

9. CONJECTURAL EMENDATION IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

For a number of years I have been thinking about textual problems in the Greek New Testament, and I have collected many passages where a conjecture seems to be necessary. Of these I would like to present to you a small number that appear especially plausible to me.

I felt encouraged to pursue these studies when I came across something Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote almost five hundred years ago¹: “The state of the Holy Books is really deplorable, if their authority depends on ignorant (as they mostly are) scribes or intoxicated typesetters.” Erasmus spoke from considerable experience as an editor. He made quite a few conjectures himself but also committed a few blunders. To tell he truth, his edition of the New Testament was produced “at breakneck speed” (*praecipitatum verius quam editum*), as he admits himself, and his text is generally considered to be inferior to the text of the illustrious Spanish *Biblia Complutensis* with which he was competing. But since his edition appeared first, in 1516, it became the basis of the *Textus Receptus* which was the main authority for centuries, although its deficiencies were clear almost from the beginning.

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.

¹ *Capita Argumentorum*, in: *Novum Testamentum*, Basel 1519, 74, as cited by J. Krans, *Beyond what is Written: Erasmus and Beza as Conjectural Critics of the New Testament* (=NT Tools and Studies, 35, 50, n.5).

There was a revival of conjectural activity in the 18th century, especially in England, following Richard Bentley's *Proposals for Printing a Critical Edition of the New Testament* (1720). Bentley who had a predecessor in John Mill (1645-1707) never fully realized his project. Although he was by no means a timid man, he was in fear (justly so) of the *rabies theologorum*, and he even declared: "The author [Bentley himself] is very sensible that in the sacred text there is no place for conjecture and emendation. Diligence and fidelity, with some judgment are the characters here requisite..." And this from a man who did not hesitate to emend John Milton's *Paradise Lost*! Of course the establishment came down on him like a ton of bricks, but his great prestige as the editor of classical authors, Terence and Horace especially, encouraged others to emend the New Testament text where it seemed necessary. One of these adventurous minds, whose name appears here and there in the *apparatus criticus*, is William Bowyer. He was neither a theologian nor a classical scholar but a printer by trade. His *Conjectures on the New Testament Collected from Various Authors* appeared in London in 1772, and the fact that a 4th edition was necessary in 1812 shows that the work was widely used.

A new period of creativity was initiated, mainly in Germany and Holland, by Karl Lachmann's innovative editions (1st 1832, 2nd 1842-50). He realized, in many ways, Bentley's goal, and he inspired a number of scholars to apply his principles (the "Method" about which so much has been written in recent years) to Scripture.

It has become evident, I think, that all three periods of intense conjectural activity in New Testament studies were initiated by a prestigious critic who had considerable experience with classical authors: Erasmus, Bentley, and Lachmann. We should not forget that there was a time when making conjectures was not a kind of sport or an intellectual exercise but a necessity. The first printed editions of the New Testament, including that of Erasmus, were based on a handful of witnesses, mostly second or third rate manuscripts, often very unreliable. Over the centuries, more and more witnesses were found and duly collated. Sometimes these newly discovered witnesses confirmed readings that had been found by conjecture. I will give you a few examples a little later,

but there are many more. Strictly speaking, such cases should be noted by editors of the New Testament in the same way that editors of classical texts have done for centuries: You cite the reading as found in one or several witnesses, and you add the name of the scholar who discovered it *ope ingenii*.

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 some day. Hence there is no longer any need for conjectures.

To deviate from the 'Textus Receptus' was virtually an act of heresy for centuries², and even in this day and age a strictly conservative approach is practised almost universally. There are actually a few brave souls today make new conjectures, but no one pays much attention to them, and the old proposals, no matter how compelling they are, tend to disappear one by one from the *apparatus criticus* of the latest editions.

Let me quote a few typical warnings. F. G. Kenyon, a sensible scholar if there ever was one, called³ conjectural emendation "a process precarious in the extreme and seldom allowing anyone but the guesser to feel confidence in the truth of its results."

K. Aland, whose merits as a New Testament scholar no one would dispute, has declared⁴: "The solution of difficulties in the text through a conjecture is not permitted," (*"Die Lösung von Schwierigkeiten im Text durch eine Konjektur ... ist nicht gestattet"*). This was toned down a little in the 2nd ed.⁵ to "should not be permitted" (*"...sollte nicht gestattet sein"*).

² See E. J. Kenney, *The Classical Text: Aspects of Editing in the Age of the Printed Book*, Univ. of California Press 1975, 69; 98ff; 105; L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 2nd ed., Oxford Univ. Press 1973, 186-7; G. Luck, "Textual Criticism Today", *AJP* 102, 1981, 173-4.

³ *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the NT*, 2nd ed., London 1926, 3.

⁴ *Der Text des Neuen Testaments*, Stuttgart 1982, 282.

⁵ Id., 2nd ed., Stuttgart 1989, 291.

One of his equally respected colleagues, B. Metzger⁶, picked a conjecture made by William Bowyer in 1 *Peter* 3:19 (see below), declared it the most convincing proposal ever made and proceeded to tear it apart. The conclusion is obvious: If the most convincing proposal ever made is not very good, then all the others must be worthless. Once you accept this conclusion *a fortiori*, you need not worry ever again about the value of any conjecture.

Another conservative critic, G. D. Kilpatrick⁷ has argued along the same lines. He picked a conjecture by Camerarius in John 19:29 (see below) which long afterwards became known from a witness, called it plausible and persuasive and then pulled it to shreds. Again, the implication is: If this proposal which appealed to a number of translators and commentators is unnecessary, all the others, being inferior, are unnecessary, too.

A different strategy has been attempted by L. Vaganay and Chr.-B. Amphoux⁸. They pick one of Bentley's worst conjectures, πορκείας instead of πορνείας in *Acts* 15:20, the "eating of pork meat" instead of the "practice of fornication" as things forbidden to Gentiles willing to convert. Still, the authors are fair enough to say (*loc. cit.*): "... conjectural emendation cannot be rejected out of hand", though they also demand (p. 86) that even the best of emendations be confined to the critical apparatus, "until such time as new discoveries provide evidence for them". This is not unreasonable, as long as one keeps in mind that the reading which seems to support the modern conjecture may be a conjecture, too, but an old one!

It seems wrong to generalize from one or two or even three conjectures. The ones chosen singled out by conservative critics may not all be equally convincing. But I would also like to examine with you a series of other suggestions. What is true for classical authors should also be true for the New Testament. In any text transmitted by hand over many centuries, we are bound to find the same types of mistakes. Some conjectures are right,

⁶ *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed., London - New York 1968, 185,n.1

⁷ *Bible Translator* 9, 1958, 133-4.

⁸ *Introduction to New Testament Criticism*, 2nd ed., Engl. Transl. by J. Heimerdinger, Cambridge 1991, 85.

and some are wrong. But just because some so-called emendations in Aeschylus or in Ovid are wrong, no classicist would prohibit the making of conjectures altogether. Even conjectures that are wrong often have a diagnostic value; they point out a problem that was not recognized before, and sometimes, perhaps centuries later, another scholar comes along and finds the solution. This has happened many times – to give just one example – in the text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

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.

We may assume that the sacred texts of a community of believers, as they are embodied in the NT, were copied with the greatest possible care. Still, we cannot rule out negligence and ignorance altogether. There is another factor. By their very nature, sacred texts such as these deal with mysteries and miracles. A reading that contradicts common sense, such as the “hyssop” in *Jn 19:29* (see below), survives partly because of its appeal to devout readers who sense a deeper meaning in it. A similar case is the “snatching” in *Phil. 2:6* (see below) which is defended zealously even by those who do not understand it. But a distinction should be made, at least in textual criticism, between *difficilior lectio potior* and *credo quia absurdum*.

Let us now look at a number of conjectures that seem plausible to me. I have been using various editions of the Nestle-Aland text, and it seems that, for many reasons, the 25th edition of 1963 ought to be considered the best so far. I cannot go into the details but would urge you to use the subsequent editions for which Aland was largely responsible, with caution. In other words, in spite of the enormous resources and much hard work, no progress has been made in the series in establishing a text that may be considered close to the original documents. The *New Jerusalem Bible* (New

York 1985) which I quote regularly is a helpful English translation, but it should also be used critically, as you will see.

