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Matthew 16.2b–3: New Considerations for a Difficult Textual Question

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A survey of the current state of research shows that scholars are at an impasse regarding the text of Matt 16.2b–3. A fresh application of reasoned eclecticism to the unit uncovers new evidence supporting the longer reading. A reappraisal of the Greek manuscripts, early versions and early Christian literature shows that the longer and shorter readings are of approximately equal antiquity as far as can be established from presently available evidence. Analysis of the Eusebian apparatus strongly suggests that the shorter reading was often the result of intentional scribal change. Of the various explanations for such change, the most persuasive view is that proposed by Scrivener, Tregelles and Weiss – the shorter reading was probably an assimilation to Matt 12.39.

Keywords: Matt 16.2b–3, textual criticism, reasoned eclecticism, Eusebian apparatus, scribal assimilation

1. Introduction

The variant unit in Matt 16.2b–3 is the lengthiest in Matthew in the apparatus of the current major critical editions of the Greek New Testament. In the NA[28] Matt 16.1–4 reads:

> Καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ Σαδδουκαῖοι πειράζοντες ἐπηρώτησαν αὐτὸν σημεῖον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐπιδεῖξαι αὐτοῖς. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· [ὀψίας γενομένης λέγετε· εὐδία, πυρράζει γὰρ ὁ οὐρανός· καὶ πρωΐ· σήμερον χειμών, πυρράζει γὰρ στυγνάζων ὁ οὐρανός. τὸ μὲν πρόσωπον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ γινώσκετε διακρίνειν, τὰ δὲ σημεῖα τῶν καιρῶν οὐ δύνασθε;] γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς σημεῖον ἐπιζητεῖ, καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ. καὶ καταλιπὼν αὐτοὺς ἀπῆλθεν.

The major variants for this unit are the 'shorter reading', which omits Matt 16.2b–3, and the 'longer reading', which includes 16.2b–3. Although most scholars agree in their assessment of the more sizeable variants in Mark 16.9–20 and John 7.53–8.11,

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no consensus on this variant unit in Matthew has emerged in either the critical editions of the Greek New Testament or in recent major critical commentaries.

The most thorough previous treatment of the textual question was the essay by the late Toshio Hirunuma.[1] However, no other extensive research on the question has been published in the nearly four decades since Hirunuma's helpful research. This essay goes beyond Hirunuma's work by exploring the current state of research, assembling significantly more manuscript data, carefully considering the evidence of the Eusebian apparatus in various early manuscripts, and thoroughly scrutinising various proposals for the causes of variation.

2. Current State of Research

F. B. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort as well as Kurt and Barbara Aland expressed certainty that the longer reading was an early scribal interpolation.[2] Constantin von Tischendorf, NA^{28} and UBS^{5} enclose the longer reading in square brackets in the main text.[3] The brackets in the NA^{28} indicate that the variant is the 'preference of the editors' even though 'textual critics today are not completely convinced of the authenticity of the enclosed words'.[4] These brackets 'always reflect a great degree of difficulty in determining the text'.[5] The UBS^{5} placed a C rating on the bracketed text.

Although Bruce M. Metzger was probably correct when he noted in 1994 that 'most scholars regard the passage [Matt 16.2b–3] as a later insertion',[6] examinations by both editors of the Greek New Testament and commentators over the last three decades have often led to different conclusions. The SBLGNT and the Tyndale House Greek New Testament print the longer reading as the main text. Of the twenty-six major commentaries treated in Table 1, ten argue that Matt 16.2b–3 was probably original, ten see the variant as a scribal interpolation, and six were unable to make a decision based on the evidence currently available.[7]

1 T. Hirunuma, 'Matthew 16:2b–3', *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis. Essays in Honor of Bruce Metzger* (ed. G. D. Fee and E. J. Epp; Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 35–45.

2 B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper, 1881) lxxxix; *idem*, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1882; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988) Appendix 1.13; K. Aland and B. Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (trans. E. F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989^{2}) 307.

3 C. von Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1869; repr. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013^{8}), 1:92–93.

4 NA^{28}, 55*.

5 NA^{28}, 55*.

6 B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994^{2}) 33.

7 W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (AB 26; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971) 192; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen

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Table 1. Critical Commentaries in English and German Published since 1968

Longer Reading		**Shorter Reading**		**Undecided**	
R. Schnackenburg	1987	W. Grundmann	1972	W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann	1971
W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison	1991	J. Gnilka	1988	D. J. Harrington	1991
C. Blomberg	1992	U. Luz	1989	L. Morris	1992
R. Gundry	1994	D. Hare	1993	D. A. Hagner	1995
C. S. Keener	1999	U. Luck	1993	D. Turner	2008
J. Nolland	2005	H. Frankemölle	1997	C. L. Quarles	2017
D. A. Carson	2010	W. Wiefel	1998		
G. Osborne	2010	F. D. Bruner	2004		
C. A. Evans	2012	R. T. France	2007		
G. Maier	2017	M. Konradt	2015		

Testament 1; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972) 381; J. Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (2 vols.; Herders Theologischer Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament; Freiburg: Herder, 1988) II.39–40; U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (4 vols.; Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament; Zürich: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger, 1990) II.443–4; W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. II: *Matthew 8–18* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 1991) 580–1; D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Sacra Pagina 1; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1991) 243; C. L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC 22; Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992) 247–8; L. Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 413–14; U. Luck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Zurcher Bibelkommentare; NT 1; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1993) 184; R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994[2]) 323–4; D. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28* (WBC 33B; Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995) 453–4; H. Frankemölle, *Matthäus: Kommentar* (2 vols.; Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1997) II.212; W. Wiefel, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament; Leipzig, Germany: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998) 290; C. S. Keener, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 422; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (trans. R. R. Barr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 154; F. D. Bruner, *The Churchbook: Matthew 13–28* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rev. and enl. edn 2004) 111–12; J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 648–9; R. T. France, *Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 604–5; D. A. Carson, 'Matthew', *Matthew–Mark* (EBC 9; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, rev. edn 2010) 411; G. R. Osborne, *Matthew* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 1; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) 612–13; C. A.

