

JOHN 9.38-39A: A SCRIBAL INTERJECTION  
FOR LITERARY REINFORCEMENT

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The majority of New Testament textual studies begin with and use the current edition of the Nestle-Aland text. Rightly regarded as a standard hand-edition of the Greek New Testament within the New Testament study guild, and now in its 28th edition (NA<sup>28</sup>), the Nestle-Aland text is continuously being updated once every few years. This endeavor and commitment by its editorial team is certainly a great service that this project has rendered especially to the next generations of scholars not only in highlighting the importance of the discipline of textual criticism but also in encouraging the continual investigation of new documentary and linguistic evidence. For the most part, the goal of textual criticism, and certainly the goal of the Nestle-Aland committee, is to discover the earliest recoverable reading of the ‘original’ text of the New Testament. In this continued search for the ‘original’ text, I propose a necessary textual emendation to the text in Jn 9.38-39a. I argue that Jn 9.38-39a is not original to the Gospel of John. Rather, it is a later scribal emendation used to support and strengthen the literary features of the text of John’s Gospel. That Jn 9.38-39a is a scribal insertion may be observed from the available external evidences and their geographical distribution, a noticeable break with the Johannine style and the Gospel writer’s method of recording healing narratives. I also offer a new explanation for the motivation of early scribes in inserting this text.

The textual challenge of Jn 9.38-39a—though largely ignored today—has been known for a long time. The missing text was brought to scholarly attention as early as the Latin Codex Veronensis, originally published in 1749.<sup>1</sup> Since then, there has been very little work on the

1. Codex Veronensis is from the fourth or fifth century CE. See Calvin Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a: A Liturgical Addition to the Text’, *NTS* 13 (1967), pp. 387-94 (387).

text in question. In fact, in the last fifty years (or even the last seventy-five years), this textual problem has been widely ignored. Only two articles in vetted journals have dealt with examining these verses since 1967.

The negligence in addressing the issue can also be observed in commentaries on John. Many critical commentaries make no mention of this textual issue.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, however, while Ernst Haenchen has some discussion on the textual character of ch. 9 in his commentary, contending on form-critical grounds that only part of v. 4 and of vv. 39-41 is from the Evangelist instead of from source material, he makes no reference to the textual history or variants of these verses.<sup>3</sup> Haenchen also does not offer any formal criteria for his contentions, nor does he allude to the manuscript evidence.

Textual criticism should not be controlled by one's theological inclination but by a formal and thorough interaction with the physical textual evidence. As such, this paper will attempt to work through the external, and then the internal, evidences, in order to deal with various textual issues related to these verses. Reasons for omission will be considered and then compared with some possible grounds for retaining the longer reading. Finally, the weaknesses of both popular positions will be exposed, and a previously unexplored solution will be presented.

### *Manuscript Evidence*

The decisions of the committee that works on the modern, eclectic NA<sup>28</sup> have resulted in this text: ὁ δὲ ἔφη· πιστεύω, κύριε· καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ. Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (Jn 9.38-39a).<sup>4</sup> This reading is supported by the oldest papyrus (P<sup>66</sup>) and four majuscule codexes

2. Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (BNTC; London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 286-87; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), I, pp. 794-95; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (ed. G.R. Beasley-Murray; trans. R.W.N. Hoare and J.K. Riches; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), pp. 338-40.

3. Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John* (ed. Robert W. Funk and Ulrich Busse; trans. Robert W. Funk; 2 vols.; Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), II, p. 41.

4. Kurt Aland et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 28th edn, 2012).

(Alexandrinus [A], Vaticanus [B], Ephraemi Rescriptus [C], and Bezae [D]). By contrast, the text is absent in the nearly contemporaneous P<sup>75</sup>,<sup>5</sup> as well as in the following significant witnesses: Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲁ), Codex Washingtonianus or Washingtonensis (W), Codex Veronensis (b), sub-Achmimic Coptic 2 (cop<sup>ach2</sup>), Sahidic Coptic (cop<sup>samss</sup>) and Tatian's *Diatessaron*.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that the texts that attest to the absence of this variant are geographically disperse.<sup>7</sup>

### *Not a Scribal Error*

Examination of textual variants should always consider the possibility of scribal error. However, in the case of Jn 9.38-39a, the omission is not 'the result of transcriptional error'.<sup>8</sup> Nothing in the text lends itself to the possibility of haplography (loss of text), *homoioarchton* (same beginning) or *homoioateleuton* (same ending) as being the likely candidate for textual variation. In short, none of the words in the missing text or its immediate surroundings would have caused a scribe to omit the text.

