

The Chicago Lectionary Project:
Its Legacy Reviewed and CSPMTs Recent Textual Discoveries Regarding
Greek Gospel Lectionary Manuscripts¹

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Do the majority of the Greek lectionaries of the gospels agree with one another so consistently that it is possible to speak of their text as “the lectionary text”? Ernest C. Colwell asked this very question in a paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting here in Chicago exactly eighty years ago.² It is a question that, for the most part, remains unanswered. Critical editions of the Greek New Testament (GNT) have generally ignored reference to Greek lectionary manuscripts and/or its printed editions. They have been viewed by the western scholars as either foreign to, or largely unimportant for the earliest text of the NT. For the most part, the value of lectionary manuscripts and their readings has been determined by proximity to the presumed original, or “1st text.” But by which 1st text are these important manuscripts to be judged? If they are of Byzantine type, then to which continuous text grouping do they most closely align?

To be sure, there remains a lack of understanding regarding the nature of the Byzantine text, for which there is much more diversity than has been generally recognized. It is also composed of several minority textual groupings and clusters, which retain their own special importance and relevancy to the overall picture of the Byzantine text. This point is especially relevant to the topic of this paper, the textual identity of the standard, or “majority” text of gospel lectionary manuscripts. Colwell’s question regarding the standard text of Greek Gospel lectionary manuscripts has continued to intrigue textual scholars today, most of whose research has been based on the work of Colwell and the Chicago Lectionary Project or (CLP).

In 1928, four years prior to Colwell’s presentation at SBL, a thesis was completed by former UBS Committee member Allen P. Wikgren on the Scheide no. 2, or L1231, archived at Princeton University, which apparently prompted Colwell to engage in further investigation of the Greek gospel lectionary manuscripts. During the summer of 1930, Colwell focused on collating a number of lectionary manuscripts found in various libraries throughout the U.S., Great Britain, and France. He returned to the U.S. with collations of over fifty Gospel lectionary manuscripts and announced his findings at the Chicago SBL meeting. At the same time, he announced the inauguration of the CLP, primarily in cooperation with Bruce Metzger (Princeton), Merrill M. Parvis (Emory), and Kurt Aland (Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung, Germany). The following year, Colwell produced the *Prolegomena*,³ which remains a standard scholarly resource for Greek

¹ This paper is based on a presentation delivered before the New Testament Textual Criticism Versions Unit at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), Chicago, IL, November 23-26, 2012.

² Ernest C. Colwell, “Is there a Lectionary Text of the Gospels?” *Harvard Theological Review* vol. XXV (January

³ Ernest C. Colwell, “Is there a Lectionary Text of the Gospels?” *Harvard Theological Review* vol. XXV (January 1932): 73-84.

lectionary manuscripts. The CLP lasted through the early 1960s, supported largely by the work of Colwell's colleagues and students. There were some apparent methodological errors in some of the studies, which affected evaluations of the Project's success. Nevertheless, the Project was instrumental in bringing some long needed attention to Greek lectionary manuscripts to western scholars. The three main objectives of the CLP were to examine the Greek lectionaries in order to determine whether or not a common, or "majority" lectionary text could be found; produce a *Greek lectionary edition* with critical apparatus; and, finally, to publish an analysis of the history and development of the lectionary text.

The CLP was only partially successful in fulfilling its original goals and aspirations. The precise textual identity of the majority Gospel lectionary text was left for the most part undetermined by the project, as Colwell had himself acknowledged. The most penetrating article on the textual identity of the majority of Greek Gospel lectionary manuscripts was published by a colleague of Colwell's, Paul Schubert, in the *Prolegomena* volume.⁴ Schubert noticed the close textual affinity of Von Soden's Byzantine continuous text group (ϕ) and, more specifically, group (ϕ^b), now called Gr 7, with the majority of lectionary manuscripts; however Schubert's article was brief, limited only to selections from the Markan readings.⁵ Some contributors concluded that the other three gospels were more western than Byzantine in their textual affinities. Thus the question remains, is there a majority agreement of Greek Gospel lectionary manuscripts and, if so, what are its textual characteristics? The answer appears to be that there is a standard text with some degree of slight variation, but with definite majority of shared "core" readings remaining even by its most divergent members.