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Each of these commentators attempted to establish the original text through an approach that falls within the broad category of reasoned eclecticism.

This brief survey of the current state of research shows that whatever consensus may have existed in the late twentieth century has unravelled over the last few decades. The present article will offer a fresh appraisal of this perplexing variant unit.

3. External Evidence

Tables 2 and 3 show evidence from continuous text Greek manuscripts for the longer and shorter readings of Matt 16.2, assigning these manuscripts to the five major categories of texts utilised by Kurt and Barbara Aland and categorised by century.[8] Unfortunately, all of the early papyri currently published that contain portions of Matthew (𝔓^{1} 𝔓^{19} 𝔓^{21} 𝔓^{25} 𝔓^{35} 𝔓^{37} 𝔓^{44} 𝔓^{45} 𝔓^{53} 𝔓^{62} 𝔓$^{64–67}$ 𝔓^{70} 𝔓^{71} 𝔓^{73} 𝔓^{77} 𝔓^{83} 𝔓^{86} 𝔓^{96} 𝔓^{101} 𝔓^{102} 𝔓^{103} 𝔓^{104} 𝔓^{105} 𝔓^{110}) are lacunose at this point.

3.1 *Sigla*

Important features of several of the manuscripts betray an awareness of the different readings. Although Codex E has the longer version of the text, this text is marked with asterisks which show that a scribe or reader doubted this longer reading was original.[9] Minuscules 566 and 1424 also contain the longer reading but mark it with asterisks.

3.2 *Misplacement*

Although minuscule 579 is listed in NA^{28} as a witness to the shorter reading, it preserves the longer reading also. However, the scribe replaced the

Evans, *Matthew* (New Cambridge Bible Commentary; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 308; M. Konradt, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus: Übersetzt und erklärt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015) 254; G. Maier, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (2 vols.; Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2015–17) II.47–8; D. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) 397–8; C. L. Quarles, *Matthew* (EGGNT; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017) 181–3.

8 See Aland and Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 106. The use of these categories is intended only to be a convenient means of highlighting similarities in readings in some texts. For recent challenges to the use of text types in classifying manuscripts, see especially E. Epp, 'Textual Clusters: Their Past and Future in New Testament Textual Criticism', *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; NTTSD 42; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014^{2}) 519–77.

9 The asterisks are in vermillion and the material in vermillion in this manuscript appears to be from a different hand than the text. Scrivener correctly recognised (contra Burgon) these as the work of a later scribe. See F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (2 vols.; ed. E. Miller; 1894; repr. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997^{4}) I.132–3.

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Table 2. Manuscripts Supporting the Shorter Reading

	Category I	**Category II**	**Category III**	**Category IV**	**Category V**	**Unclassified**
4th	ℵ B					
8th					047	
9th					V Y 2*	174
10th					X Γ 1347	
11th			124 788			
12th			157 f^{13}		2358	
13th		13	579			

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Table 3. Manuscripts Supporting the Longer Reading

	Category I	**Category II**	**Category III**	**Category IV**	**Category V**	**Unclassified**
5th		C	W	D		
6th					N Σ	
8th		L			E	
9th		Θ 33 892	Δ 565 566 1424		F G H K M U Π Ω	1500
10th			1582 2193 f^{1}		S	1110 1346 1421
11th			700		2c 35 150 1340 1343	517 1333
12th			1 346 1071 1241		3	22 535 936 1230 1329 1338 2546
13th		1342	118			233 1342 2372
14th			209		18 1328	1602 1675 2786
15–16th						372 735 2737

ἐλάβετε at the end of Matt 16.10 with ἐλάβεται (in agreement with W and 2) and inserted the longer reading (16.2b–3) between 16.10 and 11 (a singular reading).

3.3 *Commentary*

Although Codex X omits 16.2b–3, the accompanying commentary treats the omitted material, showing that both the longer and shorter readings were known to the scribe. A careful comparison of the commentary with Chrysostom's homilies on Matthew confirms F. H. A. Scrivener's claim that the commentary was derived from Chrysostom.[10] The commentary in X agrees almost verbatim with 102 out of 118 words of Chrysostom's homily in the order in which they appear in Chrysostom.

3.4 *Eusebian Apparatus*

Matt 16.2b–3 was clearly present in the Greek text utilised by Eusebius in the early fourth century in the development of his section and canon numbers. Eusebius assigned to these verses the section number 162 (ρξβ) and the canon number 5 (ε), indicating that the verses had a parallel in section 161 of Luke (12.54–6).

An examination of the Eusebian apparatus in dozens of manuscripts shows that manuscripts that have the shorter reading typically exhibit confusion in the canon and section numbers. Although the apparatus is remarkably consistent in manuscripts with the longer reading, scribes whose manuscripts have the shorter reading do not know quite what to do with the Eusebian section numbers. Some manuscripts bump the section number earlier and others later. Some completely skip the section number that originally accompanied the longer reading. Some assign two different section numbers to a single verse and even a single line. Careful examination shows that several of these manuscripts have erasures and reassignments in the Eusebian apparatus. Furthermore, the manuscripts with the shorter reading often assign incorrect canon numbers to their reordered sections. Scribes were clearly changing the Eusebian system and they lacked the skill that Eusebius himself displayed in developing the original form of the apparatus.

Codex Sinaiticus contains these Eusebian section and canon numbers but omits 16.2b–3. Consequently, each subsequent section number is mistakenly reduced by one. Although 16.4 should be section number 163, 16.4 is treated together with 16.2a as part of section 162. Although 16.6 and 16.7 should be 164 and 165 respectively, they are marked as 163 and 164 respectively.

One may wonder if the scribe who inserted the section and canon numbers was familiar with an earlier system of Eusebian sections that was based on a text that lacked 16.2b–3. Two pieces of evidence make this view highly

10 Scrivener, *Plain Introduction*, I.152.

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improbable. First, the canon numbers assigned in ℵ are correct for 16.6 (2) and 16.7 (4). However, the canon number assigned to 16.2 (5) is incorrect. Since Sinaiticus lacks 16.2b–3, the canon number should be 6 as in E and Y, indicating that 16.4, which constitutes the bulk of this section, is paralleled by Mark 8.12.[11] The use of canon number 5 seems to be influenced by an apparatus based on the inclusion of 16.2b–3.