For instance, the scribal activity can be explored by examining the omission in P<sup>75</sup>, one of our oldest extant papyri that contains textual portions of the Gospels of Luke and John. We can infer two possibilities for its accidental omission there. The first possibility is that a scribe completed v. 37 and then accidentally jumped to v. 39b. However, nothing at the end of v. 37 resembles anything in v. 38 or v. 39a that could have caused this to happen. In fact, Jn 9.37 ends with EKEINOC ECTIN, neither of which appears anywhere in vv. 38-39a.

5. Comfort and Barrett date P<sup>66</sup> to mid-second century and P<sup>75</sup> to late second century (Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts* [Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2001], pp. 376, 501).

6. A correction was made later to Sinaiticus between the sixth and seventh century, adding vv. 38-39a as a marginalia to the manuscript. This hand is referred to as Ⲁ<sup>c</sup>. The fact that the original scribe and Diothortes approved the omission indicates that vv. 38-39a was not part of their accepted *Vorlage(n)*. This addition that happened two centuries later may suggest that the insertion only became known at a later time.

7. Philip W. Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography and Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), p. 339.

8. Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 339; Porter, 'John IX. 38, 39a', p. 389.

The second possibility is the more important one to consider. For this textual omission to be attributed to scribal error, one would expect a scribe to begin with v. 37a and then skip to v. 39b. Such a scenario would result in a textual variant that would suggest the idea that a scribe was confused by the occurrence of the *nomen sacrum*  $\bar{\text{IC}}$ , since v. 37a has  $\text{EIIIEN AY}\bar{\text{T}}\bar{\text{O}} \bar{\text{IC}}$ , and v. 39a has  $\text{KAI EIIIEN O } \bar{\text{IC}}$ . However, no papyrus or manuscript ever displays this error. No extant document begins with v. 37a and then skips to v. 39b. The absence of this variant indicates that scribes did not confuse an anarthrous *nomen sacrum* with an articular one. Furthermore, if the *Vorlage* (prior text) to P<sup>75</sup> had the longer reading, the two occurrences of the *nomen sacrum* would have at least been three lines apart from each another. This would consequently make the chance of scribal confusion highly improbable.

Moreover, the fact that this variant is not found in any of the available textual evidence should eliminate scribal error as a possible explanation. And since many scribes omitted only Jn 9.38-39a and nothing else, the omission is likely to have originated from their *Vorlage(n)*.<sup>9</sup> The subsequent insertion of the longer reading is what Philip Comfort concludes is a prime example of ‘purposeful changes made to the text’.<sup>10</sup> In fact, those holding to either the long or the short reading all agree that the textual change is purposeful.

### *Reasons Proposed for Removal*

A primary question for determining originality is assessing whether a scribe is more likely to add or subtract a portion of the text. Those contending the disputed portion is not original offer five main points to explain why a scribe likely added the text. First, the association of John 9 with ‘baptismal liturgy and catechesis’ strongly motivated the addition.<sup>11</sup> There are several ancient sources that connected the healing in John 9 with baptism. For instance, Augustine explicitly taught that,

9. Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 339.

10. Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 323.

11. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John I–XII* (AB, 29; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), p. 375. See also Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John* (trans. Cecily Hastings, Francis McDonagh, and David Smith; 3 vols.; New York: Crossroad, 1968–82), II, p. 257; Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 340; and George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC, 36; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2nd edn, 1999), p. 216.

when the blind man washed his eyes, he symbolically ‘was baptized in Christ’.<sup>12</sup> Irenaeus also connects this episode with sacramental regeneration, which he says takes place during and through baptism.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Calvin Porter points to archeological evidence from the second and third centuries in catacomb art that used the blind man for baptismal ceremonies.<sup>14</sup>

