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The Comma Calmly Considered
The Critics' Comedy of Errors

By

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12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Contents:

Introduction

- Brief Remarks : Comedy of Errors
- *lectio brevior potior*
- Sturz : Byzantine Readings in 2nd Century Papyri
- "Archaic Mark" : Minuscule 2427
- IR microspectroscopy by Mary V. Orna in 1988
- Mary V. Orna (b. 1934)
- Metzger : "*lectio brevior potior*" Defined
- Image : Miniscule 2427 : f001r : <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minuscule_2427>
- Image : Mark 10:20-29 [Nestle, Aland & Aland, 27th edition, p. 123]
- Bibliography

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Introduction

This is the twelfth paper of the series. This essay has selections from my paper "The Witness of God is Greater." In this essay, my goal is to highlight some of the amazing evidence that I have discovered in collating sources for my paper. I give some comments in order to direct my readers through these points.

- For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (Psalm 119:89)
- The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. (Psalm 12:6-7)
- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)
- Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matt 24:35)

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Brief Remarks : Comedy of Errors

What if the central guiding principle of textual criticism were invented based on absolutely no evidence and with no explanation of how to apply it in any given circumstance? What if this principle assumed that scribes have more tendency to "add" text than to "omit" text when making transcriptions with absolutely no evidence and no examples, etc.? What if for hundreds of years this principle and these assumptions were zealously followed in determining the text of Scripture?

What if the prevailing group of textual critical scholars had determined that a certain textual family was the closest to the original text of the New Testament and after many decades of holding that theory, found out that they were completely wrong? How would that change the publications of the New Testament text?

Moreso, what if a body of scholars (over many decades) proposed a "gold standard" critical text of the New Testament placing the best and most reliable manuscripts into "category 1" determining the text of the New Testament on these said manuscripts and it was found that one of these manuscripts (or maybe more) was a forgery? Would that body of said scholars as well as their "gold standard" edition be able to claim any credit or standing in the academic community?

In this paper we will be presenting evidence revealing that all of the above points are true, I mean, that these presuppositions of the textual critics are false. The shortest reading is not the closest to the original. Scribal habits are more likely to omit rather than to add. The Byzantine longer readings are found in 2nd century papyri (not later recession). And the "gold standard" critical edition of the New Testament does in fact (at least did for some time) contain a forged manuscript in "category 1". A chemist, Mary Orna, in 1988 discovered the forgery, not a textual critic. All the "suspicion" voiced by any scholar means nothing when the forgery is able to become part of the published edition listed in the critical apparatus as a category 1 manuscript. What more is needed to undermine the authority of these textual critic scholars? Have you ever heard any of this before? I doubt it.

Prayers.

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Lectio brevior potior

- *Lectio brevior potior* (Latin for "the shorter reading is stronger") is one of the key principles in textual criticism, especially biblical textual criticism. The principle is based on the widely accepted view that scribes showed more tendency to embellish and harmonise by additions and inclusions than by deletions. Hence, when comparing two or more manuscripts of the same text, the shorter readings are considered more likely to be closer to the original. (*lectio brevior*. Wikipedia. <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_brevior>)

- [Royse] ...one of the most detailed and influential statements of the canons of textual criticism has been that of Griesbach. If we look at, say, his first canon, that of *lectio brevior potior* ("the shorter reading is to be preferred"), we will gain the impression that Griesbach had the wide-ranging knowledge of documents necessary to delineate precisely when scribes were likely to add and when, as exceptions, they were likely to omit. We may, of course, be sure that Griesbach *did* have such knowledge, and may well regard his distillation of this knowledge into various rules as having sound authority. Nevertheless, it is significant that no specific reading of a manuscript is cited as a foundation for this first canon. And in fact, no specific reading of a manuscript is cited *anywhere* within Griesbach's Prolegomena, Sectio III, which is titled: *Conspectus potiorum observationum criticarum et regularum, ad quas nostrum de discrepantibus lectionibus iudicium conformavimus* ("A survey of the most important critical observations and the rules to which we have confirmed our judgment regarding discrepant readings"). The fact that Griesbach does not even attempt to present evidence for his statements about how scribes copied makes it difficult (if not impossible) for later students to know what exactly he would have considered as evidence, to check the evidence upon which his statements rest, or to revise his statements in the light of the new evidence provided by subsequent manuscript discoveries. This difficulty becomes exacerbated when one turns to those variations where the different canons conflict with one another, and when one deals with issues on which competent scholars disagree. As a result of the lack of clear evidence on scribal habits, many decisions about specific textual problems appear arbitrary and subjective. (Royse, *Scribal Habits in Early Greek New Testament Papyri*, 2008, p. 4-5)