Second, Dirk Jongkind has noted that the scribe made a correction at his section 163 (Matt 16.6) by changing an initial canon number 6 (ϛ) to 2 (β). The scribe erased the upper right portion of the stigma (though traces of the stigma are still clearly visible upon close inspection of the codex) and incorporated the remaining portion into the beta. This modification suggests that the scribe was using an exemplar in which section 163 marked 16.4. The canon number 6 indicated that the section was paralleled by section 78 of Mark (Mark 8.12). But since the scribe now moved the section number 163 to Matt 16.6 (which is paralleled by Mark 8.15 and Luke 12.1), he or she necessarily corrected the canon number to 2 to identify the different parallel texts. Based on this evidence, Jongkind concluded, 'The confusion suggests that the Eusebian apparatus of Sinaiticus is taken from a manuscript that included verses 2b–3.'[12]

Other manuscripts that contain the shorter reading are similarly characterised by confusion in the Eusebian apparatus, as Table 4 illustrates. The inconsistency in the Eusebian apparatus in the early section of Matt 16 in the manuscripts that contain the shorter reading does not appear to be characteristic of the apparatus as a whole in these manuscripts. The manuscripts with the shorter reading that have anomalies in the Eusebian apparatus in the first few verses of Matt 16 show remarkable consistency elsewhere. For example, almost all (V Y 124 157 174 788 1045) agree in assigning the number 183 to Matt 18.15 and all of the manuscripts that include the canon number (V 124 174 788) agree in assigning the text to canon 5 (ε). Only Γ departs from this group by assigning 184 to 18.15. Similar results emerge from an examination of Matt 12.38. Almost all (Y Γ 124 174 788) agree in assigning 127 to the section[13] and the manuscripts

11 Note that the assignment of the section to canon 6 in E is confused since the scribe lists a Lukan, rather than Markan, parallel. The identified parallel is based on the inclusion of the longer reading but the assignment to canon 6 assumes the shorter reading.

12 D. Jongkind, *Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus* (Text and Studies Third Series 5; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007) 118–19. Jongkind added that though Sinaiticus rarely deviates from the standard Eusebian canon and section numbers in Mark, the manuscript's omission of Mark 9.44 and 46 apparently creates confusion with the section numbers there. Similar irregularities occur in the numbering system at Mark 15.28. See also P. Head, 'Some Observations on Various Features of Scribe D in the New Testament of Codex Sinaiticus', *Codex Sinaiticus: New Perspectives on the Ancient Biblical Manuscript* (ed. S. McKendrick, D. Parker, A. Myshrall and C. O'Hogan; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015) 127–37, at 128.

13 Minuscule 1045 is defective and begins at Matt 14.2.

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Table 4. Anomalies in the Eusebian Apparatus with the Shorter Reading

Manuscript	Placement of §162	Canon	Anomalies
א	16.2a, 4	5	Incorrect canon number and correction at §163 in which erasure exhibits original system
V	16.1	5	Incorrect canon number (should be 4 due to parallels in Mark §77 and John §§23 and 53)
Y	16.2a	5	Incorrect canon number;* two section numbers for single line requiring use of obelisk to demarcate sections
Γ	16.2a	5	Incorrect canon number; two section numbers for single sentence; assigns §163 to two different sections
124	16.2a	5	Incorrect canon number; two section numbers for single sentence
174	16.2a	5	Incorrect canon number; treated 16.5 as a separate section from 16.6 though both verses have the same parallels (Mark §79 and Luke §144); erased canon number for Luke §144
788	16.2a	5	Two section numbers for single sentence
1045	16.1		Skips §163 entirely
157	16.1		Skips §163 entirely
899	16.2a	5	Incorrect canon number; originally assigned §163/6 to 16.5, then erased and reassigned §163 to 16.4 omitting the canon number

* If one limits §162 to Matt 16.2a, the section has exact parallels in Mark 6.37; 10.3; Luke 8.21; 10.27; 15.29; and many other close parallels (Mark 11.14; 14.48; Luke 4.8, 12; 5.22, 31; 6.3; 7.22, 40; 10.41; 13.42; 14.3; 19.40; 20.3).

that assign canon numbers (V Y Γ 124 174 788) agree without exception in assigning the section to canon 5. Codex V departs from this group by assigning 126 to this section and apparently skipping section 127 entirely, and 157 differs by assigning 128 to the section.

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With the exception of D, manuscripts with the longer reading are remarkably consistent in assigning the section number 162 to Matthew 16.2. These include G L M S U Θ Π Ω^{vid} 1 3 22^{vid} 118 150 209 233 566 1110 1230 1338 1340^{vid} 1341 1342 1343 1421 1424 1500 1514 1602 1675 2193 2372 2546. Majuscule H and minuscules 1333 2786 assign the section number 163.[14] The vast majority of these manuscripts assign the canon number 5 to the section. These include G L M S U Π 3 118 150 233 566 1110^{vid} 1230 1343 1346 1421 1424 1500 1514 2193. Codex E assigned the canon number 6 (ϛ), but this is a careless error since the scribe correctly identified Luke 12.54–6 as the parallel in a note in the bottom margin.

The modifications to the Eusebian apparatus in the manuscripts that contain the shorter reading lead to several important conclusions. First, the agreement of the two earliest extant majuscules on the shorter reading is mitigated by the realisation than an exemplar of ℵ must have contained the longer reading. Thus, as far as one can tell from the evidence of the Greek manuscripts, the two readings are of approximately equal antiquity. Second, the very inconsistent modifications to the Eusebian apparatus in the manuscripts that contain the shorter reading suggest that copyists were utilising exemplars that contained the longer reading, choosing to omit the longer reading, and then independently revising the Eusebian apparatus to accommodate this loss. If early manuscripts that contained the apparatus preserved the shorter reading, one would expect greater consistency among these manuscripts in the modifications of the apparatus. Consequently, the shorter reading is a result of the scribe's conscious decision to omit the longer reading.