The early connection with baptismal rites likely made the text ‘susceptible to alterations’, as it may have been used as the confessional model for those being baptized.<sup>15</sup> Calvin Porter was the first to suggest that Jn 9.38-39a ‘arose out of the liturgical usage’.<sup>16</sup> His proposed reconstruction of history begins with the contention that early lectionary lessons included the texts in 9.1-38 and 9.39–10.9. This is corroborated by the findings of Herman Hoskier concerning the Synaxarion of the Gospel of John.<sup>17</sup> The lectionary lessons led to the addition of v. 38 as the positive confessional conclusion for one lesson, and v. 39a as an incipit for the next lesson.<sup>18</sup> Porter argues that the incipit formula ΚΑΙ ΕΙΠΕΝ Ο Ι̅C̅ was added to the continuous text after a period of being performed orally and perhaps even of being contained in the margins.<sup>19</sup>

The second and third points of evidence that favor the shorter reading derive from lexical arguments.<sup>20</sup> The use of ε̅φη is rare in John, only occurring at 1.23 and 9.38 in NA<sup>28</sup>. Also, the manner in which πιστεύω

12. Philip Schaff (ed.), *St Augustin: Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John and Soliloquies: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church Part 7* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), p. 245.

13. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.15.3.

14. Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, p. 391. See also Schnackenburg, *St John*, II, p. 258. Both Porter and Schnackenburg are building upon F.M. Braun, *Jean le théologien et son évangile dans l’église ancienne* (EBib; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1959), pp. 149-56.

15. Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, p. 391.

16. Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, p. 390.

17. H.C. Hoskier, *Codex B and its Allies, A Study and an Indictment* (2 vols.; London: Bernard Quaritch, 1914), II, p. 267.

18. Parker points out that the International Greek New Testament Project has discovered ε̅πεν ὁ κύριος as the beginning of two commonly added incipits in lectionaries. See D.C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 99.

19. Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, pp. 393-94.

20. Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 339; Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, p. 389.

is used raises questions.<sup>21</sup> While the lemma is used ninety-eight times in thirty-seven different conjugated forms in John, this is the only instance in which πιστεύω appears in the present, active, indicative, first-person, singular form. Specifically, the occurrence in this first-person form is peculiar, since John elsewhere records the faith of someone from an external narrative perspective (e.g. Jn 2.11, ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν; 2.23 πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν). Here, however, the healed person is recorded as confessing faith from his own perspective. It is significant to note that Mk 9.24 is the only other occurrence of πιστεύω in the entire Gospel corpus.

A fourth point against Johannine authorship is based on grammatical arguments. In John, προσκυνέω is used eleven times (see Jn 4.20, 21, 22, 23, 24; 9.38; 12.20) in nine different forms, but this is the only instance that has Jesus as the grammatical object.<sup>22</sup> With reference to the other uses, four are intransitive, two have cognitive processes as objects, two have πατρί as objects, one is a substantival participle and one has a relative pronoun as the object, having θεός as the understood antecedent. Furthermore, this is the only time this particular conjugation, that is, πιστεύω in the first-person singular, is used in John.<sup>23</sup>

The rare use of these words in an unusual form and syntax has led Porter to conclude that this ‘disputed verse is out of harmony with the teaching of the evangelist’.<sup>24</sup> Even proponents of the longer reading have acknowledged that ‘the confession of faith and the prostration... is puzzling within the Gospel, since the man is the only character who worships Jesus during his earthly ministry’.<sup>25</sup> I will return to this particular problem below.

21. Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, p. 389; Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 339.

22. The word ‘can describe ordinary homage to a human being, but the evangelist definitely intends it to mean more’ (Schnackenburg, *St John*, II, p. 254). See also Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, p. 339 n. 3; Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, p. 390; and Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 339.

23. προσκυνέω occurs 60 times in John, and it also occurs in Acts 10.25 and Heb. 11.21.

24. Porter, ‘John IX. 38, 39a’, p. 390.

25. Martijn Steegen, ‘To Worship the Johannine “Son of Man”’: John 9.38 as Refocusing on the Father’, *Bib* 91 (2010), pp. 534-54 (553). Steegen argues that some manuscripts changed the ‘son of man’ in Jn 9.35 to ‘son of God’ to emphasize Jesus’ divinity, but it is not because Jesus could not be worshipped before his resurrection (p. 542).

