

## SOME DOUBTS ABOUT DOUBT: THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF ΔΙΑΚΡΙΝΩ

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The verb διακρίνω appears nineteen times in the Greek NT. In most translations, nine of these instances (Matt 21:21; Mark 11:23; Acts 10:20; 11:12; Rom 4:20; 14:23; Jas 1:6; Jude 22) are rendered with words that express uncertainty, such as “doubt,” “hesitate,” or “waver.” The argument set forth in this article is that “uncertainty” is not the meaning that the biblical authors intended to convey in these nine cases, and that they should instead be rendered with words that express divided loyalty or disunity.<sup>1</sup>

All nineteen occurrences of διακρίνω are listed in Figure 1, where they are grouped according to voice.<sup>2</sup> Also shown are the verb’s mood and tense and the translation of each from the NASB and the NIV. Note that when it occurs in the active voice, διακρίνω is usually translated into English with such words as “discern,” “distinguish,” “make distinctions,” “judge,” or “pass judgment.” When it occurs in the passive or middle voice, it is sometimes translated as “dispute,” “contend,” “discriminate,” or “create divisions,” but other times as “hesitate,” “waver,” or “doubt.”

### I. CONTEXT AND TRADITION

Before beginning a discussion of the passages, it may be a good idea to review how we decide what a given word in the Greek NT means in the first place. In general, there are two categories of guidance which help us determine the meaning of a given instance of a given word: context and tradition. *Context* here refers to a whole range of things associated with the instance of the word in question. These include the text in which the instance occurs, other texts associated with that text, and other instances of the same or related words as they are used in texts unrelated to the instance in question.

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<sup>1</sup> For a similar expression of discontent with the traditional translation, see F. C. Synge, “Not doubt but discriminate,” *ExpTim* 89 (1977) 203–5.

<sup>2</sup> Voice is a distinguishing criterion often noted in commentaries and lexicons, for example in James Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 57; G. Dautzenberg, “διακρίνω,” *EDNT* 1.305, and BAGD 1979. Louw and Nida go so far as to list διακρίνω and διακρίνομαι as separate entries (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* [2 vols.; New York: United Bible Societies, 1988] 31, 37). This is evidently an oversimplification, however, as the active form in Acts 11:12 is nearly always translated as “hesitate” or “doubt.”

Reference	Verb form	Voice	Mood	Tense	NASB	NIV
Matt 16:3	διακρίνειν	A	N	P	discern	interpret
Acts 11:12	διακρίναντα	A	P	A	[have] misgivings	hesitate
Acts 15:9	διέκρινεν	A	I	A	make distinction	make distinction
1 Cor 4:7	διακρίνει	A	I	P	regard as superior	make different
1 Cor 6:5	διακρίναι	A	N	A	decide [between]	judge [between]
1 Cor 11:29	διακρίνων	A	P	P	judge	recognize
1 Cor 11:31	διεκρίνομεν	A	I	A	judge [ourselves]	judge [ourselves]
1 Cor 14:29	διακρινέτωσαν	A	M	P	pass judgment	weigh carefully
Acts 10:20	διακρινόμενος	M/P	P	P	[have] misgivings	hesitate
Acts 11:2	διεκρίνοντο	M	I	I	take issue with	criticize
Rom 14:23	διακρινόμενος	M/P	P	P	doubt	doubt
Jas 1:6a	διακρινόμενος	M/P	P	P	[do not] doubt	[do not] doubt
Jas 1:6b	διακρινόμενος	M/P	P	P	doubt	doubt
Jude 9	διακρινόμενος	M/P	P	P	argue	dispute
Jude 22	διακρινόμενους	M/P	P	P	doubt	doubt
Matt 21:21	διακριθήτε	P	S	A	doubt	doubt
Mark 11:23	διακριθῇ	P	S	A	doubt	doubt
Rom 4:20	διεκρίθη	P	I	A	waver in unbelief	waver through unbelief
Jas 2:4	διακρίθητε	P	I	A	create distinctions	discriminate

Fig. 1. Verses containing διακρίνω grouped by voice: A=Active, M=Middle, P=Passive. Mood: I=Indicative, S=Subjunctive, N=Infinitive, P=Participle. Tense: P=Present, A=Aorist, I=Imperfect.

The historical, sociological, relational, and theological environments in which the text was produced also form part of the context, and are as important as the text itself in determining meaning.<sup>3</sup> *Tradition* refers to what people in the past have thought the instance of the word to mean, as expressed via the sense or senses attributed to it by previous translators, commentators, and lexicographers.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the time, most of us rely more on tradition than on context. Many of us do not know the original languages well enough to use them without making extensive use of exegetical helps, and even those who do

<sup>3</sup> For extensive treatments of the importance of these contexts, see Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) and Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Commenting on lexicons, Moisés Silva says, "How did Bauer then come up with his meanings? We fool ourselves if we do not admit that, by and large, he got them from previous dictionaries. . . . [Lexicographers'] work consists largely of refining established knowledge and identifying a very small portion of new words (or new meanings for old words). . . . lexicographers determine meaning by observing word usage, by examining contexts" (*Biblical Words* 138).

know them well come to a text with a lifetime of previous exposure to it in translated form and can easily attribute to it a meaning they expect to find before the exegetical process even begins. We are sometimes helped past this unconscious predisposition when the tradition itself is divided regarding the meaning of a given word or passage. In these cases, the varying strains of tradition all must appeal to the original context and demonstrate how they fit it better than do the others. While the existence of such disagreements within the tradition can push us to evaluate each argument in the light of the original words in their contexts, when the tradition is unanimous, or nearly so, there is little motivation to question it. Such is the case with the tradition of translating instances of διακρίνω with words that convey uncertainty. However, though the tradition is nearly monolithic, thoughtful consideration of both the context and the tradition favor a different interpretation.

## II. THE WIDER LITERARY CONTEXT OF ΔΙΑΚΡΙΝΩ

While the most important literary context for determining the sense of διακρίνω in a NT passage is the passage itself, it is important to remember that the NT was not created in a linguistic or cultural vacuum, and that the reason its original readers could assign meaning to a given word in a given context is that they had previous experience with the same word in other contexts and, based on that experience, could assign meaning to the new instance of the word. Although our access to these contexts is actually quite limited, it behooves us nonetheless to examine as many relevant examples as are available.

1. *The meaning of διακρίνω in contemporary Greek literature.* The first group of relevant examples is those that occur in the part of the Greek corpus that is roughly contemporary with the NT. To come to grips with these, an attempt was made to consider all of the known examples of διακρίνω dating from 200 BC to AD 100, as well as a large number from the centuries immediately preceding and following these dates.<sup>5</sup>

This survey yielded no meanings or usages that were not already noted in standard lexicons. In general, in the active voice διακρίνω can mean "to divide," "to separate," "to distinguish," "to choose" or "to judge," and can be applied to both things and people. The verb in the middle voice can be used to express a reflexive or reciprocal sense of the meanings found in the active voice (e.g. "to separate from each other," "to distinguish oneself"), and is sometimes used to mean either "to dispute" or "to settle a dispute." The verb in the passive voice can be used as a "normal" passive (e.g. to avoid naming the agent) as well as (possibly) to mean "to reach a decision." A very common use of the passive voice is in historical works where the topic is diplomacy

<sup>5</sup> This turned out to be 388 examples from this time period. Of these, 111 examples were found in the writings of Josephus and Philo. Of the total, 139 were in middle or passive forms, and of those found in Josephus and Philo, 30 were in middle or passive forms. (Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Classical Greek are from selected volumes of the LCL.)

or war. Examples typical of this use are found in Appian's "Civil Wars," where passive forms convey the ideas of dividing an army of men into two companies, of hostilities reaching the point where negotiations are suspended, or even reaching the point of open warfare.<sup>6</sup> Nowhere, however, does any form of διακρίνω mean "doubt."

