No Longer Written

The Use of Conjectural Emendation in the Restoration of the Text of the New Testament, the Epistle of James as a Case Study

RYAN DONALD WETTLAUFER

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By

Ryan Donald Wettlaufer

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Dedicated to my grandfather
Percy Hutchinson
1924–2010

both his life and his death showed us how to live

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One certain truth is that this book exists only because of John Kloppenborg. In my early days as a doctoral student, it was John who gave me the freedom to study New Testament textual criticism, and John who helped me to publish the results. It was John who knew that conjectural emendation was a subject that needed to be studied, and John who invited me to bring that work to the scholarly community. It was John who guided this work through each of its many stages, and John whose relentless critique and cutting insight pushed it to a level beyond what I could attain myself. It was John who gave the encouragement needed to bring this to completion. If there is anything good in this book, people will innocently give the credit to me, but I will know that it was John.

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FOREWORD

The practice of conjectural emendation, widely acknowledged in the editing of Greek and Latin texts, has not met so favorable a reception among textual critics of the New Testament. This is not because there are not readings that seem to be corrupt, even unintelligible, such as all surviving witnesses to 2 Peter 3:10. It is seemingly due to a widespread conviction that somehow the 'original' reading is to be found among the almost six thousand surviving Greek manuscripts or other versional texts. This conviction, as some reflection will indicate, is not a particularly sound one, especially given the very significant gap between the putative composition date of a number of books of the New Testament and their first manuscript attestation. Cases in point are Mark, composed about 70 CE, and first attested in Chester Beatty I, some one hundred and fifty years later, and even more dramatically, the letter of James, composed perhaps in the late first century CE but with fragmentary attestations only in the late third century and a full Greek version in Codex Vaticanus in the fourth century. Were it the case that from the very first, the transmission of the books of the New Testament was controlled by professional scribes and supervised by authorities who carefully checked copie against others, we would have a stable text from the outset. But such, alas, is not the case, as the examination of the early papyri indicates. That errors and new readings crept in is beyond dispute. That many manuscripts, including the exemplars of most of our early copies, were irretrievably lost, is also certain. With this combination of corruption, invention, and loss, the strong likelihood that some original readings were lost is one that critics ought to reckon with. And in such a situation, conjectural emendation becomes a defensible way to recover an original reading.

Of course, given the current tide, strongly against the practice, the case for conjectural emendation must be built carefully, and illustrated with carefully chosen variant units. For this, the choice of the letter of James is an obvious one, given the very odd transmission history of this text, which, curiously, lacks a Western text entirely and appears for the first time in papyri relatively late. Moreover, the first patristic citations of James are also late-Origen in the East and Ambrosiaster in the West. The earliest witnesses to James contain a number of difficult readings, and Erasmus famously proposed a conjectural emendation of James 4:2 in order to make sense of a seemingly illogical argumentative sequence.

With recent advances in the practice of textual criticism, including the impressive work of the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster, the time seemed ripe to rethink conjectural emendation and to re-establish a case for its practice. Ryan Wettlaufer was singularly equipped to take on this challenge, with a combination of sharp logical skills and the kind of *Sitzfleisch* necessary to do the exhaustive checking of hundreds of variant readings many times over. And so, when I suggested this topic, and a focus on James, he took it on with enthusiasm and energy. The result, I think, speaks for itself.

John S. Kloppenborg
University of Toronto

PART ONE

THEORY

INTRODUCTION

§1. *What Is Conjectural Emendation?*

Textual Criticism is the scholarly art of recreating an earlier form of a text.[1] Conjectural emendation is an advanced method of textual criticism that has been profitably employed for several centuries. Specifically, it is the act of restoring a given text at points where all extant manuscript evidence appears to be corrupt. The method can be classified into three types, depending on what type of corruption is being corrected. If a word or phrase has been omitted from all extant copies of the text, then conjectural emendation would consist of adding it back. Conversely, if a word or phrase has been added to all extant copies of the text, then conjectural emendation would omit it. Finally, if a word has not been added or omitted but corrupted into a different word, then conjectural emendation would repair it back to its original state. An example of the first type is 2 Peter 3:10, where it has been proposed that the verbal negation οὐχ (not) has been omitted in all extant Greek manuscripts from the phrase καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα εὑρεθήσεται (and the earth and the works in it will be found).[2] An example of the second type is 1 Cor 14:34–35, which many modern translations place in brackets to reflect the popular proposal that these verses are later additions to the text that have managed to secure a place in all extant manuscripts.[3] Eph 1:11 is an example

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[1] The debate about whether this is or can be the "original text" will be discussed below and is, in any case, not relevant here: regardless of whether the reconstructed text represents the "original" form, it at least represents an *earlier* form.

[2] The reading does survive in the Sahidic. Nevertheless, in the absence of Greek witnesses, the committee will be including the reading in the next edition of the Nestle-Aland (28th) on the basis of conjectural arguments. See further discussion of this conjecture below in the section "When To Make A Conjecture."

[3] The argument that these verses were a later interpolation into Paul's text is longstanding and takes place on several levels. The committee at INTF was divided on the matter, and the UBS4 text gives the text a "B" grade to reflect that uncertainty. On a popular level, the first and primary objection to the verses is that by silencing women the text contradicts Paul's earlier instructions to women. As Richard Hays writes, "One of the strongest reasons for regarding these verses as an interpolation is that their demand for women to remain silent in

of the third type where it has been proposed that the awkward ἐκληρώθημεν found in all extant manuscripts is actually a corruption of ἐπληρώθημεν.[4] In all three of these operations the common aim of conjectural emendation is to offer a plausible correction at points where corruption appears to have overtaken all extant manuscripts of the New Testament.[5]

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the assembly stands in glaring contradiction to 11:2–16, in which Paul teaches that women may in fact pray and prophesy in church as long as they keep their heads appropriately covered. It is hard to imagine how Paul could have written those instructions and then, just a few paragraphs later, have written that 'it is shameful for a woman to teach in church' (14:35b)" (Richard Hays, *First Corinthians* [Interpretation; Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1997] 246). An even stronger argument, however, occurs on the text critical level. As Fee explains, for almost 300 years the Western text, as represented by the uncials D F G, the miniscule 88 and some Old Latin, read these verses in a different location: at the end of the chapter after v. 40. He therefore argues "on the matter of transcriptional probability, Bengel's first principle must rule: the form of the text is more likely original which best explains the emergence of the others. In this case there are three options: Either (1) Paul wrote these words at this place and they were deliberately transposed to a position after v. 40; or (2) the reverse of this, they were written originally after v. 40 and someone moved them forward to a position after v. 33; or (3) they were not part of the original text, but were a very early marginal gloss that was subsequently placed in the text at two different places. Of these options, the third is easily the one that best fits Bengel's first principle. One can give good historical reasons both for the gloss itself and for its dual position in the text, but one is especially hard pressed to account for either options 1 or 2 had the other been original" (Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987] 699). Nevertheless, some have defended the authenticity of the verses because, in one position or the other, they are found in all extant manuscripts of 1Cor 14. However, as Fee again explains, "The fact that it occurs in all extant witnesses only means that the double interpolation had taken place before the time of our present textual tradition, and could easily have happened before the turn of the first century" (Fee, *Corinthians*, 705).

[4] The problems with Eph 1:11 can be easily seen by surveying English translations of the verse. The opening verb is variously translated "we have obtained an inheritance" (NASB, KJV, NRSV), "we have been given our share in the heritage" (NEB), "we were also chosen" (TNIV) or "we were first designated" (Barth). The problem stems with the verb, κληρόω. This is the only time it occurs in the New Testament, and its suitability here is not entirely clear. The verb originally referred to the act of deciding by the drawing of lots. As usage progressed, reference to literal lot drawing developed into a more conceptual notion of appointing or choosing (thus the TNIV's "chosen" or Barth's "designated"). As Barth explains though (Markus Barth, *Ephesians* [AB; New York: Doubleday, 1974] 92–94) such a meaning hardly fits the logical context, and this has caused many interpreters to draw on contextual elements of "inheritance" and understand the verb as a reference to *being appointed to receive the inheritance*, or more simply, *to inherit*. To avoid such anguished semantic grasping, many scholars have sought alternate solutions. Some argue for the variant reading found in A D F* and G, the verb ἐκλήθημεν, *called*. At the turn of the last century, however, J.H.A. Michelsen argued instead for the conjectural proposal of ἐπληρώθημεν, to *be filled* or *fulfilled*, which fits well with the contextual use of the cognate noun in 1:10. If this proposal were correct, it would be an example of the third type of conjectural emendation: the corruption of one word into another.

[5] We should note however, as was protested by T.D. Barnes at the *Conference on Editorial*

From that description alone one might get the impression that conjectural emendation is a method glorious in its simplicity that is used profitably and regularly by textual critics in their labours to restore the New Testament text. The truth, however, is that scholarship's reception of the method is riddled with controversy, misunderstanding and fiery debate that intersects many of the most unstable issues in textual criticism today. To understand how we arrived at this point and where we need to go from here, we will first need to survey the history of the method, after which we will describe the current state of affairs and investigate the reasons behind it, including a discussion of some of the method's key principles and premises, until finally concluding with a series of test cases from the Epistle of James through which we will be able to explicate more clearly the essential elements of the theory and practice of conjectural emendation.

§ 2. *A Classical Pedigree*

In the restoration of classical texts, conjectural emendation has long been assumed as a standard tool. Bruce Metzger himself confirms this when he refers to it as "a process which has so often been found essential in the restoration of the right text in classical authors …"[6] Similarly, William Linwood echoed that description:

> Every student of the classics is aware of the value of conjectural emendation as applied to the elucidation of the ancient writers. By the judicious application of this auxiliary, many passages are now intelligible which before were doubtful, and even hopelessly obscure … That this is the case as regards the classics every one is agreed, and probably no editor could be found who would be willing to print the text of any ancient classic without some acknowledgement of the assistance derived from this source.[7]

Problems at the University of Toronto (Toronto, Nov 1–4, 2007), that some textual critics, particular in classical studies, have come to consider the correction of additions to be an exercise distinct and separate from conjectural emendation in general, and refer to this type simply as *interpolations*. While it should be elementary enough that the emending of interpolations is, if based on conjecture, obviously a form of conjectural emendation, it is nevertheless notable that Paul Maas, in his seminal text, is careful to organise the discussion of interpolations within the section on conjectural emendation. Further, in New Testament studies, the Nestle-Aland apparatus employs the abbreviation "*Cj*," i.e. "*Conjecit*," to indicate proposed emendations of all three types discussed here, including interpolations.

[6] Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (3rd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 185.

[7] William Linwood, *Remarks on Conjectural Emendation As Applied To The New Testament* (London: Wertheimer, 1873) 3.

The latter claim can easily be proved true simply by surveying classics scholars. Robert Renehan, for example, defines it as an essential part of the text critical task:

> The basic task of the textual critic is to determine, so far as is possible, the actual words of an author. To do this he has to make certain choices. He must decide in each case whether the original reading has been preserved (or conjecturally restored) in any MS tradition. If in his judgment it has not, he must decide whether it has been or can be recovered by modern conjecture or whether the passage is a *locus desperatus*.[8]

Similarly, Martin West writes "but the archetypal reading, reconstructed or extant, may be unsatisfactory. In that case, further conjecture is called for, just as it may be called for if there is complete agreement among the manuscripts."[9] Likewise, E.J. Kenny states that "if the ancient MSS do not provide the answer, recourse must be had to conjecture."[10]

These writers, however, merely echo the seminal introductory text of Paul Maas, who writes:

> In each individual case the original text either has or has not been transmitted. So our first task is to establish what *must* or *may* be regarded as transmitted—to make the recension (*recensio*); our next is to examine this tradition and discover whether it may be considered as giving the original (*examinatio*); if it proves not to give the original, we must try to reconstruct the original by conjecture (*divinatio*) or at least to isolate the corruption.[11]

Of course, even within classical text critical studies there has been some question as to the place and propriety of conjectural emendation, but as West indicates these concerns have been easily laid to rest:

> In what circumstances is it legitimate to depart from the paradosis [the extant manuscripts], to entertain a conjecture? Many scholars would answer "only when it is clear that the paradosis cannot be right". Those are scholars who will dismiss a conjecture from consideration on the ground that it is 'unnecessary'. But it does not have to be 'necessary' in order to be true; and what we should be concerned with is whether or nor [sic.] it may be true.[12]

In the end, classical text criticism has had little problem seeing the value and virtue of conjectural emendation. As Maas neatly summarises: "If the

8 Robert Renehan, *Greek Textual Criticism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) 2.
9 Martin West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique*, (Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner, 1973) 53.
10 E.J. Kenny, *The Classical Text*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 35.
11 Paul Maas, *Textual Criticism*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958) 1.
12 West, *Textual Criticism*, 55.

tradition proves to be corrupt, we must attempt to remedy it by conjecture (*divinatio*). ... The typical conjecture consists in the removal of an anomaly."[13]

This practice can easily be demonstrated through a cursory examination of the critical editions of classical texts. In his edition of Josephus for the Loeb Classical Library, for example, Henry St. John Thackeray comments on the text that "each variant has to be considered on its merits; and there is considerable scope for conjectural emendation, on which many eminent scholars have exercised their ingenuity."[14] For example, at *Vita* 80.4 Thackeray agrees with Bekker's conjectured insertion of ἐπί in order to make better sense of the phrase ἄλλως τε καὶ ἐπ' ἐξουσίας ὄντα μεγάλης.[15] Similarly, at *Vita* 161.6 he agrees with Holwerda that a copulative verb had likely been lost from the end of the phrase οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀφικομένος αὐτῆς εἰς τὴν ἐπιοῦσαν ὅπλα λαβεῖν ἦν, perhaps through scribal omission due to the similar appearance or pronunciation of the form ἦν with λαβεῖν.[16] In the same way, in his Loeb edition of Clement of Alexandria, G.W. Butterworth feels free to mention without justification that "the text printed here is substantially that of [a previous] edition, though I have occasionally preferred the conjectures of other scholars ..."[17] Thus, for example, though Wilamowitz proposed, perhaps because of the immediate proximity of the ε in δὲ, that at *Exc.* 1.2 an original δοκεῖ had been corrupted into ἐδόκει in the phrase Ἕλλησι δὲ ἐδόκει ὑποκριτὴς γεγονέναι μουσικῆς, Butterworth preferred the traditional text.[18] In *Exc.* 1.7, however, Butterworth agrees with Stählin that the received text of Οὗτος γοῦν ὁ λόγος, ὁ Χριστός, καὶ τοῦ εἶναι πάλαι ἡμας ἦν γὰρ ἐν θεῷ καὶ τοῦ εὖ εἶναι simply makes no sense, and therefore agrees to emend οὗτος to the much more sensible αἴτιος.[19] More examples of classical conjectures could easily be found. In his enduring edition of the troublesome text of Euripides' *Bacchae*, it is interesting to note that E.R. Dodds evidently assumed that the text critical discussion would proceed on conjectural grounds, that is, without the benefit of "new evidence":

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[13] Maas, *Textual Criticism*, 11.

[14] H.St.J. Thackeray, *Josephus* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997) xviii.

[15] Thackeray, *Josephus*, 32. "especially in a position of high authority."

[16] Thackeray, *Josephus*, 62. "and even if they had come, it would have been impossible for them to bear arms on the morrow."

[17] Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) xix.

[18] Butterworth, *Clement*, 4. "although the Greeks thought it to have been responsive to music."

[19] Butterworth, *Clement*, 16. "The Word, then, that is the Christ, is the cause of both our being long ago (for He was in God) and of our well-being."

> In the field of language and textual criticism a twentieth-century editor is unlikely to better very substantially the work of Elmsely and Hermann, Paley and Sandys and Wecklein, except where he is lucky enough to be armed with new evidence: the solid scholars of the last century stated all the major linguistic and textual problems of the play, and brought most of them as near to a solution as they are likely to be brought in the absence of such evidence.[20]

A.E. Housman, on the other hand, seems primarily worried that all the good conjectures have already been made, that all the errors have been emended to extinction:

> In fact Attic tragedy has been studied so long and so minutely by such great men that all the corrections which consist in iteration of syllables, or separation of letters or the like, must almost necessarily have been made already; and when one at this date makes a conjecture of this sort one ought to do it with one's hair standing on end and one's knees giving way beneath one.[21]

Whatever the standing of one's hair, clearly textual critics of classical texts have long seen the value of conjectural emendation.

§3. *Reception in New Testament Studies*

In contrast to classical scholars, New Testament textual criticism has long had a tumultuous relationship with conjectural emendation. This relationship has not always been entirely contentious, however. Like the proverbial scarlet thread, a varying degree of acceptance of the method is woven through the history of the field. As Jan Krans describes it, during the Renaissance period many considered conjectural emendation as simply one of the ways by which a text could be corrected:

> 'emendation' was not necessarily 'conjectural', but simply meant the correction of … the *editio princeps*. Critics emended, improved a previous edition with respect to details … emendation, the adoption of alternative readings, was done in two distinct ways, depending on the way these readings were found: they could either be derived from manuscripts or be arrived at through rational argument. Hence a distinction was made between *emendatio codicum ope* ('emendation by means of manuscripts') and *emendatio ingenii ope* ('emendation by means of reasoning').[22]

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[20] E.R. Dodds, *Euripedes Bacchae*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960) v.
[21] A.E. Housman, *The Letters of A.E. Housman*, (ed. Henry Maas; Cambridge: Harvard, 1971) 404.
[22] Jan Krans, *Beyond What Is Written* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 4.

Thus, as Georg Luck recounts, the use of the method was not uncommon during this period:

> Emending the text of the New Testament *ope ingenii*, that is, by conjectures, was not unusual in the Renaissance. The early printed editions were based on very few manuscripts, and some of the best and oldest witnesses, including, of course, the Papyri, were not available. Hence there was an urgent need for emending the text by all possible means. Erasmus was followed by Beza, Scaliger, Grotius and others.[23]

True enough, editors such as Erasmus, Beza[24] and later Wettstein[25] included many such conjectures in their published New Testaments. By the 18th century William Bowyer in England could publish a dedicated collection of conjectures,[26] which, as Luck notes, must have proven quite popular as it went through four editions.[27] A century later Könnecke would do the same in Germany.[28] Finally, early editions of the Nestle-Aland text still included several hundred conjectures.[29] Eberhard Nestle was even able to *assume* the reality of conjectures as a premise for a different argument about singular readings: "For just as in certain circumstances the correct reading may no longer appear in any manuscript, but must be determined by conjecture, so in another case the truth may have only one solitary representative to support it against a whole world of adversaries ..."[30] Nestle also wrote more explicitly

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[23] Georg Luck "Conjectural Emendation in the Greek New Testament" in *Verae Lectiones: estudios de crítica textual y edición de textos griegos. Exemplaria classica: Vol. Anejo 1* (M. Sanz Morales and M. Librán Moreno, eds.; Huelva: Universidad de Huelvá, 2009) 169.

[24] Krans's study is focused, in fact, on the conjectures of these two editors.

[25] Wettstein's 1750–1751 edition is still a standard repository of conjectures, many of which can no longer be found elsewhere. For a recent reprint, see Jacobus Wettstein *Novum Testamentum Graecum* (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck V. Verlagsanstalt, 1962).

[26] Cf. William Bowyer, *Conjectures on the New Testament* (London: J. Nichols, 1782).

[27] Luck, "Conjectural Emendation," 170.

[28] T. Könnecke, *Emendationen zu Stellen des Neuen Testaments* (Gütersloh: T. Bertelsmann, 1908).

[29] The exact number depends how one counts, but at least 200. In the preface to the NA25, Erwin Nestle writes "The number of conjectures taken up has been multiplied ... altogether there have been entered about 200 conjectures, with 90 names of authors" (Erwin Nestle "Explanations for the Greek New Testament" in *Novum Testamentum Graece* [25th edition; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1963] 67*). See also Erroll F. Rhodes "Conjectural Emendations in Modern Translations," in Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee, eds., *New Testament Textual Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 361–374. Interesting that the latest Nestle-Aland 27 has reduced that number to 127, cf. Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament* (4 ed.; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) 230.

[30] Eberhard Nestle, *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (trans. William Edie; Williams and Norgate[Kessinger Reprint]: London, 1901) 195.

that "when the correct reading is no longer found in any of our witnesses, neither in Greek manuscript, version, nor patristic quotation ... here we must simply have recourse to conjecture."[31] This is, of course, exactly what a great number of scholars did: as Krans notes, "throughout the centuries critics have made conjectures on the Greek text of the New Testament ... the total number of conjectures probably comes to several thousands."[32] Thus it can be seen that many New Testament critics have often had no difficulty accepting and even practicing the art of conjectural emendation.

As an aside, this acceptance has yielded some benefit for the field of New Testament textual criticism, since some of the better conjectures have been vindicated by later manuscript discoveries.[33] One striking example can be found in the traditional text of John 7:52. In that passage the Pharisees are disputing among themselves about the status of Jesus. In refutation of the notion that Jesus could be a prophet, they argue, according to the NA27, ἐραύνησον καὶ ἴδε ὅτι ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας προφήτης οὐκ ἐγείρεται ("search and see that out from Galilee a prophet does not rise"). This response has long been found problematic. First, as the variant in codex Bezae confirms,[34] the intended sense is almost certainly that it is the *scriptures*, i.e. the Hebrew Bible, that are to be searched for support of this claim. As Westcott points out, though, the scriptures in fact testify to multiple prophets coming from Galilee: "... though Jonah, Hoshea, Nahum and perhaps Elijah, Elisha and Amos were of Galilee."[35] Finding it unlikely that John would have made such a mistake in the original text, some scholars had long proposed a conjecture that would solve the problem. As Metzger notes, as early as the mid-eighteenth century Owen proposed to emend the text to restore a definite article, ὁ, before προφήτης.[36] This simple addition would change the text, from a general

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[31] Nestle, *Introduction*, 167.

[32] Krans, *Beyond*, 2.

[33] There are examples as well in the extra-biblical literature. Michael Holmes, for example, calls attention to J.B. Lightfoot's work on 1 Clement: "For his first edition Lightfoot had only one MS upon which to base his work, Codex Alexandrinus. The process of *examinatio* led him to conclude that the MS was defective in numerous places, and he attempted to repair the damage by *divination* (i.e., emendation). Remarkably, between the first and second editions new evidence, primarily the well-known MS discovered by Bryennios, turned up. What is striking is how often the new evidence provided documentary support for Lightfoot's earlier conjectures" (Michael Holmes, "Reasoned Eclecticism in New Testament Textual Criticism," *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, [eds. Bart Ehrman & Michael Homes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995] 349).

[34] The reading τας γραφας is found in D, as well as W it vg^cl sa ac².

[35] B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: John Murray, 1908) 125.

[36] Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament*—First Edition

dismissal of *any* prophet coming from Galilee, into a specific and definite denial of *the prophet* coming from there. Such a definite reference would, of course, hearken back to Moses, thereby making the phrase idiomatic for "a prophet like Moses."[37] This articular text would make much better sense in several ways. Theologically, "a prophet like Moses" would certainly constitute a reference to messianic expectation, which would fit much better within the context of Jesus' messianic claims. Literarily, it would constitute another example of a key Johannine theme: the comparison of Jesus with Moses (e.g. John 1:17 "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"). Thus, as Owen himself argued the conjecture:

> The Greek text, I apprehend, is not perfectly right: and our English Version has carried it still farther from the true meaning. Is it possible the Jews could say, "*that out of Galilee* HATH ARISEN *no prophet*;" when several (no less perhaps than six) of their own prophets were natives of *that* country? When they tell Nicodemus to *search the Scriptures* (see *Cambr*. MS. and *Vulgate* Version), they plainly meant, *for the birth-place of the prophet that was to come*, i.e. the Messiah; which he would find to be, not any town of *Galilee*, but *Bethlehem* in the land of *Judea*. Hence then I conclude, that what they really said, what the reading ought to be, was—ὅτι Ὁ ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας οὐκ ΕΓΕΙΡΕΤΑΙ: *That* THE PROPHET *is not to arise out of Galilee;* from whence they supposed Jesus to have sprung.[38]

This articular reading had much to commend in it, so much so that even Metzger, who does not accept the conjecture, agreed that it represented "what scholars had long thought was the required sense, namely 'Search [the scriptures] and you will see that *the* prophet does not rise from Galilee'."[39] The conjecture therefore was able to gain some supporters, namely Rudolf Bultmann and C.K. Barrett,[40] but true vindication had to wait for the mid 20th

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(London: United Bible Society, 1971) 219. Note, this passage is omitted from the second edition of Metzger's commentary.

[37] Cf. discussion in Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999) 121, or Craig Keener, *The Gospel According to John* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003) 734–735.

[38] *apud* Bowyer, *Conjectures*, 287. Owen's conjectures appear to have been published only as part of Bowyer's collection. As the editor of the fourth edition, John Nichols, writes in his preface "Conscious of the inadequateness of his own abilities, the present Editor would not have presumed to venture on a task of such importance, as well as difficulty, if he had not been encouraged throughout by the unremitted labours and friendship of Dr. Owen; whose regard for the memory of Mr. Bowyer, and distinguished zeal for the interests of Sacred Literature, have prompted him not only to enrich the volume with a considerable number of new notes, but also kindly and attentively to superintend the correction of the whole" (Bowyer, *Conjectures*, iii).

[39] Metzger and Ehrman, *Text*, 57.

[40] Cf. Morris, *John*, 385, n. 115.

century discovery of the Bodmer papyri. Though it appears that a corrector—possibly the scribe himself[41]—attempted to erase it, the definite article can still clearly be read in the second century papyrus 𝔓[66]. Further, while debate continues, it appears that the third century 𝔓[75] might have contained the article as well.[42] Thus, while the articular reading has yet to be accepted by the standard critical editions,[43] it remains a striking example of a conjecture confirmed by later manuscript discoveries.

Despite such validation of the method, for just as long as some New Testament critics have been accepting it, even more have been rejecting it. As early as 1873 Linwood could comment on the trend, writing:

> But when from the classics we turn to the writers of the New Testament, we are told by some very eminent authorities that the case is altogether different. It is urged that in the case of the New Testament conjecture is wholly inadmissible, and that no reading can be accepted as true, or even deemed worthy of discussion, which is not founded upon the authority of some one or more MSS.[44]

In his day, Nestle described an "aversion to this method" which "till recently prevailed, and still to some extent prevails."[45] It is in the last half-century,

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[41] Cf. discussion in Philip Comfort & David Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2001) 417. Gordon Fee argues that it was the scribe himself, not a later corrector, who attempted the erasure: "Much has been made of the singular reading of the article with προφητης. It appears, however, that there has been a half hearted attempt to delete it. I wonder whether the scribe did not in fact so intend at the same time he made the word order change from εκ της Γαλιλαιας (ο) προφητης (P[75] B pc) to προφητης εκ της Γαλιλαιας (א D Θ Byz pl), for it is hardly likely that he would have made the word order change without reference to another MS, and it is also quite likely that MS did *not* read ο προφητης. It would seem at this point that P[66*] should be read in the apparatus for the article, rather than P[66]" (Gordon Fee "Corrections of Papyrus Bodmer II" *JBL* 84/1 [Mar, 1965]: 68).

[42] For a survey of this debate, see discussion in Morris, *John*, 385, n. 115.

[43] This itself is a striking fact, though perhaps not entirely surprising seeing how, as is often noted (e.g. William Peterson "What Text Can New Testament Textual Criticism Ultimately Reach?" in New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis and Church History [ed. B. Aland and J. Delobel; Kampen: Pharos, 1994] 138–139; Reprinted 221–222 in *Patristic and Text-Critical Studies: The Collected Essays of William L. Petersen.* Edited by Jan Krans and Joseph Verheyden. New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents, 40. Leiden: Brill, 2012.), the UBS4/NA27 text does not include in the main text a single papyrus reading that is not also supported by the later uncials, i.e. א and B. This, along with the fact that of all the modern commentators on John I checked only Morris even mentions the conjecture or the support of it by 𝔓[66], should be kept in mind as we discuss in the next section the rejection of and bias against conjectural readings in the modern academy.

[44] Linwood, *Remarks*, 3.

[45] Nestle, *Introduction*, 167.

however, New Testament scholars have taken this rejection to new levels. Bruce Metzger dismissively wrote: "whereas several scholars during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries amused themselves in proposing thousands of conjectural emendations for various passages of the New Testament, the tendency in recent days has been to exercise much more caution in proposing or adopting such corrections."[46] Harold Greenlee describes it similarly:

> If examination of the available manuscripts fails to indicate satisfactorily the original text of a certain word or phrase, a scholar may resort to an "educated guess" known as conjectural emendation ... [this] tends to become what Kenyon has called "a process precarious in the extreme, and seldom allowing anyone but the guesser to feel confidence in the truth of its results."[47]

Peter Davids similarly chides that "[conjectural emendation] must remain a counsel of desperation for those who can accept no other solution."[48] J.K. Elliott explains that there is:

> ... no need to resort to conjectural emendation, which often turns out to be a mere imaginative rewriting of the New Testament. Conjectural emendation of the New Testament was practiced in earlier periods, but few of these conjectures or guesses met with widespread scholarly acceptance. A decreasing number of some famous conjectures are still allowed to clutter unnecessarily the apparatus of the NA editions.[49]

Standard texts like the Alands' advise that "textual difficulties should not be solved by conjecture, ... such attempts amount to capitulation before the difficulties and are themselves violations of the text,"[50] while Metzger again assures that "the necessity of resorting to emendation is reduced to the smallest dimensions."[51]

In practice the method of conjectural emendation has been all but shut out of modern New Testament textual criticism. While Elliott is correct that some conjectures still "clutter" the apparatus of the latest Nestle-Aland New Testament, it is noteworthy that only one has made it into the body of the

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[46] Metzger and Ehrman, *Text*, 230–231.

[47] J. Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 15.

[48] Peter Davids, *James* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 123.

[49] J.K. Elliott "The Case for Thorough-Going Eclecticism," in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. David Alan Black; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 120.

[50] Kurt Aland & Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 280.

[51] Metzger and Ehrman, *Text*, 230.

text, but even then it is enclosed in square brackets.[52] More significantly, what conjectures remain have been almost entirely ignored by modern English translations.[53]

These statements are not isolated examples but are representative of a common reluctance among New Testament critics today. While there are some modern New Testament critics who accept (or are at least open to) the method—Michael Holmes, for example, has written that while "there is considerably less need for emendation of the NT text than of comparable documents … we must not confuse *less* need with *no* need"[54]— the dominant position in contemporary studies is one of rejection, dismissal and condemnation. Why has such rejection been so common in New Testament textual criticism? The answers, of course, are multiple, and they have changed over time and vary with each critic.[55] The next chapter, however, will explore three different reasons that appear to be influential today: some overestimate the witness of the extant manuscript base, some misestimate the influence of faith in textual criticism, while some underestimate the necessity of even trying to restore the text of the New Testament.

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[52] The conjecture is found in Acts 16:12 where the best extant witnesses read πρώτη τῆς but the NA27 offers the conjecture πρώτης. It is notable that not only is the conjecture bracketed, but in Metzger's Textual Commentary both Metzger and Kurt Aland note their dissenting opinion against the majority of the editorial committee (Metzger, *Commentary*, 395). Though, as noted above, the pending 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland will include a conjecture in 2 Pet 3:10 that is already in the main text of the ECM. However, it is also interesting that all remaining conjectures will be removed from the apparatus of the NA28.

[53] Rhodes "Conjectural Emendations," 361–374. Rhodes finds one conjecture, that of Crell in Acts 16:12, which appears to have been adopted by some modern translations.

[54] Holmes, "Reasoned Eclecticism," 348. Note also the well written argument on behalf of conjectural emendation: John Strugnell "A Plea For Conjectural Emendation in the New Testament," *CBQ* 36/3(1974):543–558.

[55] Luck, for example, explains that conjectural emendation has experienced periods of acceptance within New Testament studies, and suggests that these periods correspond with periods of increased involvement in the field by Classical textual critics (Luck, "Conjectural Emendation," 169–202).

REJECTION

With its common acceptance in Classical studies and surviving presence in New Testament studies, the technique of conjectural emendation is certainly no modern novelty or baseless amusement. Rather, it is a method firmly rooted in history, proven in pedigree, and affirmed by the broader field of textual criticism. Given that, how can we explain its common rejection by New Testament critics? This chapter will explore three common reasons. Section one will offer a Socratic discussion of the nature of the manuscript base and the idea of textual survival. Section two will explore some of the theological issues that can influence the evaluation of the method. Finally, section three will introduce a relatively new trend in how the purpose of textual criticism is understood which cannot help but have implications for the practice of conjectural emendation.

§1. *Survival of the Fittest*

What Is the Most Common Reason for Rejecting Conjectural Emendation?

The first and most common explanation for the rejection of conjectural emendation by many New Testament scholars is a persistent and pervasive belief in the idea of *textual survival*. Survival is the notion that in the face of mass variation across all known copies of the New Testament, the original reading has nevertheless managed to survive at every variant passage in one manuscript or another. Somewhere in the totality of extant manuscripts the original can always be found. For example, Kilpatrick writes: "we may assume as a rule of thumb that at each point the true text has survived somewhere or other among our manuscripts."[1] Gordon Fee similarly writes "with such an abundance of material one can be reasonably certain that the

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[1] Kilpatrick, "Conjectural Emendation in the New Testament" in *The Principles and Practice of New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. J.K. Elliott; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990; originally published in *New Testament Textual Criticism* [Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon Fee, eds.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1981]) 98.

original text is to be found somewhere in it."[2] Maurice Robinson concisely explains "the original text is presumed to have been preserved among the extant witnesses."[3] The implication for conjectural emendation is clear: if the original has never been lost, then there is certainly no need to employ conjecture to recover it. On what, however, is this assurance of survival based? How can they be so sure that the true text has always survived somewhere? The basis for this conclusion, it must be stressed, is not theological, and it is important to maintain a distinction between religious doctrines of divine preservation of the text and academic assertions of textual survival. The basis for this conclusion is strictly historical; to say that the text has survived is, proponents claim, simply a description of a historical reality. As a matter of textual history, the original text has survived. What, then, led them to that conclusion? What historical evidence supports such a supposition?

In the logic of textual survival, the conclusion is assured by the large number of New Testament manuscripts that have survived. The sheer size of the extant manuscript base makes it not only likely but virtually certain that the original survives somewhere within it. As Parker describes, "conjecture has often been condemned as unnecessary in so rich a textual tradition as that of the New Testament."[4] Examples of this argument are not hard to find: Metzger writes that the need for conjectural emendation is "reduced to the smallest dimensions," because "*the amount of evidence for the text of the New Testament*, whether derived from manuscripts, early versions, or patristic quotations, *is so much greater* than that available for any ancient classical author ..."[5] Likewise Harold Greenlee concludes that "*when a large number of manuscripts. are available*, as in the case of the New Testament, conjecture is less often, if ever, necessary ..."[6] Philip Comfort argues similarly, saying "I am optimistic because we have *many early manuscripts* of excellent quality and because our view of the early period of textual transmission has been getting

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[2] Gordon Fee, "Textual Criticism of the New Testament" in *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (eds. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 6.

[3] Maurice Robinson, "The Case for Byzantine Priority" in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. David Alan Black; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 132.

[4] David Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts And Their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 308.

[5] Metzger and Ehrman, *Text*, 230, emphasis mine.

[6] Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) 15, emphasis mine.

clearer and clearer. I believe that it is possible to recover the original text of the Greek New Testament."[7] James Royse, quoting Colwell, argues the same:

> Thus, while it is certainly possible a priori that an authentic reading may be preserved in only one witness, *or in none*, the "wealth of manuscript attestation for the Greek New Testament," the nearness of this attestation to the autographs (especially in comparison to many classical texts), and the generally recognized cross-fertilization of the tradition at many points, all make such preservation highly unlikely (even if not absolutely impossible).[8]

F.F. Bruce wrote that "it is doubtful whether there is any reading in the New Testament which requires to be conjecturally emended. The wealth of attestation is such that the true reading is almost invariably bound to be preserved by at least one of the thousands of witnesses."[9] Eldon Epp writes that "*this vast number of MSS* is the reason that conjectures—which play so large a role in the textual criticism of classical literature, and also that of the OT—are rare and almost nonexistent in NT textual studies."[10] Even Westcott and Hort, who at other times wrote more acceptingly of conjectural emendation, thought that the large number of surviving manuscripts at very least lessened the need for the method: "in the New Testament *the abundance, variety and comparative excellence of the documents* confines this task of pure 'emendation' within so narrow limits that we may leave it out of sight for the present ..."[11] That such examples can be found in such a diverse body of respected scholars shows that this thinking is popular in New Testament scholarship today, and implies that it is to blame for the equally popular rejection of conjectural emendation. Popularity, however, is no necessary indicator of truth. As Luck summarises:

> The very large number of witnesses on which the text of the New Testament is based has led to the hypothesis to which practically all editors subscribe today—but mind you, it is not more than a hypothesis—that somewhere in this ocean of evidence the truth must be preserved or will emerge someday. Hence there is no longer any need for conjecture.[12]

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[7] Philip Comfort, *The Quest For the Original Text of The New Testament*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003) 20, emphasis mine.

[8] James Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Leiden: Brill, 2008) 48.

[9] F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchements* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1991) 169–170 *apud* Paul Wegner, *Textual Criticism of the Bible* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006) 240.

[10] Eldon Epp "Decision Points in New Testament Textual Criticism" in *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (eds. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) 31. Emphasis mine.

[11] B.F. Westcott & F.J.A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003) 3. Emphasis mine.

[12] Luck, "Conjectural Emendation," 171.

It is time, however, to test that hypothesis. Does the modern manuscript base justify the conclusion of textual survival?

How Rich Is the Modern Manuscript Base?

In truth, the modern manuscript base is quite rich. At the time of this writing there are 2,355 lectionaries, 2,794 minuscules, 282 uncials, and 124 papyri with more being published all the time.[13] Thus, without even considering the evidence of patristic quotations or a multitude of early versions in different languages, the New Testament textual critic already has an incredible 5550 pieces of evidence to support the study. The question remains, however: does this glorious glut of manuscripts prove the theory of textual survival? The numbers are impressive, but numbers alone cannot decide the matter. The single most important principle of modern textual criticism is that manuscripts must be weighed not counted. This means that it is the quality of the manuscripts not their quantity that is decisive in text critical decisions. The quality of manuscripts is an evaluation based on their character, their history and inter-relations, their cumulative accuracy, and whatever other factors might influence their likelihood of preserving the original text. As Westcott and Hort wrote, "all trustworthy restoration of corrupted texts is founded upon the study of their history, that is, of the relations of descent or affinity which connect several documents."[14] The question of textual survival must, therefore, be answered not by the size of the extant base, but by the character of it.

What then is the nature of the extant manuscript base? How might its character and quality be described? Simply put, the quality of the extant base appears to be surprisingly high. First, the manuscripts that have survived possess an impressive degree of uniformity. While the truism is often repeated that no two manuscripts are alike, what is often not mentioned is that a great many manuscripts miss that goal by only the smallest degree, and there are large amounts of the New Testament text for which the attestation is virtually unanimous. As Klaus Wachtel documents, "a study of test passages

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[13] Statistics taken from the *Kurzgefasste Liste* maintained by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, [cited Feb 21, 2010], http://intf.uni-muenster.de/vmr/NTVMR/IndexNTVMR.php. For a fuller discussion of the number of manuscripts, see Eldon Jay Epp "Are Early New Testament Manuscripts Truly Abundant?" in *God and Rebecca's Children* (eds. David B. Capes, April D. DeConick, Helen K. Bond, Troy Miller; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007) 77–118.

[14] Westcott & Hort, *New Testament*, 40.

conducted at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research showed that most extant manuscripts of the New Testament agree at more than 90 % of the passages where there are variants, not to mention the rest of the text that was transmitted without variation."[15] In other words, while it is true that in one manuscript or another there is variation on almost every single word of the New Testament text, the larger truth is still that *most* manuscripts agree on *most* of the words. This does not mean, of course, that they are necessarily correct—since most, and indeed all, the manuscripts can still be wrong—but it does mean that we can speak of a general accuracy and diligence characterizing the overall transmission of the New Testament.

Secondly, and more importantly, the extant base has allowed the reconstruction of a text that, in most judgements of most parts, possesses the appearance of originality. This can be seen, for example, by comparing different critical editions. The Alands compared the major critical editions of the last century and found an impressive degree of agreement, ranging by book from 45.1 % to 81.4 %, with an overall agreement of 62.9 %[16] As they conclude, "thus in nearly two-thirds of the New Testament text the seven editions of the Greek New Testament which we have reviewed are in complete accord, with no differences other than in orthographical details."[17] Moreover, despite the many manuscript discoveries between 1881 when Westcott and Hort published their edition and 1963 when the NA25 went to press, those two seminal texts differ in only 558 places.[18] While Epp famously lamented this as an "interlude,"[19] it can just as easily be seen as a testament to the remarkable degree of consensus with which New Testament scholarship has, by and large, accepted the accuracy of the reconstructed text. This continues to be confirmed by modern critical editions. While 500 more changes were made for the NA26 text in 1979,[20] the closeness to the Westcott and Hort edition

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[15] Klaus Wachtel, "The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method: A New Way to Reconstruct the Text of the Greek New Testament" in *Editing the Bible: The Forty Third Conference on Editorial Problems* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Judith Newman; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).

[16] Aland and Aland, *Text*, 29. The editions compared were the six editions of Tischendorf, Westcott & Hort, von Soden, Vogels, Merk, Bover and Nestle-Aland 25.

[17] Aland and Aland, *Text*, 29.

[18] Aland and Aland, *Text*, 26.

[19] Eldon Epp, "The Twentieth-Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism" as well as "A Continuing Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism?" both reprinted in *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (eds. Eldon Jay Epp and Gordon D. Fee; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 83–108 and 109–123 respectively.

[20] Aland and Aland, *Text*, 33.

remained. No major changes were made to the text for the NA27 in 1993.[21] Further, it is notable that the text of James in the new *Editio Critica Maior*, based as it is on a more comprehensive manuscript analysis, differs from the NA27 in only two places.[22] Finally, scholarly consensus is well demonstrated by the new SBL edition of the Greek New Testament, edited by Michael Holmes.[23] It presents a text based primarily on the agreements between 4 major critical editions: Westcott & Hort, Tregelles, Robinson-Pierpont, and the Greek text behind the NIV translation.[24] Out of 6928 variation units compared, the SBL text differed from the old Westcott & Hort in only 879 places, and differed from the new NA tradition in only 616 places,[25] implying consensus of 87% and 91% respectively. In sum, it appears safe to conclude that the text of the New Testament was transmitted with a commendable amount of care and with relative uniformity, and the critical text most commonly reconstructed from that textual tradition has approved itself to most scholars at most points. Even the newer manuscript discoveries appear essentially to have confirmed the best reconstructed text of the New Testament. It is no surprise then that Wachtel can boldly conclude "at most variant passages we are confident that the text we have reconstructed from the extant witnesses is in fact the text that stood at the beginning of the transmission."[26] The modern manuscript base is, indeed, very rich.

How Could a Corruption Completely Overtake Such a Rich Manuscript Tradition?

Conjectural emendation assumes that a manuscript base of such rich quantity and quality nevertheless fails to preserve the original text at some points. How could a primitive corruption overtake that many manuscripts?

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[21] Cf. NA27, 46*.

[22] 1:22 and 2:3. Cf. *ECM*, 11. This is as of the 1997 printing. Subsequent printings will make at least one further change.

[23] Michael Holmes, ed., *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

[24] As Michael Holmes has explained, this text is essentially that of the NA edition and was used in its stead primarily to avoid concerns of copyright law: "the publishers were rightly concerned that the new edition have a clear and uncontestable [sic] copyright … thus … it seemed best not to use the NA26–27/UBS3–4 … the reconstructed Greek text behind the NIV translation commended itself [because] … it reflected, indirectly, the NA/UBS textual tradition as well" Michael Holmes, *SBL GNT: Three Questions and Replies*, [Nov 17, 2010] http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2010/11/sbl-gnt-three-questions-and-replies.html.

[25] *SBL GNT*, xii.

[26] Wachtel, "New Way."

How could that many manuscripts be wrong? To understand this we first have to consider the character of copying during the first centuries of the text. During this early time the New Testament was likely at the mercy of a largely poor and lower class church that was largely bereft of professional scribes. Untrained scribes would necessarily be more likely to commit copying errors, making it all the more probable that corruptions entered the text during this period. As Bart Ehrman writes:

> ... because the early Christian texts were not being copied by professional scribes, at least in the first two or three centuries of the church, but simply by educated members of the Christian congregations who could do the job and were willing to do so, we can expect that in the earliest copies, especially, mistakes were commonly made in transcription.[27]

Gordon Fee has similarly written:

> Much of the difficulty stems from the work of the earliest Christian copyists. In a time when the majority of people were illiterate and when Christianity periodically underwent severe persecution, there were probably few professionally trained scribes in the service of the church. Moreover, seldom were the scribes possessed by the spirit of the scribes of later times who worked according to the instructions of the Lord given in Deuteronomy 12:32: "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish there from." In fact, the opposite seems to have been true of the scribes in the first two centuries. They introduced thousands of changes into the text.[28]

Of course, not all of the early scribes were untrained or uneducated.[29] Roberts & Skeat argued that some manuscripts showed signs of having been copied by professional scribes.[30] Comfort echoes that argument today: "Contrary to the common notion that many of the early New Testament papyri were produced by untrained scribes making personal copies of poor quality, several of the early New Testament papyri were produced with extreme care by educated and professional scribes."[31] However, while some scribes may have been

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[27] Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005) 51. Cf. C.H. Roberts, *Manuscripts, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: OUP, 1979).

[28] Fee, "Textual Criticism" 9.

[29] Larry Hurtado notes a recent unpublished thesis by Alan Mugridge (*Stages of Development in Scribal Professionalism in Early Christian Circles* [PhD Thesis, University of New England, 2010]) which argues that a greater number of the earliest Christian manuscripts came from trained, professional scribes. Note also Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[30] Colin H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987 [originally published 1954]).

[31] Comfort, *Quest*, 50.

professional, enough of them were not so that many corruptions occurred accidentally and were able to enter into the manuscript tradition at a very early date.

Untrained scribes were not the only hazard that the transmission process had to face. As copyists and readers grew in their literary and theological acumen, they often developed the confidence to fix what they perceived as errors in the text. As Westcott & Hort describe:

> ... changes not purely clerical would arise from a more or less conscious feeling on a scribe's part that he was correcting what he deemed an obvious error due to some one of his predecessors ... other copyists would not shrink from altering the form of what lay before them for the sake of substituting what they supposed to be a clearer or better representation of the matter.[32]

While in many of these cases an actual error was legitimately corrected, at many more points the error was simply perceived, and thus by introducing a correction the scribe was actually creating a corruption.

However the corruption occurred—whether accidentally or intentionally—once it had entered the manuscript tradition, it could easily produce many subsequent copies. Westcott & Hort again explain:

> Every transcription of any kind of writing involves the chance of the introduction of some errors: and even if the transcript is revised by comparison with its exemplar or immediate original, there is no absolute security that all the errors will be corrected. When the transcript becomes itself the parent of other copies, one or more, its errors are for the most part reproduced. Those only are likely to be removed which at once strike the eye of a transcriber as mere blunders destructive of sense, and even in these cases he will often go astray in making what seems to him the obvious correction. In addition to inherited deviations from the original, each fresh transcript is liable to contain fresh errors, to be transmitted in like manner to its own descendents.[33]

Moreover, new generations of copies often had more than just their own ancestors to worry about. In addition to the corruption they inherited from their own manuscript line they could also receive corruptions from other transmission lines through a process called contamination.

Contamination refers to the way in which textual corruption was able to spread quickly across multiple lines of transmission. It occurred because a single copy would often be influenced by more than one exemplar, either

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[32] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 24.
[33] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 5.

through the original scribe comparing multiple copies while he worked, or subsequent editors correcting a manuscript against a different exemplar.[34] As Westcott & Hort describe:

> Manuscripts are written in which there is an eclectic fusion of the texts of different exemplars, either by the simultaneous use of more than one at the time of transcription, or by the incorporation of various readings noted in the margin of a single exemplar from other copies, or by a scribe's conscious or unconscious recollections of a text differing from that which lies before him. This mixture, as it may be conveniently called, of texts previously independent has taken place on a large scale in the New Testament.[35]

In this way the resulting cross-pollination of readings created an intricate network of manuscripts wherein a text could change and morph from copy to copy until, in the final accounting, the original reading could be found in most, some, or even none at all.[36]

Gerd Mink has used the following illustration to show how this phenomenon progressed:[37]

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[34] Cf. Metzger & Ehrman, *Text*, 24–31.

[35] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 8.

[36] Interestingly, Royse argues that contamination should have exactly the opposite import; rather than providing greater opportunity for the original reading to be lost, he sees contamination as providing greater assurance that it survived. He writes "the fact that the New Testament has been transmitted by a tradition that is highly 'contaminated' and has left such vast quantities of manuscript evidence, indicates that there were very few, if any, real 'dead ends' within this tradition" (*Scribal Habits*, 50). (A similar line of thought is expressed by Birdsall, who, in his study [and rejection] of a conjecture for Philemon 9, questions whether "an undetected change has taken place in a first-century document at so early a date that a rich manuscript tradition has retained no record of the original" [J.N. Birdsall, "ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΗΣ in Philemon 9: A Study In Conjectural Emendation" NTS 39 (1993): 626–627].) Of course, logically, both perspectives have an *a priori* possibility of being correct. Their respective probability, however, would surely rise or fall with the specifics of each text. That is, in the actual process of contamination a correct text would encounter an incorrect text. Which text would be victorious in that encounter and thus proliferate in that particular manuscript line would depend on the individual characteristics of the respective readings, namely, which one was able to appear most authentic to that particular scribe, which itself is a phenomena that would depend on and be influenced by a wide variety of other unknown and unpredictable specifics, such as the tendencies of that scribe, his own hearing or vision problems, his own mental distractions, whether he missed dinner that night, and so on. By exploring such specifics, the balance of this work should show that there are at least *some* texts in the New Testament—a great deal more than would be commonly accepted today in any case—wherein contamination led to the loss of the original reading rather than its preservation.