Mt. 6:28-9

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also says: “And why worry about clothing? Think of the flowers of the field how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; yet I assure you that not even Solomon in all his royal robes was clothed like one of these.” Here, all witnesses seem to agree on the reading *πῶς αὐξάνουσιν*, “how they grow” or “are growing”, as the *NJB* translates, but the original reading of the *Codex Sinaiticus* (4th c.), one of our most important witnesses, clearly is, as T. C. Skeats discovered under an ultraviolet lamp, *οὐ ξαίνουσιν*. The verb here is *ξαίνω* which was pronounced as *ξένω* and means “to card” or “to comb”, a process used in the making of wool. The article by Skeats⁹ in which he reports his discovery is well worth reading today. He proposed the following translation of the original text as it was before a scribe erased it and wrote over it “how they do not card; nor do they spin ... “The words *οὐ κοπιῶσιν* Skeats took as a stop-gap. His conclusion was: “... the corruption of *οὐ ξαίνει* to *αὐξάνει* took place at a very early date ...”, and “*οὐ ξαίνει* ... is clearly not a scribal aberration” but possibly “a brilliant conjectural emendation.” In post-classical Greek *αι* was pronounced as *ε*, and since scribes wrote what they heard (from dictation, but possibly in their mind, as they wrote), many errors happened this way.

It is not surprising that Skeats’ discovery was summarily dismissed by Metzger¹⁰ as “a scribal idiosyncrasy that was almost immediately rejected”.

Mt. 7:25

Jesus compares a person who accepts his ministry and lives accordingly to a person who built a house on a rock. It is so solid that rains, rivers and winds may attack it but cannot destroy it. For “to attack”, most witnesses have *προσέπεσαν*, but Lachmann

⁹ ZNW 37, 1938, 211-4.

¹⁰ *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, London - New York 1917, 18. See also D. A. Black, “Conjectural Emendations in Matthew”, *NT* 31, 1989, 3-4.

proposed προσέπαισαν as a more appropriate verb. Προσπαίω, “to strike or beat against something” is what one would expect here, and the error could be explained, as in 6:28-9 by the pronunciation of αι as ε in postclassical Greek, but also, perhaps, by the proximity of ἔπεσεν a few words later. Lachmann’s conjecture was supported by S. A. Naber¹¹ and E. Nestle¹². The variants προσέκρουσαν, προσέρρεσαν and προσέκοψαν may be old conjectures. We have a similar case in *Apoc.* 7:16 where we should probably follow H. B. Swete¹³ and read οὐδὲ μὴ παῖση ἔτι for πέση ἐπ’ αὐτοῦς ὁ ἥλιος οὐδὲ πᾶν καῦμα. See below *ad loc.* This conjecture is at least noted in Nestle-Aland 26th, while Lachmann’s suggestion has disappeared completely. The *NJB* translates “hurled themselves against that house” which is exactly what Lachmann had in mind.

Mt. 8:30

This may be another small matter, but not important, because it illustrates the possibility of a certain type of scribal error. Jesus comes to a region of Gadara and encounters two men who are possessed and reproach him for torturing them by exorcising their daemons. The narrative continues: “There was far from them a large herd of pigs on a pasture.” What is the point of mentioning a location far away, especially as the pigs are needed at once as the recipients of the daemons? Beza (Théodore de Bèze, 1519-1605) determined that, in the main tradition, οὐ is missing before μακράν. Beza’s conjecture was anticipated by some witnesses of the Vulgate which read *erat autem non longe*. This was pointed out by Erasmus in a note, although he did not change the text, saying that it mattered very little, and the more recent editors follow him. The negation is accepted by some translators, e.g. A. Frossard and N. Bompais (Paris 1994), without mentioning the Vulgate and without giving Beza any credit. The *NJB* avoids the issue and offers a Solomonic compromise by translating: “some distance away.” Nestle-Aland 26th ed. mentions the negation as

¹¹ *Mnemosyne* 9, 1881, 276

¹² *ZNW* 9, 1908, 252-3.

¹³ *Commentary*, London 1911, *ad loc.*

attested by the indirect tradition but says nothing about Beza and leaves the text unchanged. The editor of a classical text would, in all honesty, have to say in the apparatus something like “οὐ codd. nonn. Vulgatae, ut coniecit Beza.” This kind of information would certainly be helpful in establishing the value of a reading. It may still be a conjecture, but obviously a very old one, and when it occurred to someone else, many centuries later, we may not simply ignore it ¹⁴.

Mt. 16:2b-3

Some Pharisees and Sadducees who come to Jesus wanting to trap him ask him to “show them a sign from heaven.” He answers: “When the sun is setting, you say ‘we will have fine weather, because the sky is red.’ And early in the morning you say ‘It will be stormy, because the sky is red and dark’ *πυρράζει γὰρ στυγνάζων ὁ οὐρανός*.” You can predict the weather from looking at the sky, but you do not understand the signs concerning the times.” The “signs”, incidentally, must be Jesus’ miracles, and the “times” the Messianic age.

A number of important witnesses leave out this whole part of Jesus’ answer, and Nestle-Aland 26th brackets it. Some modern translations, such as the *NJB*, the *Good News Bible*, and A.Frossard’s French version translate the whole text, and they are right, in my opinion.

We have a play on words. The learned Jews who want to trap Jesus are asking for a sign from heaven, an instant miracle, so to speak, so they can believe in him as the Messiah. But Jesus, to rebuke them, takes the “signs from heaven” literally and says ‘you are only capable of understanding the superficial, conventional signs from heaven, but not a true sign from heaven that would prove to you that I am the Son of God.’ In Greek, the play on words works perfectly, because *οὐρανός* is both “sky” and “heaven”.

There is another textual problem. In the clause *πυρράζει γὰρ στυγνάζων ὁ οὐρανός* the word *πυρράζει* seems to be a repetition from the earlier part of the sentence, dealing with a different

¹⁴ In his monograph (n.1) Krans has a useful note (50, n.50) on (possibly) omitted negations.

kind of prediction. One should probably read *στυγνάξει γὰρ ὁ οὐρανός*. What could have happened is that *στυγνάξει* became *πυρράξει* by mechanical repetition; then someone wrote the correct word (I think), *στυγνάξει*, above the line, and the next copyist, anxious to preserve as much as possible, combined the two verbs, changing one of them into a participle. This kind of “inclusive adaptation”, understandable in a sacred text, is not at all unusual in the *paradosis* of the New Testament¹⁵.

Mk. 9:23

Jesus heals a boy possessed by an evil spirit. The boy's father, seeking help from Jesus, says to him: “If you can do something, have pity on us and help us.” The *NJB* interprets the first part of Jesus' reply correctly, I think, by making it a question: “If you can?” And Jesus continues: “Everything is possible for one who has faith.” There is nothing wrong with that, but what Jesus first says in reply makes no sense as it is printed in Nestle-Aland, 26th ed. *τὸ εἰ δύνῃ*. One should read *τί τὸ ‘εἰ τι δύνῃ;* making it a question, “What do you mean by ‘if you can do something?’” A solution along these lines was first suggested by D. Heinsius (actually, traces of it may be found in the *Itala*), then by H. A. W. Meyer (*loc. cit.*, p. 120) and again by F. Blass. We need *τί*; in the sense of “why?” (cf. 1 *Cor.* 15:29) and then *τι* in the sense of “something”, to establish the exact correspondence to the father's question “if you can do something.” Both have been omitted in the main tradition, perhaps because of *τό* (by haplography). The Greek idiom is not “if you can”, but “if you can do *something*.” The ‘something’ which is not specified out of respect or out of fear refers to magic or miracles. In Greek and Latin, but also in other cultures, magicians, healers and miracle workers are often called “those who know something”. It is conceivable that Jesus was at first offended by being taken for an ordinary healer; hence his reply: “What do you mean by ‘if you can do something?’” I feel quite confident that, by combining these solutions, offered over a long period of time, we have restored the original Greek.

¹⁵ See on this passage T. Hirunuma, in: E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee (edd.), *NT Textual Criticism*, Oxford Univ. Press 1981, 35–45.

