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MUST THE GREEK TEXT ALWAYS BE PREFERRED? VERSIONAL AND PATRISTIC WITNESSES TO THE TEXT OF MATTHEW 4:16

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Among the many citations from the Hebrew Scriptures in the Gospel of Matthew is the apparent quotation of Isa 8:23–9:1 in Matt 4:15–16:

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, across the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who sit in darkness have seen a great
light, and to those sitting in the region and shadow of death a light has arisen.

Scholars have long recognized that this apparent quotation does not faithfully reproduce any known version of the text of Isaiah, a fact generally accounted for by an appeal to theories of Matthean editorial activity, suggesting that Matthew made changes to the text of Isaiah he was citing in order to render the Isaian text more amenable to its Gospel context (an argument considered in more detail below). In no case has this matter been considered text-critically, simply because there are no significant variants preserved for these verses either in extant Greek manuscripts of Matthew or in textual witnesses to Isaiah. It appears, then, that the form of the text preserved in the Greek manuscript tradition is the form original to Matthew, and if this form varies from the known witnesses to the text of Isaiah, such variations must be the result of ad hoc changes made to the text of Isaiah by Matthew.

The unanimity of the Greek manuscript tradition does not mean, however, that there are no significant text-critical issues here. A few versional texts and

An earlier version of this paper was read before the New Testament Textual Criticism section of the SBL annual meeting in 2002 in Toronto, Canada, under the title “Jewish Exegesis and the Text of Matthean Scriptural Citations: The Case of Matt. 4:16.” I would like to express my appreciation to the anonymous editorial reviewers of *JBL* for their many helpful comments that have strengthened this article. Of course, the responsibility for any remaining errors rests with the author.

patristic citations do preserve interesting variants, and it is the purpose of this investigation to consider the significance of the versional and patristic textual data related specifically to Matt 4:16. It is probable that the best form of Matt 4:16 is not preserved in the Greek manuscript tradition, despite its unanimity. Rather, I will argue that the form attested in some versional and patristic witnesses has a greater claim to originality because it provides a more plausible solution to the problem of the variation of Matthew's citation from its ostensible source in Isaiah by showing that Matthew employed the common early Jewish exegetical technique known as *gezerah shavah*—a technique that Matthew uses in other places—as the basis for his redactional activity.¹ Versional and patristic evidence demonstrates that Matthew's citation of Jewish Scripture in 4:16 was originally a combined citation of Isa 9:1 and Ps 107:10, and not simply a citation of Isa 9:1 that Matthew changed to suit his purposes. Such an argument has larger implications for the discipline of NT textual criticism because it raises the question of whether the Greek text tradition must always be given priority over the versional and patristic tradition in making text-critical decisions, a question that is rarely considered in the field of NT textual criticism.

I. The Citation of Isaiah 9:1 in Textual Witnesses to Matthew 4:16

When one compares the text of Matt 4:16 to the Greek and Hebrew forms of Isa 9:1, the differences are immediately apparent. First, it is clear that the Gospel of Matthew has not followed the text of the LXX here. Matthew writes:

ὁ λαὸς ὁ καθήμενος ἐν σκότει φῶς εἶδεν μέγα, καὶ τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν χώρα καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς.

The people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, and to those who sit in the region and shadow of death a light has arisen to them.

The LXX differs substantially with:

ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει ἴδετε φῶς μέγα· οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν χώρα καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου φῶς λάμψει ἐφ' ὑμᾶς.

You people who walk in darkness see a great light, those who dwell in the region and shadow of death a light shines upon you.

¹ By giving priority to internal evidence I am arguing in the tradition of the text-critical method known as thoroughgoing eclecticism, associated most recently with the work of J. K. Elliott. For a summary of this method, which is characterized by an emphasis on internal arguments over external manuscript evidence in text-critical decisions, see Elliott, "The Case for Thoroughgoing Eclecticism" in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. David Alan Black; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 101-24.

First, Matthew has the people “sitting” in both halves of the parallel structure against the LXX’s “walking” in the first half and “dwelling” in the second.² Second, in the first half of the verse Matthew puts the verb in the third person (εἶδεν) over against the LXX, which employs the second person (ἴδετε). Third, in Matthew the light has “arisen to them” (ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς), while in the LXX it “shines upon them” (λάμπει ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς).

If we turn to the Hebrew text of Isaiah for comparison, many of the problems remain. The MT reads:

העם ההלכים בחשך ראו אור גדול ישבי בארץ צלמות אור נגה עליהם

The people who walk in darkness see a great light, those who dwell in the region of deep darkness a light has shined upon them.

Matthew agrees with the MT against the LXX in employing the third person in the first half of the verse, but the MT supports the LXX against Matthew in having the people “walking” (הלכים) and “dwelling” (ישבי) and in having the light “shining upon them” (נגה עליהם). Moreover, the MT’s בארץ צלמות (“in the land of deep darkness”) differs from both Matthew and the LXX, though this difference is easily explained. The LXX’s ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου (“in the region and shadow of death”) has apparently read צלמות (“deep darkness”) as the two-word phrase צל מות (“shadow of death”). This would suggest that Matthew was dependent on the LXX at least for this phrase, since ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ does not translate the Hebrew בארץ צל very precisely.³

Thus, although Matt 4:16 agrees with the MT against the LXX in some places, in others the reverse is true; and in its use of the troublesome καθήμενος, it agrees with neither. So in its entirety, Matthew’s form of this citation does not follow any known version of the text of Isaiah. How might we account for this?