[37] Taken from Gerd Mink, *The Coherence Based Genealogical Method—Introductory Presentation*, [March 8, 2010], http://www.unimuenster.de/INTF/cbgm_presentation/download .html, 57 ff.

A: x x x x x

B: x y x x y   C: x x y x x

D: x y x y x   E: x y y x x

F: y y y x y
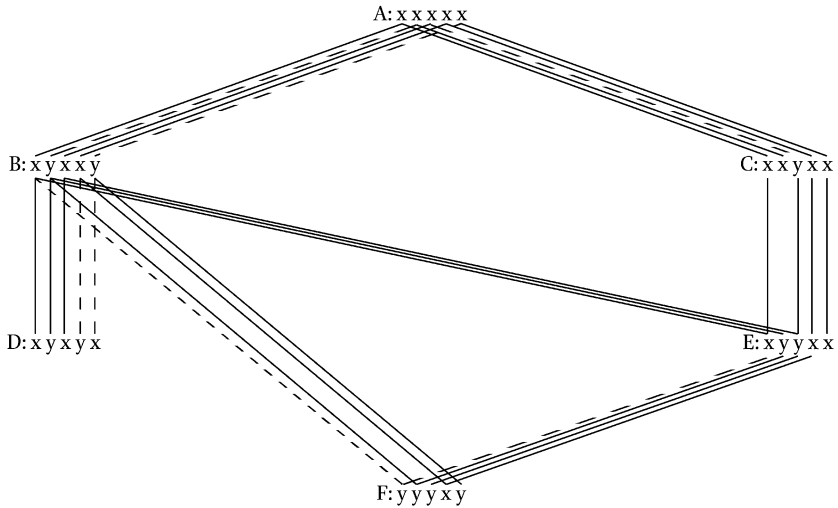
In this diagram Mink begins with a single original text, A, and traces the progression of five passages. In the original, all five passages are represented by an "x." From this original text two copies are made, B and C. The scribe of B was relatively careless, and in two of the five passages he changed—accidentally or otherwise—"x" to a "y." This change is represented by the dotted line. The scribe of C was more careful, faithfully reproducing the "x" in four of the five cases, but changing it to a "y" in the third. Each of these two copies subsequently served as exemplars for later copies. The scribe of D used only B as an exemplar, and though he exercised some care his results proved to be mixed. In the first passage he faithfully reproduced the "x", but in the second his faithfulness worked against him as he simply perpetuated B's erroneous "y." D himself corrected one of B's errors, changing the "y" of the fifth passage back to an "x", but only after committing an error of his own in the fourth passage. The mixed result is that D has only three passages in common with its exemplar, and only three in common with the original, but not the same three in both cases! The scribe of E used both B and C as exemplars, but this also proved to be of mixed success. The "x" of the first passage was confirmed by both exemplars, but in the second passage B and C disagreed, and though C correctly preserved the original "x", the scribe of E erroneously chose to follow B with its "y." E chose to follow C in the third passage, but this too was an unfortunate mistake, since C preserved a "y" at that point. This trend continued for all five passages, with the result that E is identical to neither of its exemplars, sometimes offering error where one

preserved the original, sometimes offering the original where the other had an error, but in the final tally being no more correct than either of them, having just three passages in common with the original, though not the exact same three as either B or C. The scribe of F finally used both B, and E, which itself was partly descendant from B, and in a similar manner ended up with the most mixed results of all, passing along variation at four of the five passages, preserving the original text at only one point. Mink concludes by noting that if this illustration seems complex, it should be kept in mind that the actual manuscript progression is many times more complex, being made up of thousands of witnesses and hundreds of thousands of passages! To continue Mink's illustration, if manuscript F was then taken to a scriptorium and used as an exemplar for fifty subsequent copies, we would quickly end up with a manuscript base that was very large but nevertheless contained well supported corruptions at several points. In a manner not dissimilar to this, some primitive corruptions that entered the text at an early age were able to spread through the manuscript tradition amassing the support of many witnesses.

That Explains How a Corruption Could Overtake Part of the Manuscript Tradition, but How Could It Dominate the Entire Tradition?

Here in the north country there is a saying: if you meet a bear in the woods, you do not have to run faster than the bear, only faster than your buddy! The same is true, it turns out, of corruptions and the manuscript tradition.

A corruption did not need to overtake the entire manuscript tradition in order to dominate the modern manuscript base for the simple reason that the modern manuscript base represents but a fraction of the total manuscript tradition. What happened to the rest of the manuscripts? They were lost. While a great number of manuscripts have survived to form the modern base, an even greater number have been lost. While it may be startling to put it that way, the fact of manuscript loss is universally acknowledged. As Robert Hull describes, it began with historical events in the Fourth century:

> Between the years of 303 and 313, the emperor Diocletian enforced an edict ordering the destruction of books the Christians considered holy. Massive numbers of manuscripts were lost … A reading supported by 'most of the ancient copies' known to a church father may be extant in only a very few manuscripts today. In any case, the persecution under Diocletian no doubt radically reduced the number of copies available during much of the fourth century.[38]

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[38] Robert Hull, The *Story of the New Testament Text: Movers, Materials, Motives, and Models* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010) 26, 30.

Thus, Westcott & Hort acknowledged that "multitudes of the MSS of the New Testament written in the first three centuries were destroyed at the beginning of the fourth, and there can be no doubt that multitudes of those written in the fourth and two following centuries met a similar fate in the various invasions of East and West."[39] More recently, Gerd Mink notes that "the number of manuscripts that have come down is large; some 5600 known copies so far, although most of the older ones, in particular, have been lost."[40]

The natural corollary of such manuscript loss is that at least some readings would have been lost with them—those readings that were attested only by manuscripts that were then lost—and this also has often been noted. Nestle, for example, describes how Jerome's Latin Vulgate often depends on Greek exemplar readings which are no longer extant:

> there are certain readings in Jerome which we have not yet been able to discover in any Greek manuscript that we know. For instance, he gives *docebit vos omnem veritatem* in John xvi. 13, where our present Greek editions read ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάσῃ, so that it would seem to have read διηγήσεται ὑμῖν τὴν ἀλήθειαν πᾶσαν … [but this] has not been discovered in any Greek manuscript.[41]

Many scholars today, however, do not seem to realise the full implication of this loss for the notion of textual survival. This is perhaps because, distracted by the size and quality of the base that did survive, they underestimate the greater size of the group that did not. Just how great is the number that was lost? As Nestle notes, it is at least as large as the number that survived, since every manuscript necessarily had an exemplar when it was copied and yet no one manuscript today can be matched with an extant exemplar: "it is certainly a surprising fact that so few even of our latest manuscripts can be proved with certainty to be copies of manuscripts still in existence, or at least to be derived from a common original."[42] This implies a loss rate of at least 50%. However, though we cannot be certain, the true number lost was probably even greater than that. Consider the following thought experiment.

Almost 6000 manuscripts have survived, but over the last twenty centuries how many different manuscript-reading Christian communities have there

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[39] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 9.
[40] Gerd Mink, "Problems of a Highly Contaminated Tradition: The New Testament," in *Studies in Stemmatology II* (ed. Pieter van Reenen, August den Hollander, Margot van Mulken; Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004) 13.
[41] Nestle, *Introduction*, 124.
[42] Nestle, *Introduction*, 172.

been? However many communities there were, each one likely would have needed its own manuscript copies. How often were those replaced? At what rate did early Christendom produce copies of its scriptures? These numbers are, of course, impossible to know, but for the sake of the experiment what if we settled on the conservative guess that all the communities of Christendom cumulatively achieved a yearly average of a mere ten manuscript copies. If just ten new copies were produced every year for the roughly 1500 year span between the original authorial act and the first mechanical reproduction by Ximénes de Cisneros in 1514,[43] this would result in a net total of some 15,000 manuscripts, or roughly three times the number that have survived. Since these are conservative numbers, this means that a reasonable guess would be that at most only a third of the New Testament manuscript tradition has survived till this day. In the face of such loss, the real odds of total textual survival suddenly become much clearer, and whether you are dealing with street-side shell games or manuscript transmission, one out of three are simply not good odds. The wonder then is not that at some points the original *did not* survive, but rather that at so many other points it *did!* Either way, the implication that must be understood is this: great manuscript loss makes total textual survival inherently unlikely.[44] Primitive corruptions did not need to overtake the entire manuscript base, only the small portion of it that survives to this day. They did not need to outrun the bear.

The implication of manuscript loss can be developed even further by focusing on the distribution of that loss: which manuscripts were lost? If, for example, the bulk of the loss had consisted of manuscripts from the latter centuries—perhaps the descendents of manuscript F in our earlier illustration—then our ability to filter out corruption and trace the text back to its origin would be affected only minimally, if at all. Unfortunately, the majority of the manuscript loss was from the earlier centuries. Even the earliest papyri are dated comparatively later, and many of those are fragmentary, containing no substantial amount of text or significant evidence of a continuous text type.[45] As Parker describes, "in particular the oldest

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[43] As is well known, this Complutensian Polyglot edition was completed in 1514, though actual publication was delayed until 1522. Erasmus' edition was published in 1516 and is therefore known as the first published Greek New Testament.

[44] I am tempted to simplify this even further to "loss implies ... *loss*," but somehow it seems like that should already be clear.

[45] Some would give a more positive appraisal, of course, of the ability of the papyri to establish a New Testament text in the second century (see, for example, summaries in Eldon Jay Epp "The New Testament Papyrus Manuscripts in Historical Perspective" in *To Touch the*

period suffers from a desperate paucity of evidence. To piece together the relationship between the manuscripts of that period can seem like trying to reconstruct a jigsaw picture with ten out of three thousand pieces."[46] This means that we have effectively lost the first generations of textual transmission, so that even the best genealogical reconstructions will have a glaring gap between the original text and the earliest point to which manuscript evidence can take us back.

Westcott and Hort called this gap "an interval" which "divide[s] the autograph from the earliest point or points to which genealogy conducts us back," and then made clear the problem that is created by such a gap, namely that corruption could have been introduced during that time: "any interval implies the possibility of corruption, which every addition to the length of the interval increases the probability of corruption."[47] Mink concludes similarly, writing that the earliest text that we can reconstruct from manuscript evidence, the initial text, "is not identical with the original, the text of the author. Between the autograph and the initial text considerable changes may have taken place which may not have left a single trace in the surviving textual tradition."[48] In other words, primitive corruptions were able to enter the manuscript stream at the earliest date, while subsequent manuscript loss then erased the record of their entry. In this way a corruption can dominate what is left of the manuscript tradition while not betraying any external signs of being secondary.

Could Corruption Really Have Overtaken Even the Surviving Portion of the Manuscript Tradition?

The ability of secondary variants to amass significant manuscript support is well known to textual critics. Not infrequently the critic is faced with the variation unit where external evidence is "evenly matched" or the like. In

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Text [Maurya P. Horgan and Paul J. Kobelski, eds.; New York: Crossroad, 1989] 261–288). Even if this is true, however, it would still be questionable whether the text they establish is more or less a correct text, deserving of acceptance. As Porter notes, that answer seems to be in the negative: "Even the more radically revised Nestle-Aland[26] (identical to the 27th edition) is only changed in 176 places, rejecting 980 possible places where the earliest papyri have another reading, including a number from 𝔓45, 𝔓46 and 𝔓66" (Stanley Porter, "Textual Criticism in the Light of Diverse Textual Evidence for the Greek New Testament: An Expanded Proposal," in *New Testament Manuscripts* [Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 2006] 309–310).

[46] Parker, *Introduction*, 148.
[47] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 66.
[48] Mink, "Problems," 25.

his introductory text, for example, Michael Holmes explains that "at other times, however, the evidence will be split, sometimes quite evenly, between two or more variants."[49] Specific examples of this are not hard to find. In his discussion of Jas 4:12, for example, Metzger writes "because manuscript evidence for and against the inclusion of ὁ before νομοθέτης is rather evenly balanced …"[50] At 4:14, writing in favour of the reading ποία, Metzger writes "although the reading with γάρ is widespread ($\mathfrak{P}^{74vid}$ ℵ𝄯 A K L P Ψ 049 056 most miniscules vg syr𝄯 cop𝄯 al), the connective appears to [be secondary]."[51] What such well supported secondary readings really show, however, is the ability of a corruption to gain significant traction in the manuscript tradition. What else can it mean when we say "the evidence is evenly balanced" except that "about half of the surviving manuscript tradition has been overtaken by a corruption"? In this way all textual critics are well familiar with the ability of corruptions to spread widely through the manuscript tradition.

Corruptions, however, are often able to gain support that is much greater than merely "substantial," "significant" or "evenly matched" and textual critics far and wide have already experienced this every time they have evaluated an apparently authentic reading that is nevertheless supported by only a minority of witnesses. It is surprising, in fact, how often the accepted text actually depends on only a handful of extant manuscripts against the opposing testimony of the remainder of the extant base. This will be explored in more detail in subsequent case study chapters, but till then a few examples should demonstrate the point. In Jas 1:17 the accepted text of καταβαῖνον (coming down) has survived in only $\mathfrak{P}^{74}$ and 424, versus the alternate reading κατερχομενον which is witnessed by a wide variety of manuscripts.[52] In Jas 2:8 the accepted reading of νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν (fulfilling the royal law) is found only in 400, 614 and 1893,[53] while at least eight different variant readings have commandeered all remaining manuscript evidence. In fact, if the reader simply surveys the UBS4 text, they will find that many, if not most, of the "C" rated texts are cases where the reading taken to be authentic survives in only a handful of manuscripts, while the rest of the manuscript tradition has been usurped by another reading. These examples show how secondary corruptions were able to overtake all but a few of the surviving manuscripts.

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[49] Michael Holmes, "New Testament Textual Criticism" in Scott McKnight, ed., *Introducing New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Baker: 1989) 62.

[50] Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 613.

[51] Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 613.

[52] 322 323 424 (marginal) 945 1241 1739.

[53] note ECM apparatus, 400V, 614f. and 1893V.

Finally, though not substantively different, it is striking that in many cases corruptions have overtaken all but a single member of the surviving manuscript base. Maurice Robinson has performed an initial study of the NA27 text,[54] and found at least 30 points where the reading accepted as authentic in that edition was supported by but a single manuscript.[55] Such examples show—with incontrovertible evidence—how thoroughly a secondary reading can dominate the surviving portion of the manuscript tradition. In these texts the authentic reading has survived in only a single witness. It has survived, as it is said, by the skin of its teeth. The manuscript tradition as a whole may be rich and well numbered, but this richness did not prevent the text, at some points, from being all but overtaken by secondary readings. Following this trajectory, it is only natural to wonder then if there are further cases where a corruption was actually able to overtake every extant witness?

That Shows How Total Corruption of Every Witness Could Have Happened, but Why Should We Think It Actually Did?

So far we have seen that the history of the New Testament manuscript base began with an early period of corruption during which time many lesser-educated scribes we able to introduce a great number of secondary readings. Thanks to contamination and cross-pollination, many of these secondary readings were subsequently able to spread far and wide in the manuscript flow, amassing significant amounts of support. The ensuing loss of the majority of the manuscript base left many of those secondary readings with disproportionately large support. In the modern evaluation, it has been seen that many of these readings have the support of up to half the manuscript base. Other secondary readings can be found in the majority of the surviving manuscripts, while still others have managed to dominate all but a single extant manuscript. Given this progression, it is logical to assume that there are yet more cases where secondary readings have overtaken all surviving witnesses; cases where the variant reading first managed to amass significant support on its own, and then benefited from a wave of manuscript loss which

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[54] Personal correspondence with the author, March, 2011. Robinson has also generated similar lists of variants where the commonly accepted text is supported by only two or three witnesses.

[55] These texts are: Matt 4:23, 5:39, 15:30, 19:29, 27:17, Mark 4:8, 14:10, Luke 6:42, 7:44, 13:35, 14:17, 19:38, 21:11, John 8:7, 10:29, Acts 16:28, 17:3, Romans 2:16, 8:34, 2 Cor 5:3, Eph 6:8, 2 John 1:12, Rev 4:7, 5:9, 12:10, 13:10, 13:18, 16:18, 20:2, 22:21.

happened to eliminate every alternative witness. By its very nature this claim encompasses all the extant evidence, and as such it is quite impossible to prove it absolutely by external means. It is the manuscript base as a whole, however, which provides the internal evidence necessary to show this claim as not just logical, but likely.

The modern manuscript base, it has been seen, is a rich tradition with substantial integrity. In most evaluations, it has successfully preserved the original reading in most cases, which means that the idea of textual survival is, in fact, mostly correct. It is understandable, therefore, that some scholars could get lulled into the sense that *most* might as well be *all*; that the *majority textual survival* that is actually supported by the extant manuscript base might as well be *total textual survival.* As Jeffery Kloha comments, "perhaps the mass of witnesses available to us today provides a false comfort that the original reading must have survived everywhere in every case."[56] It is here, however, that we encounter the great paradox of the extant manuscript base: the majority textual survival that it establishes is the very thing that shows how likely it is that there are points of total textual corruption. It does this by providing a basis for the expectation of consistency, violations of which can therefore be identified as textual deficiencies. For example, it is only the substantial reliability of the established text that allows us to draw conclusions about an author's characteristic style or diction. As soon as that style is established, however, it immediately exposes those points of the text that deviate from that style, and that deviation in turn creates an implication that the word(s) in question did not originate with the author. The same can be said for the other intrinsic criteria traditionally employed by textual critics, such as the logical flow of the author's argument or contextual concord. These intrinsic arguments are based on an expectation of consistency that flows naturally from the majority survival of the text, but the very employment of them, as will be discussed below, has unearthed inconsistencies in the extant text that are best explained as points where the original—consistent—text has not survived. Thus it is the very reliability of the text that shows us points where it is unreliable, the survival of the text at so many points that allows us to see where it likely did not survive.

Conclusion

Total textual survival is the idea that the original text has survived at all points somewhere in the manuscript tradition, and that this survival is assured

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[56] Jeffery Kloha, review of Jan Krans, *Beyond What is Written, Nov. T.* 51 (2009):94.

by the great size of the extant manuscript base. What this position fails to reckon with, however, is the spread of secondary readings throughout the manuscript base, and the implications of manuscript loss. As has been demonstrated here, a great number of manuscripts has been lost, a much greater number, in fact, than the number that have survived. Moreover, since that loss largely occurred in the earliest generations and the transmission and survival of those that survived was random and uncontrolled, modern scholarship simply has no way of knowing how accurately the body of surviving manuscripts represent the greater whole. It is, as Kurt Aland admits,

> Like a child, who, having picked up stones or shells on the shore and brought them home, then seeks to determine from the collected specimens the kinds of stones or shells which can be found on that particular shore. This child might have had the good fortune to collect specimens of all the important kinds of stones or shells to be found on that shore, so that a thorough examination of this shore would merely add few and unimportant new kinds to those already known. It may be that, in NT textual research, we are in a position similar to that of this child. But who knows it with certainty and who can really take it for granted?[57]

While, to continue Aland's analogy, it would be tempting to think that the more stones you gathered the better chance you had of accumulating a full cross-sampling of that shore, this is actually where the analogy breaks down. For the geological processes that deposit stones on a shore are actually more predictable than the happenstance and human error that sometimes dropped readings or whole manuscripts from the tradition of transmission. All of this makes it inherently likely that despite the size of the extant manuscript base, there are some points where the original text did not survive. As Wescott and Hort confirm, "are there as a matter of fact places in which we are constrained by overwhelming evidence to recognise the existence of textual error in all extant documents? To this question we have no hesitation in replying in the affirmative."[58] The large number of surviving manuscripts can make it tempting to dismiss this fact, but it was precisely to fight the temptation to equate numbers with accuracy that the discipline of textual criticism fought

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[57] Kurt Aland, "The Significance of the Papyri for NT Research," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (ed. J. Philip Hyatt; New York: Abingdon, 1965) 330. Note also Eldon Epp who writes "In actuality, then, the random nature of the survival of manuscripts, especially the early ones, casts a cloud of uncertainty over virtually all of our discussion, for we cannot know whether what has survived is an adequate basis for the information we seek or the conclusions we contemplate" Epp, "Abundant," 80–81.

[58] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 279.

to secure its most hard-won principle: that manuscripts must be *weighed* not *counted*. In other words, the number of manuscripts that have survived does not count for much if the correct reading has not managed to survive among them. For this reason the method of conjectural emendation must be employed in order to look beyond the extant manuscript base, and recover those readings which began with the original text but did not survive in any preserved manuscript: victims of total corruption.

Excursus: CBGM and Manuscript Loss

The thought experiment undertaken above may be helpful in showing the extent of manuscript loss, but is there a way to demonstrate that loss more empirically? Fortunately that answer is now "yes," thanks to recent developments at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research in Münster, Germany. The *Coherence Based Genealogical Method* (herein CBGM) is being developed as a means to check, track and confirm the consistency of traditional text critical decisions,[59] but some of its research is applicable to the question of manuscript loss and so it is summarised here in an excursus. The method begins by stating a key distinction between the manuscripts themselves and the texts found in them. Such a distinction has long been noted in textual criticism; Metzger's introduction, for example, advises students that while the date of a manuscript is important "of even greater importance than the age of the document itself is the date of the type of text which it embodies."[60] The distinction, however, does not appear to have been observed in any thorough-going manner until CBGM. As Wachtel describes, "the state of a text in a manuscript has to be clearly distinguished from the manuscript as artefact with its palaeographical and codicological features. The relationships analyzed by CBGM are strictly those between states of text, not between manuscripts."[61] The manuscripts themselves, then, become

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[59] The method utilises a database and software interface, titled "Genealogical Queries," which, while at time of writing only completed for the Catholic Epistles, is already available for public use on the Institute's website: http://www.uni-muenster.de/INTF/. For an introduction to the theory behind the method, see either the guide available online, or published articles by Gerd Mink, "Problems of a Highly Contaminated Tradition: The New Testament" 13–86, or Klaus Wachtel, "Towards A Redefinition of External Criteria" in *Textual Variation: Theological and Social Tendencies?* (ed. D.C. Parker and H.A.G. Houghton; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008) 109–127.

[60] Metzger & Ehrman, *Text*, 302.

[61] Wachtel, "New Way."

snapshots of the New Testament text as it existed in one way, in one place, at one time. We may not be able to discern actual historical relationships between specific manuscripts, but we can evaluate the relationship between the states of the text that are preserved in those manuscripts.[62]

That evaluation is the focus of the first phase of CBGM, which is called *pre-genealogical coherence*. This step is based on the central axiom that "all surviving witnesses are related to each other and there is *coherence* within the entire tradition."[63] In practice what this means is that, thanks to a database at the Institute based on full digital transcriptions, the variants of any one manuscript can now be fully compared with every other manuscript in order to arrive at an accurate percentage of the amount of agreement between them. Thus, for example, codex Sinaiticus 01 and codex Alexandrinus 02 are found to agree with each other on 2557 of the 2999 variants they both contain in the Catholic Epistles. CBGM, therefore, describes these two texts as having a pre-genealogical coherence of 85.262 %; or in other words, whatever the historical relationship between Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus as manuscripts, the texts they preserve are 85.262 % related. Such an evaluation can be carried out for every manuscript, subsequently allowing us for the first time to chart thoroughly the relationships between the extant witnesses, tracing for each text which other texts are more closely related to it and which are more distantly related.[64] As Wachtel describes: "this means that for each manuscript of the tradition we can nominate others that agree closely with it … There can be no doubt about the existence of coherence between states of text that have survived to our day."[65]

This concept of pre-genealogical coherence becomes applicable to the question of manuscript loss and textual survival when we compare the amount of agreement between existing witnesses. Before that comparison can be made, however, there is another foundational principle that must

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[62] It should be noted, however, that though a distinction is maintained between the manuscripts and the text in the manuscripts, the traditional manuscript names are still used in the discussion, simply because there is no other practical way to refer to the text in a given manuscript. As Wachtel notes, "strict terminological consistency, however, would be awkward in this respect, because both state of text and manuscript are indicated by the same Gregory-Aland number," "Redefinition," 113 n. 9.

[63] Mink, "Problems," 32.

[64] It should also be noted that the method incorporates a user-adjustable filter that sets the sensitivity of what is called the "connectivity" of the variants. This filter is used to mitigate the false inflation of agreement caused by cases where the same reading arose by co-incidence more than once in multiple manuscripts.

[65] Wachtel, "New Way."

be understood: scribes tended to copy their exemplars. This may, at first, sound like a truism but it is actually a striking assertion. In recent years it has been common to attribute to scribes invasive textual modification of the type that would normally fall more under the purview of an editor.[66] In contrast, this principle holds that such conceptual changes were exceptional, and as a general rule scribes sought simply to copy their exemplars as accurately as possible. Wachtel, for example, sees this conclusion as flowing naturally from the relatively high percentages of agreement, or coherence, between the majority of extant witness; in other words, scribes must have *meant* to copy their exemplars accurately because, on the whole, *they did*. He writes "the high degree of coherence can be explained only by the serious and on the whole successful efforts of the scribes to copy their exemplars as carefully as possible."[67] The corollary of this principle is that manuscript variation, or corruption as it is often called, accumulated slowly. From one generation of copying to another, usually only a small number of variations occurred.[68] It is here that pre-genealogical coherence becomes relevant to the question of textual survival: as a matter of logic, if variation accumulated slowly in small steps then manuscripts with a high rate of agreement must have only a few steps between them, while manuscripts with a low rate of agreement must have many steps between them. Thus, for example, if the percentage of agreement between manuscript *A* and manuscript *B* is 99.9%, then we can conclude that *A* and *B* are closely related and, by implication, that there were very few intermediary copies between *A* and *B*. They might, in fact, be first generation relatives. On the other hand, if the agreement between *A* and *B* was found to be only 82%, then we could conclude that while they

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[66] The most well known example being Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (New York: Oxford, 1993), but another example would be Wayne Kannaday, *Apologetic Discourse and the Scribal Tradition* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004) and also, in a different way, David Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[67] Wachtel, "New Way." David Parker has offered qualified and limited confirmation of this premise through his comparison of some directly related later manuscripts, cf. *Introduction*, 135 ff.

[68] One important caveat, the phrases "accumulated slowly" and "only a small number of variations" here must be understood relative to natural development of the New Testament text already discussed above. For example, for the untrained scribes of the earliest years "a small number" would not be as small as for the professional scribes of later centuries. Thus, while different stages of the text's development featured different rates of variation, no one age could be said to have been a free-for-all on uncontrolled variation, and when considered broadly over the entire course of the text's history, the maxim remains true that scribes tended to copy their exemplars.

are related, they are more distantly related, and many intermediary texts existed in between them. What if, however, the 82 % agreement of *B* with *A* was actually the highest of any of the surviving witnesses, and no extant text could be found that agreed with *A* more than 82 %? In such a case we would have to conclude that, while only a distant relative, *B* is the closest *surviving* relative of *A*, which means that all of the more closely related intermediary relatives must have been lost. The principle, therefore, must be this: a lower level of agreement between a manuscript and its closest surviving relative implies a higher number of lost intermediary relatives.

Given this principle, what can we conclude about the surviving witnesses of the New Testament? Simply put, the majority of *later* witnesses tend to be very closely related, meaning that for each surviving text a closely related text has also survived the transmission process and therefore not many intermediary relatives have been lost. This changes, however, when we look to the *earlier* witnesses. As will shortly be discussed in more depth, amongst the earliest witnesses the relations tend to be quite distant, and the closest surviving relative of any given witness is usually only distantly related. For example, the two oldest surviving comparable manuscripts for James,[69] ℵ Sinaiticus and B Vaticanus, have a coherence of only 90.63 % in James and 87 % overall in the Catholic epistles. This means, of course, that for the earliest witnesses a great number of intermediary relatives have been lost. As Parker agrees, "*the further back one goes, with the consequent greater loss of manuscripts, the lower the chance of having two manuscripts so closely related.*"[70] The comparatively low pre-genealogical coherence of the earliest witnesses, therefore, objectively confirms that the great majority of the earliest texts have been lost. Mink explains this in depth and deserves to be quoted at length:

> In a dense tradition it is typical of contamination that a witness shares the most of its variants with its closest relative and if it deviates from this relative the variants concerned can be found in other close relatives. In the text of James, contamination is the result of small steps. That these steps are small is visible only if the number of witnesses of the tradition that have been preserved is large. However, where the proportion of witnesses that are *not* preserved is high, contamination does not appear to be the result of small steps, as so many intermediate witnesses are missing. If the density of a tradition is very high (as it was in the middle ages from the 11th century onwards), nearly all the witnesses have very close relatives. The agreement values are typically

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[69] The two oldest manuscripts, 𝔓20 and 𝔓23, do not overlap and thus cannot be compared.
[70] Parker, *Introduction*, 140. Emphasis mine.

high, between 94% and 98%, even if the most uniform Byzantine witnesses are excluded. This implies that typically only 15–45 places of variation saw a change during the step from one preserved witness to the most closely related one that has also survived. Contamination in this context occurs in very small steps, and the steps would be even smaller if all the manuscripts had been preserved.[71]

It can be seen then how CBGM can be used to demonstrate the extent of manuscript loss. A lower level of coherence implies a greater amount of loss, and a greater amount of loss implies lower odds of total textual survival. The lower pre-genealogical coherence of the earliest witnesses, therefore, makes it *a priori* likely that not all of the original text survived the transmission process, and at some points the original reading was lost. As Mink, speaking specifically of James, concludes: "it is rather unlikely that the comparatively few manuscripts to survive from the 9th century and before are representative of the totality of the manuscripts of that time; a considerable number must have been lost."[72]

Furthermore, it was argued above that manuscript loss was concentrated on the earliest generations, and that consequently there is a gap between the original text and our earliest attainable reconstruction of it. This gap makes it difficult to know with certainty the extent to which our reconstruction actually represents the original text. Once again, this claim can be re-enforced by the results of CBGM. After establishing the pre-genealogical coherence of the witnesses, the second phase of this method evaluates what is called *genealogical coherence*. Pre-genealogical coherence indicates only that, on the basis of their high percentage of similarity, two witnesses are related. Genealogical coherence then seeks to determine, based on their disagreements, the direction of that relationship: which witness is the ancestor and which is the descendant. To accomplish this, the method begins by using standard philological arguments—the traditional canons of textual criticism such as *lectio brevior* or *lectio difficilior*—to adjudicate each and every variation unit. This allows the variant readings of each unit to be put in genealogical order, that is, which reading is thought to be the initial version, and which others are descendant from it. Thus, for example, if a variation unit has three variant readings, *A*, *B*, and *C*, and philological arguments indicate that *C* developed from *B*, and *B* developed from *A*, then the genealogical order would be *A*→*B*→*C*. Within CBGM this would be called a *local stemma*, and would be charted as follows:

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[71] Mink, "Problems," 22.
[72] Mink, "Problems," 23.

A
↓
B
↓
C

Alternatively, if both *B* and *C* were found to derive independently from *A*, the local stemma would look like this:

A
╱   ╲
B   C
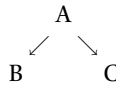
In the second example *A* precedes both *B* and *C*, so it is called a *priority reading* to both of them. In the first example, *A* is a priority reading to both *B* and *C*, while *B* is a priority reading only to *C*. These local stemmata are important because of what they logically imply about the witnesses. That is, if *A* precedes *B*, then a witness that reads *A* is likely prior to a witness that reads *B*. Thus, once a database is created of all local stemmata, CBGM proceeds to compare the disagreements of each witness against the disagreements of its closest relations and determines which has the majority of priority readings. As Wachtel explains, whichever witness possesses a "preponderance of priority readings"[73] is taken to be the ancestor, while the other is found to be a descendant.[74] For example, within the Catholic Epistles the closest surviving relative of codex Vaticanus 03 is found to be codex Bezae 04, since of 2103 variants they agree in 1878. This leaves 225 disagreements which can be used to determine genealogical direction. Of those, sixty-one are indecisive, but of the remaining 164, 116 are found to be points where 03 contains the priority reading, while 04 has the priority reading in only forty-eight cases. Thus, because it has the majority of priority readings, 03 is found to be the ancestor and 04 the descendant. Wachtel well summarises this process:

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[73] Wachtel, "Redefinition," 115.

[74] We use the terms "majority" and "preponderance," of course, because no single witness will have only priority readings in comparison to any other witness. The majority, however, indicates the dominant trend. The remaining readings are assumed to be the result of contamination from a secondary witness. In a later phase of CBGM *optimal substemma* are established which find for each witness a combination of ancestors that can account for 100% of the variants. Once all of the optimal substemma are created, CBGM will be able to offer a *global stemma* which will trace the overall genealogical flow of all New Testament witnesses.

> The basic methodological principle of the CBGM is to infer the genealogy of states of a text as preserved in the manuscripts from genealogical assessments of readings at every variant passage of that text. By assessing the readings of a variant passage in their relationship to each other we also make statements about the relationship of the manuscript texts that contain these readings. If we assert, for example, that reading x is probably the source of reading y, this implies a statement about the relationship between the states of text containing the readings.[75]

The end result is that at each variation unit a grand family tree can be constructed, much like a classical Lachmanian stemma, which traces the genealogical flow of the witnesses back to their original source. It is at this point that the genealogical coherence discovered by CBGM is able to demonstrate how the distribution of manuscript loss across the earliest centuries of textual transmission affects our ability to reconstruct the text from the surviving manuscript evidence.

In classical stemmatology a family tree is made of all the extant manuscripts in order to identify or reconstruct the text that sits at the base as the source of all others. That text is designated the archetype of the tradition, and in most cases is assumed to be the same as the lost authorial original. In a perfect world where no manuscript loss had occurred and the genealogical relationship between each manuscript was easily determined, such a stemma would flow smoothly and cohesively from all the many terminal nodes tracing backwards with increasing consolidation into intermediary nodes until finally arriving at the few main stems which connected directly to the original, perfectly reconstructed archetype. Those few main stems would surely be *few*, of course, because it is more likely than not that only a few copies would ever be made directly from the autograph, while the majority of copies would be made from those copies, or copies of those copies, or copies of those copies, and so on. Thus, to create another thought experiment, if we pretend for convenience sake that an even two copies are made from each ancestor, then the stemma would proceed as follows: the first generation after the autograph would have two stems—two separate copies made from the archetype; the second generation would have four—two descending from each of the two in the first generation; the third generation would have eight—two from each of the preceding four; the fourth generation would have sixteen, while the fifth generation would have thirty-two, and so on. It could be charted like this:

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[75] Wachtel, "Redefinition," 113.
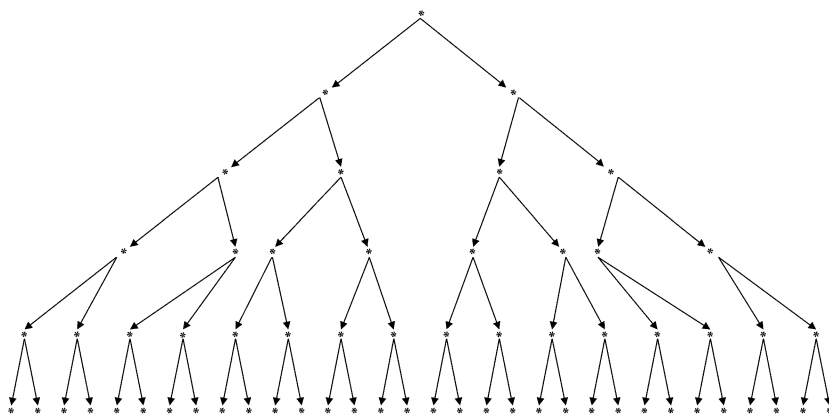
What if, however, the stemma looked like this instead?
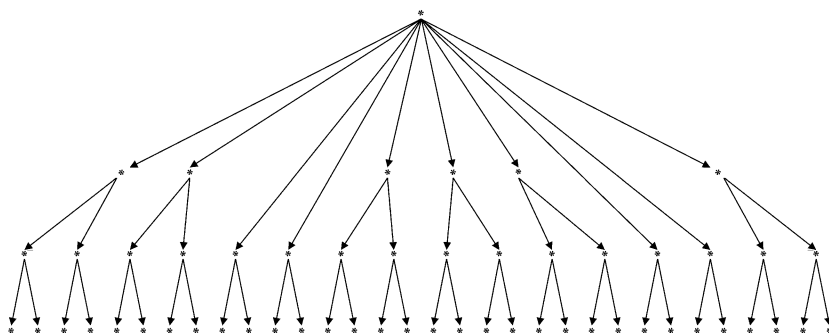
In this second example, instead of flowing into increasingly consolidated intermediary nodes, we find an abrupt level where six stems must flow directly to the reconstructed archetype as their closest surviving ancestor, and two cases where even those nodes are gone, forcing four texts from the next level to reach directly back to the archetype as well. Such a stemma would, first of all, conclusively reveal the loss of the first few generations of intermediary nodes since so many witnesses are forced to connect directly to the archetype instead of flowing gradually through intermediaries. Tellingly, it is exactly that sort of stemma that is often produced by the CBGM. Note, as one example, the coherence flow diagram for the reading ὑμῶν τῆς πίστεως (of your faith) in Jas 1:3:[76]

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[76] This image, like all CBGM data presented here, is taken with gratitude from the website of the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, http://www.uni-muenster.de/INTF/.
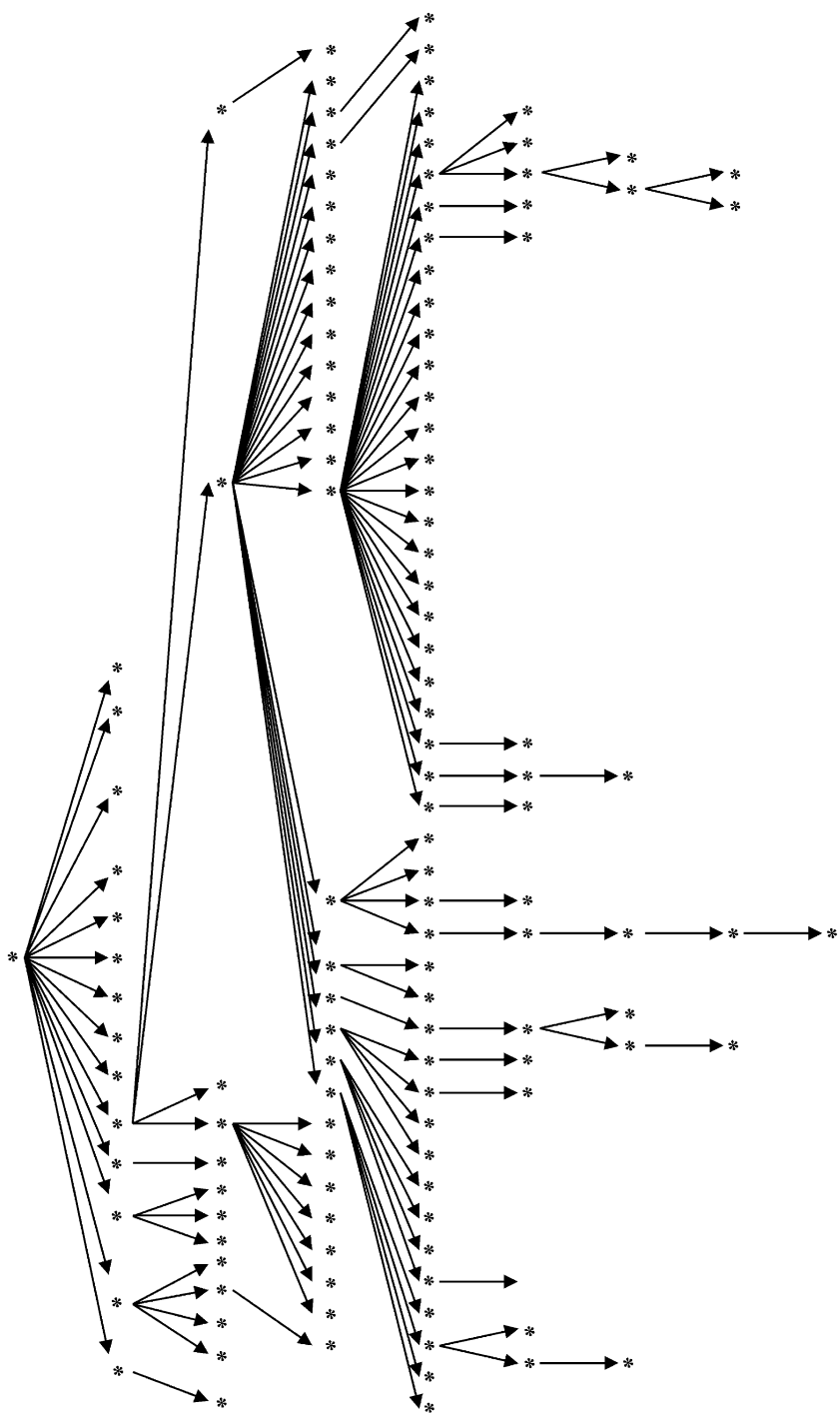
As can be seen, when the lineage of the witnesses is traced back, eighteen separate later texts can find no closer surviving relative than the reconstructed initial text itself. Notice as well how many subsequent texts have no closer surviving relative than one of those eighteen. As Mink comments, "One may wonder why so many witnesses have *A* as their most closely related potential ancestor. The reason is that the manuscript texts that would have high positions in their lists of potential ancestors are lost."[77] Thus, when we reconstruct the genealogical descent of the surviving manuscripts, it becomes apparent how the loss has affected the earliest stages of transmission. The glaring gaps in the upper levels of the stemma show how the distribution of manuscript loss was disproportionately focused on the oldest, seminal copies.

The implication of such gaps, as discussed above, is that it makes it impossible to discern with certainty whether the reconstructed archetype is the same as the original text. The stemma may show which text form likely lies at the head of the surviving witnesses, but cannot identify whether that end point is anything more than just the earliest surviving intermediary node, to which all surviving descendants are connected by force of necessity. Thus, while the stemma can lead to the best reconstruction of the archetype of the surviving tradition, the loss of so many intermediary nodes prevents it from demonstrating what the relationship is between that archetype and the original text. This means that even if the surviving manuscript tradition points uniformly to one reading, it cannot necessarily be assumed that the reading is original. The reading could instead be an early corruption that entered the tradition during the gap period, produced a significant line of offspring, and now dominates the extant manuscript base due to the loss of all alternative witnesses. It could be, in other words, a point of total textual corruption.

§ 2. *The Grass Withers*

It was December of 2001, in Lakan, Belgium, when heads of state met to discuss the continuing formation of the European Union. Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel at one point announced that "a turning point in the

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[77] Gerd Mink, "Contamination, Coherence and Coincidence in Textual Transmission" in Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes, eds., *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament* (Atlanta: SBL, 2011) 168.

history of the European Union" was about to be reached as they dispatched the new European Rapid-Reaction force to pursue peacekeeping duties in Afghanistan. Amazingly, when informed that the force did not yet exist, an undeterred Michel asserted that the force "must declare itself operational without such a declaration being based on any true capability."[78] One might think that there could be no topic more distant from textual criticism than the deployment of a military force, even a non-existent one, but in fact the foreign minister conveniently demonstrates a style of thinking that is strangely similar to a second reason that some textual critics reject conjectural emendation: the doctrine of theological preservation. The essential premise of conjectural emendation is that there are some points in the text where the correct reading has been entirely lost from the manuscript tradition; that the text is completely corrupt at that point. The doctrine of preservation, however, declares that God has supernaturally protected the text, preventing any part of it from being totally lost.

Many academics would resist the insinuation that their conclusions were influenced by such theological beliefs and deny that their thinking was based upon anything but facts and evidence. As Stephen Jay Gould explains though, such peripheral influence is quite common amongst all kinds of scientists:

> An old tradition in science proclaims that changes in theory must be driven by observation. Since most scientists believe this simplistic formula, they assume that their own shifts in interpretation only record their better understanding of newly discovered facts. Scientists therefore tend to be unaware of their own mental impositions upon the world's messy and ambiguous factuality. Such mental impositions arise from a variety of sources, including psychological disposition and social context.[79]

Textual critics are no exception to this. As even Westcott and Hort observed, "No individual mind can ever act with perfect uniformity, or free itself completely from its own idiosyncrasies: the danger of unconscious caprice is inseparable from personal judgement."[80] Theology has long been a powerful force in critical biblical studies. Rather than denying that influence[81] we would do better to face it openly. The role of theology in our thinking should be freely studied, honestly explored, and critically evaluated. Then, having reckoned

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[78] *apud* Robert Kagan, "A Postcard From Belgium" *The Washington Post*, December 21, 2001.

[79] Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996) 406.

[80] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 17.

[81] Epp has echoed this in his own way, decrying those who would hold textual criticism as a "theologically safe" discipline, cf. Eldon Jay Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism" *HTR* 92(1999):280.

with our theology, we will be able to ensure that it plays a constructive role in our work: helping us to understand the facts, rather than hiding them from us.

What then of the theology of preservation? A historical summary is a good place to begin. As John Brogan explains, the idea of divine preservation arose primarily in response to the development of the field of textual criticism: as manuscripts began to be compared and critical editions published, the differences between them led many Christians to wonder how the bible could continue to function as a single source of authority. He writes: "the presence of textual variants caused some conservative Christians to contend for a 'God-protected' text. These Christians argued that since the autographs were inspired and without error, then God must have faithfully preserved these autographs throughout the history of the church ..."[82] However it was in 1646, Daniel Wallace documents,[83] that the doctrine was formally developed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It reads:

> The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which, at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and, *by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages*, are therefore authentical; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.[84]

Preservation found one of its leading advocates in John Burgon, Dean of Chichester. He laboured long in defence of the doctrine, writing:

> There exists no reason for supposing that the Divine Agent, who in the first instance thus gave to mankind the scriptures of Truth, straightway abdicated His office; took no further care of His work; abandoned those precious writings to their fate ... all down the ages the sacred writings must needs have been God's peculiar care; that the Church under Him has watched over them with intelligence and skill; has recognized which copies exhibit a fabricated, which an honestly transcribed text; has generally sanctioned the one, and generally disallowed the other.[85]

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[82] John Brogan, "Can I Have Your Autograph? Uses and Abuses of Textual Criticism in Formulating an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture" in *Evangelicals & Scripture* (ed. Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguelez and Dennis L. Okholm; Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 97.

[83] Daniel Wallace, "Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament Textual Criticism" *Grace Theological Journal* 12.1 (1992):42.

[84] The Westminster Confession of Faith 1.8, [Mar 13, 2009], http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs, Emphasis mine.

[85] John W. Burgon, *The Traditional Text of the Gospels*, (ed. Edward Miller; London: George Bell and Sons, 1896) 11–12, *apud* William Combs, "The Preservation of Scripture" *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall, 2000):5.

In modern times, belief in preservation finds broad support amongst conservatives, particularly Evangelicals.[86] One recent example can be found in a popular lay-level text by Greenlee:

> It would be very dangerous to say as some people do that in certain passages the manuscripts agree but the original text must have been different and was lost in the process of copying … We must trust that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the original text was able to protect it through the centuries of hand-written copying.[87]

Clearly the doctrine of preservation stands in defiant opposition to the practice of conjectural emendation, but upon what does such a belief stand?

The foundation of this doctrine, it must be understood, is entirely theological. It does not merely assert that the original text happens to have been preserved as a matter of history, but makes the theological claim that God necessarily preserved these scriptures, one way or the other preventing complete corruption at every point.[88] The basis for this belief is two-fold: as a logical deduction from the doctrine of inspiration, and as an inductive conclusion from multiple biblical texts. The latter argument usually consists of collecting biblical verses which speak of God's word not being "broken" or "perishing" or other such language.[89] William Combs writes: "we are told that the Bible actually teaches the doctrine of 'infallible' preservation of the Scriptures. Many texts are commonly cited, including Psalm 12:6–7; 119:89; 119:152; 119:160; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 5:17–18; John 10:35; Matthew 24:35, and 1 Peter 1:23–25."[90] The argument from inspiration follows the logic that if God inspired the scriptures in order to deliver divine revelation to humanity, then following through on that goal would demand preserving that revelation from corruption. What good, they ask, would it be to give the scriptures only

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[86] See survey in Combs, "Preservation." Preservation was also reaffirmed in the 1976 *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,* which reads "The verdict of this science, however, is that the Hebrew and Greek text appears to be amazingly well preserved, so that we are amply justified in affirming, with the Westminster Confession, a singular providence of God in this matter and in declaring that the authority of Scripture is in no way jeopardized …" III.E. ([March 14, 2009], http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Chicago_Statement_on_Biblical_Inerrancy).

[87] Harold Greenlee, *The Text of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008) 36.

[88] It should be further stressed here that while there are some textual critics who hold both a historical position of textual survival and a theological doctrine of divine preservation, there is no necessary correlation between the two.

[89] Combs, "Preservation," 12 ff., has an excellent discussion of the problems inherent in assuming that the written text of the scriptures can be absolutely equated with the theological concept "word of God", or that "word of God" can be assumed every time there is a reference to God "speaking" or having a "word," etc.

[90] Combs, "Preservation," 11.

to let them be lost?[91] We have just seen this connection in Greenlee, who wrote that "we must trust that the same Holy Spirit who inspired the original text was able to protect it through the centuries of hand-written copying,"[92] but another interesting (reverse) example comes from Bart Ehrman, who describes how he lost his faith in the doctrine:

> This became a problem for my view of inspiration, for I came to realize that it would have been no more difficult for God to preserve the words of scripture than it would have been for him to inspire them in the first place. If he wanted his people to have his words, surely he would have given them to them (and possibly even given them the words in a language they could understand, rather than Greek and Hebrew). The fact that we don't have the words surely must show, I reasoned, that he did not preserve them for us. And if he didn't perform that miracle, there seemed to be no reason to think that he performed the earlier miracle of inspiring those words.[93]

It can be seen then how the doctrine of preservation of the scriptures is based on both an appeal to the scriptures themselves and an inference made from the doctrine of inspiration, which of course is also based on an appeal to the scriptures themselves.[94] What this means, however, is that the basis of this belief about the scriptures is entirely internal. It is not established on the basis of external facts or evidence, but asserted and accepted independently of such facts or evidence.

