

The Passive ἀποκατηλλάγητε in P46 and B03 Colossians 1:22a

An Original Grammatical Anomaly or Another Case of Scribal Assimilation?

Diego dy Carlos Araújo

Research Lecturer in New Testament

SETECEB, Anápolis, Brazil

diegodycarlos@seteceb.com.br

Abstract

Colossians 1:22a has one of the most challenging textual variants in the Pauline corpus regarding the form of the verb ἀποκαταλλάσσειν. The two competing readings are the active ἀποκατήλλαξεν, which is the reading of the majority of manuscripts, and the passive ἀποκαταλ[.]γητε/ἀποκατηλλάγητε, found in P46 and B03, two of the most important manuscripts of the New Testament. Although the latter results in a ‘grammatical anomaly’, it is the *lectio difficilior*, and, therefore, many argue that it is the only reading that reasonably explains the emergence of the others. I argue that the reading of the majority of witnesses should be accepted as the earliest attainable text on both external and internal grounds; however, scholars who support this approach have been challenged to present an explanation for the origin of the passive reading in P46 and B03. This article provides such a hypothesis, proposing that the P46/B03 reading can be reasonably explained by an unconscious assimilation (or harmonisation) of the near-parallel passage in Romans 5:10.

1. Introduction¹

Colossians 1:21–23 elaborates on the theme of reconciliation introduced by Paul in verse 20 of this chapter. He applies the effects of God’s cosmic reconciliation (τὰ πάντα, v. 20) to the experience of the Colossian believers (vv. 21–23). The believers’ former life is described as separated from and in enmity towards God (v. 21). He then goes on to say: νυνὶ δὲ ἀποκατήλλαξεν ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς

1. I am grateful to Dirk Jongkind, Tim Carter, and James B. Prothro for offering invaluable feedback on an earlier draft of this article, and likewise to the anonymous reviewers.

αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου (v. 22a). The problem is that Colossians 1:22a has one of the most challenging textual variants of the Pauline corpus regarding the form of the verb ἀποκαταλλάσσειν. The three main readings attested in the authorities are:

1. ἀποκατήλλαξεν (aorist active: *he reconciled*): supported by the majority of witnesses, both early and late (Ⲛ01 A02 C04 D05² K018 L020 P025 Ψ04 69 1739 1881 etc.);
2. ἀποκατηλλάγητε (aorist passive: *you were reconciled*): supported by two early and important witnesses (P46 B03);²
3. ἀποκατηλλαγεντες (aorist passive participle: *having been reconciled*, D06* F010 G012 etc.).

Since the third reading is dismissed by the vast majority of scholars as too improbable, I dispense with further treatment here.³ The debate, in actual fact, revolves around whether the earliest attainable reading contains a verb in the active or passive voice. On one side of the dispute, the active reading, ἀποκατήλλαξεν, has the support of all major editions (Tregelles, Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, von Soden, UBS4 (tentatively, as discussed below), NA28, and THGNT), as well as the majority of commentators.⁴ A few scholars, including

2. P46 omits the augment and is missing the line ending, leaving a space wide enough for two letters, thus, ἀποκαταλ[.]γητε.

3. It is probably to be explained as an emendation of P46 B03. Cf. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (London: Macmillan, 1897), 249–250; Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 313, n. 55. The same applies to the perfect middle, ἀποκατήλλακται, found in 33.

4. E.g. Johannes Lähnemann, *Der Kolosserbrief: Komposition, Situation und Argumentation* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1971), 43; Eduard Lohse, *A Commentary on the Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Harris, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 64; Joachim Gnilka, *Der Kolosserbrief*, HThKNT 10.1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1980), 88; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC (Waco: Word, 1982), 64; Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982), 91–94; Andreas Lindemann, *Der Kolosserbrief*, ZBK 10 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1983), 31–32; N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Leicester: IVP, 1986), 81–82; Petr Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 91, n. 4; Michael Wolter, *Der Brief an die Kolosser; Der Brief an Philemon*, ÖTK 12 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1993), 91–97; Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *Colossians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, trans. Astrid B. Beck, AB 34B (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 220–221, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780300261714>; Hans Hübner, *An Philemon, an die Kolosser, an die Epheser*, HNT 12 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 65–66; ; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, SP 17 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 72; Marianne M. Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon*, Two Horizons New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 39; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament

Lightfoot,⁵ Lohmeyer,⁶ Bruce,⁷ Metzger,⁸ Dunn,⁹ and Fee,¹⁰ however, have offered their support to the reading of P46 and B03 (i.e. the passive ἀποκατηλλάγητε).

The difficulty arises because although the passive form after the accusative ὑμᾶς (v. 21) is a ‘grammatical anomaly’,¹¹ it is also the *lectio difficilior* and therefore warrants serious attention as the potential original that gave rise to the others. This dilemma is well illustrated in the split between Metzger and the other members of the UBS committee. Whereas the UBS4 committee kept the reading of the majority of manuscripts, assigning it a C rating,¹² Metzger himself added a personal note in his *Textual Commentary* championing the passive reading as original on account of it being the *lectio difficilior*:

Despite the harsh anacoluthon that a passive verb creates after ὑμᾶς in ver. 21, only ἀποκατηλλάγητε, which is attested by diversified and early witnesses (B03 Hilary Ephraem, as well as, in effect, P46 and 33, both of which have scribal misspellings that presuppose -ηλλάγητε), can account for the rise of the other readings as more or less successful attempts to mend the syntax of the sentence.¹³

In this article I will argue that, although the passive ἀποκατηλλάγητε is the *lectio difficilior*, when both internal and external evidence are weighed up, the active ἀποκατήλλαξεν should be accepted as the earliest attainable text. Further,

Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 141; Paul Foster, *Colossians*, BNTC (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 204; cf. Stanley E. Porter, *Καταλλάσσω in Ancient Greek Literature, with Reference to the Pauline Writings*, EFN 5 (Córdoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1994), 176.

5. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 159, 249–250.

6. Ernst Lohmeyer, *Die Briefe an die Philipper, an die Kolosser und an Philemon*, KEK 12 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), 68, n. 2.

7. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 76.

8. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 554–555.

9. James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Paternoster, 1996), 105.

10. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 313–316.

11. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 313.

12. This is an ‘upgrade’ from a previous D rating (UBS1/2/3). Metzger, however, remained unconvinced.

13. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 554–555. It is worth noting that Metzger’s claim that 33 supports the reading of P46 is misleading. Through images provided on the website of the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (<https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/>), one can see that 33 has the perfect middle indicative, ἀποκατήλλακται (*he has reconciled*).

although the majority of scholars accept the active reading, most of them do not attempt to explain how it gave rise to the reading found in P46 and B03, and the explanations of those who have ventured one are found wanting. So, my aim here is to propose another hypothesis for the origin of the P46 and B03 reading: it is possible that it came about as the result of unconscious assimilation (or harmonisation) of the parallel passage in Romans 5:10. I will first provide a brief overview and evaluation of the main arguments for both the passive and the active readings. Then in part 2 I will present my own hypothesis for the origin of the passive reading, and finally, in part 3, I will briefly discuss the relationship between P46 and B03.

2. A Brief Overview of the Main Arguments

2.1 Proponents of the Passive Reading: Attempts to Make Sense of a ‘Grammatical Anomaly’

The principle of the *lectio difficilior* is the argument most commonly invoked by scholars in favour of the reading of P46 and B03. Once one determines that the reading of P46 and B03 is the earliest attainable text, one is left with the complex task of making sense of the resulting syntax.¹⁴ It is here that things get complicated, and creativity is in order.

Some scholars have proposed a change in the punctuation, substituting a comma for the period at the end of verse 20 and taking *νυνὶ ... θανάτου* (v. 22a) parenthetically: ‘In this case *παραστήσαι* [v. 22b] will be governed directly by *εὐδόκησεν* [v. 19], and will itself govern *ὑμᾶς πότε ὄντας κτλ*, the second *ὑμᾶς* being a repetition of the first.’¹⁵ However, this proposal seems to create more

14. This is not to say that the active reading does not present its own syntactical oddities, like the combination of *δέ* with *ἀποκατήλλαξεν* (cf. Pokorný, *Colossians*, 91, n. 4).

15. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 159; cf. Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians*, trans. John C. Moore, rev. William P. Dickson, Meyer’s Commentaries on the New Testament (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1875), 308–309; Thomas K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary to the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 224–225; C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 72. C. Clare Oke, ‘A Hebraistic Construction in Colossians 1.19–22’, *ExpT* 63 (1951–52): 155–156, and J. C. O’Neill, ‘The Source of the Christology in Colossians’, *NTS* 26 (1980): 87–100, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500008687>, have argued that the participle passive *ἀποκατηλλαγεντες* (D06* et al.) is original, and tried to explain it by assuming a Hebraistic construction in Colossians 1:21–22. However, as Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 176, has observed, they can only find support for this in translations (from Hebrew and Aramaic) and Revelation. Oke cites Charles’ conclusions (Robert H.

problems than it solves. The dependence of both the accusative καὶ ὑμᾶς in verse 21 and, even more cumbersome, the infinitive παραστῆσαι in 22b, on εὐδόκησεν (v. 19) is far from straightforward.¹⁶ The main difficulty is that verses 21 through 23 display a clear shift from the so-called Christ Hymn (vv. 15-20) in both style, from a more ‘hymnic’ structure to prose,¹⁷ and in focus, from the cosmological scope of reconciliation in verse 20 (τὰ πάντα, encompassing εἴτε τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς εἴτε τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) to the personal application of reconciliation focusing on the Colossian believers in verses 21-23.¹⁸

The perplexity caused by the textual issue in Colossians 1:22 is epitomised by Dunn’s questionable conclusion. Although he argues, on account of the reading of P46 and B03 being the *lectio difficilior*, that the active reading is an emendation to ἀποκατηλλάγητε, he nevertheless opts for the emendation on the grounds of internal logic: ‘since the second person passive fits so badly we may be justified in concluding that the early correction/improvement was wholly justified’.¹⁹

Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: with Introduction, Notes and Indices, also the Greek Text and English Translation (in Two Volumes)*, ICC (Edinburgh: Clark, 1920), vol. 1, cxliv–cxlv) on Semitisms in Revelation in which he quotes Col 1:26 (without elaborating on it) as an example in the New Testament outside Revelation (cf. Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 57, n. 1). However, a quick look at Colossians 1:24-26 reveals that the anacoluthon resulting from the participial phrase followed by νῦν δὲ ἐφανερώθη in verse 26 creates not nearly as many syntactical difficulties as the reading of D06* in verse 22. (On a participle continued by a finite verb construction in Paul, see BDF 468.1, 3.) O’Neill’s hypothesis, in particular, is highly speculative. Besides the proposed Semitism, he also proposes that the reading of D06* is supported by P46 (ἀποκαταλ[.]γητε), since ‘P46 is not indicative until the ending, and D06* G012, etc. supply a non-indicative reading which explains the rest’ (p. 93). He then explains the anacolutha created by the passive participle by reading verse 21 as the beginning of a vision report and supplies the phrase ‘I saw’ as the verb governing verse 21. Finally, the infinitive παραστῆσαι is taken to be imperatival with the following ὑμᾶς rendered as a reflexive.

16. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 220, n. 10: ‘A dependency of *eudokēsen* (v 19) is even more improbable. At the reading of the apostle, the listener would hardly be able to make this connection.’

17. Cf. N. T. Wright, ‘Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20’, *NTS* 36 (1990): 444–468, at 444, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002868850001585X>. (Cf. bibliography on his n. 2).