While none of the extra-biblical examples of διακρίνω that were considered occur in contexts that are similar to those in the NT which are the focus of this article, there are two instances where the verb is employed in contexts that may be relevant to the discussion. The first is found in Philo's work "On Dreams," where he states that "matters of doubt are settled by an oath."<sup>7</sup> In this example, the word translated "doubt" is derived from the word ἐνδοιάζω, while the word translated "settled" is a passive form of διακρίνω. In this instance, then, the action denoted by διακρίνω is not that of being uncertain, but rather of making an uncertain thing *more* certain. It seems unlikely that this form of διακρίνω could have meant both "doubt" and "make certain" in a context like this.

A second example comes from Philo's "Questions and Answers concerning Genesis" where he says that "the foolish man is double-minded (διχόνους) and, among other things, confuses those things that can otherwise be distinguished."<sup>8</sup> In this example, the word that is rendered "be distinguished" is a present middle/passive form of διακρίνω. The context of this statement has some similarities to the beginning of the Epistle of James regarding a person who is "double-minded" and "unstable." However, in contrast to Philo, James says that the double-minded man is unstable precisely because he is characterized by the activity conveyed by a middle/passive form of the verb διακρίνω (which most translations render "doubt"). Philo, then, says a double-minded man has problems because he cannot perform this activity, while James says he has problems because he does it constantly. Who is right? In actual fact, the contradiction is more apparent than real, and can be resolved by looking at the recipient of the action described by the passive of διακρίνω in each context. In Philo, the referent is things that have been mixed up. In James, the referent is less obvious, and discussion of it must wait until we treat the passage in which it occurs.

2. *The meaning of διακρίνω in the LXX.* Another important context to consider is the Septuagint (LXX). While the LXX does not necessarily reflect contemporary Greek usage, it influenced the thinking of both Diaspora Jews and Greek-speaking adherents of the early Church. The use of διακρίνω in the LXX could have colored both how the NT authors used it as well as how the first readers understood it.

<sup>6</sup> Appianus, *B.C.* 4.12, 5.8.71, 1.13.107.

<sup>7</sup> Philo, *Somn.* 1.12: τὰ ἐνδοιαζόμενα τῶν πραγμάτων ὀρκῶ διακρίνεται. . . .

<sup>8</sup> Philo, *QG* 2.12: διχόνους γὰρ καὶ ἐπαμφοτεριστῆς ὁ ἄφρων, τὰ ἄμικτα μίγνυς, καὶ φύπων καὶ συγχέων τὰ διακρίνεσθαι δυνάμενα. . . .

Altogether, διακρίνω in any form occurs less than thirty times in the LXX, and is almost always used of judging, judging between, or separating people. Only five occurrences<sup>9</sup> are in the middle or passive voice. One of these is in Jer 15:10, where Jeremiah applies a middle/passive participle of διακρίνω to himself as part of a complaint that he has been isolated from the rest of humanity. The other occurrences are aorist or future passive forms. They all occur in the Prophets and are all translations of the niphal of  $\text{נִפְּלַג}$ , which basically means "to judge." Richard Schultz says that in Scripture nearly all instances of the niphal of this verb "refer to divinely sanctioned activity." Furthermore, he says that "in the Prophets, the verb is used to describe God's future punishment of Israel and the nations."<sup>10</sup> God's judgment of the nations in the valley of Jehoshaphat is the theme of Joel 3:1-2, where a passive form of διακρίνω is used to describe this event. Two more instances of passive forms are used in Ezek 20:35-36. Here, God declares to the Israelites that he will take them into the desert and judge them in the same way that he judged their fathers. If verses 37 and 38 are taken as a clarification of what this judgment will entail, the action indicated by διακρίνω in this instance involves separating the rebels from the faithful and punishing those that deserve it. Here, then, a passive form of διακρίνω describes the action of making distinctions among members of the community of faith, and separating segments of the community on the basis of those distinctions.

### III. THE ΠΙΣΤ- GROUP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The aspect of the instances of διακρίνω in the NT which are the focus of this discussion that sets them apart from the instances we have just considered is that the majority of the NT occurrences are in some way contrasted with words in the πίστ- group. This being the case, it will be necessary to take a closer look at these words before proceeding with a discussion of the instances of διακρίνω themselves.

In the NT, the verb πιστεύω occurs 241 times. It is usually translated into English as "believe" or "place trust in." The various constructions in which it occurs give rise to "believe in," "believe on," and "believe that." It can also mean "keep faith with" or "be on good terms with," as it does, for example, in Plutarch's account of a certain king whose subjects complain to him that he makes war on the good people but keeps faith with (πιστεύω) the bad.<sup>11</sup>

Πιστός occurs 67 times in the NT. It is translated in several different ways, depending on its context. When it is used as an adjective, it can be

<sup>9</sup> One of these is διακριθήσονται in Ezek 17 20. However, as it is a variant that is found in only one text type and does not contribute substantially to a better understanding of the problem, it has been omitted from the discussion.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Schultz, "נִפְּלַג," *NIDOTTE* 4 219.

<sup>11</sup> δίκαιοις ἀνδράσι πολέμεις, ἀδίκους δὲ καὶ κακοῖς πιστεύεις (Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus* 21 3).

rendered "faithful," "trustworthy," or "believing," and can be used of both God and people. When it is used as a noun, it is usually rendered in the NT as "believer."

The noun πίστις is used 243 times in the NT. In the overwhelming majority of cases, these instances have been translated into English as "faith." However, πίστις has a wide range of other possible senses, including "faithfulness" (e.g. Rom 3:3), "pledge" (e.g. 1 Tim 5:12), and "proof" (e.g. Acts 17:31). Even outside of the Christian community, the term πίστις was used to describe the faithfulness of both parties in an ideal friendship between equals, and was frequently used to characterize the patron-client relationship as well, in terms of both trust and loyalty.<sup>12</sup>

As with πίστις and πιστεύω, the decision of how to render a given instance of πίστις must rely heavily on context. For example, in Luke 8:25, Jesus does not seem to be questioning his disciples' trustworthiness, but rather their confidence in his capacity to save them. In this instance, "faith" is the most likely sense. Similarly, it would be difficult to construe Rom 3:3 as a reference to God's faith. Here, "faithfulness" is the sense that best fits the context. In other places, however, deciding which term should be used to translate πίστις is not as obvious, as in 1 Thess 3:5, 7; 2 Thess 1:4; 1 Pet 1:7; Luke 17:5; 22:32; Rom 1:8, 12; Rev 13:10; and Jas 1:3. Translating πίστις in these verses as "faithfulness" would make every bit as much sense as translating it "faith."<sup>13</sup>

An aspect of faithfulness that is common to both the OT and the NT had to do with how God's people treated one another. In both testaments, sinning against someone else in the community of faith could be considered an act of unfaithfulness to God. In the OT this is made explicit in passages such as Lev 6:2 and Num 5:6. In the NT, believers' treatment of one another is a central concern of Jesus and the apostles. The general principle is set forth in John 13:34–35 and 15:12, where Jesus instructs his disciples to love each other as he loved them. In several places, both Jesus and the apostles suggest that a failure to live up to this principle is reason to question whether one's faith is genuine (see Matt 25:31–46; 1 Tim 5:8; Jas 2:14–16; 1 John 3:16–20). In other places, the apostle Paul condemns factions and splits within the body of believers (see 1 Cor 1:10–17; 11:18–22; 2 Cor 12:20), even going so far as to class them with idolatry, immorality, and greed (Gal 5:19–21). The formation of such factions constituted a failure to love that was just as much an instance of unfaithfulness as any of these other sins. In certain contexts, then, words in the πίστ- group carried a dimension of community that does not come across when these words are understood to mean "faith" or "believe."

<sup>12</sup> D. A. de Silva, "Patronage," *DNTB* 766–71, esp. 768.

