

# Paul Not Yet Justified? The Text of Philippians 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup>

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Abstract: The text of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> contains a reading in which Paul claims he has not yet been “justified” or “found righteous.” This reading, which appears in a few other witnesses (e.g., 06, 010, 012, Irenaus [Latin translation], Ambrosiaster), has been referred to as “the justification clause.” Scholars have labeled the reading “intriguing,” “very interesting,” “striking,” and “astounding.” However, scholars have devoted very little attention to this reading. This article fills that gap by highlighting the text of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup>. The author identifies four noteworthy features of the justification clause within this manuscript and proposes that the reading need not be considered “un-Pauline” (as many have understood it) but is wholly coherent with Pauline references to final justification at the last judgment. The author concludes that an early unconscious alteration due to homoiarcton or homoioteleuton best explains the absence of the reading among the majority of textual witnesses and that the justification clause should be considered authentic.

Over a century ago Marvin R. Vincent claimed that the Letter to the Philippians by the apostle Paul “presents no textual questions of importance.”<sup>1</sup> This appraisal of text-critical issues in Philippians appears to have guided scholarly assumptions both before and after the appearance of Vincent’s commentary in 1897. The presupposition that Philippians is free from textual problems has persisted, even with the publication of the text of the important papyrus manuscript P<sup>46</sup> (Chester Beatty BP II + P. Michigan Inv. 6238 [Gregory-Aland Papyrus 46]) by Frederic G. Kenyon between 1934 and 1937.<sup>2</sup> One hundred and one years after Vincent’s comment, and over eighty years after the divulgation of the text of P<sup>46</sup>, Markus Bockmuehl still maintained that

<sup>1</sup> Marvin R. Vincent, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), xxxvii. All abbreviations of secondary sources utilized in this article are drawn from the *Society of Biblical Literature Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 171–216.

<sup>2</sup> Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Descriptions and Texts of Twelve Manuscripts on Papyrus of the Greek Bible, Fasciculus 3: Pauline Epistles and Revelation, Text* (London: Emery Walker, 1934); Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Descriptions and Texts of Twelve Manuscripts on Papyrus of the Greek Bible, Fasciculus 3 Supplement: Pauline Epistles, Text* (London: Emery Walker, 1936); Kenyon, *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Descriptions and Texts of Twelve Manuscripts on Papyrus of the Greek Bible, Fasciculus 3 Supplement: Pauline Epistles, Plates* (London: Emery Walker Limited, 1937). P<sup>46</sup> contains most of the Pauline letters on eighty six extant folia. Fifty-six folia are housed in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (BP II). The additional thirty extant folia are located at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (P. Michigan Inv. 6238). The manuscript likely has an Egyptian provenance (I know of no location outside of Egypt ever suggested, although scholars have suggested various locations within Egypt). The *Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (commonly referred to as the *Liste*) kept by the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF) at the University of Münster assigns P<sup>46</sup> an “origin year early” date of 200 and an “origin year late” date of 225. See [ntvmmr.uni-muenster.de/liste](http://ntvmmr.uni-muenster.de/liste) (Document ID: 10046). For more on the dating of P<sup>46</sup>, see footnote 14 below.

“happily, the study of Philippians is free from major text-critical uncertainties; the judgment of Vincent xxxvii a century ago still holds.”<sup>3</sup>

However, in the same work Bockmuehl noted that “it is precisely in Philippians that P<sup>46</sup> supports several of the more interesting departures from the standard critical text and leaves us with difficult text-critical decisions in one or two cases.”<sup>4</sup> One of those “more interesting departures” occurs at 3:12. Moisés Silva acknowledges a reading attested there as “the most striking textual variant of P<sup>46</sup> in Philippians.”<sup>5</sup> Others describe this same reading as “intriguing,” “very interesting,” “striking,” and even “astounding.”<sup>6</sup>

The text of Phil 3:12 is located in P<sup>46</sup> on the *recto* of folio 89.<sup>7</sup> There the text of 3:12 occupies space on the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth lines. It may be transcribed as follows:

ουχ οτι ηδη ελαβον η ηδη δεδικαιωμαι η ηδη τετελειωμαι διωκω δε ει και καταλαβω εφ ω και κατελημφθην υπο χυ ιηυ.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, BNTC 11 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 40.

<sup>5</sup> Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 187.

<sup>6</sup> “Intriguing”: Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 220; “very interesting”: Ben Witherington III, *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 208 (Witherington further identifies the reading as “the most interesting and curious textual variant in the whole document” [185–86 n. 14]); “striking”: Joseph H. Hellerman, *Philippians*, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2015), 199; “astounding”: Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary: Commentary on the Variant Readings of the Ancient New Testament Manuscripts and How They Relate to the Major English Translations* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), 612.

<sup>7</sup> For images of this folio, see [ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/en\\_GB/manuscript-workspace](http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/en_GB/manuscript-workspace) (Document ID: 10046, Page ID: 1590 [89r]); [www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA\\_P46](http://www.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_P46) (CSNTM Image ID: 134820). For Kenyon’s plate of this folio see his *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Fasciculus 3 Supplement: Pauline Epistles, Plates*, f. 89. r.

