The Influence of Unit Delimitation on Reading and Use of Greek Manuscripts

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1 Introduction

It is well known that the reading of Scripture was prominent in Christian worship from the earliest times. The book of Acts depicts events as occurring according to the fulfillment of Scripture (1:16; 8:35) and Paul sees Scripture as fulfilled in the events surrounding the advent of Christ (e.g. Rom. 4:3; 10:11; Gal. 3:8; 4:30). As 1 Cor. 14:26 says, at the earliest worship ceremonies, Christians were instructed to be engaged in a variety of things, including bringing a lesson from the Scriptures. This tradition has continued in most Christian churches, with many churches following a patterned series of readings. In fact, we know that, at some period, there developed an entire set of manuscripts designed to guide such reading, called lectionaries. The lectionaries have been a neglected area of New Testament textual criticism, with several scholars attempting by fit and start to include more information regarding lectionaries in the discussion, as well as in the textual apparatus.\(^1\)

By the eighth century, the use of fairly well established lectionary sections was in place, and these are seen in at least two types of manuscripts. The first are lectionaries themselves, that is, non-continuous text manuscripts that were specifically created with lectionary use in mind. They often contain lectionary incipits to introduce the individual pericopes and make them readable in context, as well as other markers and indications, including an increasingly sophisticated and developed ekphonetic notational system to aid in reading. These lectionaries are found in Greek and other languages, such as Latin and Syriac. There are a number of these manuscripts, but much more work needs to be done on them to explore their

\(^1\)See Osburn 1995, on whom I rely for basic information; cf. also Colwell 1932/1969; Metzger 1969.
relationship to the major text types and the lectionary tradition itself. The second type of manuscript is a continuous text manuscript, that is, a biblical manuscript, that has been appropriated for lectional use. Such a manuscript may well have lectionary headings and other markings added later by a different scribe, as well as the addition of later ekphonetic markings to aid in reading. One particularly interesting manuscript in this regard is Gregory-Aland 0105 (ANB Suppl. Gr. 121), a ninth-century biblical manuscript of eight pages that has been marked to indicate lectional use by the addition of headings and Eusebian numbers (see Porter & Porter forthcoming, no. 40). However, only some of the pericopes have been marked, not all of them. One of the lectionary units conforms to a standard lectional unit (Jn 7:14-30),\(^2\) while the other does not. In other words, this manuscript – like so many others – exhibits its own distinct liturgical characteristics, even at such a late date. The manuscript was probably written in the tenth century, but some of the other markings may well have been added much later. The period before the sixth century still remains somewhat of a mystery regarding lectionary matters, however. Although we know that early Christian writers such as Origen, and perhaps as early as Epiphanius, Cyril of Alexandria and John Chrysostom, made use of specific lections, the earliest lectionaries do not seem to follow any consistent system of pericopes (see Osburn 1995, 63).

This paper wishes to explore a dimension that is difficult to reconstruct and hence has not figured as prominently in recent discussion as have some others. The various units delimited in one manuscript are examined to try to determine how this delimitation influenced the way in which this manuscript (and by implication, others) was shaped for reading, and as a consequence how various pericopes were framed in order to be interpreted. I want to concentrate on one relatively early but neglected manuscript to see if we can determine how unit delimitation influenced structuring and hence reading and use of this manuscript. Findings such as these may say not only something about how this manuscript was used, but also about the influence that it had on concurrent and subsequent textual use – I cannot explore all of these issues here.

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\(^2\)See Scrivener 1894, I, 80-85. I will use Scrivener’s synaxarion and eclogadion of the Gospels and Apostolos as a point of comparison.