3.5 *Versions*

The longer reading is supported by old Latin texts (a, aur, b, c, d, e, f, ff^1, ff^2, g^1, l, q), the Vulgate, Syriac texts (both Peshitta and Harklensis),[15] some Bohairic Coptic texts, and the Ethiopic, Georgian and Slavonic versions. The shorter reading is supported by old Syriac (c and s), and Sahidic, Middle Egyptian[16] and some Boharic Coptic texts.

Alexander Souter claimed that Tatian's Diatessaron supported the longer reading.[17] However, this is far from certain. The Arabic harmony leaps from

14 Although H assigned the section number ρκγ (123), the kappa is clearly a product of scribal error, since the section numbers that precede and follow are ρξβ (162) and ρξδ (164) respectively. The error was probably influenced by the kappa in ekthesis in close proximity to the section number.

15 G. A. Kiraz, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshitta and Harklean Versions*, vol. I: *Matthew* (New Testament Tools and Studies 21.1; New York: Brill, 1996) 235–6.

16 See H.-M. Schenke, *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection*, vol. I: *Coptic Papyri* (Oslo: Hermes, 2001) 94.

17 A. Souter, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947^2). The UBS^3 also listed the Diatessaron as a witness to the longer reading, but the reference to the Diatessaron was dropped in the UBS^4 and UBS^5. This revision is probably a product of the editors' caution

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Matt 16.1a to 16.4b but inserts 16.2b–4a between Luke 12.55 and Matt 12.22.[18] Ephrem's Commentary on the Diatessaron does not treat 16.2b–3, nor is the passage mentioned in his Hymns.[19] However, this does not necessarily mean that Ephrem's copy of the Diatessaron did not contain the longer reading since he does not comment on any portion of Matt 16.1–12 in his commentary.[20] The one possible allusion to Matt 16.1–4 is in Ephrem's first hymn on Jonah that refers to Matt 12.38–41 or 16.4, 'The servant [Jonah] bore the symbols of his Lord in his conception and his birth and in his raising to life.'[21] The one potentially helpful Western witness to the Diatessaron, Codex Fuldensis, begins chapter 90 with Matt 16.4. It lacks Matt 16.1–3 and Luke 12.54–5. The presently available evidence conflicts and is insufficient to determine the reading of the Diatessaron. The editors of the UBS text were wise to drop appeal to the Diatessaron as a witness to the longer reading.[22]

3.6 *References in Early Christian Literature*

Since none of the early papyri contain this portion of Matthew, potential witnesses to the state of the text in the second and third centuries may be especially important. Unfortunately, the Apostolic Fathers make no reference to Matthew 16.1–4.[23] However, scholars have identified three other potential sources of information that may be helpful for reconstructing the early history of transmission.

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regarding use of the Diatessaron as a witness to the text of the New Testament especially in citations from parallel pericopes in the Synoptic Gospels. See UBS^5, 44–5*.

18 A. Ciasca, *Tatiani Evangeliorum Harmoniae Arabice* (Rome: n.p., 1888) 26, 41; A.-S. Marmardji, *Diatessaron de Tatien* (Beirut: Catholic Press,1935) 136–9, 220–1.

19 K. E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns, Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1989); S. Brock, trans. *Saint Ephrem: Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladmir's Seminary, 1990) 235; J. T. Wickes, trans., *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Faith* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 2015) 423.

20 See C. McCarthy, *Saint Ephrem's Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron: An English Translation of Chester Beatty Syriac MS 709 with Introduction and Notes* (JSSSup 2; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 360.

21 McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 440.

22 On the difficulties in reconstructing the readings of the Diatessaron and using them in New Testament textual criticism, see U. Schmid, 'The Diatessaron of Tatian', *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, 115–42; and T. Baarda, 'Tatian's Diatessaron and the Greek Text of the Gospels', *The Early Text of the New Testament* (ed. C. Hill and M. Kruger; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 336–49, at 348–9.

23 Oxford Society of Historical Theology, *The New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1905) 139. See also A. F. Gregory and C. M. Tuckett, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 349.

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Subscriptions in thirty-eight Gospel manuscripts from the ninth to the thirteenth century refer to a work called τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν (Jewish Gospel).[24] Five gospel manuscripts preserve thirteen different readings from the Judaikon in notes in the margin of Matthew. Minuscule 1424 (ninth or tenth century) contains the largest number of references to the Judaikon, ten of the known references. This manuscript marks Matt 16.2b–3 with asterisks and adds the marginal note: τὰ σεσημειομένα διὰ τοῦ ἀστερίσκου ἐν ἑτέροις οὐκ ἐμφέρεται οὐτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊκῷ ('The things marked by use of the asterisk are not contained in other manuscripts nor in the Jewish Gospel'). The Judaikon was apparently based on the Greek Matthew and is a potentially early witness to the text. Unfortunately, the presently available evidence is not sufficient to establish a firm date of composition for the Judaikon. Furthermore, absence of the content of Matt 16.2b–3 from the Judaikon does not necessarily attest to the absence of these verses from the copy of Matthew known to the author of the Judaikon since the Judaikon was clearly a revision of Greek Matthew and may have abridged Matthew at many points.

In the mid-second century, Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 107.1) refers to Matthew 16.1–4. Justin's quotation leaps from a paraphrase of 16.1–2a to 16.4 and could be regarded as evidence against the inclusion of vv. 2–3. However, this is uncertain.[25] Justin paraphrases Matthew 16.1–2a in a manner that gives no indication that he intended to include a strict quotation of the passage until 16.4. Until 16.4, only two words, σημεῖον and αὐτοῖς, are taken directly from Matt 16. More importantly, the context demonstrates that Justin's purpose was to demonstrate that Jesus' resurrection was predicted in the Scriptures and a quotation of 16.2b–3 would not have contributed to this defence of the resurrection.