<sup>8</sup> Except for one adjustment, this transcription reflects the one published in Kenyon, *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Fasciculus 3 Supplement: Pauline Epistles, Text*, 146; Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett, eds., *The Complete Text of the Earliest New Testament Manuscripts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1999), 314–15; Comfort and Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts: New and Complete Transcriptions with Photographs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2001), 325. Instead of τετελειωμαι, these works print τελειωμαι, which is also the reading noted for P<sup>46</sup> in UBS<sup>3</sup>; Enrique López, “En torno a Fil 3,12,” *EstBib* 34 (1975): 121 n. 1; Carl Jaroš, *Das Neue Testament nach den ältesten griechischen Handschriften: die handschriftliche griechische Überlieferung des Neuen Testaments vor Codex Sinaiticus und Codex Vaticanus* (Wein: Echter Verlag, 2006 [according to Edgar Battad Ebojo, “A Scribe and His Manuscript: An Investigation into the Scribal Habits of Papyrus 46 (P. Chester Beatty II–P. Mich. Inv. 6238)” (PhD diss., The University of Birmingham, 2014), 815]). However, digital images of folio 89r provided on the websites of the INTF and the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (CSNTM) in Plano, TX, along with Kenyon’s plate of this folio, reveal what appears to be a faint ink mark at the end of the fourth line, immediately following the third occurrence of ηδη. In light of this, the transcription provided on the INTF website indicates that two additional letters may have been inked here, the letters *tau* and *epsilon* at the beginning of τετελειωμαι. Thus the transcription of the text on the website of the INTF reads τετελειωμαι rather than τελειωμαι. For URLs to digital images of folio 89r of P<sup>46</sup> and for Kenyon’s plate of this folio, see n. 7 above. The appearance of τξ at the end of the fourth line is noted in Klaus Wachtel and Klaus Witte, eds., *Das Neue Testament auf Papyrus. 2: Die paulinischen Briefe, 2: Gal, Ep, Phil, Kol, 1 u. 2 Thess, 1 u. 2 Tim, Tit, Phlm, Hbr*, ANTF 22 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 114, cited affirmatively by James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, NTTSD 36 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 208. Ebojo also includes these letters in his transcription, placing the *tau* in brackets (“[τ]ξ”; “A Scribe and His Manuscript,” 656, 815).

This version of Phil 3:12 has much in common with those inscribed into the vast majority of Greek manuscripts. However, it departs from them with the inclusion of the words *ἡ ἡδη δεδικαιωμαι* immediately following *ελαβον*. John Reumann translates these words, “or that I have already been justified,” and refers to the reading as “the justification clause.”<sup>9</sup> In addition to P<sup>46</sup> the reading is attested in 06, 010, 012, 0319, and the Latin texts of these same bilingual codices (VL 75, VL 76, VL 77, VL 78). The reading also appears in the Latin manuscripts VL 61 and VL 89, two Gothic manuscripts of the Pauline letters (Ambrosianus A<sup>+</sup> and Ambrosianus B), and in citations of the verse in six patristic witnesses: the Latin translation of Irenaeus’s *Adversus haereses*, the *Commentarius in xiii epistulas Paulinas* by Ambrosiaster, the anonymous treatise *De singularitate clericorum*, the anonymous *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeeum*, the sermon *De utilitate ieiunii* attributed to Augustine, and the Balliol College 157 manuscript of Pelagius’s *Expositiones xiii epistolarum S. Pauli*.<sup>10</sup>

The inclusion of the justification clause in the text of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> and these other witnesses results in Paul declaring that he has not already been justified. Reumann accepts the reading as authentic and translates the verse as follows: “I do not say that I have already had success, or that I have already been justified or am already perfected; but I run in pursuit if I also may successfully take hold, the way I was successfully taken hold of by Christ Jesus.”<sup>11</sup> The text of 3:12 in the witnesses attesting to the justification clause seems to contradict statements on justification (*δικαιοσύνη*) attested elsewhere in the Pauline letters. Verbs with a *δικαι-* root most often occur in Paul in the present tense (e.g., Rom 3:24, 28; Gal 2:16 [first occurrence]; 3:11, 5:4) or in the past tense (e.g., Rom 4:2, 5:1, 5:9, 6:7, 8:30, 8:33 [twice]; 1 Cor 4:4, 6:11; Gal 2:16 [second occurrence], 2:17, 3:24). In the version of Phil 3:12 attested in P<sup>46</sup>, the *δικαι-* term occurs in the perfect tense. It is a first-person form and follows the negative particle *οὐχ*. It thus has Paul communicating some sort of justification he had not yet experienced. In addition to his not yet obtaining whatever he intended as the direct object of *ελαβον* and his not already being “perfected” (or having “reached the goal” [*ἡ ἡδη τετελειωμαι*]), the text of 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> has Paul indicating that he has not already been justified.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Yale Bible 33B (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 533–34. I follow Reumann by referring to this reading as “the justification clause.” However, it should be noted that *δεδικαιωμαι* in this context could be translated into English not only using the term “justified” but also with other terms such as “made righteous,” “found righteous,” or “vindicated.” See the entry for the verb *δικαίωω* in BDAG, 249.