- [Miller] The maxim *lectio brevior potior* (also called *lectio brevior praeferenda*) is among the NT textual criticism's standard canons of internal evidence. Simply stated, this principle advises the textual critic to prefer the shorter reading unless faced with compelling reasons to prefer the longer reading. Though oft-stated, I reject the principle of *lectio brevior potior*, and the purpose of this article is to urge the reader to do the same. I am not the first to question the preference for the shorter reading. Early in the twentieth century, Albert C. Clark argued against it. A decade later B.H. Streeter insisted "the notion is completely refuted that the regular tendency of scribes was to choose the longer reading, and that therefore the modern editor is quite safe so long as he steadily rejects [longer readings]." Edward Hobbs pointed out the logical extreme of preferring the shorter reading, "if you have enough variations... if you follow the shorter readings, you will end up with no text at all." Studying the habits of the scribes of select papyri, Ernest Colwell (P45, P66, P75), James Royse (P45, P46, P47, P66, P72, P75), and Peter Head (fourteen shorter papyrus fragments) have found the scribal tendency to omit stronger than tendency to add. Royse, for example, argues that P46 adds fifty-five times but omits 167 times. Similarly, P47 omits eighteen times but adds only five times. Other scholars as well have challenged *lectio brevior potior*. (Miller, "The Long and Short of *Lectio Brevior Potior*" in *The Bible Translator*, 57(1), 2006, p. 11)

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Sturz : Byzantine Readings in 2nd Century Papyri

- [Sturz] In the light of the evidence, the Byzantine text should not be thought of as edited in the Westcott and Hort (WH) sense. The "proofs" by which WH defended their theory now appear untenable. As found in Section A, Byzantine readings are demonstrated early in the case of papyri. The lack of testimony to the Byzantine text-type on the part of early Fathers is neither complete nor decisive as WH had claimed. The invalidity of WH's silence-of-the-Fathers argument is evident from the discovery of non-patristic supported Byzantine readings in the early papyri. Furthermore, that the longer or conflate readings are unable to prove WH's theory of Syrian editing is apparent for two reasons: first, because this type of reading also has been shown by the papyri to go back into the second century, and second, because such readings are found in other text-types, including the Alexandrian. (Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, Nashville, Camden, New York: Thomas Nelson, 1984, p. 127)

- [Sturz] The thesis that the Byzantine text is late, textually mixed, and therefore wholly secondary in form, though it had been supported by the apparently imposing arguments of conflate readings, patristic silence, and an appeal to intrinsic character, is now inadequate to account for the data which have accumulated since the days of Westcott and Hort. Contrary to what WH held, distinctively Byzantine readings of every kind have been shown to be early. They have been shown to be early by evidence which is more certain than citation by early Fathers. The argument from the collation was found to be inadequate, not only because it is now known that such readings are early, but also because it is now realized that this type of reading is not confined to the Byzantine text. It is found in others also, including the Alexandrian. (Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, Nashville, Camden, New York: Thomas Nelson, 1984, p. 129-130)

- [Elliott] Sturz's book [*The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, 1984] is a carefully documented and painstakingly argued thesis which demonstrates that Westcott and Hort (= WH) were wrong to dismiss the validity of the Byzantine text-type as a legitimate claimant alongside the other text-types to possess the original text. One of the most valuable aspects of Sturz's work is to show how former distinctively Byzantine readings now have the support of early papyri. Full details of this often neglected material are given in lengthy appendices to this book. This partnership of Byzantine mss. and early papyri is seldom considered by those who put unduly great weight on the readings of the papyri but ought to be taken into account in any commentary on textual variants. Sturz's examination of the Byzantine text-type concludes that (a) its text goes back to the second century and (b) it is an unedited text (in the WH sense) - alleged conflation for example is not a sign of the Byzantine text's dependence on the other text types; longer readings are not to be found exclusively in the Byzantine text-type. The Byzantine text-type is seen as a conservative text emanating from second century Antioch where it was not subjected to Atticizing tendencies detected elsewhere as a literary reaction to criticism by opponents of Christianity, such as Celsus, that its scriptures were written in stylistically inferior Greek. This means that its readings need to be taken seriously. (Elliott, J.K. Harry A. Sturz, *The Byzantine Text-Type and New Testament Textual Criticism*, Nashville, Camden, New York: Thomas Nelson, 1984, 305 pp, *Novum Testamentum*, 28(3), 282, 1986)