Proponents of preservation believe that the facts of the New Testament text do support their doctrine, but this support is incidental: the doctrine, for them, stands on its own strength. As Combs describes: "those ... who affirm a doctrine of preservation, also believe that the historical evidence demonstrates the preservation of Scripture, but add that this preservation is a theological necessity—Scripture must be preserved because Scripture itself promises its own preservation."[95] What would happen, however, if the evidence was shown not to support their doctrine? Would the doctrine be

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[91] Combs quotes Edward Hills: "If the doctrine of the *divine inspiration* of the Old and New Testament Scriptures is a true doctrine, the doctrine of the *providential preservation* of the Scriptures must also be a true doctrine ... If He gave the Scriptures to His Church by inspiration ..., then it is obvious that He would not allow this revelation to disappear or undergo any alteration of its fundamental character," "Preservation," 10–11.

[92] Greenlee, *Text*, 36.

[93] Ehrman, *Misquoting*, 11.

[94] Cf. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), who writes about the "Fact of Inspiration" that "We begin by noting that throughout Scripture there is the claim or even the assumption of its divine origin ..." 226.

[95] Combs, "Preservation," 7.

held in defiance of the facts? It looks like that might be the case. As Herman Bavinck argues in his seminal *Reformed Dogmatics*:

> Furthermore, the witness of Scripture is plain and clear and even recognized as such by its opponents, but the views about the phenomena of Scripture arise from prolonged historical-critical research and change in varying ways depending on the differing positions of the critics. Theologians who want to arrive at a doctrine of Scripture based on such investigations in fact oppose their scientific insight to the teaching of Scripture about itself. But by that method one never really arrives at a doctrine of Scripture ... This can, in the nature of the case, be built only on Scripture's own witness concerning itself.[96]

Similarly, the Evangelical George Mavrodes writes that:

> For a majority, at any rate, of the theologians we are considering operate within a framework in which only the Bible is recognized as authoritative within, the field of Christian doctrine. Within that context, then, no doctrine should be formulated in such a way that its truth depends upon any extra-Biblical fact or alleged fact. The formal way of putting this is to say that no doctrine should entail a proposition whose truth cannot be established by the teaching of Scripture.[97]

Before we entirely sacrifice truth on the altar of doctrine, however, it is worth investigating what the facts actually are.

Broadly speaking, the belief in theological preservation may be sub-grouped into two types: the mainstream and the minority. The minority belief presents an extreme form of the doctrine and its acceptance is not widespread, particularly in academic circles. Nevertheless, if only as an exercise in *reductio ad absurdum*, an investigation and critique of it will prove helpful for the subsequent evaluation of the mainstream version. The minority position believes that the scriptures have been preserved in one specific text or manuscript. Specifically, they believe that the *textus receptus* is God's preserved text. As is well known, in a bid to beat to press the Complutensian Polyglot of Cardinal Ximénes de Cisneros, Erasmus in 1516 rushed the publication of the first edition of his Greek New Testament, basing it only on a handful of incomplete Byzantine minuscules. Despite the poor critical quality, the price and portability of his text made it a commercial success and soon many subsequent editions were published. In Paris an editor named Stephanus used Erasmus' edition as the basis for his own,

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[96] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics—Prolegomena* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003) 424.

[97] George I. Mavrodes, "The Inspiration of the Autographs" *The Evangelical Quarterly* 41.1 (Jan-Mar, 1969):22.

and by 1551 had published four revisions. Shortly thereafter Theodore Beza, following Stephanus, published his own edition, which was then used by the Elzevir publishing house[98] as the basis for their edition. In 1633 they published another version, the preface of which boasted that "the reader has the text now received by all." This "received text," or *textus receptus* in Latin (herein TR), thus stands as a direct descendant of the text that Erasmus originally hurried into production. That dubious lineage, however, does not stop TR advocates from believing that it alone is the one text that has been providentially preserved by God. To be fair, this likely has less to do with Erasmus' skill as an editor than with the fact that the TR represents the text used by translators in 1611 to create the King James Bible, and for that reason proponents of this position are known colloquially as "The King James Only movement." Edward Hills argues for the doctrine in this way:

> It would have been passing strange if God had guided His people in regard to the New Testament canon but had withheld from them His divine assistance in the matter of the New Testament text. This would mean that Bible believing Christians today could have no certainty concerning the New Testament text but would be obliged to rely on the hypotheses of modern, naturalistic critics. But God in His mercy did not leave His people to grope after the True New Testament Text. Through the leading of the Holy Spirit He guided them to preserve it during the manuscript period. ... It is upon this *Textus Receptus* that the King James Version and the other classic Protestant translations are based.[99]

While this style of thinking appears to be confined to the remote extremes of conservative Christianity, its advocates are vocal enough[100] that some scholars have felt compelled to issue treatments, such as D.A. Carson who published *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism*.[101] Purposes here, however, do not demand a full engagement with the TR/KJV position. Instead, all that is necessary is to show that it is impossible for the position to fulfill its stated goal of offering the one specific text in which God preserved the scriptures. This is easy to do, because in truth neither the TR nor the KJV offers a single specific text. Erasmus, who began the TR tradition, himself published five different versions. Which of those was God's preserved text?

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[98] Note: The Elzevirs were not brothers, as is often said, but uncle and nephew.

[99] Edward F. Hills, *The King James Version Defended!* (Christian Research Press, 1973), 124.

[100] Literally in fact: it was told to this author that during the late 1990s KJV Only proponents made a habit of calling the Muenster Institute for New Testament Textual Research in the middle of the night and leaving anonymous messages warning "Bruce Metzger is a liar! Bruce Metzger is going to hell!"

[101] D.A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978).

Stephanus followed that with four versions, Beza offered ten. Even if you confine the preserved text to the TR published by the Elzevirs, that moniker was applied to their work starting with the second of seven versions! In fact, the Trinitarian Bible Society, which states as its purpose the exclusive promotion of the TR,[102] concedes that there are at least thirty versions of the TR published, no two of which are exactly the same.[103] The situation gets no better if one expands the focus to the Byzantine tradition as a whole, adopting as some do a "majority text," since even within the Byzantine manuscripts there is sometimes no clear majority. As Wallace notes:

> In the Byzantine text, there are hundreds of splits where no clear majority emerges. One scholar recently found 52 variants within the majority text in the spaces of two verses. In such places how are majority text advocates to decide what is original?[104]

Even the KJV, the final focus point of so many in the King James Only moment, defies any singular identification. As Combs writes:

> There has never been one KJV, even in 1611. When the KJV was published, there were actually two printed editions in 1611, with 216 variations in the biblical text. These are commonly called the "He" and "She" Bibles, from their respective readings in Ruth 3:15 ("he went into the city" and "she went into the city"). So if the 1611 KJV is without error, which one is it? And since 1611 the KJV has gone through many changes so that no modern-day Christian uses the 1611 KJV. Even modern printings of the KJV differ among themselves.[105]

Clearly the TR/KJV tradition is incapable of offering any one text that could fulfil the doctrinal ideal of a single preserved version of the scriptures. The most that the proponents of preservation could do therefore would be to argue that God preserved the scriptures across a multiplicity of different texts. This, however, then morphs into the mainstream version of the doctrine of preservation: that God preserved the scriptures in the totality of extant manuscripts.

Accepting that the manuscript tradition of the New Testament is too diverse to allow for any one text alone to represent the divinely preserved scriptures, the mainstream manifestation of the doctrine of preservation argues only that the original text has been preserved cumulatively in the totality of extant copies. The final conclusion of Combs offers a good example of this position:

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[102] Cf. the organization's website: [March 14, 2009] http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org.
[103] Documented in Combs, "Preservation," 33.
[104] Wallace, "Inspiration," 37.
[105] Combs, "Preservation," 34.

> As Warfield reminded us long ago, inspiration was an immediate activity of God that "produced the plenarily inspired Bible, every word of which is the Word of God." Preservation, on the other hand, was a mediate activity of God that "produced the safe transmission of that Word, but not without signs of human fallibility here and there in several copies." The indisputable evidence from manuscripts, printed text, and versions proves that the autographic text has not been preserved in any single one of them, but in their totality. Only by careful examination of the preserved documents can the most accurate form of the Scriptures be identified.[106]

While this version of preservation right away seems more reasonable, given that it admits the reality of textual variation and allows for the practice of modern textual criticism, in truth it differs from the first version only by degree. The first version depended on God asserting a 100 % protective force on the New Testament text, protecting it completely from corruption. This second version still counts on God exerting a protective influence and differs only in that it allows for that protection to be something less than 100 %. God may have let all of the manuscript copies experience corruption, and he might even have allowed the loss of a great number of those copies, but he stopped short of letting the original text be lost completely at any point. Rather, at every point of the text he exerted just enough power to make sure that the correct reading survived somewhere in the extant manuscript base. Thus, while it downgrades the level of divine preservation from "complete" to "adequate," this belief nevertheless claims that God himself supernaturally intervened in the transmission process.

How can such a theological claim be evaluated? A full engagement with it is beyond this project, but we can start by critiquing its own internal consistency. This doctrine of preservation, as discussed above, is based on a two-fold theological premise: that it is the logical corollary of inspiration, and that it is promised by scripture itself. Does scripture actually promise any such thing? Of interpretations and types of interpretations there is, of course, no end, but it is significant that even among those who accept such a systematic model of biblical interpretation there is no consensus on this question. Wallace examined all of the passages normally cited as the basis of preservation and concluded that none of them taught any such doctrine. As he writes:

> the major scriptural texts alleged to support the doctrine of preservation need to be reexamined [sic.] in a new light ... It seems that a better interpretation of all these texts is that they are statements concerning either divine ethical

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[106] Combs, "Preservation," 44.

principles (i.e., moral laws which cannot be violated without some kind of consequences) or the promise of a fulfilled prophecy. The assumption that most evangelicals make about the doctrine of preservation needs to be scrutinized in light of this exegetical construct.[107]

Even Combs, who believes in this version of preservation, concludes that most of the passages usually used to support the doctrine do not really support it. He examined nine passages and found that, in his interpretation, only two "strongly imply a doctrine of preservation."[108] However we interpret scripture then, it seems fair to conclude that, at very least, it does not offer any unequivocal promise of its own preservation.

If not promised explicitly by scripture, is preservation a logical corollary of inspiration? Proponents argue that the purposes of inspiration demand subsequent preservation, for what good would it do to give revelation but then allow it to be lost? The very reception of revelation therefore implies ensured access to that revelation. The truth, however, is that this implication cannot be borne out, for even if preservation did occur, access has still been lost. As is well known, of all the extant manuscripts no two are identical, which means that no one manuscript is completely free of corruption. Prior to the invention of the printing press, however, individual manuscripts were all that any one community would ever have access to, and even after the printing press most published editions were based on only a small number of manuscripts, not the totality. The notion therefore that God preserved the text within the totality of the manuscripts fails to be meaningful since for most of the New Testament's history no one had even potential access to that totality. As Combs admits, "at least for 1500 years, once the autographs had perished and before the age of printing, no one had access to an error-free Bible."[109] Further, this truth did not change with the advent of critical editions. Most critical editions, including the popular UBS and Nestle-Aland texts, are based only on a select group of commonly cited witnesses.[110] That group may be comparatively large and well representative of the various text types, but it is still not the totality. It is only with the recent publication of the first volumes of the *Editio Critica Maior* that humanity has begun to have access to anything close to the totality of the manuscripts, but as it turns out this only compounds the problems for the doctrine of preservation. As the

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[107] Wallace, "Inspiration," 42.
[108] Combs, "Preservation," 26. To be fair, he also concluded that two other passages *almost* implied it.
[109] Combs, "Preservation," 32.
[110] Cf. the Introduction of the NA27, 45*-49*.

number of manuscripts cited increases, so increases the number of variant units that need resolution. For example, in the NA27 the first verse of James has only one point of variation with only one variant reading; in the ECM that same verse contains four points of variation with a combined total of eleven variant readings. The divine preservation of the original text somewhere in the totality quickly becomes a moot point unless it is accompanied by some equally divine way to identify that preserved text at each point of variation. Anything less would be the divine equivalent of saving the text only to hide it in a textual hall of mirrors. As G.D. Kilpatrick asked:

> if 'some special Providence' has watched over the text of the NT to ensure that at every point the original form of our text has survived among some or the other witnesses … we might wonder why this Providence has not exerted itself a little further to ensure that at each point of variation the original reading would be manifest and immediately demonstrable.[111]

If preservation is the corollary of anything then, it is the assumption that inspiration necessitates access. The conclusion presented by the facts, though, is that if God did inspire the text, he manifestly did not ensure continued access. While this is not necessarily an obstacle for a doctrine of inspiration, it is a fatal problem for any doctrine of preservation based upon that assumption.

    Is there a better way to think about the theology of textual transmission? Instead of theories of divine preservation, theology should better appreciate what might be called the human side of the miracle. The doctrine of preservation in both its forms was found to be internally inconsistent. The more troubling problem, however, was that as a doctrine it was internally established, standing independent of external facts or evidence. As Bavink, for example, argued, the only proper way to build a doctrine of scripture is on "Scripture's own witness concerning itself."[112] The European rapid reaction force was declared operational regardless of its true operational capability in order to support the ideal of a united Europe. In the same way, preservationists declare that the text has been preserved regardless of the actual state of the text in order to support the theology that they have already built. This is, to say the least, an epistemology turned on its head. As articulated in *Providentissimus Deus*, theology must be built in accord with external evidence, not in defiance of it:

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[111] Kilpatrick, "Conjectural", 99.
[112] Bavinck, *Reformed*, 424.

Let them loyally hold that God, the Creator and Ruler of all things, is also the Author of the Scriptures—and that therefore nothing can be proved either by physical science or archaeology which can really contradict the Scriptures. If, then, apparent contradiction be met with, every effort should be made to remove it. Judicious theologians and commentators should be consulted as to what is the true or most probable meaning of the passage in discussion, and the hostile arguments should be carefully weighed. Even if the difficulty is after all not cleared up and the discrepancy seems to remain, the contest must not be abandoned; truth cannot contradict truth, and we may be sure that some mistake has been made either in the interpretation of the sacred words, or in the polemical discussion itself.[113]

In other words, if no two truths can ultimately contradict, then a theology that disagrees with empirical evidence is not a higher truth; it is simply an untruth. It behoves theology then to be subject to empirical evaluation. As Wallace explained more colloquially,

If our faith cannot stand up to the scrutiny of rigorous investigation, then our beliefs need to be adjusted. But if we always jerk back the fideistic reins when the empirical horse goes too fast for us, then the charges of obscurantism, scholasticism, even pietistic dribble are well deserved.[114]

A doctrine of scripture cannot be built outside of the external evidence, which means that a theology of textual transmission cannot be formulated outside of a reckoning with the actual state of the text. Anything less might be a doctrine, but it would not be truth. Even St. Paul agreed that Christian belief must be subject to empirical falsification, writing to the Corinthians that "if Christ has not been raised … then your faith is in vain … and we are of all people most to be pitied."[115]

What then are the facts of the state of the New Testament text? As demonstrated above, the fact is that over the course of history we have lost more New Testament manuscripts than we have saved. The degree and nature of the variation found in existing manuscripts indicates that a great number of alternative readings were surely lost along with those lost manuscripts. That the surviving readings can be traced all the way back to the initial text cannot always be demonstrated with certainty, because the manuscripts that do survive date almost exclusively after the earliest period of uncontrolled

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[113] Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* (*On the Study of Holy Scripture*) 23 [February 20, 2010], http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_lxiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus_en.html.

[114] Wallace, "Inspiration," 49.

[115] 1 Cor 15:12–29.

copying when the majority of corruptions were first occurring. These facts make it *a priori* likely that at least some of the readings from the initial text did not survive the transmission process and have, so far, been lost from the New Testament. While text critical scholarship has been able to demonstrate that at most points of variation the initial text has probably survived, as this present project will show there are nevertheless some points of the text where this is likely not the case. At these points both the deficient nature of the text and the uncertainty of its interpreters points to the fact that the possibility of loss has there become a probability. All of this means that if we assume that God did inspire the text, the truth must be that he subsequently chose to let it sink into a sea of variation and loss. Rather than denying this, a constructive theology would seize the opportunity to ask why God would choose to allow this state of affairs to arise, and what it might indicate about his intentions. What does it show about his intent for the New Testament text, and how he intended that text to be manifested among its readers? One natural conclusion could be that he intended to have it recovered by textual critics, and at points where the original has been lost, through the art of conjectural emendation.

There are surely some who would bridle at this conclusion, bristling at the notion that God might surrender the integrity of the text to something as uncertain as textual criticism, never mind something as ethereal as conjectural emendation.[116] As Hills was quoted earlier, "this would mean that Bible believing Christians today could have no certainty concerning the New Testament text but would be obliged to rely on the hypotheses of modern, naturalistic critics."[117] What such thinking reveals, however, is a fundamental confusion of divine truth and human certainty: the existence of the former simply does not necessarily imply the latter. As Wallace notes:

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[116] This is also expressed in the thought that the authority of scripture demands it be based in external, written documents rather than something as subjective and ethereal as conjecture. that position, often expressed today, can be seen as early as Bentley, who, despite using conjecture extensively in his classical work, wrote in his Proposals for his NT edition that "The author is very sensible, that in the sacred writings there is no place for conjectures or emendations ... He declares, therefore, that he does not alter one letter in the text without the authorities subjoined in the notes" Arthur Ayres Ellis, ed., Bentleii critica sacra: Notes on the Greek and Latin Text of the New Testament, Extracted from the Bentley MSS. In Trinity College Library, with the Abbé Rulotta's Collation of the Vatican Codex B, A Speciman of Bentley's Intended Edition, and an Account of His Collations (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1862) xvii.

[117] Hills, *King James*, 124.

the quest for certainty is not the same as a quest for truth. There is a subtle but important distinction between the two … At bottom this quest for certainty, though often masquerading as a legitimate epistemological inquiry, is really a presuppositional stance, rooted in psychological insecurity.[118]

Kenton Sparks, in a provocative work, has argued that this problem is more common among conservative Christians and affects more than just their doctrine of scripture, but underlies their very understanding of knowledge:

> The grave error of modern humanity, says Leslie Newbigin, is its Cartesian demand for this god-like grasp on the truth. But this is an empty pursuit that ultimately paves the way for Nietzsche's nihilistic antirealism. If human knowledge must be incorrigible and indubitable to count *as* knowledge, then we will never have it …
>
> So long as we mistakenly suppose that human beings need and can achieve this kind of absolute certainty, we will always believe that incorrigible certainty is both necessary and available in a book written by God … It is perhaps more than a little myopic to demand inerrant theological knowledge from the same God who has allowed most of humanity to live and die without any Bible at all.[119]

Or, we might add, has allowed most of the manuscripts of that bible to perish, taking their variant readings with them. The truth of the New Testament, then, is that providential loss has necessarily entrusted the text to the efforts of textual scholars. This may result in some uncertainty, or, in the cases of conjectural emendation, much uncertainty, but uncertainty is the inevitable reality. God's inspiration of the text was a miracle that he worked through humanity. However, as Thomas Aquinas is often quoted, grace does not overcome nature but works *through* it.[120] Even Warfield agreed that any divine role in the production of the scriptures would not supplant human authorship, writing that "the scriptures … [were] given through men after a fashion which does no violence to their nature as men, and constitutes the book also men's book as well as God's …"[121] The miracle of the text, therefore, is also a human miracle, and appreciating that means appreciating the inherent human uncertainty. As Zuntz advised, "once the human character of the

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[118] Wallace, "Inspiration," 38.

[119] Kenton Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 54, 258.

[120] This common quotation appears to be a simplification of a common Aquinas refrain. He uses variations of it at least eleven times in various contexts, e.g. the reply to objection 2 in ST Ia, q. 1, a. 8.

[121] *apud* A.N.S. Lane, "B.B. Warfield On the Humanity of Scripture," *Vox Evangelica* 16(1986): 77.

authors is conceded, the critic must expect, at one point or another, to meet with its effects."[122] This human uncertainty should be no burden, for it is hardly a state of affairs; as St. Paul wrote some 2000 years ago, "now we know only in part ... now we see only in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I am fully known."[123]

§ 3. *The Late, Great Original Text*

A third and comparatively recent cause for the rejection of conjectural emendation by some New Testament critics is an underestimation both of the necessity of recovering the earliest text and of the importance of that task for the purpose of textual criticism. As Eldon Epp narrates, in times past many scholars simply assumed that the task of textual criticism was to recover the original text of the New Testament.[124] Indeed, when Westcott and Hort published their seminal edition in 1881, its title was the humble yet telling *The New Testament in the Original Greek*. In recent years, however, New Testament critics have begun to join their Hebrew Bible colleagues[125] in questioning the ideal of an original text as a valid goal for textual criticism.

This emerging trend that David Parker has called "narrative textual criticism"[126] really began at least as early as 1904 when Kirsopp Lake connected the alteration of the text with the social and theological history of the church: "we need to know ... what the early Church thought [a passage] meant and how it altered its wording in order to emphasize its meaning."[127] Ten years later J. Rendel Harris argued along similar lines when, in homage to Westcott

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[122] Günther Zuntz "The Critic Correcting the Author" in *Opuscula selecta* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972) 269.

[123] 1 Cor 13:9–12.

[124] Epp, "Multivalence", 248–254.

[125] As Epp notes, Hebrew Bible scholars carried this line of thought much farther and much earlier than New Testament critics. This was likely by force of necessity, given the comparative size, antiquity, and conflated complexity of both the Hebrew Bible text and extant manuscript base. For discussion, see Emmanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). Also note a recent presentation of this perspective in John Van Seters' *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

[126] *Apud* Eldon Jay Epp, "The Oxyrhynchus New Testament Papyri: 'Not Without Honor Except in Their Hometown'?" *JBL* 123/1(2004):9.

[127] *Apud* Eldon Jay Epp, "Issues in New Testament Textual Criticism," in *Rethinking New Testament Criticism* (David Alan Black, ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 52. I am indebted to Epp's summary for much of the chronology of this section.

and Hort, he offered the dictum that "knowledge … of church history should precede final judgement as to readings."[128] It was not until 1993, however, that the idea of treating textual variants not as obstacles to the singular goal of restoring the original text but as windows into theological history began to get traction after the publication of Bart Ehrman's *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.[129] Shortly after in 1997 David Parker published *The Living Text of the Gospels*[130] where he takes this idea to the next level. Essentially he argues that using the variants of a text to reconstruct the history of those who wrote that text is not only a possible goal for text criticism, but is in fact the best goal. Recovering the original text is, at least in some cases, a fruitless endeavour given the arguably equal strength (or perhaps equal weakness) of the variant options. Thus, rather than seeking a single and static *original text*, textual critics are encouraged to chase after the eponymous *living text*, which ebbed and flowed with the rise and fall of the early Christians whose text it was.

In his 2003 presidential address to the Society of Biblical literature, Eldon Epp gave his endorsement to the new narrative approach.[131] His own contribution, however, came four years earlier in the provocative article "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism."[132] In that more philosophical discussion, Epp outlined some of the conceptual obstacles merely to defining the "original text," never mind recovering it. First there are questions of preceding text forms. In composite documents like the synoptic gospels, for example, which form of a given pericope counts as original? The version that was taken up by the first gospel author, the version as it was redacted by a second gospel author, or perhaps one of the versions that circulated prior to being used by any gospel author? A second set of obstacles stem from what is traditionally known as the autograph stage: the text as it existed during the composition process. Here too the definition of the original text can be difficult to pinpoint. If the author dictated to an amanuensis, for example, what constitutes the original: the oral dictation, or whatever was written by the amanuensis? Or, if multiple copies were made so that the composition could be a circular letter, which one is the original? The first copy? The second? Finally, if the author or the amanuensis made a mistake in the composition, which is the

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[128] Epp, *Issues*, 53.
[129] Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*.
[130] Parker, *Living Text*.
[131] Published as Eldon Jay Epp, "The Oxyrhynchus New Testament Papyri: 'Not Without Honor Except in Their Hometown'?" *JBL* 123/1(2004):5–55.
[132] Epp, "Multivalence," 245–281.

original: the text that the author composed, or the (non-existing) text that the author intended to compose? A third set of complexities is introduced by the question of canon. Is the original text that which the author wrote, or is it that which the church later ruled as canon? Should, for example, the pericope adulterae be accepted into the original text of John? A final group of obstacles comes from the interpretive life of the text, the text as it was read, used, and re-written by a living church for their worship and theology. Corresponding with Parker's living text, this perspective asks why an initial form of a text should be given priority over a form that was more meaningful to the people who used it? Cumulatively, these questions preclude for Epp any continued usage of a singular concept like the traditional original text. He concludes that text criticism must "shed whatever remains of its innocence" by giving up the "myopic quest for a single original text."[133]

This nascent shift in the commonly accepted task of textual criticism carries necessary implications for the practice of conjectural emendation. When textual criticism had the straightforward goal of recovering a single original text, conjectural emendation was simply one way to attain that goal; one tool that could be used to remove the errors that had crept into that text. If that goal, however, is shown to be a chimera, then the rationale for conjectural emendation quickly becomes clouded in confusion. To what end would a scholar employ such a tool? What text would they be trying to emend? In a discipline like narrative textual criticism where the task is to look forward to see how the church changed the text through their use of it, there appears to be little need for a technique that looks back to a text prior to the church's corruption of it. The popularity of conjectural emendation, therefore, seems unlikely to rise with the spread of this trend.

Jan Krans, an accomplished student of conjectural emendation, has already begun to formulate an interesting response to this newest challenge. In what we can perhaps call "narrative conjectural emendation," he suggests that historical conjectures can be studied and used as windows into the his-

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[133] Epp, "Multivalence," 280. Note well, this does not mean that Epp sees no value in seeking the earliest attainable text. For example, note his most recent definition of the goal of textual criticism: "New Testament textual criticism, employing aspects of both science and art, studies the transmission of the New Testament text and the manuscripts that facilitate its transmission, with the unitary goal of establishing the earliest attainable text (which serves as a baseline) and, at the same time, of assessing the textual variants that emerge from the baseline text so as to hear the narratives of early Christian thought and life that inhere in the array of meaningful variants" Eldon Jay Epp, "Traditional 'Canons' of New Testament Textual Criticism: Their Value, Validity, And Viability—Or Lack Thereof" in Wachtel and Holmes, *History*, 127.

torical and theological history of the church in the same way that traditional manuscript variants can. In a detailed study of the conjectures of Erasmus and Beza which does just that, he describes his approach thusly:

> With the method adopted here, the present study takes part in the current paradigm shift in New Testament Textual Criticism. Manuscripts are no longer seen as mere sources for variant readings, but also as historical products that deserve to be studied as wholes. Moreover, variant readings as such no longer function as stepping stones towards the 'original' text, to be disposed of once this (chimeric) goal has been attained, but they acquire historical importance as mirrors of scribal convictions and conventions. In line with this new paradigm, it is asked here whether a critic's conjectural emendations mirror particular ideas of the text, its interpretability and its status.[134]

Krans' proposal is both interesting and compelling, and he is surely correct that the essential act of conjectural emendation is not drastically dissimilar from that of the many scribes in centuries past who also sought to fix the text. In this way the conjectures of the modern academy really do become the textual variants of the Gutenberg age. However, while this response successfully preserves a place in the new narrative paradigm for the *study* of conjectural emendation, it appears to do little for the actual *practice* of it. Is there anything then that can be said to this new perspective that does establish a basis for the practice of conjectural emendation?

Bart Ehrman has written that the latest developments "may be going too far,"[135] but how far should they go? Surely Epp is right to point out the concept of the original text is more vague and complex than traditionally assumed, and Parker et al. are definitely correct to see value in the narrative history of textual variants. It goes too far, however, to suggest that the quest for an original text should be discarded completely, or that narrative textual criticism is the only viable future for the field. Whether it is fully recoverable or not, there will necessarily always be an original text, at least in the strict sense of *origin*. Every text, though it may have been changed and developed into many subsequent text forms, had to begin somewhere, and as textual critics excavate through those layers they cannot help but move closer to that point of origin. As Ehrman writes:

> I do not mean to deny that there are difficulties that may be insurmountable in reconstructing the originals … Even so—despite the imponderable difficulties—we do have manuscripts of every book of the New Testament; all of these manuscripts were copied from other, earlier manuscripts, which were

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[134] Krans, *Beyond*, 3.
[135] Ehrman, *Misquoting*, 210.

themselves copied from earlier manuscripts, and the chain of transmission has to end *somewhere*, ultimately at a manuscript produced either by an author or by a secretarial scribe who was producing the 'autograph'—the first in a long line of manuscripts that were copied for nearly fifteen centuries until the invention of printing. So at least it is not 'non'-sense to talk about an original text.[136]

There is, therefore, a point of textual origin and a line of text forms descending from it. Using traditional methods to trace that descent and recover any earlier text form is thus a valid goal for textual criticism. If at any stage of that task a corruption of the text can be identified through either reasoned argument or manuscript variation, then conjectural emendation can be used as a valid means of reverting that change. While it may be difficult to define which text form deserves the mantle "original" or even identify which layer has been recovered, the resultant emended text will necessarily be an earlier form of it. The value or authority of that text form will necessarily be dependent on the purpose and perspective of the reader; for example whether they are motivated by religious doctrines of canon or a historical interest in the text form of, say, the fifth century. For those interested in narrative textual criticism, however, logic demands this task as a necessary pre-requisite. Without first tracing the descent from some principal text form, the narrative paradigm collapses into hopeless circularity. It is simply impossible to investigate what the text was changed *to* without first establishing what it was changed *from*. Or in other words, we cannot discuss the theological or social significance of the new version of the text until we know how it differs from the old version. As Robert Hull describes Ehrman's work, "At the same time, it is clear that Ehrman is interested in the original text, because he argues again and again that scribes have altered the original in support of orthodoxy. One cannot detect the alteration unless one can identify the original."[137]

Thus, far from outgrowing the quest for the original text, the new text criticism depends on it more than ever, and inherent in that dependence is, as we have seen above, the inevitable need for the critical practice of conjectural emendation.

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[136] Ehrman, *Misquoting*, 200.
[137] Hull, *Story*, 154.

METHOD

Having discussed and dismissed three different common objections to conjectural emendation, having described its history and having demonstrated its necessity, it is now time to provide some theoretical foundation for the practical aspects of the method. Namely, when can a conjecture be made responsibly, and how should it be made? Finally, as a way of learning through counter-point, the last section of this chapter will look at how a conjecture can be rejected.

§ 1. *When to Make a Conjecture*

If we accept that there are some points where conjectural emendation will be needed to restore the text, then the next natural question is how these points can be recognised: when do we get to propose a conjecture? It is this question which causes the greatest concern for some opponents of the method, since they worry that accepting the need for conjectures in theory will open the door to a subjective practice wherein anyone can change the text on a whim to suit their every fancy. As Greenlee forebodes:

> It would be very dangerous to say as some people do that in certain passages the manuscripts agree but the original text must have been different and was lost in the process of copying. Such proposals open the door to changing the scriptural text virtually anywhere it does not agree with the reader's prejudices.[1]

These fears, while perhaps exaggerated, are not entirely without merit. As Krans notes,[2] the estimated total number of New Testament conjectures documented so far runs to at least 15,000—around two per verse! Clearly then there needs to be some system of control that can govern when conjecture can or cannot be reasonably proposed.

Some scholars would argue that the extant manuscript base itself should be the controlling factor; that is, conjecture should only be used to solve

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[1] Greenlee, *Text*, 36.
[2] Krans, *Beyond*, 2 n. 5.

existing points of variation. This proposal is of mixed validity. On one hand
existing points of variation, particularly those whose definite resolution has
eluded textual critics, can be excellent indicators of primitive corruption.
Indeed, if considered stemmatologically, the probability of primitive corrup-
tion would be higher at existing points of variation, since at those points the
division of the manuscript transmission flow between the original and the
variant readings would have resulted in comparatively fewer manuscripts
carrying the original, thereby increasing the odds of its loss. Thus, at any
point if none of the extant variant readings can satisfactorily explain the
rise of the others, then this can be taken as a good sign that the archetypal
reading has been lost, and conjecture can therefore be reasonably employed.
Moreover, even if the principle reading can be identified, conjecture can still
be reasonably made if that reading, while clearly archetypal, nevertheless
appears deficient on some other ground. In other words, a reading can sit at
the genealogical head of the extant tradition without going all the way back
to the original text.

    This is, for example, what the editors of the ECM believe has happened at
2 Peter 3:10. That passage describes an apocalyptic scene where the heavens
pass away and then the elements are destroyed, after which the earth is …
what? The surviving Greek witnesses offer seven different variant options,
the most popular of which is εὑρθήσονται ("found"), but also includes ideas
of disappearing, being destroyed or burned up. Most text critics agree that
εὑρεθήσεται can be established as the principal reading and that all remaining
variants derive from it,[3] but that reading makes very little sense. As Mink
explains:

> Although the preceding passage speaks of the passing away of the heavens,
> and the dissolution of the elements, and the following verses presuppose the
> dissolution of heaven and earth (for a new heaven and a new earth are waited
> for), quite superior witnesses here have the reading 'the earth and all the works
> that are therein will be found (εὑρθήσονται)', when logic demands 'will *not* be
> found (οὐχ εὑρθήσονται)'.[4]

For this reason it is concluded that even though εὑρεθήσεται is the stemmatic
source of the extant tradition, it does not represent the original. The original,
it is conjectured, contained a negation, οὐχ ("not"), that was lost from the

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[3] Cf. Metzger's *Textual Commentary*, "The oldest reading, and the one which best explains
the origin of the others that have survived, is εὑρεθήσεται …", 636, as well as Parker, *Introduction*,
309.
[4] Mink, "Problems," 27.

textual tradition at a very early stage. As Mink concludes, "unquestionably, the hyparchetype of all these witnesses did not have the negation" but nevertheless "it is probable that the initial text had the negation."[5] It can be seen, then, how points of existing variation can indicate points of primitive corruption. Does this mean, however, that the confines of the extant manuscript base offer the best control for conjectural emendation?

There are several reasons to conclude that, while it can show the need for some conjectures, the extant manuscript base alone cannot serve as an acceptable system of control. The first is that it overstates the witness of the extant manuscript base. Confining conjectures to existing points of variation is presumably based on the rationale that the text must be free of corruption wherever all the manuscripts agree.[6] The premise is exaggerated, however, because it cannot truly be said that "all the manuscripts agree" simply because all *extant* manuscripts agree. As demonstrated above, the majority of manuscripts have been lost. Thus, to say "all the manuscripts agree" is really to say "a small minority of the manuscripts agree, while we can say nothing at all about the actual majority of the manuscripts." At its best, then, the statement is inconclusive.

The second problem is that it ignores the implication of early manuscript loss. As discussed above, the worst manuscript loss was among the earliest

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[5] Mink, "Problems," 27. Note, of course, that there are some scholars who, *contra* Mink, defend the *paradosis* at 2 Pet 3:10. Bauckham (*Jude, 2 Peter* [WBC; Word: Waco, 1983] 316–321) makes a valiant and arguably successful attempt to find a "satisfactory" interpretation for the received text. Unfortunately, Bauckham's evaluation seems tainted by a bias against conjectural emendation, as he all but admits that he would prefer an inferior reading from an extant ms over a superior conjecture: "As an emendation, the addition of οὐχ is the simplest proposed, and yields an excellent sense that it must be considered the best solution unless the reading can be given a satisfactory interpretation" (Bauckham, *Jude*, 317). Thus, even though the emendation is admittedly "an <u>excellent</u> sense" and offers the "<u>best</u> solution," Bauckham will accept a merely "<u>satisfactory</u> interpretation," apparently on the strength that it is *not* a conjecture. Confirming this, Bauckham later writes "we should not resort to emendation unless εὑρεθήσεται proves incapable of a satisfactory sense" (Bauckham, *Jude*, 318). This is a textbook case of the type of bias against conjectural emendation discussed above which leads New Testament scholars to bend over backwards in defence of less satisfactory, deficient or corrupt texts rather than accept better solutions.

[6] This is, of course, to set aside completely the technical fact that, with over 350,000 variants, the database of existing variants could hardly offer any system of control for conjectural emendation. Presumably, however, proponents of this position are assuming the qualification of "meaningful" variants, i.e. the type that might make it into the critical apparatus of the Nestle-Aland edition. This formulation could, potentially, be a much more meaningful control, but it does presume a tidier distinction between "meaningful" and "non-meaningful" than actually exists.

witnesses. The majority of the first generations of copies were lost, preventing any further generations from descending from them, while other genealogical lines were able to spring freely from corrupted texts. The implication is that a secondary reading could have risen to dominance in the manuscript tradition not because it was correct, but because all alternative texts were lost. For this reason agreement within the surviving manuscript base—even total agreement—is simply not a necessary indicator of originality. As West writes, "sometimes one sees a conjecture dismissed simply on the ground that all the manuscripts agree in a different reading. As if they could not agree in a false reading, and as if it were not in the very nature of a conjecture that it departs from them!"[7]

The final problem with using the extant manuscript base as the control is that it unduly privileges the scribes of those manuscripts. Points of existing variation usually developed where scribes, intentionally or unintentionally, perceived and interacted with a problem in the text. While, as already noted, existing variation can therefore be a great indicator of primitive corruption, why should the detection of such problems be limited to a comparatively small group of unknown scribes? Especially since, as documented above, most of those scribes were untrained in interpretation or focused instead on simply copying their exemplar rather than editing the content? Logic seems to dictate then that if we are willing to accept the testimony of scribes as to the location of primitive errors in the text, then arguing *a fortiori* we should also be willing to consider the suggestions of exegetes and scholars trained in the interpretation of that text. For these reasons, therefore, the extant manuscript base cannot serve as a suitable control for conjectural emendation.

Instead, this project offers a three-part control that should be able to detect points in the text where there is reasonable need for conjectural emendation while mitigating the influence of personal subjectivity. The first factor is what we will call *internal deficiency*. Simply put, if the text appears to contain some unexplainable error, then this could indicate a primitive corruption. The basis for this, of course, is the assumption that most of the time the original author would have composed the text without blatant errors.[8]

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[7] West, *Textual Criticism*, 59.
[8] Some have argued, however, that there are at least some points where it is the authorial original which nevertheless needs emendation. See, for example, Günther Zuntz, who argues that 1 Cor 6:5 preserves an error made either by Paul or Paul's amanuensis and concludes that "1 Cor vi.5 represents an instance where the critic is entitled, or even beholden, to correct the

These errors can include issues as mundane as grammatical mistakes, or as complex as theological or literary aporiae. Assuming, therefore, that it was not the author who introduced such errors into the text, it is possible that they represent secondary mistakes that have overtaken the extant manuscript tradition and, consequently, should be repaired through the use of conjecture.

When evaluating internal deficiency, however, it is important to maintain a balance between two poles of possibility. First, there is some degree of error which can be reasonably attributed to the author. Authors were, of course, no more perfect than scribes, and it is all but assured that the original authorial text did in fact contain some irregular passages and awkward constructions. As Westcott and Hort comment,

> There is much literature, ancient no less than modern, in which it is needful to remember that authors are not always grammatical, or clear, or consistent, or felicitous; so that not seldom an ordinary reader finds it easy to replace a feeble or half-appropriate word or phrase by an effective substitute; and thus the best words to express an author's meaning need not in all cases be those which he actually employed.[9]

In other words, not every internal deficiency can be automatically taken as a sign of primitive corruption and the critic is therefore not free to propose conjectures helter skelter wherever they find the text objectionable. Rather, emendation can be justified only for those deficiencies which are both deficient and out of keeping with the author's established style and character. In other words, deficiencies need to be evaluated by the traditional intrinsic criteria of textual criticism. Admittedly, this introduces a subjective element into the control, for what objective rule could possibly govern the distinction between "too deficient to attribute to the author" on the one hand and "not too deficient to attribute to a scribe" on the other? It is because of precarious balances like this, however, that textual criticism has long been referred to as both a science and an art. This distinction in particular has already long been a part of the discipline, as in essence it is really nothing more than an extension of the principle of *lectio difficilior*. Textual critics have long maintained that the more difficult reading should be preferred, but they have also maintained a distinction between "difficult" and "just too difficult." The Alands, for example, caution that:

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original text" (Zuntz "The Critic," 277). On that text, see also Jeffrey Kloha, "1 Corinthians 6:5: A Proposal" *Novum Testamentum* 46.2 (2004): 132–142.

[9] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 21.

> There is truth to the maxim: lectio difficilior lectio potior ("the more difficult reading is the more probable reading"). But this principle must not be taken too mechanically, with the most difficult reading (lectio difficilima) adopted as original simply because of its degree of difficulty.[10]

Similarly, Metzger comments that "obviously the category 'more difficult reading' is relative, and sometimes a point is reached when a reading must be judged to be so difficult that it can have arisen only by accident in transcription."[11] Textual critics, then, will have to continue practicing the art of judgement in order to distinguish those deficiencies that bear the character of a secondary alteration from those that simply bear the imperfection of the author.

The second pole of possibility is that there is some degree of sense that can be reasonably attributed to deficiency. A primitive corruption is, by definition, an early scribal error that was able to gain total dominance of the manuscript tradition. It stands to reason that a reading could not do this without being able to offer some degree of sense. In fact, in many ways the secondary reading might even appear superior. This should not be a surprise, since many scribal changes were, of course, deliberate attempts to fix or improve the text. As Westcott & Hort again describe:

> It follows that, with the exception of pure blunders, readings originating with scribes must always at the time have combined the appearance of improvement with the absence of its reality. If they had not been plausible, they would not have existed: yet their excellence must have been either superficial or partial, and the balance of inward and essential excellence must lie against them.[12]

For this reason we must expect that even a deficient text will still be capable of supporting some sort of reasonable interpretation. A failure to recognise this, according to Parker, is one of the reasons that so many New Testament scholars mistakenly reject conjectures:

> A third reason [that conjecture is condemned] is that when a text is so frequently commented upon and exhaustively explained as is the New Testament, there will never be lacking an explanation of the meaning of every traditional wording, however improbable its sense may be.[13]

It must be remembered, therefore, that the ability to make sense alone is not enough to vindicate a reading; rather, we should strive for those readings

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[10] Aland and Aland, *Text*, 281.
[11] Metzger, *Commentary*, 13*.
[12] Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 27.
[13] Parker, *Introduction*, 309.

that make *better* sense. Between these two poles then, between allowing some degree of error and allowing some degree of sense, the test of internal deficiency offers the first grounds for detecting the need for conjectural emendation. When attempted individually, however, the identification of internal deficiency is often tempted by private interpretation. For this reason it is important to confirm the diagnosis through the second or third parts of the control.

The second control looks for confirmation in the writings of the church fathers and other ancient interpreters. The basis for this is that if the text was truly deficient—as opposed to simply being objectionable to modern ears—it is more likely than not that some ancient interpreters would have noticed that as well. Especially significant in this regard are those patristic interpretations which, rather than commenting directly on a textual problem, simply seem to presume a different reading than the one that dominates the extant manuscript base. Further, ancient versional evidence is probably best considered here as well. If, as the truism goes, all translation involves a degree of interpretation, then the earliest translators join the ranks of the earliest interpreters. Accordingly, when early versions can be found to presume an alternate *Vorlage*, this can be taken as confirmation of internal deficiency. Interestingly, this type of confirmation appears to have influenced the editors of the ECM in their emendation of 2 Pet 3:10. As discussed above, while all extant manuscripts omit the negation, the editors concluded that the initial text likely contained it. Apparent confirmation of this can be found in some early versions, namely the Coptic manuscript in Dialect V and some manuscripts of the Philoxenian Syriac. Thus, both patristics and versions can be used to confirm the presence of primitive corruption. As Kloha comments, "fresh study of the fathers and versions suggests that some readings have disappeared from the Greek manuscript tradition."[14]

The third and final level of control is found in the scholarship of modern interpreters. While ancient scholarship is certainly worthy of respect, it is undeniable that modern advances in both evidence and theory give contemporary scholars a distinct advantage in textual analysis. In fact, while, as just discussed, it is reasonable to expect ancient interpreters to have perceived textual deficiencies, it is certainly feasible that modern analysis might be able to detect difficulties that have eluded readers for generations. In one notable example, it was social advancement more so than developments in manuscript evidence or theory that allowed an ancient deficiency finally

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[14] Kloha, review, 94.

to come to light: in his seminal study *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, Epp documents how prevailing patriarchal tendencies in society kept many generations of scholarship from seeing the deficiency in Rom 16:7 where a male name had long supplanted a female version.[15] It was the rise of modern feminism, therefore, with its consequent awareness of a more egalitarian perspective, that finally allowed this error to be identified and corrected.[16] It can be seen then how modern scholarship can make its own contribution to the investigation, and together with the ancient interpreters, they constitute a community of readers that collectively can confirm a suspicion of internal deficiency. In this way the heritage of scholarship can function as a control that can govern the personal subjectivity of any one textual critic and thereby help to ensure that fears of textual chaos do not prevent authentic errors from receiving the conjectural correction they have needed for so long.

§ 2. *How to Make a Conjecture*

Recently at a wedding the groom's friends decided to tease him by writing "*Free Will*" on the side of his car. The younger sister of the bride, looking perplexed, was heard to ask "what does that mean?" A nearby groomsman explained it to her: "your new brother-in-law is a Calvinist, and Calvinists do not believe in free will, so they are mocking him." The young girl reacted with disgust and with a twisted face exclaimed "Oh, that's terrible! I cannot believe my own sister married a *communist*!" The story is humorous (especially since the groom had actually come to America precisely to escape communist Poland!) but it also raises a key issue that must be understood before any conjectures can be either made or evaluated: how do errors occur?

The issue is normally considered from the perspective of *mechanical errors*, that is, mistakes that have a direct and predictable cause that is usually rooted in the mechanics of the text itself. Within New Testament textual criticism, this usually falls under the heading of "scribal tendencies" and refers to such mechanical acts as haplography or dittography due to homoeoteleuton or homoeoarchton, the substitution of similar sounding words during oral dictation, or perhaps harmonization to parallel passages and so on.[17] These

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[15] Eldon Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

[16] Later printings of the NA27 now read the feminine form. Of course, this correction is not exclusively a modern advancement; as Epp documents, some ancient writers like Chrysostom were long ago reading the text correctly.

[17] See, for example, Metzger & Ehrman, *Text*, 250–271.

types of errors did, of course, occur in great number, and correcting them—whether by conjecture or otherwise—would consist of tracing the direct line of causation from one reading to the other, i.e. what physical attribute led to the mistake and how did that phenomenon occur? Thus, for example, in Jas 1:4 the critical text reads λειπόμενοι (lacking) while some later scribes instead wrote λυπόμενοι.[18] The only difference between the two is the vowel sounds of the ει diphthong and the υ. Given the similarity in pronunciation, this error can likely be given a simple mechanical explanation: substitution of similar sounding words. Similarly in 1:7, a scribe[19] likely dropped a μ and heard θ instead of τ in order to change λημψεταί (receive) into ληψεσθαί. Conjectural emendations of such errors can certainly be proposed, and such proposals should be evaluated on how feasibly the conjecture can account mechanically for the rise of the extant readings: does the conjectured reading have a similar look, shape or pronunciation to the extant options? Could any known scribal tendency explain the jump from the conjectured original to the extant text? If so, then the conjecture can be declared reasonable, and perhaps ultimately worthy of acceptance. It would be a mistake, however, to confine scribal errors to such mechanical examples only, and acceptance cannot be reserved solely for conjectures that have letters similar to the extant text.

As the young bridesmaid demonstrated above, sometimes a different kind of mistake happens. Sometimes a word is substituted that bears little or no resemblance to the original, and from a strictly mechanical perspective no direct cause can be fathomed. What forces are at work at such times? To answer that question we must first understand how texts are read. Modern students of ancient Greek tend to learn by the letter.[20] As they progress in their studies, they first master the letters, then begin to pair those letters together to make short words, and then move on to more complicated words with multiple syllables and diphthongs. Historical studies have shown that ancient students began learning the language in much the same way.[21] It might be tempting, then, to assume that the reading of texts continued in the same mechanical manner. There is reason to think, however, that this was not always the case.

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[18] 631 1241 1751 2523.

[19] 621 1842.

[20] Wenham's classic text, for example, begins with chapter 1 "The alphabet" and then moves on to chapter 2 "Capital letters" J.W. Wenham, *The Elements of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[21] cf. Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 160 ff.

It is nigh impossible, of course, to study the reading habits of ancient scribes, but it is possible to explore the common human experience.[22] As with any cognitive skill, the person learning to read goes through different stages of skill development. Modern psychologists have identified three distinct stages. The first is known as the cognitive stage, and it is at this time that you are intellectualizing the task—learning the letters and syllables. The second level is known as the associative stage, and it is here that the skill is integrated into your thinking and you discover ways to become more efficient at it. The final level is called the autonomous stage, and it is here that the governing of the skill is transferred to the subconscious and the practitioner runs, as it were, on autopilot. As Joshua Foer describes, "You can actually see this shift take place in fMRI scans of people learning new skills. As a task becomes automated, the parts of the brain involved in conscious reasoning become less active and other parts of the brain take over."[23]

What happens to reading when one reaches the autonomous stage? Linguists suggest that instead of reading by the letter, you read by the word—you recognize a given word by its all-around shape. Words, and even whole phrases, become symbols which are instantly recognized and subconsciously processed. Sebastiano Timpanaro describes the process:

> For it has long been established that a copyist, whether ancient or modern, does not as a rule transcribe a text word for word, still less letter for letter … but reads a more or less lengthy section of it and then, without looking back at the original at each point, writes it down 'from memory.'[24]

The benefit of this is that even if some letters are changed inside a word, so long as the overall shape is sufficiently similar we can usually still recognise it. The strength of this flexibility, however, is also a weakness because it can just as easily cause us to misread the text. Often a word can have a very similar overall shape to another word, differing only by a letter or two, but nevertheless mean something quite different. Depending on which word we are more familiar with, we can easily think we have read one word when in fact we read the other. Similarly, if we encounter a rare word that we do not know, our brain will often compensate by substituting a recognition of the next most similarly shaped word in our database. Thus the bridesmaid

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[22] This section is indebted to the historical survey offered in Joshua Foer, *Moonwalking With Einstein* (New York: Penguin, 2011) 163 ff.

