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Elihu continued and said:

“Bear with me a little, and I will show you, for I have yet something to say on God’s behalf.”
—Job 36:1-2 (NRSV)

Punctuation in Early Greek New Testament Texts

Greg Stafford**

For good reasons Phillip Comfort as recently as five years ago wrote about the “common myth perpetrated about the ancient Greek New Testament,” that is, the myth “that the early manuscripts had no punctuation marks.”¹ Nearly one hundred and twenty-five years earlier, Ezra Abbot made a similar observation, “Incorrect statements are often made in regard to the extreme rarity of punctuation in our oldest N. T. MSS.”² Why has so little changed among those who study and interpret early Greek New Testament (NT) texts?

* This article was revised on February 7, 2011. It was originally released on September 4, 2010, apart from the *Elihu Online Papers* series, but as a draft intended to eventually be revised and included as the third *Elihu Online Paper*.

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¹ Philip Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts: An Introduction to New Testament Paleography & Textual Criticism* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), page 53.

² Ezra Abbot, “On the Construction of Romans ix. 5,” *JBL* 1 (1881), page 151. See also Abbot’s, “Recent Discussions of Romans ix. 5,” *JBL* 3 (1883), page 107, where Abbot wrote in response to Edwin Hamilton Gifford:

On p. 36 of Dr. Gifford’s *Letter*, speaking of punctuation in MSS., he observes that “it is universally acknowledged that no marks of punctuation or division were in use till long after the days of St. Paul.” This remark, if intended to apply to Greek MSS. in general, is inaccurate, and indicates that Dr. Gifford has been misled by untrustworthy authorities. If it is intended to apply to New Testament MSS., I do not see how the fact can be proved, as we [at that time] possess no MSS. of the New Testament of earlier date than the fourth century.

In both of his referenced articles, Abbot also notes several marks of punctuation in some of the earliest and highest regarded Greek NT manuscripts available, which I will cite and discuss throughout this paper. However, as correct as Abbot’s above-quoted remarks are on the use of punctuation in ancient Greek texts, Abbot does not see the obvious value in the use of these marks in NT texts when he writes (with my bracketed comments added):

The truth is, that this whole matter of punctuation in the ancient MSS. is of exceedingly small importance, which might be shown more fully, had not this paper already extended to an excessive length. In the first place, we cannot infer with confidence the construction given to the passage by the punctuator [then Abbot is not following what the text preserves and puts forth as the original understanding of the text], the distribution of points even in the oldest MSS. is so abnormal; in the second place, if we could, to how much would this authority amount? [Abbot, “On the Construction of Romans ix. 5,” page 152; see also Abbot, “Recent Discussions of Romans ix. 5,” page 107.]

In his above remarks Abbot fails to note that punctuation in such texts amounts to an acceptance of the text’s representation, right or wrong, as indicated/preserved by part of the NT textual and interpretational tradition existing prior to and/or during the time when a copy of the original was made. Indeed, Abbot even concludes his section on the punctuation of Romans 9:5 in ancient manuscripts by providing what is one of the most obvious explanations for the use of such marks, namely, because “a pause after that word was felt by ancient scribes to be natural” (Abbot, “On the Construction of Romans ix. 5,” page 152). Abbot’s failure to appreciate the importance and relevance of his own observation on the likely reason for the use of punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts is likely because of the *misuse* of the very same information (punctuation in Greek NT texts) in arguments by others during his day

It is because popular and still-circulating Trinitarian apologetic works, Greek grammars, and works on the language and text of the NT often fail to completely or accurately inform others about significant occurrences and the likely intended use of punctuation marks in ancient Greek texts. Consider the following example:

In ancient Greek there were no punctuation marks; indeed, all words were run together with no spaces between them and using all capital letters.³

As Comfort writes on the same page of his 2005 book (quoted and referenced on page 1), “This is far from the truth.” In fact, if Bowman had simply reviewed some of the very Greek grammars which he cited two years earlier in one of his 1989 publications,⁴ he may not have so wrongly stated the matter concerning punctuation marks in ancient Greek.

In his earlier publication Bowman references the shorter grammar by A.T. Robertson and W. Hersey Davis⁵ which too broadly (“purely modern”) and wrongly states (with my emphasis): “Our present system of punctuation is purely modern. *Punctuation is the result of interpretation.*” The fact is, our “present system of punctuation” is not (and should not be) “purely modern” because we have available to us actual marks of punctuation in early Greek New Testament texts, marks which show us how those very same texts were understood by different scribes or copyists of the same or earlier texts, perhaps even the original NT text, and so not necessarily even the result of any “interpretation.”

Yet, even here Robertson’s and Davis’ short grammar refers its readers to “Robertson’s [larger] *Grammar* ... pp. 241-245,” for a “full discussion” of punctuation.⁶ Beginning on page 241 of

which clearly frustrated Abbot when it came to the quality of Greek NT texts which were alleged to contain the point after “flesh” in Romans 9:5. Indeed, Abbot responded further to Gifford, picking up from where my first quote from Abbot in this note left off from Abbot’s “Recent Discussions of Romans ix. 5,” page 107:

But the essential point in Dr. Gifford’s remarks is that the punctuation in MSS. of the New Testament is *of no authority*. This is very true; and it should have been remembered by the many commentators (including Dr. Gifford) who have made the assertion (very incorrect in point of fact), that a stop after $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\alpha$ is found in only two or three inferior MSS. in Rom. ix. 5, as if that were an argument against a doxology here.

Contrary to Abbot, I believe an attempt to ‘show more fully’ the possible occurrence and meaning of potentially intentional marks of punctuation in early Greek NT texts will prove to be highly revealing and rewarding, in part, by noting and then being able to further consider the different, likely interpretations indicated by various marks of punctuation. But Abbot was clearly fighting against the tide of misuse of punctuations marks by Trinitarians in such a way it appears to have limited his own appreciation for their actual or possible occurrence in early Greek NT texts.

³ Robert M. Bowman, Jr., *Understanding Jehovah’s Witnesses: Why They Read the Bible the Way They Do* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), page 98. Compare James White, *The Forgotten Trinity: Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany, 1998), pages 72-73 (underlining added), “We should remember that punctuation did not exist in the most primitive manuscripts of the New Testament.”

⁴ On page 15 of his *Understanding Jehovah’s Witnesses*, Bowman recommends his book, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989) to his readers, first of all other books for further reading concerning the same subject (Jehovah’s Witnesses).

⁵ See Bowman, *Jehovah Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989 [1991 printing]), page 149, note 54.

⁶ See A.T. Robertson and W. Hersey Davis, *A New Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 10th ed. (Grand Raids: Baker, 1977), page 48.

Robertson's larger *Grammar*,⁷ there is a discussion on "Punctuation" in which Robertson states the matter clearly and in large part more correctly:

The oldest inscriptions and papyri show few signs of punctuation between sentences or clauses in a sentence, though punctuation by points does appear on some of the ancient inscriptions. In the Artemisia papyrus the double point (:) occasionally ends the sentence. It was Aristophanes of Byzantium (260 B.C.) who is credited with inventing a more regular system of sentence punctuation which was further developed by the Alexandrian grammarians. As a rule all the sentences, like the words, ran into one another in an unbroken line (*scriptura continua*), but finally three stops were provided for the sentence by the use of the full point. The point at the top of the line (·) (στιγμή τελεία, 'high point') was a full stop; that on the line (.) (ὑποστιγμή) was equal to our semicolon, while a middle point (στιγμή μέση) was equivalent to our comma. But gradually changes came over these stops till the top point was equal to our colon, the bottom point became the full stop, the middle point vanished, and about the ninth century A.D. the comma (,) took its place. About this time also the question-mark (;) or ἐρωτηματικόν appeared. These marks differed from the στίχοι in that they concerned the sense of the sentence. Some of the oldest N.T. MSS. show these marks to some extent. B [Codex Vaticanus] has the higher point as a period, the lower point for a shorter pause.⁸

One ancient Greek grammarian who lived shortly after Aristophanes of Byzantium (of the third century BCE) was Dionysius Thrax, who lived and who wrote from between around 170 to 90 BCE.⁹ Here is what Thrax is credited with having written about punctuation in ancient Greek several hundred years *before* the date of our earliest Greek NT texts:

⁷ A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), which is referred to by Bowman concerning other issues in his *Jehovah Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, page 145, note 13; page 149, note 53; and on page 152, note 6, for examples.

⁸ Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, page 242 (underlining added). Compare W.H.P. Hatch, *The Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), page 24, note 4, and the similar but less convincing assessment of J.H. Moulton and W.F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. II, *Accidence and Word-Formation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1919), pages 46-47. As Robertson also indicates (large *Grammar*, page 242, note 5), some view the full point on the line (ὑποστιγμή) as "our comma" rather than as a semicolon. It is not yet entirely clear in all cases just how the different points were used at different times in ancient Greek texts, though the uses can be better understood through an attempt to evaluate each point's use in a given text according to each scribal hand identified.

⁹ Dionysius' work, or that work which is attributed to him, has associated with it the understanding quoted from his grammar concerning punctuation marks used in ancient Greek since possibly as early as the middle or late second century BCE through to the "third or fourth century AD," according to Eleanor Dickey:

Dionysius' authorship, however, has been doubted since antiquity and has recently been the focus of considerable discussion; some scholars maintain that the entire treatise is a compilation of the third or fourth century AD. While others defend its complete authenticity and date it to the end of the second century BC. There is also a range of intermediate positions, which in recent years have gained much ground against both the more extreme views: some portion of the beginning of the work could go back to Dionysius, while the rest of it was written later, or the entire work (or sections of it) could be originally Dionysius' but seriously altered (and perhaps abridged) by later writers. Some argue that if the Τέχνη [grammar] is spurious, we must revise our whole view of the development of Greek grammatical thought, to put the creation of fully developed grammatical analysis in the first century BC. Others maintain that Aristarchus and his followers already possessed an advanced grammatical system and that the date of the Τέχνη [grammar] therefore makes little difference to our view of the evolution of grammar. [*Ancient Greek Scholarship: A Guide to Finding, Reading, and Understanding Scholia, Commentaries, Lexica, and Grammatical Treatises, from Their Beginnings to the Byzantine Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), page 78; compare page 191-192, Dickey's item 98.]