<sup>13</sup> It appears that in most English translations πίστις is rendered as "faithfulness" only if the context prohibits rendering it as "faith." Other examples are Matt 23:23 and Gal 6:22. For more on the question of translating πίστις in ambiguous contexts, see James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988) 17–18, 43–44, 132.

#### IV. THE CONTRASTIVE USE OF ΠΙΣΤΙΣ AND ΔΙΑΚΡΙΝΩ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Given the semantic ranges of πίστις, πιστεύω, and διακρίνω, what hypotheses can be advanced regarding the NT authors' intention in contrasting διακρίνω with πίστις? The traditional conclusion has been that since διακρίνω is placed in contrast with having πίστις, and πίστις must mean "faith," then διακρίνω must mean "to doubt." This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that, in Matt 14:31, having little πίστις is equated with διστάζω, which always means "to doubt." The reasoning seems to be that since both διστάζω and διακρίνω can stand in contrast to πίστις, they must mean the same thing.

Another possibility is that, in contrasting πίστις with διακρίνω, the NT authors' intention was to ensure that a *different* sense of πίστις was understood by their readers than would be the case were it contrasted with διστάζω. As an example of how collocation can determine which sense of a word is understood by the reader, consider the differing senses of "run" brought out in the following sentences by the different activities with which it is contrasted: (1) "He did not run, but walked"; (2) "He did not run, but withdrew his name." In these instances, it is clearly not valid to conclude that since "walked" and "withdrew his name" both occur in contrast to "run," they mean the same thing. Instead, it is the fact that they mean different things that indicates to the reader that the author had different senses of "run" in mind in each instance.

Similarly, in contrasting διακρίνω with words in the πίστις group, it was not the NT authors' intention to invest διακρίνω with a previously unknown meaning, but rather to ensure that their readers understood πίστις and πιστεύω as meaning "faithfulness" and "loyalty" rather than "certainty about a given proposition." In section V. we will see how this proposal plays out in the NT contexts of διακρίνω where it has traditionally been understood as an expression of uncertainty.

#### V. THE MEANING OF ΔΙΑΚΡΙΝΩ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. *In Acts.* In the Book of Acts διακρίνω occurs four times, twice in the active voice and twice in the middle/passive voice. In Acts 15:9 it is in the active voice and is usually translated with the well-attested sense of "make a distinction." Note that in the context of this instance, Peter is contrasting the unity created by faith (πίστις) with the activity of division signaled by διακρίνω. In Acts 11:12 διακρίνω is once again in the active voice, but here it is usually translated as "hesitate." This translation is apparently motivated by a desire to harmonize this occurrence with that in Acts 10:20, where διακρίνω in the middle voice has also been translated as "hesitate." Such harmony is desirable because the verse in Acts 11 records Peter's retelling of what the Spirit had said to him in Acts 10:20. It is probably significant that the author of Acts does not appear to have thought that the difference in voice between the two occurrences signaled a significant difference in meaning.

Although the NIV, TEV, and other versions translate Acts 10:20 as "do not hesitate to go with them," a rendering that is closer to the syntax of the

original Greek is the KJV's "go with them, doubting nothing." In this formulation, the adverbial participle can apply to more than just Peter's attitude to the journey. Since this is the case, attributing one of the better attested senses of the verb in the middle voice to this instance could yield, "Go with them, making no distinctions between yourself and them," or even more explicitly "... without keeping your distance because they are Gentiles." As is evident from the context, Peter was acutely aware of who these people were and was quite disposed to do what he had just been warned against. If the instance in Acts 10:20 is understood in this way, the instance in the active voice in Acts 11:12 does not communicate a completely different idea, but rather a shift of focus, perhaps from the way that Peter thought about the situation to the way he acted toward his new Gentile brothers.

A second middle form of διακρίνω occurs in Acts 11:2. This verse is found between the two we have just considered, and relates what happened when a group of Jewish believers found out that Peter had gone ahead and associated with uncircumcised Gentiles. In the NIV and REV it is rendered "[they] criticized him," which is certainly better attested than "hesitate," though it could also be rendered "[they] kept their distance from him." Such a translation would have the advantage of maintaining the irony of the original, where the repeated use of the verb portrays the circumcision party as treating Peter (of all people!) exactly how the Holy Spirit had told Peter not to treat Gentiles who believe.

2. *In Romans 14:23.* The next instance of διακρίνω in the middle voice is found in Rom 14:23. Here the verb is a substantive participle. In the NIV the relevant part of the verse is translated "the man who doubts is condemned if he eats." An alternative translation such as "the divisive one is condemned if he eats" would better fit the logic of the passage.

Romans 14 begins by admonishing the strong to accept the weak without διακρίσις. This word is a nominal form of διακρίνω. It occurs three times in the NT, and in the other two instances (1 Cor 12:10 and Heb 5:14) is often translated as "distinction." Thus, Rom 14:1 might well be translated as, "Accept those whose faith is weak and don't create distinctions based on secondary issues."

The rest of chapter 14 is a discussion of various issues which could arise when converts from Jewish and pagan backgrounds get together. In verse 20, Paul affirms that a believer is free to eat anything. However, if the exercise of one's freedom undermines another's walk with God, this is bad and should be avoided. In verse 22, Paul reiterates his first point: it is a blessing to feel the freedom to eat anything you want and not to condemn yourself for it. But what is his point in verse 23?

Most translations of verse 23 are similar to the NASB: "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith. . . ." In these versions the translators view Paul's focus as having shifted from the "strong" person who can eat anything to the "weak" person who has scruples but eats anyway. However, there is no indication in the context that any of the "weak" have been induced to eat what the "strong" are eating. The problem



Paul is addressing in the passage is not that people are violating their own scruples, but that people are allowing their differing opinions about a permissible diet to divide the community. It seems likely that the strong people—those *without* dietary scruples—are contributing to rifts in the body of Christ because they continue to insist on exercising their dietary freedom even though the weak people feel that they cannot associate with people who do.

If the instance of διακρίνω in this passage were rendered “the divisive person” instead of “he who doubts,” the person in focus in verse 23 will still be the strong person who is in focus in verse 22. The argument in verses 22 and 23 will be essentially a restatement of the argument in verse 20: eat what you want, but do not undermine your brother’s faith in doing so. If you do, you are condemned, not for violating your own conscience, but rather for acting in a way not in keeping with πίστις.

In what way, then, can the strong person’s exercise of freedom be said to be “not out of faith”? Once again, “faith” here is understood as having a community dimension. The second half of verse 23 is not focusing on what the individual has understood about his or her personal freedom, but rather on his or her obligations to other Christians which come with being members of the community of faith. Acting “out of faith” in this verse, then, is a reiteration of the principle of “walking according to love” stated in verse 15. It means to set aside one’s personal freedom for the sake of others and the unity of the body. Furthermore, it is precisely this theme that is expanded in the first part of Romans 15. In Rom 15:8, Paul says that Jesus himself became a servant to the circumcised for the sake of the Gentiles. The implication may be that those Christians with a Gentile background and the relative dietary freedom that comes with it should follow his example. With this interpretation, “the work of God” in verse 20 means not only each individual Christian but, more importantly, the Body of Christ.

3. *In James.* In the Epistle of James διακρίνω occurs three times. The third occurrence is a passive form found in Jas 2:4. In this instance, the context makes it quite obvious that it should be taken to mean “make distinctions.” The first two occurrences are found in Jas 1:6. These are both middle/passive participles and, once again, describe activities that contrast with acting in faith. How should these instances be understood? Most versions render this verse and its context in a way that is similar to the following:

<sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. <sup>6</sup>But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup>That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; <sup>8</sup>he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. (NIV)

If doubt here is understood as uncertainty, these verses are truly discouraging to the doubter. How can he dispel his doubts unless he gains wisdom from God? But how can he gain wisdom if God refuses to grant him his request on account of his doubts? Furthermore, such a person is described in verse 8 as “a double-minded man.” Is this fair? Finally, if this verse really is

concerned with doubt, what overall function does it play in the epistle, and why is the topic of doubt never mentioned again?

