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Six Ground-breaking Discoveries

A Summary of "Vaticanus Distigme-obelos Symbols Marking Added Text, Including 1 Corinthians 14.34–5" *New Testament Studies* 63 (2017) 604–625 (c) 2017 Payne Loving Trust

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About Philip B. Payne

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This summary of six groundbreaking discoveries from my *New Testament Studies* 63 (October, 2017) article about the oldest Bible in Greek, *Codex Vaticanus*, henceforth “*Vaticanus*,” dated AD 325–350, highlights their implications for the reliability of the transmission of the Greek New Testament and for the equal standing of man and woman:

1. Scribe B, who penned *Vaticanus*’s entire New Testament and Old Testament Prophets, was extraordinarily faithful in preserving the text of its exemplars, namely the manuscripts from which *Vaticanus* was copied.
2. The entire text of all four Gospels in *Vaticanus* is even earlier than the text of Bodmer Papyrus 75, henceforth P⁷⁵, written AD 175–225 and containing most of Luke 3 through John 15.
3. The entire text of the epistles in the second oldest Bible, *Codex Sinaiticus*, dated AD 350–360, is arguably at least as old as the text of P³², dated ca. AD 200.
4. The two-dot symbol (the technical term is “distigme”) marking the location of textual variants throughout *Vaticanus* also occurs in the fourth to fifth century LXX G.
5. Scribe B left a gap following seven two-dot+bar symbols at the exact point of a multi-word later addition.

6. Scribe B marked 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, the only Bible passage commanding women to be silent in the churches, as a later addition.

Scribe B Preserved the Text of *Vaticanus*'s Exemplars with Remarkable Fidelity

Scribe B (name unknown) is the only scribe of *Vaticanus* who preserved the bars (the technical term is “obeloi”) Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254, the most famous expert on the text of the Bible from the early church) used to show where the Septuagint Greek translation (henceforth “LXX”) of the Hebrew Scriptures added words not in the Hebrew text. Scribe B reproduced *Vaticanus*'s Prophets so faithfully that he or she did not add bars to the exemplar's text even by passages explicitly identified as “not in the Hebrew.” “Or she” reflects Eusebius's statement in *Church History* 6.23.2 that Origen employed “girls skilled in penmanship.”

The sharp contrast between the virtually complete absence of periods at the end of sentences in *Vaticanus*'s Gospels and the presence of periods throughout all its epistles shows that Scribe B copied both exemplars faithfully. This is the only explanation for this sharp contrast congruent with a copyist's primary task, to reproduce the exemplar's text.

Vaticanus symbols marking differences between manuscripts show that Scribe B was aware of variants, copied exemplars faithfully, and preferred the earliest possible text. Scribe B was extraordinarily careful not to add to or take away text from *Vaticanus*'s exemplars, not even adding periods after sentences or bars where original ink marginal notes identify LXX additions. All this supports Birdsall's judgment in *The Bible as Book*, 35, “Behind the quality of the New Testament text in this codex, there appears to be critical ‘know-how’.”

The Extraordinarily Early Text of the Gospels in *Vaticanus*

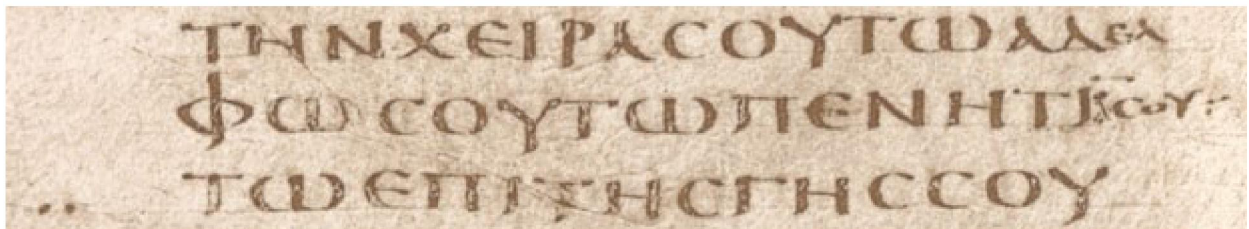
The text of P⁷⁵ is remarkably similar to the corresponding text in *Vaticanus*. Carlo Martini's *Il problema della recensionalità del codice B alla luce del papiro Bodmer xiv* argued this in detail, and scholars have confirmed his findings. The virtually complete absence of periods at the end of sentences in the *Vaticanus* Gospels but their presence throughout the *Vaticanus* epistles and P⁷⁵ indicates that, as usual then, all four *Vaticanus* Gospels were copied from the same manuscript, but one so primitive it had virtually no periods. The *Vaticanus* Gospels' lack of periods indicates that their text is earlier than the *Vaticanus* epistles' text and even earlier than P⁷⁵'s text. Paul Canart, world-renowned expert on *Vaticanus*, agrees with this explanation and knows of no publication of this apparently original observation. None of the New Testament papyri that the standard Nestle-Aland critical text identifies as second-century (P³², 90, 98, 104) contains a period.

Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, 287, state, “the original texts ... naturally also lacked punctuation.” The *Vaticanus* Gospels’ text is so old it was not contaminated by any of the five blocks of added text their two-dot+bar symbols mark. These discoveries corroborate both halves of Bruce Metzger’s judgment in *Historical and Literary Studies*, 157–58, “Since B [=*Vaticanus*] is not a lineal descendent of P⁷⁵, the common ancestor of both carries the ... text to a period prior to AD 175–225, the date assigned to P⁷⁵.” It also supports Stephen Pisano’s affirmation in *Le manuscrit B de la Bible*, 96, “of the text of B as an extremely reliable witness ..., especially of the Gospels and Acts.”

The Second Century Text of the Epistles in Codex Sinaiticus

Chris Stevens’ November 18, 2015 Evangelical Theological Society paper, “Titus in P32 and Sinaiticus: Textual Reliability and Scribal Design,” showed that there is only one letter in the text of Titus in P³², dated ca. AD 200, that differs from the text of Sinaiticus, so the Sinaiticus text of Titus goes back at least to ca. AD 200. Since fourth century scribes copied entire collections of the epistles, not separate epistles from different manuscripts, the rest of the Sinaiticus epistles’ text is probably also this old. This supports a second century date not only of the entire text of the *Vaticanus* Gospels, but also of the entire text of the Sinaiticus epistles.

The Antiquity of Two-Dot Symbols in *Vaticanus*



Approximately 780 two-dot symbols in the margins of *Vaticanus* mark the location of Greek textual variants. Fifty-one of them match the original *Vaticanus* ink. Two more with original ink protruding behind reinking suggest that most two-dot symbols were re-inked with the rest of *Vaticanus* ca. AD 1000. The same symbol occurs in the fourth- or fifth-century LXX G, the earliest extensive copy of Origen’s annotated LXX. LXX G’s and *Vaticanus*’s many parallels suggest they came from the same scriptorium. The following example from LXX G 228 demonstrates ancient use of this two-dot symbol to mark textual variants between Greek manuscripts.

These two dot symbols give us insights regarding textual variants in a corpus of very early manuscript text far wider than has survived from before the time of *Vaticanus*. Because manuscripts have survived showing textual variants at most of their locations, they show that we

probably know through surviving manuscripts most of the textual variants that were available to the producers of *Vaticanus*. This greatly reduces the plausibility that the original manuscripts were significantly different from what we know from surviving manuscripts.

Scribe B Left a Gap Following Seven Two-dot+bar Symbols at the Exact Point of a Multiword Later Addition

Seven key facts support the conclusion that all eight bars with characteristic features adjacent to a two-dot symbol mark the location of a multi-word textual addition:

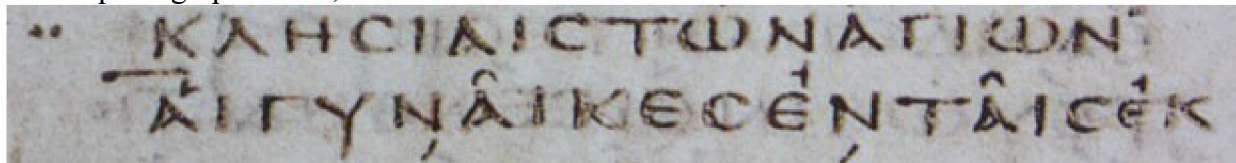
1. The Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* 28th edition identifies a multi-word textual variant somewhere in the line following each characteristic bar. If all eight were simply paragraph marks, this conjunction would have to be mere coincidence. The probability that multi-word variants identified by Nestle-Aland would occur somewhere in each of eight randomly-selected *Vaticanus* lines is less than one in a trillion.
2. Even more astounding, Scribe B left a gap at the exact letter where a widely acknowledged, multi-word textual addition begins following every characteristic bar except one that was evidently added by a different hand.
3. None of the other twenty bars adjacent to a two-dot symbol combines as much extension into the margin and total length as any of the eight characteristic bars. All eight extend, on average, almost twice as far into the margin as the other twenty and are, on average, almost one third longer than the other twenty. This distinguishes them graphically from paragraph bars randomly occurring after dots. Their extension into the margin associates them with their adjacent two-dot symbols, whose purpose was to mark the location of textual variants. Characteristic bars specify which category of variant—multi-word additions.
4. Scribe B undoubtedly used horizontal-bars in the *Vaticanus* Prophets to mark the locations of blocks of added text since one is in the middle of text and since explanations that these bars mark added text display original *Vaticanus* ink.
5. All eight characteristic bars adjacent to a two-dot symbol resemble the shape and length of each bar marking added text in the *Vaticanus* Prophets.
6. A horizontal bar was the standard Greek symbol for marking added text.
7. Bars also mark blocks of added text in other manuscripts at John 7:53–8:11 and Mark's longer ending. Apparently every manuscript with a bar introducing Mark's longer ending notes that this ending is not "in some of the copies."

All this supports the conclusion that two-dot+bar symbols mark the location of multi-word blocks of added text.

Vaticanus Scribe B Marked “Let women keep silent in the churches ... for it is a disgrace for a woman to speak in church” as a Later Addition

1 Corinthians 14:34–35 silences women in church three times with no qualification. Chapter 11, however, guides how women should prophesy, and chapter 14:5, 24 (3x), 26 and 31 affirm “all” speaking in church. Popular resolutions of this contradiction limit 14:34–35’s demand for silence only to disruptive chatter or, recently contrived, only to judging prophecies. These resolutions should be rejected since they permit speech verse 35 prohibits, namely asking questions from a desire to learn.

As this photograph shows, Scribe B identified 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 as added text



but faithfully preserved those verses from *Vaticanus*’s epistles’ exemplar, just as Scribe B faithfully preserved text in the *Vaticanus* Prophets marked with a bar as later additions. It is precisely because of honest preservation of textual data that Scribe B’s textual judgments should be respected, not dismissed.

In the 121 cases of a bar in the *Vaticanus* Prophets, a comparison with the Hebrew Scriptures shows that Scribe B’s judgments were correct, that the Greek translation being copied did indeed add words that were not in the Hebrew text.

Furthermore, manuscripts confirm a block of text was added at the gap Scribe B left following every other two-dot+bar symbol. Therefore, this symbol implies that Scribe B had manuscript evidence 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 was non-original, added text. We should trust Scribe B’s textual judgments because the wide scope of textual variants Scribe B marked implies access to far more pre-*Vaticanus* NT manuscript text than survives today.

1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is the only multi-word textual variant ever identified at the gap following this two-dot+bar symbol. At least sixty-two textual studies argue that 14:34–35 is a later addition. Joseph Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 530, notes that “the majority of commentators

today” regard verses 34–35 as a later addition. Kim Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest*, 62, affirms this of “[n]early all scholars now.”

This is important theologically because the two-dot+bar symbol at the interface of 1 Corinthians 14:33 and 34 provides a resolution to the notorious difficulty of reconciling verses 34–35 with 1 Corinthians 11’s inclusion of women prophesying and chapter 14’s affirmations of “all” prophesying—verses 34–35 were not in Paul’s original letter, but are a later addition. Therefore, Paul’s unqualified affirmations of the equal standing of man and woman in Christ (Galatians 3:28; Romans 16; 1 Corinthians 7; 11:11–12) need not be qualified by verses 34–35’s huge caveat. Nor must one resort to implausible interpretations of 14:34–35. The twenty-two page article, “*Vaticanus* Distigme-obelos Symbols Marking Added Text, Including 1 Corinthians 14.34–5” with twelve color photographs, will be downloadable free in September from

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