στιγμαί εἰσι τρεῖς τελεία, μέση, ὑποστιγμή. καὶ ἡ μὲν τελεία στιγμή ἐστὶ διανοίας ἀπηρτισμένης σημεῖον, μέση δὲ σημεῖον πνεύματος ἕνεκεν παραλαμβανόμενον, ὑποστιγμη δὲ διανοίας μηδέπω ἀπηρτισμένης ἀλλ' ἔτι ἐνδεούσης σημεῖον.¹⁰

There are three marks [or, 'points'], a period [or, 'a finished point'], a semi-colon/colon [or, 'a middle point'], and a comma. On the one hand, the period mark is a sign for a complete expression, but a semi-colon/colon [or, 'a middle point'] sign is breathed according to those who use it, while a comma is for what is not yet completely expressed; unlike the other marks, it [the comma] is a sign for what is still unfinished.¹¹

In the note to the last sentence from my quote of Robertson's larger grammar on page 3 of this paper, Robertson references the Greek grammar by Friedrich Blass. Dovetailing nicely with Robertson's earlier comments, the following must read like music to Comfort's ears when considered now in light of misstatements about punctuation marks in ancient Greek texts which have been made by Bowman (quoted on page 2) and by others¹² (with my underlining):

¹⁰ As cited in Hatch, *The Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New Testament*, page 24, note 6, and online (link: http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/graeca/Chronologia/S_ante02/DionysiosThrax/dio_tech.html#04 [last accessed February 7, 2011]), both of which are from G. Uhlig's version of 1883 (Leipzig).

¹¹ This is my personal translation. Compare the translation of Thomas Davidson, *The Grammar of Dionysios Thrax* (St. Louis, MO.: R.P. Studley Co., 1874), page 4:

There are three punctuation marks: the full stop, the semi-colon, and the comma. The full stop denotes that the sense is complete, the semi-colon is a sign of where to take breath; the comma shows that the sense is not yet complete, but that something further must be added.

Differences between the above and my translation of Dionysius relate in one instance to μέση, that is, whether it is to be understood as either a colon or a semi-colon. Also, in my translation, "a semi-colon/colon [or, 'a middle point'] sign is breathed according to those who use it," my intent is to express what seems to be an indication of a more personally fluid use of the "middle point." Or it may be as Davidson has it, namely, "a sign of where to take breath," according to a more fixed (and so less fluid) principle of reading/writing. Dionysius also adds, "At the full stop the pause is long, at the comma, very short" (Davidson, *The Grammar of Dionysios Thrax*, page 4).

¹² Compare the following descriptions of punctuation in (with my underlining) Eugene Van Ness Goetchius, *The Language of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), page 12, "The oldest New Testament manuscripts have few marks of punctuation of any kind"; Léon Vaganay and Christian-Bernard Amphoux, *An introduction to New Testament textual criticism*, Jenny Heimerdinger, trans., Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), page 9, "[punctuation was] not unknown [or] of a very elementary nature" (no examples are given which demonstrate what is claimed); 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*, Erroll F. Rhodes, trans., Revised and Enlarged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), page 282, "The scriptio continua of the original texts not only ignored the division of words, but naturally [!] also lacked any punctuation"; Jack Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts: A Working Introduction to Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), pages 32, 128, "In the earliest NT manuscripts [there] is also little or no punctuation" (page 32, "there is almost no punctuation"); Hatch, *The Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New Testament*, pages 3 and 23, "[in the] original manuscripts of the New Testament ... there were no accents or breathings and only a few marks of punctuation," and, "Punctuation is scanty in manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries"; George Milligan (*The New Testament Documents: Their Origin and Early History* [London: Macmillan and Co., 1913]), page 25, "there would be no punctuation, unless it might be the occasional insertion of a dot above the line"; E. Nestle, *Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the Greek New Testament* (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1901), page 38, "Marks of **punctuation** are hardly to be found in the earliest times. ... In the general absence of punctuation" While such comments are more accurate and so also more carefully worded than Bowman's previously quoted characterization of punctuation marks in ancient Greek, as noted by others and as I will show here again in this paper "continuous script" (*scriptio continua*) did not keep punctuation from being added "in nearly every manuscript" (Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, page 53 [underlining added]). Though based on my review of early Greek NT texts

As regards **punctuation**, it is certain that the writers of the N.T. were acquainted with it, inasmuch as other writers of that time made use of it, not only in MSS., but frequently also in letters and documents; but whether they practised [*sic*] it, no one knows, and certainly not how and where they employed it, since no authentic information has come down to us on the subject. The oldest witnesses (N and B) have some punctuation as early as the first hand; in B the higher point on the line (στυγή) is, as a rule, employed for the conclusion of an idea, the lower point (ὑποστυγή ...) where the idea is still left in suspense.¹³

In connection with the meaning of a particularly controversial NT text which in part involves the correct use of punctuation, Bowman cites the article by Bruce Metzger, “The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5.” Yet, if Bowman did in fact read Metzger’s article then it is difficult to understand how Bowman could have subsequently claimed (which he did) that in “ancient Greek there were no punctuation marks” (again, quoted and referenced on page 2 of this paper), for in the very article which Bowman cites Metzger expressly states:

to date I would instead say that in *many* manuscripts punctuation marks are used. By contrast, and more in line with the works quoted earlier in this note, consider this rather odd explanation by Keith Elliott and Ian Moir:

Our earliest manuscripts did not use marks of punctuation in any consistent or obvious way. So, although some discussion about punctuation allows an appeal to the manuscripts, it is impossible to use manuscript evidence alone when deciding on the punctuation of the NT in modern editing. [*Manuscripts and the Text of the New Testament: An Introduction for English Readers* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), page 75 (underlining added).]

Who, though, has ever even suggested using “manuscript evidence alone,” that is, when deciding “on the punctuation of the NT in modern editing”? Surely, however, the “manuscript evidence” should be considered and used if possible. Therefore, the above comments appear to me to be little more than an easy way out of explaining the poor quality of the United Bible Societies’ (UBS) Greek New Testament’s use of “various levels of punctuation variants” which, though of “crucial importance for exegesis and for translation,” are “not text-critical variants as commonly understood” (Elliott and Moir, *Manuscripts and the Text of the New Testament*, page 75). Compare the rebuke of the UBS publication process by Rykle Borger, “Remarks of an Outsider about Bauer’s Wörterbuch, BAGD, BDAG, and Their Textual Basis,” in *Biblical Greek Language and Lexicography, Essays in Honor of Frederick W. Danker*, Bernard A. Taylor, John A.L. Lee, Peter R. Burton, and Richard E. Whitaker, eds. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), page 35:

In 1955 the United Bible Societies appointed an international and interconfessional committee consisting of five scholars, including K. Aland. These five scholars were entrusted with preparation of a new edition of the NT. First they selected – with a remarkable lack of sure instinct – about 5,000 passages that should be subjected to further study. The truth was found – not without much controversy – by majority vote, even about grammatical questions. The relative degree of certainty of the variant readings was rated by the letters A, B, C, and D. The miraculous complete agreement of all ... was not attained by the UBS Committee. Finally, the Committee produced the Greek New Testament of the United Bible Societies (1966). In the third edition (1975) several changes were made in the text, for which Aland now invented the name “Standard Text.” Since that time “not a letter, not a stroke” of the text has been changed. UNSGNT became the best-selling edition of the NT, in spite of its bad planning and inadequate realization.

As for Elliott and Moir’s apparent acceptance of the complete or near complete abandonment of any actual use of ancient marks of punctuation in Greek texts “when deciding on the punctuation of the NT in modern editing” (hence, the UBS’s non-use or non-citation of just such relevant textual material), from my perspective all marks of punctuation identified confidently as such in the available texts should be evaluated individually (according to the ink and scribal hand determined by good reasons to have been used) and also against the habits and indications of other scribes of the same and of different texts.

¹³ Robertson references page 17 of Henry St. John Thackeray’s 1905, Second Edition translation of Blass’ grammar. I am quoting from page 17 of Thackeray’s First Edition of Blass’ work, *Grammar of New Testament Greek* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1898).

As is well known, during the earlier centuries of the transmission of the New Testament, scribes used marks of punctuation rather sporadically, not to say haphazardly.¹⁴

Additionally, Bowman refers to the grammars of Robert W. Funk and F. Blass and A. Debrunner, neither of which¹⁵ states the matter of punctuation in ancient Greek texts as does Bowman, and *both* of these grammars contradict what Bowman did write concerning the use of punctuation in ancient Greek texts!

¹⁴ Bruce M. Metzger, “The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5,” in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament, In Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule*, Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley, eds. (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), page 97. Referenced in Bowman, *Jehovah Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, page 146, note 3. Strangely, in spite of here providing a fairly accurate assessment (though his use of ‘sporadic’ is suspect [see below]) of the “marks of punctuation” used “during the earlier centuries of the transmission of the New Testament,” Metzger had previously written:

[U]ntil about the eighth century punctuation was used only sporadically [meaning it occurs occasionally or irregularly] ... however ... scattered examples of punctuation, by point or spacing or a combination of both, are preserved in papyri from the third century B.C. onward. ... the earliest manuscripts have very little punctuation. The Bodmer papyri and the Chester Beatty papyri ... have only an occasional mark of punctuation, as do also the uncial manuscripts. [Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, Third, Enlarged Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pages 13, 26-27.]

Though contradicting Bowman’s claim concerning punctuation marks in ancient Greek, Metzger also does not accurately describe the use of punctuation in early NT texts. For example, Metzger claims that the Bodmer and Chester Beatty papyri “have only an occasional mark of punctuation.” In fact, there are numerous examples from the Bodmer and Chester Beatty papyri which show obvious marks of punctuation, as I show and explain in part in this paper on page 11. Further, in his *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible: An Introduction to Greek Palaeography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pages 31-32, Metzger acknowledges that a “high point ... equivalent to a full stop” and a “point on the line” and a “point in a middle position ... were used with different values by different scribes.” Metzger then concludes as he did previously, but with *less* apparent conviction, “Marks of punctuation occur only sporadically or not at all in the most ancient manuscripts.” As Comfort notes and as I will show here in this paper, Metzger’s assessments are inaccurate and in certain instances simply wrong, though Metzger does not go as far in misrepresenting the use of punctuation in ancient Greek as have Bowman and others.