<sup>10</sup> For all these as witnesses to the justification clause see the following sources: Hermann Josef Frede, ed., *Epistulae ad Philippenses et ad Colossenses*, VLB 24.2 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1966–1971), 197 (middle); Kurt Aland, ed., *Galaterbrief bis Philipperbrief*, vol. 3 of *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments II, Die paulinischen Briefe*, ANTF 18 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 586–88; Wilhelm Streitberg, ed., *Der gotische Text und seine griechische Vorlage, mit Einleitung, Lesarten und Quellennachweisen sowie den kleineren Denkmälern als Anhang, mit einem Nachtrag von Piergiuseppe Scardigli*, vol. 1 of *Die gotische Bibel*, 7th ed. (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000), 375.

<sup>11</sup> Reumann, *Philippians*, 533. Others who accept the authenticity of the reading include López, “En torno a Fil 3,12,” 121–23; Comfort, *Text and Translation Commentary*, 612. Witherington acknowledges that “the arguments are evenly balanced” (*Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 209 n. 108).

<sup>12</sup> The direct object of *ελαβον* is not stated in Greek texts of Phil 3:12. No less than nine different proposals for the implied direct object are enumerated in Reumann, *Philippians*, 533–34. One of the usual explanations for the existence of the justification clause is that it was inserted to explicate the direct object of *ελαβον*. For references to this explanation, see, e.g., Victor C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature*, NovTSup 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 143; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 220; Demetrius K. Williams, *Enemies of the Cross of Christ: The Terminology of the Cross and Conflict in Philippians*, JSNTSup 223 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 196 n. 181; Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians (Revised)*,

## Four Noteworthy Features of the Justification Clause of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup>

In his edition of the text of P<sup>46</sup> Kenyon included the justification clause of Phil 3:12 among “the more noteworthy readings of the papyrus.”<sup>13</sup> Kenyon did not specify why he considered the reading noteworthy. In my view, its attestation in P<sup>46</sup> is noteworthy for at least four reasons.

First, the occurrence of the justification clause in this manuscript serves as evidence that the reading itself is quite early. If the date provided in the *Liste* is accepted, P<sup>46</sup> dates no later than 225 CE. James R. Royse is correct to stress that “even dated to *ca.* 200, P<sup>46</sup> is a remarkably ancient text.... Even now there are known only rather few verses that have survived from an earlier period.”<sup>14</sup>

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WBC 43 (Nashville: Nelson, 2004), 203; Francesco Bianchini, *L'elogio di Sé in Christo: L'utilizzo della περιαντολογία nel contest di Filippesi 3,1-4,1* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2006), 105 n. 164; Paul A. Holloway, *Philippians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 171. I agree with Silva that this explanation is “not weighty” (*Philippians*, 187). The most obvious reason for rejecting it is noted by Comfort: “the so-called addition does not supply a direct object” (*Text and Translation Commentary*, 612). In all witnesses attesting to the reading the clause contains a verb, and as Gordon D. Fee rightly notes, “there are no analogies in Paul where the ‘verb’ of a second clause supplies the ‘object’ of a former one” (*Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 344 n. 24). The direct object of ἔλαβον still remains unspecified in every witness attesting to the justification clause.

<sup>13</sup> Kenyon, *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Fasciculus 3 Supplement: Pauline Epistles, Text*, xix.