We at CSPMT discovered, just as Colwell and the CLP had observed, that the majority of Greek Gospel lectionary manuscripts are not only mostly in agreement among their minority variants, which stand apart from both the TR and the *Kappa* texts, but highly and consistently agree in their majority readings as well. In both cases, the Byzantine minority grouping ϕ , or Gr 7/1424, is most closely akin to it. This can be seen through collation of their internal pericopae lections in both the Synaxarion and Menologion sections of the Gospel lectionary. This connection may be further noticed in singular diagnostic readings shared in common. Its text is also closely related to the EP, or Antoniades text in the Gospels, although with some minor variations. Antoniades preferred this majority lectionary manuscript grouping noted as (***) in his EP edition and viewed it as a proto-Byzantine type. He also saw another more noticeably Kappa grouping he viewed as having slightly more recent origins, but correctly saw both groupings as Byzantine text types from the beginning. I would also like to state that Antoniades' acumen with the manuscript evidence has been largely ignored or misunderstood by western scholars. He was ahead of his time in his own examination of the extant lectionary manuscript evidence and correctly saw the two main groupings contained in the lectionary manuscript tradition, having described these in his introduction to the Ecumenical Patriarchal GNT edition. It is our

⁴ Ernest Cadman Colwell and Donald C. Riddle, eds., *Prolegomena to the Study of the Lectionary Text of the Gospels* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933).

⁵ Paul Schubert, "The Text of the Markan Week Day Lections and Von Soden's I^ϕ Text," *Prolegomena*, 43-56.

assessment that the CLP should have perused Schubert's conclusions further. In later independent studies, both McReynolds⁶ and Omanson⁷ supported Schubert's contention on the lectionary's textual relationship with Gr 7/1424. These studies may be found on our website.

The shortcomings inherent in the CLP in realizing its own goals do not so much stem from its choice of the TR for their collation basis, but rather from minimizing or ignoring the importance of particular Byzantine minority groups outside of the main Kappa groupings. Contemporary textual bias or certain other trends may have played a part in the results, limiting the project's achievements in the end. We have found overall consistency among textual affinities with the Byzantine ϕ MSS. There is some textual parallelism with f13, but again much less so than in the Byzantine ϕ , or Gr 7/1424 grouping. In the absence of a proven and consistent pattern of dependency or affinity with either the Alex/B-text or Western text manuscripts, their connection remains tentative at best. In the end, the majority of lectionary manuscripts appear to have an early yet separate textual development within the Byzantine text tradition.

CSPMT has found there to be two principal groupings of gospel lectionary manuscripts. First, as mentioned, there is the majority, or "standard" Byzantine textual grouping. Second, there is a K^r or f³⁵ group, based along with two other minority groupings, the post-Empire, Kappa-mix manuscripts similar to the Venetian printed editions of the Gospel lectionary and the earlier Jerusalem-order manuscripts. Some variations are found among these groups, but again the core members of each group appear easy to identify.⁸ Newly noted are the important textual variations found between the major Kappa texts and the differences between the AD Press-Tzerpos revised editions with the higher Kappa Venetian lectionary editions. The following quote from the Wachtel article is telling as to the importance of the Greek lectionary manuscripts. "At any rate, there can hardly be an adequate documentation of the history of the New Testament text in the first millennium without taking the lectionary tradition into account."⁹ Included below are two especially important variations found in the Colwell and the Wachtel articles (Fig. 1):

Fig. 1.

⁶ See Roger L. Omanson, "The Claremont Profile Method and the Grouping of Byzantine Manuscripts in the Gospel of Mark" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1975).