¹⁵ Bowman (in *Jehovah Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, page 153, note 10) references volume II of Robert W. Funk’s, *A Beginning-Intermediate Grammar of Hellenistic Greek*, Second Edition (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973). However, unless Bowman did not have or have access to volume I of Funk’s grammar (which I would consider unlikely, in as much as Bowman did have volume II), then Bowman failed to consider Funk’s remarks in volume I, page 45, section 076, “Punctuation”:

Greek manuscripts of the New Testament books were written for the most part without benefit of punctuation or even separation of words (s. BI-D §16). ... However, some peculiarities of punctuation are old. The period, comma, dash and parenthesis are employed as in English. [Underlining added.]

Funk refers to section 16 in the “BI-D” grammar, which is Funk’s translation of F. Blass and A. Debrunner’s, *A Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), referenced in Bowman, *Jehovah’s Witnesses, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel of John*, page 153, note 15. That Bowman failed to consider this grammar in his *Understanding Jehovah’s Witnesses* is clear from a comparison of Bowman’s earlier claim about there being no punctuation marks in ancient Greek (quoted on page 2) with “BI-D §16” (as referenced in Funk’s grammar), page 10, titled, “Punctuation and Colometry” (with my underlining added):

It is certain that the authors of the NT could have used punctuation just as other people did at that time, not only in MSS, but sometimes also in letters and documents. ... The earliest MSS of the NT, P⁴⁵, P⁴⁶ (not P⁴⁷), P⁶⁶, S [Codex Sinaiticus] and B [Codex Vaticanus], have already received some punctuation by the first hand ... In B, among other marks, the point above the line (στίγμα) is used for a full stop, the lower point (ὑποστίγμα: ...) for pauses after thoughts which are as yet incomplete.

The matter involving the use of punctuation marks in ancient Greek texts has been so badly misrepresented (for reasons which I will explain further later in this paper) that the most well-known of those who view the use of punctuation marks in ancient Greek as Bowman does are none other than Kurt and Barbara Aland! Consider their inaccurate description of the use of punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts:

As the plates in this volume show (e.g., pp. 88-92), the earliest manuscripts were written in **scriptio continua**, i.e., the uncial letters were written continuously, word after word and sentence after sentence, without a break and with extremely few reading aids. ... [In the uncials] the letters are written continuously and without punctuation (characteristically B², a later hand in Codex Vaticanus, clarifies the interpretation by a mark that was not available to the first scribe).¹⁶

The Alands later repeat this same inaccurate view of punctuation in relation to what may have been possible with the “original” texts, that is, based on the copies we have of what were likely “original” or close enough to be used as “original texts” (but which are no longer extant outside of the best available copies). They write, “The scriptio continua of the original texts not only ignored the division of words, but naturally also lacked any punctuation”!¹⁷

Ironically, right after furthering an incorrect view of the use of punctuation in the “original texts,” the Alands rightly note, “Occasionally this [the alleged lack of ‘any’ punctuation] can be critical for the interpretation of a sentence.” It would seem that this should have underscored to the Alands the importance of fully assessing and of rightly representing and then presenting accurate information about the use of punctuation in the “original texts,” that is, based on the best available texts’ use of any marks of punctuation (particularly where it may be “critical for the interpretation of a sentence”) which are identifiable in the best available copies of these “original texts” as representative of the original texts’ punctuated understanding.

In this light, and since many if not (according to Comfort [see my note 12, at the bottom of page 4]) “nearly every manuscript” of our earliest Greek NT texts contain marks of punctuation as representative of the earlier or even of the earliest (“original texts”) of which they are copies, further contradicting the Alands’ claims concerning punctuation in “original” or early Greek NT texts are some of the very plates of these early Greek NT texts which are, in fact, representative of the originals and so referenced by the Alands on pages 88-92 of their *Text of the New Testament* book!

Indeed, on their pages 88-92 the Alands reproduce parts of P⁴⁶, P⁶⁶, P⁴⁷, P⁷², and P⁷⁵, at least two of which (P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵) clearly *do* contain marks of punctuation, even (as I wrote above) in the very images provided by the Alands. These texts and others (see my illustrative listing below) contain marks of punctuation indicating pauses, stops, or what I believe are best described as “thought separations,”¹⁸ or perhaps at times simply as breathing or other natural pausing or

¹⁶ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, Revised and Enlarged, Erroll F. Rhodes, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), page 282 (underlining added).

¹⁷ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, page 287 (underlining added).

¹⁸ Comfort, *Encountering the Manuscripts*, page 53. Additionally, other marks indicating pauses or stops can be seen in early scribal habits. For example, according to Lattey’s report (“The Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus on Romans ix. 5,” *The Expository Times* 35 [October 1923 – September 1924], pages 42, 43) on the use of punctuation marks in Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (fifth century CE) in Romans 9:5 (note continued on the next page):

stopping points. This apparent detachment from the use of punctuation in available copies of early Greek NT texts, in the very publication in which the use of such marks of punctuation is also expressly denied, speaks to some of the reasons for why there has been a continuing deficiency, not simply where it pertains to the *occurrence* of marks of punctuation in early or even “original” Greek NT manuscripts, but also when it comes to identifying and making good use of those same marks since many of them are likely credible expressions or representations of the understanding of the original or otherwise earlier and then later copied texts.¹⁹ This should

Between $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\alpha$ and $\delta\ \acute{\omega}\nu$ there is a space hardly greater than that between any two consecutive letters, but there is quite clearly a small cross there, without any other sign or symbol. This small cross is very often found at the end of a verse ... Père Bourdon’s conclusion from the above example is that the small cross, even by itself, is a strong stop (*marque une punctuation forte*) and is equivalent to a colon, and he mentions M. Omont as an authority who agreed with him upon being shown the verse in question [Romans 9:5] and some examples. [Underlining added.]

Lathey tries his best to minimize the impact of Bourdon’s report, even ending his brief article (page 43) by claiming (in spite of the likely indication he received from the report on Codex C), “In any case the evidence for the mere comma remains overwhelming”! This gets us back once more to the issue of false assumptions involved with the use and significance of punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts. See the description of punctuation marks in Codex A below for more on Lathey’s attempts to jump ahead of the evidence, only to be later contradicted by it.

¹⁹ Hopefully, works such as some of those by Comfort and of papers such as this one, as well as through continuous reference to and a thorough study of the availability of images and of any accurate transcriptions of ancient Greek texts will lead to a more accurate understanding of the use of punctuation marks in these texts. Yet, even where such knowledge is obtainable others have so discounted or misrepresented the evidence that it sits practically unused. Ironically, back in 1928 F.C. Burkitt was drawn into a discussion concerning Romans 9:5 furthered in part by Cuthbert Lathey, who at one point requested “a reliable record” of the punctuation of Codex C, which earlier (to Lathey’s apparent dismay!) Père Bourdon and M. Omont had reported contained a “small cross” as “a strong stop” after “flesh” in Romans 9:5. Writing under the name of the same article as Cuthbert Lathey, “The Punctuation of New Testament Manuscripts,” *JTS* 29.116 [July, 1928]), on page 397 F.C. Burkitt writes:

The point raised by Fr Lathey [for a “reliable record” of Codex C] is important, but it is one that raises great difficulties for an Editor of a critical apparatus. In a certain sense, the punctuation of an ancient Greek work is no part of the original tradition. ... At other places, no doubt, the dot is intentional and significant.

How Burkitt understands such marks to be “no part of the original tradition” when they would, in fact, be the only indicators of the original tradition, if any, and while one is expressed (by marks of punctuation), the other (the use of such marks) is nowhere said of the best available texts to have been added later or to not, in fact, represent the original any less than do the words of the text. Indeed, what we have in the earliest Greek texts *are* copies of what we must argue for as the original tradition according to the best available reasons, absent the availability of better reasons, since 1) there are no “original” copies of the NT texts and 2) a copy of an original or of what is as close as we can come to an original are both quite credible and so also usable, that is, (again) unless there are overriding good reason(s) to doubt what is represented in the best available copies. The NT textual tradition should now and it always should have included the *entire* written tradition communicated in those texts which can credibly lay any claim to being “original” or to being a true representation of an original or even earlier text. It should have long ago included a full presentation of all relevant punctuation along with an attempt to evaluate its use in each text, according to each scribal or other hand identified. Indeed, such marks along with the words *are* what the scribes represented in their texts as the then-accepted or then-known (or both) tradition for how the text should be read *and* understood. If there are any accidental points then, absent any other credible argument(s) suggesting they *are* intentional (which should then be considered), the existing marks should be presented as *what they appear to be* and then for *what they might be*. True, there can be and there are likely some accidental marks in some of our early Greek NT texts. But decisions about where there is punctuation in an ancient Greek text should not be first presented or captioned according to as *accidental* but, rather, first for what can confidently be understood from their use as marks of punctuation in the text in question. Burkitt gets to this in part when he later writes, “the value, or lack of value, in the punctuation of that verse in any MS depends very greatly on the critical weight of the punctuation in that MS,” adding that this “value can only be determined by a study of its punctuation elsewhere, in uncontroversial contexts” (Burkitt, “The Punctuation of New Testament Manuscripts,” pages 396-397).

prove particularly helpful when it comes to understanding how the text being studied today was understood when it was first written, whether as an original or as a copy of an earlier text.

Yet, even today in certain text-critical circles there is little to nothing at all said about punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts, or about how this might impact our prior and currently growing knowledge and understanding of ancient Greek documents and of the interpretation of early or even possibly “original texts.” Indeed, to quote Daniel B. Wallace:

What is particularly needed is an analysis of the scribal habits of our more important MSS. Only a few have been so analyzed. If we could know the predilections and habits of every scribe, we would have a good sense of their contribution to any given textual problem. Until we have an analysis of individual scribal habits, we do not have a comprehensive “knowledge of documents.”²⁰

But nowhere does Wallace speak to the importance or even of the potential importance of the marks of punctuation which are in the “more important MSS” when Wallace mentions the work involved in noting *all* of these “differences.” True, Wallace does rightly note the need for “an analysis of individual scribal habits.” But Wallace does not define it as expressly inclusive of a study of the marks of punctuation used by these scribes according to their texts. One might think Wallace implicitly means to include punctuation when he writes as quoted above, but Wallace is the one who indicates that the differences being noted by the INTF [Münster Institute for New Testament Textual Research] and CSNTM [Wallace’s own non-profit institution] are limited to “the individual letters.” Punctuation is nowhere mentioned as of any specific interest or import.

Yet, how can that be if until we “have an analysis of individual scribal habits, we do not have a comprehensive ‘knowledge of documents’”? To not include the use of punctuation marks in nearly any study of early scribal habits is to remove from the discussion of relevant textual material what could amount in many cases to a very helpful “contribution to any [or to many] given textual problem[s].”²¹

²⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, “Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism for the Twenty-First Century,” *JETS* 51.2 (March, 2009), page 97.