18. Something more akin to the emphasis in both Rom 5:1-11 and 2 Cor 5:11-21 – Paul turns back to the Colossians as he picks up from vv. 12-14 above.

19. Dunn, *Colossians*, 105, n. 1; Robert McL. Wilson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Colossians and Philemon*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 160 seems to endorse Dunn’s remark.

Foster has charged Dunn's conclusion of being 'methodologically and logically confusing'.²⁰

In the light of such complexities, instead of explaining away the syntactical unwieldiness created by the passive form, most scholars have simply admitted that the interpreter must reckon with the fact that the original reading contains the *anacolutha*.²¹ Fee devotes more attention to explaining the *anacoluthic* ἀποκατηλλάγητε in context.²² He begins by highlighting the two main difficulties with which the textual critic needs to reckon in Colossians 1:22. On the one hand, 'two of the best manuscripts of the Pauline corpus (P46 and B03) have a reading that is a grammatical anomaly' following the accusative ὑμας in the preceding verse,²³ which has led most interpreters to disregard it as improbable. On the other hand, Fee goes on, 'the P46 B03 text is the only one that can reasonably explain the existence of the others'.²⁴ It is worth quoting him in full on this point:

This [the grammatical anomaly caused by the passive reading] has caused most textual critics to opt for the 'grammatically correct' reading; but in so doing, they are able to offer no good explanation as to how the scribe of the *Vorlage* of such superior manuscripts as P46 and B03 could have made such an egregious copying error. That is, from the perspective of a scribe copying a manuscript, it is nearly impossible to account for this reading if the other was original. Here seems to be a clear-cut case where the primary 'rule' of textual criticism must take precedence: that reading which best explains how *all* the others came about is most likely the original.²⁵

Therefore, Fee concludes, the aorist passive reading must be the earliest attainable text. He continues:

20. Foster, *Colossians*, 204.

21. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 313–316. Cf. Meyer, *Colossians*, 308 (though he suggests the possibility of a punctuation change); Abbott, *Colossians*, 225; Lohmeyer, *Kolosser*, 68, n. 2, 70–71; Joel White, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Kolosser*, HTA (Holzgerlingen: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2018), 154, 158–161, who takes it as *passivum divinum*; Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 138; Jerry L. Sumney, *Colossians: A Commentary* (Louisville: John Knox, 2008), 84, who, though he supports the passive reading, states that '[t]his decision does not affect the primary assertions of this verse. The question involves only whether this verb emphasizes the divine act or its consequences.'

22. See Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 313–16.

23. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 313.

24. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 313.

25. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 314 (*italics original*).

it is far more likely that Paul's original text was ungrammatical and deliberately changed by scribes (who regularly try to 'help out the author' in such moments) than that he wrote something as perfectly intelligible as the Majority Text reading and a scribe (or scribes) changed it to something so difficult to account for.²⁶

Fee's own hypothesis for what could have led Paul to pen such a 'grammatical anomaly' is given in a footnote:

It is not difficult to see what may have happened. Paul started his sentence with an accusative that he intended to be the object of the verb, but when he came to the main clause, the emphasis on the *contrast* itself took over in the form of a *νυνὶ δέ* (*but now*), which then launched him into a contrast in which *they themselves* were still the focus.²⁷

Although the reading of P46 and B03 is the *lectio difficilior* and, consequently, the one which should best account for the others, it seems to me that this is indeed one of those cases where the reading is too difficult to be original.²⁸ Most importantly, the anacolutha it creates with καὶ ὑμᾶς (v. 21a) and with the infinitive παραστῆσαι (v. 22b)²⁹ are unjustifiable and indeed unnecessary. Fee's explanation – that Paul, having started the sentence in verse 21 with 'an accusative that he intended to be the object of the verb', had a change of heart just a few words down the line and decided to change the whole structure of the paragraph in order to keep the focus on the referents of ὑμᾶς in verse 21a, 'they themselves' – is unwarranted.³⁰ Had Paul wanted to keep the focus on the referents of the accusative ὑμᾶς (21a), he could have done so in a more grammatically acceptable way, as we can demonstrate from another example in Colossians, since the same construction in which an opening καὶ ὑμᾶς (+ ὄντας) is expected to be the object of the following main verb also occurs in Colossians 2:13:

Καὶ ὑμᾶς νεκροὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ τῇ ἀκροβυστίᾳ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν, **συνεζωποίησεν ὑμᾶς** σὺν αὐτῷ χαρισάμενος ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα (THGNT)

26. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 314.

27. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 214, n. 56 (italics original), partly following Meyer, *Colossians*, 308 and Abbott, *Colossians*, 225; cf. Lightfoot, *Colossians*, 159. Fee also argues that the passive verb in verse 22 is Paul's way of keeping the focus on both Christ and the Colossian audience, signalled initially by καὶ ὑμᾶς in verse 21 (cf. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 315).

28. With Moo, *Colossians*, 141.

29. Fee does not comment on the anacoluthon created with the infinitive παραστῆσαι.

30. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 314, n. 56.

Interestingly, here Paul repeats the direct object ὑμᾶς after the main verb συνεζωποποίησεν for the sake of emphasis. It is not difficult to see what may have happened here. Paul started the sentence with the accusative ὑμᾶς,³¹ which he intended to be the direct object of the verb, and then when he came to the main clause he decided to (or maintained his intention to) keep the focus on the referents of the accusative ὑμᾶς, ‘you yourselves’, by repeating the pronoun after the main verb: ‘and you, being dead ... you, I say, did he make alive together with him ...’ (RSV). Therefore, had Paul wanted to keep the focus on ‘they themselves’ in 1:22, as Fee claims, he could just as well have used the same linguistic device he employs in 2:13 and avoided ‘such a clumsy afterthought’.³² So, although Fee’s hypothesis is not impossible, it seems unnecessary. If Paul wanted to keep the focus on the referent of ὑμᾶς (v. 21a), he could have done so without resorting to such a ‘grammatical anomaly’ as the P46 and B03 reading.