That Matthew’s form of this citation includes a combination of Septuagintal and Masoretic elements is hardly problematic. It is likely that Matthew used both as sources and quoted freely from both, even combining elements from both texts in the same quotation when doing so was consistent with his inter-

² Codex A of the LXX along with several other medieval manuscripts replaces πορευόμενος with καθήμενος in accordance with Matthew, almost certainly the result of assimilation of these LXX manuscripts to Matthew. In his critical edition of the LXX of Isaiah, Joseph Ziegler wrote, “Manchmal liegt auch Einwirkung von ntl. Stellen vor. So liest A mit verschiedenen anderen Hss. 9:2 καθήμενος (aus Matth. 4:16) statt πορευόμενος” (Joseph Ziegler, ed., *Isaias*, vol. 15 of *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Göttingensis editum* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939], 27).

³ Septuagintal manuscripts are divided here: $\aleph^a$ B read ἐν χώρᾳ σκιᾷ, while L reads ἐν χώρᾳ σκιᾶς, the latter doing better justice to the Hebrew.

ests.⁴ More problematic is Matthew's use of καθήμενος in place of the MT's הלכי and the LXX's πορεύόμενος, and it is here that commentators have seen evidence of Matthean redactional activity. According to Krister Stendahl, the change from "walking" to "sitting" serves to stress the "local, geographical intention of his interpretation. It was to the people actually settled there (in Zebulun and Naphtali) in such a position that the light of the Messiah came."⁵ George Soares Prabhu agrees with this interpretation and sees it being reinforced by the use of the phrase χώρα καὶ σκιὰ θανάτου, which he calls a hendiadys that "unmistakably and emphatically refers the oracle to 'the land of Zebulun and Naphtali.'"⁶ But such redactional arguments are valid only on the assumption that the form of the text preserved by the Greek manuscript tradition is the form original to Matthew.⁷ Despite the virtual unanimity of the Greek manuscript tradition, a consideration of versional and patristic evidence raises the possibility that the Greek manuscript tradition does not preserve the earliest form, leaving such redactional arguments on a questionable foundation.

Consider, for example, the form of this text as it appears in the Persian Harmony, a medieval harmony of the four Gospels usually associated with the harmony tradition spawned by Tatian's *Diatessaron*:

*an khalq ke dar tārīki nešasteh-and dar sāye marg nur 'aẓīm didand*⁸

⁴ This was the conclusion of Krister Stendahl in his seminal study, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (ASNU 20; Lund: Gleerup, 1954).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁶ George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt. 1-2* (AnBib 63; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 102.

⁷ I use the term "original" here in full awareness of how this term has been problematized in recent text-critical work. By "original" I mean that form of the text that resulted from the late-first-century compositional phase of Matthew's Gospel, regardless of whether "Matthew" refers to an individual or a community, and regardless of whether the composition of the Gospel was a singular event or an extended process. I mean only to distinguish between the activity of the community out of which the Gospel developed and the activity of the communities that disseminated and transmitted the Gospel, though it is clear that a sharp line cannot be drawn between them. For a discussion of these issues, see the excellent article by Eldon Jay Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism," *HTR* 92 (1999): 245-81.

⁸ Guiseppe Messina, ed., *Diatessaron Persiano* (BibOr 14; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1951), 44. My English translation depends heavily on Messina's Italian translation of the Persian (*la gente, che sono seduti nell'oscurità, nell'ombra della morte, videro una gran luce*). The Persian Harmony dates from the thirteenth century and appears to have been translated from a Syriac Vorlage. For a discussion of this text, see Bruce M. Metzger, "Tatian's Diatessaron and a Persian Harmony of the Gospels," *JBL* 69 (1950): 261-80; A. J. B. Higgins, "Tatian's Diatessaron and the Arabic and Persian Harmonies," in *Studies in New Testament Language and Text* (ed. J. K. Elliott; NovTSup 44; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 246-61; Guiseppe Messina, "Un Diatessaron persiano del secolo 13 tradotto dal siriano," *Bib* 24 (1943): 59-106.

The people who are sitting in darkness, in the shadow of death have seen a great light.

The two halves of the parallel structure have been collapsed into one, creating a significantly shorter form of the text, a form that appears also in a citation of Matt 4:16 in the writings of Augustine (*Epistulae* 225.5):

*Gentium populus qui sedebat in tenebris et in umbra mortis lucem viderit magnam*⁹

The people of the nations who were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death have seen a great light.

This collapsing of the two halves of the parallel structure into one creates the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death,” which, although not appearing in any Greek manuscript, does occur in two other non-Greek witnesses where the full parallel structure of the verse is preserved. For example, the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels reads in the second half of the parallel structure:

*whlyn dy dytybn bhšwk² wbtwlh dmwt² nhwr dnḥ lhwn*¹⁰

. . . and those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death a light has arisen to them.

This is followed by the text of the Basel edition of the Ethiopic Gospels:

*wala²elahi yenaberu westa šelmat wašelälota mot berhân šaraqa lomu*¹¹

⁹ For this text, see Augustine, *Epistulae* (ed. A. Goldbacher; CSEL 57; Leipzig: Freytag, 1911), 462. Augustine’s addition of *gentium* can be understood as reading the last word of v. 15 as the first word of v. 16. All Old Latin texts and the Vulgate end v. 15 with the phrase *Galilaea gentium*.

¹⁰ Agnes S. Lewis and Margaret D. Gibson, eds., *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1899), 268. This medieval lectionary, written in Syriac script, is actually written in the language of western Palestinian Aramaic and probably preserves a considerably older tradition than that of its ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts. See Bruce M. Metzger, “A Comparison of the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary and the Greek Gospel Lectionary,” in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1969), 209–20; Matthew Black, “The Syriac Versional Tradition,” in *Die alten Übersetzungen des Neuen Testaments, die Kirchenväterzitate und Lektionare* (ed. K. Aland; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972), 120–59.

¹¹ As cited by L. Hackspill, “Die äthiopische Evangelienübersetzung (Math. I–X),” *ZA* 11 (1897): 150. It is unclear how many Ethiopic manuscripts contain this reading. The Basel edition was published in 1874 and was based on a collation of manuscripts held in the Royal Library of Paris along with manuscripts owned by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The editor, Thomas Pell Platt, provides little information concerning which manuscripts he consulted, nor does he provide a critical apparatus. For more on this edition, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations* (New York: Oxford University Press,

... and to those who sit in *the darkness and shadow of death* a light has arisen to them.