There are, however, three other possibilities for the meaning of these words: (1) They could refer to having divided motives or allegiance.<sup>14</sup> This is supported by the mention in verse 8 of the double-minded man. (2) They could anticipate Jas 2:4 and the idea of divisive behavior and attitudes. (3) They could indicate a combination of both of these kinds of activities. This third option has the advantage<sup>15</sup> of being supported by all of the factors that support the first two, as well by the fact that such an understanding of these terms greatly increases the internal coherence of the entire epistle. It does this by allowing Jas 1:2–8 to serve as a concise introduction to all of the epistle's major themes, each of which is elaborated in the subsequent verses.<sup>16</sup> Figure 2 indicates how much of the epistle addresses one or both of these aspects.

Given this understanding of the Greek text, a possible translation of this part of verse 6 might be, "Let him ask in faith, free from divided motives and divisive attitudes, for such a person is like an ocean wave. . . ."

4. *In Jude.* The word διακρίνω occurs twice in the short epistle of Jude. The first instance is a middle/passive participle in verse 9, which is used in a description of the archangel Michael's argument with Satan over Moses' body. In this instance, it clearly indicates hostility and division between the parties involved. The second occurrence is another middle/passive participle in verse 22, this time used in reference to Christians who need to be shown mercy, and rendered in most versions as "those who doubt." In view of the context, however, it seems more likely that verse 22 is not concerned about uncertainty, but about divisive thoughts and wavering loyalty.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Davids links Jas 1:6 with Matt 21:21 and Mark 11:23. He cites Ropes: "a man whose allegiance wavers," that is, someone who lacks commitment. Davids rejects "the need to read back the meaning [of διψυχος] from the Didache or Hermas . . . , for both have developed this theology [of what constitutes 'doubt'] beyond James (and away from Judaism)." The διψυχος-type of person, then, is one whose allegiance to God is less than total. His divided mind indicates a basic disloyalty toward God." See Peter Davids, *The Epistle of James: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 73–75, citing James H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James* (ICC, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1916).

<sup>15</sup> A possible drawback to this option is the theoretical difficulty that a single term might encompass the two ideas of having divided allegiance and exhibiting divisive behavior. In reality, terms that encompass a wide range of seemingly disparate activities that are associated through a common domain are not that uncommon. For example, activities such as cutting small branches, digging up small plants, planting seeds, and spreading manure can all be encompassed by the single term "gardening." A proscription such as "do not do any gardening" includes the entire range of activities mentioned here, as well as many more. In James, the common domain is life in the community of faith. Even in English, a proscription such as "do not be faithless" can easily be construed in such a context as applying to both one's relationship with God and one's relationship with fellow believers, and to mean somewhat different things for each relationship. This is not to say that "do not be faithless" means exactly the same thing as μηδεν διακρινόμενος in this verse. Finding a single term in English to translate these instances may not be possible, in which case they should be rendered periphrastically.

<sup>16</sup> See also Euan Fry, "The Testing of Faith: A Study of the Structure of the Book of James," *BT* 29/4 (1978) 427–35. Fry comes to a similar conclusion through a thematic study of James.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Passage</i>	<i>Content</i>
Divided motives or allegiance and the behaviors that betray them	1:13–14	Temptation not from God, but selfish motives
	1:19–21	Anger and wickedness
	1:22–25	Doers not just hearers
	1:26–27	Bridle tongue, visit afflicted, keep pure
	3:1–12	What we say
	4:17	Business plans with selfish motives
Divided body	2:1–13	No partiality
	2:4	Make no distinctions (διακρίνω)
	4:11–12	Don't speak evil of each other
Both	2:14–18	Have no jealousy and selfish ambition
	4:1–10	Divided motives causing divided body
	4:8	Purify hearts, double-minded men

Fig. 2. Verses reflecting themes of division in James

Jude's letter deals with men whose faith is not genuine and who are advocating behavior that is contrary to the gospel. After pointing out their errors and roundly condemning them, Jude summarizes his description in verse 19, identifying them as "the ones who create divisions." In verse 20, Jude addresses his readers directly, encouraging them to behave in ways that contrast with the behavior of the evil men he has been talking about. In verses 22 and 23 he exhorts them to counteract, in effect, the destructive work of those causing divisions. Jude mentions two groups of people that his readers need to help. The first are those people whose thinking has been divided by bad teaching and example. This is the group referred to by the participial form of διακρίνω. The second group consists of those whose behavior has followed their thinking and who have contaminated themselves through immoral behavior. A translation that is more in keeping with this context and in harmony with what has been proposed for other instances of διακρίνω considered earlier might be "be merciful to those who have been confused [by the evil men we have been talking about]."

5. *In Romans 4:20.* The rendering of διακρίνω as "waver" in Rom 4:20 gives this verse a twist that readers familiar with the OT account of Abraham sometimes find surprising. Granted, Abraham maintained his faith to the end, but it certainly seems to have wavered from time to time. Despite the apparent contradiction created by such a rendering, its validity seems to be supported by the juxtaposition of the verb with τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ "through unbelief" (NIV). To the average English speaker, this verse seems to be saying that Abraham was never uncertain about God's promises, character, or protection. However, the passage in which it occurs is not about certainty, but about the superiority of πίστις to observance of the Mosaic Law. Paul is addressing people who think that God's grace needs to be supplemented by

human observance of the Law of Moses in order to result in righteousness. But for Paul any "supplement" to grace is an impossibility, and any attempt at a supplement immediately becomes a substitution, tantamount to idolatry.

To illustrate what true faith is like, Paul cites the example of Abraham, to whom God had promised both land and descendants. When the fulfillment of this promise was not immediately forthcoming, Abraham had plenty of opportunities to pursue other means to obtain what he desired. For example, in order to obtain an heir, Abraham could have sought help from the deities of the neighboring peoples, some of whom specialized in problems of fertility. Abraham may also have been tempted to help God keep his promise of land and people by making unrighteous alliances with the people around him. One such opportunity is recorded in Genesis 14, where the king of Sodom offered to enrich Abraham. Abraham refused, seeing that to accept such an offer would be an act of unfaithfulness toward God.

Paul's point in this verse is not that Abraham never had any doubts, but rather that he never let the pressure of unrealized hope seduce him into attempting to bring about the blessing which God had promised by either seeking help from some other power or by attempting to coerce God into making good. The example of Abraham is especially fitting because while he was waiting for God's promises to be fulfilled, his behavior was anything but perfect. In fact, he made a number of glaring errors. Some of these can be attributed, at least in part, to doubt. Abraham's misrepresentation before Pharaoh of his relationship with Sarah was such an instance, as was taking Hagar as his concubine in order to have an heir. His laughter at God's promise in Gen 17:17 is a particularly jolting example. In spite of his doubts, however, Abraham never resorted to anything that went beyond the bounds of his covenant relationship with God in order to obtain the blessings that God had promised him. Paul's concern here is not the amount of uncertainty in Abraham's thinking, but rather the manner in which he went about getting what was promised.

The following is a suggested rendering of διακρίνω in Rom 4:19–20 that brings this out more clearly:

... yet as he considered the state of his own body at a hundred years old and the deadness of Sarah's womb, his faith did not make him *less* able to receive what God promised. Abraham did not let reliance on something contrary to his relationship with God separate him from God, but instead was strengthened through his exclusive reliance on God's faithfulness, which resulted in God receiving all the glory for what was accomplished.

6. *In Mark 11:23 and Matthew 21:21.* Of all the instances of διακρίνω in the NT, the one in Mark 11:23 seems most likely to mean "doubt." This is because the clause in which it occurs is linked by the strong adversative ἀλλά to a clause whose main verb can only be understood to mean "believe that" (see line 6 in fig. 3). This would seem to indicate that the clause containing διακρίνω must imply a mental state that falls short of complete belief that the preceding affirmation—that a mountain will be thrown into the sea—is true.

