

Historical and Philological Correlations and the CBGM as Applied to Mark 1:1

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Abstract: This article demonstrates how the traditionally accepted philological principles of textual criticism and the editors' view of the textual history of the New Testament exert considerable control in the application of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM). The article focuses on the textual variation in Mark 1:1 (involving the words $\nu\iota\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, "Son of God") as a test case in order to probe the initial stages of the method, that is, the evaluation of so-called *pre-genealogical coherence*, followed by preliminary genealogical assessments (based on the particular editors' view of the textual history), and the construction of local stemmata. The method allows variants to be both counted and weighed in terms of their genealogical significance, depending on the overall textual relationship between the witnesses that attest them, as well as their philological nature. In regard to Mark 1:1, it is easy to explain from a palaeographical consideration, how the *nomina sacra* ($\Upsilon\Upsilon\ \Theta\Upsilon$) could have been omitted, but some scholars have expressed doubts that this would happen in a book opening. The present evaluation of *pre-genealogical coherence* shows that the shorter reading without $\nu\iota\omicron\upsilon\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ ("Son of God") has imperfect coherence—the variant is attested by a number of unrelated witnesses, and the variant has clearly emerged several times in the history of transmission, probably by accident (and several witnesses have been corrected). This evaluation and a preliminary genealogical assessment supports the longer reading in Mark 1:1.

Introduction

In 1982, Gerd Mink of the Institute for New Testament Textual Research (INTF) in Münster published his first article on a new method to survey the genealogical structure of the Greek New Testament manuscript tradition.¹ This method, now known as the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM), has been further developed and described by Mink and his colleague Klaus Wachtel.² It is currently being applied by the INTF to produce a major critical

¹ Gerd Mink, "Zur Stemmatisierung neutestamentlicher Handschriften," in *Bericht der Hermann Kunst-Stiftung zur Förderung der neutestamentlichen Textforschung für die Jahre 1979–1981* (Münster: Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung, 1982), 100–114.

² Gerd Mink, "Eine umfassende Genealogie der neutestamentlichen Überlieferung," *NTS* 39 (1993): 481–99; idem, "Editing and Genealogical Studies: The New Testament," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 15 (2000): 51–56; idem, "Was verändert sich in der Textkritik durch die Beachtung genealogischer Kohärenz?" in *Recent Developments in Textual Criticism: New Testament, other Early Christian and Jewish Literature* (ed. Wim Weren and Dietrich-Alex Koch; Assen: Royal Van

edition, the *Editio Critica Maior* (ECM), the critical text of which will form the basis for future Nestle-Aland editions. So far, the method has been thoroughly applied to the Catholic Letters.³ This has resulted in a number of changes to the critical text, which have also been incorporated in the recently published NA²⁸.⁴ In addition, textual decisions have been left open in forty-three passages (these are marked by a diamond, ◆, in NA²⁸).⁵ There is on-going work on the Gospels of Mark and John and on Acts and Revelation.

In earlier publications, I have described the method as a major methodological breakthrough further refining the so-called local-genealogical method and improving the assessment of the vast manuscript evidence to the New Testament by the use of computers and software.⁶ Further, I have described more specifically how the method can be used as a tool for explaining textual changes.⁷ However, there are also more or less outspoken critics of the method, and a number of scholars have taken an agnostic stance, not least because of the complexity of the method and the difficulty of comprehending what is going on in that black box from which appears one neat stemma of textual flow after the other.⁸ In general, the CBGM has received rather little discussion to this date, although it plays such a major role in the editorial work behind the dominating scholarly editions of the Greek New Testament, so the panel at

Gorcum, 2003), 39–68; idem, “Problems of a Highly Contaminated Tradition: The New Testament. Stemmata of Variants as a Source of a Genealogy for Witnesses,” in *Studies in Stemmatology II* (ed. Pieter van Reenen, August den Hollander, and Margot van Mulken; Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004) 13–85; idem, “Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission: The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) as a Complement and Corrective to Existing Approaches,” in *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research* (ed. Klaus Wachtel and Michael W. Holmes; TCS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 141–216; Klaus Wachtel, “Towards a Redefinition of External Criteria: The Role of Coherence in Assessing the Origin of Variants,” in *Textual Variation: Theological and Social Tendencies?* (ed. H.A.G. Houghton and D.C. Parker; Texts and Studies 3/6; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2008), 109–27; idem, “The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method: A New Way to Reconstruct the Text of the Greek New Testament,” in *Editing the Bible: The Forty Third Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto* (ed. J.S. Kloppenborg and J. Newman; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 123–38.

³ Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Gerd Mink, and Klaus Wachtel, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graecum Editio Critica Maior: Vol. 4, The Catholic Letters* (2nd rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2013).

⁴ Ibid., 35–36*. Barbara Aland et al. eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece* [Nestle-Aland] (edited by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research under the direction of Holger Strutwolf; 28th rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).

⁵ *Editio Critica Maior*, 4:37*.