Notice should also be taken of an apparent allusion to this verse by Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.* 114.1):

φῶς ἡμῖν ἐξ οὐρανοῦ τοῖς ἐν σκότει κατορωρυγμένοις καὶ ἐν σκιᾷ θανάτου κατακεκλεισμένοις ἐξέλαψεν ἡλίου καθαρώτερον¹²

A light from heaven brighter than the sun has shined upon us who have been buried in darkness and shut up in the shadow of death.

Clement appears to juxtapose “darkness” with “shadow of death” along with the Ethiopic Gospel, the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary, Augustine, and the Persian Harmony.

The occurrence of the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death” in such a geographically and linguistically diverse group of texts could hardly be coincidental. They are almost certainly reflecting a common tradition, yet it would be difficult to find a tradition common to all of them apart from a very early form of Matthew’s Gospel.¹³ While the Persian Harmony and Palestinian Syriac Lectionary do have the *Diatessaron* in common, this is probably not the case for the Ethiopic tradition and almost certainly not the case for Clement of Alexandria. Augustine would be dependent on an Old Latin text, and the Old Latin does have connections to the *Diatessaron*, but no existing Old Latin text supports this reading. A very early (or original?) text of Matthew, then, appears to be the most likely point of origin for this reading. But since there is no Greek manuscript evidence and the versional and patristic witnesses are rather late

1977), 230–31. It is clear that the Ethiopic manuscripts provide a divided tradition for this verse. According to Hackspill, the thirteenth- or fourteenth-century Paris manuscript reads the even shorter form *wala’elahi yenaberu westa šelâlotâ mot*. He suggests that the reading of the Basel edition might be the result of assimilation to the clause τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις in Luke 1:79. Hackspill, however, was unaware that this same form appears in other versional and patristic witnesses to Matthew. See below for more on the possible influence of Luke 1:79 on Matt 4:16.

¹² For this text, see Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* (ed. O. Stählin; GCS 12; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1972), 80.

¹³ This would be in agreement with the theory of linguistic geography articulated by the Italian classicist Giorgio Pasquali, which Bruce Metzger considers a significant idea for text critics as well. Metzger writes: “In general linguistics it is commonly acknowledged that the most ancient stages of a phenomenon are preserved best in the peripheral zones of the area of their dispersion, and the coincidence of two forms current in regions far removed from the centre and from each other constitutes a presumption in favour of their antiquity. In the same way the coincidence of particular readings in manuscripts of divergent origin often proves their originality” (*The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1964], 174).

(except for Clement), the classical canons of NT textual criticism would certainly rule this out as a candidate for the “original” reading of Matthew. To do so, however, abandons the crucial piece of evidence for understanding why Matthew has gone against all texts of Isaiah by reading καθήμενος. If Matthew’s citation of Isaiah originally contained the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death,” it is easy to see why he also went against his Isaiah source in introducing the word καθήμενος. But to demonstrate this will require a general consideration of Matthew’s use of the Jewish Scriptures in his Gospel.

II. Jewish Exegesis in Matthean Scriptural Citations

In 1954, Krister Stendahl published his seminal study of Matthew’s use of the Jewish Scriptures, entitled *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*. In brief, Stendahl argued that Matthew’s citations from the Hebrew Bible resembled the work of an exegetical school not unlike the kind of exegetical work one finds among the sectarian scrolls from Qumran. According to Stendahl, one finds indelible marks of Jewish exegetical and catechetical activity in the way Matthew renders texts from the Hebrew Bible.¹⁴ If Stendahl is correct, then we should not be surprised to find in Matthew the use of specific Jewish exegetical techniques in his rendering of texts from the Hebrew Bible.

Of course a word of caution is in order here. Jewish exegetical practice is best known from the later classical categories employed in rabbinic literature, and one cannot automatically retroject later rabbinic practice into the first century.¹⁵ But some scholars have begun to see evidence that rabbinic exegetical practice developed not suddenly in the classical rabbinic period but gradually, meaning that at least some form of what would later become classical rabbinic exegetical practice should be found in earlier Jewish literature.

One such exegetical technique is the rabbinic practice known as *gezerah shavah* (identical category), the common practice of explaining one text by another when the two share a common word or phrase. That this exegetical principle operated long before the rabbinic period has been demonstrated by the studies of Elieser Slomovic and George Brooke, both of whom have documented the use of this principle in Qumran writings such as 4QFlorilegium,

¹⁴ For further support of Stendahl’s view, see my *Tatian and the Jewish Scriptures: A Textual and Philological Analysis of the Old Testament Citations in Tatian’s Diatessaron* (CSCO 591, subs. 109; Leuven: Peeters, 2001).

¹⁵ For a survey of rabbinic exegesis, see Rimón Kasher, “The Interpretation of Scripture in Rabbinic Literature,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. M. J. Mulder; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 547–94.

the *Community Rule*, the *War Scroll*, and the *Damascus Document*.¹⁶ Moreover, Maarten J. J. Menken appeals to the principle of *gezerah shavah* to explain the form of OT citations in John's Gospel. Menken writes:

Already in pre-Christian Judaism, the connection of two analogous passages from Scripture (i.e. passages that have at least one word in common and that mostly also have a similar content) was a current practice, not only in exegesis, but also in the rendering of texts: a part of one could be used as a substitute for a part of the other, or could be added to it.¹⁷

This last point deserves emphasis. Although the use of *gezerah shavah* in rabbinic writings operates on the level of explanation of texts, Menken argues that in prerabbinic times, this principle was employed also in the rendering of texts. He bases this on examples that Jean Koenig gleaned from the LXX and the Qumran Isaiah manuscript.¹⁸