<i>Line</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Greek text</i>	<i>Literal translation</i>
1	Condition	Ἔχετε πίστιν Θεοῦ	(you) have faith/faithfulness in/of God
2	Orienter	ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι	truly I say to you that;
3	Scope	ὅς ᾧ	whoever;
4	Activity	εἶπη τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ Ἀρθῆτι καὶ βληθῆτι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν	says to this mountain be lifted up and thrown into the sea;
5	Condition	καὶ μὴ διακριθῇ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ	and is (not only) not divided in his heart
6	Condition	ἀλλὰ πιστεύῃ ὅτι ὃ λαλεῖ γίνεται,	But (also) believes that what he says happens
7	Result	ἔσται αὐτῷ	it will be to him.
8	Condition	διὰ τοῦτο	According to this
9	Orienter	λέγω ὑμῖν	I say to you;
10	Scope	πάντα ὅσα	whatever (everything)
11	Activity	προσεύχεσθε καὶ αἰτεῖσθα,	you ask and pray,
12	Activity	πιστεύετε ὅτι ἐλάβετε,	believe that you received it,
13	Result	καὶ ἔσται ὑμῖν	and it will be to you

Fig. 3. Diagram of Mark 11:22b–24

The conjunction ἀλλά, however, has other functions besides indicating that the clauses it joins are in logical contrast. In general, it signals that the clause it marks contains information that the speaker thinks the hearer does not expect. This means that while there are some instances where it can mean “but rather” (“not this, but rather that”), there are other instances where it can mean “but also” (“not only this, but also that”).<sup>17</sup> If this latter sense is attributed to ἀλλά in verse 23, and the well-attested sense “divided” is attributed to this instance of διακρίνω, then Jesus is saying that to cast a mountain into the sea requires both an undivided heart and a firm belief that what is said will come to pass.

This interpretation is supported by several aspects of the wider context as well. The first is the opening words of the short discourse in which this instance occurs. This discourse is Jesus’ response to Peter’s observation that the fig tree that Jesus had cursed had withered. The opening words of Jesus’ reply are: Ἔχετε πίστιν Θεοῦ. This clause is ambiguous for a number of reasons. First, ἔχετε “(you) have” can be taken as either a statement or an admonition. Second, ἔχετε πίστιν could be taken to mean either “trust in” or “keep faith with.” Finally, πίστιν Θεοῦ can be taken to mean either “faith in God” or “the faithfulness of God.” Combining these ambiguities gives us three possible interpretations of the clause: (1) have faith in God (i.e. trust

<sup>17</sup> Ἀλλά has the same function in Mark 9:37 as it does here. Some other occurrences of ἀλλά in Mark which do not indicate logical contrast are in 3:27, 29; 6:9, 25; 13:7; and 16:7.

in God); (2) you have God's faithfulness (i.e. you can count on God to be faithful); or (3) keep faith with God (i.e. be faithful to God).<sup>18</sup>

While all of these interpretations are possible, it is worth noting that the construction closest to this in the NT is ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ . . . Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, found in Jas 2:1, where it is clearly an admonition to act in a manner that is in keeping with our faith in Christ, i.e. to exhibit faithfulness. The clause can mean, "Act in a way in keeping with your relationship to God," an aspect of which is loyalty to his purposes, as made explicit in verse 23.

Another indication that "divided" is the intended meaning of διακρίνω in verse 23, rather than "doubt," is that the call to have an undivided, or whole, heart is a theme that is reiterated throughout Scripture. One of the most explicit and often-repeated instances of this is in Deut 6:4, where the people of God are admonished to love him with a whole heart. This verse is even cited in Mark 12:30.

Still another indication that a call to wholeheartedness is what is intended in Mark 11:23 comes from the way the author has structured the story in which this verse is found. In the verses which precede it, Jesus is addressed with the royal title "Son of David" (Mark 10:47). He enters Jerusalem, where the crowds welcome him as a king. When he arrives at the temple, however, he appears to be largely ignored by the religious establishment (Mark 11:1-9). After looking things over there, he leaves town. The next day he goes back to Jerusalem, cursing the fig tree on the way (Mark 11:14). He again goes to the temple, but this time he drives out the merchants (Mark 11:16) and insults the religious leaders (Mark 11:17), after which he leaves town once more. The religious leaders then decide to get rid of him (Mark 11:18). Peter's comment and Jesus' reply come the next morning as they are passing by the fig tree.

This account seems to be deliberately structured so as to parallel Hos 9:8-10:2.<sup>19</sup> Hosea 9:8 mentions a prophet who is a watchman and who encounters hostility in the house of God. In Hos 9:10, God compares "your fathers" to "the early fruit on the fig tree" but then laments that they quickly turned to

<sup>18</sup> All of these possibilities have parallels elsewhere in the NT. For option 1, see (perhaps) Rom 3:22, 26 and Gal 2:16 (etc.). For option 2, see Rom 3:3. For option 3, see Rom 14:22; 1 Tim 1:19; and Rev 14:12.

<sup>19</sup> To some modern readers, it may seem strange that Mark would do this. What, after all, is the point? One of the functions of following a previous literary pattern is to implicitly validate what is being described in the later work. Another example of this in Scripture is the account in 2 Chronicles of the building of the Temple, which is deliberately structured to parallel the account of the Tabernacle in Exodus, whereas the account of the same event in Samuel and Kings is not (see the introduction to 2 Chronicles in the *NIV Study Bible* 1995). Allusions such as the extended one in Mark 11 also serve to portray Jesus' life and ministry as the fulfillment of OT prophecy (see also Luke 24:44). But did Mark really expect his readers to catch this? Yes. After all, a lot of them knew their OT fairly well. The fact that this is an allusion actually supports this, as "allusions may actually have had greater emphasis because the writer was presupposing his readers' knowledge" (Douglas Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* [Sheffield, England: Almond, 1983] 169). For more on how the NT writers used the OT, see C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (repr. ed.; London: Collins, Fontana Books, 1952) esp. chap. 5, as well as S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) and Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985).

idols. In Hos 9:15 he promises to drive them out of his house. He criticizes their leaders and, in Hos 9:16, declares that “their root is withered, they yield no fruit.” All of these statements have parallels in Mark’s account, as shown in Figure 4.

<i>Mark</i>	<i>Hosea (LXX)</i>
11:11 lack of welcome (also chap. 12)	9:8 snares and hostility in the house of his God
11:13 look for early fruit on fig tree	9:10 fathers like early figs
11:14 curse of fig tree: no more fruit	9:11–14 curse of idolaters: slain offspring
11:15 drives unfaithful out of temple	9: 15 “I will drive them from my house”
11:17 criticism of leaders	9:15 leaders are rebels
11:18 decision to destroy Jesus	(reprise of 9:8)
11:20 fig tree withered to its roots	9:16 “. . . their root is withered”
11:22 “faithfulness to God”	9:17 God rejects them—they have not listened
11:23 no <b>divided</b> heart	10:2 their heart is deceitful (divided)
13:2 temple will be destroyed	10:2 destruction of altars and sacred stones

Fig. 4. Parallels between Mark 11 and Hos 9:8–10:2

To this point, it has been the events of the story in Mark 11 that have paralleled the prophet’s words, but now the parallels are picked up in Jesus’ own discourse. In Hos 9:17, God rejects the people who will not listen, in essence because they are being unfaithful. This pronouncement is a sort of inverse parallel to Jesus’ call to faithfulness that we have just considered. The next parallel is between the clause in Mark 11:23 containing διακρίνω and Hos 10:2, where the people are accused of having a “deceitful heart” (NIV).

