

Matt. 5:44

The Shorter And Longer Reading, And The Evidence For And Against

There's been a lot brought up on this thread already, and there's a lot I might say. Thanks Rocky for bringing in some mss support. An appeal to the evidence itself is always helpful. Forgive me if I say some things that seem rudimentary to those who've studied the issues, but I'm not always sure who knows what, and I don't want to just assume. I would encourage everyone here to read fully the discussion below. Even if you choose to never agree with textual criticism, I want you to understand it well, and I have tried to write in a way that doesn't just spit out the data, but explains how textual criticism works, and why. I will give an introductory summary, then the more detailed examination of the evidence, then a concluding summary.

Introductory Summary

I will show below that the shorter form of Matt. 5:44 was present in the Greek text as early as the 4th century, though it does have only minor support, and the longer reading is certainly the majority reading, especially from the later data. I will show that from the very first time that scholars began to collate different manuscripts, to publish a Greek NT, there has been some question about which of these readings is original. While the Complutensian Polyglot was the first printed Greek NT, it didn't get published for a few years after its printing. Thus, Erasmus in 1516, noted right from the beginning that he was not sure which of the readings was original. The first printed NT to be published wasn't sure which of these readings was original. Beza noted the same concerns, and was not sure which reading was original. Textual critics since their time have almost uniformly noted that there is some doubt about which one was the original reading. We will examine in detail the data for both the longer and the shorter reading, and then note that while I think it is very possible that the KJV has the original reading, there is certainly some room for doubt, which I would want to be noted for me. I think that, in the words of some great men in a different context, that "they that are wise had rather have their judgments at liberty in differences of readings, than to be captivated to one, when it may be the other."

The Kinds Of Sources We Have

The first, and most important, of our data for the NT is the Greek manuscripts. The first scribes who made copies of the NT did so with majuscule handwriting on papyri manuscripts. This was the type of material used almost exclusively until around the 4th century. It continued to be used by some until about the 8th. Today we have 128 of those ancient papyri. The next type of manuscripts we have are the uncials. These are made on parchment, and the scribes who produced them wrote with a majuscule script. These manuscripts were the text of the NT from

around the 4th century till around the 10th. We have today 323 of the uncials. Chronologically, the next category of manuscript is the Miniscules. Scribes began to use this running “cursive” hand, around the 9th century, and continued to use it all the way up till the 18th century. We have around 2900 + of these manuscripts.

The next category of manuscripts is what are called “lectionaries.” They are classified separately, not because they have a different hand, but because they are a different kind of thing altogether. They are not “continuous text” manuscripts, like where one might read from John 1:1 all the way through John 21:25. They are rather collections of individual Scripture passages, in different orders, to be used as part of the liturgy for a worship service. Thus, they will often have a passage from one gospel, then a passage from another gospel, etc., with marks to notate what should be read on what day. For example, one might look at l 34, on leaf 220 (a beautiful image). It contains on the same page a reading from Matt. 6:31-34; Matt. 7:9; and Matt. 19:30, all strung together into one long reading. The Lectionaries are collections of Scripture readings, rather than continuous-text manuscripts. These all come from the 10th century or later. I consider them the least important of the Greek witnesses, but they are part of the Greek manuscript tradition, and so I believe they still deserve to be heard. We have around 2400+ of these lectionaries. Altogether, we have today 5,839 Greek NT manuscripts. Because the NT was originally written in Greek, these are our primary sources when we ask what the original wording of the NT was.

In addition, we have over 10,000 manuscripts of Latin translations of the NT (mostly of Jerome’s Vulgate, but also others). These are known as Latin support. We also have thousands of what are known as “The Ancient Versions” or ancient translations of the NT into other languages. These are known as versional support. In addition, we have over 1 million places where early church fathers quote (or sometimes, paraphrase) the NT. These are known as Patristic support. Textual critics today usually work primarily with the Greek manuscripts (since the NT was originally written in Greek), while also consulting the other sources for support.

One caveat needs to be added. When we speak of having almost 5,800 + witnesses, we do not mean that we have almost 5,800+ complete copies of the NT. The vast majority of NT manuscripts were not “complete New Testaments” even when they were first copied. The books of the NT originally circulated as collections within a particular “corpus.” Thus, all of Paul’s letters would be bound in a collection. (I think Peter even refers to one of these Pauline corpus collections, but that is for a later post). Each of the gospels would be bound in a separate collection. It was not until around the fourth century (as the canon was more stably recognized) that the “New Testament” was more widely recognized as a unified whole, and so bound together. Even after this period, most manuscripts still don’t contain the whole NT. (I might write a post later explaining the classification of manuscripts by content, in each book). There are in fact only a little over 60 “complete New Testaments” in our manuscript record. Thus, when we come to a particular passage, and examine readings, we need to understand the data we are working with. When an author says that “5000 plus manuscripts agree with the KJV here, and only 2 disagree” or anything of that ilk, they demonstrate either their deep ignorance of the materials, or a disturbing dishonesty with that evidence. While I don’t know the exact numbers (and it would vary greatly depending on what book you are in, and on what passage in that book), there are I suspect on average only a few hundred manuscripts at most that contain a certain passage. This shouldn’t bother us, as each fragment of the NT, no matter how small, in some ways bears witness to a more

full form of the text that existed when it was copied, and thus gives us increased confidence in the NT as a whole. (An astounding confidence in comparison to even the most well sourced ancient author from the Roman period, but that is for another post). But it should help us to set such discussions in the context of the data that we do have, rather than imaginatively reconstructing data that we don't.

TO THE TEXT

There are actually at least 10 different textual variants found in Matt. 5:44. That is, there are 10 different points (not counting the phrases we will look at here) in the verse where some of the manuscripts read differently than others. Most of them aren't significant, and clearly represent simple errors made by the scribes who copied them, so I won't work through them all here to show how, in different combinations, there are actually quite a few different forms in which the Greek text of Mt. 5:44 appears in the Greek manuscripts. However, 2 of these variants would warrant more detailed attention, and we will treat them together.