In summary, although the attempts to make sense of the passive ἀποκατηλλάγητε by those who support its originality have not yielded impossible hypotheses, they seem to create more problems than they solve. The grammatical problems posed by the passive reading are not only extremely challenging but also unnecessary if, as Fee and others claim, Paul’s intention was to keep the focus on the ὑμᾶς in verse 21. Paul could have employed the same stylistic construction used in Colossians 2:13.

Therefore, although ἀποκατηλλάγητε has the support of two important witnesses, P46 and B03, and is indeed the *lectio difficilior*, its internal support is weak; it is difficult to account for the grammatical anomalies it creates.

2.2 Proponents of the Active Reading: Attempts to Make Sense of the Rise of the Passive Reading

After a careful analysis of the main commentaries on Colossians, it becomes clear that Fee is justified in his critique of those who take the active ἀποκατήλλαξεν to be the earliest attainable text whilst not offering a good explanation for the emergence of the passive readings.

31. Καὶ ὑμᾶς is in an emphatic position most likely as a contrast with Christ, who is the one raised from the dead in the previous verse.

32. To borrow Moule’s phrase used for a slightly different issue (Moule, *Colossians*, 72). Furthermore, it is not clear what Fee means by ‘when he came to the main clause, the emphasis on the contrast itself took over in the form of a νυνὶ δέ (*but now*), which then launched him into a contrast in which *they themselves* were still the focus’. The ποτε in the protasis indicates that the νυνὶ δέ contrast was intended from the very beginning of verse 21 (καὶ ὑμᾶς ποτε ὄντας κτλ).

The active reading is simply assumed by several commentators, without any attempt to explain the textual difficulties.³³ Others note the difficulties created by the passive reading, but do not offer any hypothesis for the rise of the variants.³⁴ In a brief remark, Lohse proposes that the aorist passive was an ‘ancient alteration by which the direct address to the community was strengthened’.³⁵ Interestingly, Fee and Lohse provide similar explanations for the origin of the passive form, although the former holds that Paul himself penned it whereas the latter puts it down to a later (albeit ancient) scribal emendation. Equally brief is Pokorný’s remark that ‘[t]he combination of δέ with ἀποκατήλλαξεν is not common linguistically, though it is possible ... for this reason some MSS have tried to modify the text’.³⁶ Although both inferences are possible, one wonders how a scribe, so sensitive to grammatical and syntactical nuances as assumed by both hypotheses, would have failed to see that, in his attempt to ‘help out’ the author, his solution was worse than the problem he was trying to fix.

In the active reading camp, it is Barth and Blanke who devote more ink to addressing our textual problem. They also venture an explanation for the rise of the passive reading. After pointing out that most of the grammatical and syntactical difficulties evaporate on the well-attested active reading, they draw attention to the need to explain the emergence of the *lectio difficilior* in P46 and B03.³⁷ They posit a ‘dogmatic problem’ possibly caused by the active reading,

Because if we use the active verb form in v. 22, analogously to the proclamation in the hymn, it becomes possible to supply God as subject, so that the reference would be to the ‘corporal body of God’ in the following sequence. The active verb form in v. 22 might well take up the subject of the hymn, which is God. Consequently in v. 22, reference would be to God’s ‘flesh of his body’.³⁸

So, they conclude,

33. E.g. Gnlika, *Kolossierbrief*, 88; Hübner, *Kolossier*, 65–66; Lähnemann, *Kolossierbrief*, 43; Lindemann, *Kolossierbrief*, 31–32; Thompson, *Colossians*, 39; Wolter, *Kolossier*, 91–92; Wright, *Colossians*, 81–82; Schweizer, *Colossians*, 91–94. Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 173, points to Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, and Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger’s ‘Textual Commentary’ for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2015), for discussion of our textual problem.

34. E.g. Foster, *Colossians*, 204; Moo, *Colossians*, 141.

35. Lohse, *Colossians*, 64, n. 16. Followed by Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 176.

36. Pokorný, *Colossians*, 91, n. 4.

37. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 220.

38. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 221.

It is ... possible and probable that the dogmatic problems arising from reading no. 3 [ἀποκατήλλαξεν] would be circumvented in variant nos. 1 and 2 [ἀποκατηλλάγητε and ἀποκατηλλαγέντες respectively]; thus it was thought that it was more important to avoid dogmatic difficulties than to resolve the possible grammatic and stylistic irregularities or peculiarities.³⁹

In their view, a scribe would thus have changed the form of the verb from the active to the passive in order to avoid the conclusion that the expression ‘body of his flesh’ in verse 22 referred to *God’s* body. Although their hypothesis is not impossible,⁴⁰ it does face some difficulties. To begin with, supplying God as the intended subject of the active ἀποκατήλλαξεν (v. 22) is far from straightforward.⁴¹ It is worth noting that God is introduced in verse 19 only obliquely as the subject of ἀποκαταλλάξαι (v. 20) via the circumlocution πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα, perhaps with the aim of keeping the focus of verses 15-20 on the Son (see v. 13). As already observed, verse 21 marks a shift from the so-called Christ Hymn (vv. 15-20), emphasising the reconciling act more strongly by the use of ἀποκατήλλαξεν as the main verb in verses 21-22. In the light of that, several scholars who accept the active reading have taken Christ to be the intended subject of the reconciling act in verse 22.⁴² So, although it is possible that a scribe identified a potential theological issue here, it is really not clear that the text is prone to such a misunderstanding in the first place, even if one takes God as the intended subject of the verb. Note how Paul, perhaps aware of a potential confusion, seems to go out of his way to make

39. Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 221.

40. The hypothesis would be strengthened if they could demonstrate that P46 tends to make theological emendations, and that this particular theological problem was indeed current around the time and place the manuscript was produced (but see James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* (Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 355-357).