Mk. 10:40

This passage does not need to be emended, but it illustrates a common type of error. Jesus says: I do not have the right to choose who will sit at my right and my left; these seats belong to those to whom they have been allotted. These last words are a translation of Greek ἄλλ' οἷς ἡτοίμασται. In 'scriptio continua' and without breathing marks, ΑΛΛΟΙΣΗΤΟΙΜΑΣΤΑΙ, this could also be read as ἄλλοις ἡτοίμασται, "it has been allotted to others", and this wrong reading has survived in the *Itala* (*aliis praeparatum est*) and other witnesses. The same variant occurs also in the parallel text, *Mt. 20:23*, with the addition, in all witnesses, "by my Father". There can be very little uncertainty about the correct reading here, and I am only citing this example to show you how 'scriptio continua' could mislead careless readers. Among the many examples one could cite from classical authors, I will just remind you of a humorous one in Petronius' "Banquet of Trimalchio" (*Sat. 43. 1*) where it is said of a rich man *ab asse crevit*, "he started out (in life) with (just) a penny", Scheffer's emendation for *abbas secrevit*, "the Abbot has set it aside" of the *paradosis*. The monk who was copying this passage was probably thinking of a good bottle of wine that the Abbot of his monastery had hidden for a special occasion. On uncertainties caused by 'scriptio continua' see note on *1Cor. 4:13*.

Mk. 12:4-5

In the parable of the tenants of the vineyard, the second servant sent by the owner is "beaten about the head and treated shamefully" by the tenants. Some witnesses add "by throwing stones", λιθοβολήσαντες, but this is considered a gloss by most editors. The verb κεφαλαιόω is a mystery. It has been derived from κεφαλή and been given the meaning "to beat about the head", in analogy to γναθόω, "to hit on the cheek"¹⁶, or γαστρώ, "to punch in the belly." The Greek-English Dictionary of Liddell-Scott-Jones attributes this vague sense to κεφαλαιόω on the basis of this one passage, even though the verb usually means "to sum

¹⁶ C. A. Lobeck on Phrynich., *Eclogae*, Leipzig 1820, II 95.

up”¹⁷. A similar word, κεφαλίζω, means “to behead” which does not fit the context.

Many changes have been proposed (none of them listed in Nestle-Aland, 26th ed.), but the only one worth considering, in my opinion, is Linwood’s ἐκολάφισαν, “they hit him” (*Mk.* 14:65; *Mt.* 26:67). This corresponds exactly to the treatment Jesus received after his arrest, and it is the same verb. The parable is meant to foreshadow the passion of Christ. Paul uses the same verb when he describes the tribulations he suffered as an apostle, in 1 *Cor.* 4:11 “We go hungry and thirsty, we are clothed in rags, we are beaten (κολαφιζόμεθα)”.

This is an easy change: A scribe exchanged *Lambda* and *Phi*, at the same time taking an *Omikron* for an *Epsilon* which happens quite often, because the two letters look very much alike in a certain script.

Instead of accepting such an easy change, scholars resort to fantastic semantic contortions. Linwood is not even mentioned.

Lk. 6:1

This is a case where the old critical rule *difficilior lectio potior* definitely does not work. The *NJB* translates the beginning of ch. 6 as follows. “It happened that one Sabbath he was walking through the cornfields...” For “one Sabbath” the main tradition offers ἐν σαββάτῳ δὲ δευτεροπρώτῳ, “on the secondfirst Sabbath” which is definitely the more difficult reading but almost certainly not the original one¹⁸. The word, although well attested in our passage, does not occur anywhere else. St. Jerome was puzzled as he tried to translate it, and he asked St. Gregory of Nazianzus who obviously did not know the meaning of the word, either, for he replied jokingly ‘*docebo te super hac re in ecclesia...*’ In the end, St. Jerome himself may have left out the word altogether, but some witnesses of the Vulgate have *secundo primo*, a

¹⁷ See F. Fields, *Notes on the Translation of the NT*, London 1899, 36-7; G. Björck, in: *Coniectanea Neotestamentica*, Lund, 1, 1936, 1ff.

¹⁸ There is a good discussion of the passage by H. Klein, in: *ZNW* 87, 1996, 290-3.

litteral translation of the Greek. The usual explanation of the difficult reading is the following: A copyist who remembered v. 6 ἐν ἐτέρῳ σαββάτῳ, on another Sabbath..." may have added πρῶτῳ, a second one, remembering 4:31 ἐν τοῖς σάββασιν, added δευτέρῳ, and a third scribe combined both readings, according to the principle of 'inclusive transmission'. Many other solutions have been proposed, but the latest one, by H. Klein, seems to me the most compelling: He assumes that Luke wrote ἐν σαββάτῳ πρῶτῳ, "on a first Sabbath", that a scribe who remembered 4:16 or 4:31, but not both passages, corrected in δευτέρῳ, above the line or in the margin, and then another copyist combined the two readings, according to the principle of 'inclusiveness'.

Lk. 14:5

Jesus happens to be in the house of one of the leading Pharisees on a Sabbath, "eating bread" or "sharing a meal" (as the *NJB* translates), and sees a sick person. He asks the Lawyers and Pharisees whether it is allowed to heal someone on a Sabbath. They say nothing. He heals the person and says: "If your son or your oxen falls into a well, would you not pull him out at once on a (or: the) Sabbath day?" Here, the sequence of "son or oxen" has offended scribes and scholars. For υἱός, a number of witnesses have ὄνος, some have both ὄνος and υἱός, another example of the principle of inclusion. The oxen and the donkey are mentioned as examples in 13:15 (cf. *Mt.* 22:4), and palaeographically, the words ὄνος and υἱός are quite close. One witness (D) offers πρόβατον which would fit the sense we are expecting but is not very close to the 'ductus litterarum', and it seems to be a deliberate change made on the basis of *Mt.* 12:11, a close parallel. Mill and Wellhausen suggested οἶν which fits the expected sense and is palaeographically plausible, but the word does not occur in the New Testament. Another possibility would be ὕν, "a swine", for υἱόν, and that has probably been suggested long ago, but ὄνον seems perfectly fine, and the *NJB* mentions the reading "his donkey" for "his son" as a variant.

Jn. 1:18

"No one has ever seen God. The only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, he has told (us)." Here, the expression

μονογενὴς θεός is awkward. Some witnesses have μονογενὴς υἱός, as one would expect, and this was printed by former editors, e. g. J. J. Wettstein. But what the context demands seems to be Ch. F. Burney's μονογενὴς θεοῦ, the genitive instead of the nominative. John uses the word μονογενής only of Jesus (cf. *Jn.* 1:14; 1 *Jn.* 4:9. The translators are forced to use paraphrases such as "the only Son who is the same as God". The *NJB* seems to accept μονογενὴς υἱός, for it renders "it is the only Son..." and lists "God the only Son" as a variant. In my view, Burney's¹⁹ proposal deserves serious consideration. It is not necessary to assume a misunderstanding of an Aramaic source, as Burney did; the error could easily have happened in the Greek text by the assimilation of a genitive ending to the preceding nominative.

Jn. 7:52

At the Festival of Shelters which Jesus is attending there is a debate among the people whether he is the Messiah or not. At one point (v. 41), someone asks: "Will the Christ (ὁ χριστός) come from Galilee?" And later, when Nicodemus stands up for Jesus in front of the Pharisees, one of them asks him: "Are you also from Galilee? Study (the Scriptures), and (you will) see that from Galilee no prophet arises, ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας προφήτης οὐκ ἐγείρεται. In the 18th c., Owen felt that the article ὁ was necessary before προφήτης, and his conjecture is now supported by a Bodmer Papyrus (Nr. 66, 2nd or 3rd c., perhaps less than a century after the composition of the Gospel). In the color photograph I have seen, o is clearly visible but a little weaker than other letters. (Incidentally, the papyrus records textual variants, e. g. a transposition of words in this very sentence). There is an important difference. "A prophet" can be any prophet, but "*The Prophet*" is the Messiah, the Christ. John the Baptist, for instance, is *a* prophet (*Mt.* 14:5; 21:26; *Mk.* 11:32; *Lk.* 1:76), but Jesus is *The Prophet* (*Jn.* 6:14; 7:40). *Mt.* 21:11 is very explicit;

¹⁹ *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel*, Oxford 1922; see Krans (n.1), 165, n.46 who says that this is not really a conjecture, but I cannot trace it to any extant witness, and Nestle-Aland, 25th ed., clearly label it as Burney's proposal.

here the crowds say:” This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.” J. Ramsey Michaels²⁰ has shown that the statement “no prophets arise from Galilee” is not only contradicted by two passages in the Old Testament (2 *Kings* 14:25 and *Jonah* 1:1) but also by the teaching of the Rabbis. The context of *Jn.* 6:14 makes it quite clear that *the* Prophet and the Christ are one and the same. The correct way to report the reading would be “ὁ προφήτης Papyrus 66, (Owen coniecit)”, and this is how Nestle-Aland 25th reported it; in the 26th ed. not only the reference to Owen but to the Papyrus reading has disappeared, as far as I can tell, so the reader is left in the dark. How can one trust such an edition? The *NJB* translates “Go into the matter, and see for yourself: prophets do not arise from Galilee” which is quite wrong; because the beginning of the sentence means: “Search the Scriptures” and the plural “prophets” distorts the original.

