

In this post I deal with an interesting question that a reader has asked me, with reference to the post I made last week where I explained a complicated situation that appears sometimes to have occurred in our surviving manuscripts of the New Testament, when every single manuscript we have may have the “wrong” reading – that is, when every one of the manuscripts appears to an alteration from what the author original wrote. Here is what I said.

*Another reason interpolations and scribal corruptions overlap is because – here it gets even more tricky – there are places where scholars are convinced that there were scribal alterations made very early in the history of the transmission of the text that occurred \*after\* the book was originally put in circulation in the textual form that has come down to us but that affected \*all\* of our surviving manuscripts. In other words, in these places (no one can agree where it has happened!) all of our manuscripts have the wrong reading, but not because of an interpolation made before the text in its final form was put in circulation but because the text in that final form was changed very early by a scribe whose alteration came to be the form of the text copied by all later scribes.*

**QUESTION:** Please can you give an example in the New Testament where a majority of scholars believe that *all* our surviving manuscripts have the wrong wording?

**RESPONSE:**

I have to admit, I’m not much of an expert on this phenomenon of textual emendation – where scholars “emend” the text (that is, suggest what the original reading was) when all the manuscripts present a reading that appears to be wrong. It’s a highly technical and massively complex sub-subfield of study within the subfield of study of textual criticism.

But I know some incredibly learned scholars in the world, and among them are experts in textual emendation. Probably the top scholar in the sub-sub-field is Jan Krans, a professor at Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. I asked him the question, and he gave me a detailed and very gratifying response.

His response was written to me, and so contains a bit of scholarly terminology and assumes a bit of scholarly background, but I think you can get the point. It’s very interesting. (I have put any explanatory glosses that I myself have made in **boldface**; if there’s anything you don’t understand about this, just ask and I’ll try to explain):

Here is what he said:

You need to belong to the blog to see the rest of this post. If you don’t join, you will never know!! It doesn’t cost much for a membership, and all fees go to charity. So join!!

You need to be logged in to see this part of the content. Please [Login](#) to access.



[Do Later Manuscript Discoveries Ever Support Proposed Interpolations?](#)

[Was John the Son of Zebedee Capable of Writing a Gospel?](#)