The TR reads,

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν,
ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν,

(1) εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμᾶς,
(2) καλῶς ποιεῖτε τοὺς μισοῦντας ὑμᾶς,

καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν

(3) ἐπηραζόντων ὑμᾶς,

καὶ διωκόντων ὑμᾶς·

Or, for those following only in the English of the KJV,

But I say unto you,
Love your enemies,

(1) bless them that curse you,
(2) do good to them that hate you,

and pray for them which

(3) despitefully use you,

and persecute you; (Mat 5:44 KJV)

Both (1-2) and (3) are not present in the NIV, but are in the KJV, which is what was pointed out in the start of this thread. Burgon and Ruckman are right to note that the majority of manuscripts have the longer reading. Although, it is worth noting, that I can only find two mss which have it in the exact form found in the TR (one of which is ms 2, which is one of the major mss on which Erasmus relied.) The TR has τοὺς μισοῦντας in (1) where every mss except two that I can find that has the longer reading has it in the form τοὺς μισοῦσιν. But that is a minor difference, and not one that would affect translation much, if at all. (The way the KJV has rendered it, for example, could be justified from either I think). When we look at the NT manuscripts which we have available to us today, we have basically two kinds of evidence that we consider. First is external evidence. This consists of the physical material itself; How many manuscripts are there, what is their date, character, provenance, type, etc. When we talk about internal evidence, we are talking about what a biblical author or a later scribe was more likely to have written. We will consider first external, then internal evidence. I will probably explain in a later post more of what these categories mean.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

The shorter reading Greek Data

The shorter reading is found in only a handful of manuscripts. Lets consider them;

PAPRYI – of the 1300 + pages of papyri manuscripts that we have, unfortunately none of them contain this section of Matthew.

UNCIALS – The Uncials are our next type of manuscripts, chronologically speaking. When Ruckman states that “all the Greek Uncials Except \aleph and B agree with the AV 1611” he seems to let it sound like “2” is a very small number. When speaking of mss as early as the Uncials, 2 is not a small number at all. We have in total 323 of them, few of which could be called complete New Testaments. In fact, there are only 14 of the Uncials which contain this section of Matthew at all. Strange that he didn’t want to explain that. When someone selectively mentions only data that supports their case, I begin to get suspicious that they might not be doing honest scholarship. Either way, the shorter reading is attested in the 4th century by the Uncials \aleph (01), and B (03).

MINISCULES - In the 10th century it is found in the Greek minuscule 1582. It is also found in the group of Greek miniscules dating from the 10th-12th centuries, sometimes grouped together and known as “Family 1,” (mss 1, 118, 131, 209).

LECTIONARIES – I know of no lectionaries which have this passage which have the shorter reading.

Latin, Versional, and Patristic Support

From the Latin data, the shorter reading is found in the 4th century in a and k. In the 5th century the shorter reading is found in the latin mss b, and in the 8th century it's found in the Latin mss g. And in the 12th century in the Latin manuscript c.

From the versional data, the shorter reading is found in the 4th – 5th century in the Old Latin it^k; in the 4th century in Syriac mss sy^s, and sy^c; in the 4th century in Coptic manuscripts, sa, bo^{pt}, and mae;

From the patristic data, the shorter reading is found in Theophilus, Ireneus (but only in the Latin translation of his work), Origen, and Cyprian.

The Longer Reading

Greek Data

The longer reading is definitely the majority reading. It is found in;

PAPYRI – none of the papyri read in in Matt. 5:44

UNCIALS – Uncials which have the longer reading stretch from the 4th to the 9th century. They are, codices 32 (4th Century), 05 (5th century), 42 (6th Century), 07 (8th century), 017 (9th century), 019 (8th Century), 21 (9th Century), 28 (10th Century), 38 (9th Century), 41 (9th Century), 45 (9th Century), 047 (8th century).

MINISCULES, (3 of which come from the 9th century, all the rest of which come from between the 10th and the 15th century); the longer reading is found in; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, 22, 26, 31, 33, 35, 38, 48, 56, 59, 61, 66, 67, 75, 83, 84, 89, 106, 109, 117, 118, 124, 130, 134, 135, 140, 141, 146, 149, 152, 153, 154, 157, 160, 161, 163, 164, 173, 174, 178, 179, 183, 184, 185, 187, 191, 199, 205, 209, 233, 238, 265, 273, 279, 295, 310, 335, 345, 346, 348, 349, 365, 72, 377, 395, 423, 444, 495, 496, 515, 517, 532, 543, 545, 552, 555, 560, 561, 565, 579, 652, 664, 676, 677, 700, 706, 713, 723, 738, 751, 752, 776, 788, 792, 824, 826, 828, 830, 833, 834, 851, 872, 892, 895, 930, 951, 954, 962, 968, 983, 989, 992, 996, 999, 1009, 1012, 1014, 1021, 1047, 1057, 1071, 1082, 1084, 1091, 1093, 1113, 1118, 1186, 1187, 1188, 1192, 1194, 1195, 1204, 1216, 1228, 1241, 1273, 1279, 1289, 1293, 1310, 1313, 1319, 1342, 1386, 1403, 1414, 1421, 1424, 1446, 1451, 1455, 1463, 1465, 1500, 1502, 1503, 1528, 1555, 1579, 1582, 1602, 1604, 1630, 1645, 1647, 1661, 1675, 1692, 1695, 1780, 1816, 1823, 2174, 2193, 2224, 2315, 2398, 2400, 2407, 2446, 2533, 2858, 2613, 2623, 2666, 2774, 2786, 2788, and 2886.

LECTIONARIES - The Longer reading is found in l 34, l 425, and l 2460 so far. It will probably turn up in others as well, since the lectionaries have not yet been fully collated, and I do not even have access to all of them.

