

Johann Jakob Wettstein and Codex Vaticanus

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BACKGROUND

NT textual scholarship in the first half of the eighteenth century was a period of collecting material. B03 was considered as a witness of little value due to two reasons: (1) limited access to obtain precise information; (2) misjudgement according to Erasmus' 'Latinisation theory'.

WETTSTEIN'S *PROLEGOMENA* (1730), *NTG* (1751–2), AND THE AMSTERDAM ARCHIVE

Johann Jakob Wettstein (1693–1754) published the work *Prolegomena* in 1730, and two decades later his Greek NT edition appeared. In addition, kept by the University Library of the University of Amsterdam (UBA), the Wettstein archive also sheds light on his use of B03.

IDENTIFICATION AND THE SIGLUM B

It is well known that Wettstein established a numbering system for Greek NT manuscripts. His designation of Codex Vaticanus as 'B' became the standard reference until the present day. The siglum precisely defined which readings belong to the manuscript, and thus solved the identification issue that has long confused scholars. Yet, it is difficult to answer how did Wettstein reach this particular order. Different versions are found:

- The 1730 *Prolegomena*: Alexandrinus, Ephraemi, Vaticanus
- UBA, III C 20^s, part r, f. 17^r: no. 13
- UBA, III C 20^s, part r, f. 18^r: Bezae and Vaticanus in 'Occidentalis'
- UBA, III E 21, f. 43^v: no. 12 in 'Codices Unicales MSS Vett'
- UBA, III E 21, f. 46^v: no. 8

MORE VARIANT READINGS AVAILABLE

Wettstein lists 90 references to B03 in his edition (Mill has only 25), but the distribution is remarkable: 13 instances in Luke 24 and 34 in the Catholic epistles. Where did his information come from?

○ UBA III H 8-10

This is an interleaved copy of von Mastricht's Greek NT edition (1711), where numerous Wettstein's handwritten notes on variant readings can be found. B03 seems to be referred to as 'Vatic.' consistently. See e.g. "Vatic. a[pud]. Brug[ensis]. et Erasmus" at Luke 10:1 (III H 9, pp. 153 and sup.).

○ Bianchini, *Evangeliarium quadruplex 1.2* (1749)

This work contains a half-page first-ever published facsimile of B03 (p. 1349; Luke 24:32–39, 44–50; John 1:1–10). In this portion, 14 variants are found but not all of them are precise: e.g., the correction τῶν ἀνθρώπων at John 1:4 is absent.

○ **Amelote, *Le Nouveau Testament* (1666–70)**

In the prefaces of this French translation of the Vulgate NT, Amelote claims to collate ancient manuscripts in the Vatican and receive a collation of the Vatican manuscript from a friend. Wettstein culled at least 31 readings from Amelote's comments (4 in the Gospels, 27 in the Catholic epistles). For example:

- Matt 16:8 TR: ἐλάβετε | Amelote: ἔχετε (*NT 1*, 'Notae', p. xxviii)
Wettstein: 'Vatic. t[este]. Amelott.' (III H 9, pp. 34 & sup.)
- Jude 5 TR: εἰδότας ὑμᾶς ἅπαξ τοῦτο | Amelote: *om.* ὑμᾶς (*NT 3*, p. 234)
Wettstein: 'Vatic. t[este]. amel[ott].' (III H 10, pp. 525 & sup.)
B03: εἰδότας ὑμᾶς ἅπαξ πάντα (= MCT)
Remarkable reception: Tischendorf, Tregelles

EVALUATION AND CONTINUATION OF THE LATINISATION THEORY

In the 1730 *Prolegomena*, Wettstein regarded ancient Greek manuscripts—B03 included—valuable for reconstructing the text. His view can be best shown by his famous maxim: 'manuscripts should be weighed on the basis of their authority, not of their number' (*Prolegomena*, p. 196; trans. Castelli, *Wettstein's Principles*, p. 441). However, his opinion has changed during the course of time. Two main reasons might cause him to change from appreciation to rejection:

○ **'Latinised' Collections**

Wettstein collected two collations of anonymous Greek manuscripts originated from Rome: the 'Veselian readings' (in de la Cerda, *Adversaria sacra*) and the 'codices Barberini' (in Possinus, *Catena in Marcum*). He suspected both as forgeries, and further questioned the value of readings from B03, which also show closeness to the Latin text. These data thus became evidence to support the Latinisation theory he now preferred.

○ **Rival with Bengel**

In reply to Bengel's famous 'harder reading principle', Wettstein came to formulate the so-called 'majority rule' in weighing variant readings: the total number of supporting witnesses should be the sole criterion. Hence, he refuted Bengel and those manuscripts agreeing with the Latin: 'I consider the authority of the Latin version, of all other versions, and of the Greek manuscripts agreeing with the Latin version for the most part secondary to the reading of all the other Greek manuscripts; hence, it cannot be otherwise that in several crucial passages where Bengel changes the received reading I retain it and defend it'. [*NTG 1*, p. 166; trans. Castelli, *Wettstein's Principles*, p. 204]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Wettstein's contributions should not be known only as of the creator of the siglum B.
- As a 'maximalist', he compiled all the sources he could find, though some of them were imprecise.
- His endeavour did not bring him toward a cogent judgement, but he was misled by biased data and thus became another victim of the Latinisation conspiracy.

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