41. Commentators who take Christ as the subject of the verb in v. 22 include: Bruce, *Colossians*, 78; Gnllka, *Kolossierbrief*, 89; Foster, *Colossians*, 197-198; Dunn, *Colossians*, 103; Wilson, *Colossians*, 164; and even Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 221.

42. Including Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, 221. To be sure, this does not solve all the syntactical difficulties of verse 22. Whether taking God or Christ as the intended subject, the interpreter is still left with at least one anacoluthon to reckon with, and in both cases it is related to one of the personal pronouns of verse 22. If God is the subject of ἀποκατήλλαξεν, then the first αὐτοῦ becomes anacoluthic because it clearly does not refer back to God, the subject of the main verb. On the other hand, whereas the anacoluthon created with ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου disappears if Christ is the intended subject of ἀποκατήλλαξεν, we should probably expect a different referent for the second pronoun in the verse: κατενώπιον αὐτοῦ. If the referent is the same as the first one (i.e. Christ), αὐτοῦ must be rendered as reflexive, and the imagery it creates seems too awkward, i.e. *Christ* reconciled ... by *Christ’s* death in *his* body of flesh in order for *Christ* to present before *Christ* (= reflexive *himself*).

crystal clear who he meant by ἐν τῷ σώματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ διὰ τοῦ θανάτου – a quite verbose sentence to say simply ‘Christ’s death’ (which had already been mentioned in verse 20b with the equally clear statement εἰρηνοποιήσας διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ).

Thus, although the active reading ἀποκατήλλαξεν does not meet the two most basic criteria for the establishment of the earliest attainable text (the reading that explains the rise of all the others, and the reading that is the most difficult one) it is both externally and internally strong. Therefore, with most commentators, the active ἀποκατήλλαξεν should be preferred as the earliest attainable text. The main obstacle to accepting the reading of the majority of manuscripts as the earliest attainable text is the lack of any convincing explanation as to how the passive reading arose. In what follows I offer a hypothesis for the rise of the aorist passive reading in P46 and B03, thereby addressing Fee’s desideratum.

3. Colossians 1:22a in P46 and B03: Assimilation of a Parallel Passage

I suggest that the passive reading of P46 and B03 arose by assimilation of (or harmonisation with)⁴³ a parallel passage – a common phenomenon by which a scribe, influenced by a parallel passage, introduces a change in the manuscript being copied, either consciously or unconsciously.⁴⁴

A couple of examples from the letter to the Colossians should suffice to illustrate this phenomenon. In Colossians 1:14 later manuscripts (614, 630, et al.) introduced the phrase διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, which is most likely an assimilation from Ephesians 1:7.

Col. 1:14	Eph. 1:7ab
ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν [διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ], τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν.	Ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ, τὴν ἄφεσιν τῶν παραπτωμάτων ...

43. I use ‘harmonisation’ and ‘assimilation’ interchangeably, without any intrinsic connotation of intention.

44. Cf. Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Erroll F. Rhodes, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 290–291; Cambry G. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization in the Synoptic Gospels*, NTTSD 60 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391819>: ‘In the field of textual criticism, this practice is usually listed as one of the routine errors made by scribes and is included under the heading of “transcriptional probabilities”, that is, readings that are the product of the scribe rather than the author.’

Metzger and Ehrman put this particular assimilation down to unintentional changes caused by ‘errors of the mind’.⁴⁵ Another example found in P46 is the insertion of the phrase διὰ ταῦτα γάρ into Colossians 3:6, which comes from the parallel in Ephesians 5:6b. Royse categorises this singular reading as a harmonisation to a parallel passage.⁴⁶

A recent monograph by Cambry G. Pardee on harmonisation clarifies how the process occurs.⁴⁷ Although his focus is on the Synoptics, as he sets out to determine the role played by harmonisation in the transmission of the text,⁴⁸ some of the methodological principles employed in his study bear on the analysis of the practice of harmonisation more generally. In one of his main conclusions, he writes that ‘[t]he results ... show that deliberate assimilation does not occur more often than accidental assimilation, and in fact occurs quite sparingly’.⁴⁹ The evidence presented in Pardee’s research demonstrates that although scribes occasionally harmonised a passage intentionally,⁵⁰ the most common type of assimilation found was what he calls ‘reflexive harmonisation’, that is, an unconscious assimilation by the scribe of a parallel (or ‘near-parallel’) passage into the text being copied. He defines ‘near-parallel’ as ‘passages that are not direct parallels but which contain very similar vocabulary, content, or context’:⁵¹

This type of harmonization occurs as a reflex to the text. It is not exactly that the scribe was *unaware* (i.e. unconscious) of what he was copying, only that he was *also aware* (i.e. conscious) of material other than the text he was copying. The external influences at work upon him (unconsciously) were subtle so that the creation of such harmonizing readings did not take place as a result of an intent to enforce uniformity among the Gospels.⁵²

Borrowing the concept of ‘horizon of expectation’ from Philip Comfort, Pardee argues that ‘[r]eflexive harmonization, caused by the scribe’s horizon of expectation, is the most common cause of assimilation’. Comfort explains ‘horizon of expectation’ as follows:

45. Bruce M. Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 257–258. Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 554.

46. Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 343; see pp. 342–343 for more examples of harmonisation to parallel passages in P46.

47. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*.

48. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 43.

49. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 11, cf. 429.

50. Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 3.

51. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 19.

52. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 16–17 (*italics original*).

Once a Gospel was read by someone, it shaped the horizon of expectations for the reading of the next Gospel; in essence, it formed the horizon by which a scribe read another Gospel, and which prompted a multitude of changes.⁵³

With that in mind, Pardee goes on to say:

This cognitive exemplar stood in competition with the physical exemplar and sometimes won out. Of course, a scribe's horizon of expectation might not be the first Gospel they read, but rather the one heard, read, or copied most often or most recently.⁵⁴

Reflexive harmonisation caused by horizon of expectation is not peculiar to the copying of the Synoptics, but is likely to occur in the copying process of any parallel or near-parallel passages, such as those found in the Pauline epistles.