I won't go through all the Latin, patristic and versional evidence for the longer reading here. It's hard to read through, exceptionally easy to make mistakes in (I'll explain if someone wants to know the difficulties of patristic collation), and I prefer to work with the Greek data. With almost every textual critic who has ever lived, I believe priority should go to texts which are in the language of the original autograph being sought. I'll simply trust Rocky's data there. If someone wants to correct his data, then we can look in detail at it.

If my math is right, (and I can't even balance a checkbook ☺, so feel free to double check me), counting all the Greek manuscripts which contain this section of Matthew, the shorter reading is found in only 7 out of 228 Greek manuscripts. That is something like 3%. If we considered just the early uncial mss, the reading is found in 2 of the 14 Uncials which read at this passage. Thus, of those mss that we have from prior to the 9th century, the shorter reading is found in about 17%. The shorter reading is definitely a minority reading.

However, when we do textual criticism, manuscripts must be weighed, not just counted. The earlier they are, the more weight they must have. This is common sense. If you and I decided to write a history of Gorge Washington, and we compiled it, then gave it to several friends each, who all copied it, and gave it to friends who copied it, we could end up with thousands of copies in a matter of a few years. But what if our history was flawed at one tiny point? We would have perpetuated that error, and the fact that we have thousands of copies of it would make it no less an error. Now, imagine that 2 or 3 documents come to light from the days when George's children were still alive. They obviously are much closer historically than we are to the original events. Say we have almost exactly the same history, but they flatly contradict the tiny error of our thousands of copies. Which would be more likely to be accurate? We may have thousands of copies, but those 2 or 3 documents have hundreds of years on us in terms of historical value. This doesn't demand that they are right of course. But it does show that they should be given more weight than just their number. All other things being equal, the closer to the event / original a source is, the more valuable it is in reconstructing that event / original. Imagine that we hadn't made thousands of copies, and only we and one friend each had made a copy. We'd have four copies of our version of the history, and only 1 early witness that contradicted it. But no one would think our four more reliable at that point, simply because there were more of them. Even 1 early witness would make our little band of four look rather foolish. My point is, I believe mss should always be weighed, not just counted. Nonetheless, there is even among the early data a majority which strongly favors the longer reading, and inclines me, looking only at the external data, to think it original. If all I considered was the external data, I would say it is very likely that Matthew originally wrote the longer reading.

There is another factor of the external data to consider though. In the manuscripts that have the longer reading, an interesting phenomenon occurs. They don't all record it in the same form. In fact the precise form of the TR, which has τὸς μισοῦντας, is only found in 2 manuscripts of all those listed. All of the others that have the phrase have it in the form τοις μισουσι. (The change is a minor one, from the accusative to the dative case. The change slightly changes how the participle functions, but wouldn't affect translation, at least not into English, unless one had rendered each slavishly literally.) And that is but one of the differences. Some manuscripts have the first phrase, "bless them who curse you" but don't have the second "do good to them who hate you." Some have both of those phrases, but don't have the (3) phrase noted above, "despitefully use you." Some have different cases, and number. All in all, of the many manuscripts that have the longer reading, I count it in over 23 different forms, spread out among themselves.

So, summarizing the external evidence, the shorter reading is definitely a minority reading. That would usually make me strongly prefer the longer reading. But it has to be noted that the shorter reading does have early support as well. If all we considered was the external evidence, I'd

still vote on the longer reading being original. However, the fact the shorter reading does have some early support, however minor, still gives me at least a little bit of doubt, even looking only at the external data.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Internal Evidence is of two kinds; intrinsic probability (what the biblical author is likely to have written) and transcriptional probability (what the scribes were likely to have copied). The guiding principle in evaluating all textual evidence is, "Choose the reading that best explains the rise of the others." When it comes right down to it, we should be able to explain every variant, and why it arose. We should be able to spot where a scribe made a mistake. We should be able to spot where a scribe may have made an intentional change. When we can make sense of each of the variants that we have in the manuscript record, and can see which one makes sense as explaining the rise of the others, if it were the original one, then we have dealt well with the internal evidence. So what does the internal evidence say?

Intrinsic Probability

Intrinsic probability has little to say here I think. There doesn't seem to be much that is distinctly Matthean or unmatthean in the phrases. It doesn't seem to uniquely fit, or in any way contradict, his theology. It might perhaps be noted here that the phrase τῶν ἐπιρραζόντων ὑμᾶς doesn't occur elsewhere in Matt., so could be said to be uncharacteristic of his vocabulary, but that may not be all that significant.

Transcriptional Probability

Transcriptional probability is a slightly different issue. The issue here is, what are the scribes likely to have written? The question we are asking here is, which reading best explains the rise of all the others? We have a shorter, and a longer reading. Let's think through which could have caused the other. If a scribe had before him the longer text, what could have happened to produce a copy with the shorter one? What would motivate the scribe to omit the phrases that are missing? Are they too theologically difficult? They don't seem to be. Did he think they were an error in Scripture? It doesn't seem like there is any reason he would have thought that. Were the lines above or below the ones he omitted similar, where he could have seen one and thought he had already written it, and so skipped it? Not in this text. Or maybe they were similar in sound, where maybe he could have heard one, and thought he heard the other, if he was reading aloud, or working in a scriptorium, writing as someone else read. But we don't see that in this text. All of those things happen sometimes, and they all can be a cause to explain why a scribe might make a mistake. But none of them occur here.

The truth is, if a scribe had before him the longer reading in his exemplar (the manuscript he is copying from), there is almost no way to explain why he would have omitted it. It just doesn't make sense. Think through how it would work if we only had one mss that had the shorter reading. Maybe we could say the scribe made some kind of random mistake like, or different from the ones noted above. Somehow or another, he skipped over these phrases (1,2) while copying, Then managed to record the phrase, "and pray for them which," then somehow managed to skip over the next phrase (3). This would be an odd combination of mistakes for one scribe to make.