Jn. 19:29

After Jesus has spoken the words “I am thirsty”, a sponge soaked in sour wine is put on a “hyssop stick” and held up to his mouth. A hyssop stick is an extremely unsuitable tool, and in the 16th century, Camerarius suggested ὑσσῶν for ὑσσώπω. Since Roman soldiers were standing near the Cross, a “spear” or “javelin” would make much more sense than a “hyssop stalk”, whose “long, firm stalk” (Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, s. v.) is pure fantasy, read out of this passage; the real hyssop is a small bush. Later, the reading proposed by Camerarius was found in a 12th c. Minuscule and in some witnesses of the *Itala*. It is obviously correct, and it is mentioned in a note in the *NJB*, but the editors reject it obstinately. One of the arguments is the “purifying effect of the hyssop” which is apparently essential here. G. D. Kilpatrick²¹ uses a different approach to disqualify the reading. According to him, ὑσσός is the Greek word for *pilum*; the characteristic weapon of the Roman legionary troops. But no legionary troops were stationed in Judaea before A. D. 66, says Kilpatrick. Pontius Pilate only had auxiliary troops serving under him, and they were not

²⁰ *Bible Translator* 8, 1957, 153–4.

²¹ *Bible Translator* 9, 1958, 133–4.

equipped with *pila*. Therefore, no *pilum* was available near the Cross. All of this is complete fiction, as any Roman historian will tell you, and all you need to do is read Lucan's *Bellum Civile* to find out how common a weapon the Roman *pilum* was. Along with the *gladius*, it belonged to the basic equipment of the Roman infantryman. It is a sobering experience to observe what flights of fancy Biblical scholars indulge in order to discredit a conjecture. This is a fight to the death, and truth, as in a real war, is its first casualty. I have to say, in all honesty, that Camerarius' conjecture has been accepted by a number of scholars, Catholic and Protestant alike, but it is still relegated to the *apparatus criticus* in modern editions, although it has been pointed out long ago²² that the stem of a hyssop branch would not be strong enough to take the weight of a wet sponge and palaeography offers an easy explanation of the error.

Acts 5:17

The Apostles perform so many miracles and wonders in Jerusalem that the High Priest and his associates, members of the party of the Sadducees, become concerned and have the Apostles arrested. At the beginning of this new section we read ἀναστὰς δὲ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς. "Standing up" is irrelevant in this context and makes no sense; therefore, Blass proposed Ἄννας, the name of the High Priest for the year who is known from *Acts* 4:6 and *Jn.* 18:24. The conjecture was found later in one witness (p) of the *Vetus Latina* and accepted by Wellhausen, Preuschen and others but never promoted to real existence by the editors of the New Testament. The verbal form ἀναστάς may have been influenced by *Mt.* 26:62 and/or *Mk.* 14:60 (from the interrogation of Jesus).

In the transmission of Greek and Latin classical texts, names are often not recognized as such. There are numerous examples of this type of error in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Names from Greek mythology were clearly unfamiliar to the medieval scribes who copied Latin texts. Similarly, Jewish names are not always recognized within the Greek New Testament, and Hebrew words are often translated into Greek because they would not be generally understood.

²² M.-J. Lagrange, *Commentary on John*, Paris 1925, *ad loc.*

In our passage, some translators simply ignore the verbal form ἀναστάς, but they also ignore the name Ἀννάς because it results from a conjecture or a singular late witness. The *Good News Bible* seems to have ἀναστάς in mind when it writes “so they decided to take action” which is pretty deplorable. The *NJB* writes “Then the high priest intervened” which is also wrong, but at least a note mentions “Annas the high priest” as a variant. To say it once more, the correct way to report the reading would be “Ἀννάς p, ut coniecit Blass”, and Nestle-Aland, 25th ed. comes close to that.

Acts 16:12

Sailing from Troas via Samothrace and Neapolis, Paul arrives at Philippi, a Roman colony and “the principal city of that district of Macedonia,” ἥτις ἐστὶν πρώτη τῆς μερίδος τῆς Μακεδονίας. This seems to be one of the two oldest form of the text, attested by the Sinaiticus (4th c.), a Bodmer Papyrus (7th c.) and other witnesses. Another form, πρώτη μερίδος τῆς Μακεδονίας is attested by the Vaticanus = B, 4th c.) and other witnesses. Here, both Nestle-Aland 26th and the *GNT* of the UBS actually print a conjecture by Clericus or Crell, accepted by Blass, Turner and others, πρώτης μερίδος, “of the first district of Macedonia”. It differs only by one letter from the text of B, and it is supported by some MSS. of the Vulgate (*primae partis*) as well as Old Provençal and Old German versions. The facts are (1) that the Romans had divided Macedonia into four districts, μερίδες, and Philippi belonged to the first one; (2) Philippi was not the capital of the district; Amphipolis most likely was; (3) Thessalonica, not Philippi was the capital of Macedonia. The need for an emendation is pretty clear²³, and the “primitive error” (Westcott-Hort) can be explained by a type of dittography²⁴. Nevertheless, the editors of the *GNT* have been attacked vigorously for accepting this conjecture – the only one, it was said, though there is at least

²³ The Editor of *Bible Translator*, 18, 1967, 15, n.1.

²⁴ E. Haenchen in his *Commentary*, 15th ed., Göttingen 1968, 474, n.2: see also Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 4th ed., Chicago 1957, s. v. μερίς; Blass-Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, 9th ed., Chicago 1954, 91.

one other one, not acknowledged as such, in *Philipp. 2:30* (see below). The *NJB* combines both versions in the most ingenious way. It translates a form of the *paradosis*, making Philippi the principal city of that district of Macedonia, but adding in a note: “a town in the principal district of the province of Macedonia”. Take your choice.

Acts 17:26

In speech before the Areopagus (vv. 22–31), Paul says (v. 26) that God made from one (ἐξ ἑνός) every race of men to live on the whole face of the earth.” The phrase “from one” is usually explained as “from one human being”, that is: from Adam. But in some witnesses, the word αἵματος is added, while others add στόματος. “Of one blood” is possible²⁵, but “of one mouth” is not. The *NJB* lists two more variants: “of one nation” and “of one race” both of which seem to translate ἔθνους, but the editions I have consulted do not list this as a variant. If a conjecture is needed, I would propose σπέρματος, “of one seed”, but this has probably been suggested before. While σπέρμα can mean “race”, it can also mean a single person (*Gal. 3:16–9* where a distinction is made between σπέρματι and σπέρμασιν. In our passage, as in *Acts 3:25*, there is a clear reference to *Gen. 22:18* where God speaks to Abraham “in your seed all the peoples on earth will be blessed” Perhaps σπέρματος is the original reading from which both αἵματος (which is possible) and στόματος (which makes no sense) are derived.

Acts 20:28

In his farewell speech to the elders of the congregation in Ephesus, Paul says: “So keep watch over yourselves and the whole flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care, so you are shepherds of the church of God which he has made through his own blood.” Can we really accept the readings αἵματος τοῦ ιδίου or ιδίου αἵματος? The *NJB* very sensibly translates “the Church of God which he bought with the blood of his own Son,” adopting a conjecture by Knapp, without giving him credit. As

²⁵Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, s. v. compare Musonius, *Ep. 1*; Josephus, *Ant. Iud. 20.226*.

Knapp recognized, υἱοῦ was omitted by mistake after ἰδίου by haplography, because of the similarity of the capital letters. In *Rom.* 8:32 we actually read τοῦ ἰδίου υἱοῦ. That God shed his own blood cannot possibly be the meaning of the Greek, because τοῦ ἰδίου is postponed, nor can God's own blood" mean "God's own son", because "blood" is never used for "son" in the Book of *Acts*. On the other hand, the idea that God made the Church his own by the blood of Jesus is central to Paul's thought. A rather desperate way out of the difficulty has been proposed by Metzger²⁶ who supposes that ὁ ἰδίος could be a title for the Messiah, like ὁ ἀγαπητός. Along the same lines, J. Jervell²⁷ takes ἰδίου as "of his own", i. e. Christ which seems to do violence to Greek²⁸.