To be sure, the assimilation I am proposing in Colossians 1:22a is of a different type from the ones in the examples provided above. What I am proposing in Colossians is not an assimilation of an exact phrase, but a 'reflexive' harmonisation from a 'remote near-parallel' text of the form of the main verb. The examples above nevertheless illustrate the sort of reflexive assimilation found in the epistles.

If the reading of Colossians 1:22a in P46 and B03 is indeed an instance of assimilation, Ephesians 2:16 and Romans 5:10 represent potential candidates for the assimilated near-parallel passage.⁵⁵ Ephesians 2:16, which includes the verb ἀποκαταλλάξει, is closer to Colossians in terms of its position in the copied text, thus making it arguably a stronger candidate for the source of an assimilation.⁵⁶ However, the physical proximity to Colossians (in both P46 and B03) seems to be the only advantage of Ephesians 2:16 on this matter. It does not share as many lexical and syntactical parallels with Colossians as Romans 5:10 does (see below). Furthermore, unlike the other three Pauline letters where the reconciliation

53. Philip W. Comfort, 'The Scribe as Interpreter: A New Look at New Testament Textual Criticism According to Reader Reception Theory' (PhD diss., The University of South Africa, 1996), 44. Also quoted by Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 17.

54. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 17.

55. The imperative passive καταλλάγητε in 2 Cor 5:20, which has the same passive ending as found in Col 1:22, may also be regarded as a possible candidate. However, the 'near-parallelism' between Col 1:21-22 and Rom 5:10 is stronger, as I hope to demonstrate below. This is not to say 2 Cor 5:20 could not have played a part in the formation of the scribe's horizon of expectation, for it could have strengthened the expectation of the passive form of the verb, thus making it more formative in his mind.

56. Only in this case the assimilation would have to go the other way around, that is, the active voice of the verb in Eph 2:16 would have been assimilated into Col 1:22a.

metaphor is significant (Romans, 2 Corinthians, and Colossians), the emphasis of this metaphor in Ephesians is on social ethnic reconciliation – the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles who, having been made one new humanity in Christ, are brought into a new standing before God (cf. Eph 2:15-18). This differs significantly from Romans, 2 Corinthians, and Colossians, where the emphasis is on vertical reconciliation, that is, between God and human beings. Moreover, although the (ἀπο)καταλλ- verb in Paul also occurs in both 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 and Ephesians 2:16, and although Ephesians is spatially closer to Colossians (at least in the extant manuscripts), the horizon of expectation may not *necessarily* be formed by the last text heard, read, or copied. The very first text heard, read, or copied could potentially do the trick just as well.⁵⁷ And as is well known, in the extant manuscripts of the New Testament, Romans usually opens the sequence of Pauline epistles (including P46 and B03) which, perhaps combined with 2 Corinthians 5:20, could potentially have contributed to make such a strong (first) impression on the scribes' mind.⁵⁸

Romans 5:10 surely does qualify as a 'near-parallel' to Colossians 1:21-22:

THGNT Romans 5:10	P46 Colossians 1:21-22a
Εἰ γὰρ ἐχθροὶ ὄντες	13 ... και υμας ποτε ον[τας]
κατηλλάγημεν τῷ θεῷ διὰ	14 απηλλοτριωμενους και εχθρους τη διανοια
τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ,	15 εν τοις εργοις τοις πονηροις νυν δε αποκαταλ[.]
πολλῶ μᾶλλον καταλλαγόντες	16 γητε τω σωματι της σαρκος αυτου δια του θανα[του] ⁵⁹
σωθησόμεθα ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ·	

There are similarities in vocabulary, style, and content. The distinctive Pauline antithesis between the believers' previous state of enmity and their present state as reconciled people of God is a key structural feature in both texts. Although the rhetorical construction ποτέ ... νυνί is lacking in Romans 5:10, it nonetheless retains the conceptual contrast.⁶⁰ The antithesis is presented with parallel lexical components in both Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:21-22: the theological enmity

57. Cf. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 17.

58. It is thus possible that Romans was indeed the first letter copied by the scribe; alternatively it might have been the Pauline letter he had heard, read, or copied most often.

59. Folio 091r, (C) 2021 Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung (underline and bold added). I have substituted '..' for the '[λα]' in αποκαταλ[λα]γητε to mark the missing line ending. There seems to be enough space for two letters. The folio can be viewed at https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/BP_II_ff_14_91/1/.

60. Cf. Rom 5:6-9.

is conveyed by ἐχθρός in combination with the present participle of εἰμί, with the reconciliation of the believers being indicated by the aorist passive (ἀπο)καταλλ- followed by the prepositional phrase διὰ τοῦ θανάτου:

ἐχθρός + participle present of εἰμί	passive (ἀπο)καταλλ-	διὰ τοῦ θανάτου
being enemies	we/you were reconciled [to] [God/Christ]	through the death

Therefore, there are multiple lexical and syntactical parallels between Romans 5:10 and Colossians 1:21-22 which could have functioned as triggers for the scribe’s mental error.⁶¹

Additionally, one could consider the effect that the Pauline version of the reconciliation metaphor could have had in the scribe’s mind: it is possible that the entire discussion of reconciliation in Romans 5:1-11 could have formed the scribe’s horizon of expectation (or semantic frame) for the reconciliation motif. Because of the somewhat radical novelty of Paul’s atonement metaphor, the impact of the reconciliation metaphor in his letters might have imprinted a strong impression on the minds of readers, especially those living in the first centuries CE, including the scribes of both P46 and its *Vorlage*. ‘Reconciliation’ is a metaphorical expression, and, as such, it evoked frames, or scenarios, which were readily available to the readers’ conceptual system, enabling them to make sense of the metaphors.⁶² Readers in the first few centuries CE would have been familiar with the widespread notion of guilty individuals making arrangements to reconcile an offended deity to themselves.⁶³ Paul employs this familiar frame to conceptualise his atonement theology, but, as the creative writer he was, he