²¹ Yet, Wallace is not the only one to highlight the subject of early scribal habits but without significantly involving or highlighting these same early scribes’ habits when it comes to their use of marks of punctuation. Indeed, one of the largest works recently completed on the subject of early scribal habits (James R. Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri* [NTTSD 36; Leiden: Brill, 2007]), in spite of its title, openly accepts the near complete omission of the occurrence of punctuation marks in its discussion of early scribal habits:

[I]n order to reduce the material involved in the present study to a more manageable level, I have decided to ignore certain common orthographic variations throughout the collation ... as well as breathings, accents, punctuation, iota adscript or subscript, and other clear forms of abbreviations or writing conventions. [Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, page 81.]

In spite of the above, Royse does comment on the occurrence and the non-occurrence of marks of punctuation in several places throughout his large volume (for examples, see Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, pages 31 [note 102], 110 [note 35], 137 [note 170], 147 [regarding P⁴⁵ (quoting Zuntz)], 156 [note 256], 247 [regarding P⁴⁶; Royse here notes “breathings and punctuation occur occasionally”], 353 [note 849], 361 [regarding P⁴⁷], 420 [regarding P⁶⁶; Royse’s item 3.], 616 [regarding P⁷⁵; here Royse notes the scribe “fairly frequently uses marks of punctuation and rough breathings”], and 745). However, at times the information presented is not always as accurate as it could be in light of the evidence from the texts in question. For example, on page 106, writing about the scribe of P⁴⁵, Royse notes that “the use of breathings and punctuation is, as would be expected in a papyrus of such antiquity, sparse” (underlining added). But P⁴⁵ is dated to the first part of the third century CE, and so it is quite within the time and well beyond the start of the use of marks of punctuation in Greek texts and, in fact, P⁴⁵ contains

It seems, then, that a proper study and presentation of punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts is destined to suffer still, in large part where it concerns any attempt to define or to explain the different, identifiable marks used according to early scribal habits, perhaps *because of its importance* in certain texts which are more impacting to correct Christian doctrine. Examples of such texts include Luke 23:43, John 1:3, and Romans 9:5. Indeed, the handling of the punctuation in Romans 9:5 has been nothing short of a near complete failure by many in Christendom to fully or even (in some cases) rightly assess the textual evidence. Luke 23:43 is disappearing entirely from certain text-critical publications,²² and the punctuation of John 1:3 in early Greek NT texts is at times ignored or wrongly represented.²³

what appear to be regular uses of punctuation marks (see, for examples, my brief evaluation of such marks in P⁴⁵ on page 11 of this paper).

²² Notice how in both editions of Bruce Metzger's, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1971 and 1994), pages 181-182 and page 155, respectively, while Metzger does note some textual matters connected with this verse he does not mention anything having to do with the presence or absence of any marks of punctuation in one or more ancient Greek texts. Instead, where it concerns the possible ways to express the Greek text where Jesus speaks to the criminal next to him, Metzger refers only to the Curetonian Syriac and rather strangely states that it "rearranges the order of the words, joining ['today'], not with ['with me you will be'], but with ['Amen, to you I say,'] and so with the meaning] ("Truly I say to you today that with me you will be ..."). Not only is Metzger misleading in his use of "rearranges" (Metzger would not likely have also considered his "Truly I say to you" translation of *amen soi lego* to be a 'rearranging of the words' from "Truly to you I say"!), there is not even a listing for Luke 23:43 (let alone of any of its textual or versional variants) in the most recent adaptation of Metzger's work by Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 2006). This change was made in spite of the fact that Codex B has a mark of punctuation (see pages 21-25) after "today" which could have been mentioned along with the Curetonian Syriac, rather than delete some of the only material in print which gives some indication of another reading based on early versional (in this case, the Curetonian Syriac) support but which differs from the more traditional English translation, "Truly I say to you, today you will be with me" Yet, Omanson deletes Luke 23:43 from consideration entirely, and Omanson does not mention the use of punctuation in ancient Greek texts at all in his Preface or in his Introduction to his *Textual Guide*. Only barely does Omanson mention the use of punctuation on his pages 8-9, and here only as it relates to modern editions and translations of the Greek text; there is nothing of any meaningful import provided to the reader about the actual or possible punctuation in early Greek NT texts.

²³ See Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, page 163, where he writes: "The oldest manuscripts have no punctuation here [in John 1:3-4]; and, in any case, the presence of punctuation in Greek manuscripts, as well as in versional and Patristic sources, cannot be regarded as more than the reflection of current exegetical understanding of the meaning of the passage." Yes, that is in fact what it reveals and so since the texts available which have punctuation claim to represent the original or at least an earlier copy of the original, the "current exegetical understanding of the meaning of the passage" is the same and so the punctuation and any significant variants of it should be sought out and presented just as the letters of the text which claim to come from the original or from copies of the original text are sought out and presented according to what should be the best available reasons. To not fully appreciate and express to some meaningful extent the importance of punctuation in early Greek NT texts, in a volume which is a fairly longstanding (beginning with Metzger's editions) *Guide to the Greek New Testament*, is surprising to say the least, particularly since in many cases the punctuation of such texts may very well represent what was used in the original documents when it comes to punctuation marks which were used during the time when the original NT texts were produced. In our evaluation of the same, the use of marks of punctuation in our earliest and best NT Greek texts should be seen first in "its syntactic function," serving "like other aspects of orthography, to convey meaning ... by identifying lexical elements and clausal, phrasal, and sentential structure" (Robert J. Scholes, "Prosodic and Syntactic Functions of Punctuation: A Contribution to the Study of Orality and Literacy," *Interchange* 21.3 [Fall, 1990], page 13 [Scholes then immediately discusses the use of punctuation marks in Greek texts from the fourth century BC to Aristophanes in the first century BC]). Conversely, Omanson not only attempts to downgrade the importance of punctuation in ancient Greek texts, he misstates facts which one would think are readily available to him when it comes to his discussion of John 1:3-4 (see Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament*, page 163), for in the "oldest Greek manuscripts" there *is* a mark of punctuation. For example, as noted on my page 11, in P⁶⁶ there is a full point right after *egeneto* and before *kai* in John 1:3. According to Comfort, in P⁷⁵ there is also a "midpoint" added by a corrector after *en* in verse 3 (see Philip W.

My review of the use of punctuation and other symbols and markings of similar import in early Greek texts will continue as I continue to study early Greek texts of the NT as well as other ancient Greek sources. I will continue to discuss my results overall and according to specific texts such as Luke 23:43, John 1:3, and Romans 9:5 in the near future, or as soon as possible. Here I will provide a further (but by comparison with my ongoing work rather brief) evaluation of some of the uses of punctuation marks in several early Greek NT texts:

P²³/P.Oxy. 1229 (third century CE): In James 1:15 there is a full point placed after ΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ but before ΜΗ (and so: ΘΑΝΑΤΟΝ·ΜΗ) to end what is now our verse 15.

P⁴⁵ (third century CE): In John 10 there is a full point (low) indicating a stop after ΠΡΟΒΑΤΩΝ in verse 7 and before ΠΑΝΤΕC (the start of our verse 8), as well as in verse 10 after ΕΧΩCΙ (note: no moveable-ν) and before ΚΑΙ (and so: ΕΧΩCΙ·ΚΑΙ), and then again after ΕΧΩCΙΝ (note: moveable-ν) there is a middle or low point ending or pausing before ΕΓΩ, which begins our modern verse 11. There is also a full point (middle or high) indicating a pause before ΚΑΙ in verse 9 three (3) times when enumerating the consequences which follow entering “through the door” and which, together with ΚΑΙ, provide natural pausing points. Other obvious, explainable punctuation marks occur throughout P⁴⁵, including a middle or a high point after the *nomina sacra* form for “Father” and before ΚΑΙ in verse 15, a middle point after ΠΡΟΒΑΤΩΝ at the end of verse 15 and before ΚΑΙ at the start of our verse 16, as well as a middle or (more likely) a lower mark after the natural pausing point following ΤΑΥΤΗC and before ΚΑΚΕΙΝΑ. Other obvious and explainable marks of punctuation occur throughout this papyrus.

P⁶⁶ (around 200 CE): There is a full, middle or high point after ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ and before ΚΑΙ (and so: ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ·ΚΑΙ) in what is now our John 1:3. There is also an obvious middle or high point after ΦΑΡΙCΑΙΩΝ and before ΚΑΙ (and so: ΦΑΡΙCΑΙΩΝ·ΚΑΙ) in what is now our John 1:24-25. There is also a middle or lower full point after ΑΕΓΩΝ and before ΕΓΩ in 1:26, and there is a middle or a high point after ΒΑΠΤΙΖΩΝ at the end of what is now our 1:28. Other obvious and explainable marks of punctuation can be seen throughout this text.

P⁷⁵ (early third century CE): There is a middle or a high point after ΕCΤΙΝ and before ΚΑΙ at the end of what is now our Luke 14:17 (and so: ΕCΤΙΝ·ΚΑΙ). There are obvious marks of punctuation in the form of a high point after the contracted form of the words for “Israel” and for “man” but before ΔΠΕΚΡΙΘΗ in John 1:49-50, as well as before the ΚΑΙ which begins our John 2:1, marking a full stop at the end of what is now John 1:51. There are other obvious and explainable marks of punctuation throughout this text.

Comfort and David P. Barrett, *The Text of the Earliest Greek Manuscripts* [Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 2001], page 567). Therefore, the two earliest papyri which contain John 1:3-4 *both* contain marks of punctuation, though according to Omanson they do not. Metzger put the matter even worse for, though Omanson clearly borrows Metzger’s language here, what Omanson *omits* is Metzger’s parenthetical reference, namely, (with my underlining of the omitted part), “The oldest manuscripts (P^{66, 75*} & A B) have no punctuation here” (see Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* [1971], page 195, and [1994] page 167). Metzger and Omanson are both wrong, however, and in the forty (40) years since Metzger’s first edition of this *Textual Commentary* the United Bible Societies has failed to get the matter right concerning the use of punctuation in this text, even regressing from the subject rather than improving its *Textual Commentary* by including more information about what the early Greek NT texts actually contain as far as accepted marks of punctuation, or by at least not continuing to present information about its occurrence or use in important (or in any) texts which is clearly incorrect.