Rom. 9:5

The Israelites are God's chosen people, for he made his covenant with them, he gave them the Law, the true form of

²⁶ *Textual Commentary* (see n.9), 480-2.

²⁷ *Commentary*, Göttingen 1998, 512.

²⁸ See on this and other controversial passages H. Riesenfeld, "Sind Konjekturen bei einer Übersetzung des Neuen Testaments notwendig?", in: *Text-Wort-Glaube, Kurt Aland gewidmet*, ed. by M. Brecht (=Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 50, 1989), 40-6. Riesenfeld, a theologian, and J. Palm, a hellenist, were commissioned by the Swedish government to translate the New Testament into Swedish. They decided to approach textual problems in a pragmatic fashion, by looking critically, as they say, at all conjectures found in editions and commentaries. They also focused on obscure passages, keeping in mind the possibility of textual corruption. In the end, they claim to have found only two passages, *Col.* 2:23 and *Jude* 22-3 which, in their opinion, were corrupt, no satisfactory conjectures being available. In these two instances, they chose a variant from the paradosis and proposed a translation which, in their own words, did not sound "totally nonsensical" – a modest goal, to be sure, though I have doubts about the validity of their method. In two passages, the one we are discussing now and in *Rom.* 4:11-2, they considered adopting a conjecture but felt that it was not absolutely necessary. In *Acts* 16:12 (see above) they believed that the conjecture was "highly probable". In *Rom.* 7:21, Riesenfeld proposed a conjecture of his own. Needless to say, these results give a completely misleading picture of the actual situation. To eliminate suggestions made by scholars like Scaliger, Grotius or Bentley and then surprise the world with a new one is not exactly an approach that deserves to be imitated.

worship, his promises and much more. Paul lists a series of the unique privileges that the people of Israel enjoys, and they are introduced individually by ὧν, literally “of whom (there is)”, usually translated by “who have” or “to whom belong”. Towards the end of the series, Paul says “and Christ, as a human being, also belongs to their race”, καὶ ἐκ ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς κατὰ σάρκα. The following clause, ὁ ὧν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸς εὐλογητὸς εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας can only be connected with Christ who would then be, according to Paul, the God over all things. This disturbed a 17th c. theologian. Jonas Schlichting de Bukowicz²⁹ because in the New Testament, Jesus is never called “God over all things” nor is he called “God” explicitly, nor is he ever given a doxology. Schlichting proposed (doubtfully) a very simple solution. Read ὧν ὁ for ὁ ὧν, an easy change involving a transposition of two words and a wrong breathing. John Taylor and others seem to have had the same idea independently, and it was accepted by Wettstein (who has a long note), Karl Barth and others. What Paul probably wrote is: “Of whom there is (= who have) God who is over everything, praised for ever Amen.” The ultimate and most important property or privilege of the Jewish people is God the Father, the God of the Old Testament, the ruler of all. Perhaps we need a καὶ before ὧν ὁ, because we have καὶ ἐξ ὧν immediately before: καὶ could easily be omitted after σάρκα by haplography. As you can imagine the passage was and is hotly debated, because it involves the nature of Christ as God (on the controversy between Erasmus and Stunica see Krans, *Beyond...*, pp. 36; 115–20; 175; 179–f). The *NJB* ignores the conjecture in the translation and has a long note justifying Christ as God³⁰.

1Cor. 2:4

Paul came to Corinth in fear and trembling, he says, because he knew that he was neither a skilled orator nor a subtle

²⁹ *Commentaria posthuma in plerosque libros Novi Testamenti libros*, Amsterdam 1665–8, 254.

³⁰ On the controversies between Erasmus and Stunica (i. e. Diego López de Zúñiga), a member of the team of scholars who edited the Complutensian Polyglott, 1522) see Krans (n.1), 36; 115–20; 175; 179–80. On the passage see also E. Lohse, *Der Brief an die Römer*, Göttingen 2003, 269, n.22.

philosopher. These were the visitors that the Corinthians, as well as the Athenians would listen to with great respect. But his own message and preaching are not delivered, he says, “with persuasive words of wisdom, but with convincing proof of the spirit and the power, so that your faith is not in human wisdom but in the wisdom of God.”

The main problem lies in the four words ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις. They seem to represent the oldest text form, but there are about ten variants, only about five recorded in Nestle-Aland, 25th and 26th ed. The meaning is clear enough. Paul refuses to base his ministry on the two pillars of pagan education: philosophy and rhetoric. These two types of education are often seen as opposites, but they could be combined. A philosopher could also be a good orator. As far as Paul is concerned, he does not need these skills. The truth of his message is self-evident, thanks to the πνεῦμα and the δύναμις of God. This must be the sense, but the Greek is dubious: πειθός, πειθή as an adjective is well attested only for this passage but apparently nowhere else. The Greek Church Fathers let the phrase ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας λόγοις pass without comment, apparently taking them to mean “in persuasive words of wisdom” or “philosophical arguments”. But Bentley objected to this reading, proposing ἐν πειθοῖ σοφίας, without λόγοις which seems to be the reading of an 11th c. Minuscule and of two manuscripts of the *Itala*. It has been accepted in the second ed. of the *GNT* (1968), perhaps as the result of a spirited review by Stephen C. Neill which I will quote in a moment, but it is not characterized as being a conjecture. It is also accepted in Nestle-Aland, 26th ed., again without being labelled as a conjecture.

Let us look for a moment at the background of Paul's statement. There were Greek sophists who thought of themselves as philosophers but who were also brilliant lecturers. There were, of course, Greek philosophers who were inarticulate, obscure and boring. And there were fascinating or entertaining lecturers who did not claim to be original thinkers. It was certainly possible to present a new philosophical doctrine or a new religion convincingly, and this is what Paul did, as we all know, although he claims the opposite. Πειθὼ τῶν λόγων is a criterion in Longinus' treatise “On the Sublime” (17, 1), and Paul himself uses the term σοφία λόγων, according to 1 *Cor.* 1:17; cf.

21. Σοφία by itself can mean “philosophy” as well as “rhetorical skill”, hence the word σοφιστής, without its negative connotation. In the same sentence, Paul also uses the term ἀπόδειξις, “proof” or “demonstration”, which belongs to the language of dialectics or mathematics. The Sophists were known for their ability to prove anything they wished to prove, even if it was completely wrong. Hence the terms “sophism” and “sophistic fallacy”. All this Paul rejects, because the truth of his message and the power of his God are proclaimed by signs and miracles that everyone witnesses and understands spontaneously.

Other suggestions have been made, e. g. πειθοῦς (P. Junius) or πιστοῖς (Grotius) or πειθοῖ καὶ (Alberti)³¹. But since Bentley’s conjecture has been accepted, although very quietly, by two recent editions, we may as well stop our search right here. Let me quote the review that, perhaps, led to the change in the text. It is, by Stephen C. Neill³²: “Bentley could be both arrogant and wrong-headed, but he had an incomparable knowledge of the Greek language; he saw quite clearly that what we need here is the dative of πειθῶ, persuasiveness; the adjective πειθός simply does not exist. Why, so many years after Bentley, should we still be printing a reading which everybody knows to be wrong?”.

1 Cor. 2:13

Here is a very similar problem. Paul says: “We have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit coming from God, so we may see what God has given us. And of this we speak not in words of human wisdom, that can be learned, but (with words of) the Spirit that can be learned.” This very literal translation will show you that something is wrong in the text, ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας λόγοις, ἀλλ’ ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος. Obviously, the contrast intended by Paul is lost. Some translations obscure this fact by rendering “words taught by the Spirit” which is not at all what the Greek says. The second διδακτοῖς should, in reality, be ἀδιδάκτοις, as Bentley saw. A capital *Alpha* could easily be omitted before the capital *Delta*.

³¹ See Blass-Debrunner (n.24), 112A.

³² *Bible Translator* 18, 1967, 14-5.

The fundamental point has vanished from the transmitted text. The Apostles insist that the gifts of the spirit cannot be learned, like rhetoric or philosophy, or bought, like magical powers (as the episode of Simon Magus in *Acts* 8: 9-24 clearly shows). It is true that ἀδίδακτος is not found anywhere else in the New Testament, but it is an obvious formation, it is the appropriate word in the context, and the error can easily be explained. Nothing is said in Nestle-Aland and the *GNT*.