61. Interestingly, P46 omits the preposition ἐν in ἀποκαταλλ[.]γητε [ἐν] τῷ σωματι τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ. The omission is now supported by 1311. This is not surprising, since 35.6% of the significant singulars in P46 are omissions (Roysse, *Scribal Habits*, 270). Furthermore, on p. 275, n. 444, Roysse quotes Lagrange, ‘Les papyrus Chester Beatty pour les Épîtres de S. Paul et l’Apocalypse’, *RB* 43 (1934): 483, on the slight tendency of our papyrus to avoid the instrumental ἐν, citing Col. 1.17 and 22b as examples. Nevertheless, as Roysse, *Scribal Habits*, 275, n. 442, comments, ‘[t]he omission by 1311 was probably by a leap (ἀποκατηλλάξεν εν); but if P46’s *Vorlage* agreed with B03, our scribe would have seen ἀποκατηλλάγητε εν, and no leap is possible.’ Whatever happened, the end result was a reading slightly closer to the ‘near-parallel’ Romans 5:10. I wonder if the scribe (either of the *Vorlage* or P46), influenced by Rom 5:10 (cf. 2 Cor 5:20), was inclined to conceptualise reconciliation as being τῷ θεῷ.

62. In frame semantics, ‘frame’ is commonly defined as ‘a script-like conceptual structure that describes a particular type of situation, object, or event and the participants and props involved in it’. Josef Ruppenhofer et al., ‘FrameNet II: Extended Theory and Practice’, 2010, 5 (<https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/docs/r1.5/book.pdf>).

63. E.g. 2 Macc 1:5; 2 Macc 7:33; 8:29.

subverts the expectations of his readers by adding a twist to the well-known dynamic of the reconciliation frame. Paul's innovative syntagmatic construction of the καταλλάσσω- word group as found in Romans 5:1-11, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Colossians 1:20,22, and Ephesians 2:16⁶⁴ gives an entirely unique twist to the meaning of (ἀπο)καταλλάσσειν, even as known in wider usage in the Greek world. This has been confirmed by Porter's research, following Marshall's suggestion.⁶⁵ Porter was able to determine that Paul's use of the καταλλάσσω word group is unattested in extant earlier Greek, that is, 'Paul uses καταλλάσσω in the active voice with the offended and hence angered party in a relationship (i.e. God) as (grammatical) subject taking the initiative in effecting reconciliation between himself and the offending party.'⁶⁶ The impact of Paul's reconfiguration of the concept of theological reconciliation lies precisely in the incongruity between his message and the familiar frames known to the hearers. Paul's reversal of that logic (i.e. the offended God reconciling guilty sinners) must have sounded rather shocking and, consequently, more 'memorable' to its first hearers. Combined with the fact that the καταλλάσσω- word group only features in four pericopes in the Pauline corpus, it is possible that Romans 5:1-11 would have left a sufficiently strong impression in the mind of a scribe to shape his horizon of expectation – especially if Romans 5 had been 'heard, read, or copied most often or most recently' by him.⁶⁷ So it is not difficult to see how a scribe, familiar with Romans 5:10, would have recalled that text and unconsciously assimilated the passive form of the verb into Colossians 1:22.

Therefore, on the one hand, it is possible that the scribe, influenced by the passive form of καταλλάσσω in Romans 5:10 (cf. 2 Cor 5:20), decided to 'help out the author' (to borrow Fee's expression) by amending the text of Colossians 1:22. Even more likely, however, is that the assimilation was made by an unconscious

64. This argument remains relevant for Colossians even if one challenges the Pauline authorship. As Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 166, commenting on the vocabulary of v. 20, says, 'the vocabulary ... indicates at the least an author who knew well the Pauline material (if it was not Paul), and was not venturing too far from Paul's view of reconciliation and the very language he himself used to describe it'. Cf. Dunn, *Colossians*, 35–39.

65. I. Howard Marshall, 'The Meaning of "Reconciliation"', in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of George E. Ladd*, ed. Robert A. Guelich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 117–132.

66. Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 16. Porter points out that the 'one major difference from other Pauline usage' in both Colossians and Ephesians is that 'the verb used [in the latter] is the prefixed form, ἀποκαταλλάσσω, which is also unattested in extant Greek documents before Colossians and Ephesians (Porter, *Καταλλάσσω*, 163).

67. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 17.

recollection of Romans 5:10.⁶⁸ The hypothesis of an unintentional assimilation is strengthened by the fact that the *effect* of the alteration (from active to passive) does not impinge on any major theological motif.⁶⁹ As correctly remarked by Sumney, '[t]his decision does not affect the primary assertions of this verse. The question involves only whether this verb emphasizes the divine act or its consequences.'⁷⁰ There is no evidence, to my knowledge, that the active reading has been misconstrued in such a way as to imply that God the father died in the flesh, as Barth and Blanke suggest. Nor is such inference naturally drawn from the text.

4. The Manuscripts: P46 and B03

An important question arises at this point concerning the nature of the relationship between the readings of P46 and B03 and how it bears on the analysis of our variant. Commenting on Colossians 1:22a, Royse interprets 'the reading of P46 as having derived from the reading now found only in B03'.⁷¹ The two manuscripts belong to a strong and important early strand of the tradition, which used to be called 'proto-Alexandrian'.⁷² In the light of that, Fee seems to be overconfident about the quality of the *Vorlage* of P46 when he challenges the supporters of the reading of the majority of manuscripts of Colossians 1:22a to

68. Pace H. F. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1913), 782, who marks 2 Cor 5:20 as the source of the harmonisation in Col 1:22.

69. Cf. the discussion of 'Functional Understanding of Intentional Changes', in Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 331–363.