But we don't have only one manuscript that has it. Think through what that means. What about that other manuscript? B and κ are demonstrably not copied from each other (Burgon himself did good work showing how different they are at times from each other – clearly neither one is a copy of the other). So, if both have the shorter reading, exactly the same way, are we really going to say that a scribe made a series of random mistake at this passage, for which there can be no real explanation, and then, amazingly, a different scribe made exactly the same random series of mistakes, at exactly the same passage, in exactly the same way? That is beyond improbable. That would be true even if these manuscripts were much later (and thus less heavily weighted). But as it is, they are our 2 *earliest* Greek manuscripts for the passage.

But now also consider, that in an entirely different place than Egypt, way further west, where Latin is the language spoken, there are two scribes, perhaps near one another, perhaps not. They are both copying manuscripts, around the same time as our first few scribes are, only they are copying Latin Manuscripts (and both a and k, btw, are demonstrably not copies of B and κ). They come along to Matt. 5:44, and they make exactly the same series of mistakes, and leave out exactly the same phrases?? This doesn't make sense at all. Now travel along to another spot to find a Syriac speaking scribe make exactly the same series of mistakes, in the same order, around the same time. And elsewhere, a Boharic scribe makes the same random series of mistakes in copying a manuscript in his language. Elsewhere, a Coptic scribe makes the same series of mistakes. And these are, again, our *earliest* witnesses in each of these languages, giving them greater weight. The scribal error required here is so nonsensical, without any clear motivation or evident reason behind the omission, that it would be hard to explain in even just one or two later witnesses. Coming from our earliest Greek witnesses, and our earliest Coptic and Syriac and Boharic witnesses, we combine improbabilities until it might be called implausibility. If we are looking to choose the reading that best explains the rise of the others, it doesn't make sense that the longer reading could explain the rise of the shorter reading. Certainly not in multiple places, in multiple languages, and to be repeated by a scribe a millennium later as well (although, because there is more time between B & κ, and 1582, a similar reading that much later could have simply been a propagation of the readings found in the earlier uncials.)

So lets switch it around, and see things fairly the other way. Lets say the shorter reading were original. Is there something that would explain the rise of the longer reading? It turns out, there is, and it makes very good sense. The parallel of this passage in Luke 6:27-28 reads,

“But I say unto you which hear,

Love your enemies,

(2) do good to them which hate you,

(1) Bless them that curse you, and pray for them

(3) which despitefully use you.”

The TR reads,

Ἀλλ' ὑμῖν λέγω τοῖς ἀκούουσιν,

Ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν,

(2) καλῶς ποιεῖτε τοῖς μισοῦσιν ὑμᾶς,
(1) εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμῖν, καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ

(3) τῶν ἐπηραζόντων ὑμᾶς.

After the same introductory, “but I say unto you” comes the same three phrases that we’ve been discussing in Matt. 5:44, in a slightly different order. And now it becomes clear what might have happened. A scribe is copying the text of Matt. 5:44. His manuscript (like the original) had only the shorter reading. But after he writes, “love your enemies,” he already knows where this one’s going. This is a common text. He knows this text. The next words are, let’s see, he can quote them, “do good to them that hate you.” Then he looks down, and he is shocked. Those words aren’t there. Instead, his manuscript reads, “and pray for them.” But he is sure he knows what is missing. Clearly the scribe who had copied his exemplar made a mistake while he was copying. Happens all the time, right? No problem. He knows how the text is supposed to go. He has learned these words of Jesus, and tried to live by them. He remembers how they go. So, he fixes the mistake he has found in his exemplar. Only he doesn’t even realize that he’s made one of his own. It works in a similar way if he actually consults a written text, only, since his exemplar doesn’t have these words in the Matthew text, he turns to the parallel in Luke 6:27-28, and provides them from there.

This kind of expansion from a longer parallel in a gospel is a mistake that was commonly made, and could easily happen over and over again, in different locations, at different times. If you don’t think so, just try preaching from Mark 8, and when you get to Peter’s great confession, try to say, “Thou art the Christ.” I don’t know about you, but I usually end up accidentally saying, “Thou art the Christ, *the son of the living God.*” (And yes, I have done that before while preaching.) Now why would I do that? Because that is the form of the statement I know. That’s the popular version. But that version is from Matthew 16:16, not Mark 8:29. In Mark 8:29, that phrase is not there. Now, imagine being a scribe, coming across the shorter reading in Mark, you might easily import the words of a longer reading from the parallel text in Matthew 16:16, without even realizing it. Or you might come to the shorter ending in Mark, and think, “That must be a mistake. I remember how this text goes.” And so you correct what you think is a mistake in your exemplar. But you don’t realize that you’ve actually made one of your own.

Scribes did this kind of “harmonization” often. In fact, some of the *very same scribes* whose manuscripts we have noted above as having the longer reading of Matt. 5:44 have made *exactly this mistake* in Mark 8:29 in their manuscripts, demonstrating that they were very capable of this error. Consider but a few examples. We noted miniscules 13, 124, 174, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983 above as having the longer reading in Matt. 5:44. Every one of those manuscripts has also added the phrase “The son of the living God” to the text in Mark 8:29 (which is not there in the KJV btw, and which no one would claim is original in Mark.) My point is, these scribes have already demonstrated that they often do this kind of “harmonizing” between the gospel accounts, where they see a shorter reading, and expand it with the longer version found in the parallel.

Or, take another example. Most of us who would quote the Lord prayer, would quote it as found in Matt. 6:9-13. That is the popular form. When we came to verse 13 we would say, “and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (The longer part of this phrase is a whole other issue worthy of a post on its own, and I am no expert on it. Perhaps we will write on it in a

later post.) In fact, we might say it this way, even if we were preaching from the gospel of Luke. But the parallel in Luke 11:2-4, (even in the KJV), ends with “and lead us not into temptation,” and doesn’t have the longer ending “but deliver us from evil.” A scribe coming to this text in Luke, finding the shorter ending in his exemplar, might end up adding the longer reading “but deliver us from evil” from the parallel in Matthew. They might do so thinking they were correcting a mistake, when they were in fact making one. In fact, scribes sometimes made exactly that mistake. Remember codex 38? One of the only 12 Uncial manuscripts which we listed above as having the longer reading in Matt. 5:44? The scribe of codex 38 has made this exact mistake at Luke 11:4. He has added “but deliver us from evil,” to his manuscript at Luke 11:4. He has thus already demonstrated, like so many others, his tendency to harmonize shorter readings in a gospel with a longer reading found in a parallel. These examples could be multiplied hundreds of times over, to demonstrate that scribes very commonly made this kind of mistake of harmonization. It is the kind of mistake that could be made repeatedly, by different scribes, in different locations, at different times, in different languages. We have in fact demonstrated that some of the very same scribes who give us the longer reading in Matt 5:44 have been proven prone to making exactly this kind of mistake.