⁶ Tommy Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission* (ConBNT 43; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2006), 16–17, 22–25; idem, “Criteria for Evaluating Readings in New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Questionis* (ed. Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes; 2nd ed.; NTTSD 42; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 595–607.

⁷ Idem, “The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method as a Tool for Explaining Textual Changes in the Greek New Testament,” *NovT* 57 (2015): 206–18.

⁸ Dirk Jongkind criticizes the CBGM in his two papers: “On the Nature and Limitations of the Coherence Based Genealogical Method” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SBL, San Diego, 22 November 2015); and “On the Weighing and Counting of Variants: The Coherence Based Genealogical Method. Potential Ancestors, and Statistical Significance” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SBL, Baltimore, 25 November 2013). Currently, I am aware of two doctoral students, Peter J. Gurry (Cambridge University) and Andrew Edmondson (Birmingham University), who are working on critical analyses of the CBGM.

the SBL 2015, devoted to the topic, is indeed welcome. In the following, I will try to look inside the black box of the CBGM to see in what way the method correlates with philological and historical observations.

I have previously treated examples from the Catholic Letters where the method has been thoroughly applied and the software tools are publicly available.⁹ In this article, I will focus on the first steps of its application: the evaluation of so-called pre-genealogical coherence. In regard to coherence, the method is based on the essential assumption that there is enough coherence in the textual tradition for the method to be effective, because scribes in general wanted to copy a manuscript with fidelity; primarily the scribes did not want to create new readings, although inevitably it happened.¹⁰ Thus, exemplars and copies normally have closely related texts.

The Necessity of Counting and Weighing

In a very instructive essay, “On the Types, Classification, and Presentation of Textual Variation,” Gordon Fee expressed the necessity not only of counting textual agreements as in the quantitative analysis developed by E. C. Colwell and E. W. Tune, but also weighing textual variation:

The basic problem, of course, has to do with the degree of dependence or independence two or more MSS have where they share a common variant. It is a truism of our discipline that some agreements in variation by their very nature are just as likely to be the result of independent scribal activity as others are almost impossible to explain apart from some kind of dependence on exemplars from the same family or text-type.¹¹

and

The closer MSS are to one another in actual point of origin, the closer will usually be the textual relatedness between them in *all* the classifications of variation. Therefore at the highest level of manuscript relationships ... all variants take on genetic significance. ... Until scholars work out a complete classification of variants in the manner suggested here, it is not likely that progress will be made in the writing of the history of the NT text.¹²

In my opinion, the CBGM marks a development in this direction, where variants are assigned different degrees of genealogical significance (or “connectivity” to use Mink’s term) depending on their philological nature and in relation to the witnesses that attest them—whether they are close or distant in their totality.¹³

⁹ See “Genealogical Queries 2.0,” Institute for New Testament Textual Research, released July 2013, <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/cbGM2/GenQ.html>.

¹⁰ See Mink, “Problems,” 25. See also Michael Holmes’s discussion about macrolevel stability in the textual tradition of the Gospels and Acts in “From ‘Original Text’ to ‘Initial Text,’” in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, 672–74.

¹¹ Gordon D. Fee, “On the Types, Classification, and Presentation of Textual Variation,” in *Studies in the Theory and Method of New Testament Textual Criticism* (ed. Eldon J. Epp and Gordon D. Fee; SD 45; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 67.

¹² *Ibid.*, 68.

¹³ Wachtel, “External Criteria,” 116, “The term [*connectivity*] relates to the connecting force of a variant. If we think the probability is low that a scribe could have produced a variant independently of what he found in his exemplar, the connectivity of the variant will be regarded as high. If we think the variant may have emerged from some kind of semi-conscious trivialisation [or by accident], the connectivity is low.” See also Mink, “Problems,” 28–29, 54–55; Wasserman, “Criteria,” 597.

The first step then is simply to count the agreements and differences between all the witnesses in each variation-unit where there is textual variation. Previous to that, however, a similar step is also used to eliminate from further consideration the majority of Byzantine MSS that witness to the late Byzantine text. This procedure, which does not belong to the CBGM proper, was based on a smaller selection of test passages (Teststellen) in each book as published in the *Text und Textwert* series.¹⁴

The degree of agreement between the texts, as registered in a database, is part of the *pre-genealogical coherence* of the tradition and in turn reflects the degree of probability that any single agreement between two witnesses in a certain textual variant indicates a genealogical relation between them. A weak *pre-genealogical coherence* between two witnesses attesting to a textual variant suggests that the variant reading has emerged independently in the two witnesses. In this way, shared textual variants are regarded as more or less *connective* in terms of genealogical significance.

As Fee pointed out in his essay, however, the genealogical significance of a certain variant, or its connectivity, depends not only on the degree of overall agreement between the attesting witnesses, but also on the character of the variant. Hence, variants are both weighed and counted. But counting comes first.

In the next step, local stemmata are constructed. Of course, the foundational principle for evaluating textual variants is applied as far as possible, that is, prefer the reading that best explains the rise of the others. The Alands have described the application of the principle as a “local-genealogical method,” which means that the critic should make a reconstruction of a stemma of readings for each variation-unit in the New Testament.¹⁵ In this process, the underlying database of textual agreements is utilized. For example, variants with singular or minor support are assigned to variants attested by their closest relatives as their source. Furthermore, traditional internal criteria and established views of the quality of textual witnesses are taken into account.