[23] Foer, *Moonwalking*, 170.

[24] Sebastiano Timpanaro, *The Freudian Slip: Psychoanalysis and Textual Criticism* (London: NLB, 1974) 21–22.

above, though she was listening and not reading, subconsciously substituted a similar word that she did recognise, *communist*, for one that she did not, *Calvinist*.

This error of the mind, which we will call subconscious substitution, is a common human experience. Greenlee, in a different discussion, offers a striking example, pointing out that most people who read the sentence "I know a man who is vicegerent of the company" will think that they just read the word *vice-regent*.[25] In popular culture, Philip B. Corbett, the "public editor" for the *New York Times*, writes that journalists experience this all the time. Commenting on the tendency to substitute "cite" for "site" he writes:

> It's illuminating that we mix up **sight/site/cite** so often. Our writers and editors certainly know the difference. But for many of us, I think, composing at the keyboard involves a strange melding of mental, aural and muscle memory. We hear a sentence in our mind as we compose it. Then our fingers automatically find the corresponding keys, but without the intervention of our mental dictionary program, which would distinguish **site** from **sight** or **there** from **their**.[26]

This phenomenon even forms the basis for popular jokes spread about the internet:

> Acocdrnig to an elgnsih unviesitry sutdy the oredr of letetrs in a wrod dosen't mttaer, the olny thnig thta's iopmrantt is that the frsit and lsat ltteer of eevry word is in the crcreot ptoision. The rset can be jmbueld and one is stlil able to raed the txet wiohtut dclftfuiiy.[27]

Modern culture, however, is not the only place that examples of subconscious substitution can be found.

The most telling sign of subconscious substitution among scribes is that this type of error can be seen in the record of the New Testament. Examples are easy to find in the extant tradition, and just a few should suffice. In James 1:5, for example, if anyone is lacking wisdom they are told *to ask* (αἰτείτω) God who gives freely. The scribe of 1127, however, somehow managed to substitute ζητείτω, *to seek*. While there is some semantic overlap in meaning, the two

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[25] Greenlee, *Text*, 66.

[26] Philip B. Corbett, "Public Editor" *The New York Times*, Jan. 13, 2009, [Jan 15, 2009] http://topics.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/13/the-age-of-schadenfreude/.

[27] Collected on the internet, April, 2009. For a cheekier example, consider why so many people driving by the clothing store *French Connection United Kingdom* think they have read something very different when they see the acronym of its name on the sign.

words look and sound nothing alike.[28] Just one verse later in James 1:6 it tells people to "ask in faith, not *doubting* (διακρινόμενος)." Some ancestor of 429, 630 and 220, however, substituted ἀπιστῶν, *faithless*. How could that happen? Perhaps the scribe was distracted by the occurrence of πίστει, *faith*, at the beginning of the verse, or perhaps someone nearby happened to be discussing *faithlessness* just as he was transcribing that line? We simply cannot know with any certainty what could have been misleading the scribe's mind at that point. Yet another example can be found in James 1:10, where it warns that like the flowering grass the rich will *pass away* (παρελεύσεται). The scribe of 2180, however, was somehow led to write παρερχεται instead. In meaning the two words are almost synonymous, but what is interesting here is how differently they both look and sound. There is no way this confusion could occur mechanically: it could only have happened in the jumble of the scribe's mind.

   As several of those examples imply, subconscious substitution is not confined merely to jumbled letters or rare words. The mind's susceptibility to a wide variety of distractions opens the door to all manner of textual changes. As Timpanaro explains,

> But it has long been recognised that the majority of mistakes in transcription and quotation … are, on the contrary, 'errors due to distraction' … to which anyone transcribing or citing a text may be subject—whether scholar or lay man, mediaeval monk or modern typist or student.[29]

These distractions could take any form, from environmental to social to psychological. Metzger, for example, documents a scribe who was distracted enough to write complaints in the margin of the manuscript about the coldness of winter, the dimness of the lamp light, and even the weight of the parchment![30] Even if that scribe's focus was not disrupted by such distractions, what about the scribe unfortunate enough to be sitting at the next table, who had to listen to the complaints?[31] We cannot begin to imagine the full

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[28] Perhaps the scribe was distracted by his memory of Jesus saying in Matt 7:7, "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find."

[29] Timpanaro, *Freudian*, 20.

[30] Metzger & Ehrman, *Text*, 28–34. In another example, the winter's cold caused a scribe's ink to freeze! What might that have done to a person's focus?

[31] The effect of others should not be underestimated. The author once had a colleague who was busy typing away in a study carol. She was making great progress in her work, but suddenly let out a cry of frustration: without realising it, she had written much of the last page in French! Bi-lingual since birth, she had not realised that the background conversation of a nearby French couple had caused her brain to switch subconsciously from one language to the other.

magnitude of the possibilities for distraction, and so any steps that limit the types of distractions that could occur or the types of errors that could spring from them will necessarily be premature at best. Even Kenyon, who considered conjectures to be a waste of time, conceded that:

> there are errors of which nothing can be said save that they are unaccountable. Everyone who has done much writing must know that now and again he puts down words which have no meaning in the context in which he uses them, or (if he is copying) are wholly unlike the words which he should have copied. His mind has strayed and he has written down words which some obscure train of association has put into his head. Errors such as these are sometimes made by the copyists of manuscripts, and since they have no traceable connexion with the true text, they do not, as some kinds of error do, provide the means for their own correction.[32]

Accordingly, we must maintain an open imagination and a willingness to consider any option that might produce an acceptable result. As Timpanaro prescribes:

> the textual critic … necessarily has a greater awareness of the multiplicity and complexity of the causes which conjoin to produce a 'slip' and is thus much more alive to the fact that his task cannot be restricted to grouping 'slips' within wholesale categories, but demands an effort to understand how various general tendencies contribute on any given occasion to the production of a single and particular error.[33]

Thus, while a conjecture may look more compelling when it differs from the extant text by only one or two (preferably similar looking) letters, it does not need to be that similar in order to be true. For the scribe, much like us,[34] very easily could have snatched from his mind a substitute word that had only the vaguest connection to the original.

What does all of this mean for the practice of conjectural emendation? It means that conjectures cannot be confined to cases of mechanical near letter similarity. While such mechanical cases are quite common, and studies continue to confirm that different scribes copied in different manners with different habits,[35] conjectures must be free to move beyond this. Textual

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[32] Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1901) 10.

[33] Timpanaro, *Freudian*, 84.

[34] For example, much of this work was written in a downtown apartment over top of a women's dress shop called *Florence's Finery*. Our Old English Sheepdog, who is fairly well known about town, is named *Flannery*. We were humoured then to hear someone on the street say "There's the dog who lives above *Florence's Flannery*"!

[35] Royse's landmark study provides, for example, an intimate and detailed look into the habits of the scribes of the manuscripts he considers. Cf. Royse, *Scribal Habits*.

critics must be flexible enough in their consideration of conjectural readings to allow for the random eccentricity of the human mind. As Robin Nisbet has written:

> ... an obsession with letter-forms can become a snare: we have met old articles ... where an elaborate sequence of misreading is posited that becomes more speculative at every move. It must be remembered that copyists read by the word, just as we do, rather than by the individual letter. I once heard in a radio news-bulletin that a certain athlete was suffering from "frost-bite, I mean fibrositis"; and I saw in a newspaper the other day a puzzling reference to Chalkidice, only to find that I had misread "Chalkface". Many corruptions of classical texts are of this kind, and it is the textual critic's job to clutch out of the air a word with perhaps no more than a general resemblance to the transmitted reading.[36]

In the end it can be seen that conjectural emendation is a scientific art requiring both a knowledge of the text and a creativity of the mind. As A.E. Housman concludes:

> To read attentively, think correctly, omit no relevant consideration, and repress self-will, are not ordinary accomplishments; yet an emendator needs much besides: just literary perception, congenial intimacy with the author, experience which must have been won by study, and mother wit which he must have brought from his mother's womb.[37]

§3. How to Reject a Conjecture

Among those who reject the use of conjectural emendation the most common concern appears to be that the method would allow anyone to

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[36] Robin G.M. Nisbet, "How Textual Conjectures Are Made," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 26 (1991):66.

[37] *apud* Nisbet, "Conjectures," 65. Luck concludes similarly: "What does it require to make an emendation in the Greek New Testament? One obvious answer is: A solid knowledge of Greek. But there is more to it. You should also need some experience in the editing of ancient texts and you should be aware of all the possibilities of textual corruption ... But some brilliant ideas have been proposed by relatively obscure scholars, like the Lutheran clergyman in 19th c. Saxony who came up with what seems to be the correct explanation of μὴ ὑπὲρ ἃ γέγραπται in 1 Cor. 4:6. The man obviously had a good training in Greek, but he also had an inspiration, a lucky moment, no doubt after having thought about the passage for a long time. It is the same kind of inspiration that reveals to you the solution to a chess problem, for instance. There are no rules and recipes for this sort of thing, and no 'method', not even the method of Lachmann, can teach you that. This is why A.E. Housman once said that he made conjectures the same way a dog catches flees, more or less by instinct and long practice" Luck, "Conjectural Emendation," 202.

argue that the text was corrupt wherever and whenever they wanted. We have already heard Greenlee, for example, claim that "such proposals open the door to changing the scriptural text virtually anywhere it does not agree with the reader's prejudices."[38] Kilpatrick similarly noted that "another difficulty [with conjectural emendation] is that it seems to open the door to considerable rewriting of the NT" and then concluded that the method "is too often only one way among others of dealing with a problem in the text."[39] While this concern is not without merit, it should be noted that, technically, it has nothing to do with whether or not one accepts conjectural emendation. Regardless of whether the academy accepts the method, other people will still be just as free as they have always been to argue whatever they want. Accepting the legitimacy of emendation does not give anyone else any freedom that they did not already have: everyone has always been free to make a bad argument. Perhaps the real concern behind this objection, then, is that if they accept the legitimate role of conjectural emendation they will no longer be able to dismiss other people's bad arguments simply by saying "there is no manuscript support for that." While losing an invalid objection is really no loss, it seems only fair to provide in its place some discussion of what valid objections might look like.

A number of probing questions can be used to determine whether there is good reason to reject a conjecture. The first of these asks whether the problem that the conjecture supposedly resolves would only exist for a modern reader? Contemporary interpreters can sometimes be guilty of holding ancient texts to modern standards, and so it needs to be asked whether the text in question really contains an inherent deficiency, or does it merely fall short of a modern convention that it never set out to meet? This may include modern standards of editing, current cultural sensibilities, factual accuracy or even objections based on modern grammatical knowledge or contemporary theology. For example, in 1:17 James uses the phrase τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, *father of lights*. As Bowyer documents,[40] troubled by the rarity and apparent astrological overtones in a divine title, several readers proposed a more palatable conjecture. Instead of τῶν φώτων the text could read πνευμάτων, *father of spirits*. Such a title would have a much more acceptable origin in Num 27:7, and further would match similar references in Heb 12:9 and Rev 22:6. While it is possible to imagine a scribe substituting φώτων for πνευμάτων,

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[38] Greenlee, *Text*, 36.
[39] G.D. Kilpatrick, "Conjectural Emendation" 358, 360.
[40] Bowyer, *Conjectures*, 591.

clearly the concern with *father of lights* has less to do with the text itself and more to do with 18th century religious concerns for doctrinal purity, not to mention a desire for canonical uniformity that could only make sense in a later age when James would circulate in a collection with Numbers, Hebrews and Revelation. This is but one example of how modern eyes can see problems that somehow did not previously exist in the text. The rule of thumb is this: is the scholar proposing a conjecture because the surviving text is not how the *author* would say it, or because it is not how the *scholar* would say it? If the latter, then the conjecture should likely be rejected.

A second question asks if the conjecture depends on a word usage or grammar that violates the author's known tendencies? Since, as discussed above, authors did not always say something in the best way it could be said, it is imperative to judge conjectures not on how well they express what the author *should* have said, but on how well they express what the author *would* have said. This will demand a thorough understanding of an author's style and tendencies, without which it would be impossible to determine whether the conjecture would fit with any sense of accord. Note well, however, this does not mean that a conjecture must be confined to the words, phrases or devices already expressed by the author, as if an author could only ever do what they had already done. A conjecture is just as free to offer something new as the author would have been. Had the author composed something new, however, it would have still been characteristic of their general style. A proposed conjecture, therefore, must also fit faithfully within the *trajectory* of an author's style.

An example of this can be seen in James 3:18. There the author says that a harvest of righteousness awaits those who ἐν εἰρήνῃ σπείρεται, *sow in peace*. The construction of the phrase is simple enough: a verb with a prepositional phrase of manner. All the same, as Bowyer again documents,[41] some have proposed a conjecture that emends the text to the adverb εἰρηνικῆς, *peacefully*. The meaning is the same—since prepositional phrases of manner function the same as adverbs—but the emended text is more grammatically straightforward. This conjecture can be evaluated though not just on whether it offers a grammatical improvement, but also on whether it accords with James' style. A survey and comparison of his use of adverbs versus prepositional phrases in similar constructions yields interesting results. James is certainly open to using adverbial constructions. He does so at least four times: gives generously (1:5), forgets immediately (1:24), asks

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[41] Bowyer, *Conjectures*, 594.

badly (4:3) and speaks vainly (4:5). He uses prepositional phrases slightly more often, in at least five cases: ask in faith (1:6), welcome in meekness (1:21), have faith in partiality (2:1), go in peace (2:16), boast in arrogance (4:16). From simple quantity of usage, then, either option could make approximately equal claim on James' style. However, writing style is about more than raw numbers; it concerns what types of words are used and what sorts of ways they are used. In this case, it is notable that James' use of adverbs tends to favour concrete descriptions (e.g. forget immediately, give generously) while his use of prepositional phrases tend to involve more abstract concepts (e.g. ask in faith). To that end, it is especially notable that the other time James wants to use peace as a descriptor—"go in peace" in 2:18—he uses a prepositional phrase. We can conclude then from this mini-study that if James was going to use a concept like "peace" to modify a verb like "sow," he would characteristically use a prepositional phrase. That is just how he would say it. Since the proposed conjecture violates that style, it should likely be rejected.

Third, it should be asked if the conjecture is exegetically inferior? Does it disrupt the logical or thematic flow of the text? In other words, does the extant text make better sense—better, not just sense—without the conjecture? It would be easy to assume that such an inferior conjecture would never be proposed, but in fact the history of conjectures shows that it is surprisingly easy to focus on the immediate text in a way that loses sight of the greater context. For example, Georg Luck has argued in favour of an old conjecture for John 19:29. In that text Jesus, hanging on the cross, declares that he is thirsty and according to the extant text a sponge soaked in vinegar is raised to him on a "hyssop stick" (ὑσσώπῳ). As many have pointed out, however, "a hyssop stick is an extremely unsuitable tool … the stem of a hyssop branch would not be strong enough to take the weight of a wet sponge …"[42] To address this perceived difficulty, in the 16th century Camerarius suggested that the original text read ὑσσῷ, which means "spear" or "javelin." Within the immediate text, this conjecture has much to commend for it. It makes historical and logical sense, since it is much easier to imagine one of the nearby Roman soldiers raising a sponge on his spear than on a flimsy twig from a bush. It also works stemmatically, since it is easy to see how an original ὑσσῳ could lead to a secondary ὑσσώπῳ: the scribe simply committed dittography when copying the final ω. However, while the conjecture works well in the immediate text, it undermines the greater thematic context.

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[42] Luck, "Conjectural Emendation" 182.

It has long been known in gospel interpretation that Jesus is often presented as a symbolic fulfillment of the Passover lamb. To build that theme, John incorporates many references from the original Passover narrative into the story of Jesus. As part of that thematic project, John likely wrote that Jesus was offered hyssop not because it was historically factual (or even possible) but rather because it was yet another point of connection with the Passover lamb, echoing the hyssop used in Exod 12:22. As F.F. Bruce commented, "A sprig of hyssop seems an unsuitable instrument ... but John's wording may be influenced by the symbolic use of hyssop in the Old Testament, e.g. in the Passover ceremony ... The death of Jesus is the true Passover ..."[43] It can be seen, then, how the conjecture is exegetically inferior, and thus should likely be rejected.

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[43] F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 373.

PART TWO

PRACTICE

INTRODUCTION TO JAMES AS A CASE STUDY

Where could the scholarly art of conjectural emendation be best demonstrated? Of all the texts in the New Testament it is probably the epistle of James that bears the most potential for sound conjectural emendation. While the story of Martin Luther's disposal of the strawy epistle into the nearest river is well known, less well known is the fact that the western church did not even accept the book into its scriptures until at least a century after most of the other New Testament texts.[1] During this initial period of rejection James was less copied and less preserved than other New Testament texts. In the modern manuscript database, genealogy conducts us only as far back as the fourth century texts of Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Currently there are two third century papyri—$\mathfrak{P}^{20}$ and $\mathfrak{P}^{23}$—but these are both extremely lacunary.[2] One other papyri—$\mathfrak{P}^{100}$—is usually dated to either the late third century or early fourth and is also but a fragment.[3] In other words, for at least the first two centuries of the epistle's life—when untrained lay scribes were introducing some of the harshest corruptions—we have no direct textual evidence. Such a gap greatly increases the probability of primitive errors—those textual corruptions that precede our earliest manuscripts.

As Luck echoes,

> Even the most conservative editors of the New Testament seem to agree that textual corruption was possible at various stages of the *paradosis*. The fifteen decades between 150 and 300, roughly speaking, are singled out as the period during which most of the damage was done. The Books of the New Testament were not yet fully protected as parts of a sacred Canon. Editorial changes, glosses, interlinear and marginal additions could easily find their way into the text during that time. It is generally believed that certain Books, e.g. the *Letter of James* had a fairly long "private life" before they became part of the Canon.[4]

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[1] See discussions in Davids, *James*, 57 ff., or Martin Dibelius, *James* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 57 ff.

[2] $\mathfrak{P}^{20}$ contains 2:19–3:2 and 3:4–9, while $\mathfrak{P}^{23}$ contains 1:10–12, 15–18.

[3] $\mathfrak{P}$100 contains 3:13–4:4 and 4:9–5:1.

[4] Luck, "Conjectural Emendation," 173.

This is confirmed all the more by the number of variations in the manuscripts that did survive. Currently there are 535 Greek manuscripts of James, and in the epistle's approximately 1740 words, those manuscripts present 761 variant units with a combined total of 2132 variant readings.[5] That means that in just the few manuscripts that have managed to survive we already encounter textual variation almost every two words. How many more readings perished with all the manuscripts that were lost, and how many of those were original? That answer will never be known, but what is clear is that the potential for fruitful conjectures is higher in James than with other New Testament books. As Martin Dibelius comments at length:

> On the whole, the text of Jas which has been handed down is relatively homogeneous … Yet one must not rejoice over this picture too quickly. For merely because the textual tradition as we have it shows no evidence of extensive degeneration of Jas, this does not prove that in the history of Jas such a distortion never occurred. The extant variants are evidence only for the Biblical book "Jas"; but the lot of Jas in the relatively long period of its "private existence," before it found general acceptance in the canon, remains unknown to us … The longer that the private existence of James lasted, the easier it would have been for the exact wording of a passage to have been lost completely. It would then have been so thoroughly displaced that it would not have been accepted into any of the texts used in the churches. In principle, therefore, greater latitude is due to conjectures in the textual criticism of Jas than is the case with most other books of the New Testament.[6]

This study will capitalize on this fact by surveying four proposed conjectural emendations in the book of James. Chapter four will look at Jas 3:1 with its curious command that μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε (not many should be teachers), and subsequently argue that the text should be emended to read μὴ πολύλαλοι διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε (do not be garrulous teachers). Chapter five will turn to the famous conjecture of Erasmus, who proposed that the text of 4:2 be emended to read φθονεῖτε (envy) instead of φονεύετε (murder). Chapter six explores how a long lost scriptural quotation can be rediscovered by emending πρὸς φθόνον (towards envy) to πρὸς τὸν θεόν (towards God). Finally, chapter seven will look at what not to do by examining a far-reaching conjectural proposal that would omit as interpolations the references to Christ in 1:1 and 2:1. Through these case studies, many of the ideas and truths that have so far been explained only in abstract will finally be seen to flow naturally from the texts themselves.

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[5] Mink, "Problems," 21.
[6] Dibelius, *James*, 61.

JAMES 3:1

Introduction

It is often said that conjectural emendation should be confined to those unresolved passages where the extant text is undeniably deficient and corruption has obviously occurred. Peter Head, for example, has written that in most cases the use of conjectural emendation should be rejected, but concedes that "It is a different matter when there are variants and an obvious problem to be solved."[1] One of the problems with this position, however, is that it does not fully reckon with the logic of textual transmission. Inherent in conjectural emendation is the premise that early in the transmission process an alternate reading usurped the author's text and subsequently came to dominate the manuscript tradition, leaving the original text to perish without a trace. In order for a reading to so proliferate that it could take over the manuscript tradition, however, it would in most cases need to be free from such obvious deficiencies, which would otherwise inspire caution among the scribes and thereby limit its propagation. In other words, obvious problems generally attend only those corruptions which failed to catch on; the scribal variations that succeeded in spreading would, almost by force of logical necessity, offer a sensible and appealing reading. Thus, as Westcott & Hort were previously quoted:

> It follows that, with the exception of pure blunders, readings originating with scribes must always at the time have combined the appearance of

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[1] Head limits conjecture to passages with existing variants. His full comment reads: "… in a passage with no variants (i.e. where all the manuscripts agree) I don't think there is any basis for conjectural emendation. Several reasons for this: a) it was not thought difficult by scribes—so there is no problem to be solved; b) conjectural emendations in these situations would be subject to the accusation of subjectivism and an attempt to improve on Scripture; c) no conjectural emendation in this situation is likely to commend itself to the scholarly crowd. It is a different matter when there are variants and an obvious problem to be solved" (Evangelical Textual Criticism blog [April 19, 2010]. http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot .com/2009/02/textual-criticism-and-theology-redux.html).

improvement with the absence of its reality. If they had not been plausible, they would not have existed: yet their excellence must have been either superficial or partial, and the balance of inward and essential excellence must lie against them.[2]

For this reason conjectural emendation cannot be rejected simply because the traditionally accepted text is already sensible and appealing. A variation that garnered such wide acceptance would be expected to bear such appealing *good* sense. Instead, a conjectural emendation should be judged, at least in part, by whether it makes *better* sense than the text that is extant.

An excellent case study of this principle can be found in the first line of James chapter three. On first glance it is a humble and unassuming text. The extant text begins with a simple imperative, μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε ἀδελφοί μου, followed by an equally straightforward explanation εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα. The words are unambiguous and the sense seems clear: not many people should be teachers because teachers will receive a greater judgment. This text has been sensibly understood for quite a long time. Hilary, the fifth century archbishop of Arles, explained:

> The apostle here prohibits a large number of teachers, for even our Lord Jesus Christ chose only a few for this role. He had only twelve disciples, and not all of them went on to become teachers of the gospel.[3]

In modern times most commentators follow similar suit. Craig Blomberg & Mariam Kamell, for example, write that James warns "that only a small percentage of the people in his churches should aspire to this leadership role."[4] Sophie Laws similarly writes "James seeks to discourage many of his readers from becoming teachers …"[5] It can be safely assumed, then, that the traditional text has been accepted by most as being easy to understand, making good sense, and being quite straightforward.

From a text critical perspective, the passage appears to have been just as straightforward to the majority of scribes, since there is only minimal variation in the extant manuscript base. There are six known alternative variants, which can be tabulated as follows:

2 Westcott & Hort, *Introduction*, 27.

3 Hilary of Arles, *Introductory Tractate on the Letter of James* (P.L. Supp. 3:75) *apud James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude* (*ACC*; ed. Gerald Bray, Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 36.

4 Craig L. Blomberg & Mariam Kamell, *James* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 151.

5 Sophie Laws, *The Epistle of James* (BNTC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979) 140.

1	ℵB A D 33 88		μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι	γίνεσθε	ἀδελφοί μου	εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα
2	020 630		μὴ πολυδιδάσκαλοι	γινεσθε	ἀδελφοί μου	εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα.
3	044 1367 1848 2347		μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι	γίνεσθε	ἀδελφοί	εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα.
4	2652		μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι	γίνησθε	ἀδελφοί μου	εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα
5	2523	ἀδελφοί μου	μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι	γίνεσθε		εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα
6	1751 1838	ἀδελφοί	μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι	γίνεσθε		εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα
7	*l*422	ἀγαπητοί	μὴ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι	γίνεσθε		εἰδότες ὅτι μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα

These variations are easily sorted out by the canons of textual criticism. The first reading is found in the NA27 and all modern English translations. It is supported by ℵB A D among other major uncials, important minuscules like 33 and 88, the bulk of Byzantine manuscripts, and almost every other manuscript the average reader would encounter. The second reading is supported only by 020 and 630, dated to the 9th and 14th centuries respectively, but will prove interesting for other reasons that will be discussed shortly.[6] The third version survives in the 9th century 044 and later minuscules like 1367 1848 2347, as well as various eastern fathers. The reading obviously arose from accidental omission of the possessive μου, and the diversity of the manuscript support suggests that this was an easy mistake to make. The fourth version is found only in the 15th century minuscule 2652. Its sole distinctive is a shift in tense from γίνεσθε to γίνησθε, a change likely caused by an aural mistake during oral dictation. Version five is found in the minuscule 2523 and was likely inspired by lectionaries like 427. Version six survives in minuscules 1751 and 1838 and was also likely inspired by the popular lectionaries that attest it, such as 590 593 596 884 921 938 1141 1281 1441 2087. The last version is found only in lectionary 422 and represents an obvious homiletical development.

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6 In published discussions the compound is sometimes separated as πολυ διδάσκαλοι, while other times spelled πολλυ διδάσκαλοι.

The first reading then—the ℵ B A D text—clearly dominates the manu-
script tradition. It has experienced minimal variation, and the little variation
that has occurred can be easily explained by it. That variation appears to
have occurred in three ways. First, two readings developed through simple
accident—the omission of the small word μου and the aural confusion
of γίνεσθε and γίνησθε. Second, three readings developed from lectionary
use; variations within this group represent either homiletical development,
or variations on the lectionary tradition inspired to adhere to one of the
other accidental readings. Finally, one reading—the change of διδάσκαλοι to
πολυδιδάσκαλοι represents a different type of corruption that will be discussed
shortly. Thus, by the common canons of textual criticism, the traditional text,
on account of its ability to explain the rise of the other variations, can be
accepted as the earliest attainable text. It sits at the head of the surviving
line of manuscript transmission, and through the centuries was accepted
and copied without difficulty or objection by the majority of scribes.

Trouble in Paradise

The ℵ B A D text of James 3:1 clearly makes good sense. For many centuries,
however, there have been readers of James who found that it did not make
the best sense. The history of scholarship reveals a procession of interpreters
who have struggled with the surviving text. John Chrysostom is one example.
By all indications he had the ℵ B A D text in front of him, and yet to find a
meaningful interpretation of it he evidently felt the need to delve into the
importance of joining the teaching of the faith with the doing of good works.
As he explained, teaching without doing was of no gain (κέρδος οὐδὲν) and
bore much damage and condemnation (ζημίαν πολλὴν καὶ κατάκρισεν). Those
who combine the right teaching (λόγων ὀρθῶν) with works are compared
with those described in Jas 3:2, who can bridle the whole body and thus are
perfect.[7] His conclusions may accord well with James' overall theology, but
why would he enlist them for a discussion of Jas 3:1, a text that, ostensibly,
says nothing more than to limit the number of teachers?

Another thread of textual difficulty, however, can begin to be unravelled
by looking into the second variant reading discussed above. What exactly
drove the 9th century scribe (or ancestor) of Codex Angelicus (020) to
change διδάσκαλοι to πολυδιδάσκαλοι? It might be tempting to explain it

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[7] John Chrysostom, *In Epistolam Sancti Jacobi* (PG 64:1042).

as a typical accident of hearing, an aural confusion of οι with υ, but, as will be seen, exegetical considerations prove this less likely. Instead, it seems more probable that this version represents the efforts of an intelligent scribe to fix a broken text: a conceptual change intended to make the text say what the scribe already knew it was supposed to mean. The switch from πολλοί to πολυ shifts the sense from a substantive to an adjective, so that the text no longer limits the quantity of teachers, but instead speaks to their quality: namely, they should not *teach-much*, or be long-spoken. This significant change might still be dismissed as an unintended accident if it did not accord so well with an already pre-established trend in the interpretation of Jas 3:1. The Old Latin Speculum, an early fifth century collection of patristic quotations, reads *multiloqui* at 3:1, and thus implies a text of James that discouraged not a great number of teachers, but teachers who went on at great length. Isho'Dad of Merv, the early 9th century commentator, argued that something like this was the meaning that James actually intended: "James is not trying to limit the number of teachers but rather trying to warn them against the dangers of false doctrines."[8] Thus the change to πολυδιδάσκαλοι, far from simply showing a scribe who needed his ears cleaned, demonstrates an ancient and long-held dissatisfaction with the dominant text of James.[9]

In the study of conjectural emendation, dissatisfaction often implies deficiency. These few ancient readers were dissatisfied with the text because there was a deficiency in the text. While many, if not most, readers have been able to make good sense of the text, a closer examination of it reveals several ways in which it does not make the best sense, or indeed, makes very little sense at all. These difficulties can be most easily seen in the way that modern interpreters have been forced to deal with the text. The first problem they have faced is how to connect a specific injunction against an excess of teachers with the remainder of the text, which immediately turns to general instructions for all people on controlling the tongue and speaking responsibly. As Douglas Moo queries, "Verse 1 raises the question of the occasion and specificity of James's warning about sinful speech. Why does

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[8] Isho'Dad of Merv, *CIM* 36–37. The leap from long-winded teachers to false teachers is not insurmountably great. The longer the teacher went on, the more likely they would be to teach something false. It is reasonable then that Isho'Dad could have understood the former to encompass the latter, especially if he was interpreting the text from memory.

[9] This does not even address the question of whether the 14th century scribe of ms 630 was dependent on 020, another ms that preserved the same reading but is no longer extant, or was an independent manifestation of this trend.

James single out the teacher in the opening of his exhortation?"[10] Why indeed. What would a limitation of teachers have to do with a general exhortation to good speech? The congregation is told to watch their tongues, an act of spiritual discipline that fits in with James' ethical thrust, but teachers are merely told to flee the profession, an act of escapism that seems atypical of James. Teachers, it would be assumed, would be equally obliged to watch their speech. Or, are the few who become teachers able to ignore the instructions given to the rest of the body and let their tongues roam free? Alternatively, if the general congregation were able to control their tongues, would they then be able to become teachers without fear of the judgment described in v. 1b? These questions might be playful, but they point to a key incongruity between the dominant reading's first verse and those that follow: while the general congregation is instructed to conquer sin, the teachers are told simply to hide from it.[11]

An even greater difficulty, however, is the internal logic of v. 1 itself. Most interpreters understand v. 1b, "knowing that we will receive greater judgement," as the ground for the opening injunction, "not many should be teachers."[12] How do we explain this flow of logic? Most commentators begin by constructing a social context, trying first to find in the history of James' community a reason why the number of teachers would need to be limited. That reason, they agree, was a massive influx of would-be teachers seeking the prestige and honour that came with the position. As James Adamson writes, "[t]he rough equivalent to the rabbi would have meant that a teacher in the early Jewish-Christian church would have had considerable prestige …"[13] and further "[i]n the Jewish Diaspora congregations there was an order of 'teachers,' which this passage suggests was in danger of being overrun by unworthy members and candidates."[14] Ralph Martin similarly confirms

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[10] Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James* (TNCT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985) 147.

[11] Or as Dibelius comments from the other side of the coin, "… the distance between the admonition in v. 1 and the following treatise is still recognizable. For it is out of the question that Jas seriously wished to ascribe to the teachers of the community, or to those who wish to become such (even if he were supposed to have known them personally), all of the sins to which he alludes in what follows …" (Dibelius, *James*, 182).

[12] Some, like Patrick Hartin (*James* [SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003] 182), argue that v. 2, with its opening γαρ, should properly be considered the ground for v. 1a. However, given that the premise of v. 2, "for we all stumble in many ways," could only be logically connected to v. 1a through the assumption of v. 1b, i.e. an impetus to avoid the greater judgement for all the many ways that we stumble, the argument is ultimately moot.

[13] James Adamson, *The Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 367–368.

[14] James Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 140.

that "[i]n the early church to be a teacher brought high status ..." [15] while Laws assures us that "[i]t may be presumed that is was the status given to the teacher that was the attraction in James' community."[16] Finally, Davids summarises:

> In the early church the charismatic office of teacher was valued and thus high in status. This naturally built upon the role of the teacher in Judaism, as is reflected in the gospels ... In this passage, then, the author deals with people wishing to put themselves forward as teachers because of the status and other rewards of the position.[17]

Once this social context is established, modern interpreters can then begin to make some sense of James' injunction: it was to scare off these fame-seekers that James shrouds the office of teacher with the certainty of perilous judgement! Being a teacher is not an easy path to honour, James seems to say, but is a tricky trail fraught with danger that should be reserved for only an elite few.[18] As Adamson explains "[t]he main thought of vv. 1–12 is the greater responsibility of teachers and the extremely dangerous character of the instrument which they have to use."[19] Or Moo again:

> ... but the logic of James's argument, as we follow it into v. 2, suggests ... [that] teachers, because their ministry involves speech, the hardest of all parts of the body to control, expose themselves to greater danger of judgment. Their constant use of the tongue means they can sin very easily, leading others astray at the same time.[20]

Similarly, Martin concludes: "James quickly supplies the reason why the office of teacher is not to be sought. Those who teach come under greater scrutiny and are liable to the greater (μείζων) judgment (κρίμα)."[21]

With this construction, modern interpreters do manage to give the dominant reading a degree of reasonableness, but it does not address all of the inherent difficulties. Foremost of these is the inadequacy of its solution. All versions of James are united in their agreement that teachers will bear greater judgement. The dominant reading's answer to this is to discourage the

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[15] Ralph Martin, *James* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1988) 108.

[16] Laws, *James*, 141.

[17] Davids, *James*, 136.

[18] Adamson offers a uniquely glurgy paraphrase for modern Christians "Don't many of you go in for the Ministry; the standard of righteousness is such that few can hope to approach (and none can reach)." (*The Man*, 367–368).

[19] Adamson, *James*, 141.

[20] Moo, *James*, 149–150.

[21] Martin, *James*, 107.

majority from becoming teachers. Even if we accept this limitation, however, it is only that: a *limitation*, not a *ban*. The *whole* of James' community is not kept from becoming teachers, only *many* of them are. *Some* of them, presumably, will still have to do it, and for those poor souls remains only the prospect of certain judgement. This is the inadequacy of the dominant reading, for if teaching really does represent the path to danger, what sense would it make to warn only part of the congregation away from it? That would be akin to posting a sign on the highway saying "bridge out ahead: road closed to *most* cars." As James himself implies in v. 1, teachers were a necessity in the early church.[22] Dangerous or not, some people would still have to be teachers. If teaching was really such a dangerous calling, however, then a sensible text would give instruction and advice how to pursue it safely. Tellingly, that is exactly the logic James follows in the rest of the text. Even if it was "lesser" rather than "greater," general congregants would, presumably, still be subject to judgement for their verbal sin. Yet in vv. 2–12 James does not command them to avoid talking, but instead teaches them how to speak responsibly in order to avoid that judgement. The dominant reading does nothing so sensible for the few poor souls who become teachers and therefore bear inevitable judgement, and that failure reveals its own deficiency.

Some commentators have tried to alleviate this problem by playing with the definition of "judgment", κρίμα. Lexically, it is possible that the term could refer to either a harsher punishment, or a stricter scrutiny. As Dibelius documents, the first sense is more common and is most likely the intended meaning here.[23] Interpreters of the dominant reading, however, tend to favour the latter meaning in order to help the reading make more sense.[24] After all, while automatically dispensing a stricter penalty to teachers would seem harsh and ungrateful, simply holding them to a stricter standard more commensurate with their responsibility seems much more fair and fitting, even echoing the classic "to whom much is given, much is expected" literary motif.[25] As Laws, for example, explains:

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[22] Most commentators interpret the first person plural in v. 1b as indicating James' own membership in the teaching profession, e.g. Dibelius, "The author clearly considers himself among the teachers" (*James*, 183).

[23] Dibelius, *James*, 182.

[24] Either that, or, like Hartin, they argue that "both meanings are possible. It is not necessary to choose between them;" (Hartin, *James*, 173) which, conveniently, allows the dominant reading to continue to experience redemption from the latter meaning.

[25] Davids in fact uses that very phrase: "Not so, says James, for not many should be teachers. Only a few are called. What is more, such a role means not simply honor and a following, but responsibility, for 'to whom much is given from him much is required.'" (Davids, *James*, 136).

> The noun *krima* can mean process of judging, and also the judicial verdict, usually of condemnation. It generally carries the latter sense when found, as here, with the verb *lambanō* (cf. Mk xii.40; Rom. xiii. 2). However, it seems unlikely that James would hold out to all teachers, and indeed himself, only the prospect of greater or lesser punishment.[26]

It is commendable that such scholars see the injustice inherent in blindly sentencing teachers to a harsher punishment. It is unfortunate, however, that this causes them to question the simple meaning of common words and phrases instead of re-evaluating the reading itself.

Yet another difficulty with the dominant reading is found when it is compared with an early Christian context. Earliest Christianity was undoubtedly a diverse phenomenon. The extent of the connection between the earliest Christian communities has long been a subject of debate,[27] and scholars of James continue to disagree on the letter's exact provenance and whether it knew of or engaged other Christian writers like Paul.[28] Accordingly, any discord the dominant reading may have will necessarily be of limited probative value, since it could simply reflect the normal conflict and diversity of the time. The comparison, however, is still worth making. James' early Christian circulation more than likely would have overlapped broader Christianity,[29] and as time progressed this connection would only expand. Agreement with this broader theological context quite possibly would have been important to the author or editors of the epistle,[30] and certainly would have been increasingly important to the earliest scribes and readers. In other words, even allowing for early diversity, it is still notable when an early Christian document disagrees with the broad strokes of earliest Christianity. To that end, it is significant that the dominant reading appears to differ from other Christian documents on the subject of teachers.

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[26] Laws, *James*, 144.

[27] A discussion really inaugurated by Walter Bauer in his classic *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler Press, 1996), though modern readers might find its latest incarnation more accessible, i.e. Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianites: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford, 2005).

[28] See discussion, for example, in Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Letter of James* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1995) 58 ff.

[29] While Bauckham et al. (*The Gospel for All Christians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]) may go too far in describing the interaction between the early Christian communities as a "holy internet," Epp ("New Testament Papyrus Manuscripts and Letter Carrying in Greco-Roman Times" in Birger A. Pearson, ed., *The Future of Early Christianity* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991] 35–56) has shown that such integrative communication between far-flung communities would have been at least possible.

[30] Setting aside, for the moment, discussions of authorship.

The rest of the New Testament does not appear to know of any specific limitation of teachers in early Christianity. To be sure, one could point to Matthew 23:8 where Jesus is reported to say "but do not be called rabbi (ῥαββί), for you have one teacher (διδάσκαλος), and all of you are brothers and sisters." This might, on first glance, appear to support the type of limitation found in the dominant reading, but on further study this is found to be untrue. First, if this text is talking about the same type of teachers found in Jas 3:1, then it is not simply limiting them, but prohibiting them completely. No one should be a teacher, according to this text, for they should all consider themselves siblings of equal stature. Second, as many commentators have noted, Matt 23:8 is not intended to eliminate the function of teachers in the community, but rather to prevent the self-glorification that can come with such titles. As Donald Hagner comments, "[t]he point here is not to deny that the Christian community has teachers, but rather to put up a barrier against the elevation of some above others and the pride that so naturally accompanies such differentiation."[31] Instead of a limitation of teachers, the rest of the New Testament seems to demonstrate a general exhortation to teaching. In Matthew's account of Jesus, one of the last commands he gives the community is to *teach* (διδάσκοντες) new disciples all that Jesus had taught them (Matt 28:20). The author of Colossians seems to describe teaching as an interactive component of the community life: "Let the word of Christ live in you abundantly, teaching (διδάσκοντες) and admonishing each other in all wisdom …" (3:16). Finally, the author of Hebrews actually chastises his readers for not yet having matured enough to participate in the teaching practice: "For by this time you also should be teachers (διδάσκαλοι) instead you have need for someone to teach you again the elementary principles of the words of God …" (Heb 5:12).

In the writings of Paul, the general call to teaching found in the rest of the New Testament is developed into something much more specific. Paul has an extensive theology of spiritual gifts that he discusses on several occasions. In 1 Cor 12:1, for example, he introduces the subject saying "Now about spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant … there are varieties of spiritual gifts, but one same spirit." For Paul, these spiritual gifts are special abilities and roles given to all members of the early church to help them function as an interactive community. One of these spiritual gifts

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[31] Donald Hagner, *Matthew* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1995) 661.

is teaching, and Paul makes it clear that those who are given the gift of teaching had better make sure that they teach! As he writes in Romans: "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *let each exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches(διδάσκων), in his teaching(διδασκαλίᾳ);" (Rom 12:6–7, NASB). Teaching is, in Paul, a gifting dispensed by God at his prerogative (1Cor 12:28, Cf. Eph 4:11) and thus, contrary to the dominant reading of Jas 3:1, not subject to human regulation or limiting. In other words, if Paul read the dominant reading he might respond "No, it is not for us to decide to how many God gives the gift of teaching." Thus, whether it is differing with a general call to teaching or contradicting a theology of spiritual gifts, the discord the dominant reading exhibits with an early Christian context is just one more indicator of its problematic nature.

A Conjectured Solution

For several centuries scholars have surveyed all of these problems and difficulties with the dominant reading and found them to create an insurmountable obstacle to affirming the reading's authenticity. The reading may have come to dominate the manuscript tradition, but it simply does not fit in the text, no matter how hard interpreters strain to shoehorn it in. The reading must, therefore, be secondary, and if it is secondary, then it is the duty of textual critics to recover the earlier reading that it supplanted. Most traditional textual critics would therefore look to the other variant readings in the extant manuscript base. Of these, the second variant discussed above—the change from διδάσκαλοι to πολυδιδάσκαλοι—immediately looks the most promising. After all, if it was, as we argued here, a scribal attempt to fix the deficiencies of the dominant reading, it would be only natural for it to solve many of the problems attendant to that dominant reading. Most textual critics, however, dismiss the reading rather quickly, since it finds support only in two later minuscules. Of course, it is possible that πολυδιδάσκαλοι does predate the dominant reading and has simply managed to survive only in late minuscules, but ultimately this seems unlikely, primarily because of stemmatological reasons that will be discussed shortly. The conclusion seems unavoidable then that while the dominant reading is inauthentic, it is the least inauthentic of the extant readings.

Unwilling to settle for merely the best of a bad lot, some textual critics have looked outside of the extant manuscript tradition to find a conjectural

reading that might prove more satisfactory. Daniel Völter, taking a cue from Hermas *Sim.* 9.22.2, has proposed ἐθελοδιδάσκαλοι.[32] The word would refer to a self-proclaimed teacher, as opposed to one authorized by the church. Jas 3:1 would then be a call for would-be teachers to submit to church authority, or face a greater judgement. While that would solve some of the logic problems internal to the dominant reading, it does not alleviate any of the contextual incongruities. Another proposal comes from Franz Mussner.[33] Being more of a minimalist, he argues that we simply need to shorten πολλοί to πολύ and understand it adjectively. This is very similar to the πολυδιδάσκαλοι reading discussed above, and can be evaluated in the same way. Lachmann proposed the conjecture of πῶλοι διδάσκαλοι,[34] which would therefore prohibit *young* teachers. While this might then find echo in other early Christian writings—historically, many have interpreted νεόφυτος in 1 Tim 3:5 or the variously used πρεσβύτερος (literally "being of an advanced age" s.v. BDAG) as a discouragement of youthful ordination— it suffers under the dependence on a rather unlikely usage of πῶλος: the word is used 12 times in the New Testament, always in its more common meaning as a reference to a young colt or donkey. Another conjecture of note, documented by Dibelius, proposes reading πλάνοι διδάσκαλοι, "do not be deceitful teachers."[35] This is a strong option in that it would solve most of the problems inherent in the dominant reading, but, as will be seen, it does not provide the best account for the rise of the extant text. None of these conjectures has gathered any large amount of scholarly support.

A different conjecture is found in μὴ πολύλαλοι διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε, "do not be garrulous teachers." It is not completely clear who first proposed the reading, as it appears to have slipped rather surreptitiously through the back channels of textual criticism for several centuries now. The latest Bauer lexicon attributes the conjecture to a "VandeSande Bakhuyzen," though the only bibliographical information it provides is a reference to the standard grammar by Blass and Debrunner.[36] The most recent edition of that work is only slightly more helpful, claiming that a "de Sande Bakhuizen" offered

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[32] Daniel Völter, "Zwei neue Wörter für das Lexicon des griechischen Neuen Testaments?" *ZNW* 10 (1909):328 ff.

[33] Franz Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief* (4th ed.; HTKNT 13; Freiburg: Herder, 1975) 159.

[34] Documented in Nestle, *Introduction*, 168.

[35] Dibelius, *James*, 183 n. 9.

[36] BDAG, s.v. πολύλαλος.

the reading based on the old Latin attestation of *multiloqui* discussed above.[37] The scholar in question is Willem Hendrik Van De Sande Bakhuyzen, who in 1880 published *Over De Toepassing Ven De Conjecturaal-Kritiek Op Den Tekst Des Nieuwen Testaments*.[38] In the main text he criticizes the dominant reading for not fitting in with the context of James 3; namely that the rest of the text instructs as to the moral quality of speech, and thus teachers should be exhorted likewise. To that end Van de Sande Bakhuyzen appears to support the alternate reading of πλανοδιδάσκαλοι, which he attributes to a scholar named Naber.[39] In a footnote, however, Van de Sande Bakhuyzen mentions how a colleague named de Hoop Scheffer has, following the Latin, proposed πολύλαλοι and then concludes that this is likely the correct reading.[40] No bibliographical information is given for de Hoop Scheffer, but the reading can surely be traced back further than him, since Bowyer includes it in his 1782 collection of New Testament conjectures.[41] Bowyer's source is identified only as "P. Junius," and while that likely refers to Franciscus Junius, it is unclear whether this is the father (1545–1602) or his son of the same name (1589–1677), both of whom published scholarly investigations of the New Testament text. Either way, πολύλαλοι turns out to be quite a pedigreed conjecture that can be dated back at least as far as the very beginnings of modern critical study.[42]

It appears that no sustained argument has ever been published in support of πολύλαλοι, which is a surprise considering how much there is to commend in the reading. That it preserves an earlier form of James 3:1 can be seen, in quick succession, to be *not impossible*, then quite *possible*, and finally rather *probable*. First, πολύλαλοι can be called not impossible because there are no valid objections to it; no real reason why it could not be authentic. Valid objections could concern whether it would fit with James' vocabulary and style, or whether its use in 3:1 would fall within the normal semantic usage of the word. Vocabulary might initially appear problematic simply because the word πολύλαλος is so rare.[43] While its occurrence here would constitute a

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[37] BDF, § 115.1.

[38] Willem Hendrik Van De Sande Bakhuyzen, *Over De Toepassing Ven De Conjecturaal-Kritiek Op Den Tekst Des Nieuwen Testaments* (Haarlem: F. Bohn, 1880).

[39] Van De Sande Bakhuyzen, *Over*, 292.

[40] Van De Sande Bakhuyzen, *Over*, 292, n. 1.

[41] Bowyer, *Conjecture*, 450.

[42] Nestle (*Introduction*, 168) also traces this conjecture back as far as Junias, though he provides no further documentation.

[43] TLG lists only 15 occurrences: Herodianus, *De pros.cath.* 3.1.233.5, 15; Pythagoras, *Frag.*

New Testament *hapax legomenon*, that would not be an obstacle since James already demonstrates a proclivity for such rare words. Davids, among many others, comments:

> A further characteristic of James is his unusual vocabulary ... There are, according to Mayor, ccxlvi–ccxlviii, 63 New Testament hapax legomena in James. Of these 13 appear in James for the first time in Greek ... Some of these may have been in the language previously, while one or two James may have coined himself ....[44]

A rare word like πολύλαλος would thus be quite at home in the vocabulary of James. Questions of style would ask whether or not James would have used a word like πολύλαλος. While it is a more complex compound word, it cannot out of hand be dismissed as incongruent with James' style, since he uses many other similar compounds. For example, in 3:2 he uses χαλιναγωγέω (bridle), in 3:4 he uses εὐθύνω (inclination), and in 2:2 he offers χρυσοδακτύλιος (gold ring). Interestingly, all of those are also exceedingly rare terms, with the last likely even invented by James.[45] Finally, a use here as part of a moral exhortation to teachers regarding the quality of their speech would not at all be outside of the semantic range of πολύλαλοι. Indeed, beyond the New Testament, that is how the word is often used. In the first century *Hermas*, we find πολύλαλος in a typical vice list: "... and immediately he is impudent and shameless and garrulous (πολύλαλος) and lives in many luxuries and in many other deceptions and accepts money for his prophesying, and if he does not get money, he does not prophesy."[46] The third century *Apostolic Constitutions* contains an even more notable occurrence in its standards for godly widows: "Let every widow be meek, quiet, gentle, sincere, free from anger, not talkative (μὴ πολύλαλος), not disruptive, not quick to talk, not ill-speaking, not a gossip, not double-tongued, not a busybody."[47] Such references

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astr. 11.2.125.6; Clemens, *Homiliae* 18.11.3.3; Dionysius, *kappa* 8.1; Herm. 11.12; Septem Sapientes, *Apophthegmata* 1.3; *Vitae Aesopi, Vita G,* 26.7, 26.8, *Vita W,* 26.4; Plotinus *Enneades,* 6.2.21.4; Stobaeus, *Anthologium,* 3.1.172.5; Amphilochius, *Orat. Mes.*191; Libanius, *Declamationes 1–51.* 27.1.2.10; Orion, *Etym. alpha,* 6.12; *Const.Ap.* 3.5.2.

