

THE MUTILATION OF MARK 16:9-20 – FLOYD NOLEN JONES, Th.D., Ph.D.

Most modern versions have a footnote to the effect that “these verses are not in the oldest, best, most reliable Greek manuscripts”. In laymen’s terms this means Mark 16:9–20 is not in the two 4th century Greek manuscripts, *Vaticanus B* and *Sinaiticus* Ⲛ (the Hebrew letter *Aleph* – both are used) which were derived from Origen’s (AD 185–254) edited New Testament (a 12th century minuscule also omits the verses). Satan has always wanted to strip the church of its power, authority, and commission. These verses are the Great Commission spoken by Jesus as recorded by Mark. It is an apostolic commission delegating great power to the body of Christ that it may continue the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

Of the approximately 3,119 Greek manuscripts of the NT extant today, none is complete. The segment of text bearing Mark 16 has been lost from many, but over 1,800 contain the section and verses 9–20 are present in all but the three cited above.¹ The footnote is thus unveiled and laid bare as dishonest and deliberately misleading in intimating these verses are not the Word of God.

The external evidence is massive. Not only is the Greek manuscript evidence over 600 to 1 in support of the verses (99.99%) – around 8,000 Latin mss, about 1,000 Syriac versions as well as all of the over 2,000 known Greek Lectionaries contain the verses.² They were cited by Church Fathers who lived 150 years or more *before* B or *Aleph* were written, i.e.: Papias (c.100), Justin Martyr (c.150), Irenaeus (c.180), Tertullian (c.195), and Hippolytus (c.200).³

Sinaiticus is not a bound codex. Thus, any given folio (a sheet of paper folded in half to form four pages) can easily be pulled free and later replaced. Tischendorf himself noted that the folio containing Mark 14:54 to 16:8 and Luke 1:1 to 1:56 had not been written by the scribe which he designated as “A”. He said that *Sinaiticus Aleph* exhibited a different handwriting and ink on these leaves. Tischendorf goes on to add that scribe A wrote all of the New Testament in Ⲛ except six leaves (plus part of a seventh) and that these six, which included Mark 16, were written by A’s colleague, Scribe D. He stated that D wrote part of the Old Testament and also acted as *diorthota* or corrector of the New Testament. Tischendorf also identified Scribe D as the man who years earlier had penned *Vaticanus B* and left out Mark 16:9-20 resulting in the third column being left blank! Dr. F.H.A. Scrivener, as well as Hort, likewise concluded that D was the scribe of *Vaticanus*.⁴

But there is more. Tischendorf further observed there is a change in spacing and size of the individual letters. This was done by scribe D in an attempt to place some words in the void left by his removal of verses 9-20 that scribe A had originally placed in the codex. This is seen in that the first three columns on page 228 have 14 Greek letters per line; however, the letters in the fourth column are somewhat wider such that each line has only 12 letters.

¹ Even in 1871 AD, 620 of the then extant mss were known to contain Mark 16; **only** *Vaticanus B* and *Sinaiticus Aleph* did not have verses 9-20; John W. Burgon, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel According to S. Mark*, (Oxford and London: James Parker & Co., 1871), p. 71. Since 1871, hundreds more of the 3,119 mss have been discovered.

² Only one Latin mss, one Syriac and one Coptic version omit Mark 9-20. Much of the material in this paragraph has been gleaned from Dr. Wilbur N. Pickering’s taped interview before the Majority Text Society in Dallas, Texas (summer of 1995).

³ John Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, (London: John Murray, 1883), pp. 422-423.

⁴ Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, 4th ed., Edward Miller ed., London: George Bell and Sons Pub., 1894, Vol. 2, p. 337, fn. 1.

Coming to page 229 of the folio, we find the first column has but 11.6 letters to the line, the second column has only three and one third lines with a letter spacing of 10.7. Having accomplished his goal of placing a few words in the heretofore blank second column, the situation returns to normal and the third column, which begins with Luke 1:1, has 14.1 letters per line and the fourth column 13.9.

Taken together, these circumstances undeniably testify that the sheet is a forgery. For whatever reason, scribe D, who years before had left the column blank in *Vaticanus B*, simply slipped the folio out that scribe A originally prepared, then rewrote and replaced it. He was obviously determined not to leave another column blank; a circumstance which for years he undoubtedly had to explain to various associates and authorities many times over.

Thus, the blank column in B and *Aleph* are the work of a single scribe and thereby does not constitute the voice of two witnesses against the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20. The omission (or disappearance) in both codices is due to only one and the same person – the scribe who wrote B and then revised *ℵ* – or perhaps to an editor under whose directions he acted. But either way, it is *not* the independent voice of two different authorities working decades apart from one another as we have been told for some 150 years! Furthermore, the blank space Scribe D left in *Vaticanus B* bears evidence and proves he knew of the passage. As he is the copyist of that folio in *Aleph*, rather than being witnesses against the last twelve verses of Mark 16, both B and *ℵ* must be seen as actually bearing testimony to their existence in antiquity.⁵

Yet even this is not all. Although not well publicized and generally unknown is the fact that *Alexandrinus A* – one of the text critics favored three of their “old uncials” – actually includes Mark 19:9-20! This Codex was sent to England in 1627 and now resides in the British Museum (thus beyond any tampering by the Jesuits as well as the Vatican). Though having heretical readings as well as many other detractions, *Alexandrinus* has value – especially since it reads as the *Textus Receptus* in the gospels.

In the 17th century Cyril Lucar (1572-1638 AD), then patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox See in Alexandria, brought the codex to his new See at Constantinople. Like *Vaticanus* (c.350 AD) and *Sinaiticus* (c.380 AD), *Alexandrinus* was originally dated as a 4th century codex. However, today it is dated 5th century – even though there is an Arabic note in the first volume of the manuscript stating it was written by the hand of Thecla, the martyr. At that time, Lucar added that she was a notable lady of Egypt and had written Codex A shortly *after* the AD 325 Council of Nicea – thus, as old or even older than *Vaticanus B*!⁶

Finally, do we really believe that God would have the greatest story ever told end at verse 8: “And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid”. Is it truly rational that God would allow the good news of the Gospel to end with his disciples cringing in fear? Would Mark really have concluded his Gospel without any reference to the appearance of the risen Christ to His inner circle of followers? I think not! The reader should feel a deep sense of righteous indignation upon learning of the unscrupulous manner in which these verses have been presented to their readers by nearly all Bible publishers. Shame!

⁵ John Burgon, *The Traditional Text of the Holy Gospels Vindicated and Established*, Edward Miller ed., London: George Bell and Sons, 1896, pp. 298-301.

⁶ Sir Frederick Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, 5th ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1958), p. 198; Ira M. Price, *The Ancestry of our English Bible*, 3rd ed., rev., (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), pp. 58-59.