Codex 8/Sinaiticus (fourth century CE): In John 6:14 there is a middle point after ΕΛΕΓΟΝ and before the demonstrative ΟΥΤΟC (and so: ΕΛΕΓΟΝ·ΟΥΤΟC). Note also that the middle point appears to take the place of ὅτι which is used in B and in P⁷⁵ and which indicates a pause. Also departing from B and P⁷⁵, 8 uses a middle or a high point after ΕΡΧΟΜΕΝΟC, which 8 uses as the last word to end what is now our verse 14.

Codex A/Alexandrinus (fifth century CE): One of the more notable examples of punctuation in this text is in Romans 9:5, where there is not only a full point indicating a pause or a stop after the word for “flesh,” but there is even a noticeable *space* after the point (and so: CΔPKΔ·Ο).²⁴ See also Luke 12:54, where there is a middle or a high point after ΟΧΛΟΙC indicating a pause prior to Jesus speaking.

Codex B/Vaticanus (fourth century CE): As noted earlier, the 1961 English translation of the Greek grammar by Blass and Debrunner (quoted and referenced in my note 15, page 6), the “earliest MSS of the NT, P⁴⁵, P⁴⁶ (not P⁴⁷), P⁶⁶, ... and B [Codex Vaticanus], have already received some punctuation by the first hand.” Earlier in this past twentieth century Frederic Kenyon put the matter a bit differently, deemphasizing but not eliminating original marks of punctuation from the first hand of Codex B with the words: “Unfortunately its appearance has been spoilt by a corrector, who thought it necessary to trace over every letter afresh, only sparing those which he regarded as incorrect and therefore better allowed to fade away. ... There appear to be no accents, breathings, or stops by the first hand.”²⁵

Using nearly the exact same language and wording as Kenyon, but with a conclusion concerning the “first hand” of B that is more in agreement with Blass-Debrunner, Metzger wrote the following concerning Codex B:

²⁴ Both the point and the space are apparent to me after viewing the facsimile edition of the British Museum’s *The Codex Alexandrinus (Royal MS. 1 D V-VIII) New Testament and Clementine Epistles* (London, 1909). In response to some (including W. Sanday) who appeared to express doubt as to the use of punctuation in Codex A after “flesh” in Romans 9:5, G. Vance Smith, “Additional Note on Romans IX. 5,” *The Expositor* 10 (July, 1879), page 233, wrote:

May I beg the two doubters (if they are such) to take the first opportunity of going to the British Museum to look at the Manuscript for themselves? They will easily gain access to it; and, if their eyesight be tolerably good, I venture to say they will be perfectly satisfied (from the colour of the ink and from the existence of the space) that the stop is a real stop, and from the first hand. [Underlining added.]

Compare Sanday’s reply to this point in the same journal’s article, “Additional Note on Romans IX. 5,” page 235:

Since I last wrote I have had an opportunity of examining the Codex Alexandrinus, and I quite agree with Dr. Vance Smith that there can be no doubt as to the punctuation. It is altogether plainer than I had expected to find it. The point is clearly marked, and it is evidently by the first hand. Future critical editors should take note of this, and the fact should be credited, so far as it goes, to Dr. Vance Smith’s side of the argument. There seems now to be less danger of its importance being exaggerated. [Underlining added.]

I can only imagine what Sanday would think (if he were alive today) about the danger of its importance having since been *lessened!* Consider how many translators are likely under-informed by the judgments of those responsible for UBS⁴ (*The Greek New Testament*, Fourth Revised Edition [Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993]), which on page 543 fails to cite even one single Greek manuscript’s punctuation of this text, preferring to instead list various modern translations’ choice of punctuation! Similarly, NA²⁶ (*Novum Testamentum Graece* [Stuttgart, 1979]), page 425, fails those who use it by not providing any reference to the punctuation of this text in any Greek manuscripts.

²⁵ Frederic G. Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1901), page 65 (underlining added).

Unfortunately the beauty of the original has been spoiled by a later scribe who found the ink faded and traced over every letter afresh, omitting only those letters and words that he believed to be incorrect. A few passages therefore remain to show the original appearance of the first hand. There appear to have been two scribes of the Old Testament and one of the New Testament, and two correctors, one (B²) about contemporary with the scribes, and the other (B³) of about the tenth or eleventh century. ... Accent and breathing marks, as well as punctuation, have been added by a later hand.²⁶

Though noting there are some “passages” remaining which “show the original appearance of the first hand” in B, Metzger here puts the use of punctuation in the light of what Metzger claims was “added by a later hand.” The Münster Institute’s “report” through Metzger was apparently sufficient for Murray J. Harris to simply accept “the second hand” (though without noting which of the “two correctors” is meant!) as the cause of the obvious middle or high point after C Δ PK Δ (and so [as in Codex A, also]: C Δ PK Δ · O) in Romans 9:5.²⁷ This makes more relevant the comments by Kenyon written over a century ago, namely, “certain questions as to the distinction between the hands of correctors and the original scribe must always necessitate a reference to the original.”²⁸

From the comments of Kenyon (repeated in large part by Metzger) there is reason to believe the corrector(s) of B traced over only what was felt to be correct, leaving the incorrect marks to “fade away.” If the original punctuation in Codex B in Romans 9:5 is lighter or fading in comparison with the corrected or added marks, then it should be accepted as the original punctuation used in the text since the ink used by the corrector(s) is darker than the original brown ink.²⁹ While I have not had the opportunity to view the original Codex B in order to

²⁶ Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible*, page 74. Compare also Metzger, “The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5,” page 97, where in Metzger’s review of the manuscript evidence involved with Romans 9:5 Metzger writes (with my underlining), “A point standing in a middle position with respect to the line of writing (a colon [in Metzger’s view]) is present after [‘flesh’] in A, B (*sec. man.* [= *secundus manuscript* (‘secondary manuscript’))). See also the quote from Metzger regarding punctuation in early Greek texts in my note 14, page 6. Compare John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Volume X (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981 [repr. of 1867-1887]), page 731, “It has been doubted whether any of the stops are by the first hand; and the breathings and accents are now generally allowed to have been added by a second hand.”

²⁷ Murray J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), page 149. See my discussion in this paper starting on page 18 and following for further review of the “Münster report.” See also Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, page 282, where (with my underlining) it is first wrongly stated that in the uncials “letters are written continuously and without punctuation” and then it is further wrongly claimed that “characteristically B², a later hand in Codex Vaticanus, clarifies the interpretation by a mark that was not available to the first scribe”! Not only are some of the marks of punctuation in B likely by the original hand (see the discussion in this paper beginning on page 12) but the “mark” which the Alands claim “was not available to the first scribe,” if any of the full points in use and defined by Greek grammarians several hundred years prior to the writing of Codex B are meant (see pages 3-4), then the Alands are again incorrect in their assessment.

²⁸ Kenyon, *Handbook to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, page 64.

²⁹ Finegan, *Encountering New Testament Manuscripts*, pages 127, 128: “Each page is written in brown ink ... One corrector went through the manuscript very soon after the time of the original writing. A second corrector worked at a much later date, probably tenth or eleventh century. The latter traced over the pale letters with fresh ink.” Compare McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Volume X, page 731:

[A]pparently about the 8th century [a second hand] retraced, with as much care as such an operation would admit, the faint lines of the original writing (the ink whereof was, perhaps, never quite black), the remains of

determine the color of the point used in Romans 9:5, the fact is a point is used and that is what relates most of all to the subject of this paper, namely, a review of the use of punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts. I can, however, go a bit further where it concerns the potential originality of the marks in B in both Romans 9:5 and Luke 23:43, that is, by using evidence from those who appear to have inspected and subsequently reported on the use of punctuation in these texts in Codex B.

As with Codex A (similar also to Codex C and to a host of other Greek texts³⁰), Codex B uses a full point in Romans 9:5 after the word for “flesh,” which appears to indicate a pause or a stop, for breathing or for reflection on the part of the scribe or the reader, that is, before proceeding with the balance of the text or with the rest of any connected thought. So there is no disputing the fact that, once again, in one of the earliest and best witnesses to the Greek text of the NT there is a mark of punctuation. But is this mark original, or was it made by early or by later correctors to Codex B? That this question is not new can be seen from Smith’s remarks:

In regard to the Vatican (B), I readily admit, the age of the stop may be fairly considered doubtful. Cardinal Pitra, by whom on one occasion the Manuscript was shewn [*sic*] to me, and to whom I pointed it out, observed at once that it might be of later date than the writing. On the other hand, Tischendorf holds that many of the stops in B are *a prima manu* [= “first hand”]; and I do not know of any good reason why this particular point [in Romans 9:5] should not be one of them.³¹

Apparently, the ink color did not come up during the showing of B by Cardinal Pitra to Smith, otherwise Smith would not conclude as he does above by noting he has ‘no good reason’ to discount the originality of the point. Therefore, consider Abbot’s remarks regarding the color of the point:

The facts as to the Vatican MS. are these. ... The later hand, of the tenth or eleventh century, has but rarely supplied points. ... The original scribe indicates a pause, sometimes by a small space simply; sometimes by such a space with a point, and sometimes by a point with *very* small space between the letters or none at all. ... It is expressly stated by a gentlemen who recently examined the MS., and whose letter from Rome I have been permitted to see, that the point after σάρκα [in Romans 9:5] “is of lighter color than the adjoining letters,” and that it was certainly much fainter than a point in the space after ημων on the same page, “which was as black as the touched letters.”³²

which can even now be seen; and, at the same time, the reviser left untouched such words or letters as he wished, for critical purposes, to reject, and these still express the original condition of the MS., being unaccented.

³⁰ Abbot, “Recent Discussions of Romans ix. 5,” page 107, wrote:

I can now name, besides the uncials A, B, C, L, ... at least twenty-six cursives which have a stop after σάρκα [“flesh”], the same in general which they have after αἰῶνας or Ἀμήν. In all probability, the result of an examination would show that three-quarters or four-fifths of the cursive MSS. containing [*sic* (‘containing’)] Rom. ix 5 have a stop after σάρκα.

Abbot’s conclusion has been accepted almost without qualification by Metzger (see “The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5,” page 97) and by Harris (see *Jesus as God*, page 149).

³¹ Smith, “Additional Note on Romans IX. 5,” page 233 (underlining added).