A fifth and final argument for the shorter reading is that v. 38 disrupts the flow of the story. If vv. 38-39a is removed, a ‘continuous statement from Jesus’ lips’ remains.<sup>26</sup> But the additional statement by the blind man interrupts Jesus’ statement in v. 37 and v. 39b. This also holds true grammatically. Nothing in vv. 38-39a is syntactically dependent on phoric material, nor does it function as grammatical head to anything following it. The passage can easily be removed without impairment to anything within the remaining text.

Someone might try to argue that v. 38 is an answer to the question of v. 35, but that would be incorrect. In v. 36, the man does make his reply to Jesus’ question by offering his own question. In the Gospel of John, questions asked by Jesus are not always answered in a direct manner. For instance, in Jn 5.6-7, the crippled man does not answer Jesus, but he does make a statement. Furthermore, many questions in John are not invitations for a response, but they serve the purpose of introducing or leading to Jesus’ teaching statements (e.g. Jn 16.19-20).

#### *Proponents of Keeping the Longer Text*

Acknowledging the peculiarities of the verse, proponents for the longer reading believe that the evidence does ‘not necessarily have to lead to the conclusion that these verses were added by a later hand’.<sup>27</sup> First, the longer reading is found in one of the earliest papyri and continues in later significant codexes. This fact deserves recognition. Secondly, an early homily by Chrysostom makes use of the verse and gives no indication of doubt concerning it.<sup>28</sup> While a discussion of textual variation is not expected in an ancient sermon, if the missing verse was unfamiliar to the audience of Chrysostom, some explanation of his comments would seem reasonable. The fact that he does not substantiate the text suggests that he and the audience were in some way familiar with the inclusion of v. 38.

There are also reasonable responses to the lexical challenges. First, while the exact term ἔφη is used only one other time in John at 1.23, it

26. Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 340.

27. Steegen, ‘Worship’, p. 553. See also D.A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 379.

28. Philip Schaff (ed.), *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St John and the Epistle to the Hebrews: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Vol. 14* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1886), p. 213.

is used twenty-seven times in the Synoptics (e.g. Mt. 4.7; Mk 10.20; Lk. 5.7).<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲙ) has an additional occurrence of ἔφη in 9.37 that is not found in the NA<sup>28</sup>. Also, in P<sup>66</sup>, the scribe wrote ἔφη in v. 36 before scraping it out. Furthermore, concerning προσκυνέω, even though the verb here is the only instance of an aorist, active, indicative, third-person, singular, this verbal form appears to be the ‘least marked’ form.<sup>30</sup>

The remaining small support for the longer reading—albeit very little—is based primarily on theological reasoning. The responses to the problems mentioned above can be examined briefly. First, proponents of the longer reading contend that early scribes likely omitted the text, since it has Jesus being worshipped prior to his death and resurrection.<sup>31</sup> The resulting christological ramifications of such an event might have seemed out of place for some scribes. I will say more about these christological factors below.

Secondly, the theory of lectionary marginal inclusion proposed by Porter only works if lectionary ‘forces were influential in shaping the transmission of the text at an astonishingly early date’.<sup>32</sup> It would necessarily need to be early enough for inclusion in P<sup>66</sup>. Furthermore, the theory only works if all early lectionaries split the lessons at precisely this point. However, this critique is weakened by the fact that it does not directly address the textual issue. It simply has challenged

29. Ἐφη is used 14 times in Mt., 6 times in Mk and 7 times in Lk.

30. Markedness is a linguistic feature far too large a subject to explicate fully here, but some comments might be beneficial. The concept of *markedness* at the word-level is described by Battistella as the hierarchy of ‘polar oppositions’ that ‘show an evaluative nonequivalence that is imposed on all oppositions’ (E.L. Battistella, *Markedness: The Evaluative Superstructure of Language* [Sunny Series in Linguistics; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990], p. 1). The two poles of a relationship of opposites are general vs. specific, simple vs. complex and expected vs. unexpected. In short, language can express something as either general, simple and undefined (what is called *unmarked*) or specific, complex and defined (what is called *marked*). Individual languages develop a ‘hierarchisation of opposites’, which can be applied to Greek tense-forms (see Battistella, *Markedness*, pp. 4, 21). For the application of this kind of *markedness* concept to the Greek New Testament, see Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament: With Reference to Tense and Mood* (SBG, 1; New York: Peter Lang, 1989), esp. p. 181.