[44] Davids, *James,* 58–59.

[45] In the New Testament, χαλιναγωγέω occurs only in James, εὐθύνω occurs in one other place in John 1:23, though that is embedded in a quotation from Isa. 40:3, and David (*James,* 59) argues that χρυσοδακτύλιος was coined by James. This last claim can never be known for sure, of course, but it is notable that TLG finds only five occurrences of the word in the first fifteen centuries of this age, with the earliest being James 3:1, while the next earliest comes some 400 years later in Cyril, *Comm. Johannem* 1.504.24.
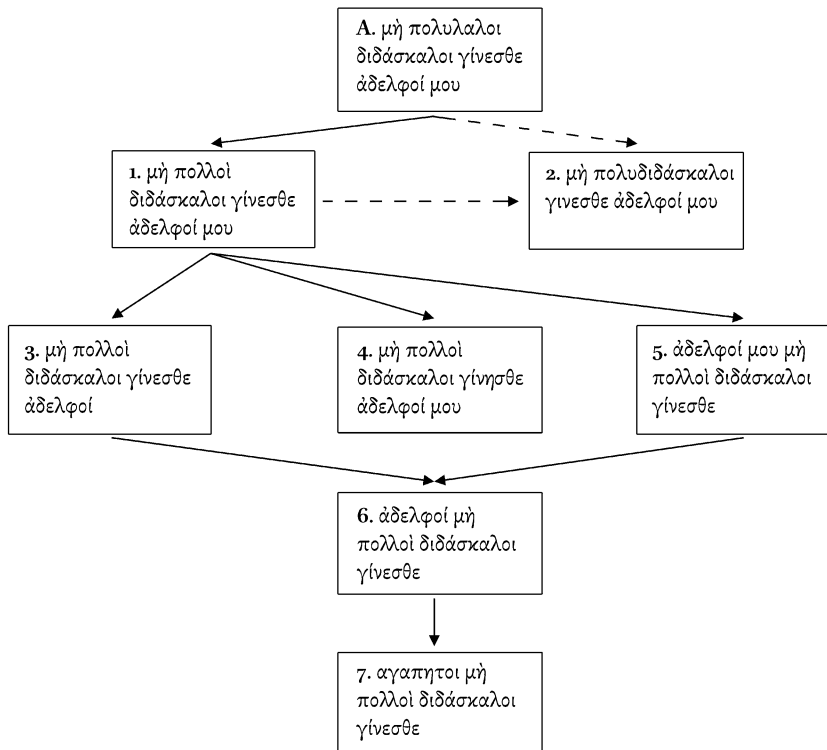
[46] Herm. 43.12.

[47] *Con.Apost.* 3.5.2.

show that the employment of πολύλαλος in James 3:1 would be well within the characteristic usage of that word.[48] Given, therefore, that πολύλαλος would not violate any constraints of vocabulary, style or semantics, the reading can at least be described as not impossible.

A much more charitable appraisal of πολύλαλος can yet be made however, since far from merely being not impossible, the proposal can also be proven as quite possible. This is because we can easily construct a feasible theory of descent beginning with the reading. That is, if we assume πολύλαλος as an earlier text form, it is possible to give a reasonable explanation of how subsequent versions, such as the dominant reading, were derived. While it is true that, thanks to the random quirks of human reading errors, the textual critic is often forced to "clutch out of the air a word with perhaps no more than a general resemblance to the transmitted reading,"[49] it nevertheless strengthens the case for a conjecture when it can explain the origin of the other readings, as per the cardinal rule of textual criticism. It has already been seen how the remaining variants of 3:1 are likely derived from the dominant reading, but it has yet to be seen how easily the dominant reading can be derived from this conjecture. Simply put, it likely resulted from the occurrence of a common scribal habit: haplography. Similarity of letters within or between words often caused scribes' eyes to leap from one set to the other thereby accidentally omitting what lay between.[50] This could have easily occurred with an earlier πολύλαλοι when the scribe leapt from one λ to the other, resulting in the dominant πολλοί. Compare: **ΠΟΛΥΛΑΛΟΙ → ΠΟΛ(ΥΛΑ)ΛΟΙ → ΠΟΛΛΟΙ**. It is not the neatest example of haplography, but it is precisely the type of messy mistake to which the earliest untrained scribes were prone. Given this prospect, the conjectured transmission stemma would be as follows:

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[48] That these references post-date James does not detract from the point, but rather raises the tantalizing possibility that it was actually an earlier form of James containing πολύλαλος that inaugurated or popularized such usage in Christian circles.

[49] Nisbet, "Conjectures" 66.

[50] Cf. Metzger & Ehrman, *Introduction*, 253–254.

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ A. μὴ πολυλαλοι      │
                    │ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε   │
                    │ ἀδελφοί μου          │
                    └─────────────────────┘
            ┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
            │ 1. μὴ πολλοὶ      │      │ 2. μὴ πολυδιδάσκαλοι  │
            │ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε │─ ─ ─▶│ γινεσθε ἀδελφοί μου   │
            │ ἀδελφοί μου        │      └──────────────────────┘
            └──────────────────┘
   ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
   │ 3. μὴ πολλοὶ      │  │ 4. μὴ πολλοὶ      │  │ 5. ἀδελφοί μου μὴ │
   │ διδάσκαλοι γίνεσθε │  │ διδάσκαλοι γίνησθε │  │ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι │
   │ ἀδελφοί            │  │ ἀδελφοί μου        │  │ γίνεσθε            │
   └──────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ 6. ἀδελφοί μὴ        │
                    │ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι    │
                    │ γίνεσθε              │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ 7. αγαπητοι μὴ       │
                    │ πολλοὶ διδάσκαλοι    │
                    │ γίνεσθε              │
                    └─────────────────────┘
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Since, therefore, it is able to explain the rise and origin of the other variants, it must be admitted that the conjectural proposal of πολύλαλος is distinctly possible.

Finally, more than just being possible, as an earlier form of Jas 3:1 πολύλαλος is actually quite probable. Interpreters of the dominant reading have, through a variety of exegetical manoeuvres already discussed, managed to imbue that text with a degree of sensibility. As was apparent, however, they have not managed to address all of its inherent problems. In contrast, πολύλαλοι appears to solve all of those problems, and in so doing it demonstrates its own superiority. In other words, while the dominant reading may make *some* sense, πολύλαλοι makes *better* sense, and that is why it is probably the earlier reading. This can be seen through a simple comparison. First, the dominant reading has difficulty connecting with its immediate context: how does a specific limitation of teachers connect to the general moral exhortation to good speech found in the surrounding verses? With πολύλαλοι however, the connection is quite clear, since the entire text then becomes one coherent

call to controlled speech. James has one message—control your tongue—
and is simply expanding the application outwards in concentric circles: first
to the teachers, then to the rest.

For a second comparison, the dominant reading depended on the recon-
struction of a specific set of historical circumstances: an influx into James'
community of glory-seeking, unworthy teachers. This premise was neces-
sary to explain why James would take the unusual step of trying to limit the
number of teachers. With πολύλαλοι however, no such conjecture is needed.
Rather than trying to limit new unworthy teachers, this text simply instructs
existing teachers to be worthy. Such instructions make sense all on their own,
and need no supporting explanation involving historical events which may
or may not have occurred.

Third, to make the dominant reading more palatable, interpreters pressed
into service a less common meaning of κρίμα, so that instead of a greater
judgment, teachers would be in danger of greater *scrutiny*. While that sense
could still be understood with πολύλαλοι—e.g. "watch your words, since
they will be more rigorously scrutinized"—the advantage is that it is not
at all necessary. With πολύλαλοι, the more common meaning of κρίμα as
judgment or penalty can easily be read if the phrase is understood as a
conditional statement—e.g. "do not be garrulous teachers, or receive a greater
judgement!" This understanding also has the benefit of being more fair and
just, since any judgment the teachers receive would be the result of their
own garrulous disobedience, and not simply a blind response to their choice
of profession.

Fourth, while the dominant reading stood in tension with other early
Christian writings, πολύλαλοι fits much better with its early Christian context.
Within James, by instructing teachers to hide from potential sin rather than
conquering it, the dominant reading marked a departure from the prevailing
train of thought. A reading of πολύλαλοι however, could be seen as a natural
development of the logic found in James, such as 1:19, "everyone should be
quick to listen but slow to speak …"[51] Outside of James, rather than disagreeing
with other Christian thinkers about the calling of teachers, πολύλαλοι would
fit well with other exhortations to controlled, responsible speech, such as
Matt 12:36–37, "I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an
account for every careless word you utter; for by your words you will be

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[51] Indeed, it is telling that even with the dominant reading several commentators see that
3:1 is supposed to function as a development of 1:19, e.g. Adamson, *James*, 93 or Hartin, *James*,
181.

justified, and by your words you will be condemned"⁵² (NRSV) or Matt 6:7,
"When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases (βατταλογήσητε) as
the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard because of their many words
(πολυλογία)" (NRSV). These texts in particular, being placed as they are on the
lips of Jesus, offer especially strong support for πολύλαλοι in light of James'
common tendency to echo Jesus traditions.⁵³ To that end, it is also notable
that the second clause, μεῖζον κρίμα λημψόμεθα, already echoes Jesus tradition
from Mark 12:40 λήμψονται περισσότερον κρίμα.⁵⁴

Such echoes can be found not only in the teachings of Jesus, but in classical
philosophers as well. Plutarch, writing contemporarily with James, composed
an entire essay on garrulousness. While he does not use πολύλαλος, preferring
the term ἀδολεσχία instead, he does show familiarity with similar terms, such
as πολύφωνία.⁵⁵ Further, while he includes no specific injunction for teachers,
he does make a connection between teachers and not being garrulous, writing
poetically that "we have men as teachers, but in keeping silent we have
gods, and we receive from them this lesson of silence."⁵⁶ On the whole, the
conceptual parallels are quite striking. Like James, he enlists the metaphor
of the bridle, warning against the disaster brought on by "unbridled tongues"
(ἀχαλίνων στομάτων).⁵⁷ More substantively, he often refers to the fight against
garrulousness in distinctly religious terms, calling garrulousness one of the
"diseases of the soul" (νοσήμασαι τῆς ψυχῆς),⁵⁸ describing it as something to
be "repented" (μετενόησε) of,⁵⁹ and calling those who succeed "holy" (ἅγιον)⁶⁰
It is most interesting, therefore, to see how a reading of πολύλαλοι in Jas 3:1
would seat James so well alongside his peers in the moral thought-world
of his time. Lastly, a reading of πολύλαλοι would explain several historical

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⁵² See further discussions of this parallel in, among others, Joseph Mayor, *The Epistle of
James* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990) 107 ff. and Davids, *James*, 136.

⁵³ Cf. John Kloppenborg, "Reception and Emulation of the Jesus Traditions in James" in
Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg (eds.). *Reading James with New Eyes* (New York: T.
& T. Clark International, 2007). Though it should be admitted that the force of this point is
somewhat lessened by the debate over whether Matt 12:36–37, in light of its apocalyptic
overtones, constitutes authentic Jesus tradition. It is still a strong point, however, if we
understand that James, not having the benefit of modern critical studies, *perceived* the tradition
to be authentic.

⁵⁴ See discussion in, among others, Davids, *James*, 137.

⁵⁵ Plutarch, *De garrulitate* 504B (W.C. Helmbold, LCL).

⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Garr*. 506A.

⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Garr*. 503C.

⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Garr*. 502E.

⁵⁹ Plutarch, *Garr*. 515A.

⁶⁰ Plutarch, *Garr*. 510E.

incongruities that have dogged the dominant reading, such as why the old Latin reads the synonymous *multiloqui*, or why Isho'Dad of Merv was sure that James spoke to the quality of the teaching rather than the quantity of the teachers. These comparisons show how πολύλαλοι makes better sense than the dominant reading and therefore is probably an earlier and more authentic version of the text. It is time, then, for the reading that tops the manuscripts to be sent to the bottom of the page, and the bold but sensible conjecture of πολύλαλοι to be accepted in its place.

JAMES 4:2

Introduction

The year was 1519 when Erasmus first proposed that the text of James be emended at 4:2 to read φθονεῖτε instead of φονεύετε, and since then it has become one of the most famous conjectures in New Testament studies. Part of the reason for the conjecture's continued popularity is surely the continued problems with the text itself. The chapter opens with a philosophical question to the readers: πόθεν πόλεμοι καὶ πόθεν μάχαι ἐν ὑμῖν; The repetition, obscured by most English translations, is another example of James' dependency on the parallelism of Hebrew poetry: *whence the wars and whence the fights among you?* In a rhetorical flourish, James proceeds to answer his own question: οὐκ ἐντεῦθεν, ἐκ τῶν ἡδονῶν ὑμῶν τῶν στρατευομένων ἐν τοῖς μέλεσιν ὑμῶν; *Do they not come from this? From your selfish desires making battle among your members?* It is in the next line, however, when James develops his description of this phenomenon, that problems begin in the extant text: ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε— *you desire and do not have you murder and you covet and you are not able to attain you fight and wage war.* Even before we insert punctuation to clarify the logical flow of the text, φονεύετε (you murder) is already a startling choice of words. While *fighting* surely occurs in all social organizations and Christian documents in general often use *war* language to describe the moral struggle,[1] was actual *murder* really a problem in James' community? If so, why does he mention it so casually between two other lesser vices, *desire* and *coveting*? As Hort pondered:

> This has long been recognised as a serious difficulty, because it is a strange word to couple with ζηλοῦτε, more especially as preceding it. Jealousy or envy would be the cause, not the result, of murder. Moreover "murder" is a kind of crime that we should hardly look for among any early Christians.[2]

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[1] e.g. The "armour of God" in Eph 6:10–17.

[2] F.J.A. Hort, *The Epistle of James* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1909) 89. Dibelius similarly comments: "The verb "you murder" (φονεύτε) especially destroys the effect, although this

Interpreters of the extant text have made many attempts to explain this unusual reference to murder.

The Problem and Its Problematic Solutions

The presence of murder in the text is problematic in at least two ways. First, as Hort commented above, it is literarily anticlimactic since it precedes "covet" rather than follows it. Murder might be understandable as a consequence of coveting, but not a cause. While some might explain this away as simply part of the roughness of James' literary style, the second problem is much harder to dismiss: could murder actually have existed in the believing community to which James wrote? These problems have plagued interpreters of this text for ages, and the history of their attempts to solve them is worth surveying.

One of the earliest solutions came from Oecumenius, who was the first to propose a spiritualised understanding of the term, concluding "murders and wars, these do not speak physically but spiritually."[3] Following that, a more popular solution was simply to water down the sense of φονεύτε, so that rather than literal murder, it referred to something lesser, such as "hate" or some other less drastic disposition. The most famous example of this was probably John Wesley, who phrased it "you kill—in your heart" and justified it with a paraphrased reference to Matt 5:22 "for he that hateth his brother is a murderer."[4] A more creative solution was proposed by Gerald Rendall, who, taking his cue from the use of ζηλοῦτε, argued that James was targeting members of the Jewish zealot movement who had come to consider murder as an acceptable solution to religious problems.[5] None of these solutions however, were able to win the consensus of scholarship. As Adamson summarised:

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word is attested by all the manuscripts. "You murder" neither fits well with the following "you are envious" (ζηλοῦτε), which sounds slightly out of place following an accusation of murder, nor does it fit the sense of the section as a whole" (Martin Dibelius, *James* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 217).

    [3] Oecumenius, *Commentary on James* (*PG* 119:492). οὕτω καὶ φόνους καὶ πολέμους, οὐ τοὺς σωματικοὺς, ἀλλα τοὺς ψυχικοὺς λέγει.

    [4] John Wesley, *Wesley's Notes on the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), s.v. Sleeper also appears to take this position, writing "Despite the harshness of the language, then, it seems best to take it symbolically …" (C. Freeman Sleeper, *James* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1998] 103).

    [5] Gerald H. Rendall, *The Epistle of St. James and Judaic Christianity* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1927) 113.

Every attempt to makes sense of 'you kill' (*phoneute*) as it stands in the traditional text produces an intolerable climax, for example: (i) as a reference to Zealotism (Rendall); (ii) as hendiadys, 'You murderously covet,' *occiditis per odia et zelum* (Bengel); (iii) as a rendering of the Aramaic for the Arabic use of 'kill' *qātala*, in a milder sense, 'quarrel'; and (iv) by the psychopathic analog, 'hate' (Oecumenius, Theophylact).[6]

Another type of solution—one based on the structure and punctuation of the text—has found much more success.

Is it possible to punctuate away the problem of murder? The traditional structure, found in classic texts like Westcott and Hort, modern standard texts such as NA27 and contemporary translations like the NIV, uses a three clause sequence. The first clause tells of a simple but frustrated desire: ἐπιθυμεῖτε καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε—"you desire yet you do not have." The second clause offers a progressive parallel that takes the frustration to the next level: φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν—"you murder and you covet yet you are not able to obtain." The final clause stands alone, proceeding without any connective, and describes the final result of all this frustration: μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε—"you fight and wage war." In this way the entire verse becomes an answer to the question in v. 1, which inquired as to the origin of their fighting and warring. The cause, James answers, is their frustrated desire. The solution, James explains in subsequent verses, is to take these desires to God through a proper petition.[7]

This three clause format has always had much to commend in it. It offers a smooth and progressive theological exposition of the theme: the source and solution of their conflict. It offers a parallelism that is typical of James' style, with the first two progressive clauses leading to the inevitable consequence in the third. Note how the basic desire of the first clause, ἐπιθυμεῖτε, grows into the vain attempts to fulfill that desire in the second clause, φονεύετε καὶ ζηλοῦτε, while both clauses describe the frustration of that desire with conceptually synonymous phrases: καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε and καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν. It also has the benefit of pedigree, being supported by the standard critical texts and the most popular modern translations. What it has never had, however, is a satisfactory explanation for the problem of murder.

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[6] Adamson *James*, 167.

[7] As the end of v. 2 explains, "you do not have because you do not ask," and as v. 3 further explains, when they do ask they do not receive "because you ask with wrong motives." The implication is that the readers need to purify their motives and ask God properly, as v. 8 later instructs "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you, cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded."

This attempt to solve the problem is centred on a new two clause structure. First popularised by Hort,[8] this structure has been adopted by modern translations such as the NRSV. It too sees a neat parallel structure, characterised by frustrated desire and unfortunate response. Each clause is built from three progressive elements. First comes the desire: ἐπιθυμεῖτε in the first clause, ζηλοῦτε in the second. Next comes the denial of that desire: καὶ οὐκ ἔχετε in the first, καὶ οὐ δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν in the second. Finally, each clause gives the unfortunate response to that frustration: φονεύετε in the first, and the compound μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε in the second. This structure has garnered much support, primarily because of its tight parallelism. As Ropes comments, "[t]his punctuation alone … preserves the perfect parallelism between the two series of verbs, which is fatally marred by the usual punctuation …"[9] True enough, the comparison is very neat:

	ἐπιθυμεῖτε	καὶ	οὐκ	ἔχετε	φονεύτε
καὶ	ζηλοῦτε	καὶ	οὐ	δύνασθε ἐπιτυχεῖν	μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε

Note how each element is paired with an almost synonymous counterpart in the next clause. The most important question remains though: is this new structure enough to solve the problem of murder in James 4:2?

Admittedly, this structural solution goes a long way towards solving the problem. The use of φονεύετε becomes much less jarring when paired with μάχεσθε καὶ πολεμεῖτε, and in fact forms a rather acceptable thematic match with them. Many interpreters, however, still say that it does not go far enough. Some, like Mayor, argue that there is still a troubling anticlimax to the text:

> If it is recognised that, whatever punctuation we adopt, φονεύετε can only be taken here in its literal sense, [then] it must be allowed that it disturbs the natural order, and strikes, as it were, a false note between the πόλεμοι and μάχαι of ver. 1 and the μάχεσθε and πολεμεῖτε of ver. 2.[10]

While it is true that it is still slightly backwards to have murder preceding the fighting, the larger problem even with this new structure remains the implication that James' community of believers was struggling with murder at all. How could we explain this rather lethal form of fellowship?

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[8] Hort, *James*, 89.

[9] James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC 41; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978[originally published 1916]) 254.

[10] Mayor, *James*, 137.

One popular way is to generalize the phenomenon by arguing that James was not addressing a specific community but Christendom as a whole. After all, while it might be difficult to imagine murder occurring in one specific tight-knit group of believers, it is much easier to accept just the general possibility of someone somewhere doing it. Thus Ropes argues:

> φονεύτε, 'kill,' 'murder.' No weaker sense is possible, and none here is necessary, for James is not describing the condition of any special community, but is analysing the result of choosing pleasure instead of God.[11]

Or again later,

> James, writing to no one community, but to the whole Christian world, is speaking of general tendencies, not of the sins of any particular local group.[12]

The problem with this proposal, besides the fact that it likely over-estimates the broader unity of early Christianity,[13] is that James already clearly situated the discussion in a specific local context when in v. 1 he specified ἐν ὑμῖν, "among you." Another proposal then is to concede that James is addressing a local group, but deny that he is describing an ongoing event; instead, James is theorizing about hypothetical eventualities. As Moo explains:

> As we have seen, the tradition to which James is indebted often portrayed murder as the end product of envy. James is warning his readers about just where their envious desires might lead them if not checked in time. James's readers are not yet killing each other. But 'fightings' and 'wars' are already in evidence among them; and, if covetous zeal goes unrestrained, the danger of actual violence is real.[14]

The problem with this idea, however, is that it needlessly dissects the text: "murder" occurs in close proximity and in the same context as "fightings" and "wars"; why should one be classified as ongoing while the latter is only hypothetical? The same can be said for any other spiritualised or non-literal rendering of the term: on what basis could one part of an otherwise literal verse be taken non-literally? In a consistent reading of the text then, even with the new two-clause structure, the inclusion of murder in James' community is still seriously problematic.

In the final analysis it can be seen that despite all the various efforts to mollify it, murder is still a real obstacle to the interpretation of Jas 4:2. As Adamson admits:

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[11] Ropes, *James*, 254–255.
[12] Ropes, *James*, 255.
[13] See Ch. 2, note 29.
[14] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, (Pillar; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000) 184.

> ... the thought is ruined by the word for 'you kill' with any punctuation. The
> word goes far beyond the limits of the metaphorical or modified use of 'wars'
> and 'battles' and 'campaigning' in vv. 1–3. In spite of all the arguments to the
> contrary, it is still very difficult to take it literally ... and it is no less difficult to
> give it any meaning to fit this passage.[15]

Shifting from the traditional three-clause structure to the new two-clause
structure may lessen the literary anti-climax, but it does not eliminate it
completely and does nothing to explain the disturbing presence of murder in
James' community. As Davids asks, "Neither structure eliminates the problem
of φονεύτε. How does murder fit into this series?"[16] This is the question that
remains unanswered, the problem that the extant text has not yet been able
to solve.

Erasmus' Conjecture: A Better Solution

Just a few centuries after Erasmus, Hort would consider the options for this
text and then begrudgingly conclude "this difficulty must remain if φονεύετε is
genuine, whatever be the punctuation."[17] Even in that resignation, however, is
a hint of the simple yet elegant solution offered by Erasmus: what if φονεύετε
was not genuine? What if earlier—and perhaps even the earliest—copies of
James read not φονεύετε but φθονεῖτε instead? Such a conjectural emendation
could find a great deal of support in the text of James. In fact, so effectively
does it solve all of the problems attendant the extant text that Dibelius, as
he is so often quoted, exclaimed "... the emendation, already proposed by
Erasmus, of "you murder" (φονεύτε) to "you are jealous" (φθονεῖτε) is really a
rather obvious solution."[18] The merit of this proposal can be demonstrated
on several levels. First, φθονεῖτε can arguably make a strong a claim to being
characteristic of James' diction and style. While φονεύετε occurs two other
times in James, the first of these is a quotation from the Decalogue,[19] while
the latter[20] is possibly a description of Christ or at very least a condemnation
of the rich outside of James' community. Neither reference is similar to the
extant text of 4:2. In comparison, the cognate φθόνος has been accepted

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[15] Adamson, *James*, 168.
[16] Davids, *James*, 158.
[17] Hort, *James*, 89.
[18] Dibelius, *James*, 217.
[19] James 2:11.
[20] James 5:6.

as characteristic of James and part of his text at the neighbouring 4:5 for many centuries. As a subsequent chapter of this study will show, there is a good chance that 4:5 is itself corrupt and that the text did not initially read φθόνος, but it is still telling that during the intervening time in which φθόνος has been accepted at 4:5, no one has ever found any reason to think that it violated James' literary style or character. Thus, there are no grounds to dismiss φθονεῖτε a priori as uncharacteristic of James. It is also notable that, as commentators often point out, φθόνος is often paired with ζῆλος in extra-biblical literature.[21]

Another strength of Erasmus' proposal is its ability to provide a plausible theory of descent; a reasonable explanation of how the remaining extant readings evolved. In this case it was likely a simple visual error, as an early untrained scribe, confused by the proliferation of rounded letters, thought he saw **ΦΟΝΕΥΤΕ** when he was really seeing **ΦΘΟΝΕΙΤΕ**. Such a mix up would not have been unusual, and in fact, as many commentators note, has occurred in several other parts of the New Testament. In Gal 5:21, for example, a number of manuscripts[22] read φόνοι instead of the better attested φθόνοι. In 1 Pet 2:1, codex Vaticanus reads φόνους instead of the preferred reading φθόνους. What is even more telling, however, is that some scribes of this very portion of James experienced the same problem: several scribes, faced with an extant text at 4:5 that read φθόνον, managed to change it to φόνον.[23] Scribal error is thus an obvious explanation for the origin of φονεύτε, but how did it proliferate and come to dominate the textual tradition? A possible explanation for this could be the initial thematic connection between φονεύετε and μάχεσθε καὶ

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[21] Martin (*James*, 140), for example, documents 1 Macc 8:16; T. Sim. 2:7; 1 Clem. 3:2; 4:7, 13; 5:2, as well as Gal 5:21 within the New Testament. These potential parallels are striking. 1 Macc 8:16, describing the noble Roman government, reads "They trust one man each year to rule over them and to control all their land; they all heed the one man, and there is no envy or jealousy among them" (NRSV). 1 Clem 3:2 reads "From this came jealousy and envy, strife and faction, persecution and disorderliness, war and captivity" (Ehrman, LCL). 1 Clem 4:7 reads "You see, brothers, jealousy and envy brought about the murder of a brother." 1 Clem 4:13 reads "Because of jealousy not only did David incur envy from foreigners, but he was even persecuted by Saul, the King of Israel" (Ehrman, LCL). 1 Clem 5:2 reads "Because of jealousy and envy the greatest and most upright pillars were persecuted, and they struggled in the contest even to death" (Ehrman, LCL). T. Sim. 2.7 may have been cited in error, since it does not mention either term, though 2.6 uses "jealousy" and 2:13 uses "envy."

[22] Principally A C D F G Ψ 0122 0278 1739 1881 𝔐.

[23] Namely 181 1243 2492. As will be discussed in ch. 4, 4:5 is likely corrupt at this point and thus it could be argued that these scribes made the change deliberately in order to fix what they saw as a broken text. However, as will be seen, the internal problems of 4:5 would not be solved by this change, and thus it likely simply reflects the same orthographical error that other scribes made at Gal 5:21 and 1 Pet 2:1.

πολεμεῖτε, which all share a common idea of violence. Dibelius comments on "… the probability that the association of πόλεμοι ("wars, conflicts") and μάχαι ("fightings") with outward violence could assist in the triumph of the reading "you murder" (φονεύτε) once it had been introduced into the text tradition."[24] Of course, as seen above, the inclusion of φονεύετε is ultimately a fatal error in the extant text, but remember what Westcott and Hort explained, that scribal variants often appeared preferable on first glance, with their problematic nature only becoming clear after subsequent sustained study: "… readings originating with scribes must always at the time have combined the appearance of improvement with the absence of its reality."[25] Thus, having arisen by accident, φονεύετε was able to conquer the manuscript tradition of James by appearing to offer thematic improvement even while introducing substantive problems.

The greatest validation of Erasmus' conjecture is how, when the text is reverted to this earlier form, virtually all of the substantive problems are solved. First, by correcting "murder" to "envy" we immediately eliminate all of the historical concerns about the apparently homicidal nature of early Christianity. While it was difficult to imagine a tendency in the earliest church to kill each other, the notion of them envying each other is entirely more probable. In fact, other Christian writers often chastened their readers for just that problem.[26] On a literary level, φθονεῖτε can be commended in either structure. The traditional three clause structure is greatly improved by the pairing of "envy" and "covet," which, being almost synonymous, create a typical poetic pleonasm in the description of frustrated desire: "you envy and covet yet you are not able to obtain." Far from the jarring anticlimax of the surviving text, the emended form flows smoothly and logically. The newer two clause structure had already managed to lessen some of the literary problems with φονεύτε, so it does, admittedly, not experience the same degree of improvement from the emendation. It can, however, still profit from the correction. The two clause structure lessened the difficulty of the extant text by pairing "murder" with "fighting and waging war." While this is a thematic improvement, it is still, as Ropes explained above, somewhat incongruent to

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[24] Dibelius, *James*, 217.
[25] Wescott and Hort, *Introduction*, 27. It should be noted that W&H make an exception for readings that resulted from "pure scribal blunders," but this blunder is the proverbial exception that proves the rule.
[26] Cf. Gal 5:26, 1 Pet 2:1, 1 Tim 6:4. In comparison, except for numerous references to the Decalogue, no other Christian writer chastises their readers for murder the way that the extant text portrays James as doing.

begin with fighting in v. 1, then escalate to murder in v. 2a, only to retreat back to fighting in v. 2b.[27] While not as extreme as murder, "envy" still often carries overtones of strife in early Christian writings, as evidenced by other New Testament references.[28] Thus by pairing "fighting" with "envy," the correction allows for a much more consistent literary progression. In sum, whatever way we look at the text, it simply looks better when it has been corrected. This is to be expected, however, since it is the nature of an anomaly to be disruptive, and when, as Maas previously summarised, that anomalous "tradition proves to be corrupt" then, like a doctor excising a cancer, the heart of conjectural emendation is "the removal of [that] anomaly."[29]

Modern Reception and Rejection

Emending φονεύετε to φθονεῖτε on the basis of conjecture has long been a scholarly solution to the problems of Jas 4:2. While it is unfortunate that no supporting manuscripts for the reading have managed to survive,[30] a dearth of manuscript evidence is no obstacle for a good conjecture. As was discussed above, part of the essential nature of a conjecture is that it reaches beyond the small fraction of manuscripts that did happen to survive in order to restore those authentic readings which did not. A good conjecture will flow from the text holistically, depending on a wide variety of other textual elements besides manuscript base in order to show how, in comparison to the surviving text, the conjectured reading makes better sense over all. In this case: φθονεῖτε fits well with the language and style of James, as well as extra-biblical use of the word. It offers a plausible theory of descent, explaining both the origin of the other reading—through the accidental scribal substitution of a similar looking word—and the rise of that reading in popularity—through a superficial thematic connection. Finally it better fits the socio-historical context of James' community and eliminates the insoluble problems created by φονεύτε, which had the earliest Christians coming together in communion only to kill each other.

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[27] Ropes, *James*, 254.

[28] Cf. Rom 1:29, Phil 1:15, Gal 5:26, 1 Tim 6:4. Note, however, in a testament to the ever-messiness of language, some of those texts also reference "murder."

[29] Maas, *Textual*, 11.

[30] That we are currently aware of, anyway. It is interesting that, technically, there is some manuscript evidence for the conjecture in minuscule 918. However, since this consists merely of a marginal note and dates contemporary with Erasmus, its evidentiary value is limited to say the least.

Given the evident superiority of the conjecture, it is not surprising that, through history, many scholars have decided in its favour. After Erasmus proposed it, the reading was favoured by both Calvin and Beza. Luther also agreed with the correction, and many German bibles today still print it in the main body of text on the basis of his translation.[31] Other scholars accepting the conjecture include Hottinger, Ewald, Stier and Spitta,[32] and more recently Dibelius, Windisch and Adamson.[33] In modern western scholarship, however, the conjecture finds a curious lack of support, and exploring the reasons for that will reveal problems in the academy much larger than the text of Jas 4:2.

Why have so many recent scholars rejected such a sensible conjecture? Luke Timothy Johnson alone has offered an interesting defence of the extant text. In both an earlier article[34] and a latter full-length commentary, Johnson argues, with some strength, that the entire larger structure of the text—covering 3:13–4:10—is modeled after a common Hellenistic *topos* on envy. This *topos* often connected murder, φόνος, with envy, φθόνος, and can thereby explain the otherwise peculiar and anti-climactic occurrence here in 4:2. As he writes, "[the conjecture] fails to recognize, further, that "killing" (*phonos*) is a common element in the *topos* on envy … and, for a Hellenistic reader, would have been expected in this context."[35] The proposal is, in many ways, compelling, but can the *topos* on envy really be used to explain the presence of murder in James' text? Undergirding his central claim that the *topos* connects φόνος with φθόνος is a claim to find precedent in five extra-biblical texts: T. Sim. 2.6, 3.1, 4.5, T. Gad 4.6, and 1 Clem 3:2.[36] This group of texts, as Johnson admits, are often cited together for this purpose.[37] What, however, do these texts actually say?[38]

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[31] e.g. *Die Gute Nachricht Die Bibel in heutigem Deutsch* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1982).

[32] Documented by Mayor, *James*, 136.

[33] Documented by Martin, *James*, 140.

[34] Luke Timothy Johnson, "James 3:13–4:10 and the Topos περι φθονου" *NovT* 25, 4(1983):327–347.

[35] Johnson, *James*, 277.

[36] Johnson surveys several other subsidiary texts as well.

[37] Johnson, "Topos", 330 n. 19. Note this publication actually cites T. Sim ii.3. That he intended to cite ii.6 is a conjecture on my part, based on the fact that while the latter mentions envy, the former does nothing of the sort. Without any manuscript support, however, we may never be sure.

[38] These translations taken from James Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vols. I & II (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1983) with the exception of 1 Clem 3:2 which comes from Bart Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vols. I & II (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard, 2003).

T. Sim. 2.6	In the time of my youth I was jealous (ἐζήλωσα) of Joseph, because my father loved him more than all the rest of us. I determined inwardly to destroy (ἀνελεῖν) him …
T. Sim. 3.1	Beware of the spirit of deceit and envy (φθόνου). For envy dominates the whole of a man's mind and does not permit him to eat or drink or to do anything good. Rather it keeps prodding him to destroy (ἀνελεῖν) the one whom he envies.
T. Sim. 4.5	Guard yourselves therefore, my children, from all jealousy (ζήλου) and envy (φθόνου) … For that attitude makes the soul savage and corrupts the body; it foments wrath (ὀργήν) and conflict (πόλημον) in the reason, excites to the shedding of blood (αἵματα παροξύνει) …
T. Gad. 4.5–6	Hatred collaborates with envy (φθόνῳ) … so hate wants to kill (ἀποκτεῖναι) the living
1 Clem 3:2	From this came jealousy (ζῆλος) and envy (φθόνος), strife (ἔρις) and faction (στάσις), persecution (διωγμός) and disorderliness, war (πόλεμος) and captivity.

How can this evidence be summarised? The simplest conclusion seems to be that members of the jealousy/envy word group are usually connected to members of the violence word group. From this Johnson concludes rather specifically that φθόνος and ζῆλος are synonymously interchangeable, and therefore that the occurrence of ζῆλος in Jas 4:2 can explain a reference to φόνος. A careful interpretation of the evidence, however, suggests that φθόνος and ζῆλος, while each able to stand alone, are more often found together, and that as a pair they are usually connected to some term in the violence word group, not necessarily φόνος. The two terms φθόνος and ζῆλος occur together in at least two of the five texts—three if the occurrence of φθόνος in T.Sim 2.13 is allowed to complement 2. 6. In the remaining 2 texts φθόνος occurs on its own. Thus, rather than showing the two terms as interchangeable, the evidence seems to suggest that, at very least, they usually occur together, and that if they are not together, it is perhaps more common to find φθόνος on its own. The connection of these terms to violence seems to be to any member of that word group. The texts in question refer to ἀναιρέω, ὀργή, πόλεμος, ἀποκτείνω, ἔρις, στάσις and διωγμός. While a term like φόνος would certainly be at home in this group, it is notable that it is not actually found in any of these texts. Rather than looking for φόνος specifically then, it would be better to look for any member of the violence word group. It is worth noting that other texts also follow this pattern. 1 Clem 4:7, for example, reads "You see, brothers, jealousy (ζῆλος) and envy (φθόνος) brought about the murder (ἀδελφοκτονίαν) of a brother."

Taking these findings then to Jas 4:2, what can be concluded? Excluding the term under contention, the text already has a member of the jealousy/envy

word group: ζηλόω. It already connects that term to members of the violence word group: μάχομαι and πολεμέω. The only thing missing from the typical *topos*, therefore, would not be another member of the violence word group, like φόνος, but rather the fact that along with ζῆλος we usually find φθόνος. Thus, while Johnson dismisses the Erasmus conjecture as having "little logic"[39] it appears that his *topos* on envy and his collections of parallel texts would actually support a reading of φθόνος at Jas 4:2.

So if not for a *topos* on envy, why have so many other scholars rejected the conjecture? Amazingly, despite the fact that conjectural emendation begins by intentionally looking outside of the extant manuscript tradition, most scholars who reject the conjecture cite a lack of manuscript support as their reason.[40] C. Freeman Sleeper, for example, writes that "there are two major objections to [the conjecture]. The first is that it does not appear in any Greek manuscript."[41] Moo similarly explains "more popular has been the suggestion that phoneute (you kill) be emended to phthoneite ('you are envious'), but there is no textual justification for the change."[42] Likewise Martin argues: "alternatively it is possible to keep the text intact (as there is no external textual evidence to emend it) …"[43] Davids also explains that "the conjecture has absolutely no textual evidence, so if another explanation makes sense of the text, it is preferable."[44] Ropes, at least, also appeals to the parallelism, but still objects that "… there is no manuscript evidence for the reading here. The conjecture is unnecessary, and it obliterates the careful parallelism of the two series."[45] Hort concedes the theoretical possibility of emendation but will not make the leap here:

> There is absolutely no manuscript authority for this; and though it is possible that slight errors occur here and there in all manuscripts, and there are some passages where this does appear to be the case, it must not be accepted in any single instance without clear evidence.[46]

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[39] Johnson, "Topos," 344.

[40] Linwood remarks on the illogic of demanding MS support for conjectures: "I am not sure that I understand this; for surely conjectural emendation, if supported by MS. evidence, would not be conjectural emendation at all, which from its very nature implies the absence of MS. support" (Linwood, *Remarks*, 9n.)

[41] C. Freeman Sleeper, *James* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998) 105.

[42] Moo, *James*, 141.

[43] Martin, *James*, 140.

[44] Davids, *James*, 158.

[45] Ropes, *James*, 256.

[46] Hort, *James*, 89.

Johnson, however, freely reveals his bias against conjectural emendation: "But it is a faulty solution. Appeals to emendation should always be a last resort, and there is really no basis for it here."[47] Similarly Hartin writes:

> However, the biggest objection still remains: there is absolutely no textual evidence in support of such an emendation. It is irresponsible to accept a reading for which there is no concrete textual evidence. For this reason one must make sense of the text as it stands.[48]

Likewise, Laws dismisses conjectures as mere "guesswork" when she writes:

> the conjecture, which has no mss support ... can be a matter of guesswork only, and it is undesirable to adopt a reading for which, in the nature of the case, there can be no positive evidence. It must be preferable to make sense of the text as it stands.[49]

Brosend, commenting on Dibelius' famous conclusion that the conjecture was an "obvious solution," tellingly argues that "the solution is obvious only so long as the complete absence of any manuscript support is not troubling. Given the 'obvious' appeal of this solution to the problem, the wonder is that no copyist has left any evidence of adopting it."[50] It is amazing that such a diverse group of scholars could be so united in their reasoning, but even more startling is the misunderstanding that such reasoning reveals. Especially representative of the underlying problem is Moo, who writes "but emendation (which has no textual basis) is always a last resort in interpreting a text as rich in manuscript evidence as is the NT."[51] These scholars have not just rejected Erasmus' proposal of φθονεῖτε; they have rejected the very method of conjectural emendation, and they have done so because of their misunderstanding of the manuscript base.

Testing the Manuscript Base

What do they mean when they say that there is no manuscript support or that it is not in the manuscript tradition? By itself it is simply a descriptive statement, neither good nor bad—after all, a great many things are not found

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[47] Johnson, *James*, 277.
[48] Hartin, *James*, 197.
[49] Laws, *James*, 171.
[50] William F. Brosend, *James & Jude* (NCBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 108.
[51] Moo, *James* (Pillar), 183–184.

in the manuscript tradition and that does not make them bad. In this case, however, these scholars evidently intend the statement to be dismissive, and so it is worth asking how they think that works. Not being in the manuscript tradition could only be considered a fault in the face of an expectation to be found in the manuscript tradition, and in this case that expectation is surely in response to the assertion of Erasmus et al. that the conjecture is a correct reading. In other words, when these scholars say "it is not in the manuscript tradition," what they are really revealing is their assumption that *if* it were an authentic reading it *would* be found there. As discussed in chapter two, this assumption is at the heart of the belief in *textual survival*—the idea that the authentic text has managed to survive at all points somewhere in the extant manuscript base. As Kilpatrick was quoted, "[w]e may assume as a rule of thumb that at each point the true text has survived somewhere or other among our manuscripts."[52] Why would New Testament scholars across such a wide spectrum share such an assumption, especially when such a belief is almost never found in the work of textual critics of non-biblical texts? As has been seen, New Testament scholars alone are tempted to such presumption because New Testament scholars alone have such a large body of extant manuscripts to work with. Bruce Metzger well demonstrated this line of thought when he wrote that the need for conjectural emendation is "reduced to the smallest dimensions," because "the amount of evidence for the text of the New Testament … is so much greater than that available for any ancient classical author …"[53] The reasoning is implicit but clear: the need for conjectural emendation is so greatly reduced because the correct reading is, somewhere, already extant, and we know it must be extant because the manuscript evidence is so great and plentiful. Thus is the logic of the doctrine of textual survival.

The theory behind this position has already been evaluated at length, and its weaknesses have already been seen. It has been seen how the historical realities of contamination and loss collude to prevent any absolute assurance that an unbroken line to the original text can always be traced back somewhere through the manuscript tradition. It has been seen how the extant manuscript base dates almost exclusively after the earliest period of the greatest corruption in the second century, which means that we have virtually no external evidence by which to trace the text back through its most tumultuous time. We have also already seen how, of all the corrupted

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[52] Kilpatrick, "Conjectural Emendation," 98.
[53] Metzger and Ehrman, *Text, 230.*

manuscripts that were produced after that period, only a small fraction have survived till today, which means that an unknown number of readings of unknown authenticity are forever unknown to the manuscript base. Finally, we have already seen how those that did survive were transmitted and preserved in a mostly random and uncontrolled manner, which means that it is impossible to discern from the manuscripts themselves how accurately they represent the earliest text, and carries the further implication that having more manuscripts in the tradition merely multiplies exponentially that random factor, thereby increasing that uncertainty all the more. All of this, again, is why textual criticism holds as its cardinal rule that manuscripts must be weighed and not counted. Thus, the theory of textual survival has already been evaluated. The text of Jas 4:2, however, provides an excellent opportunity to test the theory in practice: how well does the idea of textual survival hold up against the evidence of an actual text?

Traditional textual critics often speak with confidence of the close to 6000 manuscripts found in the modern database, but how many of these actually underlie the average New Testament text? It is quite misleading to speak of such high numbers in any way that suggests that a given New Testament text, such as Jas 4:2, is relying on anywhere near that many manuscripts. The total database may contain that many manuscripts, but in practice many of them are lacunary, while many of those that are not are of such late date or poor textual quality that textual critics simply do not consider them. For its *Editio Critica Maior* the Institute for New Testament Textual Criticism has grouped James with the Catholic Letters. Speaking of the manuscript base for this group they write:

> all available text manuscripts of the Catholic Letters have been collated at the Institute … The results show that 372 of the 522 complete manuscripts and larger fragments of the Catholic Letters attest the majority text in at least 90% of the test passages. The great number of these almost identical manuscripts are represented in the present edition by a relatively small selection.[54]

To the novice, it may be startling enough to discover that rather than 6000 manuscripts, when it came to James there were only 522 to start with. More troubling than that, however, might be the fact that 372 of those were set aside shortly thereafter because they attested the majority text. This, however, is simply the proper working-out of the maxim that manuscripts must be

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[54] The Institute For New Testament Textual Research, eds. *Catholic Letters—Part 1 Text*. Vol. 4 of *Novum Testamentum Graecum—Editio Critica Maior* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997) 12*.

weighed not counted. A manuscript carries weight when it offers its own testimony, not when it simply echoes an earlier copy. After all, any one manuscript, regardless of its quality, could potentially yield many copies, but all of those copies undoubtedly still would offer nothing more than the first manuscript already did. Such clones can therefore be sifted out with the assurance that unique contributions are not being lost from the discussion. As Gerd Mink explains,

> ... one may ask whether this means that genealogical research should be based on full collation of *all* extant manuscripts. In principle, this would be preferable. It can be shown, on the other hand, that such effort would not be justified by a gain of knowledge about the textual history of the first millennium. 123 continuous text witnesses were included consistently in the ECM apparatus of the Catholic Letters. For the Letter of James, however, the number is 164, because the editors wanted to make sure not to miss relevant variants that might be preserved in witnesses coming close to the majority text. It turned out that the gain achieved by taking 41 more manuscripts into account was very small. Restricting the selection of manuscripts to those which show some distance to the majority text does not lead to a considerable loss of variants.[55]

Thus, the editors of the critical text narrowed the focus to only those manuscripts that had authentic evidentiary value to the text. This number, even after some witnesses of the Byzantine/majority text were added back in, is strikingly less than 6000. As the Institute concluded, "all the remaining manuscripts ... are without exception represented in this edition of James. Several manuscripts which attest an almost pure form of the Byzantine text are also included ... bringing the total number selected to 182."[56]

To speak of 182 manuscripts underlying James, however, may still be misleading. There may be 182 manuscripts that are, theoretically, worth considering, but not all of them are brought to bear on every variant unit in the text of James. Many of them are lacunary and thus offer no testimony either way on a given variant unit, while others are dismissed due to their textual character at that point. Looking in more detail at specific examples will be telling: how many of the 182 potential manuscripts have actually been used to construct this part of the text of James?[57] For the sake of convenience

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[55] Mink, "Contamination," 147.
[56] ECM, 12*.
[57] It is worth noting that INTF now offers online an easy way to see exactly which manuscripts underlie any given text. The module "New Testament Transcripts" is available at http://nttranscripts.uni-muenster.de/.

and on account of proximity, all of chapter 4 can be considered as the greater context for 4:2. In these seventeen verses there are, depending on how they are counted, some sixty-six separate variant units listed in the ECM.[58] Since space constraints prevent the analysis of all sixty-six, we will instead look only at the variants included in the text of *The Greek New Testament*, commonly known as UBS4, also produced by the Institute. The apparatus of this edition was designed to focus only on the important variants by "eliminating from the apparatus a large number of variant units where the readings were of minor significance, concerned only with the minutest of textual variation, and including others having a greater importance for the reader's understanding of the history of the text and exegesis."[59] For this section of James the UBS4 lists six variants, and since they have already been judged as important to the text, they should serve well as test cases. The texts are 4:4, 4:5, 4:12, 4:14a, 4:14b, and 4:14c.

The first text, 4:4, contains variation on the first word. James opens with a chastising address, calling his antagonists either μοιχαλίδες or μοιχοί καὶ μοιχαλίδες. The latter option is supported by the majority of manuscripts, including the original hand of ℵ, two more uncials, and 64 minuscules.[60] The editorial committee at the Institute, however, chose the former option, the shorter reading of μοιχαλίδες. The justification for this choice, according to Metzger's *Textual Commentary*, is based on a logical appeal to known scribal habits: "In scriptural imagery, μοιχαλίς ("adulteress") is used figuratively of Israel as the unfaithful spouse of Jehovah … When copyists, however, understood the word here in its literal sense, they were puzzled why only women were mentioned and therefore considered it right to add a reference to men as well."[61] Upon how many manuscripts, however, is this textual decision based? The ECM cites only a single papyrus, three uncials and seven minuscules; just eleven manuscripts in total.[62] This small manuscript base should, in a scholarly analysis, cause no concern since the reasoning for the reading is sound. As Nestle reasoned:

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[58] That is an average of four variants per verse.

[59] UBS, v.

[60] 01* 025 044 5 69 88 206 218 322 323 398 400 429 436 522 614 621 623 629* 630 631 808 915 918 945 996 1066 1067 1127 1175 1243 1270 1292 1297 1359 1409 1448 1490 1505 1524 1563 1598 1609 1611 1661 1678 1718 1735 1751 1799 1831 1842 1890 2138 2147 2200 2298 2344 2374 2412 2464 2492 2495 2523 2541 2652 2805.

[61] Metzger, *Commentary*, 612.

[62] 𝔓100 01¹ 02 03 33 81 629 1175 1241 1739 1852.

