

Dr. Burgon, a contemporary of Scrivener, is even more blunt (*Revision Revised*, pages 11-12,15-16):

“But here an important consideration claims special attention. We allude to the result of increased acquaintance with certain of the oldest extant codices of the N. T. Two of these,—viz. a copy in the Vatican technically indicated by the letter B, and the recently-discovered Sinaitic codex, styled after the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet **ℵ**,—are thought to belong to the IVth century. Two are assigned to the Vth, viz. the Alexandrian (A) in the British Museum, and the rescript codex preserved at Paris, designated C. One is probably of the VIth, viz. the codex Bezae (D) preserved at Cambridge. **Singular to relate, the first, second, fourth, and fifth of these codices (B & C D), but especially B and ℵ, have within the last twenty years established a tyrannical ascendancy over the imagination of the Critics, which can only be fitly spoken of as a blind superstition. It matters nothing that all four are discovered on careful scrutiny to differ essentially, not only from ninety-nine out of a hundred of the whole body of extant MSS. besides, but even from one another.** This last circumstance, obviously fatal to their corporate pretensions, is unaccountably overlooked. And yet it admits of only one satisfactory explanation: viz. that *in different degrees* **they all five exhibit a fabricated text.** Between the first two (B and **ℵ**) there subsists an amount of sinister resemblance, which proves that they must have been derived at no very remote period from **the same corrupt original. Tischendorf insists that they were partly written by the same scribe. Yet do they stand asunder in every page; as well as differ widely from the commonly received Text, with which they have been carefully collated.** On being referred to this standard, in the Gospels alone, B is found to omit at least 2877 words: to add, 536: to substitute, 935: to transpose, 2098: to modify, 1132 (in all 7578):—the corresponding figures for **ℵ** being severally 3455, 839, 1114, 2299, 1265 (in all 8972). **And be it remembered that the omissions, additions, substitutions, transpositions, and modifications, are by no means the same in both. It is in fact easier to find two consecutive verses in which these two MSS. differ the one from the other, than two consecutive verses in which they entirely agree.**

....

“What we are just now insisting upon is only the **depraved text of codices ℵ A B C D,—especially of ℵ B D.** And because this is a matter which lies at the root of the whole controversy, and because we cannot afford that there shall exist in our reader’s mind the slightest doubt on *this* part of the subject, we shall be constrained once and again to trouble him with detailed specimens of the contents of **ℵ B**, &c., in proof of the justice of what we have been alleging. We venture to assure him, without a particle of hesitation, **that ℵ B D are three of the most scandalously corrupt copies extant:—exhibit the most shamefully mutilated texts, which are anywhere to be met with:—have**

become, by whatever process (for their history is wholly unknown), the depositories of the largest amount of *fabricated readings*, ancient *blunders*, and *intentional perversions of Truth*,—which are discoverable in any known copies of the Word of GOD.” (Italic emphasis in original. Bold emphasis mine.)

Again, we look at Codex B itself as found on the Vatican’s website. See Figure 2 below.

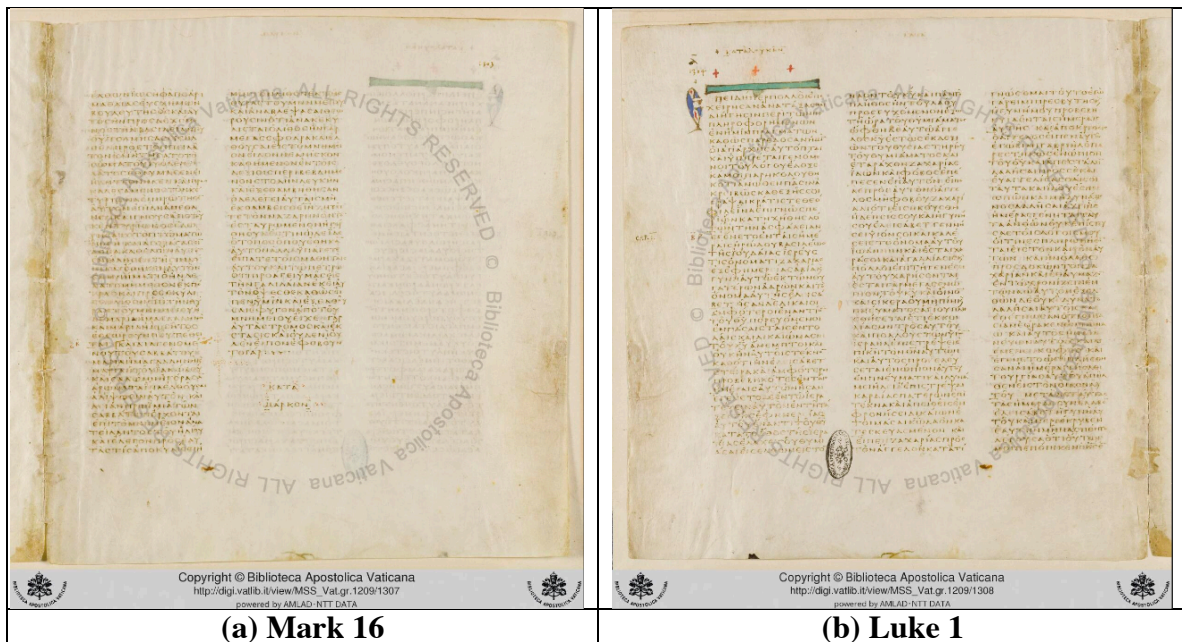


Figure 2. Codex Vaticanus.

(a) This is the last page of Mark. Notice the large conspicuous blank space in the third column. Mark 16:9-20 belongs here but is obviously absent. As Scrivener, Burgon, and others note, this is the only blank column in the entire Vatican manuscript. That is suspicious!