For example, in the Hebrew text of both Exod 15:3 and Isa 42:13, God is referred to as מלחמה ("a man of war"),¹⁹ but the Septuagint translates this as the opposite, "one who breaks wars," in both places (συντρίβων πολέμους in Exodus, συντρίψει πόλεμον in Isaiah). This was done, according to Koenig, under the influence of Ps 76:4 and Hos 2:20, both of which indicate that God will abolish war from the earth.²⁰ Here מלחמה serves as the connecting word legitimizing the rendering of one text in accordance with another.²¹ Having established that the principle of *gezerah shavah* operated on the level of rendering texts in prerabbinic Judaism, Menken then explains the form of some OT quotations in John's Gospel on this principle. For example, the quotation in John 6:31, ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς φαγεῖν ("bread from heaven

¹⁶ See Elieser Slomovic, "Toward an Understanding of the Exegesis in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *RevQ* 7 (1969–71): 3–15; George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in Its Jewish Context* (JSOTSup 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985). J. W. Doeve has argued that it is the rabbinic idea of the inspiration of the entire scripture down to the most seemingly insignificant of details that justifies this bringing together of analogous texts into a mutually interpretive framework. He characterizes early Jewish exegesis with the observation that "[t]here is nothing, absolutely nothing in Scripture without meaning. From everything, however slight it may seem, something may be learnt" (*Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* [Assen: van Gorcum, 1954], 89).

¹⁷ Maarten J. J. Menken, *Old Testament Quotations in the Fourth Gospel: Studies in Textual Form* (CBET 15; Kampen: Pharos, 1996), 52.

¹⁸ See Jean Koenig, *L'herméneutique analogique du Judaïsme antique d'après les témoins textuels d'Isaïe* (VTSup 33; Leiden: Brill, 1982).

¹⁹ כאיש מלחמה ("like a man of wars") in Isaiah.

²⁰ Psalm 76:4 reads שמח רשפי קשת מן וחרב ומלחמה ("There he broke [συνέτριψε in the LXX] the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and war"). Hosea 2:20 reads the very similar וקשת וחרב ומלחמה אשבור מן הארץ ("And the bow, the sword, and war I will abolish [συντρίψω in the LXX] from the earth").

²¹ For a discussion, see Koenig, *L'herméneutique analogique du Judaïsme antique*, 59–63; Menken, *Old Testament Quotations*, 52–53.

he gave them to eat”), while it seems closest to a quotation of the LXX of Ps 77:24 (καὶ ἄρτον οὐρανοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς [“and the bread of heaven he gave to them”]), differs from the Psalm text in the additions of ἐκ τοῦ and φαγεῖν. These differences can be explained, however, on the theory that John rendered Ps 77:24 LXX in combination with Exod 16:4 and 15 on the authority of the principle of *gezerah shavah*. The similar text in Exod 16:4 LXX, ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ὥω ὑμῖν ἄρτους ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (“Behold, I am raining upon you bread from heaven”), provides John with the phrase ἐκ τοῦ, while Exod 16:15 LXX, οὗτος ὁ ἄρτος ὃν ἔδωκεν κύριος ὑμῖν φαγεῖν (“This is the bread which the LORD gave to you to eat”), provides John with the word φαγεῖν. The concept of giving bread to the people ties all these texts together.²²

Given that the basic principle of *gezerah shavah* operated widely in early Judaism, and given the likelihood that Matthew’s Gospel was formed in the context of some kind of Jewish scholastic environment, it would be surprising if Matthew’s citations from the Jewish Scriptures were not influenced by Jewish exegetical principles, especially by *gezerah shavah*. That this is indeed the case may be demonstrated by Matthew’s citation in 2:6 of Mic 5:1, ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ ἐξελεύσεται ἡγούμενος ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραὴλ (“for from you will come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel”).²³ The phrase ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραὴλ in Matthew replaces the phrase τοῦ εἶναι εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ (“to be a ruler in Israel”) in Micah, and scholars have generally recognized that Matthew has combined Mic 5:1 with 2 Sam 5:2, where David is told in the Septuagint, σὺ ποιμανεῖς τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραὴλ (“you will shepherd my people Israel”).²⁴ This allows Matthew to introduce a text explicitly referring to David into a text predicting the emergence of a leader from Bethlehem in a way that is based entirely on the authority of the Jewish Scriptures (presumably the word Ἰσραὴλ, common to both texts, provided the link between the two). The only redactional change necessary is to change the verb from second person (ποιμανεῖς) to third person (ποιμανεῖ) in order to fit the new context. It is clear from this example that Matthew does employ the principle of *gezerah shavah* in the rendering of texts from the Jewish Scriptures.²⁵

²² See the discussion in Menken, *Old Testament Quotations*, 49–54.

²³ It is likely that here as well the Greek manuscript tradition does not preserve the earliest form of this text. See the discussion in my *Tatian and the Jewish Scriptures*, 37–41; and “The Gospels and the Text of the Hebrew Bible: Micah 5:1 (Matt. 2:6) in Tatian’s Diatessaron,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. Craig A. Evans; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).

²⁴ See Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, 99–101.

²⁵ Consider also Matt 21:5, where the initial phrase, “Say to the daughter of Zion,” from Isa 62:11 replaces the phrase “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion” of Zech 9:9, even though the remainder of the quotation (“Behold your king comes to you humble and riding on an ass, and on a

Returning now to Matt 4:16, I will argue that the variant form of this citation from Isaiah preserved in the Persian Harmony, Palestinian Syriac Lectionary, Ethiopic Gospel, Augustine, and possibly Clement of Alexandria, the form of the citation containing the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death,” owes its existence to the operation of *gezerah shavah* at the level of Matthean composition, despite the fact that this reading is absent from the Greek manuscript tradition.