Now, ask yourself, what might you expect to find if the shorter reading *was* the original one, and the longer one was a scribal harmonization from Luke 6:27-28? Well, since many of them might do this from memory, it is likely that they might not remember the exact form of the words from the Parallel in Luke. So when they added the longer reading to Matthew, they might make a mistake in word order. They might remember it as being a dative plural, when it was actually an accusative singular. They might remember 2 of the clauses, but not remember all three. They would make such mistakes, and their mistakes would not all be the same. So we would expect to find the phrases of the longer reading in a variety of different forms. Guess what – remember what we noted above? The longer reading of Matt. 5:44 doesn’t show up in just one form. As we noted above, we find it in over 20 different forms, spread across the manuscripts. Some of which are demonstrable mistakes. This makes perfect sense if the longer reading is only here because the scribe is importing it (oftentimes from memory) from the parallel in Luke, and of course some of those scribes, like all of us, have less than perfect memories. Ironically, when we look at some of the earliest printed Greek New testaments, we will see that Beza, as early as 1588, suggested that this is exactly what happened here, noting that he thought it was likely that the longer ending had “crept in from Luke.”

COMBINING EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL EVIDENCE

We have looked at both the external, and the internal evidence to try to figure out which reading was originally written by Matthew. I have tried to make separately an objective case for each above. Sometimes, textual decisions are easy, the mistake is obvious, and since both the external and the internal data point in the same direction, and we can reach a rather confident decision. But the real rub of textual criticism comes when the external evidence and the internal evidence point in opposite directions, as they might be said to do here.

- Some textual critics give priority to external evidence. (known as a “majority text” or a “byzantine priority” position.) John Burgon was one. Zane Hodges was another. So is Arthur Farstad. Today, the textual critic who most champions the position that external evidence

should be given priority is Maurice Robinson. These textual critics have printed the longer reading in their texts, but noted the shorter one in the footnotes.

- Some extreme positions give greatest weight to internal evidence, (known as “rigorous eclecticism”) and care little or not at all what the external evidence says. Examples would be G. D. Kilpatrick or J. K. Elliot. They seem not to care how many manuscripts say what, when, or where.
- The vast majority of evangelical textual critics today try to balance both external and internal evidence (an approach known as “reasoned eclecticism”). However, when they seem to point different directions, and push comes to shove, as it does in this text, they must choose one or the other.

The Greek texts on which the KJV relied, when push came to shove, felt that the *external* evidence was stronger (although most of the evidence we have today wasn’t known in their time, and I suspect that some of them, especially Erasmus, would have put the shorter reading in their texts if they had access to the manuscripts which we have today. His typical handling of the Greek evidence makes me think that he would have printed the shorter ending in the text if he had known it had Greek support). The KJV translators, as Scrivener explained in his preface, were not really trying to wrestle with the evidence in such cases, they were just trusting the decisions made by the men who had produced the printed Greek texts which they had available to them. Their goal wasn’t to create a new Greek text (although they essentially did, the result of their choices, which was later published by Scrivener). Their goal was to take several good translations, and to make one that was better. And, as we will see below, they did know about the variant, long before W and H were even born. The NIV translators, on the other hand, felt that when push comes to shove, the *internal* evidence was stronger. So they put the shorter reading in the text. In the Greek text behind their version (which we will explain at the end), they noted that many manuscripts have the longer ending, and provide both.

The Greek Texts Which The KJV Translators Translated From;

I thought it would be helpful to run through how some of the different textual critics have handled this variant, first of all noting how the men who produced the printed Greek texts which the KJV translators probably used handled it.

Erasmus, 1516, has the longer reading in his actual text, but in his annotations at the back of the volume, he notes the shorter reading, mentioning briefly some patristic support for the shorter reading. (I suspect that if he had known there was Greek support for the shorter reading, he would have put the shorter reading in the text, and the longer one in the notes.) He notes that there are several variants among the mss, here, and states that he doesn’t know if the longer reading was added, but suggests that part of it might have been added by a scribe who remembered the similar words from Paul’s letter to the Romans in 12:14. (Erasmus, *Novum Instrumentum, Annotationes*, 1516, pg. 248. See at http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Erasmus_1516/Erasmus1516_0290b.jpg). Either way, he had his doubts about which was original, so he noted them. The KJV translators very likely had his NT (although that is more debated – it seems evident that they had Beza, but I am not certain they had Erasmus) with its notes, but had they tried to reproduce all of his textual notes, their NT

would have at least doubled in size. That was simply not their intent. They also were not really equipped to evaluate variants, so they almost always go with the actual text of their sources, and simply make choices between them when they differ.

Beza, in his 1588 and 1598 editions, has the longer reading in his actual text, but he notes the shorter reading in his apparatus below the text, and provides some Latin and patristic support for both readings. (Interestingly, if I've read him right, he seems to suggest that Chrysostom had the shorter reading. Your Burgon quote above said that Chrysostom had the longer one. Both are careful scholars. My copy of Chrysostom has the longer one in the text, and the editors have noted that they think he originally had the shorter, but I only have the English translation of Chrys., and all such questions have to be definitively answered from the much more expensive Greek PG set which gives the critical edition of Chrys., noting all the different copies of his works, their dates, and forms.) Beza suggests in his note that the reading in the text could be wrong, noting that the variant was not in the early Latin editions, and "*fortassis ex Luca irrepsit,*" Or "perhaps crept in from Luke." (Beza, 1588, pg 26, 1598, pg. 27. See his 1588 text and note here http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Bezae_NT_1588/Bezae_NT_1588_0013b.jpg and his 1589 text and note here http://www.cspmt.org/pdf/printed_editions/Beza-1598.pdf).