<sup>14</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 201. The date of P<sup>46</sup> has been debated. Most scholars seem to accept a date around (or no later than) 200, including Ulrich Wilcken, “The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri,” *APF* 11 (1933): 113; H. C. Hoskier, “A Study of the Chester Beatty Codex of the Pauline Epistles,” *JTS* 38 (1937): 149; Günther Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum*, The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy 1946 (London: The British Academy, 1953; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 11; Bruce M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Paleography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 64; Klaus Junack et al., eds., *Das Neue Testament auf Papyrus 2: Die paulinischen Briefe, 1: Röm, 1. Kor., 2. Kor.*, ANTF 12 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), xlv. Young Kyu Kim went so far as to argue for a date sometime in “the later first century” (“Paleographic Dating of P<sup>46</sup> to the Later First Century,” *Bib* 69 [1988]: 248). Min Seok Jang suggested a date between 75–175 CE (“A Reconsideration of the Date of Papyrus 46,” [PhD diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010], 145). Based on a comparison with P.Fay. 87, Guglielmo Cavallo suggested a date in the second half of the second century (see Brent Nongbri, *God’s Library: The Archaeology of the Earliest Christian Manuscripts* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018], 141). Don Barker suggests that “perhaps a tentative dating range of AD 150–250 should be assigned to P<sup>46</sup>” (“The Dating of the New Testament Papyri,” *NTS* 54 [2011]: 580–81). Ebojo is disposed toward a date between 175–225 (“A Scribe and His Manuscript,” 368). Pasquale Orsini and Willy Clarysee propose a date between 200–225 CE (“Early New Testament Manuscripts and Their Dates: A Critique of Theological Palaeography,” *ETL* 88 [2012]: 470). For a date of sometime during the early/first half of the third century, see William Henry Paine Hatch, *The Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), plate II; H. F. D. Sparks, “Order of the Epistles in P<sup>46</sup>,” *JTS* 42 (1941): 181. A broad date during the second or third century is cited by López, “En torno a Fil 3,12,” 121. For a general third-century date, see Ernst von Dobschütz, “Zur Liste der NTlichen Handschriften,” *ZNW* 32 (1933): 188; Henry A. Sanders, *A Third-Century Papyrus Codex of the Epistles of Paul*, University of Michigan Studies Humanistic Series 38 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1935), 13; Kenneth W. Clark, “Note On the Beatty Michigan Pauline Papyrus,” *JBL* 55 (1936): 83; Kirsopp Lake and Silva Lake, “Some Recent Discoveries,” *Religion in Life* 5 (1936): 89; Georg Maldfeld, “Die griechischen



Second, the justification clause of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> is noteworthy because the scribe of P<sup>46</sup> tended to omit text. This tendency is summarized by Royse in his analysis of the scribal habits of the P<sup>46</sup> scribe:

If we compare the overall patterns of additions and omissions, we see that P<sup>46</sup> adds a total of 54 words in its 52 additions.... On the other hand, the scribe omits a total of 298 or 299 words in his 161 omissions, for an average of almost two words (1.9, to be more precise) per omission. So the omissions in P<sup>46</sup> are not only much more frequent than additions, but also tend to be longer. Looking at the total picture, we see that our scribe's errors of addition and omission have resulted in a net loss of 244 or 245 words from the *Vorlage*, a figure that again makes evident that the tendency of P<sup>46</sup> is to produce a shorter text.<sup>15</sup>

Already prior to Royse, the tendency of this scribe to shorten the text was recognized early on in articles by Marie-Joseph Lagrange and Pierre Benoit. About the scribe of P<sup>46</sup> Benoit highlighted "*sa brièveté et même, onsons-nous dire, sa hâte.*"<sup>16</sup> Benoit proceeded to ask, "Ces omissions, et beaucoup d'autres, sont-elles dues seulement à une certaine hâte coupable du copiste, ou bien remontent-elles à un réviseur qui a le *goût des leçons plus courtes, plus légères?*"<sup>17</sup> Similarly Lagrange mused:

Peut-être sa tendance la plus caractéristique est-elle d'alléger le texte. Ce n'est pas assez de dire que pap. est un texte court qui ne s'est pas surchargé d'éléments inutiles. Dans certains endroits on dirait qu'il a jugé le style de Paul trop dense, presque encombré, et qu'il a été à la sobriété et au dépouille.<sup>18</sup>

Royse counts just fifty two additions in P<sup>46</sup>, comprising 11.5 percent of the 452 significant singular readings in the manuscript.<sup>19</sup> By contrast Royse counts 161 omissions in the manuscript.<sup>20</sup> He seems to attribute most of these omissions to accidental oversight or carelessness as opposed to a preference for a shorter, less-encumbered text.<sup>21</sup> However, he recognizes that the omission of twenty six pronouns, all of which he classifies as harmonizations of one type or

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Handschriftenbruchstücke des Neuen Testamentes auf Papyrus," *ZNW* 42 (1949): 250; Eric G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 20, 59, 148. I know of no scholar who has argued for a date later than the third century.

<sup>15</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 297–98.

<sup>16</sup> Pierre Benoit, "Le Codex paulinien Chester Beatty," *RB* 46 (1937): 62.

<sup>17</sup> Benoit, "Le Codex paulinien Chester Beatty," 63.

<sup>18</sup> Marie-Joseph Lagrange, "Les Papyrus Chester Beatty pour les épîtres de S. Paul et l'Apocalypse," *RB* 43 (1934): 483.

<sup>19</sup> Fifty of these additions are of one word only. These include twenty one conjunctions, fourteen articles, six pronouns, four verbs, four prepositions, and one adverb. The remaining two additions are at Rom 8:34 and Heb 5:10. Royse attributes the addition of  $\alpha\mu\alpha\ \delta\epsilon$  at Rom 8:34 as an attempt to clarify the grammar in Rom 8:33–34. He classifies the addition of  $\sigma\upsilon\ \epsilon\iota$  at Heb 5:10 as a harmonization to the citation of Ps 110:4 in Heb 5:6. See Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 267–70.

