

Give Me a Break

Scribal Segmentation in Two Uncial Manuscripts

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22 August 2012
Presented as Part of the Requirements for a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies at
Trinity Western University
Langley, British Columbia

ABSTRACT

The examination of segmentation (or “paragraphing”) of biblical manuscripts is mostly neglected within biblical studies. Most research in this field has been devoted to Old Testament manuscripts and has failed to adequately recognize the insights that can be gained from analyzing segmentation in New Testament manuscripts.

This thesis will demonstrate that the study of the New Testament can be aided by the examination of segment breaks that occur in manuscripts containing the biblical text. It first identifies possible motivations that might have led the scribes of these manuscripts to divide the biblical text where they did. These include motivations that arise from linguistic notions of a paragraph, motivations that may be related to segmentation conventions at the time of the copying of the manuscripts, and motivations that come from the practical considerations of the production of a manuscript. As an example of the insights that can be gained from the study of segmentation, the textual divisions of 1 Corinthians in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus are analyzed to determine which motivations served to influence each representative scribes’ segmentation decisions. Following this, the segmentation found in these two codices is compared, and the information gained from this comparison evaluated. We recognize that though scribes felt some freedom in their decisions to segment a text, they did so according to similar notions of topic continuity and textual structure. Additionally, scribal divisions in 1 Corinthians 3:23-4:2; 6:9-9; 9:3; 11:22; 14:1; and 14:33 are compared to modern versions of 1 Corinthians in order to contrast how the scribes who copied these passages in Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus read the texts and how they are read today. Finally, the thesis indicates how the study of segmentation can help to provide quantifiable data with which to analyze Greek language. An example is provided that determines the continuity indicated by different Greek conjunctions. All this taken together demonstrates the value in studying segmentation in New Testament manuscripts.