> Can it be allowable to judge a reading's claim to be mentioned and considered from the number of witnesses supporting it[?] ... I think not ... the truth may have only one solitary representative left to support it against a whole world of adversaries (Heb. xii.3), and this solitary witness either a manuscript, a version, or a quotation. On the other hand, it may have a whole cloud of witnesses supporting it. In matters of this kind numbers have nothing to do with the case whatever. To speak of majorities is nonsense. The true man is willing and able to stand alone ...[63]

Thus, for textual critics, having the support of only eleven (or even fewer) manuscripts is no necessary obstacle to accepting an otherwise superior reading. What if, however, those eleven manuscripts had, like so many others, been lost? Would that at all change any of the reading's intrinsic qualities? Would that take away any of the characteristics that otherwise made it superior? Given the numbers of manuscripts that were lost and how easily any or all of the eleven cited above could have joined that number, this question should give pause for thought to any textual critics who would reject a conjectured reading simply for having no manuscript support.

The second text, 4:5, is a variation unit consisting of two competing verb forms. The corruption comes in a clause which describes the spirit as either κατῴκισεν or κατῴκησεν in us. The former would likely be understood causatively ("the spirit which is made to dwell in us") while the latter would be intransitive ("the spirit which dwells in us"). Whichever version was first, the other likely arose through itacism which caused both forms to be pronounced alike. The committee, while citing a strong balance of external evidence, largely based their decision on the fact that of the two forms κατῴκισεν was rarer, meaning that the average scribe would have been tempted to replace it with the more common κατῴκησεν, not vice versa.[64] This, again, is fine reasoning, but it is interesting to note the manuscript evidence in support of the two options. The rejected reading has fifty-six manuscripts cited in support,[65] while the accepted reading is based on only twenty-two.[66]

The third text is 4:12 and centres on whether νομοθέτης should be read anarthrously or whether the text includes the definite article ὁ. In the UBS4

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[63] Nestle, *Introduction*, 195.
[64] Metzger, *Commentary*, 612.
[65] 025 5 33 69 88 206 218 322 323 398 429 436 522 614 621 623 629 630 915 918 945 996 1066 1067 1127 1243 1292 1359 1409 1448 1490 1505 1524 1563 1609 1611 1661 1678 1735 1751 1799 1831 1842 1852 1890 2138 2147 2200 2298 2344 2412 2492 2495 2523 2541 2652.
[66] 𝔓74 01 03 044 049 6 93 104 197 431 459 617 665 676 808 1241 1251 1718 1739 2374 2774 2805 2087.

apparatus this variation is graded as a "C" because the committee at the Institute could come to no firm decision either way. As Metzger summarised, "… manuscript evidence for and against … is rather evenly balanced, with no compelling considerations arising from either palaeography or syntax …"[67] Accordingly, the main text gives only a tentative reading in square brackets. As for the amount of manuscript evidence, inclusion of the article is supported by sixty manuscripts,[68] while omission is supported by seventeen.[69]

The last three test variants all occur in 4:14. The first concerns which article should precede τῆς αὔριον (tomorrow). Should it be τὸ, as supported by thirty-seven manuscripts,[70] or τὰ, as supported by thirty-eight manuscripts,[71] or omitted entirely, as is supported by codex Vaticanus? Though Vaticanus is usually considered to be of highest quality, the committee rejected its reading in this case due to its demonstrated tendency to omit such articles. The committee further concluded that τὰ was an assimilation to Prov 27:1, and therefore decided on the reading τὸ. The second variant asks what should follow ποία in the second clause of 4:14: γάρ (for), γάρ ἐστε (for you are) or nothing at all? The first option is found in sixty-three manuscripts,[72] while the second is found in just one.[73] The committee, however, chose to omit, even though that is supported by only thirteen manuscripts, because the other readings were deemed to be assimilations to the next clause.[74] Finally, the last test variant attempts to sort out the mess in the final clause of 4:14. There are six options found in the manuscript tradition. The phrase ἀτμὶς γάρ ἐστε (vapour for you are) is found in thirty-one manuscripts.[75] Almost double that number, however, read ἀτμὶς γάρ ἔσται.[76] Another fifty-two

[67] Metzger, *Commentary*, 613.

[68] 01 02 044 5 33 69 81 206 218 322 323 398 400 429 436 522 614 623 629 630 631 808 918 945 996 1067 1127 1241 1270 1292 1297 1359 1409 1490 1505 1524 1563 1598 1609 1611 1661 1678 1718 1735 1739 1751 1831 1842 1890 2138 2147 2200 2298 2344 2412 2464 2495 2523 2541 2652.

[69] 𝔓74 𝔓100 03 025 88 621 720 915 1175 1241* 1243 1448 1852 2374 2492 2674 2805.

[70] 01 044 5 69 88 218 322 323 398 400 436 623 629 631 808 915 918 996 1127 1270 1297 1359 1409 1524 1563 1598 1661 1678 1718 1735 1751 1842 2374 2464 2523 2541 2805*.

[71] 02 025 33 81 206 252 378 429 522 614 621 630 945 1067 1175 1241 1243 1292 1448 1490 1505 1609 1611 1739 1799 1831 1852 1890 2138 2147 2200 2298 2344 2412 2492 2495 2652 2805¹.

[72] 𝔓74 𝔓100 01¹ 02 025 044 5 33 69 81 88 206 218 322 323 398 400 429 436 522 621 623 629 630 631 808 915 918 945 996 1067 1127 1175 1241 1243 1270 1292 1297 1359 1409 1490 1524 1563 1598 1609 1661 1678 1718 1735 1739 1751 1799 1831 1842 2200 2298 2344 2374 2464 2492 2523 2541 2805.

[73] *l*593.

[74] Metzger, *Commentary*, 613.

[75] 03 81 104 197 218 322 323 459 614 642 808 915 945 1067 1127 1175 1243 1292 1359 1563 1718 1739 1842 1852 1875 1893 2147 2298 2412 2492 2652.

[76] 018 025 044 049 1 6 38 69 88 93 94 180 181 252 307 326 398 424 431 436 442 453 456 467 617

manuscripts read ἀτμὶς γάρ ἐστιν,[77] while ἀτμὶς ἐστιν is found in four manu-
scripts.[78] The shorter ἀτμὶς ἐσται is found in codex Vaticanus, while codex
Sinaiticus omits the phrase entirely. For a variety of reasons, mostly centring
on transcriptional probability, the committee chose the first reading, though
in the UBS4 apparatus they once again graded it a tentative "C."

   What conclusions can be drawn about the typical manuscript base of
James from these six test variants? It seems safe to conclude that the
manuscript evidence is not nearly as overwhelming as many scholars imply
when they speak of us possessing a wealth of almost 6000 New Testament
manuscripts. In truth, the editors of the ECM found that only 182 manuscripts
needed to be consulted for the text of James. In these test variants, however,
it was seen that typically the printed text does not depend on even that
many. In the first case, the accepted text had just eleven manuscripts cited in
support. The second garnered twenty-two, while the third could boast either
sixty or seventeen depending on which decision is made. The fourth, fifth and
sixth cited only thirty-seven, thirteen and thirty-one respectively. Rounding
these numbers together, it seems safe to say that at a given variation point
the text of James is, on average, likely built upon fewer than 50 manuscripts.
That represents less than 1% of the total surviving manuscripts, and an even
smaller fraction of the larger number of manuscripts that did not survive.
The text may have survived at these points, but had manuscript loss been
just 1% greater than it was, the outcome could have been very different.
The argument that textual survival is assured by the size of the manuscript
base therefore fails at this point, because it defies the realities of probability
theory to conclude that anything could be thought of as *assured* by such
small margins.

   At this point some textual critics who have so far been counting on the
great size of the extant manuscript base might instead turn to weighing the
manuscripts, arguing that conjectural emendation is not necessary because,
while there may only be a small number of manuscripts underlying the
accepted text, those few manuscripts are of a high quality and have proven
themselves to be consistently accurate. This type of manuscript partiality
has a long history in New Testament textual criticism. Westcott & Hort,

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643 665 720 876 918 1241 1367 1390 1448 1501 1505 1611 1678 1729 1751 1765 1827 1832 1837 1838 1840
1845 1848 1850 1874 2138 2186 2197 2243t 2464 2494 2495 2523 2541 2718 2818.

   [77] 020 056 0142 5 18 35 43 206 254 312 319 321 330 378 400 429 468 522 607 621 623 629 630
631 676 996 999 1251 1270 1297 1409 1490 1509 1524 1595 1598 1609 1661 1799 1831 1853 1890 2080
2200 2242 2243^l 2374 2423 2544 2674 2774 2805.

   [78] 33 61 1735 2344.

for example, held a hardly hidden bias in favour of codex Vaticanus, and were almost prepared to accept Vaticanus in exchange for every other extant manuscript. As they wrote:

> Accordingly … the readings of אB combined may safely be accepted as genuine in the absence of specially strong internal evidence to the contrary, and can never safely be rejected altogether. [In] the numerous variations in which א and B stand on different sides … Every such binary combination containing B … is found to have a large proportion of readings which on the closest scrutiny have the ring of genuineness, and hardly any that look suspicious after full consideration: in fact, the character of such groups is scarcely to be distinguished from that of אB. On the other hand every combination of א with another primary MS presents for the most part readings which cannot be finally approved … All other MSS stand the trial with even less success than א.[79]

In other words, the only thing better than Vaticanus combined with Sinaiticus is Vaticanus by itself! This type of faith, however, is not supported by the six test variants in James 4. Of the 182 potentially citable manuscripts, only eighty-seven are cited as preserving the accepted text at one or more points. This means that more than half of the best manuscripts of James were found to be corrupt or lacunary at all six of the most important variant units in chapter 4. Of the eighty-seven that did preserve the correct text at least once, a more detailed breakdown is less flattering. A total of twenty-seven of them, or 31%, were correct in only one of the six test variants. A further thirty-nine of them, or 45%, were correct only twice. Sixteen of them, some 18%, were correct three times, while only four, or 5% were correct four times and a single manuscript, 1% of the total, was correct in five cases. Not one of the manuscripts, however, managed to preserve the accepted reading in all six test cases. Even codex Vaticanus was found to be incorrect at some points. While it must be conceded that some of the extant manuscripts have been found to be of a generally high quality, what these six test variants suggest is that it would nevertheless be irresponsible to depend on even the best manuscripts to have preserved the accepted text at every point. In other words, if, as we have seen, textual critics cannot use the quantity of the manuscript base as an excuse to dismiss conjectural emendation, neither can they use its quality.

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[79] Wescott & Hort, *Introduction*, 557.

Conclusion

All of this should make a difference in how Erasmus' conjectural proposal for 4:2 is evaluated. The emendation of φονεύετε to φθονεῖτε makes the best sense overall. It fits with the style and language of James, it can explain the other variants, it corrects a literary incongruence, and it solves all the socio-historical problems. So far, textual critics' main reason for rejecting this solution was that it did not appear in the extant manuscript base. If the manuscript base really were an overwhelming wealth of consistently accurate manuscripts numbering into the thousands, then this might be a valid objection. Since, however, the actual manuscript tradition for this part of James has been seen to be a motley collection that is, on average, wrong more often than it is right and numbers 182 at most and in practice probably fewer than fifty, the objection almost starts to prove the conjecture's own case. A reading's failure to appear in a tiny fraction of often incorrect manuscripts chosen by random forces from the exponentially larger[80] manuscript heritage of the New Testament cannot, in any scholarly analysis, be considered a vice, and certainly cannot overcome all the virtues otherwise demonstrated by the conjectural emendation at 4:2 of φθονεῖτε.

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[80] The discussion above in the section "Survival of the Fittest" gives several supporting reasons for the conclusion that the total number of manuscripts ever produced was exponentially larger than the total number that have survived. For a much more vivid demonstration, however, note Nestle's observation that "it is certainly a surprising fact that so few even of our latest manuscripts can be proved with certainty to be copies of manuscripts still in existence, or at least be derived from a common original" (*Introduction*, 172). In other words, every existing manuscript is de facto evidence of a lost exemplar, which necessitates that—at minimum—the total number of produced manuscripts was at least twice as large as the total surviving number.

JAMES 4:5

Introduction

The discovery of primitive corruption in need of conjectural emendation is not, as critics have scoffed, a matter of mere guesswork, but can often be made by focusing on points where most interpreters have had great difficulty making sense of the extant text. After all, if we assume that the author originally wrote an intelligible text—an assumption, it should be admitted, that cannot always be granted[1]—then an unintelligible text would logically indicate that somewhere along the way something was corrupted. Accordingly, it should be more than a little telling when we find so many New Testament scholars describing James 4:5 as one of the most—or in some cases the most—difficult texts in the entire epistle. Martin, for example, writes that "... v. 5 remains one of the most difficult to understand in all the letter,"[2] while Hartin exclaims that "there are many problems with this verse, making it one of the most disputed in the letter of James."[3] Laws agrees that "the next verse presents a number of difficulties,"[4] and even Dibelius admits "... these two difficult verses ..."[5] while Richardson opines "this next verse is notoriously difficult to translate ..."[6] and Moo concludes "Jas. 4:5 is one of the most difficult verses in the New Testament. The degree of difficulty is revealed in the fact that our major English translations provide quite distinct interpretations."[7] Davids calls the verse "... one of the thorniest problems in the epistle ..."[8] but Brosend is even less hopeful, conceding that "v. 5 is another matter altogether, for here we are not sure what James means or what he

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[1] Sometimes the author seems to have been deliberately obtuse, e.g. the grammar of Revelation (Cf. G.K. Beale, *Revelation* [NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999] 100 ff.), while other times the author appears simply to have made rough composition.

[2] Martin, *James*, 149.

[3] Hartin, *James*, 199.

[4] Laws, *James*, 174.

[5] Dibelius, *James*, 220.

[6] Kurt Richardson, *James* (NAC; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997) 179.

[7] Moo, *James*, 188.

[8] Davids, *James*, 162.

is talking about."[9] Johnson is much more specific, stating that "the problem of punctuation appears again in this verse in perhaps an even more acute form and has generated more discussion than virtually any other section of James."[10] Richard Bauckham laments that there are "... many debatable aspects of this verse [which] cannot be decided without discussion of other controverted issues,"[11] while even Hort admits that "these words and those that follow stand almost on a level with iii. 6 for difficulty, and the number of solutions proposed is great."[12] Craig Carpenter calls it an "exegetically thorny passage" and notes that "Erasmus once said there are 'wagon-loads' of interpretations on this passage,"[13] while, finally, Wiard Popkes gives up altogether and considers the text "insoluble."[14] Shortly, this chapter will offer a conjectural proposal that does solve these problems and make sense of the text, but first we will look at the reasons why the emendation is needed. What then are these difficulties that are confounding every interpreter, resisting every attempt at resolution?

Asking Questions

The standard critical text reads: ἢ δοκεῖτε ὅτι κενῶς ἡ γραφὴ λέγει πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν, and standard English versions translate it "Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: 'He jealously desires the spirit which He has made to dwell in us'?"[15] or "do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?"[16] While commentators tend to focus on identifying the apparent quotation of scripture, differences in translation alone begin to reveal some of the many other difficulties with this verse. They can be enumerated as follows:

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9   Brosend, *James*, 109.
10   Johnson, *James*, 280.
11   Richard Bauckham, "The Spirit of God In Us Loathes Envy: James 4:5" in *The Holy Spirit And Christian Origins* (eds. Graham Stanton, Bruce Longenecker and Stephen Barton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 270.
12   Hort, *James*, 93.
13   Craig Carpenter, "James 4.5 Reconsidered" *NTS* 46 (2000):189.
14   *apud* Bauckham, "Spirit," 270.
15   Jas 4:5, NASB, note the marginal reading "The Spirit which He has made to dwell in us jealously desires us."
16   Jas 4:5, NIV, note marginal readings "that God jealously longs for the spirit that he made to live in us" or "that the Spirit he caused to live in us longs jealously."

1. Does ἡ γραφὴ λέγει (the scripture says) introduce a formal quotation in v. 5? Formulas such as this usually introduce specific quotations or references, but is that the case here?

2. If it does introduce a quotation, is it verbatim, allusive, or a general reference of concept? Quotations in the New Testament documents are not always verbatim reproductions of their sources. Often they show different translational decisions, theological modifications of key terms, or even a broad and allusive handling of the language.

3. If it does introduce a quotation, what was the source text? While James attributes the text to ἡ γραφή, "the scripture," the first thing interpreters of this verse usually point out is that the text is found in no known version of the Hebrew scriptures. New Testament authors sometimes cited texts outside of what is now commonly accepted as the Old Testament,[17] but no comparable text can be found in any apocryphal, pseudepigraphal, rabbinic, or any other type of extra-biblical writing. What then could the source text be? Some have proposed that James was making a broad thematic reference to the whole of scripture, but would this accord with either the quotation formula or James' normal practice? Others have proposed that the quotation formula does not refer to v. 5, but looks ahead to v. 6, but this conclusion must first be subject to the question of whether or not there is a quotation in v. 5 (see #1 above).

4 Does πρὸς φθόνον modify λέγει or ἐπιποθεῖ? Technically the prepositional phrase πρὸς φθόνον could modify either verb, but what is the most natural grammatical structure here? On one hand such a phrase would be an unusual addition to a quotation formula, but on the other hand it does not fit well with a verb like ἐπιποθεῖ, which normally has a more positive sense.

5 What does ἐπιποθεῖ mean? Again, the verb ἐπιποθέω has a relatively simple meaning: to long for or desire, but the nuance can be negative or positive depending on whether πρὸς φθόνον is taken as its modifier or not, and if so, whether ἐπιποθέω is implying something negative like force against a vice or something positive like movement towards a virtue. Thus the controvertible questions begin to intertwine.

6. How does the preposition πρός function in this construction? As an adverb? To indicate force *against*? Or perhaps movement *towards*? Several different functions are possible according to the rules of grammar,

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[17] See, for example, Jude 9.

but which is more likely here? It could function adverbially, making πρὸς φθόνον mean "enviously." The idea of movement towards would, in this context, indicate an inclination towards envy, while force against would communicate opposition to it. Which of these is the best reading is largely governed by which verb the phrase is taken to modify, and what that verb is understood to mean. In other words, is it *speaking enviously*, *speaking against envy*, *speaking on behalf of envy*, *desires enviously*, *tends towards envy*, or *tends away from envy*?

7. What does φθόνον mean? The word φθόνος bears a relatively standard meaning of "envy," so the basic meaning of the word is not in question. Some people, however, do question its nuance in this usage: is it negative or positive? Does it mean envy in a *bad* way, or can it mean envy in a *good* way? This question varies in importance depending on who is taken to be the subject; to whom the envy is being ascribed.

8. Who is the subject of ἐπιποθεῖ? How ἐπιποθέω is interpreted is largely governed by who is assumed as the subject. The grammar of the text allows several options. One could assume an implicit subject of "God." Others, however, tend towards the explicit and thus favour the stated τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν. Since the neuter τὸ πνεῦμα uses the same form for both nominative and accusative, however, it could just as feasibly be the object.

9. Is it κατῴκισεν or κατῴκησεν? This is a classic text critical question with a number of solid manuscripts supporting both options. Why it is relevant, however, is that a causative κατῴκισεν would likely assume an implicit divine passive as a subject, thereby possibly lending a degree of support for the same conclusion in regards to the subject of ἐπιποθέω.

10. Who is the τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν? Whether it is caused to dwell or simply dwells, and whether it is the subject or object of ἐπιποθέω, who is this *spirit* dwelling in us? If the text were a definite quotation with a known source text, then the answer could likely be discerned easily from the context of the original citation. However, given the orphan status of this alleged quotation, interpreters have been free to imagine several possibilities. Those include God himself, the Holy Spirit as the emissary of God, the spiritual heart of humans, i.e. "our spirit", or one of the competing impulses that, according to Jewish mysticism, lurked inside of every person and fought to influence their moral choices. Obviously this decision is in part governed by how the previous questions are answered, and whether this τὸ πνεῦμα is a subject or object acting either negatively or positively.

11. How does the quotation function in the logical flow of the passage? The function of a New Testament quotation is often revealed by its original context,[18] but without that context, readers of 4:5 have been left to disagree as to the purpose of any quotation here. Is it supposed to be a contrast to the human behaviour James has been condemning? Does it offer an example set by God? Is it a condemnation of humans? Is it a literary foil? A paradigm? Such broader conclusions cannot be made apart from first resolving the preceding issues.

These are the questions that must be answered before any coherent interpretation of James 4:5 can be offered.

Finding Answers

Given the notorious reputation of this text and the difficulty of the issues surrounding it, one might be surprised to learn that most of these questions, if taken on their own, would be relatively easy to answer. Grammatical and literary analysis of the New Testament in general and James in particular makes it possible to construct certain rules. Of course, grammatical rules are not "rules" in the prescriptive sense of the term, but they do describe consistently observed patterns or trends and thus make it possible to establish what a word or phrase might mean or how it might function in a specific text. They can absolutely not be taken as absolute, and any given text could always be the exception to the rule, but as a general course they can identify what would have been standard for an author, text or language, and what would have been abnormal. For most of the questions just listed, there are demonstrable rules and standards which can tell us almost in advance what the most likely answers should be. Simply following these rules makes arriving at those answers much easier than expected.

Take the first question: is there a formal quotation introduced in v. 5? While this has been a thorny issue in this verse, in general it is quite easy to answer. Formal quotations of scripture in the New Testament are often introduced by citation formula, and when citation formula are found they are almost always introducing quotations or explicit references. Not every citation formula is the same—some are composed of a simple καθὼς γέγραπται[19] (just as it is written) while others are more ornamental, such as τοῦτο δὲ γέγονεν ἵνα

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18 cf. Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale, 1989).
19 Rom 1:17, inter alia.

πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος[20] (now this took place so that the word spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled)—but they all share one feature in common: they are followed by formal quotations or references. This means that, as a rule, if we find a citation formula then we should expect to find a quotation connected to it. The phrase found in 4:5, ἡ γραφὴ λέγει, is definitely a citation formula, and is found verbatim as such in several other New Testament texts.[21] As Martin documents, "in every other case where we read ἡ γραφὴ λέγει (*hē graphē legei*) in the New Testament this formula introduces a direct scriptural reference or allusion."[22] Thus, as a rule, James 4:5 should be expected to contain a formal citation.

From this point it is easy to deal with the second question as well: does v. 5 introduce a full quotation, or merely an allusion, reference, or echo of some sort? This too would normally be rather easy to answer, even without knowing the source text. While James does incorporate many fleeting allusions and reworked variations of tradition,[23] he appears to use citation formula exclusively for the introduction of full quotations. This rule can be established by surveying James' other formal quotations. In 2:8 he uses the citation formula κατὰ τὴν γραφήν (according to the scripture) to introduce a verbatim quotation of Lev 19:18, while in 4:6 he uses διὸ λέγει (wherefore it says) to introduce another verbatim quotation of Prov 3:34.[24] In 2:23 he uses the extended formula καί ἐπληρώθη ἡ γραφὴ ἡ λέγουσα (and the scripture was fulfilled which says) and then begins with a quotation from Gen 15:6. The quotation is almost verbatim, though James does make some minor stylistic changes: he changes the conjunction καί to δέ, and uses the latter form of Ἀβραάμ for Abraham, rather than the form Ἀβράμ which was in use at that point in the Genesis narrative. Laws writes that these changes should likely "be seen as a mere slip, owing probably to his quoting from memory rather than by consultation of the text direct."[25] There is one other element of note in this quotation, however, and that is James' addition of the phrase καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη (and was called a friend of God) which does not

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[20] Matt 21:4.

[21] e.g. Rom 4:3.

[22] Martin, *James*, 149.

[23] Cf. D.A. Carson, "James," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed.G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) 997–1014.

[24] As Laws notes ("Does the Scripture Speak in Vain?" *NTS* 20 (1973–1974):210) the verbatim reproduction of the LXX is even more significant here since at that point the LXX departs significantly from the Hebrew MT.

[25] Laws, "Scripture," 211.

originate in Gen 15:6. Most scholars see this as an excerpt from either Isa 41:8 or 2 Chron 20:7 that has been married to the Genesis quotation. While this would not be that unusual given the occurrence of other married quotations in the New Testament,[26] Laws nevertheless argues that it is better explained as a common honorific that James added as a matter of custom.[27] Finally, In 2:11 James uses a simple ὁ γὰρ εἰπών[28] (for he who said) to introduce a pair of quotations from the Decalogue, which again are very close to the LXX text with some minor stylistic improvements.[29]

What rule then can be established by these texts? While it would be preferable to have more than four examples, the pattern that begins to emerge is that when James invokes a citation formula, he uses it to introduce a quotation from the LXX, and while he might feel free to make some minor stylistic changes and possibly a connection with another LXX text, for the most part his quotation will keep fairly closely to the LXX source text. Thus, as Sleeper similarly concludes, "… in other places where he claims to be citing Scripture, he quotes the texts rather precisely (2:8, 11 and 4:6)."[30] This rule implies that James 4:5 should contain a formal quotation, and this is confirmed by most scholars. Dibelius says "thus one must assume—as almost all modern interpreters do—that v. 5 contains a quotation …"[31] while Blomberg and Kamell write that "the majority of commentators, therefore, understand v. 5b to reflect the quotation of 'Scripture,' however allusive (and elusive)!"[32] Finally, Laws notes, "James's other quotations are all from the LXX (ii.8, ii.11, ii. 23, iv.6), which creates a strong probability that that would be the point of reference here."[33] Thus, it seems fair to conclude that, were this any other text, most scholars would adduce with very little fuss that James 4:5 must house a relatively precise quotation from the LXX.

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[26] Mark's combination of Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1 in 1:2–3, is an example made famous in textual criticism classes thanks to the efforts of scribes to identify, distinguish, or otherwise deal with the married quotation.

[27] Laws, "Scripture," 211.

[28] Laws appears to think that this phrase might be insufficient to count as a citation formula, concluding that "it is at least possible that he is rather calling on a general, perhaps even liturgical, knowledge of the Decalogue independent of the textual tradition" (Laws, "Scripture," 212) but the fact that a divine subject is clearly being assumed as the speaker of these laws surely gives the phrase a revelatory significance beyond what its short and simple construction might imply.

[29] He uses the negation μή rather than the LXX οὐ.

[30] Sleeper, *James*, 108.

[31] Dibelius, *James*, 222.

[32] Blomberg & Kamell, *James*, 191.

[33] Laws, *James*, 177.

Most of the other issues lend themselves to easy individual resolution as well. How about πρὸς φθόνον, does it modify λέγει or ἐπιποθεῖ? The most natural reading of the Greek text would be to take πρὸς φθόνον as modifying ἐπιποθεῖ, both because λέγει is already modified by κενῶς and so piling any more on it would make it conceptually cumbersome,[34] and because otherwise ἐπιποθει is left a conceptual orphan: longing for whom, for what? Mayor agrees, writing that "such a division seems to me to spoil both sentences."[35] It was early in the church's history, however, when the difficulties surrounding James 4:5 caused some readers to wonder if πρὸς φθόνον could not be attached to λέγει. Theophylact is the most well known of these, but the manoeuvre was also favoured by the scribe of codex Alexandrinus, who inserted punctuation accordingly, as well as some later scholars such as Spitta.[36] As noted, however, this creates more problems than it solves. Accordingly, Mayor notes that "almost all the later commentators are agreed that πρὸς φθόνον can only be taken with ἐπιποθεῖ."[37]

Naturally the next issue would be the meaning of ἐπιποθέω. Lexically it can bear the meaning of yearning or having a strong desire for something.[38] In the biblical literature it is almost always used of a human longing, usually for some spiritual item. For example, 1 Pet 2:2 instructs readers "like newborn babies *long* for the pure milk of the word,"[39] while in 2 Cor 9:14 those whom Paul calls "saints" *yearn* for communion with other believers.[40] Thus Moo concludes "... the word *epipotheō* ('yearn', 'desire') is never used with reference to God in biblical Greek."[41] With that settled, the next question can also be dealt with: how does πρός function? As a preposition it is relatively straightforward, and with an accusative noun it is usually understood as action towards: it points to the target of the verbal action.[42] This makes perfect sense when paired with a verb like ἐπιποθέω, which already communicates desire or inclination. Together, then, it should be easy to conclude that the text is describing an inclination or a desire for φθόνος. This is where many

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[34] Take, for example, A.R. Gebser's comma splice "Think ye that the Scripture speaks without reason, enviously?" *apud* Mayor, *James*, 143.

[35] Mayor, *James*, 143.

[36] Mayor, *James*, 143.

[37] Mayor, *James*, 143.

[38] BDAG s.v. ἐπιποθέω.

[39] 1 Peter 2:2.

[40] See also Rom 1:11, 2 Cor 5:2, Phil 1:8, 2:26, 1 Thes 3:6, 2 Tim 1:4. In the Pauline and related literature, it is also often used to speak of longing to visit another person.

[41] Moo, *James*, 145.

[42] BDAG s.v. προς.

readers have had problems, however, because it is unusual to speak of having a tendency towards something like φθόνος. Normally New Testament authors might speak of being *filled with* envy,[43] *preaching because of* envy,[44] and even *living in* envy,[45] but this is the only time in the New Testament that we find *desires toward* envy. As Johnson notes, it is a "rare construction."[46] Many interpreters, therefore, try to take the phrase adverbially, translating it *jealously*. As Hort explains, "apparently it can only mean 'jealously' in the same way that πρὸς ὀργήν means 'angrily,' πρὸς ἀλήθειαν 'truly,' etc."[47] This adverbial sense might be an allowable way to render the extant text, but it is certainly not ideal in this case. It would be, as Hort admits, "the only place in the N.T. where πρός is so used."[48] If possible it would be preferable to allow the πρός to point, as πρός usually does, to the object of the verbal action: φθόνον.

This naturally leads to the next question: what does φθόνον mean? Again, on its own, this would be a very simple question to answer. The word has the basic meaning of *envy*. Envy is, as the latest Oxford dictionary defines it, the act of feeling discontented or resentful longing aroused by another's better fortune.[49] It is a vice roundly condemned in both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures.[50] As Hort writes, "is then φθόνον used in a good sense or an evil sense? If we follow the usage of the word itself, it should have an evil sense."[51] Accordingly, many scholars agree that the usage here must indicate an inclination towards evil, and thus could only be used of something that could be inclined to such evil. Johnson writes "... in Greek usage, *phthonos* is always a vice; it cannot be used positively ... Part of the *topos* on envy, indeed, is that the divine realm cannot be associated with envy ..."[52] while Moo similarly concludes "*phthonos*, translated 'envy' in the NIV, always has a negative connotation in biblical Greek, and is naturally never used with reference to God ..."[53]

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[43] Rom 1:29.
[44] Phil 1:15.
[45] Titus 3:3.
[46] Johnson, *James*, 281.
[47] Hort, *James*, 93.
[48] Hort, *James*, 93.
[49] OED, s.v. "envy."
[50] See, for example, Rom 1:29.
[51] Hort, *James*, 94.
[52] Johnson, James, 281.
[53] Moo, *James* (TNTC), 145.

This leads to the final question of the clause: who is the subject of ἐπιποθεῖ? Who is it that yearns for envy? Grammatically there are two options, both of which look later in the sentence to find the answer. The first option is to see as the subject the cryptic entity described as τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν. The neuter form τὸ πνεῦμα can function as either subject or object, and if taken here as the subject of ἐπιποθεῖ, then whatever that τὸ πνεῦμα is, it yearns for envy. The second option, noting that the nuance of a causative κατῴκισεν would demand the introduction of the divine passive, sees God himself as the subject. While both options are grammatically possible, the facts and probabilities established so far already rule out the second. First, if an implicit divine passive is assumed as the subject, this would leave no other option for τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν than to be taken as the object of ἐπιποθεῖ: (God) yearns for τὸ πνεῦμα. If τὸ πνεῦμα is the target of the verbal action, however, then this would leave no function for πρὸς φθόνον other than to be taken as an adverbial modifier, which, as we have already seen, is possible but less than ideal. The second problem is that it would entail applying both the verb ἐπιποθέω and the noun φθόνος to God, both of which, as we have seen, are never attributed to God in the biblical literature. Given these two objections, the most responsible choice for the subject must be τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν.

Key to the text then is the identity of τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν. Before that can be addressed, however, there is a small text critical question to answer: Is it κατῴκισεν or κατῴκησεν? Even a quick glance at the external evidence, as tabled below, shows that, by traditional text critical canons, it is an easy decision:

κατῴκισεν	κατῴκησεν
𝔓 74 01ℵ 03B 044 049 6 93 104 197 431 459 617 665 676 808 1241 1251 1718 1739 2374 2774 2805	025P 5 33 69 88 206 218 322 323 398 429 436 522 614 621 623 629 630 915 918 945 996 1066 1067 1127 1243 1292 1359 1409 1448 1490 1505 1524 1563 1609 1611 1661 1678 1735 1751 1799 1831 1842 1852 1890 2138 2147 220 2298 2344 2412 2492 2495 2523 2541 2652 𝔐

The causative κατῴκισεν is supported by, among others, 𝔓⁷⁴ ℵ and B, while the best external support for the simple κατῴκησεν is codex P, the minuscule 33, and the majority of later minuscules, such as the Byzantine group normally cited by 𝔐. Further, κατῴκισεν enjoys internal support as the harder reading and the reading best able to explain the other. As Roger Omanson summarises: "The verb κατῴκισεν has better manuscript support than the

verb κατῴκησεν (dwelt). Since the verb κατοικίζειν (to cause to dwell) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, copyists were more likely to replace it with the much more common verb κατοικεῖν (to dwell), than vice versa."[54] Thus the text should most likely read κατῴκισεν, *he caused to dwell*, and this is notable not just because it introduces God as the divine passive subject, but also for the role it plays in the interpretation of the phrase as a whole.

Who then is this τὸ πνεῦμα that is caused to dwell within us? There are three primary options: 1) The human spirit—the heart or soul; 2) a mystical spiritual entity seeking to influence our actions—the little devil on our shoulder; 3) The Holy Spirit. This last option could be possible in other New Testament writers, since the Holy Spirit is often described as living within or among us.[55] In James, however, it is much less likely, since otherwise he has not mentioned the Holy Spirit at all, and in fact is usually regarded as having no formal doctrine of pneumatology. As Richardson notes, "there is really no pneumatology, that is, doctrine of the Holy Spirit, in the Epistle of James."[56] Johnson similarly concludes "there is no reason to suppose that James is thinking of the Holy Spirit."[57] The second option springs from Jewish mystic theology which saw competing spiritual powers at work in every person, some pushing towards good, others pulling towards evil. As Johnson describes, "in rabbinic texts, the notion of *yēṣer hārā'* and the *yēṣer haṭṭôb* refer to an 'impulse' not entirely to be identified with individual psychology but equally with cosmic powers."[58] Johnson goes on to draw comparisons with the "spirit of truth" and "spirit of falsehood" found in extra-biblical literature like *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.[59] Given his Jewish context it is likely that James was aware of such theology, but it is nevertheless unlikely that he had it in view in 4:5: the text's description of God himself *causing* the spirit to dwell in us seems to preclude that type of capricious spiritual conflict, not to mention that in James only a single spirit is mentioned.

At this point we can also address another common proposal. As is often noted, the later writing of *Hermas* has a very similar reference to a spirit made to dwell in us,[60] and while he might be using James 4:5 as a starting point, the

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[54] Roger L. Omanson, A *Textual Guide To The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006) 475.

[55] Cf. Rom 8:11, 1 Cor 3:16, Eph 2:2, κτλ.

[56] Richardson, *James*, 179.

[57] Johnson, *James*, 280.

[58] Johnson, *James*, 281.

[59] Johnson, James, 281. He cites, among others, 1QS 4:9–26, T. Jud. 20:1, T. Reub. 3:5, T. Dan 1:6, T. Naph. 8:4, T. Dan 5:1–3, T. Jos. 10:2–3, T. Ben. 6:4.

[60] Cf. Herm, *Mand.* 3.1, 5.2.5, 10.2.6, 10.3.2.

dualistic picture he offers of two competing spirits appears to be, as Dibelius notes, "unique in early Christian literature"[61] and, as Laws concludes, really "has no basis in the epistle [of James]."[62] This leaves only the third option, that τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν is the human spirit, or as Dibelius writes, "is to be equated more with the 'heart'."[63] This answer makes the most sense, and accords with James' usage: as Laws points out, James' "only other reference to *pneuma* is to the spirit which vivifies the body (ii.26)." Or, as Hort similarly argues, "the reference here is certainly, as in other parts of the epistle, to God's breathing into man's nostrils the breath of life."[64] It is this human spirit then, this spirit which God caused to dwell in us, that yearns for envy.

This leaves just the final question then: how does this quotation function in the logical flow of the passage? In New Testament writings a scriptural quotation can function in many different ways.[65] It can be given prescriptively as a law to be followed, or it can be cited as a prophecy currently being fulfilled by some event or idea. It can be offered negatively as an example of what to avoid, or it can be offered positively as an example to be followed. What purpose does James have in mind for 4:5? Based on the text itself, the key must surely be in the adjective κενῶς. James adds it to ἡ γραφὴ λέγει in what is likely—despite the lack of modifier—a rhetorical question expecting a negative reply: *do you suppose that the scripture speaks in vain?* Such an idiom is clearly intended to be a challenge. In vv. 1–4 James describes their behaviour in terms that are disapproving to say the least. In v. 1 he explains that their quarrels and conflicts stem from their own internal conflicts and inconsistencies. In v. 2 he describes how they commit immorality in the pursuit of their various lusts and desires. In v. 3 he tells them not only that they want the wrong things, but that they want them for the wrong reasons. In v. 4 he summarises all of the preceding under the classification of "friendship with the world" and explains that it is equivalent to enmity with God. When, therefore, in v. 5 he challenges them as to whether the scripture speaks in vain, surely he must have in mind a scripture that would oppose their behaviour and point to some better alternative. As Brosend writes, "contextually, James is contrasting worldly and Godly and asking the reader to choose."[66] Following

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[61] Dibelius, *James*, 223.

[62] Laws, *James*, 177.

[63] Dibelius, *James*, 224.

[64] Hort, *James*, 93.

[65] Cf. Richard Longenecker *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) or Hays, *Echoes, 14ff.*.

[66] Brosend, *James*, 110.

the cue of v. 4, rather than pursuing friendship with the world, this scripture might encourage them to pursue friendship with God. Whatever the scripture says, if the behaviour listed in vv. 1–4 threatens to leave it said in vain, then it must in someway have challenged that behaviour.

Identifying the Problem

It can be seen then that all the various little problems in 4:5 can be addressed through the application of grammatical rules and common usage. According to those rules, 4:5 presents a fairly close quotation from the Septuagint that is intended to challenge the reader's immoral behaviour by describing how the human spirit, which God caused to indwell us, yearns for envy. The real problem then is not presented by those assorted difficulties, but the resultant fact that when it is interpreted according to these rules, the extant text is hopelessly self-contradicting and ultimately makes no sense at all. The most obvious problem is that while the rules say that the text presents a quotation from the LXX, the well-known truth is that no such quotation can be found anywhere in or near the LXX. The more complicated problem, however, is in the quotation itself. What could it possibly mean to "yearn for envy"—a phrase that sounds more sensible in English than in the awkward preposition of the Greek πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ. If you are *yearning* for envy, then, by definition, you already have it. Finally, even if the quotation could be made to make sense and could be found in the LXX, how would the immoral behaviour of vv. 1–4 leave it speaking in vain? Envy is precisely the characteristic most dominant in their behaviour; a quotation describing how their spirit longs for envy, rather than being in vain, would be the most apt thing that could possibly be said. Far from being in vain, it would be the literal opposite of vain. It would be appropriate, well-suited, accurate, correct and only fitting. How then could James possibly call it in vain? Blomberg and Kamell have also noticed this problem, writing that "… even if some writing could be found that taught … 'the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely' … how might someone imagine this 'writing' (or Scripture) to speak in vain?"[67] This is more, of course, than a concern about words and whether James used the appropriate adverb, for the function of the quotation is, as discussed above, the central point of the text's logical progression. The unavoidable crisis is that the extant text, when interpreted according to the rules, folds that logic over against itself. It is a text divided, so how then can it stand?

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[67] Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 191.

It has to be accepted then that the extant text, when interpreted properly, contradicts itself and makes no sense. As discussed above, if the text as it stands cannot make sense, then there is a good chance it actually preserves a primitive corruption. This early error, though it came to dominate all the manuscript copies which happened to survive, is nevertheless incorrect and thus could not help but cause all of the telltale difficulties which have confounded interpreters of this text for so long. One could be forgiven for thinking then that New Testament scholars would be eager to explore possible emendations that would restore the text to its natural sensibility. Strangely, that has not been the case. Instead, interpreters have persisted in the unfounded rejection of the method discussed in chapter two. Adamson, for example, has chastised those who suggest that James 4:5 might be "… a corrupt text, demanding the 'desperate hypothesis' of emendation …"[68] while Martin needles that "the Greek text poses a myriad of problems […] and has produced several needless attempts to repunctuate or emend the text …"[69] and Ropes calls "unacceptable" the "textual conjectures by which various scholars have tried to eliminate a supposed gloss …"[70] Dibelius, though he is much more open to the method, nevertheless cautiously pleads for the second option, saying that "… one must avoid premature attempts to emend the text, for our knowledge is not sufficient for us to state with certainty that the wording as it now stands is indeed impossible."[71] So if they are still unwilling to emend the text, how have scholars attempted to make sense of it?

Simply put, they have gone backwards. When interpretation in accordance with common rules reveals a corrupted text, rather than accepting that the text is corrupt these scholars instead turn back to the standards themselves, arguing that it is the rules which are corrupt. It is not the text that is defective, they protest, but the grammar and usage which would otherwise rarely be questioned. True to form, while almost every commentator offers their own unique explanation of this difficult text, every one of those explanations is predicated on a presumed exception to the rules. It is a comedy worth surveying.

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[68] Adamson, *James*, 171.
[69] Martin, *James*, 150.
[70] Ropes, *James*, 262.
[71] Dibelius, *James*, 222.

A Comedy of Errors

The most popular proposal has to be the God-as-a-jealous-lover model. This reading involves the violation of several interpretative rules, the first of which is taking "God" as the subject of ἐπιποθει. It then relegates τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν to being the object of the verb, and finally takes the prepositional phrase πρὸς φθόνον as an adverbial construction. The resulting interpretation would be rendered in English something like "God yearns jealously for the human spirit that he caused to dwell within us." Rules of Greek grammar, of course, often appear to exist solely for the sake of being broken, but are these exceptions reasonable in this case? To begin, the first proposal takes an assumed "God" as the subject of ἐπιποθει. The reason most proponents give for proposing this interpretation is that God is already the assumed subject of the next clause, the divine passive κατῴκισεν. As Hort writes, "at the outset, κατῴκισεν not -ησεν, is the reading: so that the verse contains a distinct reference to God 'which He caused to dwell in us.' This of itself makes it highly probable that ἐπιποθεῖ has the same subject, making τὸ πνεῦμα accusative, 'He longs for the spirit which He caused to dwell.'"[72] Similarly Blomberg & Kamell argue that "God must be the subject of 'caused to live,' so it is most natural if he remains the subject throughout the half-verse"[73] while Davids also says that "God is undoubtedly the subject of κατῴκισεν ... This conclusion ... makes it antecedently probable that God is also the subject of the main clause ..."[74] and Ropes concludes that "this has the advantage that ἐπιποθεῖ and κατῴκισεν then have the same subject, and seems on the whole better."[75] Finally, Donald Carson opines "it is syntactically likely that God is the subject of *epipothei* ... not least since God is transparently the subject of the other finite verb, *katōkisen* ..."[76]

The positive argument here is, first of all, entirely unnecessary: there is nothing about a divine passive that demands that its subject be carried on anywhere else in the text. In fact, often the divine passive will be the lone reference to God in a given verse. A striking example can be found in Phlm 22, where Paul writes "and at the same time prepare also for me a lodging, for I hope that because of your prayers I will be given to you." In that text "God"

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[72] Hort, *James*, 93.
[73] Blomberg & Kamell, *James*, 192.
[74] Davids, *James*, 163.
[75] Ropes, *James*, 264.
[76] D.A. Carson, "James," 1006.

is undoubtedly the subject of the divine passive "given," yet it is the only appearance God makes in the text, with the remaining verbal action being carried out exclusively by Paul and Philemon. Similarly, already in the text of James the divine passive exists in isolation; 2:7, for example, reads: "are they not blaspheming the good name by which you have been called?" Given that the subject of the main verb is the evil rich, this text shows a verbal subject that is not only different than the divine passive, but distinctly contrastive. In fact, in none of the six other divine passives in James is "God" carried forward as the subject of the main verb.[77] Thus, there really is no reason to suppose that God should have to be the subject of ἐπιποθεῖ just because he is the subject of the divine passive κατῴκισεν.

While it is *unnecessary* to have God as the subject of ἐπιποθει, more important is the fact that God simply *cannot* be the subject because of the rule that in biblical usage God is not the subject of ἐπιποθέω and does not have φθόνος attributed to him. This is the rule that proponents of this model wish to violate, and yet without a compelling reason for doing so, there is no justification for concluding that this text is an exception to the dominant usage. As Laws explains in further detail:

> In the LXX the verb *zēloō* ... is virtually a technical term for the divine jealousy ... as is the Hebrew root *qnr* which it generally translates. Certainly the verb and noun are also used of men ... but they are clearly used by the translators to carry a special sense in application to God, and this is reflected, for instance, in 2 Cor. xi 2. By contrast, despite its similar range of meanings in regard to human longings, the verb *epipotheō* is never used to translate *qnr*, and is never applied to God (except perhaps in the eagle image of Deut. xxxii. 11) and the noun *phthonos*, which does not appear in the translation Greek of the LXX, is always used of a base human or devilish emotion (Wisd. ii. 24, vi. 23; 1 Macc. viii. 16; 3 Macc vi. 7) and so figures in the New Testament lists of voices (e.g. Rom. i. 29; Tit. iii. 3; 1 Pet. ii. 1). A writer of James's familiarity with the LXX is highly unlikely to write of God's jealousy in a way that neglects the usual terms and adopts language unprecedented and unsuitable in this context.[78]

Some interpreters nevertheless argue that the rule can be ignored in this case because of the long established Old Testament motif of divine jealousy. Blomberg & Kamell, for example, write that "while some reject an interpretation that has either God or the Holy Spirit described as 'jealous,' the background of God's jealousy in Ex 20:5 makes it possible here to apply a

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[77] 1:5, 1:21, 1:25, 2:7, 3:9, 5:9.
[78] Laws, *James*, 177–178.

normally negative term ('envy'—φθόνος) to a holy God. 'Longs' (ἐπιποθεῖ), after all, often refers to a strong desire that is not necessarily evil."[79] Martin takes the argument a step further, arguing that it was acceptable for James to apply φθόνος to God because he was using it as a synonym for more acceptable terms:

> … James may be using φθόνος in this case to modify God's action. It is to be noted that the term is parallel with ζῆλος and that φθόνος can be used interchangeably with ζῆλος, for both are often used for the 'jealousy' of God (1Macc 8:16; T. Sim 4.5; T. Gad. 7.2; 1Clem. 3.2; 4.7; 5.2). πρὸς φθόνος can thus carry the same sense as πρὸς ζῆλον (Mussner, 183). Furthermore, ἐπιποθεῖν can have a positive connotation. The point is that James could have used φθόνος instead of ζῆλος to show that God jealously longs for his people.[80]

Carson also echoes this, writing "*phthonos* is sometimes used interchangeably with *zēlos* (e.g., 1Macc. 8:16; T. Sim. 4.5; T. Gad 7:2), and the latter regularly refers to divine jealousy. Further, even *phthonos* is sometimes used by pagan Greek writers to refer to the jealousy of the Olympian gods."[81] This argument of synonyms, however, is simply untenable. As Johnson points out:

> As we have seen, *zēlos* is capable of being understood both positively and negatively, but in Greek usage, *phthonos* is *always* a vice; it cannot be used positively (so correctly, Laws, 177–178). Martin's claim that the term is used with reference to God is simply erroneous; the passages he adduces do not refer to God but to humans as having *phthonos* (Martin, 150).[82]

More important is the enduring and inviolable truth that φθόνος simply cannot be attributed to God. This is true in every body of literature in which we can examine it. In the New Testament φθόνος is used eight other times, and as the following chart shows, *never* is it applied to God—it is *always* an evil vice exhibited by humanity:

Text	Usage
Matt 27:18	Pharisees deliver Jesus to Pilate out of φθόνος
Mark 15:10	Pharisees deliver Jesus to Pilate out of φθόνος
Rom 1:29	God gave people over to a depraved mind filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, insolence, arrogance, boastfulness, disobedience and φθόνος.
Gal 5:21	Paul forewarns people against the "deeds of the flesh" including immorality, impurity, idolatry, sorcery and φθόνος.

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[79] Blomberg & Kamell, *James*, 191.
[80] Martin, *James*, 150.
[81] Carson, "James," 1006.
[82] Johnson, *James*, 281.

Phil 1:15	Some preach out of strife and φθόνος, while others are motivated by goodwill.
1 Tim 6:4	People who preach "a different doctrine" have a morbid interest in controversial questions which arise from strife, abusive language, evil suspicions and φθόνος.
Tit 3:3	In the pre-conversion state people were disobedient, deceived, enslaved to lust and spent their life in malice, hate and φθόνος.
1 Pet 2:1	Believers encouraged to put away all malice, guile, hypocrisy, slander and φθόνος.

Clearly in the New Testament literature φθόνος is not applied to God, nor is it at all the type of word that could be. In the LXX usage is less common, but just as consistent. The word φθόνος occurs four times, tabled as follows:

Text	Usage
Wis 2:24	Death enters the world through the φθόνος of the devil.
Wis 6:23	People encouraged to seek wisdom instead of going with "consuming" φθόνος.
1 Macc 8:16	Describes the Romans as working for good order and obedience, rather than φθόνος.
3 Macc 6:7	Daniel was thrown to the lion's den out of slander and φθόνος.