<sup>20</sup> These include 128 omissions of singular words: forty-two conjunctions and particles, twenty-eight articles, twenty-six pronouns, eight prepositions, seven nouns, seven verbs, four adverbs, four adjectives, and two proper names. Another thirty-three omissions are of more than one word. These include ten omissions of two words, one omission of two or three words, four omissions of three words, six omissions of four words, two omissions of five words, one omission of six words, one omission of seven words, one omission of eight words, three omissions of nine words, one omission of ten words, one omission of eleven words, one omission of twelve words, and one omission of twenty-one words. Royse attributes fifty-three omissions in P<sup>46</sup> to scribal leaps. See Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 270–98.

<sup>21</sup> Zuntz also recognized omissions as "a typical fault of the papyrus" (*Text of the Epistles*, 198).

another, “may be a consequence of the scribe’s desire to improve style.”<sup>22</sup> Whichever alterations were conscious or unconscious, the data amassed by Royse leads to the recognition of this scribe’s “very marked tendency to omit portions of the text” as one of “the main features characterizing the copying activity of the scribe of P<sup>46</sup>.”<sup>23</sup>

This phenomenon is noteworthy if the justification clause was present in the exemplar of this manuscript.<sup>24</sup> If indeed it was present, and if (as Lagrange and Benoit suggested) the scribe of P<sup>46</sup> was more a “réviseur” of the text in front of them than a thoughtless copyist, then this might have been a natural place for an omission. This is especially the case if the scribe had any inkling that the clause was spurious. The fact that the clause was not omitted by a scribe with a discernable tendency to omit text (again, assuming the inclusion of the clause in the exemplar) suggests that the scribe saw no reason why this text should be omitted.<sup>25</sup>

A third noteworthy feature of the justification clause of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> is that it remained untouched by later hands. According to the most recent calculation by Jacob W. Peterson, P<sup>46</sup> contains 202 total corrections to its text.<sup>26</sup> At least five different hands have been recognized as responsible for these corrections.<sup>27</sup> None of these hands left evidence that the justification clause of Phil 3:12 is out of place. No correction marks appear at this point in the manuscript. This lack of correction to the reading becomes even more interesting if Günther Zuntz’s observation of “a momentous characteristic of the tradition represented by P<sup>46</sup>” is accurate:

At all stages which the papyrus allows us to recover—and they extend over a whole century—we observe the endeavor to move away from such forms of text as are attested, in the extant tradition, by Western witnesses (exclusively or with others) and to replace them by ‘Alexandrian,’ and particularly B-readings.<sup>28</sup>

No endeavor to move away from the version of Phil 3:12 attested in P<sup>46</sup> was made by any of its correctors. Zuntz recognized an early “philological method” or “Christian critical philology” discernable in the manuscript, a “critical consciousness and method, [which] strove to keep the text pure ... an early and persisting attempt at keeping the text free from corruptions.”<sup>29</sup> If that is correct, then the fact that the justification clause of Phil 3:12 stands uncor-

<sup>22</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 282.

<sup>23</sup> Royse, *Scribal Habits*, 357–58. Ebojo compared the text of P<sup>46</sup> against NA<sup>28</sup> and counted an addition of 159 words and an omission of 685 words in P<sup>46</sup> (“A Scribe and His Manuscript,” 220–22).

<sup>24</sup> This seems to be the assumption of Ebojo, who labels the reading an “exemplaric variation,” i.e., a variation from the text of NA<sup>28</sup> that is best explained as already present in the exemplar (“A Scribe and His Manuscript,” 815).

<sup>25</sup> One of the points made by Reumann for accepting the reading as authentic is that “in papyrus like P<sup>46</sup> scribes tended to omit rather than add material.” See Reumann, *Philippians*, 534 and the literature cited there.

<sup>26</sup> Jacob W. Peterson, “An Updated Correction List for Chester-Beatty BP II + P. Mich. Inv. 6238 (Gregory-Aland Papyrus 46 [P46]),” *BASP* 56 (2019): 188. The most recent calculation prior to Peterson’s was conducted by Ebojo, who identified 195 corrections. Peterson identified fourteen additional corrections and rejected seven of those identified by Ebojo.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion of the five hands and their corrections, see Ebojo, “A Scribe and His Manuscript,” 301–19. For an overview of the history of research on corrections in P<sup>46</sup>, see Peterson, “Updated Correction List,” 174–77.

<sup>28</sup> Zuntz, *Text of the Epistles*, 254.

<sup>29</sup> Zuntz, *Text of the Epistles*, 255, 257, 262. Harry Y. Gamble likewise notes that for P<sup>46</sup> “the complexion of the text is ‘Alexandrian,’ reflecting the influence of the careful editorial traditions of Alexandrian scholarship” (“An Early Codex of the Epistles of Paul,” in *In the Beginning: Bibles before the Year 1000*, ed. Michelle P. Brown [Washington: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2006], 256).

rected in P<sup>46</sup> is even more significant. It is possible that these “early critics” (as Zuntz dubbed them) committed an error at this point by allowing a spurious reading to remain in the text. However, it is more probable that the lack of correction to the text at this point is due to the correctors’ belief that the text of Phil 3:12 as it stands in P<sup>46</sup> did not stand in need of correction.