Of particular interest is what lies behind this expression in Hosea. The Hebrew in modern editions of the MT is כָּלֵךְ לֵךְ. In the first century, however, the text was unpointed. While the unpointed קלל can mean either “be smooth” or “be divided,”<sup>20</sup> the translators of the LXX understood it to mean the latter, rendering the phrase as ἐμέρισαν καρδίας “they divided (their) hearts.”<sup>21</sup> This could easily have been what first-century Judaism understood the text to mean, and would certainly have been familiar to the Greek-speaking churches reading Mark’s Gospel. The extensive nature of the parallels between these two passages, then, suggests that Mark intended

<sup>20</sup> While the meaning intended by Hosea may be open to debate (Keil and Delitzsch, for example, argue that the sense “divide” is grammatically impossible), the originally intended meaning is less important to this discussion than what Mark thought his readers would understand it to mean. Since Mark was writing in Greek, it is reasonable to assume that his readers would be most familiar with the Greek translation of Hosea in the LXX (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 10 *Minor Prophets* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989] 128).

<sup>21</sup> The word μερίζω is used with the sense of “divided loyalty” in Matt 12:25–26, Mark 3:25–26, and 1 Cor 7:34. If the translators of the LXX understood the Hebrew term in this way, it is not unreasonable to suppose that at least some of those reading the Hebrew in subsequent years would understand it in the same way.

his readers to understand the instance of διακρίνω in Mark 11:23 in the same way that the translators of the LXX understood קָלַח in Hos 10:2.

A final support for translating this passive form of διακρίνω with "divided" or "division" rather than "doubt" is the presence of Mark 11:25. In most versions, this verse seems to have only a tenuous connection to the preceding passage. However, as passive forms of διακρίνω can also convey the idea of division and dissension among people, Mark 11:23 can apply to the divisions created among the people of God when they harbor bitterness and resentment in their hearts. Verse 25 seems to be making this aspect of unfaithfulness explicit in order to assure that those reading the passage would not miss it. The use of διακρίνω and the inclusion of verse 25 indicate that the faithfulness that Jesus has in mind here has a horizontal as well as a vertical dimension. Unfaithfulness to either the purposes or the people of God could keep the disciples from receiving answers to their prayers.

The relationship between verses 23 and 24 is also important to consider. In the NIV, TEV, NASB, and other versions, the logical relationship between these verses is made explicit. The NIV and the NASB both join the verses with "therefore" and TEV with "for this reason," making verse 23 function as the factual ground upon which the admonition (and promise) of verse 24 is based. The Greek expression that lies behind these joiners is διὰ τοῦτο. While it is true that "therefore" is often the best translation of this term,<sup>22</sup> there are a number of instances in the NT where it is obviously inappropriate.<sup>23</sup> Many clauses introduced by διὰ τοῦτο are in the immediate context of a clause introduced by ὅτι, ἵνα, or another explicit marker that helps to establish the logical relationship between the clauses. Where these are absent, the function of διὰ τοῦτο must be inferred from other factors. In some cases, as in Matt 18:23 and John 7:22, one is hard pressed to come up with an appropriate equivalent for the term in English. These instances seem to function in a way similar to that of διὰ τοῦτο in Matt 6:25, 12:31, 21:43, and Luke 12:22, where in each case it is followed by λέγω ὑμῖν (a feature also shared by the instance in Mark 11:24). In cases like these, the best equivalent of διὰ τοῦτο might be something like "with this in mind" or "while we

<sup>22</sup> Smyth says that διὰ with the accusative indicates that something is due to the fault or merit of a person thing, or a situation beyond our control. From this perspective, the translation might be "since this is the case" (Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984] 375).

<sup>23</sup> For one thing, in normal usage, these English expressions require that the reason be stated before the conclusion. A clause introduced by διὰ τοῦτο, however, can either precede or follow the reason given. When the immediate context includes a ὅτι-clause, the clause introduced by διὰ τοῦτο is normally a conclusion drawn from the fact set forth in the ὅτι-clause. In some of these instances, the ὅτι-clause precedes the conclusion (Mark 6:14, John 15:9), but more often the ὅτι-clause follows the clause introduced by διὰ τοῦτο (e.g. Matt. 24:44, John 5:16, 1 Thess 2:13 [see esp. TEV]). When a clause introduced by διὰ τοῦτο occurs in the context of a ἵνα-clause, however, the ἵνα-clause expresses not the factual basis for what follows διὰ τοῦτο, but the motivation for it (e.g. see Matt 27:18, Rom 14:15, 1 Pet 2:19 for διὰ used in this way with nominal objects). In these cases, "for this reason" or "for this purpose" is a better rendering than "therefore." In some cases an even better translation might be "motivated by this." As with ὅτι-clauses, ἵνα-clauses can either precede (2 Tim 2:10) or follow (John 1:31) the clause introduced by διὰ τοῦτο.



are on the subject, I will tell you something else.” Given the context, the best rendering in verse 24 might be one of these or even “motivated by this,” which would recall the conditions already laid down in the preceding verses (lines 1, 5, and 6).

Finally, what about the instance of διακρίνω in Matt 21:21? While it does not have nearly the number of contextual cues as the one in Mark 11:23, neither is there any aspect of the context that poses an obstacle to the sense being proposed here. If the sense “be divided” can be attributed to διακρίνω in Mark 11, there is no reason that it cannot be valid in Matthew 21 as well.

7. *In 1 Corinthians 11.* The last two instances of διακρίνω to consider are found in 1 Cor 11:29 and 31. Both are in the active voice and are usually translated with well-attested meanings. However, the preceding discussion of the other instances of διακρίνω in the NT suggests a different translation possibility for verse 29.

In Greek<sup>24</sup> verse 29 is as follows (an operational gloss is given in the second line):

ὁ γάρ	ἐσθίων	καὶ	πίνων	κρίμα	ἑαυτῷ
For the one	eating	and	drinking	judgment	to himself
ἐσθίει	καὶ	πίνει	μὴ	διακρίνων	τὸ σῶμα
eats	and	drinks	not	διακρίνω-ing	the body.

There are five exegetical questions that need to be resolved when translating this verse: (1) What does it mean to “eat and drink judgment to oneself”? (2) What is meant by “the body”? (3) Exactly what is the activity indicated by διακρίνω in this verse? (4) How are the words in the text related to one another? (5) How does this verse relate to the rest of the context? As the answer to any one of these questions has implications for the range of possible answers to the other four, the best answer for any of them is the one that allows satisfactory solutions to the other four as well.

Of the five questions, the fourth may be the most important, because it gets to the heart of what is presupposed in this verse and what is being asserted.<sup>25</sup> The subject of the main clause here is a participial phrase which functions like a restrictive relative clause and as such conveys information that the author most likely believes his readers can identify. The rest of the verse consists of information the author wishes to assert as true, and which he judges is probably new to the reader. The key question, then, is what part of the verse belongs to the subject?

The RSV is fairly typical of English translations: “For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.”

<sup>24</sup> The text here is that which is supported by both the UBSGNT and Nestle-Aland (1994) critical editions. For some of the reasoning behind the non-inclusion of ἀναξίως and τοῦ κυρίου, see Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 558, nn. 3 and 4, and 562–63.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of these terms, see Knud Lambrecht, *Information Structure and Sentence Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) esp. 51–54.

That is, the adverbial participial clause  $\mu\eta\ \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\omega\ \tau\acute{o}\ \sigma\acute{o}\mu\alpha$  has been analyzed as modifying the subject, and  $\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha$  "judgment" is taken as the object of the main verbs. Also,  $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$  is rendered "discern," but the meaning of  $\sigma\acute{o}\mu\alpha$  "body" is not made explicit. The presupposed information is that there are people who eat and drink without discerning the body, and the assertion is that these people eat and drink judgment upon themselves. This information structure is shared by the great majority of modern versions (though many of them make what is meant by "eat and drink judgment" and "discern the body" more explicit). In the versions that follow this pattern, "eat and drink judgment" appears to refer to the negative consequences of eating without discerning the body, and so anticipates the contents of verse 30. A possible drawback of this rendering is that what is meant by "discerning the body" does not seem to arise from the context.