³² Abbot, “On the Construction of Romans ix. 5,” pages 150-151 (underlining added). This provides further support for my contention that the difference in point color is essential to determine before attempting to broadly brush all

Here is where the mishandling of other marks of punctuation by Trinitarians from Lattey, to Metzger, to Harris really got the discussion about punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts really far off track. Nearly ninety years ago Lattey attempted to dismiss a part of the evidence against his preferred view of Romans 9:5, which evidence was in the form of punctuation marks (and spaces!) which are evident in Codex A and Codex B by writing, “in any case the *Vaticanus* presents no more difficulty than the *Alexandrinus*!”³³ Lattey then further explains what he means:

I have inspected carefully the Vatican phototype of 1889, and find a similar colon without a space after σάρκα at the end of Ro 9³, after both occurrences of Ἰσραήλ in v.⁶, after Ἀβραάμ in v.⁷, ῥεβέκκα in v.¹⁰, and αὐτοῦ in v.²². These instances will doubtless be judged sufficient to settle the point.³⁴

What point is that? That there is really no point to all these points! Note Metzger’s near complete restatement and furtherance of Lattey’s above assessment fifty years later:

In estimating the significance of the preceding data one should also take into account the quite erratic punctuation contained in early manuscripts for other verses of chap. 9. Thus, codex Vaticanus has a colon at the end of 9:3, after both occurrences of Ἰσραήλ in verse 6, after Ἀβραάμ in verse 7, ῥεβέκκα in verse 10, and αὐτοῦ in verse 22! Codex Alexandrinus has a colon after μεγάλη in verse 2, one between Χριστοῦ and ὑπέρ and another after σάρκα in verse 3, and one after Ἰσραηλῖται in verse 4.³⁵

More recently Harris has also repeated Lattey’s argument and Metzger’s additions in support of Harris’ own conclusion that “in the early centuries the scribes responsible for the transmission of the NT used marks of punctuation in an inconsistent and erratic fashion.”³⁶ Yet, Lattey, Metzger, and Harris do not present a sufficient case for or against an “inconsistent and erratic” use of punctuation according to each text, according to each evident hand in each text, and according to each separate color ink which may be attributable to different scribes during earlier, during the same, or during later periods.

Lattey (followed by Metzger and by Harris) refers to “a similar colon without a space after σάρκα at the end of Ro 9³,” but this is the same pausing or stopping point as we find in verse 5 (ΚΔΤΔCΔPKΔ·), though the point in B in both places is nearer the top of Δ and also a natural place to draw a breath before continuing with the reading (even reading as one is copying for other readers) since the breath is released at the end of σάρκα and it is drawn in again before beginning the (rough breathing) pronunciation of both οἵτινες in verse 4 and before breathing out and pronouncing ὁ ὧν in verse 5.

marks in a particular text as if they are by the same hand or for the same reasons; rather, they should be evaluated according to each determinable hand’s reading, writing, re-inking, or other discernable but related scribal practice.

³³ Cuthbert Lattey, “The Codex Vaticanus on Romans ix. 5,” *The Expository Times* 34 (1922-1923), page 331. See also page 7, notes 18 and 19, for Lattey’s obvious disappointment in the outcome of his inquiry concerning the punctuation of Romans 9:5 in Codex C.

³⁴ Lattey, “The Codex Vaticanus on Romans ix. 5,” page 331.

³⁵ Metzger, “The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5,” page 99.

³⁶ Harris, *Jesus as God*, page 149.

Lattey, Metzger, and Harris all consider the point “after both occurrences of Ἰσραήλ in verse 6” to be a further “inconsistent and erratic” (Harris) use of punctuation. But they are all three wrong about the use of the first mark, which is a rough breathing mark added to the start of οὔτοι, while the point after the second occurrence of “Israel” in verse 6 is quite appropriate in ending or pausing the thought. Therefore, any argument to the contrary should have to show otherwise by good reasons rather than or before simply dismissing as of little or even as of no value the use of points, marks, spaces, or other symbols related to the reading or punctuation of early Greek NT texts.

Further, Lattey, Metzger, and Harris all three consider the point after Ἀβραάμ in verse 7, the point after ῥεβέκκα in verse 10, and the point after αὐτοῦ in verse 22 to be further examples of an inconsistent/erratic use of punctuation here in Codex B. Yet, not one of these three even attempts to make any sense out of their examples by considering the potentially different hands and inks used to punctuate the text in different places, for example, by considering the possible reading or breathing patterns discernable by the hand of each scribe.³⁷ Lattey, Metzger, and Harris all three basically throw up their hands in resignation of the matter after citing a plethora of examples they do not even try to understand meaningfully, leaving it to the likely much less educated reader to try and make sense out of what they appear to consider nonsense, that is, if the use of such points is taken seriously in early Greek NT texts!

The fact is, there is nothing so obviously “inconsistent and erratic” with the placement of these marks *according to the practice of the scribe(s) who used them* that we should essentially abandon their potential (even likely, in many cases) importance for a proper interpretation of specific texts according to one or more scribal hands which may be identified as involved in some way with a particular text’s transmission. Today, with the growing availability of early Greek NT texts online and in print, no one can credibly dismiss marks of punctuation as if they are of little or no importance for our interpretation of that same text, nor can we any longer consider such marks as too “erratic,” and so effectively useless when it comes to translation or interpretation. Further, such marks should not be considered alone, that is, apart from the other indications of meaning in the text. Yet, these appear to be the views associated in large part with

³⁷ And even if they did these things, Harris would not care much for it at all it seems. Consider his rather astounding conclusion:

Even if consistency were apparent, one could not move with any degree of confidence from the presence of a punctuation mark in a manuscript to the exegetical view of the scribe. Nor is there manuscript evidence of a colon after σάρκα before the fifth century. At most one may say that many ancient scribes regarded a pause after σάρκα as natural or necessary. [Harris, *Jesus as God*, page 149.]

“At most”? That *is* what most have said and do say about the use of such marks and, if “many ancient scribes” used such marks for “a pause” that was considered (with my underlining) “natural or necessary” then why is it not also considered “necessary” in many places in our modern Greek NT texts and in text-critical studies of them today? Further, notice that when Harris writes there is no “manuscript evidence of a colon after σάρκα before the fifth century,” he relies on the assumed “second hand” of Codex B when, as I have shown through my citation and my evaluation of those who have seen the original Codex B in this text, it is more likely by the *first* hand due to the color of the point in comparison with the ink color used by later scribes (see pages 12-14). Indeed, in his remarks Harris makes of little importance Codex A and Codex C (even removing the cross and the small space from his main text’s listing of the texts on page 149 down to Harris’ note 14 on that same page [in Harris’ *Jesus as God*]), both of which support the reading in B. For the understanding of Christian Witnesses of Jah concerning the use of terms for “G-god” in the Bible, see Chapter 2 of my *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Third Edition [Murrieta, CA: Elihu Books, 2009]. See also my Second Edition (2000), pages 143-152 for my previous discussion of Romans 9:5, and page 144, note 39, of my Second Edition for some of my earlier observations on the use of punctuation marks in some early Greek texts.

the use of punctuation marks in ancient Greek in some of the more well-known, established, or otherwise popular works on Greek grammar, NT text critical and exegetical works and journals, and Trinitarian apologetics (for some examples, see pages 2-10 of this paper).

Returning to the examples given by Lattey, by Metzger, and by Harris, to have a pause or stop indicated after Ἐβραάμ in verse 7 of Codex B is quite easy to accept as natural for the scribe who, absent the assumption that the point is an accident (for which the burden of proof is entirely on the one who makes such a claim, as its location suggests the mark was intentional), used a mark of punctuation here and elsewhere in Codex B. Indeed, the same middle or high(er) point is used in the same place after ΔΒΡΔΔΜ in Codex A; therefore, *both* scribes had the same or a similar thought separation or other moment of pause at the same spot in the same verse.

The mark in this text appears to me clearly to provide a natural pause point for a full (mental or audible) reading of CΠΕΡΜΔΔΒΡΔΔΜ (with heavy accent on the ultima of ΔΒΡΔΔΜ) which is then restated more expressly and (potentially) reflectively on the part of the scribe by ΠΔΝΤΕCΤΕΚΝΔ, and which naturally terminates into a pause or a stop before what is also an Δ-vowel beginning, superordinate conjunction (ΔΛΛ') introducing a more important but very much connected thought.

Since the point after ΔΔΒΡΔΔΜ is middle or high, with the point after ΤΕΚΝΔ by contrast being low, it appears (without knowing for sure the color of each mark) that Codex B separates “the seed of Abraham” in the first part of verse 7 from “the seed” in the latter part as it relates to the promise fulfilled through his descendant (Isaac). After the scribe of B paused with a middle or a high point after ICΡΔΗΛ, he used the equivalent of a colon after CΠΕΡΜΔΔΒΡΔΔΜ, which then makes perfect sense of the following ΠΔΝΤΕCΤΕΚΝΔ, and which quite naturally makes for another pause with the middle or high point before ΔΛΛ', the first part of a separately introduced but connected thought. This is also *precisely what we have in verse 8!*³⁸

Similarly, in our verse 10 the point makes good sense indicating a pause after ῥεβέκκα before the scribe/reader (after the final, short release of breath at the end of the preceding proper name) proceeds with ἐξ ἔνδς and with what follows, which provides a natural pausing point in both thought and in writing. Finally, the point after αὐτοῦ in verse 22 is also an obvious pausing point with αὐτοῦ as the last word in the first part of the sentence setting up a contrast with what begins with ἤνεγκεν, and so it becomes a natural place (that is, after αὐτοῦ) to indicate a pause before pronouncing the first word of the next part of the sentence or thought.

Metzger also points to Romans Chapter 9 in Codex Alexandrinus and he questions several marks in it, namely, the points after μεγάλη in verse 2, between Χριστοῦ and ὑπέρ and after σάρκα in verse 3, as well as after Ἰσραηλῖται in verse 4. But, again, each instance mentioned by Metzger is easily explainable according to the text and a reasonably discernable scribal practice. For example, a short pause after μεγάλη in verse 2 fits quite well with the release of breath following the final syllable and, in fact, I believe it is required here at this part in the sentence before proceeding with καὶ (try reading it without a short pause). The same is true when pronouncing the abbreviated genitive form of “Christ” which immediately precedes the rough breathing required for ὑπέρ. This is also apparently, at least in part, why there is a pause indicated after

³⁸ Note the contrast here (with underlining added but with no line over the abbreviation of the *nomina sacra* [which is in the text]), ΟΥΤΔΤΕΚΝΔΤΗCΔΡΚΟCΤΔ[ΥΤΔ]ΤΕΚΝΔΤΟΥΟΥ·ΔΛΛΔΤΔΤΕΚΝΔ, which continues with, ΤΗCΠΔΓΓΕΛΙΔCΛΟΓΙΖΕΤΔΙΕΙC CΠΕΡΜΔ, at the end of which is a high point ending this thought.