A fourth noteworthy feature of the justification clause in P<sup>46</sup> is the high concentration of shared orthographic and lexical components present in the clause and its surrounding text. The adverb *ἡδη* appears here three times in the span of seven words. Twice, *ἡδη* is immediately preceded by the particle *ἦ*, which shares the same letter as the first and last letter in *ἡδη*. A total of six words make up the *ἦ ἡδη δεδικαιωμαι* and *ἦ ἡδη τετελειωμαι* clauses; among these six words, two words are repeated (*ἦ* and *ἡδη*), and in both instances these repeated words precede words with the same syllabification and the same four final letters (*δεδικαιωμαι* and *τετελειωμαι*). This high concentration of similar orthographic and lexical features suggests that this part of the text of Phil 3:12 as it appears in P<sup>46</sup> would have been highly vulnerable to unconscious omissions.<sup>30</sup>

## The Justification Clause of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> and Final Justification at the Last Judgment

In spite of its attestation in P<sup>46</sup>, nearly all scholars have rejected the notion that the justification clause deserves a place among the initial text of Philippians. One major reason for this is the minimal external support for the reading. As far as I know, it is attested only in the nineteen witnesses noted earlier in this article. Only five of those witnesses are Greek manuscripts. The reading is absent from the overwhelming number of Greek, early version, and patristic witnesses to the text of Phil 3:12.

Scholars have also argued that the justification clause seems so very unlike something Paul would have written. Among these are F. F. Bruce, who asserted that “this would be an un-Pauline use of the verb ‘justify’: Paul knew that together with all believers in Christ he had been justified through faith.”<sup>31</sup> Likewise Victor C. Pfitzner indicated that “the meaning which results is problematical. Especially in his letters to the Romans and to the Galatians Paul does not tire in emphasizing that the believer is justified . . . the attributed righteousness of Christ is a present reality, even though the final verdict of God, the righteous judge, is still awaited in the future.”<sup>32</sup> In his earlier commentary on Philippians, Ben Witherington III echoed Bruce: “This, however, represents a non-Pauline insertion, for Paul certainly does think he has already been justified in Christ.”<sup>33</sup> Gordon D. Fee concluded that the clause was added in the so-called Western text

<sup>30</sup> Numerous scholars have recognized unconscious alteration due to homoioteleuton or homoeoarcton as one possible explanation for this textual issue. See ,e.g., López, “En torno a Fil 3,12,” 122; Silva, *Philippians*, 187; Comfort, *Text and Translation Commentary*, 612; Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 547–48; Fee, *Philippians*, 337 n. 1; Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians (Revised)*, 203; Reumann, *Philippians*, 534–35; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 200; Mark J. Keown, *Philippians 2:19–4:23*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2017), 190.

<sup>31</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, NIBCNT (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 122.

<sup>32</sup> Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif*, 143.

<sup>33</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity International, 1994), 86. In his more recent commentary on Philippians, Witherington acknowledges the reading and follows immediately with this statement: “But of course Paul believed that he and all genuine Christians had indeed *already* been set right with God” (*Paul’s Letter to the Philippians*, 185–86 n. 14).

by someone “who by adding such a clause quite missed the fact that they give a meaning to this verb not otherwise known to Paul.”<sup>34</sup> Mark J. Keown noted that “‘justified’ is highly unlikely in terms of Paul’s wider theology of justification.”<sup>35</sup> Most recently William Varner recognized that “this addition has Paul declaring that he has not been justified, which is problematic in light of what he wrote in 3:8–10 and elsewhere, e.g., in Romans.”<sup>36</sup> Other scholars in addition to these have suggested the (apparent) non-Pauline nature of the reading is actually a point in favor of its omission as a transcriptional probability, even if they ultimately view it as a later insertion.<sup>37</sup>

The considerable external support for the omission of the reading must be acknowledged. However, the view that the clause is un-Pauline is problematic. The reading can quite naturally be interpreted as a reference to final justification at the last judgment. Like many in early Judaism, Paul certainly anticipated a postmortem final judgment at which time a verdict would be rendered by God over the lives of human beings according to their deeds.<sup>38</sup> Paul sometimes employed a δικαι- term to refer to a “quality or state of juridical correctness” he hoped to be found with at that eschatological event.<sup>39</sup> Future tense verbal forms of δικαι- terms occur four times in the Pauline letters (Rom 2:13, 3:20, 3:30; Gal 2:16). Various scholars have interpreted all four occurrences as references to “justification” or “righteousness” at the last judgment.<sup>40</sup> When Paul used the δικαι- term in these texts, he was referring to something distinct from what he normally referred to whenever he used this term.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Fee, *Philippians*, 337 n. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Keown, *Philippians 2:19–4:23*, 190 n. 10.

<sup>36</sup> William Varner, *Philippians: A Linguistic Commentary* (Middlebury, DE: William Varner, 2017), 100.

