

The Decentralising of the Biblical Text in Manuscript

Formation

A Seminar hosted by the ITSEE, University of Birmingham

14 March 2022

Unchaining the Scriptures

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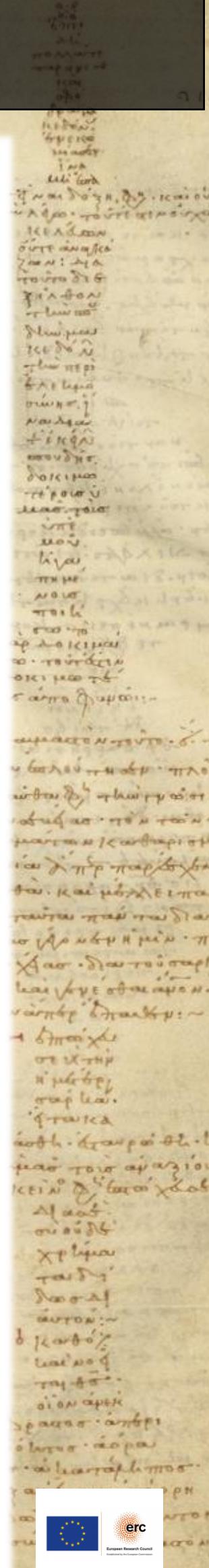
Ugo Rozzo quipped 'it should also be obvious that the paratext is not the text (even if it is a text).' His sentiment certainly is reflected in Greek New Testament manuscripts: the page focuses on the Scriptures and all paratexts serve the reader in navigating, understanding, and appreciating the sacred words. Yet one asks, can the biblical text be a paratext? This paper proposes that some catena manuscripts reverse the usual text-paratext relationship and decentralise the biblical text in service of the commentary. Such a relationship depends on the recognition of the catena as an independent text. The composition of the catenae, the ways they are presented in Greek New Testament manuscripts, and the reasons for producing such a book demonstrate that catenae are indeed an independent work which sometimes relegates the biblical text to the place of paratext in Greek New Testament manuscripts.

Doubled Recycling in Late Ancient Commentary

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In this paper, I trace a late ancient commentarial project created through a doubled practice of recycling. Recycling in various forms has long been part of the practice of commentary. Commentators — from antiquity to the present and from China to Ireland — have refashioned and renewed prior works of commentary for new readings of the text. For readers embedded within an ongoing commentarial tradition, an act of new commentary thus often comments not only on the lemma but also on previous commentary. In the late ancient Mediterranean, recycling took an explicit citational form in the creation of catenae and scholia, both constructed as a 'tissue of quotations' from previous works of textual scholarship. The constitutive citational gesture of such projects provides the commentary with the authority of a past tradition and embeds the lemma within a controlling interpretative frame. This compositional practice assumes the existence of prior commentary which one can recycle. But in late antiquity the Gospel according to Mark lacked an established commentary tradition. One could not simply construct a Markan catena from earlier commentaries on Mark, yet the absence of catena commentary emphasised Mark's tenuous position in the history of Gospel reading, generating a tension between fourfold Gospel and ecclesial tradition. This absence prompted a second form of recycling: the sixth-century *Catena in Marcum* reconfigured commentary on the Gospels according to Matthew, Luke, and John in order to create a novel catena for the Gospel according to Mark. This peculiar move reappropriated commentary written for one text and recycled it as commentary on another. Other late ancient catena and scholia — on Homeric doublets or Gospel parallels — engaged occasionally in such doubled recycling, but the architectonic scale of this practice was novel. The double act of recyclage both embeds Mark within a fourfold tradition of Gospel commentary and invites deeper engagement with the tensions — in narratives, details, and themes — between Mark and these other Gospels. Yet the tensions and ruptures created by this ambitious practice of recyclage emerge, often more subtly, in other commentarial projects as well. The *Catena in Marcum* thus affords a productive vantage point to interrogate commentarial recyclage in late antiquity and beyond.



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Repurposing Antiques: The Use and Reuse of Gospel *Kephalai* in Commentary Manuscripts

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This paper looks at one of the oldest and most stable Greek Gospel paratexts, the *kephalaia* (known also as the Old Greek Chapters) and their use in Gospel commentary manuscripts. Although their original purpose remains the subject of speculation, the *kephalaia* fulfil various practical functions, acting as a bookmarking tool through the marginal placement of *titloi*, and as an exegetical lens, since each *kephalaion* brings into focus one particular event or theme of the Gospel story.