In 1861, D. Rudolpho Anger, in a work on OT citations in Matthew, suggested that Matthew’s use of καθήμενος for the LXX’s πορευόμενος and MT’s הִלָּכְוֹת was a sign that Matthew’s citation of Isaiah had been influenced by a similar text appearing in Ps 107:10.²⁶ In the LXX, Ps 107:10 contains the phrase καθήμενους ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου (“those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death”). Because of the similarity of this phrase to what appears in Isa 9:1, Anger argued that Matthew’s καθήμενος was based on the psalm text’s καθήμενους. What Anger did not know, however, is that this whole phrase from Ps 107:10, “those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death,” appears in an array of geographically and linguistically diverse witnesses to the text of Matt 4:16. I would argue that Anger did not know how right he was. Matthew’s citation of Isa 9:1 was not only influenced by Ps 107:10 in its use of καθήμενος. Rather, this entire phrase from Ps 107:10 was combined in some way with the text of Isa 9:1 according to the principle of *gezerah shavah*, the appearance of “darkness” and “shadow of death” in both texts linking these analogous passages together. But why would Matthew do this? What does he gain by combining Isa 9:1 with Ps 107:10, rather than simply citing either one alone? To answer this question we must consider Matthew’s purpose in citing Jewish Scripture.

In a recent article in *JBL*, Warren Carter considered the meaning of the citations from Isaiah that appear in Matt 1:23 and 4:15–16. He argues that Matthew cites Jewish Scripture in order to evoke in his readers the larger scriptural context in which those citations are embedded. In the case of these two citations from Isaiah, namely, Isa 7:14 and 8:23–9:1, Carter argues that Matthew is trying to evoke in his audience the entire context of Isaiah 7–9.²⁷

colt the foal of an ass”) is from Zech 9:9. Here “daughter of Zion” provides the link between the two texts.

²⁶ D. Rudolpho Anger, *Ratio, qua loci Veteris Testamenti in evangelio Matthaei laudantur, quid valeat ad illustrandam huius evangelii originem, quaeritur: Particula I* (Leipzig: Litteris Edelmanni, 1861), 29. The possibility of influence from Ps 107:10 or even Isa 42:7 has also been noted by W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 1:385.

²⁷ Warren Carter, “Evoking Isaiah: Matthean Soteriology and an Intertextual Reading of Isaiah 7–9 and Matthew 1:23 and 4:15–16,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 503–20.

These chapters of Isaiah deal with a situation of imperial threat, that of Assyrian power, which Carter argues establishes an analogy “with the situation of the Gospel’s authorial audience also living under imperial power, that of Rome, and also promised God’s salvation.”²⁸ Just as the people of Judah, when they were sitting in the darkness of impending invasion by the Assyrians, saw the light of salvation, probably in the person of Hezekiah, so Matthew’s community, though sitting in the darkness of Roman domination, will see the light of salvation in the person of Jesus. It is significant for Carter that Matthew’s citation of Isaiah in 4:16 comes right at the end of the first narrative unit of the Gospel. He writes:

The intertext recognizes the Gospel audience’s experience of imperial power, provides God’s perspectives on that situation, explains the present, underlines the hope of change, warns of rejection, and raises the key question at the end of the first narrative block and on the brink of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry of how God will accomplish that salvation through Jesus.²⁹

If Carter is right that Matthew’s purpose in citing scripture is to evoke in his readers the larger context of the small units he cites, it is entirely understandable that Matthew would want to evoke not only the message of Isa 7–9 but also the entirety of Ps 107, for the latter is a song of praise for deliverance from Babylonian exile. Consider vv. 10–14 of this forty-two-verse psalm. In vv. 10–11 the psalmist writes:

יִשְׁבִּי חֹשֶׁךְ וצִלְמוֹת אֲסִירִי עֲנִי בְרוֹל
כִּי הִמְרֹו אֲמַרִי אֵל וְעִצַּת עֲלִיּוֹן נֶאֱצָו

Some were dwellers of *darkness and deep shadows* (shadow of death),
prisoners in misery and in irons,
for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel
of the most high.

Here “darkness and the shadow of death” describes the misery of exile. But in vv. 13–14 the psalmist writes:

וַיִּזְעֲקוּ אֵל יְהוָה בְּצָר לָהֶם מִמַּצְקוֹתֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׁעֵם
וַיִּצְאֵם מִחֹשֶׁךְ וצִלְמוֹת וּמוֹסְרוֹתֵיהֶם יִתַּק

They cried to the LORD in their trouble and he saved them from their
distress;
he brought them out of *darkness and deep shadows* (shadow of death)
and tore apart their bonds.

²⁸ Ibid., 507.

²⁹ Ibid., 520.

Again the Psalmist invokes the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death,” this time to describe the situation from which God delivered the exiles. In the context of Ps 107, the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death” is pregnant with meaning, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Matthew would want to introduce this phrase into his citation of Isa 9:1. Doing so allows him to draw an analogy between the salvation the community will experience in Jesus and two former occasions of salvation, that of Judah from the threat of Assyrian conquest (via the Isaiah text), and that of the Judean remnant from the misery of exile (via the Psalm text).³⁰

This point is further reinforced by the appearance of another example of this same textual combination in Luke 1:79 in the context of the song of Zechariah, which is based almost entirely on texts from Jewish Scripture. In the midst of Zechariah’s prophecy concerning the messianic age, we read ἐπιφάναι τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις (“to give light to those who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death”). Given the clear Jewish background of the “songs” in the Lukan infancy narrative, it is possible that the association of Isa 9:1 with Ps 107:10 had already been made in Jewish messianic traditions and that Matthew and Luke independently adopted this already existing connection.³¹

We cannot altogether ignore the possibility that the appearance of the clause “those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death” in certain versional and patristic witnesses to Matthew is the result of secondary assimilation of Matthew’s text to the text of Luke 1:79 rather than the work of those who composed Matthew. But this seems unlikely. First, the odds are remote that the Persian Harmony, the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary, the Ethiopic Gospel, and Augustine would all have independently assimilated their text of Matt 4:16 to Luke 1:79. Such assimilation would have to have occurred early in the transmissional history of Matthew, a point from which it could have influenced these other texts. The likely candidate for the origin of such assimilation is Tatian’s *Diatessaron*. It is difficult to see, though, how Tatian could have been influenced by Luke 1:79 in his rendering of Matt 4:16, since these two texts come