Tischendorf's apparatus identified Theophilus of Antioch as a witness to the longer reading.[26] Theophilus' only extant work is *Ad Autolycum*, which he wrote in the late second century. However, no efforts to locate a reference to

24 For a brief but helpful survey of the current debate over the origin and nature of this gospel, see A. Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites* (Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 269–74.

25 Although von Soden listed Justin as a potential witness to the shorter reading, he indicated his uncertainty by marking the reference with a question mark. See H. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, vol. II: *Text mit Apparat* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913) 57.

26 The UBS^3 also listed Theophilus as a witness to the longer reading. Oddly, the UBS^3 listed Euthalius as a witness to the longer reading, even though the *Euthaliana* do not contain the Gospels. The editors probably misread the abbreviation Euth in Tischendorf as a reference to Euthalius when Tischendorf probably intended to refer to Euthymius Zigabenus whose commentary on Matthew is based on the longer reading. Although Euthymius mentions that the *pericope adulterae* was absent or marked with the obelisk in manuscripts available to him, he makes no such comment on Matthew 16.2b–3. Compare PG 129.460–61 with PG 129.1280 (παρὰ τοῖς ἀκριβέσιν ἀντιγράφοις ἢ οὐχ εὕρηται ἢ ὠβέλισται).

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Matt 16.1–4 by translators of Theophilus' work have been successful.[27] Thus Tischendorf appears to have been in error.[28]

In the mid-third century (*ca.* 246–8), Origen's commentary on Matt 16.1–5 (12.1–4) shows no knowledge of the longer reading. Origen's silence is generally regarded as the earliest witness to the shorter reading.[29] Such a conclusion is questionable, however, since Origen omits words, clauses and whole verses in the Scripture citations in the Matthew commentary.[30] Furthermore, a detailed study of the nature of Origen's text of Matthew has confirmed Hort's theory that Codex 1 most closely resembled Origen's text and discovered that 1582 was also remarkably similar.[31] Yet both of these manuscripts contain the longer reading. This raises the possibility, perhaps even the probability, that Origen's text contained the longer reading but he simply did not deem the details of the reading worthy of further comment.

In the fourth century, several writers allude to or comment on Matt 16.2b–3, including the Spanish poet Juvencus (*Evangelicae historiae* 3.224–30), Hilary of Poitiers (*Commentary on Matthew)*, Basil of Caesarea (*Hexaemeron* 6.4), and John Chrysostom (*Hom. Matt.* 53.3). None of these writers mention manuscripts that lack 16.2b–3. However, in the early fifth century, Jerome's *Comm. Matt.* 3.16 (16.2f.) claims that the verses were absent in most manuscripts available to him

27 R. Grant, *Theophilus of Antioch: Ad Autolycum* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Clarendon, 1970) 149. Hirunuma also noted the absence of a reference to Matt 16.3 in Grant's index. See his 'Matthew 16:2b–3', 37.

28 Theophilus did quote Matt 6.3 in *Ad Autolycum* 3.14. Perhaps Tischendorf confused a reference to 6.3 with a reference to 16.3.

29 See Hirunuma, 'Matthew 16:2b–3', 36; UBS[5]; and R. Heine, *The Commentary of Origen on the Gospel of St Matthew* (Oxford Early Christian Texts; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018) 91 n. 19.

30 K. W. Kim, 'The Matthean Text of Origen in his Commentary on Matthew', *JBL* 68 (1949) 125–39, at 133. Although Kim did not list examples of Origen's omission of whole verses, Origen's commentary on the next pericope (16.5–12) offers such an example. Origen neither quotes the text of 16.9–10 nor alludes to the content of these verses in his commentary, though there are no grounds for suggesting that they were absent from his text of Matthew. Origen's silence here and elsewhere (cf. Matt 15.23, and plausibly 16.2b–3) is merely due to the fact that his commentary did not intend to be exhaustive in its treatment of Matthew. A cursory examination of the commentary on the preceding and following chapters locates several other similar examples. Origen passes over Matt 15.23 in his commentary on the exorcism of the Canaanite woman's daughter (11.17). Nevertheless, his text clearly contained the verse since he later quotes it out of context in his discussion of the feeding of the four thousand (11.19). Origen also passes almost completely over Matt 17.6–7. Only the statement 'the Logos touched them' indicates the presence of these verses in Origen's text. These examples are sufficient to confirm the old adage that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

31 Kim, 'The Matthean Text of Origen in his Commentary on Matthew', 125–39.

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(*hoc in plerisque codicibus non habetur*).[32] Augustine's *Quaestiones in evangelium Matthaei* focuses question 20 on the meaning of 16.2b–3 thereby confirming that his text contained the longer reading, even though his commentary on the harmony of the Gospels skipped from Matt 15.39 to 16.4.[33]

The evidence from early Christian literature is of limited value for establishing the earliest recoverable text. On one hand, the statement by Jerome seems to be corroborated by the fourth-century majuscules ℵ and B. Yet the literature mitigates this evidence to some extent by demonstrating that manuscripts with the longer reading had a wide geographical distribution by the fourth century.

4. Internal Evidence

4.1 *Intrinsic Probability*

4.1.1 Presence of Mattheanisms

Robert Gundry argued persuasively that Matt 16.2b–3 contains Mattheanisms that suggest that the longer reading was original. First, the discussion of the meteorological signs in Matthew was characterised by extensive parallelism such as the parallel between evening and morning, fair weather and stormy weather and discerning the face of the sky but not the signs of the times. Such parallelism 'typifies Matthew's style'. Second, the differences between Matt 16.2b–3 and Luke 12.54–6 exhibit diction characteristic of Matthew. The genitive absolute ὀψίας γενομένης not only occurs three times in double tradition material, but is also found twice as an insertion by Matthew and once in his unique material. Other features such as the absence of the recitative ὁτι and εὐθέως and the use of favourite terms such as οὐρανός and σήμερον exhibit Matthean preferences. Although Matt 16.3 and Luke 12.56 have the same basic sense, the version in Matthew reflects his favourite vocabulary. Luke's δοκιμάζειν is matched by Matthew's διακρίνειν. Matthew inserts words from the κρι- word group eleven times in the paralleled material in his Gospel. Finally, the version in Matthew mentions evening before morning, which seems to reflect the Jewish view of the day in which the day begins in the evening.[34] A later scribe would probably not have been capable of imitating Matthew's style so well.