Across classical literature too is this pattern preserved, with φθόνος chiefly describing a vice of humanity. For example, in Aristotle's Rhetoric φθόνος is described as that which occurs when other people yearn for your good fortune.[83] Pindar describes φθόνος as something that could strike people "like a rough stone."[84] Only in a handful of texts do we find φθόνος used in any other manner. In Aeschylus, Xerxes is said not to know that the gods "begrudge" his success; that is, in their φθόνος they do not want him to succeed against the Greeks.[85] Similarly, Aeschylus also has Agamemnon worry about being struck by a glance from the gods' "envious eye."[86] In Euripides Heracles prays that no φθόνος will come from the gods.[87] Similarly, Sophocles has Philoctetes encourage Neoptolemus to humble himself before the envious gods, lest harm come to him.[88] These exceptions, however, do not overthrow the general rule which is observed throughout the classical Greek usage and, most importantly, followed without fail in the biblical literature. Thus, the

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[83] Arist. *Rh*. 1387b 22.
[84] Pin. *Olymp*. 8.55.
[85] Aesch. *Pers*. 362.
[86] Aesch. *Ag*. 947.
[87] Eur. *Alc*. 1135.
[88] Soph. *Phil*. 776.

rule cannot be rejected in this case: φθόνος cannot be ascribed to God, and thus God cannot be the subject of ἐπιποθεῖ. The exception its proponents have been making cannot be made.

The second exception this interpretation hopes to make is not as severe but notable nevertheless. After assuming the implicit "God" as the subject of ἐπιποθει, the model is forced to read τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν as the object. On its own this is perfectly acceptable, since the neuter τὸ πνεῦμα takes the same form for both nominative and accusative cases. The odd exception, however, comes when the prepositional phrase πρὸς φθόνον must be squeezed in as a verbal modifier: this model demands that it be taken adverbially. As Moo summarises, "the 'divine jealousy' interpretation suffers from almost exactly the opposite problem. It can give the verb [ἐπιποθει] its normal meaning of 'desire,' 'yearn,' but must interpret the preposition in a somewhat unusual way, as an adverbial construction: 'in a jealous manner.'"[89] While Ropes would like to claim that this is a quite natural reading of the preposition, writing that "πρός with the accusative is a regular periphrasis for the adverb,"[90] Hort has already conceded that this would be "the only place in the N.T. where πρός is so used,"[91] meaning that even if the reading is grammatically allowable, "regular" is hardly an accurate descriptor for it. The more regular use of the preposition would be to let it point to the target of the verbal action, but, as already discovered, such usage is one of several features of the extant text that inevitably result in internal contradiction. It was to escape such contradictions that proponents of the jealous-God interpretation sought to make exceptions to rules of grammar and common usage, but as has been seen, such exceptions seem to create more difficulties than they solve.

Another scheme that some scholars use to avoid the inherent inconsistencies of the extant text is similar to the jealous-God model, but differs in one important respect. That model assumed God as the subject of the verb and the human spirit as the object, but ran aground when, among other things, it attempted to attribute πρὸς φθόνον to God as an adverbial phrase. This model avoids that problem by connecting the preposition conceptually not to the main verb, but to the verbal object: the human spirit. Simply put, it takes it as a kind of imperative for the spirit; it describes *what* God is yearning for the human spirit *to do*. Of course, if God was yearning for

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[89] Moo, *James* (Pillar), 189.
[90] Ropes, *James*, 262.
[91] Hort, *James*, 93.

the human spirit to be directed towards envy, as the preposition πρός would normally imply, then this interpretation would still fail for ultimately connecting God to an immoral vice. However, this reading steers clear of that by assuming an unusual usage for πρός: that it means to oppose, or be contrary. As Pheme Perkins argues, "in situations that imply conflict, the preposition *pros* with an accusative can designate what is being opposed."[92] Martin similarly argues "the meaning must be that God's yearning over his people is set over against (πρός + acc.) their 'jealousy'; hence our rendering, admittedly more a paraphrase, 'oppose.' "[93] This results in an interpretation, paraphrased by Perkins, which reads something like: "God desires the spirit that dwells within humans to be opposed to jealousy, not be its slave."[94] Its proponents argue that this reading can find conceptual precedent in extra-biblical texts like *T. Sim*. 3:1–6. Is this, however, a valid function for πρός in this text? It is true that, in general usage, πρός can sometimes mean against.[95] The question, however, is whether πρός can take that meaning when paired with a verb like ἐπιποθέω. As Bauckham asks:

> … can πρὸς φθόνον ἐπιποθεῖ really mean 'opposes'? Mayor is surely right to object: 'πρός can only mean 'against' when joined with a word that implies hostility: it cannot have this force when joined with a word which implies strong affection like ἐπιποθεῖ …[96]

The proof, however, should be in the usage of the phrase. In the New Testament ἐπιποθέω occurs in eight other texts,[97] but in none of them is it modified by πρός. Outside of the New Testament, TLG turns up fifty-eight texts where ἐπιποθέω is paired with πρός. The most important of these is found in Ps 41:2, which reads "As the deer longs (ἐπιποθεῖ) for (ἐπὶ) the fountains of water, thus also my soul longs (ἐπιποθεῖ) for (πρὸς) you O God." It can be easily seen, then, that in this text ἐπιποθέω + πρός necessitates a positive sense rather than oppositional. Of the remaining texts, fifty-six are simply quotations of or comments on Ps 41:2.[98] The one remaining text is unrelated

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[92] Pheme Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995) 125.

[93] Martin, *James*, 141.

[94] Perkins, James, 125.

[95] cf. BDAG, πρός, 3.d.

[96] Bauckham, "Spirit," 276.

[97] Rom 1:11, 2 Cor 5:2, 9:14, Phil 1:8, 2:26, 1 Thess 3:6, 2 Tim 1:4, 1 Pet 2:2.

[98] Eusebius, *Comm. Isa.*, 2.8.77, *Comm. Ps.*, 23.368.56; Epiphanius, *Panarion*. 3.497.20; Athanasius, *Exp. Ps.* 27.201.5; Origen, *Comm. Jn.*, 13.4.22.5, *In Jeremiam*, 18.9.12.19, *Comm. Matt.*,

to the psalm, and while it also uses a positive sense, it dates from the seventh century CE and thus is of limited evidentiary value for the time of James.[99] It can be seen then that construing ἐπιποθέω + πρός in an oppositional sense would be at odds with what biblical usage we do have of that construction. The proposed exception, therefore, probably cannot be made, and is thus unable to rescue the extant text from its own incoherence.

One of the other problems with the extant text was the fact that it appears to produce a quotation from the LXX that is not actually found anywhere in the LXX. To escape this problem various scholars have proposed several different exceptions to the rules that might allow the extant text to mean something more intelligible. One popular option is to suggest that James is not quoting one specific scripture, but making a general reference to scripture as a whole. Richardson appears to lean towards this option when he concludes "which Scripture James was referring to is unclear, unless he was appealing to the sense of scripture as a whole."[100] Carson similarly concludes "Sometimes the singular 'Scripture Says' refers to a theme rather than a specific quotation (e.g., John 7:37–39; possibly Matt. 2:23)."[101] Another proposal is less broad but equally inexact, arguing that James had a particular

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14.1.111; John Chrysostom, *Ad Stelechium de compunctione*, 47.415.27, *Exp. Ps.*, 55.155.60, 55.159.20, 55.159.33, 55.161.16, 55.162.48, 55.163.14, 55.163.34, 55.164.20, 55.166.22, 55.493.47, 55.585.68, *De patientia*, 60.729.66; Didymus Caecus, *Comm. Ps.*, 296.19, 297.2, 297.7; *Physiologus* (*redactio Prima*), 30.2, *Physiologus* (*redactio secunda quae vocatur Byzantina*), 4.15, *Physiologus* (*redactio tertia quae vocatur pseudo-Basiliana*), 4.3, 4.4; Theodorus Studites, *Epistulae*. 384.8, *Parva Catechesis*, 3.46; *Apophthegmata patrum*, 329.25; Eustratius Presbyter, *Vita Eutychii*, 2507; Anastasius Sinaïta, *Sermo iii in constitutionem hominis secundum imaginem Dei*, 4.54; Leontius, *In pentecosten*, 11.102, 13.252, 13.254; Joannes Damascenus, *Epistula de hymno trisagio*, 3.40, 3.44, *Vita Barlaam et Joasaph*, 292.17, 562.20; Joannes Apocaucus, *Notitiae et epistulae*, 61.8; Neophytus Inclusus, *ανηγυρικὴ βίβλος*, 14.101, *Comm. Ps.*, 3.41.3; Joannes VI Cantacuzenus, *Orationes contra Judaeos*, 9.393; Gennadius Scholarius, *Precationes paenitentiae et epitomes psalmorum*, 335.28; Philotheus Coccinus, *Orationes et homiliae*, 1.146; Theodoretus, *Int. Ps.*, 80.1169.15, 80.1169.16; Diodorus, *Commentarii in Psalmos I–L*, 41.2.1n, 41.2.2n; Theodorus Mopsuestenus, *Exp. Ps.*, 41.2b.1; Ephraem Syrus, *Capita centum. Quomodo quis humilitatem sibi comparet*, 70.14, *De non suscipiendis*, 147.6, *Sermo de resurrectione, in consecrationibus, et de tumulo sancto*, 56.5; *Martyrium Sanctae Tatianae*, 16.39; *Typicon Magnae Ecclesiae*, 5.174.20, *Typicon carinae, paschae et pentecostes*, 5.32.1.

99   The text is Georgius Syceota, *Vita sancti Theodori Syceotae*, 164.8 and reads πλείονα καὶ μακροτέραν τὴν μετ' αὐτοῦ συντυχίαν γίνεσθαι ἐπιποθεῖ πρὸς τὸ καὶ πλέον παρ' αὐτῷ γνωρισθῆναι καὶ αἰτήσεων ὧν ἂν βούλοιτο εὑρεῖν καιρὸν καὶ παρὰ πάντων ὁραθῆναι τὴν πρὸς αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ παρρησίαν, (A.-J. Festugière, *Vie de Théodore de Sykeôn*, vol. 1 [*Subsidia hagiographica* 48. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1970]: 1–161).

100   Richardson, *James*, 180.

101   Carson, "James," 1007.

scripture in mind but cites it only approximately. Mayor, for example, writes "No passage in the O.T. exactly corresponds to this. The nearest are Gen. vi. 3–7, Exod. xx. 5 … and we have other instances of quotations in the N.T. which remind us rather of the general sense of several passages than of the actual words of any particular passage in the O.T."[102] Developing the idea even more, another model proposes that James was quoting a secondary source of some sort. Hort, for example, suggests that James was perhaps quoting not the LXX, but some later paraphrase of the LXX which is now lost:

> … the form of language suggests a quotation … [but] the difficulty is that no such words can be found. The [OT] passages already cited contain however their substantial purport; so that *our* O.T. Scripture does in a manner furnish them. But it is likely enough that they come directly from some intermediate source now lost to us. There are other reasons for supposing the N.T. writers to have used Greek paraphrases of the O.T. resembling the Hebrew Targums, and the words may have come literally from one of these.[103]

Spitta, in a conclusion followed by Bauckham,[104] famously attributed the quotation to the lost apocryphal writing *Eldad and Modad*,[105] while several other scholars have suggested that the text points to some midrashic formulation.[106] A more inward looking solution is to re-punctuate the text so that 4:5b is not a quotation at all and the citation formula is just some type of rhetorical flourish. Sleeper offers one version of this:

> One simple solution avoids virtually all of these problems. It is to treat the punctuation after the first part of the verse as a question mark rather than a colon, thus dividing the verse into two separate questions … The first question is therefore a general one: "Do you think that the scripture speaks in vain?" It expects the response "Of course not!" The second question, then, is not a quotation from Scripture, but it does reinforce the negative view of human nature that we have seen in these last two units: "Does the spirit which he [God] caused to dwell in you have jealous desires?" The answer must be "Of course it does."[107]

Johnson shares this position almost exactly, arguing that "it is better to take the two parts of this verse as two rhetorical questions, as in 4:1."[108] Carpenter

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[102] Mayor, *James*, 140.
[103] Hort, *James*, 94.
[104] Bauckham, "Spirit," 281.
[105] *apud, inter alia*, Mayor, *James*, 140.
[106] See discussion in Adamson, *James*, 141.
[107] Sleeper, *James*, 109.
[108] Johnson, *James*, 280.

arrives at a conclusion that is ultimately similar when he suggests that the passage be structured as an indirect discourse wherein James actually quotes scripture only in 4:6, while 4:5 is simply an interpretive paraphrase James uses to introduce that quotation and show the readers how to apply it to their situation.[109]

All such proposals fail to offer a responsible reckoning with the extant text of 4:5. For example, if it is just an interpretive paraphrase, then of what text? The question of origin would still remain, making the argument moot. If 4:5 is some type of rhetorical structure, then where is the telltale negation? In New Testament Greek, rhetorical questions expecting negative answers usually include some negation, such as μη.[110] Furthermore, if 4:5a and 4:5b were two consecutive rhetorical questions, what relation would they bear to each other? In that model the text would start with a clause that discusses the strength and relevance of the scriptures and immediately jump awkwardly to a clause that describes the jealous longings of the human spirit. As even Sleeper admits, "in one sense it seems to divert us from the statement about having confidence in scripture."[111] Thus Blomberg and Kamell respond:

> [a] few scholars have detached v. 5a from 5b, creating two separate sentences … Yet after 'the Scripture says' we expect to discover the contents of that reference. And without this, v. 5b follows on from v. 5a with no obvious logical connection.[112]

The larger problem with all of these alternative proposals, however, is that they all violate the demonstrated rule that ἡ γραφὴ λέγει is a citation formula, and that citation formulas in James introduce direct quotations from the LXX. As Blomberg & Kamell summarise:

> A minority of commentators, therefore, have translated "Scripture" (γραφή) as merely 'writing'; but with the overwhelming frequency of the term in the New Testament meaning what we call the OT and with the verb 'says' repeated in the middle of v. 6 in similar formula introducing what is unequivocally Scripture, this solution seems much less likely.[113]

Similarly, Davids reminds us that "… in every other case in the New Testament the γραφή λέγει formula introduces a direct quotation, not a sense quotation, allusion, or reference to scripture in general."[114] This fact is not changed by the

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[109] Carpenter, "Reconsidered," 189–205.
[110] Cf. BDF § 427(2).
[111] Sleeper, *James*, 109.
[112] Blomberg & Kamell, *James*, 190.
[113] Blomberg & Kamell, *James*, 190.
[114] Davids, *James*, 162.

exceptions that Carson offers. In both of those cases the quotation formula is not γραφὴ λέγει. John 7:37–39 uses the slightly different grammatical form of εἶπον ἡ γραθή (the scripture said) while Matt 2:23 enlists the rather different ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν (thus fulfilling the word spoken through the prophets). More importantly, while neither verse appears to quote any particular text in full, John at least seems to refer to specific known texts.[115] Thus, the rule must be then that James 4:5 contains a direct quotation from the LXX. The problem of our inability to identify that quotation simply cannot be allowed to lead us away from the plain meaning of the extant text.

A Better Way

All of these attempted solutions stem from a common impetus: to find a way around the unavoidable internal contradictions of the extant text. When interpreted according to rules of grammar and standard usage, the extant text of 4:5 suffers from several intractable problems: it quotes a quotation that does not exist; it gives an odd description of the human spirit yearning for envy; and by simply mirroring the immorality of the text, it appears to perform no logical function in the context—offering a challenge that does not challenge, speaking in vain while not speaking in vain. Interpreters have therefore tried to find new ways to understand the text, ways which avoid those difficulties, but every solution they have offered has depended upon the violation of one or more of the common rules. This is why no single one of these interpretations has managed to win consensus in the academy, because while they may make some sense of the text, they only do so at the expense of otherwise accepted standards. Thus, even when proposing their model, scholars have frequently felt compelled to admit its shortcomings, often conceding that it is merely the best of a bad bunch. Blomberg & Kamell, for example, caution that "… no interpretation is free from

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[115] For John 3:37–39, Andreas Köstenberger, in a volume edited in part by Carson, reproduces a lengthy list of candidates: "Possible scriptural allusions include those promising spiritual blessings (Isa 58:11; cf. Prov. 4:23; 5:15; Zech. 14:8; see Menken [1996a: 187–203; 1996b], who favors Ps. 77:16, 20 LXX [78:16, 20 MT], with the epithet 'living' coming from Zech. 14:8; cf. Daly-Denton 2004: 134), including blessings related to the outpouring of water (Isa. 12:3; 44:3; 49:10; Ezek. 36:25–27; 47:1; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:11–15; Zech 13:1; an allusion to Ezek. 47:1–11 is favored by Hodges 1979:243–248; Knapp 1997:116–117), in line with the feast itself (Neh. 9:15, 19–20; cf. Exod 17:6; Ps. 105:41; Prov 18:4; Isa 43:19–20; 48:21; 55:1; Jer 2:13; 17:13; see also 1QHᵃ XVI, 4–40)", "John" in G.K. Beale & D.A. Carson, eds., *Comentary on the New Testament Use of The Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007) 454.

problems …"[116] while the best Johnson can say about his proposal is that "…
the solution offered has fewer problems than any other …"[117] This does not
have to be. As discussed at the start, when the text that survives suffers so
insolubly, rather than settling for the lesser evil, the better way is to see it as
an indication of primitive corruption and seek a more sensible emendation.
In other words, instead of trying to fix rules that are not broken, scholars
should fix the text that obviously is.

Seeing this, over the centuries several scholars have proposed different
emendations of the text of 4:5.[118] One notable one was offered in 1926 by
J.A. Findlay. In a brief article in the *Expository Times* he surveyed several of
the inherent difficulties with the extant text already discussed here and
then offered a novel idea: emend φθόνον to φόνον.[119] It is the inverse, he
notes, of the popular Erasmus conjecture in 4:2, and thus benefits from
all the same transcriptional arguments that can be made there: with the
difference of only a single similarly round letter (**ΦΘΟΝΟΝ→ΦΟΝΟΝ**) it
is certainly a conceivable scribal slip. In fact, several later scribes, of the
minuscules 181, 1243, 2492, did just that. The resultant text could be translated,
as Findlay paraphrases, something like "the spirit that took up its abode in you
(when your contentions began) is yearning for murder, but he gives greater
grace."[120] This emendation has several points to commend in it. First, it offers
a potential source text for the scriptural quotation. As Findlay argues, "The
'Scripture' referred to will then be Gn 4[7]: 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be
accepted? and, if thou doest not well, sin croucheth at the door: *and unto thee
is its desire*, but thou shouldst rule over it.' "[121] Second, by contrasting the "he
gives a greater grace" of 4:6, it offers a solid logical connection with that text's
opening adversative "but." As Findlay argues, "'*But* he gives greater grace'
becomes full of meaning. 'Thou shouldst rule over it.' "[122] Third, it does offer a
good thematic tie-in with the entire passage, since, as Findlay writes, "… we
begin with 'wars and battles,' and pass on first to their motives, and then to
their possible consequences."[123] Finally, it solves all of the problems attendant

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[116]   Blomberg and Kamell, *James*, 192.
[117]   Johnson, *James*, 282.
[118]   Cf. Ropes, *James*, 264 ff., or Dibelius, *James*, 225 n. 91, for a survey of the history of other
proposed emendations of this text.
[119]   J.A. Findlay, "James iv. 5, 6" *The Expository Times* 37/8 (1926):381–382.
[120]   Findlay, "James," 381.
[121]   Findlay, "James," 381.
[122]   Findlay, "James," 382.
[123]   Findlay, "James," 381.

the reading πρὸς φθόνον. It seems that there is no choice then but to conclude that the emendation is not only plausible, but certainly more sensible than the version of the text that has happened to dominate the extant manuscript base. Is it, however, the most sensible and fitting text possible? For all the good that can be found in the proposal, there are several short-comings that suggest this is not be the case.

First, while one of this conjecture's greatest strengths is its ability to point to a source text for the quotation in the LXX, it actually does not accord very well with that source text. To start, the LXX text is not overly similar with the English version upon which Findlay bases his argument. It reads οὐκ ἐὰν ὀρθῶς προσενέγκῃς, ὀρθῶς δὲ μὴ διέλῃς ἥμαρτες; ἡσύχασον, πρὸς σὲ ἡ ἀποστροφὴ αὐτοῦ, καὶ σὺ ἄρξεις αὐτοῦ, which might be translated "if you have brought it rightly but not divided it rightly, have you not sinned? Be still, towards you is its inclination, yet you will rule over it." There is no verbatim overlap with the text of James 4:5, and the closest point of connection is the conceptual similarity between ἐπιποθεῖ, *desire*, and ἡ ἀποστροφὴ, *inclination*. Even this connection is not very strong, however, since *inclination* is already an unusual sense for ἀποστροφὴ, pressed into service largely in an attempt to make the text more closely resemble the underlying Hebrew.[124] The Hebrew text at this point uses a pronoun-noun construction, וְאֵלֶיךָ הְשׁוּקָתוֹ, *and for you is its desire*, but again the connection is solely conceptual, since in the LXX ἐπιποθέω is never used to translate תְּשׁוּקָה. Even if we forget this lack of linguistic overlap and assume that something like James 4:5's *the human spirit* is the focus of Gen 4:7, the conceptual connection is still not very strong. The Genesis text would describe how sin desires the human spirit, while Findlay's text offers the inverse: a human spirit that desires sin, and even then, not just "sin," but "murder" in specific. The combined effect of all these differences is that Gen 4:7 simply does not posses the characteristics of a quoted text as they are usually found in the text of James. When James quotes a text he does so fairly closely; Gen 4:7 is, in any estimation, just not close enough.

Second, Findlay's emendation does not allow the quotation to fulfil any more logical a purpose in the context. While it does connect well with the adversative of 4:6, it does not seem to fulfill the κενῶς that importantly introduces the function of 4:5. This itself is interesting because Findlay claims this precisely as one of the strengths of his proposal: "Full value is given to κενῶς, which leads us to expect a strong warning."[125] It is difficult to see how

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[124] Cf. J. Lust et al., *A Greek English Lexicon of the Septuagint,* s.v. ἀποστροφή.
[125] Findlay, "James," 381.

this is true however. As discussed above, for the scripture to be in danger of speaking in vain it would have to be presenting a contrast with the described immoral behaviour. One of the chief weaknesses of the extant text is that in describing the human spirit as longing for envy, it does not offer any contrast or challenge at all, but merely re-enforces the preceding description. After the behaviour described in 4:1–4, to call the human spirit envious would not, we argued above, be in vain, but would be accurate and well put. If that is true of an envious spirit, how much more true would it be of a murderous one? Findlay's proposed emendation then does not challenge the behaviour, but re-enforces it all the more.[126] Far from fixing the problems of the extant text, at this point it magnifies them. Thus, while Findlay's conjecture offers a good start and, in its attempt to fix the text not the rules, offers a superior strategy than is normally practiced, it cannot ultimately be accepted as the most sensible version of the text.

A far better conjecture was first proposed in 1730 by Wettstein,[127] and most recently defended by O. Kirn in a series of articles published in 1904 in *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*. This conjecture would emend the text so that instead of yearning πρὸς φθόνον, the human spirit would yearn πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Thus, the verse could be translated something like "do you think that in vain the scripture says 'the spirit he caused to dwell within us yearns for God'?" It would speak to the human soul's ultimate desire for communion with God. This version of the text is, as will be seen, eminently sensible and a strong argument can be made for it pre-existing the version that has come to dominate the extant manuscript base. There are, however, some questions to address. First, what form would the text have taken? Kirn, like Wettstein before him, argues for a form that features θεόν abbreviated as a *nomen sacrum*: ΘΝ.[128] This presumes, however, that the corruption occurred late enough for *nomina sacra* to be common practice. While the earliest support for πρὸς φθόνον comes from the third century, in order to attain dominance of the manuscript stream the corruption would have had to have occurred significantly earlier. The latest scholarship on the *nomina sacra* places the rise of the phenomenon sometime in the mid-second century,[129] but even then the practice did not always encompass all occurrences of the usual

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[126] Especially if one does not accept Erasmus' conjecture of 4:2, replacing the "murder" there with "envy."

[127] Cf. Ropes, *James*, 265; T. Könnecke, *Emendationen*, 15 (note erroneous reference to p. 51 in Dibelius, *James*, 225 n. 91).

[128] O. Kirn, "Ein Vorschlag zu Jacobus 4, 5" *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 77(1904):131.

[129] Larry Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006) 96–97.

terms, even within the same manuscript.[130] Thus, while the abbreviation of πρὸς τὸν θεόν as *nomina sacra* is a possibility, it is certainly not a necessity. The next question, however, concerns transcriptional possibility: whatever form the text took, how did its corruption occur? Kirn argued a very specific theory of how an early scribe mistook τὸν θεόν for φθόνον: the majuscule T appeared like a ΦΘ, while the Θ looked like a O, thereby resulting in the change. He writes:

> Diese Änderung ist einfach, denn sie nötigt uns im Grunde nur eine Vertauschung von φθ mit τ anzunehmen, und mit der auch sonst vorkommenden, namentlich aus 1 Tim. 3, 16 bekannten Unsicherheit über die lesung von O oder Θ in der Majuskelschrift zu rechnen.[131]

This theory can line up rather neatly, as seen in the following:

   T   O   N   Θ   N
ΦΘ   O   N   O   N

The corruption is only one letter longer than the original, and of the 5 letter sets, three are held in common. The scribe would have to misread only two letter sets, and of those one can be easily accepted, given the circle-shaped similarity of Θ and O, while the other, T to ΦΘ, is at least conceivable given the recurrence of both a horizontal and vertical line, though the sudden appearance of multiple round shapes is notable. Without the *nomina sacra* the text does not line up as neatly, though overall it could be argued to better resemble the general shape of the corruption:

   ΠΡΟΣΦΘΟΝΟΝ
ΠΡΟΣΤΟΝΘΕΟΝ
   ΠΡΟΣΤΟΝΘΝ

Either way this is a conjecture that well demonstrates the principle that corruption does not always follow lines of individual letter similarity. Just like the bridesmaid in chapter three whose mind substituted "communist" for "calvinist," scribes read by the word, and it is probably beyond the limits of imagination to estimate all the many mental and environmental factors that could have led a scribe to see one word instead of another. Perhaps the scribe was distracted by the recent occurrence of φθόνος in 4:2, or maybe the scribe was just thinking of that word that day. It is impossible to know with certainty, and so it is worth remembering the opening caution of Nisbet that "… an

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[130] Hurtado, *Artifacts,* 126.
[131] Kirn, "Jacobus," 131.

obsession with letter-forms can become a snare" and that often "the textual critic's job to clutch out of the air a word with perhaps no more than a general resemblance to the transmitted reading."[132] The best means for evaluating a conjecture, then, is not the similarity of individual letters—though that does add to a proposal's feasibility—but whether the emendation makes better sense of an extant text that otherwise does not.

One of the ways that the dominant text did not make sense was that it presented a formal quotation for which no source text could be found. This proposed emendation solves that problem, though not without some complexity of its own. Though many scholars and the apparatus of the NA27 supply only LXX Ps 41:2 as the source, Kirn argued that the full source was likely a combination of that text and Eccl 12:7.[133] The issues involved can be seen immediately if the respective texts are set in parallel:

Eccl 12:7   τὸ πνεῦμα ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς τὸν θεόν
Jas 4:5   πρὸς τὸν θεόν ἐπιποθεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν
Ps 41:2   ἐπιποθεῖ ἡ ψυχή μου πρὸς σέ ὁ θεός

Right away it can be seen that regardless of which source James used, he added a gloss on the subject τὸ πνεῦμα: ὃ κατῴκισεν ἐν ἡμῖν. This itself would not be problematic or out of the ordinary. The phrase does have a certain feel of independent portability to it, as evidenced perhaps by the later appropriation of it in *Hermas*,[134] and could be comparable to the gloss καὶ φίλος θεοῦ ἐκλήθη that James may have added to "Abraham" in his quotation of Gen 15:6 back in 2:23. Leaving aside that gloss, we are left with three points of comparison: the subject τὸ πνεῦμα, the verb ἐπιποθεῖ, and the object πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Looking first at Ps 41:2, the verb is a perfect match so only the subject and object need to be dealt with. For the object, changing ὁ θεός to the accusative form and dropping the pronoun σέ would serve simply to shift the sense from a direct vocative to an indirect description. This would make the phrase fit better into James' argument in chapter four, and is in keeping with the types of minor stylistic changes we have already seen James make to LXX texts. The subject, however, is a different matter. Why would James change ἡ ψυχή to τὸ πνεῦμα? Laws argues that the problem is not insuperable, because the two nouns could be considered synonymous: "In the LXX, in so far as πνεῦμα is used of the human spirit, it appears to be virtually equivalent to ψυχή (e.g.

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[132] Nisbet, "Conjectures," 66.
[133] Kirn, "James," 132.
[134] Cf. Laws, *James*, 176.

in the variant descriptions of man as created in Gen. ii. 7 and vi. 17). James would not be flouting LXX usage in substituting the one for the other."[135] Further, both Laws and Johnson point out that James could have made the substitution in order to avoid confusion with his specialized usage of ψυχικός in 3:15.[136] While not entirely explaining away the difficulty, this does certainly make it less severe.

As a source text, Eccl 12:7 does not suffer the same problems. It shares both an identical subject and object with the James quotation, thereby making it an undeniable contender as the source text. The problem, however, is in the verb. How did James end up with ἐπιποθεῖ instead of ἐπιστρέψῃ? Generally speaking the two are not interchangeable. The verb ἐπιστρέφω means to return or turn around,[137] while ἐπιποθέω, of course, refers to the inclination of desire or yearning. In Eccl 12:7 ἐπιστρέφω translates the Hebrew שׁוּב, while in Ps 41:2 ἐπιποθέω translates ערג. Nowhere in the LXX is ἐπιστρέφω ever used to translate ערג, and ἐπιποθέω never translates שׁוּב. It is unlikely, therefore, that James just happened to have a different translation of the LXX which used ἐπιποθέω in Eccl 12:7. Given the visual similarity between ΕΠΙΠΟΘΕΙ and ΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΨΗ, it is theoretically possible that James simply had a variant text of the LXX in which some previous scribe had confused the two, but there are no known examples of such variation to lend credibility to that notion. It seems then that the only point of connection between ἐπιποθέω and ἐπιστρέφω is, in fact, in the comparison of Ps 41:2 and Eccl 12:7. It is only in that textual pairing that we discover an emergent synonymy. While the first text speaks of having a longing for God, the second speaks of returning to God—an act which necessarily presupposes that same longing. It is possible therefore that James himself made the synonymous substitution, or it is possible that Kirn was originally correct: that the quotation represents a marriage of both texts. Such a combination would, as discussed above, not be out of the ordinary. Thus, in either Ps 41:2, Eccl 12:7, or both, this proposed emendation allows a source text to be found for the quotation in Jas 4:5.

That Jas 4:5 should be emended to reflect this source text can be confirmed all the more by the uniqueness of the grammatical construction. As discussed above, James' pairing of ἐπιποθέω with πρός is an exceedingly rare construction.[138] Outside of the proposed source text, Ps 41:2, it has not

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[135] Laws, "Scripture," 215.
[136] Laws, "Scripture," 215; Johnson, *James*, 280.
[137] BDAG, s.v. ἐπιστρέφω.
[138] In the 366 occurrences I surveyed, ἐπιποθέω seemed to prefer either the preposition ἐπι, or no preposition at all.

been found in period Greek literature. Even if another occurrence is yet found, Ps 41:2 is absolutely the only example within the texts of scripture. When an author begins, as James has, by introducing a formal quotation from the scriptures and then proceeds to offer a unique phrase that occurs in only one text in those scriptures, the conclusion that he must be quoting that one text is, to say the least, *likely*. In truth, this reason alone could prove the proposed emendation. That the remainder of James' text does not match the source text simply demonstrates the need for its conjectural repair.

The transcriptional arguments above show how this conjecture is possible, and the ability to produce a source text for the infamous phantom quotation is a strong point in its favour. There are, however, several more reasons worth exploring why this emendation is the most sensible reading and likely represents the earliest form of James 4:5. The first is how well it fits in James' scriptural context. The New Testament authors were constantly interacting with the Hebrew scriptures in a variety of ways, and while explicit quotations are the easiest to notice, implicit allusions are equally as important for the discovery of how a particular author made use of the scriptures. By any count James makes many allusions to both the Psalms and Ecclesiastes. According to the NA27 marginalia, for example, James includes nineteen allusions to the Psalms[139] and two to Ecclesiastes.[140] These references show that James had those portions of Hebrew scripture near the forefront of his mind as he composed his epistle. Accordingly, the surprise would not be to find an explicit quotation from one or both of them here in 4:5— the surprise would be *not* to find such a quotation. Second, this conjecture accords well with the interpretive history of James. While it is easy to find ancient readers puzzling over the difficulties of 4:5, it is the 4th century bishop Severian of Gabala who offers an interpretation of the verse that sounds remarkably as if he was reading this emended text. He wrote: "What this means is that the Spirit in us tends toward fellowship with God. He turns us away from the love of the world and gives us ever more grace."[141] These two points on their own show how fitting the emendation is for the text of James.

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[139] Jas 1:17= Ps 136:7; 1:18 = 119:43; 1:25 = 19:8; 1:26 = 34:14; 1:27= 10:14, 18; 3:3 = 32:9; 3:8 = 140:4; 4:8 = 18:21–25; 4:11 = 101:5; 4:14 = 39:6, 12; 5:3 = 21:10; 5:4 = 18:7; 5:11 = 103:8, 111:4; 5:20 = 32:1, 51:15, 85:3.

[140] Jas 1:19 = Eccl 5:1; 1:19 = 7:9.

[141] Severian of Gabala, *Catena* (CEC 29)– *apud James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude* (*ACC*; ed. Gerald Bray, Downers Grove: IVP, 2000) 47.

The third and most important argument in favour of the conjecture is how well it solves all of the difficulties attendant the extant text. As an added benefit, it achieves that success without having to break or bend any of the rules of grammar or usage. By offering a source text for the quotation, this emendation allows the citation formula ἡ γραφὴ λέγει to fulfill its most natural meaning: as an introduction to a quotation. As an object for ἐπιποθεῖ, πρὸς τὸν θεόν does not strain to attribute an unusual meaning to either πρός or ἐπιποθεῖ, like φθόνον did. It further allows πρός to perform its most natural function as a preposition: pointing towards τὸν θεόν as the direct object of the verbal action. Also, by taking, as its source texts do, the human spirit as the subject of the verb, this emendation avoids any theological or lexical aberration from the attribution of immoral jealousy to God. Finally, it makes the best sense of the quotation's stated purpose: to offer a challenge that the scripture's words not be said κενῶς, *in vain*. After describing their sinful behaviour and concluding that such amounted to fellowship with the world, this emended text clearly confronts all of that, calling instead for the people to have fellowship with God. The object of their heart's desire should not be the world, this text challenges them, but God himself. Should they ignore that call and continue in their current behaviour, then the scripture's words will have been in vain, but, James continues, should they choose to take up that call, then v. 6 promises that God will give to them more grace to enable their efforts. Interestingly, though she uses an unfortunate rhetorical construction rather than this sensible emendation, Laws arrives at much the same conclusion in her analysis of this passage's logical flow. She writes:

> An allusion to [Ps. 41:2] would produce a coherent argument proceeding from rhetorical questions: man is torn by frustrated desires, aligning himself with the world against God. Does scripture mean nothing? Is this (according to the scripture) the way the human spirit's longing is directed, by envy? The implicit answer, once the allusion is caught, is: surely not! According to scripture, the object of the spirit's desire is God, and the things of God; and the scriptures says, too, that God gives grace to those who come humbly to him (vv. 6f.).[142]

That analysis is surely correct, and now this emendation can allow it to proceed without any distracting dance around the problem of envy. Curiously, Dibelius rejects this conjecture precisely because he feels it "… would not contain the threat which must certainly be expected after v. 5a."[143] It is

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[142] Laws, *James*, 178.
[143] Dibelius, *James*, 225, n. 91.

difficult to see how this is the case. By confronting the sinful behaviour and issuing a call to pursue God instead, this conjecture offers a challenge that, arguably, threads its way through every page of both the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, and has certainly been the most significant and strenuous undertaking of anyone who has taken to following the faith held by James, who himself aptly wrote "draw near to God, and he will draw near to you."[144]

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[144] James 4:8.

JAMES 1:1 & 2:1

Introduction

The final example of a conjecture for the text of James focuses on two different texts that have at times been emended in the same way. James 1:1, woodenly translated, reads "James, of God and of Lord Jesus Christ a slave, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, greetings," while James 2:1 reads "my brothers, do not in partiality hold the faith of the Lord our Jesus Christ of Glory." It has been argued, at various times and for various reasons, that the reference to Jesus Christ in one or both of these texts is a secondary interpolation that should be omitted. This chapter will look at these two texts more closely, examining the problems within them and the reasons why this conjecture has often been proposed, including how this conjecture is often connected with arguments about the origin and provenance of James. Finally, it will revisit what can be learned from scholarship's treatment of these proposals about the method of conjectural emendation and the text of the New Testament.

The Problem

The text of James 1:1, as found in the NA27, reads Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ χαίρειν. The problem with this text is the vagueness of the referent: does it refer to two separate substantives, i.e. "God" *and* "Lord Jesus Christ," or just one, i.e. "Jesus Christ" being described as both "God" and "Lord"? On one hand, such a compound reference just to Jesus Christ would not be unusual in the broader New Testament. Titus 2:13, for example, invokes the glory of τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (our great God and saviour Jesus Christ), while 2 Peter 1:1 refers to the righteousness of the same. In those texts, however, the compound references are governed by a single definite article which, in accordance with the Granville Sharp rule, identifies the reference as singular. James 1:1 has no such definite article. Furthermore, a compound singular in James 1:1 would result in an explicit declaration of

Jesus Christ's deity that would be uncharacteristic of the epistle's otherwise subdued Christology. On the other hand, dual references typically contain additional modifiers that clarify the referent. Romans 1:7, for example, reads θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (God our father and Lord Jesus Christ). Though the construction is otherwise identical to Jas 1:1, in that text the referent is made clear through the addition of πατρὸς, which clarifies that θεὸς must be a reference to the father independent of the subsequent reference to Jesus Christ the son. James 1:1. however, has no such clarifying additions. Its spartan string of genitives has therefore been found by many to be vague and awkward. Consequently, it should be no surprise that numerous scribes over the years have been tangled and tripped by the verse. The known variation of the text, divided by clause, can be tabled as follows:

First Clause		Second Clause	
θεοῦ καὶ	𝔓74 ℵ A B 025 044 5 33 69 81 88 218 322 323 398 400 436 621 623 629 631 808 915 918 945 996 1067 1127 1175 1241 1243 1270 1297 1359 1409 1448 1490ᶜ 1505 1524 1563 1598 1609 1611 1661 1678 1718 1735 1739 1751 1842 1852 1890 2138 2298 2344 2374 2464 2492 2495 2523 2541 2805	κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	𝔓74
θεοῦ πατρός καὶ	206 429 522 614 630 1292 1490 1799 1831 2080 2147 2200 2412 2652	κυρίου Ἰησοῦ	945 1359
θεοῦ καὶ πατρός	378	κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	some early versions
		Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	365 1842 1850

As can be seen, the variations primarily consist of the addition of clarifying modifiers, such as πατρός. Laws summarises:

> Some manuscripts seek to clarify the distinction between the two objects of service by identifying God as Father, *theou patros*, and Jesus as *Lord* (so 69, 206, 429), while some versions, in the absence of a definite article in Greek, add the qualification 'our Lord'. This recognition by scribes of an awkwardness in the text, together with the fact that the acknowledgement of two-fold service is unparalleled in the addresses of other New Testament epistles ...[1]

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[1] Laws, *James*, 46.

Previously it was argued that such scribal difficulties can often indicate points of primitive corruption. Accordingly, the conjectural proposal to emend the text by removing the Christ reference goes a long way towards addressing those problems. The text is simply smoother and clearer with the Christ reference omitted.

The opening of chapter two has caused even more consternation. As Davids comments, "the phrase τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης is the center of one of the turmoils over James ... the genitive qualifier of πίστιν is quite unusual ..."[2] The problem stems primarily from its string of genitives. Starting with τὴν πίστιν, just the modifier τοῦ κυρίου would make perfect sense: *the faith of the lord*. Adding the modifier ἡμῶν would still make fine sense: *the faith of our lord*. Even adding Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ would still make sense: *the faith of our lord Jesus Christ*. Such references are, in fact, found elsewhere in the New Testament, such as 1 Tim 1:14, or, arguably, Gal 2:16. What sense, however, is made by the addition of the final modifier τῆς δόξης? Which of the preceding terms does it modify: πίστιν, κυρίου, or Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ? Should it be rendered *the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ*, as the NASB does, or *the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory*, as the KJV has, or even *believing as you do in our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns in glory*, as the NEB reads? The differences in English translations alone are enough to demonstrate the confusion over the place and purpose of τῆς δόξης, and the question of how it connects to the preceding string of genitives. As Laws again summarizes: "the whole phrase is extremely syntactically awkward, being a string of genitives of which the last, *tēs doxēs*, reads like an appendage without any clear connection with what precedes it."[3]

This awkwardness was an issue for more than one scribe. The extant variation can again be tabled as follows:

τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης	ℵ A B D 025 044 5 69 81 88 218 322 323 398 400 621 623 629 808 915 918 945 996 1127 1175 1241 1243 1270 1297 1359 1524 1563 1598 1609 1661 1678 1718 1735 1739 1751 1842 1852 2292 2374 2464 2492 2523 2805
τὴν πίστιν τῆς δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	206 429 436 522 614 630 1067 1292 1367 1409 1448 1490 1505 1611 1799 1831 1890 2080 2138 2147 2200 2412 2495 2541 2652

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[2] Davids, *James*, 106.
[3] Laws, *James*, 94.

τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	33 631
τὴν πίστιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ	2344
τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ	some early versions

As with 1:1, such difficulties can often reveal the need for a conjectural correction. While many past scribes, as seen in the second two variants above, attempted to fix the text by either omitting or moving τῆς δόξης, the alternate proposal to omit Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ solves the problem much more easily. As Mayor summarised, the argument for it is quite straightforward:

> … it is pointed out that the construction of τῆς δόξης has been felt as a great difficulty by all the interpreters, and that this difficulty disappears if we omit the words [ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ]. We then have the perfectly simple phrase 'the faith of the Lord of glory,' the latter words, or words equivalent to them, being frequently used of God in Jewish writings … It is next pointed out that there are undoubted examples of the interpolation of the name of Christ in the N.T., e.g. Col. i. 2, 2 Thess. 1. 1, James v. 14, and that the use of the phrase κύριος τῆς δόξης of Christ in 1 Cor. ii. 8 may have led to the insertion of the gloss here.[4]

This elegant solution does, it must be admitted, result in a better text for 2:1. Given that the same conjecture can be applied with equally felicitous results to 1:1, it can be seen that a solid case can be made to emend the text of James to omit its two Christ references.

The Origin of the Treatise

Omitting the only two Christ references would immediately call into question how "Christian" the resulting text would be, and in that way this conjecture has often been offered in conjunction with different theories about the origin and provenance of the epistle. The first and most famous example of this were the twin proposals of Massebieau[5] and Spitta.[6] Working independently over a century ago, both concluded that the original version of James did not have the two Christ references because the original version of James originated

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[4] Mayor, *James*, cxciii–cxciv.

[5] L. Massebieau, "L'Epitre de Jacques: Est-elle l'oeuvre d'un chretien?" *Revue de L'histoire des religions* 32(1895): 249–283. Though Spitta is most often associated with this conjecture, it appears that Massebieau was the first to publish the hypothesis.

[6] F. Spitta, *Der Brief des Jakobus untersucht* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896).

strictly within Judaism with no Christian influence.[7] This earlier epistle was later appropriated by Christians who "baptised" it into Christianity by adding the Christ references. While their proposal clearly depends greatly on the conjectured omission, their argument was primarily exegetical. James was not originally a Christian document, they argued, because without the two Christ references there was really nothing Christian about it. Besides omitting any other explicit Christian identifiers, it completely lacked all of the central themes of Christian theology. As Massebieau explained: "one would search the epistle in vain for the least mention of the acts of the redemption drama: the incarnation of the Son of God, his expiatory sacrifice, his resurrection, his glorious advent."[8] Since then interpreters have often echoed this striking omission. Laws, for example, comments at length:

> Yet the omission of what might be thought to be central and indispensable Christian themes is glaring. There is no reference to Christ's death and its effects or to his resurrection; none to the gift and activity of the Holy Spirit; none to the sacrament of the eucharist. Example of endurance is found in the prophets and in Job, v. 10 f., rather than, as by the author of 1 Peter, ii. 21–23, in Christ; and in contrast to the practice of every other New Testament author (except the author of the Apocalypse), the title 'Lord' is still more frequently a title of God (1. 7, iii. 9, iv. 10, iv. 15, v. 4, v. 10, v. 11). By contrast with thinkers such as Paul, John or the author of Hebrews, the Christianity of James will inevitably be judged as superficial and undeveloped.[9]

Even Johnson, who has written at length in opposition to the conjecture, is forced to admit that the epistle's "explicitly messianic character is more muted than any other canonical writing … James makes no obvious use of

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[7] Though not important for the overall argument, it should be noted that Massebieau and Spitta's proposals did differ somewhat. In 1:1 Massebieau omits only Ἰησοῦ χριστου, while Spitta omits the entire phrase καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστου. The basic proposal was later accepted in part or whole, as documented in Dale Allison "The Fiction of James and its Sitz Im Leben" *RB* 118 (2001) n. 38, by: M.E. Boismard "Une liturgie baptismale dans la Prima Petri II-son influence sur l'épître de Jacques," *RB* 54 (1957) 176; Henry Fulford, *The General Epistle of St. James* (London: Methuen, 1901) 469; J. Halévy, "Lettre d'un rabbin de Palestine égarée dans l'évangile," *RevSém* 22 (1914) 197–201; A.H. McNeile *An Introduction To The Study Of The New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953) 206, n. 1; Arnold Meyer, *Das Rätsel des Jacobusbriefes* (BZNW 10; Gießen: Alfred Töpelmann, 1930) 118–121; James Moulton "Synoptic Studies II," 47; and Hans Windisch and Herbert Preisker, *Die Katholischen Briefe* (3rd ed.; HNT 15; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1951). My gratitude is extended to Dale Allison who kindly sent me a copy of his paper.

[8] "Or c'est vainement qu'on chercherait dans l'epitre la moindre mention d'un des actes du drame de la Redemption: incarnation du Fils de Dieu, son sacrifice expiatoire, sa resurrection, son glorieux avenement," Massebieau, "L'Epitre," 253.

[9] Laws, *James*, 3.

any of the narrative traditions concerning Jesus. Most notably, he makes no mention of the death of Jesus."[10] The lack of Christian themes is just the start, however. What is even more telling are those elements of James that, arguably, are most naturally read as expressions of a Judaic faith. In 1:25 there is a commendation of the person who intently studies "the perfect law," and if that appraisal is not sufficiently positive the next clause calls it "the law of liberty." In 2:2 a standard English translation talks about the person who "comes into your *assembly*," thereby obscuring the fact that the Greek text uses the much more recognizably Jewish term *synagōgē*, and furthermore note that it is not just any *synagōgē*, but *your synagōgē*: the synagogue of the epistle's recipients. Similarly, in 2:21 the author makes a point of adding that Abraham was not just anyone's father, but "*our* father." A creedal reference to the Jewish *shema* of Deut 6:4 is clearly found in 2:19, while an allusion to ritual washing is probably hiding in 4:8's "cleanse your hands you sinners." The relationship with the law in 4:11 again sounds more Jewish than Christian in that the reader is commanded not to judge or dismiss the law, but just to do it. More significantly, as Laws notes, in 5:10 when the author needed an ultimate example of pious suffering he looked not to the passion of the Christ but to the persecution of the prophets. Finally, while the phrase "in the name of the Lord," gives a Christian flavour to the instructions to "anoint the sick with oil" in 5:14, it is notable that the clause is in doubt, being absent from codex Vaticanus. On their own any one of these points might be easily explainable, but taken together their force seems to support the theory of Massebieau and Spitta: the epistle of James, when interpreted as a whole, reads more like a document that originated within Judaism. As Dibelius summarises:

> For both Spitta and Massebieau are doubtless correct in their observation that the unbiased reader of Jas senses in some passages the lack of decisively Christian references. The models are Abraham, Rahab, Job and Elijah; a reference to the suffering of Jesus cannot even be gleaned from 5:11. We seek in vain for traces of a Christ-cult, of preaching about the cross and the resurrection, indeed, of any relatively enthusiastic emphasis of particularly Christian sentiments. Jas seems to lie completely in line with pre-Christian Jewish literature.[11]

In this way Spitta and Massebieau used the conjectural arguments about the interpolation of the Christ references to support their exegetical arguments about the origin of the epistle.

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[10] Johnson, *James*, 49.
[11] Dibelius, *James*, 22.