An alternative to this common understanding is that  $\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha$  "judgment" be taken as the object of the participles in the subject and that  $\mu\eta\ \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\omega\ \tau\acute{o}\ \sigma\acute{o}\mu\alpha$  be understood as modifying the action of the main verbs. For this to make the most sense,  $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$  should be understood to mean "divide" and  $\tau\acute{o}\ \sigma\acute{o}\mu\alpha$  to refer to the body of believers, the church.<sup>26</sup> This analysis would yield, "For the one who eats and drinks judgment to himself eats and drinks without dividing the body." With this rendering, the presupposed information is that there is a category of person who eats and drinks judgment upon himself and the assertion is that this category of person eats and drinks without dividing the body.

This alternative analysis has a number of advantages. One is that the elements in the original text that are the most closely related are also contiguous. A second is that the identity and nature of those who eat and drink judgment to themselves is easily recoverable from the immediate context. In verse 28, Paul has just recommended that his readers examine themselves and so eat and drink. The phrase "the one eating and drinking judgment to himself" can be understood as someone who has followed the apostle's recommendations and come to a conclusion about himself or herself. The insights gained from self-examination have been a deterrent to behavior that is divisive.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of this rendering is the sense it makes of the surrounding context. Verse 29 comes near the conclusion of a section that begins at verse 17. The theme of this section is stated in verse 18: "there are divisions among you." As Paul develops this theme, he cites the Corinthians' behavior during communion as an indication of how deeply these divisions have eaten into the core of the fellowship. The very meal that was intended to celebrate the ratification of the new covenant that would abolish divisions among redeemed people has been compromised and trivialized by these people's behavior. (It is perhaps worth noting that the

<sup>26</sup> See Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 563 for support for this. Two of his reasons are: (1) in the preceding discussion references to the sacrament are to "the body and the blood," never just "the body"; (2) Paul's previous use of "the body" was in 1 Cor 10:17, where it meant "believers."

divisions being addressed here have an economic basis, not a doctrinal one. These are the same sorts of distinctions that James addresses with such vehemence in his epistle.)

Having pointed out the problem and explained the gravity of it, Paul suggests a way to correct it in verses 28 and 29. "Think about what you are doing," he says, "because anyone who corrects their thinking and behavior in the light of what I just told you will not keep acting divisively." By verse 29, then, Paul has brought his readers back to the problem with which he started.

Verse 30 starts with διὰ τοῦτο, which here means "because of this": "Because of this, many of you are sick. . . ." But because of what? If verse 29 is rendered as suggested here, it could be specifically because of divisive behavior during the Lord's Supper, but it is more likely that Paul is referring back to the whole general problem of divisiveness in the Corinthian church. This reasoning seems to be in keeping with the suggestion in Mark 11 that divisions are a hindrance to answered prayer and James's pronouncement that a divided and divisive person should not expect anything from God. In the case of the Corinthians, divisions among the believers seem to be leaving them open to debilitating illness.

In verse 31, Paul again employs the word διακρίνω in the active voice. The NIV translates it "judged": "But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment." This is a good translation for two reasons. First, it maintains the play on words in this passage. Second, despite the fact that the object of the verb is a reflexive pronoun, the verb itself is in the active voice, not the middle. Were it in the middle voice, the clause would probably be taken to mean "separate ourselves." However, the construction as it actually is seems to imply that we are to step outside of ourselves and discern what we are really like, much as the people in Matt 16:3 discerned the appearance of the sky.

#### VI. BUT HOW CAN 1700 YEARS OF TRADITION BE WRONG?

The tradition of translating these nine instances of διακρίνω into Indo-European languages with words that convey a sense of uncertainty or hesitation dates back at least to the Latin versions that were the precursors of the Vulgate. Since then, the practice has been followed in most (if not all) of the major translations into European languages. While the universality of this practice would appear to be an argument in its favor, it may instead be a testament to the Vulgate's inordinate influence on subsequent translations. Tyndale's first translation was, after all, a translation of the Vulgate, not of the Greek text, and a plausible case can be made that the other European translators were at least as familiar with the Latin version as they were with the Greek, and many knew of one another's work. This is important because the words used in the Vulgate (*haesito* and *dubito*) to translate διακρίνω in the instances in question can mean either "be undecided (regarding two or more possibilities)" or "doubt." It may be that the Latin translators chose these terms because they could convey the idea of undecided loyalty,

but that the later European translators understood them to mean "doubt." "Doubt," however, never means divided loyalty, but always means uncertainty regarding the truth of a proposition. Once the sense "doubt" was enshrined in tradition by these early versions (and through them in Greek lexicons), it was quite natural that the tradition continue in subsequent translations.

One reason to question this tradition is that there is no evidence that any form of *διακρίνω* meant "doubt" in works written prior to or contemporary with the NT; and even *after* the NT, this usage is extremely rare.<sup>27</sup> This being the case, why would the authors of the NT use this word in this new way, especially when other, well-established ways of indicating uncertainty were available to them? As a number of commentators have attempted to answer this question, it may be useful to propose counter-arguments to their two most convincing arguments.<sup>28</sup>

The first argument for attributing the meaning "doubt" to some form of *διακρίνω* is that while no instances of *διακρίνω* with this sense can be found prior to or contemporary with the NT, there are a small number of uses of this sense that postdate the NT. According to this argument, they provide evidence that this sense could have developed as the NT was being written, and may even have been "a product of Greek-speaking Christianity."<sup>29</sup> There are two problems with this argument. The first is that even if these examples were numerous and unambiguous, which they are not, it is not valid to point to the sense of later instances of a word to support attributing that sense to earlier instances of it, especially when the later ones were decades later.<sup>30</sup> The second is that the examples given for this argument do not support it very well. Not only are there very few of them, but most could just as easily mean something other than "doubt" in the contexts in which they occur. This is especially true of the examples from the Greek Fathers, who use passive and middle forms of *διακρίνω* in reference not to people or actions marked by uncertainty, but rather to dissenters from established church

<sup>27</sup> That is, many commentaries and lexicons say there are no examples of this usage prior to the NT. Moreover, a search of the largest available corpus of instances of *διακρίνω* from the second century BC through the first century AD (388 examples) yielded none either. A survey of more than six hundred additional instances from before and after this period yielded the same result.

<sup>28</sup> There is also a third, much weaker argument: the treatment of the texts in question by authors such as John Chrysostom and Hesychius (see Adamson, *The Epistle of James* 58).

<sup>29</sup> Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (2d ed. [1897]; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 40. See also Friedrich Büchsel, "*διακρίνω*," *TDNT* 13.948–49. For conjectures of how this development would have occurred, see Dautzenberg, "*διακρίνω*" 305.