³⁰ This does not mean that the redactional arguments discussed above are entirely moot. This adoption of the verb κάθημαι from Ps 107:10 may still serve to stress the idea that it is to the people actually settled in the land that the light of the Messiah has come. What is important is to recognize that Matthew does not make this point on his own authority; he bases it on the authority of the Jewish Scriptures, and these scriptural sources serve as a constraint on the kinds of redactional changes Matthew can make. If it is not found in the text, it is out of bounds. Thus, George M. Soares Prabhu’s characterization of Matt 4:15–16 as “an *ad hoc* christologically oriented translation” must be rejected, if *ad hoc* is meant to imply that Matthew made the change on his own authority (see Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 104).

³¹ Stendahl has argued that the combination of Mal 3:1 with Exod 23:20 that occurs in the quotation in Matt 11:10 (Mark 1:2/Luke 7:27) was already a part of the Jewish milieu of the Gospel writers and not a new creation of the evangelists (*School of St. Matthew*, 52).

from such different contexts in the two Gospels. Moreover, Luke 1:79 appears in the Arabic Harmony in the form “to those who are sitting in darkness and *under* the shadow of death.”³² The inclusion of “under” occurs neither in the Greek textual tradition nor in the Old Syriac, Peshitta, or Old Latin. When the Arabic Harmony differs from both the Greek tradition and the Peshitta, there is a good chance that it represents the original reading of the *Diatessaron*. If Tatian included “under” in his rendering of Luke 1:79, it is problematic that he did not include it also in his rendering of Matt 4:16—if indeed he was influenced by the former in his rendering of the latter. The supposition that the variant form of Matt 4:16 under investigation here is the result of assimilation to Luke 1:79 creates more problems than it solves, and it does not explain one additional textual anomaly found in textual witnesses to Matt 4:16, a textual anomaly that makes sense on the assumption that Matthew combined Isa 9:1 with Ps 107:10 according to the principle of *gezerah shavah*.

The grammatically singular term λαός occurs twelve times in the Gospels in the nominative singular form, and in every case it functions as the subject of a grammatically singular verb.³³ While a term like λαός could be construed as a collective singular and paired with a plural verb, this construction never occurs in the Greek Gospels except in Codex D of Matt 4:16, which reads ὁ λαός ὁ καθημένος ἐν σκοτει φῶς εἶδον μέγα. This pairing of a grammatically singular noun, modified by a grammatically singular participle, with a plural verb occurs in several Syriac and Latin witnesses to Matt 4:16 and the Ethiopic Gospel as well.³⁴ It may be that the text of Matt 4:16 underwent some type of corruption. If Matthew did employ the phrase from Ps 107:10 with its plural καθημένους (with the appropriate change in case), the plural verbs in these witnesses would be consistent with such use and may therefore be vestiges left over from this earlier form of the text that have not been “corrected” to the later form of the text that emerges in the Greek manuscript tradition.

It remains now to consider how Matt 4:16 might have appeared as a citation of Jewish scripture combining Isa 9:1 with Ps 107:10. Any reconstruction

³² See A. S. Marmardji, ed., *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1935), 12. The Arabic text reads *al-jālasīna fī-zzālām watahtaʿzālāl al-mawt*, which Marmardji renders in French as *qui sont assis dans l'obscurité et sous les ombres de la mort*.

³³ The occurrences are Matt 4:16; 15:8; 27:25; Mark 7:6; Luke 1:21; 7:29; 18:43; 19:48; 20:6; 21:38; 23:35; John 8:2.

³⁴ See the Curetonian Syriac and Ephrem's *Commentary on the Diatessaron* 1.7, which read ʿmʿ dyth hwʿ bḥšukʿ ḥzw nwhrʿ rbʿ; and the Palestinian Syriac Lectionary MS B, which reads qhlʿ dyth bqbʿ nhwr rb ḥmw (MSS A and C “correct” the verb to the singular ḥmʿ). In addition, five Old Latin texts (a, b d, g¹, h) read *populus qui sedabat in tenebris lucem viderunt magnam*. See also the Ethiopic Gospel's *hezba zayenaber westa selmat reʿeyu berhān ʿabida*. The only other time that the grammatically singular “people” serves as the subject of a plural verb in Syriac and Latin texts of the Gospels is where λαός in the Greek is modified by either πᾶς or πάντες, and even in these instances the construction is not used consistently.

must be considered tentative, given the variability in textual form among witnesses that contain the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death.” The evidence suggests that this verse went through a complicated process of textual change, and it is not at all clear that any of the witnesses containing the phrase from Ps 107:10 actually preserves the original form of the entire verse. It may well be that the original form of the verse is unrecoverable from the extant evidence, but we can make some observations and venture a tentative reconstruction.