32 PL 26.117a. See also A. Donaldson, 'Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings among Greek and Latin Church Fathers' (2 vols.; PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2009) II.372–3.

33 For a recent English translation, see R. Teske, 'Questions on the Gospels', *The Works of Saint Augustine*, vol. I.15–16: *New Testament I and II* (ed. B. Ramsey; Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2014) 348–415, at 367–8. Compare *Cons.* 2.51.106. This example demonstrates that failure to comment on specific verses does not necessarily indicate that the verses were absent from the biblical text used by the commentator. See again the discussion on Origen.

34 Gundry, *Matthew*, 323–4. More recently, Yuanhui Ye pointed to several other features overlooked by Gundry that support the text's authenticity. See Y. Ye, '"By What Authority?": The

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4.1.2 Unusual Stylistic Features

Theodor Zahn, A. H. McNeile and Erich Klostermann pointed to one stylistic feature that seemed inconsistent with the authenticity of the longer reading.[35] Matt 16.3 is the only text in Matthew or the New Testament that uses γινώσκω with the complementary infinitive to mean 'to know how to …' However, in Matt 7.11 the verb οἶδα with the infinitive was used in this same sense, and Matthew uses γινώσκω in instances in which parallel texts use οἶδα (compare Matt 7.23 and Luke 6.27; Matt 22.18 and Mark 12.15). Since Matthew seems to treat the two verbs as synonyms and use them interchangeably, the construction in 16.3 is not inconsistent with Matthean composition.

4.1.3 Presence of Rare Vocabulary

Some scholars have suggested that the presence of rare and potentially late vocabulary in the longer reading supports the view that the longer reading is a scribal interpolation. Hirunuma claimed that, outside Matt 16.2, πυρράζω appears only in Byzantine writers.[36] Matthew would have been expected to use the related term πυρρίζω that appears in the Septuagint and Philo.[37]

Several lines of evidence suggest that Matthew may have coined the term. First, the external evidence (C D W) confirms that the term appeared in texts of Matthew prior to the fifth century, and the evidence from Eusebius pushes the *terminus ad quem* for the origin of the term to the late third century. Second, Hellenistic Greek writers often converted adjectives ending in -ος into intransitive verbs by adding the -αζω suffix.[38] Third, Matthew possibly coined the term παρομοιάζω in 23.27 since this passage contains the first documented usage of it.[39] If Matthew used the -αζω suffix to create this verb from παρόμοιος (an adjective used by Herodotus and Thucydides), he could just as easily have created the verb πυρράζω.

Literary Function and Impact of Conflict Stories in the Gospel of Matthew' (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2014) 133–5.

35 E. Klostermann, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 4; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1909) 137; T. Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche, 1922[4]) 530; A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980) 235.

36 On this basis, Harry Fleddermann argued that Matt 16.2b–3 must be a 'late interpolation' (H. Fleddermann, *Q: A Reconstruction and Commentary* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 652.

37 See Lev 13.19, 42, 43, 49; 14.37 and Philo, *Det.* 1.16.

38 BDF §108, 4. A search of lexical entries in BDAG located 118 verbs ending with the -αζω suffix and 209 with the -ιζω suffix used in the NT and early Christian literature. Andrew Sihler (*New Comparative Grammar of Greek and Latin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 516) referred to these two suffixes as 'enormously productive suffixes' that 'form denominatives from stems of all kinds to the number of several thousands'. For the various nuances of the suffixes, see J. A. C. Greppin, 'Greek Verbs in -άζω and -ίζω', *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 50 (1997) 107–9.

39 Matthew's usage is the earliest in the TLG database.

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Some scholars have objected to the longer reading on the grounds that in the Septuagint and New Testament the verb στυγνάζω is used of human emotion rather than a description of overcast skies.[40] This argument fails to consider that the related noun στυγνότης is used as early as the second century BCE by Polybius to describe the gloomy appearance of the sky (ψυχρότητα καὶ στυγνότητα, 'cold and gloomy atmospheric conditions').[41] The related adjective στυγνός was used to describe a gloomy night in the Septuagint (Wis 17.5). The meaning of the related noun and adjective in works written prior to the composition of Matthew's Gospel demonstrates the plausibility of a first-century author using the verb στυγνάζω to refer to cloudy skies.

4.1.4 Relationship to Context

Several scholars have supported the shorter reading because the longer ending is believed to fit awkwardly with the surrounding context or have internal tensions. R. T. France argued that the shift from the second person plural in 16.2b–3 to the third person singular in 16.4 suggested that the longer reading was an interpolation.[42] However, such shifts in person and number occur elsewhere in Matthew and in contexts without any significant textual variation. Matt 12.36–7 shifts from the second person plural to the third person plural and then again to the second person singular. More importantly, in Matt 23.35–6 Jesus described the scribes and Pharisees using the second person plural and then describes them as 'this generation' (τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην) in a manner comparable to the shift from the longer reading to Matt 16.4.

On the surface, the shift from the request for a 'sign from heaven' (Matt 16.1) to a discussion of the 'signs of the times' (Matt 16.3) might seem to be an abrupt change in topic raising suspicions that the latter phrase is part of an insertion. However, in Matt 24.3 the disciples pose a question about τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος which Jesus appears to identify later as τὸ σημεῖον τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν οὐρανῷ (Matt 24.30). Since Jesus elsewhere identifies an eschatological sign as a sign 'in heaven', the association of a request for a sign 'from heaven' with 'signs of the times' seems fully consistent with Matthean style.

Some scholars have argued that the use of the verb πυρράζω as both a sign of fair weather and a storm creates an internal tension in the longer reading and have proposed emending the text to remove this tension.[43] One could argue that the tension is an indication that the longer reading is an interpolation. Although the tension might be only imagined since the longer reading refers to the colour of the sky at different times of the day, this explanation is not fully

40 Ezek 27.35; 28.19; 32.10; Mark 10.22.

41 Polybius, *Hist.* 4.21 (trans. W. R. Paton).

42 France, *Matthew*, 604–5.

43 A. Pallis, *Notes on St. Mark and St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1932) 88–9; P.-L. Couchoud, 'Notes de critique verbale sur St Marc et St Matthieu', *JTS* 34 (1933) 113–38, at 136.