1 Cor. 4:6

At the beginning of the chapter, Paul says that he and the other Apostles should be thought of as servants of Christ who do their best to be faithful to the master. They deserve not to be judged prematurely. He then declares: "For your sake, brothers, I have applied this to myself and Apollos [another missionary], so that you may learn from our example,... so that no one should be proud of one person rather than of another." This means, as we see, that Paul does not want people to boast: "I am a disciple of Paul" or: "I am a disciple of Apollos". Between the two clauses beginning with ἵνα there is a puzzling and virtually untranslatable sequence of words, τὸ μὴ ὑπὲρ ὃ γέγραπται. The *NJB* translates these words anyway: "Nothing beyond what is written", but adds a note: "Obscure. Perhaps a citation of a proverb familiar to the Corinthian Jews, perhaps a gloss deprecating some insertion by a copyist." Another possibility, that the five words were a marginal gloss that somehow found its way into the text, was proposed by F. A. Bornemann³³. What this gloss means is simply "The μὴ has

³³ *De memorabili glossemate*, in: J. G. R. Kaeuffer (ed.), *Biblische Studien von Geistlichen des Königreiches Sachsen*, Leipzig 1843, II 37-44. The idea was accepted by J. M. S. Baljon, *De Tekst der Brieven van Paulus aan de Romeinen, de Corinthiërs en de Galatiërs als voorwerp van de conjecturalkritiek beschouwd*, Utrecht 1884, 49-51 and embodied in his *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 2nd ed. Leiden 1898. See also W. Bousset, in: *Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, Göttingen 1917, *ad loc.*; A. Legault, *NTS* 18, 1971-23, 227-31; L. L. Welborn, *NovT* 29, 1987, 321, n.9; 329, n.51; J. C. Hanges, *JBL* 117, 1998, 275-98. For some of these references I am indebted to the on-line *Hypotyposeis* (Sketches in Biblical Studies) by Stephen C. Carlson.

been written over ἄλφα”, the ἄλφα being either the -α of ἵνα or the word εἷς which could be written as ἄλφα in Greek. If this is true, it would mean that in a very early copy, the word μή had been omitted by mistake and a later scribe noticed the omission and pointed it out in a marginal or interlinear note. Even later, the glossa was embodied into the text³⁴.

1 Cor. 12:13b

Paul writes: “We were baptized into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink,” καὶ πάντες ἓν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν. This passage has been discussed not so long ago by Baldomero Macías³⁵. In this learned article he first deals with the ways in which St. Ambrosius, Lorenzo Valla and Erasmus explained the transmitted text. He then presents an unknown conjecture by William Canter (1542-1575) found among the correspondence of Arias Montano, one of the editors of the *Biblia Polyglotta* (1568-1573) which is preserved in the Royal Library in Stockholm. The letter has no date, and it is unclear to whom it was addressed, but the conjecture is well worth considering, as Macías demonstrates. Instead of ἐποτίσθημεν, Canter proposes ἐφωτίσθημεν, “we were illuminated”, and he bases this on a passage in Dionysius Areopagita, *Hierarchica Ecclesiastica*. The conjecture is not only convincing by itself, but it allows us to retain the preposition εἰς found in a few witnesses but left out by Nestle-Aland, 25th and 26th edition and by the *GNT*.

Gal. 2:1

Towards the end of the first chapter of *Galatians*, Paul mentioned his travels in Syria and Cilicia. Then he writes: “Fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking along Titus as well. “ Fourteen years seems a very long period of time to fit into Paul’s life, no matter whether we date

³⁴There is a useful survey of the whole problem in H. Conzelmann’s Commentary, 2nd ed., Göttingen 1981, 112, nn.12-3. See also J. Strugnell, *CBQ* 36, 1971, 555ff and Krans (n.1), 1, n.2. His book title is derived from these words, but he seems to think that they were written by Paul himself.

³⁵*Filología Neotestamentaria* 7, 1994, 209-14.

it from the beginning of his ministry (Wettstein) or from his first visit to Jerusalem (Schlier). Grotius³⁶ therefore suggested τεσσάρων for διατεσσάρων. If numerals were used in the archetype, διὰ δ' could easily become διὰ ἰδ', especially if we picture the whole text in capital letters and in 'scriptio continua', as we should. Grotius made his proposal in the *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*..., ed. by P. Hofstede de Groot, Groningen 1826-34, vol. 6, p. 555 (see Krans, *Beyond* ... p. 282, n. 53), and it has since been found in a minuscule (1241s). H. Schlier³⁷ does not even mention the problem, and the *NJB* desperately tries to explain "14", although it clashes with *Acts* 4:36 and 15:2, by saying that "3" can mean "a little more" than "1" and "14" can mean "a little more" than "12".

The reason why the editors reject the easy change is given, among others, by W. G. Kümmel³⁸. It is simply considered a hopeless task to reconcile the chronology of *Acts* with the chronology of *Galatians*.

Phil. 2:1-6

This is an especially beautiful passage, comparable to 1 *Cor.* 13, but it presents several textual problems. Let me first try to translate the text, as it should be established, in my opinion: "If the admonition in Christ means something (τι for τις, as suggested by Blass), if the comfort of love means something (τι for τις, as before, proposed by Blass), make my joy complete by having the same love, by having the same soul, by thinking of one thing, by doing nothing from a sense of competition (ἐριθεία) and from cheap self-glorification. But in humility consider others superior to you and look out for one another's interests, not just your own." So far, so good. But now comes the real crux. "Think the same way Jesus Christ thought. He was in the shape of God, yet did not think it a snatching (ἄρπαγμόν) to be equal to God, but he emptied himself, taking on the shape of a slave and became

³⁶ *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*, etc., ed. by P. Hofstede de Groot, Groningen 1826-34, VI 555; see Krans (n.1), 282, n.53.

³⁷ *Commentary*, 4th ed., Göttingen 1965, 64-5.

³⁸ *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, 17th ed., Heidelberg 1973, 263-5.

like a human being.” Here the word ἄρπαγμός is curious. It is found only here in Biblical Greek, and outside the Bible, it seems to be very rare. In Plutarch, *De Liberis Educandis* 12A it could mean “a prize” or a “thing to be grasped”, but also “a matter of robbery”. None of these possible meanings seems to fit our passage. Among the conjectures offered I mention only οὐκ ἀπράγμων (S. Reinach)³⁹ and οὐχὶ πρᾶγμα (S. M. Naber and F. Kattenbusch)⁴⁰. The first suggestion would mean “He (Jesus Christ) did not think it a leisurely thing to be like God”: the second would mean “He did not think it a big thing to be like God”. The scholars who proposed these changes assumed that Paul puts himself, for a moment, in the place of a Greek or Roman, for whom the idea of having a divine father or mother is nothing unusual. Their mythology is full of divine and semi-divine figures. This status obviously confers certain privileges, it is a “big thing” and it could allow a “life of leisure”, if that is what one wishes. Heracles, on the other hand, although he was a son of Zeus, rejected a “life of leisure” and worked very hard, as a kind of savior-god, to free the world from monsters. Jesus, too, who was not a son of Zeus, but the only son of the only true God, did not take advantage of his unique privilege; in fact, he humiliated himself, took on human shape and died a shameful death.

If we accept Reinach’s proposal – which I myself find very neat – we would label the type of corruption a “double transposition of letters”. If we accept Naber’s solution, the error becomes more complicated.

Both conjectures have been denounced as “fantaisies qui ne doivent pas nous retenir” by P. Henry⁴¹, an immensely learned and totally unconvincing attempt to defend an indefensible reading. E. Lohmeyer⁴² reports the conjectures and interprets their meaning

³⁹ “L’indolence des dieux”, *REG* 19, 1916, 238–44; see also *Cultes, mythes et religions*, Paris 1923, V 304–5; A. Fridrichsen, *SO* 12, 1933, 52.

⁴⁰ F. Kattenbusch, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 104, 1932, 373–420. See also W. A. Mills, *An Index to Periodical Literature on the Apostle Paul*, Leiden 1993, 192ff.

⁴¹ In his article “Kénose”, in: *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Fasc. 24, 1950, 21.

⁴² Commentary, Göttingen 1964, 21–7.

but does not adopt them. The *NJB* translates “(He)... did not count equality with God something to be grasped”. Based on a dubious interpretation of a controversial passage in Plutarch this is hardly possible.