- [Kinney] Dr. H. A. Sturz has collected lists of readings found in Papyri dated between 100 and 300 A.D. that contradict the major premise of Westcott and Hort. His first list gives 150 different readings of the traditional text, that Westcott and Hort rejected because they were found in neither ALEPH, nor B, nor D. A second list of Sturz contains 170 readings found in the traditional text that were confirmed by early Papyri, but were rejected

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

by Westcott and Hort because they were not found in ALEPH or B but were found in D. A third list contains 80 readings found in the traditional text that were confirmed by early Papyri, but were rejected by Westcott and Hort because either ALEPH, or B, or D did not contain the reading. <brandplucked.webs.com/whitelies.htm>

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

“Archaic Mark” : Minuscule 2427

- [Carlson] "Archaic Mark" is the moniker given by Ernest Cadman Colwell to an unprovenanced, illuminated manuscript of the Gospel of Mark that has fascinated textual critics ever since it was acquired by the University of Chicago nearly seventy years ago from the estate of an Athenian collector. Also known by its Gregory number of 2427, this manuscript upon first impression appears to be an ordinary, medieval parchment codex of Mark. Appearances deceive, however, because 2427's text of Mark is not of the usual Byzantine text-type that so dominates the medieval transmission of the Greek text, belonging instead to a much older and interesting Alexandrian text-type. In fact, 2427's text is closer to the text of the famous fourth century Codex Vaticanus (B) than to that of any other manuscript. (Carlson, "'Archaic March' (MS 2427) and the Finding of a Manuscript Fake," SBL Forum, n.p. [Cited Aug 2006]. <www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=577>)

- Codex 2427 (in the Gregory-Aland numbering), formerly known as Archaic Mark, is a miniature manuscript of the Gospel of Mark written in minuscule Greek. The manuscript had been very difficult to date paleographically and had been assigned to the 13th-18th century, until 2006 when it was proved a forgery following the publication of digital images of the codex, which had been made available online to renew interest in the manuscript. The codex is written in a tiny minuscule hand on parchment leaves, containing 44 leaves (11.5 cm by 8.5 cm), written in one column per page, 21-25 lines per page. The codex has no sections, canons or headings, but it contains 16 colour illuminations.[1] There are no indications on the codex that it was originally part of a tetra evangelium (4 gospels). The codex includes text of Mark 16:9-20. The codex 2427 was found among the possessions of John Askitopoulos, an Athenian collector and dealer of antiquities, after his death in 1917. In 1937 the manuscript was sent to the University of Chicago Library, where it still resides (Ms. 972). Illustrations are very similar to those from minuscule 777. Robert S. Nelson suggested that they were copied from 777.

- The manuscript found some early critics upon arriving in Chicago. Robert P. Casey "voiced his suspicion in 1947". In 1988 Mary V. Orna found that one of the illustrations contained Prussian blue (KFe[Fe(CN)₆]), produced since 1704 only. This did not resolve the question of authenticity, however, as it was "conceivable that the illuminations could have been retouched in a naïve attempt at restoration." In early 2006 the University of Chicago announced that digital images of the manuscript had appeared online in an effort to "foster further research." By February Stephen Carlson had announced his findings that the codex was a forgery, and proved his case beyond a doubt at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. Its text has been copied from Philipp Buttmann's 1860 Greek New Testament edition (based on Cardinal Mai's edition of Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209). This is especially obvious since the forger also followed Buttmann in 81 out of 85 places where his edition departed from the Codex Vaticanus text. Furthermore, in three places the copyist of 2427 had accidentally omitted a line (6:2, 8:12, 14:14), and it transpired that in each verse the omitted text corresponds exactly to the lineation of Buttmann's edition.

- Furthermore, microscopic, chemical and codicological testing eventually proved in 2009 that the manuscript had been made in 1874 at the earliest. What made the text a forgery was that it was carefully manufactured in the style of a medieval codex, when it was in fact a very recent creation, no older than the late 19th century. What originally made scholars so suspicious was that it was textually the closest known manuscript – in fact, virtually identical – to Codex Vaticanus, but of a much later date. Furthermore, Greek codices of a single gospel are extremely unusual, further contributing to the suspicion that it was made as a souvenir.

- Minuscule 2427. Wikipedia. <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minuscule_2427>.

