

## DISSERTATION SUMMARY

# The Scribes and Correctors of Codex Vaticanus

## A Study on the Codicology, Paleography, and Text of B(03)<sup>1</sup>

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For many, the field of New Testament textual criticism and manuscript studies can appear increasingly niche, while others continue to question its value altogether. Nevertheless, most readers will be familiar with the famous Codex Vaticanus and will recognise it by the siglum ‘B’ or the Gregory-Aland number ‘03’ in standard editions of the Septuagint (Rahlfs) or the Greek NT (NA28/UBS5). However, despite wide recognition of the codex and its importance for Septuagint and NT textual scholarship, there have not been any full-length treatments of the manuscript’s production and text. The current lacuna has become particularly evident in recent years as studies of individual manuscripts abound. While we have access to published monographs on Codices Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Bezae, P46, and P47, there has not yet been a similar undertaking with Codex Vaticanus. The manuscript remained heavily guarded by the Vatican Library (BAV) for much of its modern history, resulting in many failed attempts to investigate the codex, especially by Protestant scholars. In 1999, however, the Vatican published an impressive photo-facsimile edition of the whole manuscript and subsequently released the high-resolution images online. As a result, scholars from around the world have been able to investigate the codex without needing direct access to the BAV.<sup>1</sup>

This doctoral thesis examines Codex Vaticanus (B[03]), beginning from its material construction, continuing to the palaeographic and paratextual features

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1. Jesse R. Grenz, ‘The Scribes and Correctors of Codex Vaticanus: A Study on the Codicology, Paleography, and Text of B(03)’ (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2021). Supervisor: Dr Dirk Jongkind.

(Part I), and concluding with the early corrections in the manuscript (Part II). As is clear from the study’s title, the project finds its inspiration from the seminal monograph of H. J. M. Milne and T. C. Skeat, *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* (1938). At the end of their study, Milne and Skeat printed a four-page appendix on the scribes of B(03), where they applied several criteria to present a new division of scribes in the codex. By examining the coronides at the end of each book, the paragraphing, line fillers, *nomina sacra*, and orthography, the two scholars suggested that two scribes were involved in copying the whole pandect. This project returns to the data presented by Milne and Skeat, as well as Ludwig Traube before them,<sup>2</sup> and examines additional evidence that instead supports a threefold division of the scribes of B(03) (Table 1).

Table 1: Divisions of Scribal Labour in B(03)

Source	Scribe	Pages	Content
Ludwig Traube (1907)	B1	41–334	Gen 46:28–1 Kgdms 19:11
	B2	335–674	1 Kgdms 19:11–Ps 77:71
	B3	675–1244	Ps 77:72–Matt 9:5
	B4 or B2	1245–1518	Matt 9:5–Heb 9:14
Milne & Skeat (1938)	A	41–334	Gen 46:28–1 Kgdms 19:11
	B	335–624	1 Kgdms 19:11–2 Esd
	A	625–944	Ps–Tob
	B	945–1518	Hos–Heb 9:14
Grenz (2021)	A	41–334	Gen 46:28–1 Kgdms 19:11
	B	335–674	1 Kgdms 19:11–Ps 77:71a
	C	675–944	Ps 77:71b–Tob
	B	945–1518	Hos–Heb 9:14

After a short introduction to the historical context of B(03) – such as date, provenance, and theories of dictation – Part I investigates the physical structure, paratexts, and palaeography of the codex as they bear signs of distinctive scribal patterns. In Chapter 1, I adopt the method of structural codicology and argue that it provides valuable evidence for considering the scribes. Understanding the structure of the codex allows for appreciation of the complex production layers in the manuscript as well as the consistency (or inconsistency) with which the scribes produced it. A crucial observation in structural codicology is

2. Ludwig Traube, *Nomina Sacra: Versuch einer Geschichte der christlichen Kürzung* (1907).

that overlapping discontinuities in the codicology and *mise en page* may signal transitions in scribal hands. Therefore, my study of the codicology of B(03) identified several observable discontinuities at locations of scribe change. For example, all three scribal transitions proposed by myself, Traube, and Milne and Skeat coincide with quire breaks except for the latter's division at Psalm 1:1 (p. 625). This is one of the many reasons why the change of scribes should not be located until later in the Psalter. The evidence is strengthened when compounded in a single place. Not only does the change from scribe A to B (1 Kgdms 19:11) occur at a quire break, but the lining of the page shifts from forty-four lines per column to forty-two. The observable discontinuities in codicology that occur at our three scribe changes (1 Kgdms 19:11; Ps 77:71; Hosea 1:1) also find support in the paratexts and palaeography of B(03).