Interestingly, that is precisely the suggestion made above in the section on internal evidence. I suspect that if Beza had known there was Greek support for the shorter reading, instead of just Latin, he would have put the shorter reading in the text, and put the longer reading in the note. Then, our KJV would probably have had the shorter reading. Either way, he had his doubts about the text. The KJV translators leaned heavily on Beza, and they simply translated what he had put in the text, without noting the variants. (If they had reproduced all his detailed textual notes, their NT would have been several times its actual size).

Stephanus, 1550, reads the same in the text as the KJV. He was less of a textual critic than a fine printer, so he basically prints Erasmus text directly, with little change, and little comment. But he does have a marginal note that reads "τοις μισουσι εν πασι." If I've understood his marginal note correctly, he is noting that in all of the Greek mss, they read differently than what he has printed - specifically that in all of the witnesses he knows, they have the dative plural τοις μισουσι, instead of the TR τοὺς μισοῦντας which he places in his text. As well, he seems to list on the Left hand side several siglum for mss which have variant readings in the verse, but I don't know his siglum well enough to know to which mss he is referring. Either way, He had some doubts about the original reading at least, that much is obvious even in his brief note. (Stephanus, 1550, pg. 8. Text and note viewable here http://images.csntm.org/PublishedWorks/Stephanus_1550/Stephanus_1550_0004b.jpg.)

Greek Texts After The KJV;

John Mill, in his Greek text with critical notes, published in 1707, maintained the same text in the verse as the TR, but noted both variants in his apparatus, listing support for the shorter reading, and noting that he thought the shorter reading original. His practice was typically to simply reprint the text of Erasmus, and then simply note in his apparatus the places where he thinks those readings are unoriginal. (Mill, 1707, *Novum Testamentum*, pg. 12)

The First Printing Of The KJV Translators Own Choices;

Scrivener's 1881 TR (originally published as a companion to the Revised Version of 1881 to fully document the places where the RV had differed from the Greek text underlying the KJV) noted both variants in the apparatus, although the purpose of that edition was only to compare the KJV and the RV, so he didn't note manuscripts or give his opinions. It is interesting to note that, since this edition was the very first time that the exact Greek behind the KJV had been printed (existing prior to this time only in the minds of the KJV translators who had made text-critical choices between Beza, Erasmus, and Stephanus when they diverged), from its very first printing the TR noted the variant. (Scrivener, NT in Greek, 1881, pg. 12).

His 1887 Critical edition of the TR notes both textual variants by bolding them in the text, and noting them in his apparatus, though, unfortunately, he doesn't list which manuscripts support each reading, only various editions of the Greek New Testament that have adopted them. (Scrivener, H KAINH DIAΘHKH, Novum Testamentum, pg. 11. One can view this text at http://www.cspmt.org/pdf/printed_editions/Scriveners_1887_Critical_TR.pdf).

Scrivener's 1894 edition contains the longer reading in the text, but notes the shorter reading in the footnotes. (Scrivener, 1894, pg. 12). I suspect that every person on this thread who has learned any Greek (certainly any who learned at HBBC) has been advised at one point to use his 1894 TR. I could be wrong, but I would also guess that they have used the little blue hardcover edition reprinted by TBS (or a similar one). The only thing about such reprints is that the editors chose to print only the actual Greek text of the 1894 edition, but they quite intentionally omitted his preface explaining his dubious reconstruction of the text, and they omitted the many notations of textual variants included with his edition when first published. Anyone using an original copy of his text, instead of the reprint, would have the shorter reading in the footnote of their Greek text. I am grateful for the work you have pushed me to do here. I have said in the past that I didn't know it Scrivener himself had published his 1894 without its preface and notes, or if the TBS edition had simply chosen to omit that preface and the notes. Now that I have examined the primary source, it is clear that his 1894 still included such notes, and it was only the reprint that chose, for reasons I can only imagine, to omit them. To see the Scrivener 1894 edition, one may turn here http://www.cspmt.org/pdf/printed_editions/Scriveners_1894_TR.pdf.)

Later Editions Of The Greek NT

Karl Lachmann, in his Greek NT, published in 1831, and then again in 1842, omitted both phrases from the text, not believing them original. (I find it curious that so many KJVO advocates think that B.F. Westcott was responsible for all non-KJV readings being maliciously "removed" from the KJV. I think Westcott was around 7 years old when Lachmann printed his text of Mat. 5:44 with the shorter reading.) He has the exact reading found in the Greek text of the NIV.

Tischendorf, in his critical edition of the NT, first published in 1865, omitted the phrases from his text, and noted the variants in his apparatus, (including the several other variants I mentioned above that we won't deal with here), and listed extensively the manuscript, versional, and patristic support he had found for each. He was as careful a textual scholar as any who has ever lived. I'm not even smart enough to understand all that is in his apparatus. It seems to me like he has actually listed several other earlier witness to the shorter reading than the ones I have listed above, but since I can't read his work well enough to say, I didn't list them. In a day when liberalism from Germany was viciously attacking the historicity of Christianity, Tischendorf responded with a bold defense of the faith by his efforts in archeology and textual criticism. It has been suggested that in his digs he is responsible for tripling the number of Greek manuscripts that we had at that time, and he powerfully wielded the results of textual criticism against the liberal attacks on the Bible flowing from Europe.

Tregellas, in his 1857 Greek NT, omitted both phrases, and noted the variants.

Wescott and Hort, who were simply following in the train of Lachman, Tischendorf, and Tregellas before them, printed the shorter reading in their text in 1881.

Von Sodon, in his 1913 edition of the NT, printed the shorter reading, and noted the variants, providing extensive support for each.

The Majority text.