As part of the standard paratextual “furniture” of Gospelbooks since Antiquity, the *kephalaia* also appear in many Gospel commentaries, usually in unaltered form, where they also operate as structuring element for the lemmata or as section headings for the ensuing commentary text. A few commentary manuscripts, however, feature *kephalaia* lists which are greatly expanded and specially adapted to the commentary text. This paper will focus on one particular set of commentary *kephalaia*, attested in three manuscripts, and examine the additions, alterations and refinements that the standard lists and *titloi* undergo to suit them to the commentary’s contents. It will also consider how an expanded *kephalaia* system might affect the reader’s approach to both the biblical and the commentary text in a way that differs from how the *kephalaia* mediate the text in a standard a Gospel manuscript.

Marginalized Witnesses to the Greek New Testament Text in the Austrian National Library

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According to the official registry (*Kurzgefasste Liste*), there are 95 Greek New Testament manuscripts housed in the National Library of Austria in Vienna. Resulting from work on this article, three further manuscripts will be registered and assigned a Gregory-Aland number, two lectionaries and one minuscule. I will briefly describe these manuscripts, and focus on two other manuscripts, the miscellaneous codex (Sammelhandschrift) MS. Hist. gr. 91 with various excerpts from the New Testament and MS Theol. gr. 209, a commentary manuscript with abbreviated biblical text, which has nevertheless been assigned a Gregory-Aland number recently quite recently (2988). In several of these manuscripts, the New Testament text has been marginalized in favor of other textual or codicological features, which I think has worked against their registration in the *Liste*



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Valorisation and Fading of the Biblical Lemmas in the Manuscripts of Latin Patristic Commentaries in the 8th-9th Century: The Case of Philip's Commentary on Job

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The commentary of Philip, a disciple of Jerome of Stridon, on the book of Job is of particular interest to scholars interested in the history of the text of this biblical book. The translation used by Philip in the lemmas he comments on is indeed the Vulgate text, but with sometimes interesting variations from the main Vulgate witnesses.

Moreover, part of the commentary is based on a comparison between the Latin text of the lemmas and pre-Vulgate translations. But the manuscripts through which we know this text seem to pay little attention to the biblical text that Philip puts, according to contemporary analyses, at the heart of his work. The present paper will therefore study the place of biblical lemmas in the eighth- and ninth-century manuscripts of the commentary on Job and the many different ways copyists dealt with them: can the reader easily distinguish them from the commentary? Are the many biblical verses from other books than Job quoted by Philip marked by the copyists? Based on a comparison with other manuscripts of Jerome's commentaries from the same period, we will offer some reflections on the discrepancy between our vision of the textual variations of the Bible, as contemporary scholars, and that which the copyists of the manuscripts studied may have had.

Materialising Unity: Catena Manuscripts as Imperial and Ecclesial Reform

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Catena manuscripts are a unique form of biblical commentary created in the 6th century for the Old Testament and 6th/7th century for the New Testament. In this commentary tradition, the biblical text is supplemented with extracts from selected church fathers. The earliest format for these manuscripts was a “frame” style in which the extracts are typically enumerated along the top, outside, and bottom margins of the folio, surrounding the biblical material. In the 10th and 11th centuries an “alternating” format of catenae—wherein the biblical text is divided by the patristic extracts within the body of the page—became the predominant *mise en page*. This layout decentralises the biblical text in such a way as to warrant discussion about its ultimate purpose.

These alternating catenae represent a stage of manuscript tradition in which the “paratextual” material, both aesthetically and functionally, assimilates the biblical material. Historical details following the Christological controversies of the Council of Chalcedon of the 5th century and leading into the Council of Trullo in the 7th century offer a plausible use of catenae in the development and promulgation of a syncretic “byzantine” theology. During the reign of both Justinian I (527-565) and Justinian II (685-695/705-711) attempts were made to unite the divisions within the Greek church—each for divergent purposes. Justinian I established a precedent in legal matters by consolidating the numerous Roman legal codes into a single volume, intended to supersede all previous tomes and become the singular reference source for all discussion. By the first reign of Justinian II the Council of Trullo is convened in which Canon 19 declares that all clergy are to only teach piety and defend the scripture with the words of the orthodox divines and not from one’s own intellect. This paper will draw upon several streams of historical data to complement the change in format within the catena manuscript tradition proposing that these manuscripts served as a reference point for clergy, particularly post-Trullo, to preach piety and defend orthodoxy to the confessional community.



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