As provocative as the proposal is, the evaluation of it does not even need to bother with the conjectural question, since scrutiny of it can be carried out on an exegetical basis alone. There are three exegetical reasons why proposals like that of Massebieau and Spitta cannot be accepted: they assume a false distinction between Christian and Jew; they do not reckon with the Christian content of the letter; and they ignore a much better explanation for the omission of typical Christian themes. The first reason is that they depend on a strict distinction between "Christian" and "Jew" that is anachronistic and ultimately untenable. Such proposals assume an understanding of Judaism and Christianity as strictly separate and mutually exclusive entities: you could be a member (or an epistle) of one, or the other, but not both. That understanding may accord with modern religious expression, but it cannot be read back into the first century. John Elliott explains:

> As Jacob Neusner and a growing number of scholars have been emphasizing for some time now, the concept 'Jew' as understood today derives not from the first century but from the fourth and following centuries CE. It denotes persons shaped by and oriented to not only Torah and Tanakh but Mishna, Midrashim and Talmudim. In similar fashion the name 'Christian' as used and understood today designates persons marked more by doctrines and events of the fourth and later centuries (trinity of the godhead, double natures of Christ, consolidating and hierarchically structured catholic church) than by those of the first.[12]

Thus, while we may, for convenience sake, continue to use the same terms,[13] when describing religious expression during the period of the epistle's composition we must adopt a more historically accurate understanding. In the time of James, far from being a 'religion' separate from Judaism, Christianity is best understood as a renewal movement within it, made up of people who considered themselves Jewish first, and followers of Jesus second. As Elliott again explains:

> The Jesus movement was not a Judean or 'Jewish' phenomenon but originated as a renewal movement within Israel. Emerging around Jesus as yet another faction within first-century Israel, it eventually morphed into an Israelite sect, which over generations slowly separated from other Israelite parties, factions and sects socially as well as ideologically. That process, however, was

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[12] John H. Elliott "Jesus the Israelite was Neither A 'Jew' Nor A 'Christian': On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature" *JSHJ* 5.2 (2007): 119–120.

[13] Contrary to Elliott, who proposes strict limitations on the use of the word "Judean" and complete rejection of the terms "Jew" and "Christian" in the discussion of first century religion.

> an intramural affair involving sectarian struggle within Israel. Jesus did not found a new 'religion' and Paul did not 'convert' to it. They were and remained life-long Israelites.[14]

This understanding simply echoes the conclusion of Stephen Wilson, who fifteen years earlier wrote:

> Moreover, Jesus, I think, was wholly embedded in the Judaism of his day and thought he was going to precipitate the restoration of Israel. That he would found a religion called Christianity, which would become competitive with the Judaism he knew, was a thought that never entered his mind. Paul, with his obsession for converting Gentiles, set in place a number of changes that resonated through the succeeding centuries, but, in the last resort (Romans 9–11), he remained committed to Israel.[15]

Thus, when discussing first century Christianity it needs to be understood that we are dealing primarily with a group within Judaism that also followed Jesus. To speak then, as Spitta and Massebieau do, of the epistle being *either* Christian *or* Jewish, as if it could be Christian without automatically also being Jewish, is to assume a distinction that is not historically defensible. Whether or not James originated among Jesus followers, it would still necessarily originate within Judaism. This is why arguments based on the supposed Jewish character of the epistle—a favourable view of the law, appeals to the example of the prophets, references to synagogues—are simply not probative for either including or excluding the name "Jesus Christ", since many "Christian" documents could still be expected to contain such elements. Thus, for example, the gospel of Matthew, even though it obviously originates among Jesus followers, nevertheless contains many of the same "Jewish" elements that James does. Note, for instance, the striking juxtaposition in the Sermon on the Mount of nascent Christology with a high appraisal of the law:

> Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.[16]

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[14] Elliott "Jesus"151–152.

[15] Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) xv.

[16] Matt 5:17–19, NRSV.

It can be seen then how this proposal is based on a false distinction and subsequent misunderstanding of the textual evidence. The question is not, therefore, whether James had any origin in Judaism, but rather *since* James originated in Judaism did it *also* originate among Jesus followers within Judaism, and if so, why are the most common Christian themes oddly absent from the epistle?

Second, the question of whether James originated among the Jesus followers within Judaism—or what would traditionally be called a "Christian origin"—can easily be answered in the affirmative. While Spitta and Massebieau are correct that many common Christian themes are missing, there are at least two types of Christian content present in the epistle that necessarily indicate a Christian provenance. The first of these is James' interaction with Pauline theology. In 2:14–26 James famously engages in an extended discussion of the nature of faith in relation to good works. He begins by asking the question "What does it profit, my brothers and sisters, if someone says they have faith but does not have works? Is faith able to save them?" and concludes with the startling assertion that "a person is justified by works and not by faith alone (ἐκ πίστεως μόνον)." Startling, that is, if one has just been reading Paul, who argued that "a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law,"[17] and earlier stated that "we know that a person is not justified by works of the law (ἐξ ἔργων) but through faith in Jesus Christ …"[18] An incredible amount of effort has already been expended trying to discern whether James is agreeing with Paul, disagreeing with Paul, or whether the two are ultimately reconcilable, but the more important fact to notice here is that, agreeing or disagreeing, either way James is *interacting* with Paul. This necessarily presumes James' previous knowledge of and concern with the theology of Paul, and therefore places James 2:14–26 squarely within an early debate amongst Christian-Jews on the nature of faith and works. Many scholars, in fact, conclude that James is responding to a libertarian misunderstanding of Paul. As Moo writes, "most scholars think … that James is reacting to a misunderstood Pauline theology. This is because the slogan 'justification by faith' which James deals with is difficult to trace to any other source than the preaching of Paul, who made it a distinctive part of his message."[19] This misunderstanding, furthermore, likely proves the "Christian origin" of James' response, as opposed to a reaction by non-Christian Jews. As Laws argues:

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[17] Rom 3:28.
[18] Gal 3:16.
[19] Moo, *James*, 27.

> The discussion about faith and works in ii. 14–26 is conducted in terms which presuppose some acquaintance with the Pauline argument about justification; it cannot be read as a Jewish reaction to Paul, because of the author's failure to realise that Paul's attack is directed to notions of works of the Law, but must represent a debate conducted within Christian circles.[20]

This identification of James as part of an ongoing Christian discussion about the nature of faith is strong evidence of its Christian provenance.[21]

A second type of Christian content can be seen by comparing the text of James with the known traditions of Jesus. While James never explicitly quotes Jesus, most scholars agree that he alludes to his sayings on many occasions. As Kloppenborg summarizes:

> Commentators on the Letter of James frequently observe the close conceptual parallels between James and the Jesus tradition ... There is disagreement over just how many 'parallels' exist; a survey of commentators up to the late 1980s indicated that on average interpreters find about eighteen echoes of the Jesus tradition in James.[22]

Echoing Hartin, Kloppenborg argues that James' use of the Jesus traditions demonstrates direct knowledge of the synoptics' Q source.[23] Further, in what could at least partially explain the lack of explicit quotations, Kloppenborg concludes that James deliberately reworked and rephrased these sayings as part of the common practice of rhetorical emulation. This interaction with the sayings of Jesus is clear to see in even a brief survey. While Kloppenborg offers twenty-two cases,[24] just a few examples will suffice for this discussion. In 1:5 James says "and if anyone among you lacks wisdom, let them ask the God who gives to all freely and without reproach, and it will be given to them." Though James has expanded the tradition, the resemblance to the one found in Matt 7:7/Luke 11:9 is unmistakable: "Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find." Another example can be found in James 5:12: "Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, not by heaven nor by the earth, nor any other oath, but let your yes be yes and your no be no, lest you fall under

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[20] Laws, *James*, 3.

[21] Allison sees another Pauline parallel between Jas 1:2–4 and Rom 5:3–5, though he sees this as resulting from mutual dependence on a common source rather than a direct relationship between James and Romans ("Fiction," 558).

[22] John Kloppenborg "Emulation of the Jesus Tradition in James," in *Reading James with New Eyes* (Ed. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg; New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2007) 123.

[23] Kloppenborg, "Emulation," 122.

[24] Kloppenborg, "Emulation," 143–147.

judgement." Clearly this is adapted from the tradition Matthew employs in
5:34: "But I say to you do not swear at all, not by heaven—for it is God's
throne—nor by the earth—for it is his footstool—nor by Jerusalem—for it
is the city of the great king—nor by your head—for you cannot make even
one hair white or black. But let your yes be yes and your no be no."[25] This
following of Jesus' teaching makes a strong case for identifying James as a
Jesus follower and, when taken together with the epistle's interaction with
Paul, constitutes the second exegetical argument for rejecting the proposal
of Massebieau and Spitta. All that remains to be found then is a satisfactory
explanation for the omission of the common Christian themes: why would a
Jesus follower within first century Judaism write a letter that omitted all the
central features of their faith in Jesus?

    The problem is not as troubling as it might at first seem, and in fact
there have been several plausible explanations.[26] One idea suggests that
the epistle was intended to evangelize Jews, and thus the Christology was
strategically suppressed. Another wonders if James simply represents a type
of Christianity that did not focus on the life and work of Jesus. As will be
discussed below, Allison has revived an interesting proposal that the epistle's
intended recipients were, at least in part, non-Christian Jews, and it was out
of consideration for them that the Christianity of the letter was deliberately
toned down. As he concludes:

> James ... likely emerged from a group that, in its place and time ... was still
> seeking to keep relations irenic. It was yet within the synagogue (2:2) and
> so still trying to get along as best as possible with those who did not believe
> Jesus to be the Messiah. In such a context the epistle of James makes good
> sense. The emphasis upon convictions rooted in the common religiosity of the
> wisdom literature, the omission of potentially divisive Christian affirmations,
> and the passages that can be read one way by a Christian and another way by
> a non-Christian would make for good will on the part of the latter and also
> provide edification for the former.[27]

Each of these different explanations can be subject to their own evaluation,[28]
but the one that we find most compelling is based in the idea of *genre*. That

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[25] Yet another example this project would hasten to point out would be Matt 12:36–
37, "I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless
word you utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be
condemned" and James 3:1 "Do not be garrulous teachers, knowing that you will receive
greater judgement."

[26] The following is based on Allison's survey in "Fiction," 55.

[27] Allison, "Fiction" 566–567.

[28] Allison offers an insightful evaluation of the various options in "Fiction," 555.

is, the lack of explicit Christian theology in James is probably best explained by the *type* of document that it is: it simply was not the type to include theology.

   Genre, it must be said, has become somewhat of a poisoned well in contemporary James studies largely because of the legacy of Dibelius. He famously placed James within a specific genre known as *paraenesis*, which he generally defined as "a text which strings together admonitions of general ethical content."[29] While there is, of course, a degree to which that description is essentially true, other scholars came to see the need to qualify and specify Dibelius' assessment.[30] As Hartin describes:

> Martin Dibelius's commentary had important consequences for understanding the Wisdom dimension of James. As we saw above, he viewed James as a *paraenesis*, a "book of popular slogans," individual passages that were simply strung together by means of catchwords. Scholars tended to embrace this view almost uncritically. Since the late 1980s, however, this approach has been seriously challenged.[31]

Most recently, those challenges have more and more turned into dismissals, so that Dibelius' position has been all but rejected. As Davids exhorts, "scholarship must move beyond Dibelius's form-critical view of James ..."[32] This trend is unfortunate. While it is true that many of Dibelius' subsequent conclusions do need to be refined, and the epistle surely does posses more literary unity than he allowed, it is nevertheless also true that the basic essence of his description is accurate: the letter of James is more practical than theological. In general, it does not concern itself with in-depth theological exposition; even its most theological section, the discussion in 2:14–26 on the nature of faith, is pursued from the perspective of practical works. Its advice concerns everyday issues of common experience, and its style is deliberately brief and pithy. This can be quickly seen by even a cursory survey of its contents:

1:1–4	Enduring Trials
1:5	Asking For Wisdom
1:6–8	Not Doubting
1:9–11	Being Rich And Poor
1:12–18	Enduring Temptation
1:19	Having Self Control

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[29] Dibelius, *James*, 3.
[30] Cf. Johnson (*James*, 16) who wants to classify it as *protreptic discourse*.
[31] Patrick Hartin, *James* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2003) 10.
[32] Davids, *James*, 25.

Almost the entire book, it is clear, is concerned primarily with practical advice. Whether this is called *paraenesis* or not, it should be admitted that James is simply the *type* of document that is more concerned with the practical, and less concerned with the theological. That this can sufficiently explain the omission of Christian theology is confirmed by the seldom noted yet stark fact that the epistle is equally empty of traditional Jewish theological themes. As Laws comments, "he makes no mention of Judaism's characteristic institutions: circumcision; the keeping of the Sabbath and the food laws; rules of ritual purity and separation ... the worship of the Temple ..."[33] This dual omission of both Christian and Judaic themes corroborates the theory that James was just not the type of document that emphasised theology, and thus answers the question of why the epistle omits Christian theological themes. Given that James has proved exegetically to be a practical letter written by Christ followers within Judaism, theories of origin like those of Massebieau and Spitta can be dismissed, at least in the sense that they intended those theories to function, without even evaluating the conjectural arguments for 1:1 and 2:1.

Another Direction

There is another, quite different proposal that also makes use of the conjecture. As noted above, Allison, in 2001,[34] and Kloppenborg, in 2007,[35] have made strong arguments in support of a proposal that is concerned not with where

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[33] Laws, *James*, 4.
[34] Allison, "Fiction", 529–570.
[35] John Kloppenborg "Judeans or Judaean Christians in James?" *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians and Others* (New Testament Monographs 18; eds. P. Harland and Z.A. Crook; London and New York: Sheffield-Phoenix, 2007) 113–135.

James *came from*, but where it was *going to*: its recipients. The proposal begins with the understanding that the epistle originated among Christ-followers within Judaism, and then argues that the address in James 1:1, "to the twelve tribes in the dispersion," should be interpreted in its literal sense: as a reference to the people of Israel. As Kloppenborg argues, "'twelve tribes' is best interpreted in its ordinary sense, as a designation of collective Israel, and 'Diaspora' should then be understood geographically, denoting Judaeans residing outside of Eretz Israel"[36] If the reference is so interpreted, then the epistle becomes addressed to readers within Judaism, whether they be Christ-followers or not. Kloppenborg writes "James means to address not Judaean Christians, still less pagans or Gentile Christians, but Judaeans of the diaspora."[37] Allison concludes similarly, arguing that the epistle was openly addressed to both Christ-followers and non-Christ-followers within Judaism: "it has a two-fold audience—those who share the author's Christian convictions and those who do not …"[38] In this way James would become an example of intramural communication within Judaism that later became popular within Christianity.

This proposal could easily find support in the text of James in general, since it fits so well with its muted Christian character. As Allison writes, "on this view of the letter we can understand why it is so Janus faced, why it seems so Christian and yet is so resolutely mute on peculiarly Christian themes …"[39] The explicit Christ references found in the traditional text, however, might offer an obstacle, and so it is here that the conjectural emendation is enlisted. It should be stressed, however, that unlike Spitta and Massebieau, both Allison and Kloppenborg emend only 2:1. The Christ reference in 1:1 is retained, both because they find insufficient textual grounds to justify the emendation, and because it is not exegetically threatening to their argument. The reference in 1:1 does not identify the recipients as Christians, but only the author, and as Kloppenborg explains, "it is perfectly conceivable that the fictive writer might identify himself with the Jesus movement without imagining that his addressees did."[40] The reference in 2:1 however—which not only appropriates the traditional Hebrew title "Lord of Glory" and gives it to *Jesus Christ* but also, in the best witnesses at least, identifies that Jesus Christ

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36 Kloppenborg, "Judeans," 119.
37 Kloppenborg, "Judeans," 113.
38 Allison, "Fiction," 570.
39 Allison, "Fiction," 570.
40 Kloppenborg, "Judeans" 126.

as _our_—would be much more problematic, and so it is emended out of the text on the basis of conjecture. As has been discussed above at some length, there is, of course, nothing *a priori* wrong with an appeal to conjecture, but such a proposal should be supported by a plausible theory of the extant text's origin. For this, both Allison and Kloppenborg turn to the phenomenon of the scribal expansion of divine titles, often known colloquially as "title creep": an early scribe, encountering the original phrase "Lord of Glory," added "Jesus Christ." Allison notes, "we know that scribes added 'Jesus,' 'Christ,' and 'Jesus Christ' elsewhere to their manuscripts,"[41] while Kloppenborg similarly argues:

> The addition of Christological formulae is of course a well known phenomenon in the history of the text of the New Testament. And as Allison notes, the title that is produced by the emendation, 'Lord of Glory', is widely attested in Judaean and Christian sources, normally as a title for God but at 1 Cor 2.8 used for Christ. Ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς τῆς δόξης, by contrast, is not otherwise attested.[42]

The theory is not, therefore, immediately improbable. Before it can be completely accepted, however, we will have to evaluate, finally, the textual basis for the conjectural emendation.

Evaluating the Conjecture

The validity of this conjectural proposal is directly dependent on the origin of the Christ references in the text of James. Logically, there appear to be only three possible explanations for them: they originate with the author (or authorial process), they were inserted by a later editor, or they were added by a later scribe.[43] As seen above, both Allison and Kloppenborg appeal to

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[41] Allison, "Fiction," 543.

[42] Kloppenborg, "Judeans," 130.

[43] These terms—*author*, *editor* and *scribe*—and the distinctions between them do need to be unpacked somewhat. As discussed in chapter one, it is common today to blur the important distinction between scribe and editor by attributing to scribes various types of intentional and theologically far-reaching changes. However, as Parker explains, it is likely unreasonable to expect that level of activity from the average scribe: "A scribe copying a manuscript had a number of things to pay attention to: the preparation and quality of the parchment; the preparation of ink and the tending of the pen; the copying of the text, the keeping of the sheets in order. Where in this process did the opportunity arise for the kind of theological examination of the text … It is quite hard to believe that it could have happened in the middle of the process of copying from one page to another. It is conceivable that it took place at a preparatory stage, in which the exemplar was examined and read, errors being corrected and changes proposed, this prepared text then being copied" (Parker, *Introduction*,

the last option to explain James 2:1, arguing that the Christ reference was inserted as an example of "title creep." The phenomenon of title creep is established and well known. Metzger, in his standard introduction, refers to it as a "growing text," commenting:

> A good example of a growing text is found in Gal. vi. 17, where the earliest form of the text is that preserved in 𝔓⁴⁶ B A C* *f*, 'I bear on my body the marks of Jesus'. Pious scribes could not resist the temptation to embroider the simple and unadorned Ἰησοῦ with various additions, producing κυρίου Ἰησοῦ, as in C³ Dᶜ E K L and many other witnesses; κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, in ℵ d e Augustine; and κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησου Χριστοῦ, in Dᵍʳ* G Syrᵖ Goth Chrysostom, Victorinus, Epiphanius.[44]

Thus title creep is *generally* possible, but is it the most probable explanation for James 2:1 *specifically*? To answer that question we would first need to study the practice of title creep in more detail. A thorough study of the phenomenon has yet to be completed, but this author did undertake an initial study that yielded some relevant, if preliminary, results.[45] That study tracked the variation of six of the more common divine titles in the text of the NA27: θεός, κύριος, Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός, πατήρ and υἱός. While this limited selection could not give a comprehensive picture, it did offer a good cross-section of the evidence. The evidence tabled consisted of the terms that were added to the title, where in the title they were added, the witnesses commonly cited in support of the variation, and the earliest date of attestation. The resulting

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154). Thus, as Wachtel has also argued above, *scribes* tended simply to copy their exemplars, while intentional significant changes are better attributed to *editors*. The distinction, however, between *editor* and *author* can be much more ambiguous. In the simplest formulation, the author would be the person who originally composed the text, and the editor would be any later person(s) who made subsequent revisions or alterations to that text. The problem is that, as is commonly accepted (though see recent objections by John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2006]) many of the biblical texts were not the result of a single compositional act by a single person, but rather developed out of compositional processes that could involve multiple people, often working separately, over a range of time to shape the final form of the text that survives today. As Eldon Epp has often explained (see his latest discussion in "It's All about Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism" *HTR* 100:3[2007]:275–308), these types of messy, multi-layered and drawn-out processes can make it hard to determine where the "author"—if there even really is one—ends and the "editor" begins. These questions are valid, but too broad to be addressed here. Fortunately, within the strict confines of the theory under examination, the distinction is easier to draw: the *editor* is the latter level of activity that sought to Christianize the text, while the *author* is the earlier layer that did not.

  [44] Metzger and Ehrman, *Text*, 263–264.
  [45] See Ryan D. Wettlaufer "A First Glance At Title Creep" (forthcoming). Most of this section is drawn from that article.

data allows us to draw some initial conclusions about the occurrence of title creep in the manuscripts of the New Testament, which will in turn allow us to evaluate whether the phenomenon is a likely explanation for the specifics of James 2:1. So what were the results?

The results of the study led to four general conclusions. The first concerned the frequency of the phenomenon. The estimated total number of texts containing at least one of the six theological titles was 4321. Of all those texts, only 125 were found to have experienced title creep. This is only 2.89 % of the possible texts. Appeals to title creep, therefore, should be tempered by the knowledge that the phenomenon did not actually occur very often. While generally uncommon, it should be further noted that title creep appears to have been more common in some manuscripts than others. Codex Sinaiticus א, for example, together with its correctors, contains a total of thirty-three occurrences of title creep, while Codex Vaticanus B has a mere 6 occurrences. Claims of title creep should, therefore, take into account the individual tendencies of the supporting witnesses.

A second conclusion concerns the substance of the variations, or better, the *lack* of substance. Almost all of the title creep variations consist of either a neutral descriptor, such as adding τοῦ ζῶντος (living) to θεοῦ in Matt 26:63, or an additional title that is essentially synonymous with the original, such as the addition of ὁ Ναζωραῖος (the Nazarene) to Ἰησοῦς in Acts 9:5. Moreover, in no case does the title creep change the identity of the original title's referent in any substantive manner. A third conclusion concerns the location of title creep. Of the 125 recorded occurrences, 100 of them, or 80 %, occurred at the end of the title. A further twenty-one of them, or 17 %, occurred at the beginning of the title. The dominant trend, therefore, is for the end of the title, though prefatory title creep could be a reasonable conclusion at least one-fifth of the time. The most uncommon form of title creep was the intermediate insertion, wherein the expansion was added in the middle of the title. This was found to occur only six times, most of which were just the insertion of a simple possessive pronoun. For example, in 1 Cor 6:11 κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is expanded to κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Similar insertions occur in Phm 25, Jas 5:10 and Rev 22:21. Only 2 of the 6 interjections are of more substance than that. In 1 John 1:7 Χριστοῦ is inserted between Ἰησοῦ and τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (his son), while in Col 3:24 κυρίῳ Χριστῷ becomes κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. That last text is notable in that the title, along with experiencing an interjection, is also shifted into the genitive case. The final conclusion concerned the temporal distribution of the variants. The larger share of the variants, fifty occurrences, find their earliest attestation in the 5th century. The average date for the earliest witness is 5.79, or the 6th century,

while the median date is the 5th century. It cannot be assumed, of course, that the earliest extant witness represents the actual origin of any given variant; in many cases even the oldest witness will simply be passing on the text of an earlier archetype. There is a degree, however, to which we can conclude that title creep occurred more frequently after the 4th and 5th centuries. This is further implied by the distribution of the title creep variations, which disproportionately prefers the later manuscripts. Even the combined total of all the cited early papyri[46] amounts to only fifteen occurrences of title creep; a relative frequency of 0.347%. By contrast, codex Bezae on its own contains thirty occurrences—a frequency of 0.694%. Codex Alexandrinus, the other great fifth century uncial, contains twenty-three occurrences, or 0.532%. In other words, a 5th century manuscript is almost twice as likely to attest title creep as an early papyri. For whatever reason, therefore, it appears that title creep did not occur as frequently in the earliest centuries, and thus arguments for title creep should take account of the implied date of the variant's origin accordingly.

Using these conclusions as guidelines, what evaluation can be made of Allison and Kloppenborg's argument that ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ was a secondary interpolation that could be explained as an example of scribal title creep? While the argument is generally possible, the specifics simply do not fit. First, the oldest and chief witness for Jas 2:1 is codex Vaticanus, yet the study showed that Vaticanus, of all the commonly cited manuscripts, contained title creep the least often. Second, while the oldest witness is the 4th century Vaticanus, the uniformity of the traditional text in the extant manuscript base implies that, if it was a secondary interpolation, its archetype would have necessarily been quite a bit earlier than Vaticanus. Such an early occurrence of title creep, however, appears less likely in the light of the study, which showed that title creep primarily rose to prominence in the 5th century. Third, their proposal would have title creep occurring as an insertion in the middle of the title, yet the study showed that such intermediate insertions were rare. In that regard, it is notable that in the only other New Testament occurrence of τὸν κύριον τῆς δόξης in 1 Cor 2:8, the only extant title creep is the post-positive addition of αὐτῶν;[47] there are no known intermediate insertions. Finally, if ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Jas 2:1 was an example of title creep, it would be an addition that made a substantive change to the identity

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[46] In this study, based on the NA27 text, the commonly cited early papyri, defined as 4th century or prior, consist of: 𝔓38, 𝔓41, 𝔓46, 𝔓47, 𝔓63, 𝔓66, 𝔓75.

[47] Found in 𝔓46.

of the referent, changing it from a standard Hebrew reference for the *Lord of Glory* into a Christian reference to *Jesus Christ*. The study, however, indicated that title creep normally did not effect such substantive changes. In short, the argument violates every guideline for title creep that the study discovered. It seems best then to discount the possibility that ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ was a secondary insertion by title creep into the text of Jas 2:1.

If the Christ reference was not an occurrence of title creep, then logically it must be either an editorial insertion, or an authorial original.[48] While we will likely not be able to say for sure, there are several reasons to conclude that the latter is more likely than the former. Authorial origin is, first of all, more logically consistent. The intention of an editor would, presumably, have been to further "Christianize" the letter. Such a scenario becomes logically unlikely, however, as soon as it is realised that the supposed editorial changes do not really accomplish that goal. Much of the debate and controversy over James has stemmed precisely from the fact that outside of the two Christ references there is scarcely any explicit Christian content. Even those two references, however, do a poor job of establishing the Christian character of the letter—as Allison well demonstrates when he explains how his theory can stand even if they are not conjecturally omitted:

> Even if one disagrees that the argument for deleting ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ from 2.1 is compelling, James is quite capable of abruptly moving from one segment of his readership to another, so we can hardly neglect the possibility that some part of his letter addressed to Jews in the diaspora in general may speak equally to Christians in particular. One might also speculate that our author simply failed to carry the fiction of his first line through consistently.[49]

In other words, if the goal were to make the letter more "Christian", the Christ references alone are not enough. As Mayor queries:

> A natural objection, however, to the alleged interpolation in this case is that, if it were desired to give a Christian colour to a Hebrew treatise, the interpolator would not have confined himself to inserting the name of Christ in two passages only; he would at any rate have introduced some further references to the life and work of Christ, where it seemed called for.[50]

The theory of a Christianizing editor, therefore, falters from the insufficiency of the alleged editing.[51] Perhaps it could be further theorized that a

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[48] See above, n. 42, for this distinction.
[49] Allison, "Fiction," 543–544.
[50] Mayor, *James*, cxcv.
[51] This argument must be carefully distinguished from a completely different argument

Christianizing editor simply failed at his attempted task, but the rule of parsimony would favour the simpler alternative: this is the way the author wrote it.

A second reason that authorial origin is more likely is that it better fits the textual context of the Christ reference. As well noted, if ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ was a secondary insertion, then the original text would have simply read τοῦ κυρίου τῆς δόξης. On its own this would be entirely plausible since, as Kloppenborg notes,[52] on its own the phrase τοῦ κυρίου τῆς δόξης is well-known. That general plausibility, however, must be governed—as always—by the specifics of this text. In this text the phrase would not simply read the well-known τοῦ κυρίου τῆς δόξης but rather would read τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου τῆς δόξης, *the faith* of the Lord of Glory. Such a phrase could be taken as an objective genitive, comparable perhaps with texts like Mark 11:22: ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ (have faith in God). However, while potentially sensible, references to *the faith* of the Lord of Glory are, so far, unattested. In contrast, an authorial text of τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης connects the idea of *faith*, notwithstanding the intervening terms, with *Jesus Christ*, and thereby echoes many other early Christian texts.[53]

Thirdly, the Christ reference could have originated with the author because it fits the authorial context. By this we mean it accords with the writing style of the author. The phrase in Jas 2:1 has inspired so much discussion in part because it is so grammatically awkward. While there are multiple questions of grammar that have provoked that discussion,[54] the most provocative is usually

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that is often made: that the grammatical difficulties in the extant text make the theory of editorial interpolation unlikely, because an editor would likely not be so incompetent. Note, for example, Davids who concludes "the phrase is difficult enough that one would have to posit an interpolator with an unusual lack of ability" (Davids, *James*, 106) or Dibelius "And even if the deletion should be appropriate here, the later interpolation need not be explained as a covert Christianization of a Jewish text. If someone were intending such a thing, he would scarcely have constructed such an odd expression," (Dibelius, *James*, 22). This editorial incompetence argument fails because there is no reason not to apply the charge to the author as well: why could we have an author with "an unusual lack of ability" but not an editor? The editorial insufficiency argument advanced in this paper, however, avoids this error by making a distinction in the intentions: The supposed Christianizing editor would have intended to add Christian references, and thus the theory can be judged by the number of references found. The author, on the other hand, intended, as argued above, simply to write a practical letter, and thus carries no significant expectation of Christian references.

[52] Cf. Kloppenborg, "Judaeans," n. 49.

[53] Gal 2:16, for example, says that people are justified through πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, and that we have believed (ἐπιστεύσαμεν) εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, so that we might be justified ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ.

[54] See survey in Kloppenborg, "Judeans" or Ropes, *James*, 187–188.

taken to be the final genitive phrase: τῆς δόξης. In the proposed emended text, this genitive is not nearly so problematic since, as discussed above, the title *Lord of Glory* was already independently common. Defenders of the extant text, however, must be able to offer some explanation for why James would tack the genitive so awkwardly onto the end of *Jesus Christ*. To that end, a quick study of James' grammatical patterns suggests that combining the genitive with the Christ reference was, in fact, entirely in keeping with James' writing style, awkward or not.

The genitive phrase is surely a genitive of quality, a usage that fulfills the function of an adjective and was often favoured by biblical authors with a Hebrew background since the "construction compensates for the nearly non-existent adjective" in that language.[55] Given that, it is interesting to survey how the author of James used the genitive of quality. The author uses the construction at least seven other times.[56] The use of the article is flexible; a phrase is just as likely to be arthrous, such as 1:25 τὸν (νόμον) τῆς ἐλευθερίας (the law of freedom) as anarthrous, such as 2:12 νόμου ἐλευθερίας. What appears to be more consistent is the theological nature of the usage. While some occurrences are arguably less formal, such as διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν (evil motives) in 2:4 or ὁ κόσμος τῆς ἀδικίας (the world of iniquity) in 3:6, for the most part James tends to reserve the construction for what would now be called formal theological terms. Besides the dual references to the *law of liberty* listed above, he also refers to τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς (the crown of life) in 1:12 and λόγῳ ἀληθείας (word of truth) in 1:18. In contrast, when James does use a simple adjective he tends to use it for more mundane descriptions. While some occurrences are admittedly more theological, such as τὸν ἔμφυτον λόγον (implanted word) in 1:21, the dominant trend is towards more routine adjectives, such as τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν λαμπρὰν (the fine clothes) in 2:3, ἀνέμων σκληρῶν (strong winds) in 3:4, or μικρὸν μέλος (small part) in 3:5. These patterns might reflect the fact that in James' time the Hebrew which inspired this adjectival use of the genitive was primarily reserved for theological contexts, or they might simply be a quirk of the author's style. Either way, if James was going to compose a phrase that described Jesus Christ in terms of Lordship and glory, a genitive of quality such as we find in the extant text is likely what he would have used.

Finally, the structure of the Christ reference in the extant text could fit with the religious context of the author. In all the discussion of the awkwardness

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[55] BDF §165.
[56] 1:12, 1:18, 1:25, 2:4, 2:12, 3:6, 5:13.

of the phrase's grammar, often overlooked is the striking significance of how deliberately the known title Ἰησοῦ Χριστου appears to have been inserted directly into the middle of the known title κυρίου τῆς δόξης. Such intrusiveness does not have the character of a casual mistake or a momentary grammatical lapse. Its bold presumption gives the impression that the awkwardness was deliberate: perhaps the author intended to compose such a choppy phrase.[57] Why, however, would the writer be so intrusive? What point could he hope to make by drawing attention to this clumsy conflation? We can only be entirely subjective here, but one possibility is that this clever consolidation was a deliberate attempt to make a statement—a statement of new identity. As discussed above, the epistle likely originated among Jesus followers of Judea. The author would therefore have regarded himself primarily as a Judean.[58] Unlike most of his compatriots, however, this Judean also embraced a second religious identity: that of a Jesus follower. It is possible therefore to see the combination of the two common titles in 2:1 as the author's way of combining his two identities; the unification of his Judean heritage with his new faith in Jesus. The awkwardness of the construction would cause the reader to slow down and notice the change: the new *Lord of Glory* was *Our Jesus Christ*. The inclusion of the possessive pronoun only emphasises this all the more. Thus, the Christ reference can be considered authorial because it represents an appropriation of a Judean heritage for a Christian expression that fits the religious context of the author.

Thus we have seen four arguments in favour of the extant text. It is the most logical choice since, once we eliminate the options of scribal title creep and editorial revision, a process of elimination leaves authorial original as the most likely option. It best fits the textual context in that, unlike the proposed emendation *faith of the Lord of Glory*, the phrase *faith of Jesus Christ the Lord of Glory* finds ample precedent in prior literature. It best fits the authorial context since the awkward use of the genitive of quality is well in keeping with the demonstrated patterns of the author's style. Finally, it best fits the author's likely religious context since the abrupt assertiveness of the phrase

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[57] It is, of course, possible that the author simply made a grammatical mistake and that this is nothing more than an example of bad writing, but given the quality of the rest of the composition—there are no other comparably awkward constructions—it would seem more fair to give the author the benefit of the doubt here.

[58] Here we deliberately avoid discussions of the author(s)' actual identity. Whether or not the author was the brother of Jesus, or another person, or even a group of persons, if the letter originated among Jesus followers of Judea, it is therefore de facto likely that the author was himself a Judean.

could well reflect the establishment of the author's new religious identity as a follower of Jesus. For these reasons it is more probable that the full phrase τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης constitutes the authorial text of James 2:1. Arguing *a fortiori*, the same can likely be concluded for the Christ reference in 1:1. The final conclusion, therefore, is that there is insufficient textual basis to accept any conjectural emendation that omits the two Christ references from the text of James.

The Right Answer for the Wrong Reasons

Unfortunately, it is for a very different reason that the conjecture is usually rejected by New Testament scholars. It is, of course, almost universally rejected, but not because of an insufficient exegetical basis. Instead, the conjecture appears to be rejected by most scholars for no other reason than the very fact that it is a conjecture. In other words, it is the proposal's very nature as a conjecture that causes many commentators to dismiss it. Davids, for example, agrees with rejecting the theory, "… Spitta and Meyer, claim that nothing Christian exists in this work other than minor Christian editing. We must firmly reject this claim …"[59] but later claims that the reason for doing so is the tentative nature of conjectures: "… this interpolation theory is normally used to support Jewish origin for the work, which is too much weight for such a tentative hypothesis to bear …"[60] Dibelius similarly concludes that conjectural proposals alone are not serious or stable enough to support serious textual claims: "but if the text can be understood as it stands, there is no necessity for the hypothesis of an interpolation which finds no support in the textual tradition, especially not if that hypothesis is then to be burdened with the weighty assertion that the entire document is of Jewish origin."[61] Finally, if there was any doubt, Mayor makes it clear that conjectural emendation is simply not a sound enough technique to support such major arguments: "If the Epistle is proved on other grounds to be pre-Christian, we should then be compelled to admit interpolation here, but not otherwise."[62] Why does a conjectural proposal seem to provoke such an automatic dismissal from so many scholars? What is it about conjectural emendation that they reject out of hand? In chapter two we surveyed

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[59] Davids, *James*, 14.
[60] Davids, *James*, 106.
[61] Dibelius, *James*, 127.
[62] Mayor, *James*, cxcv.

three reasons why modern scholars tend to dislike conjectural theories; it is interesting to see which reason is at work in this case.

Traditional textual critics, trained to choose between variant options in extant manuscripts, often assume that a lack of manuscript evidence should count against a conjecture. A conjectural reading may make the best sense of a troublesome text, but if it cannot be found in at least one of the surviving manuscripts, then they refuse to consider it, or consider it only as a last resort. Though, as has been seen, there are good exegetical and textual reasons for rejecting the conjecture of 1:1/2:1, most scholars appear to do so because of this lack of manuscripts support. Sleeper, for example, argues: "The suggestion of some commentators that this verse and 2:1 were added to a previously Jewish document in order to 'Christianize' it has no textual evidence to support it."[63] Hartin similarly concludes "furthermore, no manuscript evidence can be given to support such a theory."[64] Laws thinks it is significant that "there is no textual warrant for eliminating the two references to Jesus Christ in i. 1 and ii. 1 …"[65] Johnson seems almost surprised by the conjecture, declaring that "the extraordinary separation of the phrases *tou kyriou* and *tēs doxēs* helped generate theories of interpolation … even though no MS evidence supports such theories"[66] while later asserting that "the interpolation theory has no text-critical basis, since "Jesus Christ" is attested in all extant witnesses."[67] Martin echoes the same attitude, "… reading the phrase as integral to the textual evidence … as we should …"[68] Finally, just to confirm the pervasiveness of this thinking, even when evaluating a different conjectural proposal for 2:1, Davids still falls back to the lack of ms evidence: "Adamson's emendation … to read 'the Lord Jesus Christ our glory' (cf. 1 Tim. 1:1), appears without basis either in the manuscript evidence or in the given word order."[69] How is it that so many scholars could so misunderstand the nature of conjectural emendation that they would think that a lack of manuscript support is a weakness, rather than the very essence of the art?

The essence of conjectural emendation is an understanding of the implications of loss. The text of James as it is known today is simply our best critical reconstruction based on the manuscript copies which happened

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[63] Sleeper, *James*, 47.
[64] Hartin, *James*, 50.
[65] Laws, *James*, 2.
[66] Johnson, *James*, 220.
[67] Johnson, *James*, 48.
[68] Martin, *James*, 60.
[69] Davids, *James*, 107.

to have survived. The text of James as it originally existed was the direct product of an act of authorial composition.[70] From that original product descended the textual archetype, and from the textual archetype came, in progressive and increasingly complex and inter-related genealogical lines, all manuscript copies. If there had been no loss, then retracing this process back to the authorial text would be an easy exercise in certainty. Loss, however, has affected every step of the transmission process. Just how much has been lost? As seen in chapter two, a reasonable indication can be found by determining how close the relationship is between the texts of the manuscripts that did survive.[71] The oldest surviving manuscript evidence for both James 1:1 and 2:1 is the 4th century codex Vaticanus (03).[72] According to research at the Institute for New Testament Textual Research,[73] the next oldest surviving manuscript, codex Sinaiticus (01), agrees with Vaticanus in only 87% of attested variants.[74] Even the most closely related text, preserved in the 5th century codex Ephraemi (04), is only 89% similar with Vaticanus.[75] Going a step further, the next closest surviving relative to Sinaiticus appears to be the text that survived in the 11th century minuscule 81, but they are only 85% in agreement.[76] By way of comparison, the 10th century minuscule 307, when compared with its closest related witness, the 14th century 453, has 98.5% of variants in common. Assuming again that difference accumulated slowly and gradually, the larger degree of difference between these oldest surviving witnesses of James 1:1/2:1 demonstrates objectively that a great many intermediary relatives have been lost. Indeed, as demonstrated before, it appears likely that whole nodes—entire branches of the family tree—have been lost. The implication of this loss is that even the best reconstruction of the archetype will be necessarily partial, being comprised of only some of

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[70] However that may be defined, setting aside for the moment discussions of authorship or source criticism.

[71] An important distinction must be made here between the manuscript itself as a historical artefact, and the text it preserves, the lineage of which likely differs in date and character. The following comparisons, therefore, describe simply the objective relationship between the character of the texts, and not any actual historical relationship between the manuscripts. Cf. Wachtel, "Towards," 109–127.

[72] The only papyrus evidence for this section, $\mathfrak{P}$74, dates from the 7th century. $\mathfrak{P}$20 and $\mathfrak{P}$23, both lacunary, omit 1:1 and 2:1.

[73] Searches can be replicated on their website through the program "Genealogical Queries" [Mar 6 2009] http://intf.uni-muenster.de/cbgm/en.html.

[74] Based only on comparison in the Catholic Epistles. Of 3002 known attested variants, 03 and 01 agree in 2617 cases, or 87.175%.

[75] Of 2103 attested known variants, they agree in 1878, or 89.301%.

[76] Of 2990 attested known variants, they agree in 2556, or 85.485%.

the readings that originally descended from that archetype. As seen above, it appears that the original readings at 1:1 and 2:1 have been preserved in a textual line that did survive, but this was demonstrated on internal and exegetical grounds: there is nothing in the nature of the extant manuscript base that necessitated that conclusion. The original reading could just as easily have been carried only in a manuscript line or lines that were lost, while a scribal error lay at the head of the line that happened to survive. That the number of manuscripts lost is so much greater than the number that survived only increases this possibility, while the cases studied in previous chapters—cases where the text that did survive has been found problematic by scribes, ancient interpreters, modern commentators and grammarians alike—show that there are some points where that possibility is the most likely probability. In those cases, therefore, far from it being a weakness in a conjectural proposal, a lack of manuscript support is actually the rationale for its very existence. It is the loss of manuscript evidence that creates the basis for conjectural emendation. It is that loss that implies the likelihood of there being some points where the original reading did not survive, and it is that loss which subsequently demands that we look beyond the extant manuscript base by using conjectural emendation to see those variants that for too long have remained unseen.

CONCLUSION

Conjectural emendation is more important to New Testament studies than it has ever been. In times past, introductory textbooks could get away with a simple—usually disparaging—reference, a couple of lines, or maybe a paragraph on the subject. That has changed. Multiple monographs are now published. Compiled collections are featuring dedicated essays, introductions are being expanded, conference presentations are being made, and most importantly, proposed conjectures are being discussed—and at some points even accepted—at all levels of the scholarly enterprise.

This growing importance stems largely from the fact that the issue of conjectural emendation sits on the intersection of two of the most significant questions in New Testament textual criticism today: how do we see the goal and purpose of textual criticism, and how do we see the New Testament manuscripts? The first of those questions has been well served by a great many published essays and books, many of which have been documented in this study, but the discussion has perhaps produced more heat than light, and at very least, more terms and phrases than answers. For many years, the traditional answer was that the purpose of textual criticism was to restore the *original text*. As of late both that phrase and that goal have come under intense critique, and one result of that is an increasing tendency among textual critics to use different terms to talk about different goals. Within German scholarship there has been talk of the *Ausgangstext*, which refers to the source or ancestral text from which the surviving line of manuscript copies descends. English scholars have used *archetype* to refer to the same thing: the text at the start of the manuscript tradition. A more conservative phrase is the *earliest attested text*, which in many ways is the same as the archetype or Ausgangstext, with the important distinction that the latter two could, potentially, take the form of a theoretical reconstruction, while the former must, specifically, have extant attestation. Still others refer to the *earliest attainable text*. While this may just be a misformulation of the earliest attested text, it is the most notable of these terms or phrases in that by merely referring to the start of the surviving manuscript tradition, it engages in a classic case of begging the question: what text should we be trying to attain?

There are other terms and phrases in use, however. The *initial text* is much more provocative, since it refers back to the text as it initially was: the very first form of it, regardless of how it survives today. Similarly, the phrase *authorial*

text speaks of the text as it was first written, but has the added overtone of history; it roots the pursuit for the text in the historical reality that these texts were written by human authors, and as such they did have some kind of definite beginning at the end of a pen. Both of these phrases may just be sleight-of-hand substitutes for the original text, but that is actually the source of their strength. The old quest for the original text may have been bloated in presumption and blind to the value of variant readings, and as such it may have been ripe for critique, but the primary goal of textual criticism must still be to restore the text to the form in which it began. Evaluating extant readings in order to establish the archetype or Ausgangstext will be the first step towards that goal, and in the vast majority of cases where it appears that the archetype preserves the text as originally written, it will also be the last step. But in those cases where there is reason to suspect primitive corruption, the next step must be to use conjectural emendation to re-create the text as it was once written. Anything less will be a capitulation to the problem, and a forsaking of the task entrusted to us.

The second significant question is how we should look at the New Testament manuscripts. From the earliest beginnings of textual criticism in the writings of Origen and other church fathers, readers of the text realised that some manuscripts could be better and more trustworthy than others. It seems it is really only in the modern age, however, that people start referring to the manuscript base as a whole, as a general entity. This appears to coincide with the rise of the critical text: as it became clear that the New Testament was not preserved completely in any one manuscript, scholars began looking for it across the body of manuscripts. Corruption may have tainted each and every individual manuscript, but a solution would come by considering the manuscripts collectively—somewhere in that mass of parchment the right reading would be found. When church-goers became worried about textual criticism, fearful for how the authority of scripture could survive with so many divergent copies, textual critics down to Westcott and Hort offered them for comfort the surpassing quality of the manuscript base as a whole. The manuscript base is of exceedingly high quality, they said. The manuscript base was very carefully copied, they said. The manuscript base was respected as holy scripture, they said.

The manuscript base is, of course, all of those things. But one thing it is not is enough. It is not sufficient, and it is not complete. Incredible loss has been visited upon the manuscript base. At least half to two-thirds of the manuscripts are missing, and with them have disappeared entire lines of readings. Among those lost readings are some that originated with the authors themselves: primitive corruptions of the original text. This is

both suggested by deficiencies in the surviving text, and implied by the preservation pattern of the accepted text—wherein the accepted reading sometimes survives in just a few manuscripts or even in just one. That is the reality of manuscript loss, and textual critics must reckon with it as they consider the manuscript base. Is there any other scientific field where more than half the evidence could be lost but the practitioners would still insist that they had enough data? This loss, this incompleteness of the manuscript base, means that the right reading will not always be found in the surviving database, and at points where it is not, textual critics must take up conjectural emendation so that what was lost might once again be found.

By no means does this present study settle the issue, and there is still much to be considered and discovered. Here then are some questions for consideration. The first is: are we giving preferential treatment to readings simply because they can be found in written form among the surviving manuscripts? Christians are known as a people of the book, and whether it is Paul asking for the parchments to be brought or the early church taking up the codex, we have long given a special place to the written word in general, and the scriptures in particular. This respect is in many ways good, but it can create a bias for the written, which can in turn lead us to accord an unearned respect to something simply because it is written. Has this affected our evaluation of manuscript readings? Are we awarding extra points to inferior readings simply because they survive in written form? Even Erasmus fell victim to this when he felt obliged to accept the *comma Johannine*, which he knew to be secondary, because it was finally presented to him in written form. Conjectures are considered at points where the extant text appears to be corrupted. If the original text has been corrupted, however, then all surviving readings are necessarily secondary. They may survive in ancient manuscripts, they may have been handed down for centuries, and they may even have been used as scripture by communities of Christians and have the aura of the sacred written word, but they are nevertheless secondary. As secondary readings, they are ultimately just something that someone wrote down, and as such are really no different than any other reading that any other person could write down either past or present. In that sense they are no different than modern conjectures, and thus do not deserve any special treatment just because somebody wrote them down a few centuries ago rather than a few minutes ago. If we reject the method of conjectural emendation out of hand, as so many still do, we need to ask whether we are judging the proposed text by something other than its own intrinsic merit.

A second question asks if we tolerate mediocrity for the sake of certainty? The infamous letter-rating system of the UBS Greek New Testament is a witness to our desire for certainty; we want to know: how certain is that reading? This is inline with much of modern Western epistemology, which often holds that knowledge must be certain in order to count as knowledge. From this perspective, many will reject a conjecture, even if it makes better sense than the surviving alternatives, because they see it as less certain. They reject the conjecture because there is no way to know for certain if it is correct. We have to ask, however, whether this tyranny of the certain is causing us to accept readings that make less sense but offer more certainty? We should further ask whether conjectures really are less certain and whether manuscript readings really are more certain? After all, at each point of variation the typical textual critic chooses from among the manuscript readings. The resulting critical text, therefore, will always be a text that depends on and is mediated by the scholarly skills that the critic used to make that choice—the same skills with which they would evaluate a proposed conjecture. The critical text, therefore, can never have any more certainty than the scholar can give it, and this would be true whether it contained conjectures or not. Finally, as noted, conjectures are only proposed when the extant text is thought to be wrong. Even if we thought a conjecture had only a 0.05 % chance of being right, in the face of an extant text that we are 99.99 % sure is wrong, the conjecture is actually more certain.

Third, have we misplaced the burden of proof? Many have claimed that a conjecture should only be entertained when the extant text is completely insoluble. It is as if the extant text should be kept so long as any solution at all can be offered for it, regardless of how improbable that solution may be. This leads to the well documented phenomenon of New Testament scholars bending over backwards to make sense of a text that simply does not make sense. We need to ask why we assume that the extant text deserves such a defence? Why is it presumed to be innocent until proven guilty? Right until proven wrong? The old textus receptus was once treated the same, being given the benefit of the doubt ahead of inherently superior readings. In treating the surviving text as a textual default, have we simply enthroned a new text to be received by all?

Finally, are we are engaging in theological wishful thinking? Christians believe that God has given revelation, and so it is tempting, and maybe preferable, to believe that God would protect that revelation and ensure its preservation. That is one reason why the belief in the doctrine of preservation is so persistent, and why so many people can look at the mass of modern manuscripts and assert that the original text must have been saved some-

where within. The facts about the modern manuscript base, however, would seem to indicate that God did not work in that way. We have to ask then whether we are allowing our theology to be governed by that truth, or by our own preferences. It may be theologically unsettling to ponder a God who would let his revelation be overtaken by the messiness of humanity, but that is the very reason why the church historically has believed that revelation is more than just the written word and that the Word of God is bigger than just the words on the page. Rather, it is an act of the Spirit, and that Spirit can act in any form, either spoken or written, known or unknown, assured or conjectured.

These are the questions that we have to ask, and when we are done answering them, perhaps we will see that it is time to restore conjectural emendation to its rightful place as a useful and necessary tool in the repertoire of the textual critic. The text of the New Testament has long been one of the most important writings that humanity has had. As soon as it was written down, however, it joined in with the brokenness of humanity. As a community of scholars, it is the calling of textual critics to fix it, and so it is not enough simply to pass it on as we found it. We must make every attempt, no matter how uncertain or unsure, to restore what is no longer written.

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