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

IR microspectroscopy by Orna in 1988

• [Orna] The fourth University of Chicago manuscript, known as the "Archaic Mark", is a book of decidedly modest quality but of undeniable interest to philologists. As Allison noted in an unpublished description of the manuscript (16), some readings find parallels in the early Codex Vaticanus, and others are unique. One scholar was so dazzled by the textual evidence that he thought that the University of Chicago Mark might contain the text of the Gospel of Mark "in a more primitive form than any other known manuscript" (17). On the other hand, others have suggested that its rare text may have been taken from a 19th-century printed version of the Greek gospels, and some have even questioned the authenticity of the manuscript. (Mary V. Orna, "Applications of Infrared Microspectroscopy to Art Historical Questions about Medieval Manuscripts," *Advances in Chemistry* 4 (1988), p. 270)

• [Orna] Another example of pigment identification by IR microspectroscopy is shown in Figure 10. The bottom spectrum was obtained from a blue pigment from MS 972 (Archaic Mark); the top spectrum is a reference spectrum of Prussian blue. The band corresponding to the C=N of ferric ferrocyanide is common to both spectra. Replicate spectra of blue pigments removed from different locations in MS 972 indicate that the average frequency of this band is $2083 \pm 6 \text{ cm}^{-1}$. **The ubiquitousness of an iron blue in this manuscript raises doubts about the authenticity of this manuscript. The iron blues are the first of the artificial pigments with a known history and an established date of first preparation. The color was made by the Berlin color maker Diesbach in or around 1704. Moreover, according to Gettens and Stout (25), the material is so complex in composition and method of manufacture that there is practically no possibility that it was invented independently in other times or places. This fact, in addition to the evidence indicating that both the Archaic Mark and the Leningrad gospel fragment were copies of the Athens codex 93, suggests that these manuscripts originated some time much later than their purported 12th-century fabrication. Furthermore, neither of these manuscripts has a genealogy that can be traced prior to about 1930, a fact suggesting that their origin may very well be during the flurry of Athenian forgeries that came to the market in the 1920s.** (Mary V. Orna, "Applications of Infrared Microspectroscopy to Art Historical Questions about Medieval Manuscripts," *Advances in Chemistry* 4 (1988), p. 275)

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Mary V. Orna (b. 1934)

• Mary Virginia Orna (born 1934, New Jersey) is an American color chemist, historian of science, and professor emerita of the College of New Rochelle. Orna will receive the 2021 HIST Award for Outstanding Achievement in the History of Chemistry from the American Chemical Society's Division of the History of Chemistry "for her exemplary leadership in the worldwide community of the history of chemistry, especially for her original research in the area of color and pigment chemistry and the discovery of the elements, her commitment to education, her decades of service to the Division of History of Chemistry, and her continuing role in supporting and participating in the worldwide research in the archeology of chemistry. Orna received a B.S. in Chemistry at Chestnut Hill College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1955. She studied Analytical Chemistry at Fordham University in New York City with Michael Cefola, receiving her Ph.D. in 1962. She studied for her profession with the Ursulines at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. and completed her M.A. in Religious Education in 1967.

• In 1966 Orna joined the faculty of the College of New Rochelle in New York, a Roman Catholic college for women. She spent her career at the college, chaired its Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and is now a Professor of Chemistry Emerita. She has focused on education and chemistry through her teaching at the College, working internationally during sabbaticals in Israel and Rome, and through the creation of an educational spin-off from the NSF, ChemSource. She has studied the chemistry of color and its historical use. Orna has been a member of the Division of the History of Chemistry of the American Chemical Society since 1976, chair of the ACS Division of the History of Chemistry, Chair of the Executive Committee in 1984 and Treasurer from 1989-90, and chair of the Division of Chemical Education, in addition to serving on many ACS committees. She was Director of Educational Services at Philadelphia's Science History Institute (1997-2000) and editor of its magazine. Orna helped to found the Edelstein Center for the Analysis of Middle Eastern Textiles and Artifacts at Shenkar College of Engineering and Design, in Ramat-Gan, Israel, and was an original member of its Steering Committee.

• Mary Virginia Orna. Wikipedia. <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Virginia_Orna>.