Farstad's Majority text has the longer reading, since they typically prefer external evidence, but since it follows the majority of the mss, it has it in the slightly different form than that found in the TR. But, Farstad is faithful to note in his apparatus both variants, and to share the textual data for each. (The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text, pg. 14). Seems fair.

The Byzantine Text

The presentation of the Byzantine text compiled by Maurice Robinson (basically a more carefully done Majority text) has the longer reading, since the Byzantine manuscripts almost uniformly have the longer ending, but in the form slightly distinct from the TR. And of course, he notes both variants in the apparatus. One weakness of the BYZ text of Robinson is that he only lists variants, he doesn't provide you with an explanation of the witnesses that support each. His marginal notes provide variants where the Byzantine mss disagree, while his lower apparatus list places the Byzantine text differs from the NA. (Robinson, *The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform*, pg. 9).

NA 28

The most recent edition of the Nestle-Aland text, (usually considered the standard text, though no one would agree with it at all points, or ever claim that it was perfect), has the shorter reading in the actual text. But because they know they could be wrong, and because they want to be honest in presenting all of the data from all of the manuscripts, they have printed the entire text of the longer reading (in several of its different forms) in the apparatus below the text. They also list representatives of the manuscript support for both the longer and the shorter reading, so that the reader is free to evaluate the evidence, and come to a judgment for themselves about which is most likely to be original. This seems like honest scholarship, and I am grateful for their labors.

UBS4

(Note - I don't have the newer UBS 5 yet, which has been updated to match the text of NA 28) The UBS 4 has the shorter reading in the text, but prints the longer reading in its apparatus. It also lists the major manuscript data which supports both readings, so that the reader has the evidence for themselves, and is free to come to their own judgment (I will explain the differences in the apparatus' of the NA and UBS text if someone is curious. Or maybe in a later post.) Additionally, the volume published as a companion to the text (Metzger's *Textual Commentary*) has a full-length note explaining both the longer and shorter readings, and why they believed the shorter reading was more likely to be original. This seems like honest scholarship to me.

NIV Greek text

As noted below, the NIV Greek text was published as "*A Readers Greek New Testament.*" It has the shorter reading in the text, but underneath the text, it includes the full text of the longer reading. Once again, this seems like honest scholarship to me.

English Translations

I don't have a lot of English translations, but I do have a few, and I thought it might be helpful to see what a few of them say here.

Tyndale had the longer reading, but translated the phrase τῶν ἐπιηραζόντων ὑμᾶς as "them which do you wrong" so that his text read, "But I saye vnto you love youre enimies. Blesse the that course you. Do good to them that hate you. Praye for them which doo you wronge and persecute you." The KJV translates the same word in I Pet. 3:15, as, "revile." The Geneva Bible had translated the same phrase as "them which hurt you." Coverdale had "them which do you wrong." Wycliff had "them that slander you." The word is difficult on any account, and the KJV translators have themselves translated it 2 different ways, so perhaps some liberty should be allowed.

The NKJV has the longer reading, following the TR behind the KJV, but it notes the variant in a footnote so the reader knows there is some doubt. As promised in their introductory preface, there is no judgment rendered about which is "better," they simply provide the variant with no comment.

The MEV, which claims to be a recent translation of the TR (I have not spent much time with it, and know little about the translation) has the longer reading, translating the TR as "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

The NET has the shorter reading in the text, but has a detailed note giving the longer reading, and explaining why they found the shorter reading more likely. The NET Bible is exceptionally helpful in such cases, and probably has more notes that alert the reader to textual variants than any other English version ever printed> I believe the NET has over 60,000 footnotes. And in a debate (KJV vs. Textual Criticism), where some might be tempted to accuse modern

translations of being made only for the purpose of making money, it is instructive that despite the incredible cost of producing the NET, its text and footnotes were released free online, right from the start, and their motto has been that their text would be free for all, for all time. The editor is a friend of mine, and I suspect that you would look long and hard to find a man of more humble stature, Christian spirit, and deep scholarly insight. I've don't know that I have ever met a man who has a greater passion to see people trust deeply in the Bible as the Word of God.

CONCLUSION

I think it is very possible that the KJV got it right. I think Matthew could have written the longer reading. The external evidence is strong. But even with just the external evidence, there is room for some doubt. The early witnesses make one wonder if there isn't some small chance that the KJV got it wrong. But, when we add the clear explanation provided by the internal data, we have definite reason for doubt. In the light of the evidence, I don't think anyone should be 100% certain that the longer reading is original. Erasmus was not sure, so he included both. That way, one was sure to have it right, either in his text, or in his annotations. Beza was not sure, so he included both. That way, the reader was sure to have it right, either in his text, or in the margin. Stephanus was not sure (at least about the minor part of the variant), so he noted his doubts. Scrivener was not sure, so he included both, so the reader was sure to have it right, either in the text, or in the footnote. Every modern Greek text I know does the same. They are sometimes confident in their choice, but the manuscript data does not let them be 100% sure, so they note the variant in the margin. Good, honest scholars today, both those who accept, and those who reject, the longer reading, are simply following in their train.

Please, think through what that means. I think the KJV very possibly got it right. But if we care about the data, instead of just believing the KJV was inspired, then there is a chance, however small, that they got it wrong. Doesn't that doubt nag at you at all? Doesn't it breed a humility in light of the evidence that should make one reluctant to take a position that says, "I am 100% certain that the KJV got it right; I don't care about any data that might disagree; I don't care how many good scholars, pre and post KJV, had their doubts; I am sure the KJV is right, and so I will declare that any translation that is different from the KJV is wrong, not because the data is conclusive, but precisely because it is different from the KJV." Does the actual data warrant that kind of position? You decide.