⁷ Paul R. McReynolds, "The Claremont Profile Methodology and the Grouping of Byzantine New Testament Manuscripts" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1969).

⁸ Klaus Wachtel, "Early Variants in the Byzantine Text of the Gospels," *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-Critical and Exegetical Studies* (J.W. Childers and D.C. Parker, eds., Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006) 28-47.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

Sample Variants:

1. Mt 12:40 (Matthew) τη τεταρτη της ε' εβδομαδος (Wachtel, nos. 3, 4; pg. 43)
ην Ιωνας - κ B D L M f1 f13 *rell* β lect. MSS All lect. edit. cop. lat. NA RP TR Theophylact
εγενετο Ιωνας ο προφητης - Gr 7 Gr 1424 *Lect* EP
2. Mk 11:18 (Luke) τη τριτη της ιε' εβδομαδος (Colwell, HTR article, pg. 78)
αρχιερεις και οι γραμματαις - Aleph A B C D K L W Δ Π Ψ f1 fΠ 28 33 115 565 579 700 1071
1194 Gr 1216 L844 (Jeru. Order) lat. sy(c) cop. lat. NA
γραμματαις και οι αρχιερεις - M E G H M N S U V Y Γ Λ Φ Σ Ω f13 157 1241
β lect. MSS pre-1968 lect. edit. slav Sy (h) HF RP TR Theophylact
γραμματαις και οι φαρισαιοι - Gr 1424
γραμματαις και οι φαρισαιοι και οι αρχιερεις - Gr 7 *Lect* post-1968 lect. edit. EP

More recent lectionary textual studies by both Kellett and Jordan have proven valuable for cultivating further interest in the West for Greek lectionary textual studies. Chris Jordan continues his work on the lectionary manuscript tradition; however, without a broader, more inclusive appreciation of all Byzantine groupings and their readings, textual identification and further in-depth studies of this subject will continue to fall short in value. The time has come for greater study and appreciation of the Byzantine text including lectionary manuscripts as well.

Recent CSPMT Mss. Discoveries

We agree with Wisse's assessment, that the main corruption of the text came very early, before or about the time our earliest NT papyri were written. The Byzantine scribes were preoccupied with eliminating variants rather than creating new ones even granting minor emendations. The CLP was an early notice to all NT textual scholars that this area of study lies open for further investigation and study. The Project's accomplishments were partial, but its vision was exemplary for future study of Greek lectionary manuscripts. Dr. Colwell and the scholars involved in the CLP were convinced the Greek lectionary manuscripts had not only been overlooked, but underestimated in value by the West as well.

At CSPMT we are addressing the questions raised by the CLP, some eighty years after its inception, with many of its original goals having yet been unrealized. Byzantine text studies in general have continued to languish over the years due to other priorities and interests in the field of NT-TC; but we are optimistic about the future. We are experiencing worldwide interest and appreciation of Byzantine text studies by both ecclesiastics and scholars through our website and in our other current projects and planned editions. CSPMT continues its preparations for production of a critical Greek Gospel lectionary and Byzantine NT editions, each of which will contain a complete critical apparatus with all main Byzantine MS groupings and editions represented, as well as pertinent continuous text editions for purposes of comparison.

As Carroll D. Osburn observes in the Ehrman-Holmes volume, “*A critical edition of the lectionary is greatly needed, based on full collations of all lections and direct comparisons of texts rather than variants from a printed text.*”¹⁰ This critical Greek lectionary edition would fulfill one of the primary objectives originally set out by Prof. Colwell and scholars involved with the CLP.

In conclusion, we do not view lectionary manuscripts as textually inferior in importance in their relevancy to the original or 1st text of the Greek NT. The importance and relevancy of Greek Gospel lectionary manuscripts to NT-TC cannot be overemphasized. Though much work remains regarding our projects and editions we believe through God’s grace and guidance this will come to fruition.

¹⁰ Carroll D. Osburn, “The Greek Lectionaries of the New Testament,” *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research, Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes, eds.; SD 46; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) 71.