<sup>30</sup> Consider, for example, the term "to psyche out," which in the 1930s commonly meant to analyze the thoughts, methods, or intentions of someone. In the 1970s, however, it usually meant to make uneasy, to unnerve, to intimidate. Both senses could occur in exactly the same context, such as, "He psyched out his opponent." It would be illegitimate, however, to conclude that an instance of the term penned in the 1930s meant "to intimidate" on the basis of the 1970s sense. Other examples include words such as "fundamentalist" or "gay," which in the second half of the twentieth century acquired senses which would have surprised many people who used them with quite a different sense in the first half. See also Osborne's comments and his example of "martyr" (Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* 72).

doctrine or to people who broke fellowship with the church or were cut off from fellowship.<sup>31</sup>

A second argument that has been put forward in support of attributing the sense "doubt" to διακρίνω in the verses in question is the way they were rendered in the earliest translations of the NT (i.e. those that predate the Vulgate).<sup>32</sup> Theoretically, this evidence could be quite convincing. If it can be shown that translators working in different languages relatively soon after the NT was written (and without undue influence from other translations) understood these instances to express uncertainty, then there is a fairly good chance that this is the correct sense of the Greek term in such contexts. However, the evidence is, once again, ambiguous at best. In the first place, the ravages of time have made it difficult to be certain exactly what many of the original renderings were. Second, the evidence from the texts of the translations that we do have access to gives at least as much support to the rendering being proposed in this article as it does to the traditional one. The Coptic versions, for example, render most of these instances as "make/be two hearts."<sup>33</sup> While such a metaphor could include the sense "doubt," it could also include the idea of disloyalty, contention, or hypocrisy. Similarly, Büchsel indicates that the Syriac rendering of Matt 21:21 emphasizes division, contention, and duality.<sup>34</sup> The only relevant passage that has survived in Gothic is Mark 11:23; and in it the word used for διακρίνω, namely *tuzwerjan*, occurs only here in the extant corpus so that any arguments about the meaning of the word are almost inevitably circular.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Lampe, Mayor, Büchsel, and others list a number of examples of διακρίνω in post-biblical works that could have one of these senses (G. W. H. Lampe, "διακρίνω," *PGL* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961); Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* 40–41; Büchsel, "διακρίνω" 948). Of these, only the instances found in *Prot. Jas.* 11 (late first or early second century) and in 1–2 *Clem* 1:20 and 2:40 (second century) support the sense "doubt." The use in *Prot. Jas.*, however, does not represent an independent use of the term but is rather part of a self-conscious attempt to imitate the style and vocabulary of the canonical epistle. The author could easily have copied the term without fully understanding the original intended meaning. Similar doubts can be raised concerning the Homilies. Passages in the Greek Fathers that are cited as supporting "doubt" but which seem better translated as "separatist" or "divisive" include Socrates Scholasticus, *Hist. eccl.* 3.9; Gel. Cyz., *Hist. eccl.* 3.15.5; Timotheus I of Constantinople, *De Receptione Haereticorum*; Theod. Lect., *Hist. eccl.* 2.31; and Leont. Byz. *De Sectis* 4.7 (section numbers are those of PG). Origen's use of the word would be a study in and of itself. His discussions of passages where it occurs regularly cite the rest of the places it occurs in all voices in both the NT and the LXX. Although some of these discussions do not exclude the sense "doubt," they seem to support a sort of plenary meaning for every occurrence.

<sup>32</sup> For an introduction to this topic, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>33</sup> Based on Horner's texts. See George William Horner, ed. and trans., *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect, Otherwise Called Memphitic and Bohairic* (6 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1898) and George William Horner, ed. and trans., *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect, Otherwise Called Sahidic and Thebic* (6 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1911–24).

<sup>34</sup> Büchsel, "διακρίνω" 949.

<sup>35</sup> However, a related word, *unwerjan*, occurs in the Gothic translation of Mark 10:14 and 10:41 where in each it renders the Greek word ἀγανακτεῖν as "to be vexed." Also, the Gothic prefix *un-*

If the sense “uncertainty” had really been intended in the nine NT passages, it would probably have created unnecessary confusion for the reader, since διακρίνω already had a number of other senses that could make sense in the contexts in question, and which the NT authors use elsewhere in their writings. Moreover, they had available a number of other words whose well-established sense was “doubt.”<sup>36</sup> It should also be noted that the sense “doubt” is attributed to διακρίνω in Matthew, Mark, Acts, Romans, James, and Jude. These six books represent six different authors of diverse backgrounds writing to geographically and socially diverse audiences. Is it likely that all of them would use a term with such potential for misinterpretation when a common and unambiguous term was available?<sup>37</sup>

## VII. CONCLUSION

Determining the meaning of words in long-dead languages is far from an exact science. We are centuries removed from the original author, audience, and situation. There are no native speakers left who can clarify what is obscure. In many cases, the best we can do is to weigh the available evidence and choose the option that appears to be the most likely. In the case of διακρίνω in the NT, both the historical and contextual evidence seem to me to favor an interpretation of these instances that is more in keeping with the well-attested senses of division and contention, and to disfavor the more traditional renderings that convey doubt or uncertainty.

The suggestions made in this article for the meanings of the occurrences of διακρίνω in the NT are summarized in Figure 5. In this chart, an “X” in one of the middle columns denotes that this sense is being newly proposed for the instance of διακρίνω that occurs in the verse whose reference is shown in the left hand column. An “O” in a middle column indicates that this sense is already attributed to an occurrence in most translations. A “?” indicates that an occurrence may have a secondary sense arising from its particular context.

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is cognate with “un-” and *tuz-* with “dys-,” and they seem to have had similar functions. This seems to me to tilt the evidence in favor of interpreting *tuzwerjan* as having as much to do with contention as uncertainty. See Wilhelm Streitberg, ed., *Die gotische Bibel* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1919–28).

<sup>36</sup> Büchsel (“διακρίνω” 948) mentions ἀμφισβητέω, ἀμφιβάλλω, and διστάζω. Philo also used ἐνδοιάζω. The word διστάζω is even used in the NT, in Matt 14:31 and 28:17, and was the word used most often in the writings of the Church fathers to express “doubt.” It is used by Aristotle, Josephus, and Diodorus of Sicily to express “uncertainty.” LSJ and BAGD both list “doubt” and “hesitate” as the only attested senses of διστάζω. Moreover, it would seem to have made a less ambiguous choice than διακρίνω in at least some of its occurrences.

<sup>37</sup> This is especially the case if, as the corpus indicates, this sense of διακρίνω was restricted to the Christian community. Assuming that Matthew and Mark targeted at least a partially non-Christian readership, it would seem they would have avoided deliberately and unnecessarily confusing them.

<i>Reference</i>	<i>Verb form</i>	<i>Voice</i>	<i>Divided loyalty</i>	<i>Divisive attitude or action</i>	<i>NIV</i>
Matt 16:3	διακρίνειν	A			interpret
Matt 21:21	διακριθήτε	P	X		doubt
Mark 11:23	διακριθῇ	P	X	?	doubt
Acts 10:20	διακρινόμενος	M/P		X	hesitate
Acts 11:2	διεκρίνοντο	M		O	criticize
Acts 11:12	διακρίναντα	A		X	hesitate
Acts 15:9	διέκρινεν	A		O	make distinction
Rom 4:20	διεκρίθη	P	X		waver through unbelief
Rom 14:23	διακρινόμενος	M/P		X	The one who doubts
1 Cor 4:7	διακρίνει	A		O	make different
1 Cor 6:5	διακρίναι	A		O	judge [between]
1 Cor 11:29	διακρίνων	A		X	recognize
1 Cor 11:31	διεκρίνομεν	A			judge [ourselves]
1 Cor 14:29	διακρινέτωσαν	A			weigh carefully
Jas 1:6a	διακρινόμενος	M/P	X	?	[don't] doubt
Jas 1:6b	διακρινόμενος	M/P	X	?	doubt
Jas 2:4	διακριθήτε	P		O	discriminate
Jude 1:9	διακρινόμενος	M/P		O	dispute
Jude 1:22	διακρινομένου	M/P	X	?	doubt

Fig. 5. Suggested senses of NT occurrences of διακρίνω. X = non-traditional sense suggested in this article. O = traditional sense in keeping with what is being suggested in this article. ? = possible secondary sense which arises from the context. NIV translation is given for comparative purposes.

As is apparent from Figure 5, those instances of διακρίνω in the passive voice are more likely to convey “divided loyalty,” while instances in the middle or active voice are more likely to convey “divisive attitude or action.” However, in all instances, the wider context of the occurrence is at least as determinative of the meaning as voice. Participial forms that can be interpreted as either middle or passive are the most likely to carry a nuance of both senses at once. In instances where διακρίνω is explicitly contrasted with a member of the πίστ- word group, the latter should be taken to have a sense that is more readily translated with the terms “loyalty” or “faithfulness” than with “faith.”