If one has a position that demands that he use "Only" the KJV, he would read his Bible, and never be aware that there is some doubt, however small, about which reading was original. Doubt that good men have had for at least 100 years before the KJV was translated. Someone using "Only" the KJV, could, in fact, face the possibility of getting it wrong. They have surrendered their right to think through the issue and make a decision for themselves, and have decided instead to blindly trust the KJV translators, even though the men who produced the Greek texts which they used weren't certain. Some English versions don't note the variant, but then, they are not claiming that their text always "got it right." That is a claim made exclusively by the KJV and TRO position. Anyone using almost any version of the TR (except for the little blue reprint of Scrivener, which chose not to include his textual notes) would be certain to have it right, either in the text, or in the footnote. Anyone using a modern Greek text would be certain to have it right, either in the text, or

in the margin. Anyone using the NET Bible would be certain to have it right, either in the text, or in the margin. Anyone using the NKJV would be certain to have it right, either in the text, or in the margin. Basically, only someone holding a KJVO, or a TRO (if what they might mean was the little blue reprint), has any chance of not having the exact words of God here. Anyone holding a textual criticism position is sure to have them, either in the text, or in the margin.

I didn't choose to title this page "KJV vs. Textual Criticism." In fact, I advised against it. But since that's what it's called, think through what it means. The KJV being right here wouldn't invalidate a textual criticism position. In fact, even if you could be 100% certain that the KJV got it right, it wouldn't invalidate a textual criticism position, since that position freely confesses (in fact, as part of its basic platform), that we sometimes get it wrong in the minor details. But if there's even a small chance that the KJV is wrong here, then the KJVO position is in trouble. Since I think the KJV probably got it right here, I won't call this a "lose" for the KJV, even though a KJVO position is the only one that really has a possibility of being wrong here. The textual criticism position is guaranteed to have it right, either in the text, or in the footnotes. We will see this same story play out over and over again as we go along. For this one, since I believe the KJV probably got it right, I won't call it a win for NTTC or a lose for KJV.

I guess we can just call this one a tie. ☺

A BRIEF NOTE ON ACCURACY

It was suggested above that the WH was the text behind the NIV, then it was also stated (perhaps as a correction?) that the Nestle-Aland was its text (which is closer to being true at least). In truth, it would be quite inaccurate to say that the NIV was translated from the Westcott-Hort NT. The original NIV and the 1984 revision used an eclectic text (I do not know what text the 2011 revision used). It did rely largely on the NA 26, but the translators made their own decisions about which readings were original. They disagreed with the reading in the text of the NA 26, believing that the reading in the apparatus (footnotes) was the original one, in around 231 places. This Greek text, the result of the translators textual decisions, was later published as "*A Readers Greek NT*," much like the KJV translators own decisions were later published by Scrivener. I own the 2nd ed. and have used it often. I even have an extra copy if somebody wants it. I don't know the exact number, but I suspect it would differ from WH in hundreds, maybe even a thousand or so places.

I could be wrong, but I don't know a single evangelical translation that has translated directly from WH in over 100 years (I think the heretical NWT consulted it, but even they didn't translate directly from it), and every single modern translator that I know of would be aghast as the idea of translating straight from WH. When they produced their text, there were only 2 of the papyri known (our oldest mss, which they actually didn't use) and only 5 of the uncials (our next oldest mss). Some today would say they leaned too heavily on those 5 uncials. I would probably concur, (thought the kind of malicious and unchristian things often said about them are frankly unwarranted). No one today would translate from their text, because modern translations want to take account of all of the available data. We have literally almost 100 times as much papyri and

uncial data today. My point is simply that we should seek to be accurate in what we say. I believe the God is honored by truth, not hazy misinformation. The NA 28 is not “the WH text.” Neither is the Greek text underlying the NIV. I realize there is sometimes a temptation to paint the world in black and white, and to see everybody as either on “my side,” or “the enemy.” One might then deride every text different than the KJV as “WH” but that is simply not fair to them, not true, and not good scholarship. I realize we are all fallible, but I believe we most honor Jesus when we seek to speak most accurately. I believe that Solomon was right when he often admonished us that we most honor God when we strive to know what we are talking about before we speak.

I believe we can each do better at such things.

Here is an excerpt I typed out from the introductory preface of the Greek text behind the NIV. I thought it so well written, and helpful, and such a good caution to us about accuracy, that I decided to share it;

“The Greek text presented in *‘A Readers Greek New Testament’* is the eclectic text that underpins the New International Version. This text, compiled by Edward Goodrick and John Kohlenberger III, is printed here for the first time. Since this eclectic text does differ from the Standard Text, a few words to clarify such differences are in order.

As any student of the NT will know, our evidence for the original text of the NT is found scattered among a great number of manuscripts, manuscript fragments, and pieces of papyri that have survived from antiquity. Employing these diverse witnesses, textual scholars have been able to reconstruct a text that has the best probability of representing the words of the original NT writers.

There are some points, however, where the manuscript traditions favor different readings. When these divergences were encountered, the editorial committee for compiling the Standard Text decided which variants reading to include in the text. This selection of the ‘correct’ variant did not always have the support of the entire committee, and at best represents a compromise solution. The Critical apparatus included with modern versions of the Greek NT alerts the reader to the possibility of other readings. One of the preliminary tasks of any translator is to review the variants found in a source text. The Committee for Biblical Translation (the body responsible for the translation of the NIV) subjected the Standard Text to a critical review, and, somewhat unsurprisingly, their independent scholarship led them to favor different readings in the case of selected variants. The NIV was based on the variant readings selected by the Committee for Biblical Translation from the possibilities offered in the standard text.

In the mid-eighties, Edward Goodrick and John Kohlenberger II decided to ‘reverse engineer’ the Hebrew and Greek texts that underlie the NIV translation. They created a text that deviates from the Standard Text in only the points where the NIV translators favored a different variant. The eclectic text created by this process represents an alternative view of the original text of the New Testament, the consensus of a different team of scholars.

A Readers Greek New Testament uses the text created by Goodrick Kohlenberger. In order to be as useful as possible, variations from the Standard Text are noted in the textual apparatus. The reader of *A Greek New Testament* is able to compare the decisions of two independent teams of biblical scholars, a process that will deepen the appreciation for the complex issues facing modern textual critics.”

- A Readers Greek New Testament, pg. 9-10.