(b) The backside of (a), this is the first page of Luke. Vaticanus’ scribe did not begin Luke in the third column of (a), but rather skipped it and began writing in the next column. Save for this instance, he always began a new book in the column immediately following the previous book. Why did he—and *here of all places*—depart from his pattern?

Images source: *Digital Vatican Library*

Dr. Floyd Nolen Jones advises on page 31 of *Which Version is the Bible?*:

“Further, the Vatican MSS has a blank space exactly the size required to include the 12 verses at the end of the 16th chapter. The scribe who prepared B obviously knew of the existence of the verses and their precise content. Indeed, as Tischendorf observed, Sinaiticus exhibits a different handwriting and ink on this page, and there is a change in spacing and size of the individual letters in an attempt to fill up the void left by the removal of the verses. These circumstances testify that the sheet is a

forgery." (Bold emphasis mine.)

Drs. Geisler and Nix, textual critics who authored the classic seminary/Bible-college textbook, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, wrote on pages 391-392 concerning Vaticanus: "Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53—8:11 were **purposefully omitted** from the text."

On page 154 of *Neither Oldest Nor Best*, Dr. David Sorenson argues that a certain manuscript—the Goodspeed Manuscript 38 (or Manuscript 2427)—is proof **Vaticanus originally contained Mark 16:9-20**. Manuscript 2427 is a verbatim (word-for-word) copy of Vaticanus' version of Mark, and Manuscript 2427 **contains** the last 12 verses of Mark! According to chemical analyses of its inks, Manuscript 2427 is a forgery from the 19th century (1800s). Sorenson concludes,

"MS 2427 was copied from Vaticanus *before* the last 12 verses of Mark were removed. We thus have *prima facie* [on the first impression] evidence of what the complete Gospel of Mark in Vaticanus looked like before it was intentionally modified. The evidence is clear. The last 12 verses of Mark were **removed from Vaticanus** (and **most likely from Sinaiticus**) at some point during **the mid 19th century**" (Italics in original. Bold emphasis mine.).

Dr. Sorenson provides other details about Vaticanus, as well as Sinaiticus, on page 147:

"We shall see that Vaticanus and Sinaiticus are not independent witnesses, but in fact were modified at the same time by the same scribe in the same way. Their independent testimony certainly becomes collusion and their integrity as evidence certainly becomes dishonesty.... As incredulous as this may seem, it is true. The portion of the Gospel of Mark 16 in both Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were written out by the same scribe. Tischendorf refers to him as 'Scribe D.' As remarkable as it may seem, even Tischendorf himself noticed this and commented about it on several occasions."

Dr. Scrivener, leading conservative on the 1881 Revised Version committee, remarked on page 584, footnote 1, of *A Plain Introduction to Criticism of the New Testament*:

"I have ventured but slowly to vouch for Tischendorf's notion, that six leaves of Cod. \aleph , that containing Mark xvi. 2—Luke i. 56 being one of them, **were written by the scribe of Cod. B**. On mere identity of handwriting and the peculiar shape of certain letters who shall insist? Yet there are parts of the case, apparently unnoticed by Tischendorf himself (see p. 92, note), which I know not how to answer, and which have **persuaded even Dr Hort**. Having now arrived at this conclusion our inference is simple and direct, that **at least in these leaves, Cod. \aleph B make but one witness, not two**" (Bold emphasis mine.).

On pages 147-148 of *Neither Oldest Nor Best*, Dr. Sorenson offers a lengthy quote from British literary scholar James Harris. Summarizing the matter in 1893, Harris commented:

“It is generally held today that Tischendorf was justified in recognizing in the Sinaitic Codex the traces of the same hand as wrote the New Testament portion of the Codex Vaticanus... But after Tischendorf had come to his conclusion he took the argument a step further, and said that the hand in question was the same hand that wrote the New Testament portion of the Vatican Codex. The argument is as before a palaeographical one and depends on shapes of letters, spellings, etc.

“Dr. Hort, who completely accepted Tischendorf’s judgment, remarked that its accuracy was confirmed by the fact that the six cancel [replaced] leaves were conjugate [adjacent] leaves in the quire, so that they were really three double leaves. This is as it should be, for in a MS. in which the quire is the foundation, one cannot cancel [replace] a single leaf....

“The interest of the question is much intensified by the fact that one of the cancelled [replaced] leaves is that which contains the closing passages of S. Mark, where both Aleph [Sinaiticus] and B [Vaticanus] show a remarkable omission. The coincidence is a curious one, and many people, naturally enough, refuse to believe that it is accidental. **They say we have the scribe of B [Vaticanus] twice over for the omission, and not two separate authorities**” (Bold emphasis mne.).

Harris claimed the copyist who omitted Mark’s last 12 verses from *Sinaiticus* was also the **same** scribe who removed Mark’s last 12 verses from *Vaticanus*! The six leaves of each codex were replaced. In other words, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus originally had Mark 16:9-20 before both codices were rewritten to exclude them! They are **one** witness, **not two**!

In our next part, we will say more about Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and something call “stichometry.”

D. A Closer Look at Sinaiticus and Mark 16:9-20

According to textual scholars, the last 12 verses of Mark are lacking in the “oldest and best” manuscripts. We have already seen Vaticanus, and now we examine its ally Sinaiticus. Codex Aleph, as it is also called, bears even more suspicious features we cannot help but notice—unless we, like the “scholars,” **refuse** to see!

Sinaiticus’ scribe for Mark chapter 16 handled these verses most deceitfully. In the column before Mark 16:8 (that is, the first column of Figure 3a), he widened letters