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satisfactory, since R. Pappa described the sun (and thus the sky) as ordinarily red at both sunrise and sunset.[44] However, the fact that the second use of πυρράζω is accompanied by the participle στυγνάζων ('be gloomy, overcast') distinguishes it sharply from the earlier usage. Some scholars have objected that the sky cannot be red and overcast at the same time. However, Aratus also stated that a rising sun draped by both black and red was a sign of impending rain and high winds.[45] Any apparent tension is also eased if the participle denotes the early stage of a process, 'The sky is red and is becoming overcast.'

4.2 *Transcriptional Probability*

4.2.1 Unintentional Change

Few scholars have suggested that the variant was caused by an unintentional scribal change. John Nolland posited that the omission of the longer reading may have resulted from haplography due to parablepsis. The eyes of the scribe leapt from the γεν in γενομένης 16.2b to the γεν in γενεά: [ὀψίας **γεν**ομένης λέγετε· εὐδία, ...] **γεν**εὰ πονηρὰ.

This explanation is complicated by the placement of the ὀψίας before γενομένης. Since the omission includes ὀψίας, the scribe would probably have initially written ὀψίας, then jumped accidentally to γενέα, then recognised that ὀψίας now made no sense and decided to erase it without consulting his exemplar. It seems much more probable that a scribe who committed haplography in this instance (or his corrector) would have consulted his exemplar rather than casually erasing the dangling ὀψίας.

4.2.2 Intentional Change

It is more likely that a scribe intentionally interpolated the longer reading from another source or intentionally deleted the longer reading.

4.2.2.1 Assimilation to Luke 12.54–6

Scholars have suggested that early scribes inserted the reference to meteorological signs to assimilate Matthew to Luke 12.54–6. Although the two passages agree verbatim in five words (λέγετε, τὸ πρόσωπον ... τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), the two passages have far more differences than similarities. Jesus' words in Matthew are addressed to the scribes and Pharisees, but in Luke they are addressed to the crowds. In Matthew the meteorological signs are related to the colour of the sky at different times of day, but in Luke they are related to cloud formation and wind direction.[46] To argue that the early scribe who assimilated

44 b. B. Bat. 83b.

45 Aratus, *Phaen.* 835–9.

46 For an argument against the derivation of Matt 16.2b–3 from Luke 12.54–6, see C. P. März, 'Lk 12,54b–56 par Mat 16,2b–3 und die Akoluthie der Redequelle', *SNTU* A 11 (1986) 83–96. März argues for the longer reading in Matthew.

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Matthew to Luke also adapted the Lucan passage to better conform to meteorological conditions known by his readers would be unpersuasive, since no trace of similar adaptations in Luke's Gospel are preserved in extant witnesses.

Since the longer reading is not likely the result of an assimilation to Luke and since it contains important traces of Matthew's style which an early scribe would not like have been capable of mimicking so well, intentional omission is more likely. Scholars have suggested two possible motivations for an intentional omission.

4.2.2.2 Inapplicable Meteorological Signs

Davies and Allison, Blomberg, Gundry, Keener, Nolland, Osborne and Carson have followed earlier scholars such as Scrivener in arguing that scribes omitted 16.2b–3 because the meteorological signs did not apply to their climate. Some scribes may have thought the omission necessary to prevent readers from wrongly dismissing Jesus' perfect knowledge and infallibility that extends even to his description of weather indicators.

The signs in Matt 16.2b–3 belong to the system of ancient weather prediction known as Theophrastan meteorology. A brief survey of similar statements from classical antiquity (see Table 5) is necessary if one is to judge how the longer reading might have been viewed in the broader Mediterranean world.[47]

Although the weather signs in the longer reading were widely accepted,[48] the survey in Table 5 shows that they were not *universally* accepted or obvious. The weather signs in Matt 16.2b–3 agree with those discussed by Aratus and by Pliny. However, the reference to a red evening sky as a sign of fair weather clearly contradicts the signs discussed by Theophrastus (though Theophrastus admitted that the sign was not entirely reliable) and possibly also the sign described by Ptolemy. Ancient scribes familiar with Theophrastus' influential treatise or Ptolemy's work or those who had independently made similar observations might have chosen to omit the reference to the meteorological signs due to real or perceived conflicts with these sources or observations. Both Theophrastus and Ptolemy pointed out that the specific location of an observer played a crucial role in the interpretation of weather signs and that principles of weather prediction could not be applied universally.[49]

Although this explanation is initially persuasive, further investigation raises serious doubt. The meteorological indicators in Matt 16.2b–3 are more widely applicable than those in Luke 12.54–6, since those in Luke assume a location

47 D. Lehoux, *Astronomy, Weather, and Calendars in the Ancient World: Parapegmata and Related Texts in Classical and Near Eastern Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 5.

48 Luz, *Matthäus*, II.347.

49 L. Taub, *Ancient Meteorology* (Sciences of Antiquity; London: Routledge, 2003) 28, 32; Theophrastus, *De signis* 1.3; Pliny, *Nat.* 18.57.210–17.

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directly to the east of the Mediterranean Sea.[50] However, no manuscripts omitted the Lucan passage or significantly revised it in a manner that would universalise the meteorological signs.

Plausible explanations for the textual stability of Luke 12.54–6 in contrast to the omission in Matt 16.2b–3 can be offered. For example, the wider distribution of the very popular Gospel of Matthew at an earlier period may have resulted in modifications to the Matthean text that Luke's text did not experience. Yet the apparent acceptance of Luke's reference to meteorological signs even though they were specific to Palestine poses serious difficulties for the commonly held view that the longer reading in Matthew was deleted out of meteorological concerns in regions remote from Palestine.