Phil. 2:30

Pauls recommends Epaphroditus to the Church in Philippi: “Welcome him in the Lord, then, with all joy; hold people like him in honor, because it was for Christ’s work that he came so near to dying, risking his life to do the duty to me which you could not do yourselves.” The key word here is παραβολευσάμενος, literally, “who exposed himself” or, as the *NJB* translates, “risking his life”.

This very rare word was proposed by Joseph Scaliger in the early 17th century, and today we read it in the editions of the Greek New Testament, but without Scaliger’s name, because it was then found in the Chester Beatty Papyrus and in several other witnesses (e. g. the Codex Claromontanus, 6th c.) unknown to Scaliger. Before, the accepted reading was παραβουλευσάμενος which no one really understood, but it was interpreted as *non habere rationem (vitae)* by Erasmus and others, which is exactly the meaning of παραβολεύομαι. Scaliger knew that gladiators and other fighters who risked their lives in the Circus were called παράβολοι, and he felt justified to make the change in the text, because, as he said, in one of his letters without any false modesty (*Epistolae*, ed. 1627): *Sunt ... passim in textum Evangelicum ab ultima vetustate vitia admissa quae nemo praeter me indicaverit*. In this case, his conjecture was confirmed by several respectable witnesses, including a very old one, the Papyrus, and once it was confirmed, it was accepted by Casaubonus, Grotius, Salmasius and other great scholars of his time, and it appeared in print in the Elzevier edition of 1633.

In an article well worth reading, H. J. de Jonge⁴³ reminds us that the apparatus criticus of Nestle–Aland lists about 200 conjectures, without admitting a single one to the text. Among the ninety or so scholars to whom we owe these conjectures, the

⁴³ *NT* 17, 1975, 297–303.

name of Scaliger is missing. De Jonge concludes sadly: "And this is what happens to a scholar who made a conjecture which was confirmed by manuscript evidence." If this were a classical text, the editor would feel obliged to acknowledge a debt to Scaliger, for instance in the following form "παραβολευσάμενος, [list the witnesses and add] Scaliger *ex coniectura*" or "ut coniecit Scaliger".

Philem. 9

Paul is in prison and requests a favor from Philemon, describing himself as "Paul, an old man, but now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus." There seems to be a parallelism between "an old man" and "a prisoner", and the genitive "of Jesus Christ" ought to belong to both terms which makes no sense in the case of "an old man". Thus, Bentley very sensibly suggested πρεσβευτής, "ambassador", for πρεσβύτες, and Hort and others accepted it. It is a very easy change, and sense and syntax demand it. The two words are frequently confused by scribes⁴⁴. Nestle accepted the conjecture in one of the earlier editions, but he relegated it to the apparatus criticus in the 25th, followed by Aland in the 26th. The translation "ambassador" appears in the margin of the Revised Version. Bentley's change⁴⁵, was rejected not so long ago by J. N. Birdsall⁴⁶. He correctly reported Bentley's two main reasons: (1) Paul was νεανίας in 39 AD (*Acts* 7:58); (2) he describes himself as "on embassy in chains" in *Ephes.* 6:20 (cf. *2 Cor.* 5:20). Birdsall's own chronological calculations remain vague and unconvincing, and his emphasis on the universal attestation of a bad reading is meaningless. The change is also rejected by H.-F. Weiss⁴⁷. It really seems that very little progress has been made since the days of Beza and Bentley. Conservative critics today claim that πρεσβύτες can mean "messenger" or "envoy" which is very

⁴⁴ J. B. Lightfoot, *Commentary*, 11th ed., London 1892, ad loc.; E. Haupt, *Commentary*, 8th ed., Göttingen 1902, ad loc.; G. Bornkamm, in: *ThWbNT* VI 683, n.2; Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich (n.24), s. v.

⁴⁵ Published in *Critica Sacra*, ed. by A. A. Ellis, London 1862, 73.

⁴⁶ *New Testament Studies* 39, 1993, 625-30.

⁴⁷ H.-F. Weiss, *Commentary on Hebrews*, Göttingen 1991, ad loc.

doubtful, although the verb can have both meanings. An envoy *may* be an old man, but not every old man is an envoy.

Hebr. 11:4

The author proposes a definition of true faith and uses Abel as an example: "It was through faith that Abel offered a greater sacrifice than Cain. Through faith he was given a testimony that he was righteous, because God testified about his gifts, and by means of it (his faith) he still speaks, even though he is dead." It is surprising that Abel's sacrifice is called "greater" (πλείονα) than that of his bother, Cain. What one would expect is something like "more acceptable". Maynard suggested ῥδιόνα, and Cobet, the tireless and often successful Dutch producer of conjectures, modified this to ῥδείονα. Now the endings are identical, and the close similarity of ῥδ- and πλ- (in capital letters, ignoring the breathing) becomes evident. *H* looks like a *Π* whose horizontal stroke has moved downward, and *Lambda* looks like a *Delta* without the horizontal stroke. H.-Fr. Weiss (*ad loc.*) understands "bigger" as "better" and refers to Justin, *Dial.* 29, a passage which has been used to support ῥδείονα. Let me quote again Stephen C. Neill⁴⁸: "At *Heb.* 11:4, should not the translator be made aware of Cobets ῥδείονα? Cobet, like Bentley, was inclined to amend too often and sometimes without cause. But he had an uncanny flair for seeing where any manuscripts have gone wrong; only Nicolaus Heinsius, Bentley and Porson have rendered greater services than he to the restoration of true readings in Greek and Latin words. Now it may be that Cobet with his 'more pleasing sacrifice' is wrong. What is certain is that the manuscripts with their πλείονα cannot be right. Abel did not offer *more* sacrifices than Cain; he offered a better, a more acceptable sacrifice. If there is any instance in Greek literature of πλείων meaning 'better', I have not come across it." But the voice of reason was not heard, and the *NJB*, among others, takes "bigger" as meaning "better".

⁴⁸ *Bible Translator* 18, 1967, 15. At this point, readers may feel that I am paying too much attention to this useful but relatively humble periodical. But, to be quite honest, it often is the voice of reason when the highly respected authorities seem to be on the wrong track.

Hebr. 11:37

Still speaking about the power of faith, the author lists the tortures and the horrible manners of death that martyrs have endured. "Some were mocked and whipped, and others were put in chains and imprisoned. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword..." The main *paradosis* which is divided between ἐπειράσθησαν and ἐπρίσθησαν has generated whole fireworks of conjectures, as scholars were competing with each other in imagining the cruelest methods of torture and execution. Let me just mention ἐπρωόθησαν "they were mutilated" (T. Faber), ἐπράθησαν, "they were sold as slaves" (S. Le Moyne and D. Heinsius), ἐσπειράσθησαν, "they were strangled". For some reason, ἐπρίσθησαν, "they were sawn in two" did not satisfy critics, although it appears in the Papyrus 46 and other witnesses, and although "sawing in half" is well attested as a particularly slow and cruel method of execution. The prophet Isaiah, according to tradition, was put to death in this manner by King Manasseh. Ἐπρίσθησαν is confirmed, as I see it, by ἐπειράθησαν which appears in its place or together with it in many witnesses; one of them, Papyrus 13 is almost as old as Papyrus 46, but the reading is disputed. In my opinion, ἐπρίσθησαν was misread in an early copy, partly because of iotacism (πειρ- being pronounced as πρ-). In part of the *paradosis*, the wrong reading was never completely discarded but kept, in case it might be correct. It is the principle of inclusiveness at work. We need, in this context, a concrete form of execution. The recent editions all have ἐπρίσθησαν, and the *NJB* correctly translates "sawn in half", referring to the fate of the prophet Isaiah in a note. No conjecture is needed, though a few might be listed for curiosity's sake.