As noted earlier, Isa 9:1 contains a poetic parallelism; the clause “The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light” represents the first member of the parallel structure, and the second member consists of the nearly synonymous “those who dwell in the region of deep darkness (shadow of death), a light has shined upon them.” In their citations of Matt 4:16, the Persian Harmony and Augustine collapse this parallelism into a single entity “the people who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death have seen a great light.”³⁵ The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary and Ethiopic Gospel, on the other hand, both preserve the parallelism and introduce the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death” in the second member.³⁶ Now in MS B of the Lectionary, as well as in the other texts that preserve the grammatical incongruity between the singular subject and plural verb, this grammatical incongruity occurs in the first member of the parallelism. In each case the plural verb is the verb “see” or “have seen,” and not a form of the verb “shine,” which occurs only in the second member of the parallelism. This might suggest that if Matthew had originally taken over Ps 107:10 with its plural *καθημένων* (which I assume he would have changed to *καθημένοι*), he placed it in the first member of the parallelism and made the verb “see” plural for grammatical coherence. As this verse in various texts was gradually “corrected” toward the text of Isaiah, the subject was made singular while the verb was not corrected to the singular in all cases, leaving the grammatical incongruity noted above. Notice that alone among the various witnesses, the Persian Harmony reads a plural subject (*an khalq ke . . . nešasteh-and*) along with a plural verb (*didand*).³⁷ All of this evidence taken together suggests that the Persian Harmony might preserve this verse in a form closest to what Matthew composed, which may have resembled the following:

³⁵ Although it might be argued that the phrase “darkness and the shadow of death” here arises simply from the collapsing of the parallelism and not from reference to Ps 107:10, this argument does not account for the use of *καθημενος*.

³⁶ I leave aside Clement of Alexandria’s reference at this point, since it is only an allusion to Matt 4:16, rendering unclear whether Clement’s text had a parallel structure or not.

³⁷ The Persian noun *khalq* (“people”) is grammatically singular but should be thought of as plural in meaning, since it is modified by the grammatically plural participial phrase *nešasteh-and* (“are sitting”).

οἱ λαοὶ οἱ καθημένοι ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου φῶς εἶδον μέγα³⁸

The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary and Ethiopic Gospel have been partially conformed to the later Greek text by restoring the poetic parallelism, even while they retain the phrase from Ps 107:10 in the second member of the parallelism.

This is a radically different form of the text from that in the Greek manuscript tradition and raises the question of why it is preserved (in whole or in part) in mostly late versional and patristic witnesses, but not in any Greek manuscript. Why did this reading disappear from the Greek textual tradition? The answer to this is uncertain. It would be tempting to posit an “orthodox corruption of scripture.”³⁹ Maybe anti-Judaic tendencies in early Christianity motivated scribes to remove this evidence of specifically Jewish exegesis from the text. But I have already demonstrated that just such evidence survives in the case of Matt 2:6 in its citation of Mic 5:1 (2 Sam 5:2), so any anti-Judaic explanation must be considered speculative. Since Matt 4:15 appears to follow its Isaiah source much more closely, it might simply be that scribes did not recognize the composite nature of Matt 4:16 since it varies so considerably from Isa 9:1. They therefore corrected it back toward the text of Isaiah they knew.⁴⁰ But perhaps of greater importance than why the text was changed is the larger implication of this argument: that Greek manuscript evidence cannot always take precedence over versional and patristic evidence in text-critical decisions.

III. Matthew 4:16 and the Dominance of the Greek Text in New Testament Textual Criticism

For much of its history the discipline of NT textual criticism has centered on the collation and analysis of a substantial Greek manuscript tradition encompassing more than five thousand manuscripts, with the result that

³⁸ Interestingly, Codex D reads the nominative plural οἱ καθημένοι in the second half of the verse against the dative plural τοῖς καθημένοις, which occurs in most if not all other Greek manuscripts. Some editions of the Greek NT (von Soden, Aland’s *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*) seem to indicate that MS 700 agrees with D, but 700 reads with the majority, according to the work of Reuben Swanson, ed., *New Testament Greek Manuscripts: Variant Readings Arranged in Horizontal Lines against Codex Vaticanus*, vol. 1, *Matthew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

³⁹ In the sense in which Bart D. Ehrman has articulated in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effects of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ This would not have been as big a problem in Matt 2:6 since the variance from Mic 5:1 created by the inclusion of a phrase from 2 Sam 5:2 is not nearly as great. For several examples of NT scribes conforming OT quotations more closely to the LXX, see Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 198.

versional and patristic evidence has been relegated to secondary status.⁴¹ Versional and patristic witnesses to a reading, while not ignored, are cited only as secondary support for the Greek manuscript evidence, and versional and/or patristic readings that diverge entirely from the Greek manuscript tradition are rarely if ever included in the apparatus of critical editions of the NT. In a recent article, Maurice Robinson states it as an unvarying principle of textual criticism that, "Isolated patristic or versional testimony is not sufficient to overturn the reading most strongly supported among the Greek manuscript base."⁴² This principle and others like it presuppose that a clear and distinct separation can be made between the activities of textual composition and textual transmission. For the text we are considering here, that would mean that Matthew composed his Gospel in Greek in the latter part of the first century and disinterested scribes copied and transmitted it with minor variation thereafter. Thus, given the large number of extant Greek manuscripts, it is statistically probable that the "original" reading will always occur somewhere in the Greek tradition, especially when it is supported by versional and/or patristic evidence.

Recent work, however, has begun to challenge this fundamental notion. The composition and transmission of the NT (if these can be thought of as

⁴¹ The very term "version" used to describe the Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, and other traditions has a marginalizing effect on them. Since they are all lumped together in a single category as mere versions of the NT, while the Greek tradition is something qualitatively different, the natural assumption is that the Greek is superior. Chapter 2 of Bruce Metzger's influential introduction to NT textual criticism is entitled "Important Witnesses to the Text of the New Testament." Greek manuscripts are treated together in the first section of the chapter, and all the versions are treated together in the second. This automatically sets up a Greek/Version hierarchy that is followed in the apparatus to all critical editions of the NT, in which Greek evidence is always cited first, followed by versional and patristic evidence as secondary support for the Greek. See Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 36–92. This neat bifurcation between the Greek and versional traditions belies a considerably more complicated picture. There is no reason to assume automatically that every Greek manuscript is a witness superior to every versional manuscript; an early Latin or Syriac text might well be a better witness than a medieval Greek text. But the current way of talking about the versions discourages this possibility from being raised.