4.2.2.3 Assimilation to Matt 12.39 or Mark 8.11–13

Davies and Allison, Blomberg, Gundry and Osborne have argued that some scribes omitted 16.2b–3 in order to assimilate 16.1–4 to Mark 8.11–13.[51] Scrivener, Tregelles and Weiss argued that the longer reading was omitted in order to conform 16.1–4 to Matt 12.38–39.[52] Table 6 shows the similarities between these parallels.

Of these two options, Scrivener's hypothesis is more probable. Matt 16.2a, 4 shares 21 words in common with Matt 12.39 in a shared order without any deviation and differs only by the absence of τοῦ προφήτου. It shares only six words in

50 See 1 Kgs 18.44–5; Job 37.17. The appearance of a cloud in the west signals rain in a region with a western seaboard and a wind from the south signals hot temperatures if deserts are located to the south of a region. Both weather signs are appropriate to Palestine. See J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke x–xxiv* (AB 28A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985) 999–1000; J. R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015) 387–8. See especially the discussion in b. Yom. 21b in which favourable wind directions in Israel are the opposite of those in Babylonia. Francis Bovon argues that Luke's meteorological signs fit the conditions in Egypt and Greece rather than Palestine and that Luke adapted Jesus' examples to the climate that he knew best since his home country was north of the Aegean Sea. See F. Bovon, *Luke 9:51–19:27* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013) 256. However, Elaine Philips has recently demonstrated that the descriptions in both Luke and Matthew fit Palestine well (E. Phillips, 'Jesus' Interpretation of Weather Patterns', *Lexham Geographic Commentary on the Gospels* (ed. B. J. Beitzel; Bellingham, WA; Lexham, 2016) 278–85.

51 See n. 7. For a helpful discussion of scribal assimilation, see W. Wisselink, 'Assimilation as a Criterion for the Establishment of the Text: A Comparative Study on the Basis of Passages from Matthew, Mark, and Luke' (D.Th. diss., Theologische Universiteit te Kampen; Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989). For data on assimilation tendencies among major witnesses, see G. Lanier, 'A Case for the Assimilation of Matthew 21:44 to the Lukan "Crushing Stone" (20:18), with Special Reference to $\mathfrak{P}^{104*}$', *TC* 21 (2016) 12–16.

52 Scrivener, *Plain Introduction*, II.326; S. Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text of the Greek New Testament* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1854) 205; B. Weiss, *Textkritik der Vier Evangelien* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1899) 184.

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common with Mark 8.11–13 (71 per cent less than Matt 12.39) and thirteen with Luke 11.29 (38 per cent less than Matt 12.39). Thus the omission of the longer reading brought Matt 16.1–4 into nearly perfect agreement with the passage already familiar to the scribe from his copying of the earlier portions of the Gospel.

5. Conclusion

The difficulty of evaluating the variants in Matt 16.2–3 was summarised well by Joachim Gnilka, who referred to the unit as 'ein fast nicht lösbares Problem'.[53] However, this investigation has led to several discoveries that support the longer reading. Since Origen is not the clear witness to the shorter reading he has been generally assumed to be, the earliest witness to this reading is Vaticanus. Yet Sinaiticus used an exemplar that contained the longer ending and this exemplar was likely either contemporary with or even earlier than Vaticanus. As far as one can tell from the manuscript evidence, the two readings are of equal antiquity.

Table 5. Ancient Statements of Weather Prediction

Author	Century	Place	Weather Signs
Theophrastus[54]	4th cent. BCE	Greece	red sky at dawn or at sunset signals rain within the next three days
Aratus[55]	3rd cent. BCE	Greece	red sky in the evening is a sign of fair weather but a darkening sun at dawn is a sign of a coming storm
Pliny[56]	1st cent. CE	Italy	red clouds at sunrise signal high winds, but when black clouds mingle with the red, rain is approaching; red clouds at sunset guarantee fair weather the following day
Ptolemy[57]	2nd cent. CE	Egypt	red sun at dawn or dusk indicates high winds; gloomy sky at dawn or dusk presages storm and rain

53 Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, II.39.
54 Theophrastus, *De signis* 10.
55 Aratus, *Phaen.* 858–71, 880–92.
56 Pliny, *Nat.* 18.78.
57 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 2.13.

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Table 6. Matthew 16.2a, 4 and Synoptic Parallels

Matt 16.2a, 4	**Matt 12.39**	**Mark 8.11–13**	**Luke 11.29**
ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς·	**ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς·**	καὶ ἀναστενάξας τῷ πνεύματι αὐτοῦ λέγει·	τῶν δὲ ὄχλων ἐπαθροιζομένων ἤρξατο λέγειν·
γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς σημεῖον ἐπιζητεῖ, καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ. καὶ καταλιπὼν αὐτοὺς ἀπῆλθεν.	**γενεὰ πονηρὰ καὶ μοιχαλὶς σημεῖον ἐπιζητεῖ, καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ** τοῦ προφήτου.	τί ἡ **γενεὰ** αὕτη ζητεῖ **σημεῖον**; ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, εἰ **δοθήσεται** τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ **σημεῖον**. καὶ ἀφεὶς **αὐτοὺς** πάλιν ἐμβὰς **ἀπῆλθεν** εἰς τὸ πέραν.	ἡ **γενεὰ** αὕτη γενεὰ **πονηρά** ἐστιν· **σημεῖον** ζητεῖ, **καὶ σημεῖον οὐ δοθήσεται αὐτῇ εἰ μὴ τὸ σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ**.

The longer reading is not likely to be an insertion by an early Christian scribe since it contains features of Matthean composition which few scribes would have been able to imitate. Furthermore, the adjustments made to the Eusebian apparatus in manuscripts with the shorter reading suggest that the scribes who produced these manuscripts had exemplars with the longer reading and yet chose to remove or omit it. They then independently revised the Eusebian apparatus in inconsistent ways in order to accommodate this change. The intentional removal of the longer reading probably had one of two motivations: (1) these scribes had access to another exemplar that contained the shorter reading or (2) they chose to remove the longer reading due to other concerns. The most plausible motivation for removal is assimilation to Matt 12.39.

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