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## BANISHING THE LETTER “V” FROM THE LATIN ALPHABET

I was looking at James Morwood’s *A Latin Grammar* (Oxford), when I espied at the foot of the introduction (p. vii) the following words:

I am delighted to have compiled the first Latin grammar in English to have banished the letter V from the Latin alphabet. It was never there.

These words do smack rather of hubris, and one Amazon reviewer commented drily:

One bit of pretentiousness: the author is “delighted to have banished the letter ‘v’ from the Latin alphabet. It was never there.” Maybe not, but neither were lower case letters.

Just so. It does feel rather elitist, making Latin less like modern languages.

Morwood seeks to replace Kennedy, *The Revised Latin Primer*, which first appeared in 1888, and was revised by Sir James Mountford in 1930. My own copy dates is a 1998 reprint of the 1962 edition. This certainly includes “v”.

But why did sentiment in the late 19th and early 20th century turn against writing “j” and “v”? I have been unable to find any study of the change. [A discussion](#) in the Textkit forums discusses the subject but gives no answer. Was it purely anglophone, or wider? It would be most interesting to know.

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