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. Silva, *Philippians*, 187; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 220; Jerry L. Sumney, *Philippians: A Greek Student’s Intermediate Reader* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 84; Hellerman, *Philippians*, 200.

<sup>38</sup> For a survey of numerous ancient Jewish texts in which belief in the last judgment is evident, see Chris VanLandingham, *Judgment and Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 66–171. Karl Paul Donfried rightly recognizes, “The fact that Paul expects a universal judgment for all persons could clearly be assumed from his doctrine of the righteousness of God and justification, particularly since those themes are derived from the Old Testament and apocalyptic Judaism. However, Paul does not leave us guessing in this matter of a universal last judgment: he explicitly describes such a judgment for us” (“Justification and Last Judgment in Paul,” *ZNW* 67 [1976]: 143). For explicit references in the Pauline Letters to the last judgment, see, e.g., Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10.

<sup>39</sup> The phrase “quality or state of juridical correctness” is from BDAG, 247.

<sup>40</sup> For δικαιωθήσονται in Rom 2:13 as a reference to final justification at the last judgment, see, e.g., E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 495; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 62; Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 212; VanLandingham, *Judgment and Justification*, 225. For δικαιωθήσεται in Rom 3:20 as a reference to final justification at the last judgment, see, e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Nashville: Nelson, 1988), 159; Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 96; Käsemann, *Romans*, 88–89. For δικαιώσει in Rom 3:30 as a reference to final justification at the last judgment, see, e.g., Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 189. For δικαιωθήσεται in Gal 2:16 as a reference to final justification at the last judgment, see, e.g., Hans Deiter Betz, *Galatians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979), 118; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 183.

<sup>41</sup> I join the majority of Pauline interpreters in reading all four of these texts as representative of Paul’s own perspective. One somewhat recent argument advanced most famously by Douglas A.



Paul A. Holloway considers references to past, present, and future δικαιοσύνη in the Pauline letters and offers an understanding of Paul's view of justification that makes good sense of these varied references. In his discussion of "key religious topoi" found in Philippians Holloway makes the following claim:

The protestant reformers were right to insist that the Greek verb typically translated "to justify" (δικαιοῦν) implies a legal judgment. What subsequent interpretation has generally failed to observe, however, is that Paul uses δικαιοῦν and its cognates to refer to two different and distinct judgments: (1) an initial judgment that pronounces the believer to be a member of the eschatological community of the "righteous," and (2) a final judgment that determines where one stands in the eschatological justice of God, which is to say whether one's end is "destruction" or "salvation."<sup>42</sup>

In Holloway's view, Paul's use of δικαι- terminology was not monolithic in meaning.<sup>43</sup> Most of the time Paul used this terminology with reference to the initial judgment pronounced in the Christ-believer's past, based on faith, accomplished by the atoning death of Christ. Bruce was correct to cite Rom 5:1 as clear evidence for this usage. Bruce was also correct to insist that Paul believed he had already been justified in this sense. Paul understood himself and all who believe in Christ Jesus to be "justified by faith," in the present, as an effect of the Christ-event.

However, there were other times when Paul used δικαι- terminology in another sense to refer to a final verdict rendered at the last judgment. As Holloway notes, "justification in the second sense can be distinguished from justification in the first sense by the fact that it still lies in the future."<sup>44</sup> This future justification by no means negated or minimized the reality of initial justification for Paul. In fact, based on Paul's understanding of the divine spirit at work in the Christ-believer and on wider views of divine eschatological preservation in ancient Jewish apocalypticism, there is reason to believe Paul thought it highly probable that believers would be found righteous at the last judgment.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, the future justification Paul hoped he would be found with at the last judgment is not the same as the initial justification he had already received. In one sense Paul had already been justified; in a second sense Paul had not yet been justified.

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Campbell is that much of Rom 1:18–3:20 is an example of προσωποποιία, or "speech-in-character," in which Paul is mimicking a hypothetical perspective of an opponent rather than presenting his own perspective. See Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 519–600. For a critique of this view, see Robin Griffith-Jones, "Beyond Reasonable Hope of Recognition? *Prōsōpopoiia* in Romans 1:18–3:8," in *Beyond Old and New Perspectives on Paul: Reflections on the Work of Douglas Campbell*, ed. Chris Tilling (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014), 161–74.

<sup>42</sup> Holloway, *Philippians*, 53.

<sup>43</sup> So also Sanders notes, "[Paul] does not use the righteousness terminology with *any one* meaning. It may be used as the equivalent of salvation and life; or it may refer to acquittal in the present for past transgressions, or to future vindication in the judgment" (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 495).

<sup>44</sup> Holloway, *Philippians*, 54. According to Holloway, it is Paul's thinking about justification in this way that enables Paul to write what he does in Rom 2:13, 1 Cor 4:3–4, and Gal 5:4–5. This fits with the observations of C. H. Cosgrove, that "there are two moments of justification" for Paul and that "justification in Paul belongs not only at the beginning of life in Christ but also at its final consummation" ("Justification in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Reflection," *JBL* 106 [1987]: 654, 670).