31. Steegen, ‘Worship’, p. 553.

32. Carson, *John*, p. 379.



the proposal by Porter, which is only one possible scenario.

Finally, Bruce Metzger offers his support for the longer reading, but only on conjectural grounds. He recounts what the majority of the committee behind the NA<sup>28</sup> believed: ‘the omission, if not accidental, is to be regarded as editorial, made in the interest of unifying Jesus’ teaching in verses 37 and 39’.<sup>33</sup> However, Metzger’s point does not directly address the textual issues either. Metzger has merely offered a different historical scenario than Porter, and one that in fact highlights the dubious nature of the text.

Metzger indicates that, if vv. 38-39a were included in a manuscript used by an early scribe, the scribe would have recognized it as a textual error and would thus have likely omitted it. But this begs the question how and why so many different scribes independently agreed that vv. 38-39a did not make sense and consequently decided to omit this particular text only. There are no early papyri or manuscripts that omit anything else in the surrounding co-texts of these verses. For this reason, Metzger has not really offered a solution to this textual problem, but has rather confirmed that the inclusion in the NA<sup>28</sup> is perplexing.

### *Remaining Problems*

Both sides have left significant issues unaddressed. First, it remains to be understood how the addition could happen so early.<sup>34</sup> Porter’s theory is significantly hindered by the fact that there is no evidence for lectionaries prior to or contemporary with P<sup>66</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>. In fact, our earliest extant evidence for a lectionary comes from the fourth century CE.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, no one (so far as I know) has addressed the content of the response of the healed person, or how it was recorded, as a clue

33. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 2nd edn, 1994), p. 195.

34. This is the question of both Metzger and Carson (see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 195; and Carson, *John*, p. 379).

35. The NA<sup>28</sup> and UBS<sup>4</sup> both have Lectionaries 563 and 672 listed as the oldest ones coming from the fourth century. See Stanley E. Porter, *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), pp. 139-40.

concerning originality.<sup>36</sup> I will address these remaining problems and offer further information that at least needs to be considered.

To begin with, a correction needs to be stated. Metzger claims that the ‘overwhelming preponderance of external attestation’ is substantial grounds for the originality of the text.<sup>37</sup> This is not entirely accurate. If one compares the number of occurrences and omissions in the first four centuries, the evidence is in favor of exclusion. It is not until after the biblical texts were standardized during the fourth century CE that more manuscripts began including the verse rather than excluding it.

### *Miracle Narratives*

Contrary to Porter and Metzger, vv. 38-39a is not out of harmony with Johannine theology. The Gospel of John has a propensity towards evincing a more developed or higher Christology.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the worship of Jesus is not itself a mark against this text. However, there is significant disagreement between the narrative form of healings and miracles in John and this questionable text, namely, apart from this occurrence, there is no recorded response or action of a beneficiary after a healing miracle.

While current rhetorical and socio-rhetorical studies have indeed ‘crossed a form-critical boundary set down by Rudolf Bultmann’, the benefits of considering literary form should not be ignored.<sup>39</sup> In John,

36. Comfort hints at the issue but does not offer any argument for what the content of the verse indicates about authenticity (see Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, p. 340).

37. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 195.

38. While not radically different from the rest of the New Testament, ‘the development of Christology may be held to have its culmination and climax in the Fourth Gospel’ (Andrew Chester, ‘High Christology—Whence, When and Why?’, *Early Christianity* 2 [2011], pp. 22-50 [45]). Also, concerning John 9, Beth Stovell argues that ‘the continuity of kingship from Father to Son stressed Jesus’ similarity to the Father, moving the Gospel towards a high Christology’ (see Beth M. Stovell, *Mapping Metaphorical Discourse in the Fourth Gospel: John’s Eternal King* [LBS, 5; Leiden: Brill, 2012], p. 224). Beasley-Murray discusses the ‘semeia hypothesis’, which argues that ‘the Johannine redaction reflects a higher Christology’ (Beasley-Murray, *John*, p. cxxi).