Chapter 2 comprises the longest section of the thesis, as it works through all of the earliest paratextual layers, including titles, textual divisions, and other marginalia. Following the insights of structural codicology, I do not assume all the earliest paratexts belong to the same layer of production but attempt to understand their relationship to one another. As a consequence, some may have been added *in scribendo* by the scribe of the main text, while others may be the responsibility of a corrector or one of the other scribes. Therefore, these marginalia do not all belong to the same *paradosis* but sometimes are intended to correct and modify earlier paratexts. More importantly for this thesis, there are numerous discontinuities in paratexts and palaeography which align with those found in the codicology and *mise en page* at the proposed places of scribe change. For example, the hand of the Psalm numbers is noticeably different after Psalm 77 (from scribe B to C). Likewise, the abbreviations of καί often take a unique form in Psalm 77:71–Tobit which does not appear elsewhere in the main text. This is one of the numerous reasons why Milne and Skeat's suggestion that scribe A was responsible for these pages is unlikely. The most significant development in this chapter was the use of unreinforced (non-reinked) text to analyse the palaeography of the manuscript, where previous scholars had assumed this would be impossible or inconclusive. The result of such analysis was a clear distinction of three scribal hands based on the alphas, deltas, and lambdas. This division of the scribes was then bolstered by differences in other palaeographic features, abbreviations (numerals and *nomina sacra*), orthography, and coronides.

In Part II of this study, I shift attention to the earliest corrections in B(03). The aim of chapters 4–6 is to describe the kinds of correction methods used in the codex and to investigate what the earliest corrections tell us about the copying of each scribe in relation to one another. Chapter 4 outlines the history

of scholarship from Erasmus to the present, highlighting the various discussions of corrections and correctors in B(03). Through this historical survey, we can organise a typology of correction methods, divided broadly into the categories of addition or omission of information in the text. Since the typology is concerned with adding or removing textual information from the codex, it is distinguished from the types of errors indicated by the corrections themselves (e.g., addition, omission, substitution, etc.). For example, the corrections accompanied by the marginal S-shaped sigla involve the addition of text to the manuscript but do not indicate omission in the first-hand text. Rather, these corrections present substitutions or genuine alternative readings, which are not necessarily intended to replace the original reading.

Since two of our three locations of scribe change occur in the middle of a book (1 Kingdoms and Psalms), they offer useful samples to compare the work of our three scribes. While the copyists may have adopted different exemplars for the various books, it is unlikely to be the case for individual books. By comparing the earliest corrections – those of the scribes and the *diorthotai* – in 1 Kingdoms and Psalms, we get a sense of how each scribe tended towards different types of error. Additionally, this chapter discusses the corrections of another early hand, which consistently corrects the text towards apparently Lucianic readings. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of all early corrections in the NT (Scribe B). While only one scribe was responsible for copying this portion of the codex, it was possible to compare the types and frequency of corrections in the various sections of the NT – Gospels, Acts, Catholic Epistles, and Pauline corpus. The chapter regards these results as largely consistent within the NT and scribe B's work in 1 Kingdoms and Psalms.

The study concludes with a synthesis of the evidence discussed in Parts I and II. While there is no clear sign of scribal hierarchy between the three copyists, it is notable that scribe B was responsible for copying significantly more text (915 pages extant) than scribes A and C (354–356 pages and 277 pages respectively). This chapter also suggests that further divisions of early correctors should be included in the apparatuses of critical editions of the Greek NT. The limitations of this study may be circumvented by future implementation of multi-spectral imaging and the execution of artificial intelligence-based writer identification, as practised on the Isaiah scroll (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>). While the argument of this thesis has challenged various assumptions concerning the production of B(03), its conclusions confirm the codex's prominence as arguably the earliest Greek Bible that contains a text of prime importance for reconstructing the text of the NT.