σάρκα at the end of our verse 3. As I explained earlier, the breath is released at the end of σάρκα and it is drawn in again before beginning the rough breathing pronunciation of οἵτινες in verse 4 and also before breathing out while pronouncing ὃ ὦν in verse 5.

As for the use of a mark of punctuation in Codex A in verse 4 after Ἰσραηλῖται, it is hardly “quite erratic” (so described by Metzger, followed by Harris). A mark of punctuation here in verse 4 appears to me to be very natural and explainable, used as it is where there is a natural release of breath following Ἰσραηλῖται, but where it also seems required *before* taking in the breath needed before proceeding with what is in Codex A a *double* rough breathing in ὦν ὃ.

In addition to questioning the use and the importance of marks of punctuation found in the above examples, Metzger went even further than Lattey in attempting to dismiss other explainable uses of punctuation marks or points in early Greek NT texts. Metzger (followed by Harris) wrote:

According to information supplied by the Münster Institut[e], F^P also has a point in the middle position after πατέρας, after the first ὃ, after ὦν, after εὐλογοῦντες, after εἰς, after τοὺς, and after αἰῶνας, as well as a high point after the second ὦν, a low point after the second ὃ, and a cluster of two points and a comma after ἀμήν. G^P, besides having a point in the middle position after σάρκα, has a similar point after πατέρας, after the first ὃ, after ὦν, after θεός, and after αἰῶνας. K has a low point after πατέρας, two points (:) after σάρκα, followed on the next line by commentary, and two points (:) after ἀμήν, followed by commentary. L, besides having a high point after σάρκα, has a point in the middle position after πατέρας, a comma after θεός, and a point in the middle position after ἀμήν, followed by τέλος in the next line. P has a lacuna [missing text] from 8:8 to 9:11. 056 has a high point after πατέρας and another after ἀμήν, followed by a space and commentary. 0142 has a point in the middle position after πατέρας and a high point after ἀμήν, followed by commentary. 0151 has two dots (:) after ἀμήν, followed by commentary on the next line.³⁹

But neither Metzger nor Harris even attempt to make sense out of the points used in the above cited examples, even though there is a difference between them and the earliest Greek NT texts containing Romans 9:5 of over four-five hundred years!⁴⁰ Indeed, *all* of the texts referred to by Metzger above as containing marks of punctuation are from a time when the system of punctuation was also, apparently, radically changing.⁴¹

³⁹ Metzger, “The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5,” page 98. Harris, *Jesus as God*, pages 148-149.

⁴⁰ All of the above texts cited by Metzger are from the ninth century CE or later, and so nowhere close to the type of punctuated texts which we have in the uncials and papyri of the fifth and earlier centuries CE. Metzger cites F^P (also known as F² and as Codex Augiensis) and G^P (also known as G³ and as Codex Harleianus), both from the ninth century CE, and “both of them probably go back one or two generations to a common archetype” (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, page 53). Metzger’s “Münster report” also refers to Codex L (though he must have meant L^{ap} [L²], since L contains the four Gospels) also of the ninth century CE, as well as to uncial 056 of the tenth century, to uncial 0142 of the tenth century, and to uncial 0151 of the ninth century, none of which have marks in the places noted by “the Münster report” which cannot be reasonably explained according to possible or even likely scribal practices associated with each discernable hand.

⁴¹ See Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, page 242, who writes: “gradually changes came over these stops till the top point was equal to our colon, the bottom point became the full stop, the middle point vanished, and about the ninth century A.D. the comma (,) took its place. About this time also the question-mark (;) or ἐρωτηματικόν appeared”; and Hatch (*The Principal Uncial Manuscripts of the New Testament*, page 24 [compare also Hatch’s note 2], “This system of punctuation [including the use of three types of points], like the breathings and accents mentioned above, is commonly ascribed to Aristophanes of

There is, therefore, no good reason to consider marks of punctuation which are so obviously different from those used hundreds of years earlier as if they are or as if they should be viewed as of the same or of similar import, purpose, or quality. The scribe of B is clearly a professional and so it should be distinguished not only from other texts of less quality from around the same time,⁴² but also from texts such as both F^P and G^P, texts in which the “dot is most freely used,” so much so that in 1 Timothy 3:16 in “F ... each word [is] divided from the next by a dot”!⁴³

Again, these are hardly the types of texts with which to compare in any sense with B or with other earlier uncials and papyri of similar quality.⁴⁴ But not comparing the right texts or by not evaluating more closely the texts in question, the inks used, and the likely marks of punctuation, has for far too long led to the advancement of erroneous opinions about the use of punctuation in ancient Greek. These erroneous beliefs have in turn helped stifle deeper study into these possible marks of punctuation, even when it comes to the possible meaning of several important texts (such as Luke 23:43, John 1:3, and Romans 9:5). Amazingly, the Alands’ greatest obstacle to accurately assessing different marks of punctuation in Greek texts may have been the quality of their own microfilm copies. According to Wallace (with my underlining), “the microfilms in Münster are, to put it charitably, of very poor quality, at times even illegible.”⁴⁵ Whether “the

Byzantium. The comma (,) came into use in the ninth century, and the interrogation point (;) was introduced in the eighth or ninth century.”

⁴² See P.M. Head and M. Warren, “Re-inking the Pen: Evidence from P.Oxy. 657 (P13) concerning unintentional scribal errors,” online version (link: <http://www.tyndale.cam.ac.uk/Tyndale/staff/Head/Reinking.htm> [last accessed on February 7, 2011]). Note the opening words of their section III.:

The best scribes clearly took care that the process of re-inking their reed pen did not adversely effect the presentation of their document. Among less competent scribes, however, the gradual fading of the letters is sometimes followed by a dramatic bolder word or two. In the early period very clear examples of this can be found in P.Oxy. 657, a manuscript containing portions of Hebrews and dated to around AD 300. Various lines of evidence suggest that the scribe responsible for this manuscript should be classified as ‘non-professional’. In the first place, an analysis of the manuscript reveals a distinct lack of discipline in column width and a wide variation in the number of lines per column, neither of which would characterise [*sic*] a professional scribe paid by the line.

Clearly, P.Oxy 657 is nothing like B in its textual quality or scribal hand(s)! Yet, even in P.Oxy 657 there are a number of locations of “re-inking” which “occur at natural divisions in the text, often corresponding with punctuation marks of one form or another” (Head and Warren, “Re-inking the Pen: Evidence from P.Oxy. 657 [P13],” online version, section III., paragraph 3).

⁴³ Moulton and Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. II, *Accidence and Word-Formation*, page 47.

⁴⁴ Yet, Moulton-Howard (*Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. II, *Accidence and Word-Formation*, page 47 [underlining added]) conclude by repeating Gregory’s claim, “no argument towards a right punctuation can be drawn from the barrenness of the earlier or the abundance of the later signs.” This is similar to Abbot’s near-concluding remark in his “On the Construction of Romans ix. 5,” page 152. But Abbot there also distinguishes between punctuation that is of “exceedingly small importance” where “we cannot infer with confidence the construction given to the punctuator” (but if we *can* with confidence do so, it is certainly not of “exceedingly small importance”), with what Abbot “argued from the point after σόρκα in A B C L, &c.,” namely, “that a pause after that word was felt by ancient scribes to be natural.” Such a pause here is not “exceedingly small” in “importance,” for *it is the representation of some of the best available texts*. Those responsible for these texts should, at the very least, indicate the more ‘confident’ uses (by the first, by the second, or by any later hands) of punctuation in textual studies and materials, and *then* continue to try and better understand the possible or likely indications of these marks of punctuation. Denying or misrepresenting the existence of marks of punctuation in ancient Greek is not an acceptable alternative.

⁴⁵ Wallace, “Challenges in New Testament Textual Criticism for the Twenty-First Century,” page 97.

Münster report” fell victim to the poor quality of its own microfilms, it very well may have kept the Alands from at times rightly assessing the original hands or inks used, particularly in Codex B (see my page 13, note 27).

In addition to sharing an unfortunate history with others regarding the use of punctuation marks in early Greek NT texts, the further shortcomings of the Alands’ and of the United Bible Societies’ concerning the text of the New Testament and of related literature have been revealed by Borger. Allow me to string together some comments from his recent article, comments which hold nothing back but behind which are much learning through history and experience with those whom many of us know only through the writings and texts which bear their name:

In ... [1982], K. Aland and B. Aland denounced BAG as on “öffentlicher Skandal” [public scandal] — apparently either they did not know BAGD (1979) at all, or they had condemned it *a priori*. Clearly this attack was written from memory, without having the *corpus delicti* [the “dead body”] at hand. ... In the second edition, K. and B. Aland have silently withdrawn the “public scandal” and admitted that they did not understand their enigmatical sentence. ... Concerning NA²⁶ and “Bauer-Aland,” Aland’s left hand did not know what his right hand was doing. That may be in agreement with Scripture, but it has caused a lot of trouble. Aland should have checked his own selection of variants against NA²⁵, Tischendorf’s *Octava* (at least the *Octava minor*) and Merck⁹. The *de facto* meaning of “Hss.” is: “Sorry, here the critical apparatus of NA²⁶ lets you down, but have a look at Tischendorf, etc.” Aland had a rather strained relationship to secondary literature (especially from beyond the boundaries of Germany) and was apparently proud of having removed a considerable number of Bauer’s bibliographical references. Needless to say, this destruction of Bauer’s labors is inexcusable. ... While working on my *GGA* article, I tried to find out which writings from early Christian literature had been quoted by Aland (and Bauer). The manner in which the POxy. 1081 (*Sophia Jesu Christi*) was dealt with by the Alands particularly horrified me. The whole Münster Institute had not managed to establish the Greek papyrus from the Coptic version before quoting it in the dictionary. ... Too often ecclesiastical dignitaries—Roman Catholic and Protestant—have authoritatively pronounced opinions about questions of biblical philology that were totally wrong, thereby abusing the trust of their believers. When Bishop Kunst had published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* his optimistic thesis about “NT regained,” in a letter to him I formulated the following pessimistic thesis of my own:

New Testament textual criticism from the time of Erasmus onward has been detrimental to Christian virtues. It has turned out to be a breeding-ground of *rabbies theologorum*. It should be abolished for ethical reasons. Fortunately, even comprehensive NT commentaries do care very little for textual criticism anyhow.⁴⁶

It is hard to closely consider the above without also thinking of the long-standing deficiencies⁴⁷ in many works on textual criticism, in Greek grammars, and in other works which comment on

⁴⁶ Borger, “Remarks of an Outsider about Bauer’s Wörterbuch, BAGD, BDAG, and Their Textual Basis,” pages 33, 34, 44, 45, 46-47 (bracketed comments are mine).