39. Wendy J. Cotter, ‘Miracle Discourse in the New Testament: A Response’, in Duane F. Watson (ed.), *Miracle Discourse in the New Testament* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), pp. 211-23 (211).

the model for recording healings can be observed in the event of the healing of the official's son in Jn 4.46-54. A man makes a request to Jesus, and after some verbal interaction, which includes recorded speech, Jesus performs a healing miracle. This is followed by belief on the part of the beneficiary, even though he has not yet verified the miracle. But even when the healing is confirmed and understood, there is no further interaction between Jesus and the beneficiary. Most notably, there is no further recorded speech of the beneficiary (the healed) that is directed to the benefactor (the healer). Also, there is no recorded incident of worship after the healing miracle.

This pattern for recording miracles is found consistently in John. First, consider the water turned into wine at the wedding in Cana. The Gospel narrative records the disciples exercising an undefined belief in Jesus, but there are no recorded acts of worship or verbal profession by them. Secondly, the pattern is seen in the Passover feast found in Jn 2.23. The author states that many believed in Jesus on account of the signs he performs, but there are no recorded acts of worship or direct speech by them. Thirdly, the healing of an invalid in John 5 further highlights this pattern. John has multiple lines of quoted speech of the man interacting with Jesus and the religious leader, but after being healed, John does not record any worship act or speech directed toward Jesus. Fourth, in Jn 7.31, at the festival of Booths, it is stated that some believed, but there is no reported worship act or individual recorded speech. Lastly, the episode of the raising of Lazarus is very similar to that of John 5. Before the resurrection miracle, there is a lot of recorded speech and interaction with Jesus, but afterwards, there is no recorded speech from the spatial-temporal setting of the miracle.<sup>40</sup>

There is one seeming deviation from this pattern in John, and this can be seen in the incident of the feeding of the five thousand. After the miracle has become known, there is a generic confession made by the crowd in 6.14. However, it is not individualized speech, and there is no worship or profession of faith. Most importantly, it was not a healing miracle.

The pattern of interaction with Jesus prior to a miracle or healing event is also consistent in the Synoptics. In Mt. 9.27-31, the blind men confess that Jesus is able to heal, but after the healing incident, there is

40. John 11.47-50 records the speech of the Jewish council and of Caiaphas, but this event was in Jerusalem and not in Bethany. The verb of motion in 11.46 (*ἀπῆλθον πρὸς τοὺς Φαρισαίους*) indicates the spatial-temporal movement.

no recorded speech. The lack of direct speech is surprising, given that Jesus speaks to them and that their further actions are mentioned. In Mt. 12.22, after being healed of his blindness and demon possession, the person does not confess or respond at all. Similarly, in Mt. 20.34, the two blind men do not respond or worship after being healed. Furthermore, Lk. 18.25-43 is strikingly similar to Mk 10.46-52, where there is recorded speech by the blind beggar Bartimaeus interacting with Jesus prior to his healing, but nothing is recorded after it.<sup>41</sup>

Surprisingly, this pattern also holds true for the verb προσκυνέω. In Mt. 8.2, the lepers bow (προσεκύνει) before being healed, but no response is recorded afterward. In Mt. 9.18, the ruler bows before Jesus (προσεκύνει), but afterward there is no response from him. The pattern continues in Mt. 9.20-22 and 15.22-28. But, in John's Gospel, there is a single deviation from the Synoptics. In Mt. 14.33, the disciples do bow (προσεκύνησαν) and make confession after the calming of the sea. However, once again, it is not a healing incident, and no individual speech is recorded.

#### *Potential Anomaly*

There is one incident in Luke that appears to break this pattern. In Lk. 17.11-19, we encounter a recorded group dialog by the ten lepers, but it is noticeable that there is no record of individualized speech. All of them interacted with Jesus, but only one person returned after being healed. In Lk. 17.15-16, the healed person is said to have praised God with a loud voice, fallen at the feet of Jesus, and given thanks to him. Upon closer examination, however, even in this scene—which has no parallel elsewhere in the Gospels—there is no recorded speech, and different verbs other than προσκυνέω are used to describe his actions—ἔπεσεν and εὐχαριστῶν.