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Metzger : “*lectio brevior potior*” Defined

• [Metzger] In general the shorter reading is to be preferred, except where (a) Parablepsis arising from homoeoarcton or homoeoteleuton may have occurred (i.e., where the eye of the copyist may have inadvertently passed from one word to another having a similar sequence of letters); or where (b) the scribe may have omitted material that was deemed to be (i) superfluous, (ii) harsh, or (iii) contrary to pious belief, liturgical usage, or ascetical practice. (Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 1994, p. 13)



Minuscule 2427 : f001r : <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minuscule_2427>

ἔστιν ἱκάμηλον διὰ Ὁ[τῆς] Ἰ[σ]χυρομαλίας Ὁ[τῆς] Ἰ[σ]χυροφίδος
 διελεῖν ἢ πλουσίον εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελ-
 θεῖν. 26 οἱ δὲ περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες ἑπρὸς
 ἑαυτοὺς· καὶ τίς δύναται σωθῆναι; 27 ἐμβλέψας Ἦ αὐ-
 τοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγει· παρὰ ἀνθρώποις ἀδύνατον, ἀλλ' οὐ
 παρὰ θεῶ· πάντα γὰρ δυνατὰ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ.
 28 Ἦρξατο λέγειν ὁ Πέτρος αὐτῷ· ἰδοὺ ἡμεῖς ἀφή-
 110 II καμεν πάντα καὶ Ἰήκολουθήκαμέν σοι. 29 Ἐφη ὁ Ἰη-
 19^p) B* K W Δ Ψ f^{1,13} 28. 579. 700. 2542 al vg^{ms} sys; Cl | txt N A B² C D Θ 0274. 2427 M
 lat sy^{p,h} co | σου N* C N W Θ 28. 565. 2427. 2542 al it vg^{ms} sys.p • 20 ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν
 (εφη C) A C D W Θ f^{1,13} M latt sy | txt N B Δ Ψ 0274. 579. 892. 2427 pc co • 21 ὁ A B W
 Ψ f¹³ M; Cl | txt N C D Θ 0274 f¹ 28. 565. 892. 2427. 1844. 12211 al | τ (8,34) αρας τον
 σταυρον (+ σου W f¹³ pc) A (f W f^{1,13} 2542) M (a) q sy (sa^{ms}) bo^{ms} | txt N B C D Δ Θ Ψ
 0274. 565. 579. 892. 2427 pc lat sa^{ms} bo; Cl • 23 ταχίον καμηλος δια τρυμαλιδος
 ραφιδος διελευσεται ἢ πλουσιος εἰς την βασιλειαν του θεου (et om. vs 25) D a b ff²
 • 24 ττους πεποιθοτας επι (+ τοις D Θ f^{1,13} 28. 565 al) χρημασιν A C D Θ f^{1,13} 2427
 M lat sy bo^p; Cl | txt N B (W: + πλουσιον p. εισελ.) Δ Ψ k sa bo^p • 25 (cf vs 23) |
 ἱκαμilon f¹³ 28. 579 pc geo | bis N A C (D) K N W Δ Θ Ψ f^{1,13} 579. 700. 892. 1241. 1424.
 2542 pm (Γ 28. 565 al: om. της) | txt B E 2427 pm; Cl | τρηματος N* | τρυπηματος
 f¹³ pc | βελονης f¹³; Cl • 26 ἑπρος αυτον N B C Δ Ψ 892. 2427 co | προς αλληλους
 M* k sy^p | - 579 pc bo^{ms}; Cl^{vid} | txt A D W Θ f^{1,13} M lat sy^h • 27 δε A C² D W (Θ) f¹³ M
 k sy^{p,h} sa | txt N B C* Δ Ψ f¹ 2427 pc sys bo | 1-8 10 B Θ 892 pc | 1-7 9 10 (W) 579 | 1-4
 Δ Ψ f¹ al | vg^{ms} | p) εστιν, παρα δε τω θεω δυνατον D (it) • 28 Ἦ-θησαμεν N A Θ Ψ
 f^{1,13} M; Cl | txt B C D W 2427 pc • 29 εφη αυτω ο Ιησους N pc | εφη αυτοις Ψ (579) |
 και (- A W pm) αποκριθεις ο Ιησους ειπεν A C W Θ f^{1,13} 565. 700. 2542 pm lat sy^h |
 αποκριθεις δε ο Ιησους (- ο I. Γ) ειπεν (D) K Γ 28. 1241. 1424 pm it; (Cl) | txt B Δ 892.
 2427 (pc) bo

Mark 10:20-29 (Nestle, Aland, and Aland. Novum testamentum Graece. 27th Edition, 1993, p. 123.)

12 - The Comma Calmly Considered : The Critics' Comedy of Errors

Bibliography

[For a full bibliography : See my paper "The Witness of God is Greater"]

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