<sup>45</sup> On all this see Holloway, *Philippians*, 54–55. Paula Fredriksen indicates that in Paul's view, "All humanity will ... stand before Christ the judge.... But the ultimate verdict is not in doubt: gentile believers have been 'called,' 'foreknown,' 'fore-ordained,' 'conformed' to Christ's image, 'chosen' (Rom 8.28–33)" (*Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017], 159).

The phrase  $\eta \eta\delta\eta \delta\epsilon\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omega\mu\alpha\iota$  in Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> is in full harmony with this second sense of Paul's meaning of  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$  as final justification at the last judgment. Furthermore, it is wholly coherent within its immediate context in Philippians. In Phil 3:8–9 Paul declares that he considers all to be loss and rubbish in order that he may gain Christ and be “found in him.” Holloway rightly recognizes the phrase “found in him” ( $\epsilon\upsilon\text{ρε}\theta\acute{\omega} \epsilon\nu \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}$ , 3:9) as introducing “a new theme of eschatological salvation based on how one is ‘found’ at the last judgment,” with the remainder of 3:9 constituting a development of this theme.<sup>46</sup> In 3:10–11 Paul continues this theme with a short list of things he desires. The list culminates with a reference to “the resurrection from the dead” ( $\tau\eta\nu \acute{\epsilon}\xi\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\nu \tau\eta\nu \acute{\epsilon}\kappa \nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\acute{\omega}\nu$ , 3:11).<sup>47</sup> Paul has not already obtained this, nor has he been perfected, but he presses on toward the goal of experiencing these eschatological hopes. As a reference to final justification at the last judgment, the justification clause fits well within this larger theme of eschatological salvation.<sup>48</sup>

## Conclusion

The text of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup> is fascinating due to its inclusion of a reading in which Paul declares he has not yet been justified. This reading in this witness is noteworthy in light of its age, the tendency of its scribe to omit text, the fact that its later hands made no attempt to correct the reading, and the high concentration of orthographic and lexical elements present in the justification clause and its surrounding text.

The attestation of this reading in P<sup>46</sup> should provide some caution against hastily dismissing it as inauthentic. To be sure, the substantial external support for the absence of the reading among the majority of textual witnesses must be conceded. The evidence from P<sup>46</sup> should be considered alongside other text-critical data for any final evaluation of the reading. However, the four noteworthy features of its appearance in this important witness, along with its coherence in its immediate context and with other Pauline references to justification at the last judgment, makes for a strong case for including the reading in the initial text of Philippians.

My position is that an early unconscious alteration due to homoioarcton or homoioteleuton best explains the absence of the reading among the mass of the textual tradition. As noted earlier, several scholars have recognized a parablepsis omission as a possibility here.<sup>49</sup> I know of no scholar who has marshalled a direct argument against this explanation. Evidence of these types of accidental eye-skips certainly abounds in ancient manuscripts. They are in fact so common that Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland point to them as one of the first possibilities one should consider when evaluating any variant reading in which text is missing: “Leaps from one word to a similar word over shorter or longer units of text ... are not at all rare in manuscript

<sup>46</sup> Holloway, *Philippians*, 163. Holloway's succinct explanation of the development of the theme is helpful: “The believer who *gains* Christ in this life will be *found* to be righteous in the next.”

<sup>47</sup> The unstated direct object of  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\alpha\beta\omicron\nu$  in 3:12 is likely  $\tau\eta\nu \acute{\epsilon}\xi\alpha\nu\acute{\alpha}\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\nu \tau\eta\nu \acute{\epsilon}\kappa \nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\acute{\omega}\nu$  from 3:11. See Donfried, “Justification and Last Judgment in Paul,” 100; Silva, *Philippians*, 174; Varner, *Philippians*, 100.

<sup>48</sup> Fee rightly dismisses the explanation that the clause was omitted due to its apparent theological difficulty. Part of his reason for doing so is how well it fits with the preceding discourse: “Such a view has enormous difficulties to overcome in terms of finding any scribal analogies (especially so early) for such ‘theologically astute’ omissions, especially when it fits so nicely with vv. 8–11” (*Philippians*, 337 n. 1). I agree that the reading fits nicely in this context. However, the reading does not resemble the type of *perfect* fit that signals an intentional insertion, especially in light of its perceived theological difficulty.

<sup>49</sup> See footnote 30 above.

transmission, and when an omission occurs one of the first questions to be raised by textual criticism is whether homoioteleuton is involved.<sup>50</sup> I have already highlighted the high concentration of shared orthographic and lexical features present in the clause and its surrounding text as one of the noteworthy features of the text of Phil 3:12 in P<sup>46</sup>. Aside from a repetition of the exact same words, it is hard to conceive of a transcriptional situation in which an unconscious omission could have been any more likely.

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<sup>50</sup> 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. Eroll F. Rhodes, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 237.