The consistent pattern of dialog and reported speech that happens in a healing event has, thus far, been an unexplored factor concerning the originality of Jn 9.38-39a. The pattern is clear throughout the Gospels: (a) the Gospels do not record speech directed to Jesus after a healing miracle, (b) the Gospels do not record individual profession after a healing miracle and (c) the Gospels do not record a worship incident

41. Cf. Mk 8.22-26.

after a healing miracle. John 9.38 stands out as contradicting all of these otherwise consistent narrative elements.

Of course, merely breaking with a pattern is not a proof for the text being a scribal addition. But on account of controverting multiple factors that are consistent throughout John and the Synoptics, the longer reading definitely falls outside of Johannine literary style and method. It was most likely added to the text.

### *Alternative Conclusion*

Why then was the text added? While the suggestion by Porter is intriguing, I find the early date of P<sup>66</sup> an insurmountable challenge. If P<sup>66</sup> is close to the mid-second century CE, there does not seem to be enough time for an incipit and conclusion to be adopted from lectionaries into the continuous text.<sup>42</sup> However, its use in baptismal rites and the narrative structure of John 9–10 suggest a simpler and more probable scenario. The evidence suggests an early scribe(s) might have inserted the verse in order to record the expected confession of the healed person.

There are two primary considerations that could have motivated an early scribe(s) to have expected an explicit confession from the healed man. The first is on account of the literary parallel between the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees and the sight of the blind man.<sup>43</sup> In Jn 9.16, there is recorded speech of the Pharisees declaring Jesus is not from God. Thus, an early scribe might have wished to strengthen the literary contrast by inserting recorded speech from the blind man concerning his spiritual sight, namely, his confession that Jesus is from God. Even though the literary point is explicit in Jn 9.40, the early Christians might have wanted to strengthen the contrast with the confession being recorded as direct speech. Such reinforcement of the literary parallel explains the motivation behind the anomaly of a post-healing confession. It also would explain the motivation behind the authorial selection of word-forms that are rarely used in John, such as ἔφη, πιστεύω and προσεκύνησεν, all of which appear in Jn 9.38, with ἔφη appearing at only one other instance in Jn 1.23.

Furthermore, scribes were perhaps motivated to have the confession of the healed man stated more explicitly so as to strengthen the literary

42. Comfort and Barrett, *Text of the Earliest New Testament*, p. 376.

43. Schnackenburg, *St John*, II, p. 239.

foundation of John 9–10. The missing confession was problematic for early scribes because of the theological and narrative importance placed upon the blind man. For instance, when examining this issue from a literary-rhetorical standpoint, Gail O’Day argues that in John ‘the effect of a miracle story is not coterminous with the narration of the story proper, but can inform the surrounding narrative in which it is embedded’.<sup>44</sup> So, besides the direct reference in 10.21 and 11.37, the entirety of John 10 is a theological discourse built upon John 9, specifically, the episode concerning the healed blind man.<sup>45</sup> The scribes might have found it advantageous to insert v. 38 to reinforce this narrative foundation. It is this confessional statement that would later become the model text for baptismal rites and lectionary teachings.

In conclusion, the external evidence indicates that absence of the verse was widespread in the early textual history. The internal evidence seems to suggest that the omission is not due to scribal error. The lexical and syntactic choices do not give any confidence in the originality of the verse. Moreover, Jn 9.38 would be the only anomaly to the literary form for the recorded healing events in the four Gospels. Most importantly, the addition of the verse can simply be explained as a product of motivated theological expectations and narrative reinforcement. Consequently, the evidence strongly suggests that Jn 9:38-39a was an added or emended text to the original text. Thus, the shorter reading should be adopted.

44. Gail R. O’Day, ‘Miracle Discourse and the Gospel of John’, in Watson (ed.), *Miracle Discourse*, pp. 175-88 (178-79).

45. Karoline M. Lewis, *Rereading the Shepherd Discourse: Restoring the Integrity of John 9.39–10.21* (StBibLit, 113; New York: Peter Lang, 2008), pp. 7-20.