James 4:2

James deplors the conflicts and dissensions among the early Christians: "You desire and do not possess. You kill and compete, and you cannot obtain. You fight, and you wage war, etc.", but φονεύετε, "you kill" or "you commit murder" seems very strong in this context. Erasmus' conjecture φθονεῖτε, "you are envious" which is practically synonymous to the following word ζηλοῦτε, "you compete" has found wide acceptance. Calvin,

Luther and Beza found it necessary, and so did, among later scholars Spitta, Mayor, the Catholic theologian H. J. Vogels⁴⁹ as well as the Lutheran theologian Dibelius⁵⁰ who calls it “eigentlich selbstverständlich” and refers to 1 *Peter* 2:1 and *Gal.* 5:21 where the *paradosis* varies between forms of φόνος and φθόνος. It is a very easy change: A capital Θῆτα looks like a capital ῥοικρον and could easily be omitted before it by haplography. Krans⁵¹ calls this “Eramus’ most influential conjecture” and seems to accept it⁵². One could say that it is just coincidence that in 1 *Peter* and in *Galatians* the *paradosis* preserves the correct variant, but not in *James*, but this would not be quite true, because *James*, as we have said, has its own, peculiar textual history and did not become a part of the Canon until late. The *NJB* translates: “You want something and you lack it. So you kill.” And this is said of an early Christian community. The note offers an alternative translation (“textual corrections”): “You are envious and jealous...” This is Erasmus’ conjecture, but he is not given credit. Nestle-Aland, 25th and 26th ed. mention Erasmus in the apparatus criticus but print φονεύετε.

James 4:5

The author addresses those who have committed adultery: Do you not know that the friendship with the world is the hatred of God? Whoever wants to be the world’s friend, must be God’s enemy. Or do you think that Scripture says in vain “The Spirit that dwells within you desires envy”? It gives a greater blessing.” For the word φθόνον which seems inappropriate here, Wettstein suggested τὸν θεόν. The passage from Scripture is *Psalms* 41[42]: 2 in the Septuagint version: “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” The translators who ignore Wettstein’s conjecture have to be very creative. The *NJB* tries: “The longing of the spirit he sent to dwell in us is a jealous spirit” and notes that the

⁴⁹ *Handbuch der Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*, 2nd ed., Bonn 1955, 220.

⁵⁰ M. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus*, 6th ed., Göttingen 1984, 260.

⁵¹ Krans (n.1), 125–7.

⁵² See also Krans, 11; 27; 187; 189; 201.

Old Testament passage is hard to identify. "Yes, if you reject the conjecture, you will never find it; but if you accept the change, it is clearly the Psalm just referred to, the Psalm which gave Wettstein his idea. Other translations are no less imaginative:" The spirit that God placed in us is filled with fierce desires", as if φθόνος could mean "fierce desires" and πρὸς could mean "filled with". Another attempt is: "God yearns jealously over the spirit that he placed in us." Further interpretations of πρὸς φθόνον, some a little more plausible than others, but all unnecessary, are found in Dibelius' Commentary⁵³. A very simple change restores the sense and points to the source of the citation.

1 *Peter* 3:18-9

There are several textual problems in this Letter⁵⁴, but I will deal only with one of them. The author says: "Because Christ died for us, a just man for unjust people, in order to lead us (or: you) to God, put to death in the body but made alive in the spirit in which he also went and preached to the spirits in prison who once had not obeyed God when he waited patiently during the days when Noah was building the ark." Here, the words ἐν ᾧ καὶ, "in which also" are a mystery. Some scholars translate or paraphrase "and in his spiritual existence" which is just as enigmatic as the text. An elegant solution was proposed by Bowyer (1772) who read Ἐνώχ for ἐν ᾧ καὶ. He had recognized in the passage an allusion to the Book of *Henoch* 12:4f; cf. 9:10; 11-15. His proposal was modified by Harris⁵⁵ who preferred ἐν ᾧ καὶ Ἐνώχ. Like Enoch, Christ visited the spirits of the unrepentant contemporaries of Noah in their prison in the underworld, but, unlike Enoch, Christ brought them new hope. This is probably the meaning of 4:6 (cf. *Rom.* 10:7). The name, Enoch, could easily have been omitted after ἐν ᾧ καὶ by haplography. In his commentary L. Goppelt⁵⁶ acknowledges these connections but ignores Bowyer

⁵³ Dibelius' Commentary, 6th ed., Göttingen 184, 264-9.

⁵⁴ See Krans, 129-33.

⁵⁵ *Expositor*, Series 6, IV, 346ff; V, 371ff.

⁵⁶ L. Goppelt, Göttingen 1978, 246-54.

and Harris.

The *NJB* translates: “In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life, and, in the spirit, he went to preach to the spirits in prison.” It leaves out the name Enoch but provides a useful note: “The ‘spirits in prison’ to whom he ‘preached’ or ‘proclaimed’ salvation are identified by some writers as the chained demons mentioned in the *Book of Enoch* (some texts are corrected so as to make Enoch, and not Christ, preach to them). .. Others interpret this passage of the souls of the dead who, punished at the time of the Flood, are nevertheless called by the ‘patience of God’ to life...” What the author wants to say is this: If there is hope even for the spirits of the dead which have been singled out for special punishment in hell, there must be hope for all the dead, thanks to Christ.

Other translators have accepted “Enoch”, e. g. E. J. Goodspeed (1939): “in it Enoch went and preached even to those spirits that were in prison...” or J. Moffatt (1954): “it was in the Spirit that Enoch also went and preached to the imprisoned spirits...”, but many more have rejected it. One cannot help noticing how Goodspeed and Moffatt disagree about the proper place of καί.

B. M. Metzger⁵⁷ called this the most convincing conjecture ever made in the New Testament and then proceeded to demolish it, rejecting *eo ipso* all other conjectures, an ingenious but problematic move which eliminates all conjectures once and for all. It seems that the conservative critics have devised a strategy, by which every scholar takes on a well-known conjecture, builds it up as convincingly as he can and then tears it down, thus showing that no conjectures are needed at all. See above on *Jn.* 19:29, etc.

Apoc. 7:16

John has a vision of an enormous crowd of people, all dressed in white robes, and holding palm branches in their hands. He is told by one of the elders: “These are the people who have come through the great persecution and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That is why they stand before God’s throne and serve him day and night in his

⁵⁷ B. M. Metzger (see n.6)

temple. He who sits on the throne will dwell above them (or: protect them by his presence). Never will they hunger any more nor thirst any more, nor will the sun or any heat fall upon them.” The verb “to fall upon”, πίπτω ἐπί, seems out of place, and Swete⁵⁸ and others conjectured παῖσιν ἔτι, “strike any more” for πέσιν ἐπί. The error was caused by the pronunciation of αἰ as ε⁵⁹ and the misreading of ἔτι as ἐπ’. In capital letters, TI looks very much like a II. What we have is the result of an acoustic and a graphic error. The author uses the verb παίω in a similar context in 9:5. Cf. the note on Mt.7:25. The *NJB* renders “sun and scorching will never plague them”, accepting the change without saying anything.

Apoc. 15:3

Finally, we come to a very bizarre case. Those who had won the victory over the beast and its image and the number of its name are standing near the sea of glass, holding the harps that God had given them (3), and they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb: “Great and wonderful are your deeds. Just and true are your ways, o King of the nations.” The last word, ἔθνῶν, printed by Nestle-Aland, 25th and 26th edd., as well as by the *GNT*, is controversial, and the variant αἰῶνος has strong manuscript support (Papyrus 47, late 3rd c., Sinaiticus, 4th c. and other witnesses). ἔθνῶν is suspicious because it could mean “of the Gentiles”, and this is how Luther originally translated it; later he changed his mind and accepted (ἁγίων, “of the Saints”) from Erasmus, but this is also wrong. Erasmus had retranslated this part of the *Apocalypse* from the Latin Vulgate, because he had no Greek manuscript for it. In the Codex he was using, he found the compendium *scrlum* (for *saeculorum*) which he misread as the compendium for *sctrum* (= *sanctorum*), so he boldly translated ἁγίων, which survived as part of the ‘textus receptus’ until the truth became clear in the early 19th century. Meanwhile, αἰῶνος had been accepted as the true reading by Grotius, Mills

⁵⁸ Commentary, London 1906, ad loc.

⁵⁹ See L. Radermacher, *Neutestamentliche Grammatik*, 2nd ed., Tübingen 1925, 41-2.

and others long ago. It is confirmed by 1 *Tim.* 1:17. The correct form could easily be corrupted into ἐθνῶν, because αἱ sounded like ε, and the ὠμέγα could be taken as a θήτα. This example is sufficient, all by itself, to show how unreliable our editions of the Greek New Testament are. The *NJB* translate “King of nations”, without any comment.

In conclusion, we may ask: 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 also need some experience in editing ancient texts and you should be aware of all the possibilities of textual corruption. They are the same in the transmission of the New Testament as in the *paradosis* of classical texts. So it not surprising that the names of famous classicists such as Bentley or Lachmann appear more than once in any survey of conjectures. 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 practice⁶⁰.

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