70. Sumney, *Colossians*, 84; cf. Jean N. Aletti, *Saint Paul, épître aux Colossiens: introduction, traduction et commentaire*, EBib 20 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993), 123.

71. Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 305, n. 600. However, note that P46 still has a singular variant at this point with the omission of the augment in ἀποκαταλ[.]γητε (instead of ἀποκατηλ[.]γητε). Again, such misspelling is not surprising since P46 is riddled with scribal blunders (cf. Günther Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London: The British Academy, 1953), 229). Furthermore, not only was the work of the correctors not particularly good, but also '[t]he scribe and the later correctors devoted most of their attention to the earlier portion of the codex, and especially to Hebrews' (Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 212; cf. Günther Zuntz, *Opuscula Selecta* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), 252–268, also quoted by Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 266, n. 366). Royse does not address the issue of the rise of the passive reading.

72. There is a genetic relationship between the two manuscripts. As Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, 62, puts it, '[d]irect dependence of B03 upon P46 being evidently out of the question, we conclude that these two manuscripts belong to one and the same ancient and narrow branch of the tradition.'

explain ‘how the scribe of the *Vorlage* of such superior manuscripts as P46 and B03 could have made such an egregious copying error’.⁷³ One wonders if this is a reflection of Fee’s commitment to the notion of a neutral text type. As is well known, however, the superior quality of the branch does not necessarily mean that the *Vorlage* of P46 was free from spurious readings.⁷⁴ Zuntz highlights a few such readings shared by P46 and B03 and concludes that ‘[t]he high proportion of errors ... is a striking, and even a welcome feature. These special agreements in error (*Leitfehler*) demonstrate the close interrelation between P46 and B03.’⁷⁵ As he goes on to conclude with regard to the basic text of P46, the occurrence and frequency of these errors ‘contain a notable reminder and a renewed warning against the mirage of a “neutral” text’.⁷⁶

The studies conducted by Zuntz and Royse have demonstrated that egregious copying errors are indeed a common characteristic of P46. Zuntz writes: ‘The papyrus, though written by a professional scribe and corrected by an *ex officio* corrector, is in itself a very poor manuscript. Both scribe and corrector did their work badly.’⁷⁷ To this, Royse adds that ‘[a]ctually, even Zuntz does not fully present the extent of error in P46, since he gives only samples of the readings ...’⁷⁸ All this supports Dirk Jongkind’s conclusion that P46 ‘is a type of manuscript that is used to confirm a reading rather than to suggest the correct reading’.⁷⁹

With regards to Codex Vaticanus (B03), Jongkind warns against the pitfall for textual critics of

transferring wholesale to the Pauline corpus distinctions learned in the textual criticism of the four gospels. In point of fact, some important manuscripts that contain both the gospels and Paul differ in their textual character and the quality of the text between these two major subdivisions.⁸⁰

73. Fee, *Pauline Christology*, 314.

74. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, 62; cf. 34.

75. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, 62.

76. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, 62.

77. Zuntz, ‘The Text of the Epistles’, 265–266, also quoted by Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 266, n. 366.

78. Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 266, n. 366.

79. Dirk Jongkind, *An Introduction to the Greek New Testament Produced at Tyndale House*, Cambridge (Wheaton: Crossway, 2019), 53.

80. Dirk Jongkind, ‘The Text of the Pauline Corpus’, in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. Stephen Westerholm (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 221, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444395778.ch14>.

Codex Vaticanus is a case in point, for it ‘appears to have a higher proportion of less-reliable readings in the Pauline corpus than elsewhere’.⁸¹ So, despite the acknowledged quality of B03,⁸² it ‘needs to be treated with more caution in the Pauline Letters’.⁸³

Additionally, the relationship between the readings of P46 and B03 could be interpreted as an indication that we are not dealing with *two* strong witnesses, but with the witness of *one* tradition – and a reading that only made it into two extant witnesses from a vast number of representatives of that tradition.⁸⁴ If this is the case, then it further emphasises the danger of overstating the importance of these MSS in determining the reading of Colossians 1:22a.

Therefore, the agreement between P46 and B03 alone, without proper analysis of each reading individually in relation to both the external and internal evidence, should not be invariably preferred in determining the earliest attainable text. The external weight provided by P46 and B03 for the passive form in Colossians 1:22a is balanced out by the vast majority of witnesses, including important representatives of the same Alexandrian branch of P46 and B03, such as Ξ01 A02 C04 Ψ044, the tenth-century minuscule 1739, and the fourteenth-century 1881. As for the internal evidence, I have shown above the virtually insurmountable, and unnecessary, syntactical and grammatical difficulties posed by the reading of P46 and B03 in Colossians 1:22a.

5. Conclusion

In the light of the analysis above, I propose that the reading of P46 and B03 in Colossians 1:22a can be plausibly explained by a reflexive assimilation (or harmonisation) of the parallel passage in Romans 5:10. My hypothesis both reaffirms the reading of the majority of manuscripts, the active ἀποκατήλαξεν, and provides a viable response to the challenge issued by Fee for advocates of the active reading to propose a plausible explanation for the rise of the passive reading in P46 and B03. According to Pardee’s classification, my proposed assimilation in Colossians 1:22a could be assigned the category of ‘Possible (P)’, which, as he observes, is a broad and inclusive category.⁸⁵ However, in light of the arguments

81. Jongkind, ‘The Text of the Pauline Corpus’, 221.

82. Cf. Dirk Jongkind, ‘Redactional Elements in the Text of Codex B’, in *The Future of New Testament Textual Scholarship: From H. C. Hoskier to the Editio Critica Maior and Beyond*, ed. Garrick V. Allen (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 231–245.

83. Jongkind, *Introduction*, 58.

84. I owe this insight to James B. Prothro in a personal correspondence.

85. Pardee, *Scribal Harmonization*, 42.

presented above, it seems to provide the best explanation for the dilemma posed by the grammatically anomalous *lectio difficilior* in P46 and B03.

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