⁴² Maurice A. Robinson, "New Testament Textual Criticism: The Case for Byzantine Priority," *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 6 (2001): par. 52, <http://purl.org/TC>. Note the marginalizing rhetoric in Robinson's statement; evidence from patristic or versional sources is "isolated," while the Greek manuscript tradition constitutes a "base"! See also his "Investigating Text-Critical Dichotomy: A Critique of Modern Eclectic Praxis from a Byzantine-Priority Perspective," *Faith & Mission* 16 (1999): 16–31. Robinson's dogmatic assertion in support of the Greek textual tradition is indelibly linked to his larger view that the Byzantine textual tradition most closely resembles the original text of the NT, or what is known as the Byzantine-priority position. This is a distinctly minority viewpoint, yet even those textual critics who employ one of the more common eclectic methodologies still effectively support the priority of the Greek manuscript tradition even if they are less dogmatic about it. See, e.g., the essays in *Rethinking New Testament Textual Criticism*, ed. Black, where versional and patristic sources receive little attention even in the essays by scholars who employ a more common eclectic methodology.

clearly distinct enterprises) occurred not in a vacuum but in a highly contentious polemical environment. Bart Ehrman has clearly demonstrated that early christological controversies had a significant influence on the development of the NT text.⁴³ David C. Parker has argued convincingly that the text of the Gospels should be seen as a “living text” in the sense that seemingly small variations in a text, when viewed in isolation, may seem insignificant, yet those variations have the cumulative effect over larger portions of text of creating a substantially altered document. For Parker, the text of the Gospels in the early centuries was always in the process of becoming.⁴⁴ More recently Kim Haines-Eitzen has created a profile of early Christian scribes that dispels any notion of their being merely disinterested copiers of the text.⁴⁵ The work of all these scholars has underscored the point that the text of the NT was significantly more fluid, especially during the first two centuries of its existence, than generally recognized. This should not come as a surprise. Several scholars have observed that a fluid text should be expected in view of the doctrinal and theological fluidity of Christianity in its first two centuries. Helmut Koester even goes so far as to call textual critics naïve in this regard.⁴⁶

Since Matt 4:16 is not preserved in any second- or third-century papyrus fragment, the earliest Greek witnesses to this text are the fourth-century uncials Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. It is likely that the invariable Greek manuscript tradition preserves a reading older than the fourth century, but, in the absence of any Greek manuscripts older than these two famous codices, we cannot know how much older. The texts that attest to Matthew’s combining of

⁴³ Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*.

⁴⁴ David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). See especially Parker’s treatment of textual variation in the last three chapters of Luke and his conclusion that “the sum total (of the textual variations) provides incontrovertible evidence that the text of these chapters was not fixed, and indeed continued to grow for centuries after its composition” (p. 172).

⁴⁵ Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). The issue of power in textual transmission was raised also in the New Testament Textual Criticism section of the 2002 SBL annual meeting in Toronto, Canada, by the papers of William Kannaday, “The Exoneration of Pilate in the Textual Tradition of the Matthean Gospel,” and Dominika Kurek, “Some Textual Problems with Prisca and Aquila,” the latter introducing a feminist perspective into the discipline of textual criticism.

⁴⁶ Helmut Koester, “The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century,” in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission* (ed. William L. Petersen; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 20. See also William L. Petersen, “What Text Can New Testament Textual Criticism Ultimately Reach,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism, Exegesis, and Early Church History: A Discussion of Methods* (ed. Barbara Aland and J. Delobel; Kampen: Pharos, 1994), 136–51; J. N. Birdsall, “The New Testament Text,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, *From the Beginning to Jerome* (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 308–76.

Isa 9:1 and Ps 107:10 are generally later, but texts such as the Persian Harmony and Palestinian Syriac Lectionary would probably not have been liable to the same kind of “orthodox correction” as the Greek manuscript tradition since they arose and functioned within quite different environments.⁴⁷ If this composite citation existed in the Greek textual tradition in the middle of the second century, it could have been picked up in Tatian’s *Diatessaron*, through which it was transmitted to the Persian Harmony and Palestinian Syriac Lectionary, two texts generally associated with the Diatessaronic tradition.⁴⁸ If Clement of Alexandria is a witness to this reading, we have further second-century support. Augustine could have gained the reading from an Old Latin tradition dependent on the second-century Greek tradition.⁴⁹ So the form of the text that emerges in these versional and patristic witnesses may well have existed as early as the reading attested unanimously by the Greek text tradition. But internal evidence suggests that, in Matt 4:16, the best form of the text must be sought outside the Greek manuscript tradition, raising the provocative question of whether this might be true in other places as well.⁵⁰

We should not forget that a century ago, giants in the field of textual criticism like B. F. Westcott, F. C. Burkitt, Alexander Souter, and Eberhard Nestle had come to the conclusion that a reading supported by the Siniatic Syriac manuscript and the Old Latin Codex Bobiensis (k) was probably original even in the absence of Greek manuscript support.⁵¹ Thus, the idea that the original reading of any text must invariably be sought in the Greek manuscript tradition, an idea that has come to dominate contemporary text-critical work, is a comparatively recent one and one that might be fruitfully reevaluated. It is hoped that the argument presented here will serve to spur such a reevaluation.

⁴⁷ I am not arguing here that these witnesses were not subject to textual fluidity, only that the type and level of fluidity would be different from that of the Greek tradition, since these texts functioned in qualitatively different environments.

⁴⁸ Elsewhere I have argued for this being the reading of the *Diatessaron*; see my *Tatian and the Jewish Scriptures*, 41–47.

⁴⁹ The origin of this reading in the Ethiopic Gospel is not entirely clear, partly because the origins of this tradition are rather obscure. See Metzger, *Early Versions*, 215–23.

⁵⁰ Investigating this question is made difficult by the Greek bias dominating the field of NT textual criticism. Since critical editions of the NT generally cite versional and patristic evidence only in support of Greek manuscript readings, there is no ready source for variants that are unique to versional and patristic witnesses.

⁵¹ For a discussion see Petersen, *Tatian’s Diatessaron*, 21–22.