⁴⁷ Compare the sentiments expressed over eighty (80) years ago by Cuthbert Lattey, “The Punctuation of New Testament Manuscripts,” *JTS* 29.116 (July, 1928), page 396 (with underlining added):

I take this opportunity to refer to a matter which I feel to be of considerable importance. An admirable enterprise is on foot, of editing a reliable record of all New Testament readings up to date. I would plead that this ought to include a reliable record of the punctuation also, at least of the more important manuscripts which are punctuated. The precise value of the punctuation is still rather uncertain, but in some cases it may well be very early.

(or which omit entirely, but for no good reasons) the use of punctuation marks in ancient Greek and in early Greek NT texts.

On page 12 I mentioned Luke 23:43 together with Romans 9:5 as examples of where in Codex B marks of punctuation are used. While the lower point after “today,” before the word for “with” (and so: CHMEPON.MET) is easily viewable in nearly any available copy of Codex B, because this text comes up often in discussions concerning Jehovah’s Witnesses and the punctuation of it in the *New World Translation*, on November 8, 1994, a Witness named Nelson Herle, Jr., wrote to the Vatican and asked about the ink color of the lower point used after the Greek word for “today” in Luke 23:43. On page 22 I have provided a copy of Herle’s letter along with the Vatican’s handwritten response which was given directly on Herle’s letter, and which I have transcribed diagonal from the right of the handwriting (indicated by an arrow) along with providing a copy of the postmark for the return reply from Rome.

Following the reply by the Vatican, Herle sent out copies to many people interested in this subject, one of whom was a gentleman named Rudy Carmona. Being interested in textual studies as well as with the interpretation of biblical texts, Carmona wrote to the Vatican to question the correctness of the first response from Rome to Herle which, though dating the mark to the “Fourth century,” also indicated that the mark “seems to be the same as that of the letters of the text.” Carmona understood from his studies on Codex B that more than one hand was involved in the transmittal of the text, and so he wrote to the Vatican to further question the originality of the mark of punctuation on February 24, 1995.

On the pages 23-25 I have reproduced the letter from Carmona to the Vatican which also contains Rome’s reply, again handwritten on the received letter, along with underlining, checkmarks, and with other marks as part of the Vatican’s response to Carmona. A transcription of the Vatican’s reply to Carmona in the order of the handwriting’s appearance is provided after the copy of the letter and it is enclosed in brackets. As the response from Rome states clearly, the color of the lower point in Codex B in Luke 23:43 after the Greek word for “today” is *brown*, not black or dark, as is the ink of the second or even the much later corrector.

Even if it were a mark by one of the other two, later scribes it would still serve as an indication of the belief of the scribe identified about how the text was understood at the time it was later “corrected.” But since the point is apparently of the original “brown” color, then the mark after “today” in Codex B in Luke 23:43 should be included as part of the good reasons which indicate the correct understanding of Luke 23:43, according to one of the best available texts. Again, this is no “exceedingly small” matter. Therefore, separately I will return to a discussion of this text as it appears in Codex B and in other Greek NT texts and early versions, and provide what I consider the interpretation of Luke 23:43 which follows from the best available evidence.⁴⁸

Lathey is then immediately contradicted under the same article heading by C.F. Burkitt, who in doing so expresses the same type of error still continued by some today, namely (with my underlining and bracketed exclamation):

The point raised by Fr Lathey is important, but it is one that raises great difficulties for an Editor of a critical apparatus. In a certain sense the punctuation of an ancient Greek work is no part of the original tradition [!]; a properly written Greek paragraph goes in theory from the beginning to the end without punctuation, the beginnings and the due subordination of the several sentences being sufficiently indicated by the appropriate particles. [Burkitt, “The Punctuation of New Testament Manuscripts,” page 397.]

⁴⁸ See also my prior discussion of Luke 23:43 in my Appendix A in *Jehovah’s Witnesses Defended: An Answer to Scholars and Critics*, Second Edition (Huntington Beach, CA: Elihu Books, 2000), pages 545-560.

November 8, 1994

Letter from Nelson Herle, Jr., to the Vatican, Rome, Italy, with Handwritten Response

Nelson A. Herle, Jr.
13476 Apple Blossom Lane
Apple Valley, CA 92308
United States of America
November 8, 1994

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
00120
Rome, Italy

Dear Sirs:

I am preparing a treatise on ancient biblical manuscripts with special interest in punctuation, accents and breathings. I have studied a microfilm of your "Wat. Grec. 1209 II Parte" dated "10 Nov, 1970". On page 1347 column one line 39 I noted a lower point (ὀρθοῦς) between the last two syllables of "CHMEPON" and the beginning of "MET" at Luke 23:43. Researching data on this text I have seen that various scholars inform that some of the punctuation is of the fourth century and some of the punctuation, accents and breathings are of the ninth, tenth or the eleventh century.

Could you please let me know if, in your considered opinion, the lower point referenced above is by the original hand or a later addition?

Thanking you in advance for any assistance you can provide in this matter, I am,

Sincerely yours,

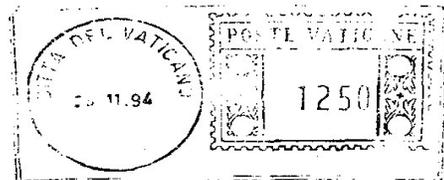
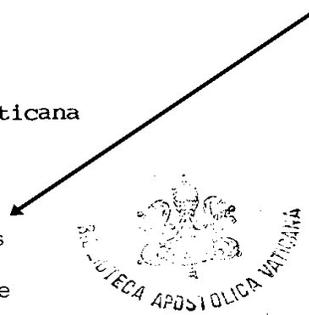
Nelson A. Herle Jr.
Nelson A. Herle Jr.

The ink of the lower point seems to be the same as that of the letters of the text; it can therefore be traced back to the Fourth century

enclosure: self addressed stamped envelope

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
00120
Rome, Italy

[The ink of the lower point seems to be the same as that of the letters of the text; it can therefore be traced back to the Fourth century]



Nelson A. Herle, Jr.
13476 Apple Blossom Lane
Apple Valley, CA 92308
United States of America

February 24, 1995

Letter from Rudy Carmona to the Vatican, Rome, Italy, with Handwritten Response

Rudy Carmona
1517 S. Marguerita Avenue, Unit J.
Alhambra, California 91803-3146
USA
February 24, 1995

BIBLIOTECA APOSTOLICA VATICANA
00120
ROME, ITALY

↳ 6. iii' → 9. iii'

Dear Sirs:

During the month of November, 1994, you responded to an inquiry sent to you by, Mr. Nelson A. Herle, Jr. In his letter, Mr. Herle expressed an interest in trying to ascertain the genuineness of the "lower point (ὑποστιγμαή) between the last two syllables of 'CHMEPON' and the beginning of 'MET' at Luke 23:43." The uncial Greek text that Mr. Herle had viewed on a roll of microfilm for this study was the, "'Vat. Grec. 1209 II Parte' dated '10 Nov, 1970'...page 1347 column one line 39."

After you examined this text, you then wrote the following brief handwritten reply: "The ink of the lower point seems to be the same as that of the letters of the text; it can therefore be traced back to The Fourth century." ✓

After reading a copy of your response to Mr. Herle, several further questions arose; I would appreciate your response to the following:

1) What specific text did you view in order to reach your conclusions regarding, "The ink of the lower point" and "that of the letters of the text"? Did you for example, view the microfilm, a color facsimile of codex B, or preferably, the original vellum folio leaf? ✓

2) If permissible, would you please give me the name and title of the person who responded to Mr. Herle? I would also appreciate knowing the measure of competence the person has who reached the conclusion about the ink and letters. Have they ever studied Text Criticism or Greek Paleography? *The person in question is a member of the Academic Staff of the Library, and is a Greek Papyrologist specialist* (What is yours?)

3) Were you aware that the ink of the uncial letters in codex B was at one time a faded brown color, and that in a later century, a scribe traced over most of the letters in black ink? What color is the ink on the letters and lower point in our subject text? *It's rather obvious!* many brown

✓ 4) It has also been noted by several scholars, that the vast majority of accents and punctuation marks were not penned by the original first hand, during The Fourth century. Others say, that all the accents and punctuation marks were added sometime after

the seventh century A.D. ^{it is} With these comments in mind, could you clearly see and conclude from the original folio leaf, that the lower point is a faded brown color? Or has the brown been traced ^{no} over with black ink? Or perhaps, it was not there in the first place, only later being added to the text in black ink by a much ^{no} later scribe?

In conclusion, could you please tell me where I could purchase a color facsimile of codex B. I would like to purchase a complete text of the OT and NT texts; but of course, any portion of it would be useful. Do you know if any of the NT facsimile editions, in color, are still available from those issued by the Vatican in 1968? A copy of this facsimile was give to each ^{no} Bishop, who attended the Vatican Council II. I realize that answering all my inquiries will take time, but I am in no rush, so please, take your time.

Please accept my warm gratitude for your attention to these important matters; and for the fine service you provide.

Yours in Christ,


Rudy Carmona

enclosure: one photocopy

A complete color facsimile of Codex B will be published shortly (but exactly when is still up in the air) by the Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, the Italian State publishing house. We have no idea what the price will be, but it will be hefty.

BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION OF HANDWRITTEN RESPONSE BY VATICAN TO CARMONA LETTER:

[What is yours?

The person in question

Is a member of the Academic staff of the Library, and is a Greek Patristics specialist

brown

many (after crossing out "most" and adding a line [GS])

It is rather obvious!

it is (with line added to the word "faded" [GS])

No

No

No

A complete color facsimile of Codex B will be published shortly (but exactly when is still up in the air) by the Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, the Italian State publishing house. We have no idea what the price will be, but it will be hefty.]

[END OF THE TRANSCRIPTION OF THE HANDWRITTEN RESPONSE BY THE VATICAN.]