Pre-genealogical Coherence in Mark 1:1

I will now attempt to simulate the first steps of the process in the well-known passage in Mark 1:1, which I have evaluated according to conventional text-critical method elsewhere.¹⁶

In a publication, Clayton Croy identified as many as nine different readings in this passage. Such multiplicity, he proposed, could not be explained unless Mark circulated without any stable form of its opening words and the whole verse is the work of a later redactor (although there are no MSS that omit the whole verse).¹⁷

However, only five readings are attested in the Greek MSS.

¹⁴ Kurt Aland et al., eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments* (17 vols.; ANTF 9–11; 16–21; 26–31; 35–36; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1987–2005). For an explanation of this method, see Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (trans. E. F. Rhodes; 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leiden: Brill, 1989), 317–37; see also David Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2008), 50–51.

¹⁵ Aland and Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, 34, 291.

¹⁶ Tommy Wasserman, “The ‘Son of God’ Was in the Beginning (Mark 1:1),” *JTS* 62 (2011): 20–50.

¹⁷ N. Clayton Croy, “Where the Gospel Text Begins: A Non-Theological Interpretation of Mark 1:1,” *NovT* 43 (2001): 107–88 (the external evidence), 119–25 (Clayton’s proposal).

- a. Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (τοῦ) υἱοῦ (τοῦ) θεοῦ (⊠¹ A B D L W Δ f^{1,13} 33 579 582^c 820^c 1555^c ℳ a aur b c d f ff² l q r¹ VL9A vg sy^{p.ph.h} got sa^{mss} bo geo² aeth arab^{mss} slav Ir^{lat} Sever Cyr Ps-Ath Ps-Vic; Ambr Chrom Hier^{pt} Aug)
- b. Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (⊠* Θ 28^c 530 582* 820* 1021 1436 1555* 1692 2430 2533 l2211 sy^{pal} sa^{ms} arm geo¹ arab^{ms} Or^{gr.lat} Serap Bas CyrJ AstI Hes; Vic Hier^{pt})¹⁸
- c. Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ (28*)
- d. Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ κυρίου (1241)
- e. Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (055 752 858 1337 1506)

It is rather apparent that readings *c*, *d*, and *e* are secondary developments and can be assigned to the two main readings (*c* to *b*; *d* and *e* to *a*), and we can expect their closest relatives to be found in the respective attestation (in the case of 28, we have to do with a correction of the same MS, and we can assume that the singular reading represents a scribal mistake). It is quite apparent that we are left with two main variants (*a* and *b*).

The next thing that the ECM editors do as part of the evaluation of *pre-genealogical coherence* is to look inside each attestation to see to what degree the attesting witnesses are closely related—if their closest relatives have a different reading, then the chance is that the reading in such a manuscript is a mistake. Let us consider the manuscripts attesting to reading *b*:

⊠* Θ 28^c 530 582* 820* 1021 1436 1555* 1692 2430 2533 l2211

Since the CBGM has not yet been applied in Mark, for the purpose of my simulation, I turn to the *Text und Textwert* data for a quantitative measurement based on some two hundred test passages in the Gospel of Mark.¹⁹

In the supplementary list of manuscript relationships (*Ergänzungsliste*), we can find out which are the closest manuscripts of Codex Sinaiticus (01 ⊠) based on the test passages.²⁰ If we disregard fragmentary MSS and count only those extant in at least fifty test passages, the closest related MS within the attestation, that is, with the short reading, is Codex Θ (038) on thirteenth place, which has 37 percent of total agreement with Sinaiticus in 193 test passages.

On the other hand, the twelve closest relatives have the longer reading. On the top of the list of close relatives are: L (019) 63 percent; B (03) 61 percent; and C (04) 59 percent. These low figures in general have to do with the fact that singular readings have been counted, but perhaps also reflect a more ample textual variation in Mark than some other books. The issue of whether to include or exclude singular readings is in my opinion something to consider in the future development of CBGM. There is already an option to leave out fragments from the computing, and I would at least like to see an option to leave out singular readings as well, since they potentially distort the genealogical analysis.

Another significant observation is the fact that Codex Sinaiticus as well as several other MSS with the short reading have been corrected. In the case of Sinaiticus, it is difficult to tell whether the correction reflects a mistake in copying the exemplar or whether the correction has been made against a different exemplar. Peter Malik who has investigated the corrections

¹⁸ In his eight edition (1869) of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Tischendorf cites the minuscule 255. The reference is unclear. Alexander Globe suggests that this is in fact 1555. See Alexander Globe, “The Caesarean Omission of the Phrase ‘Son of God’ in Mark 1:1,” *HTR* 75 (1982): 209–18, 214 n. 15.

¹⁹ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments: 4.1. Die Synoptischen Evangelien; Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; ANTF 26–27; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998).

²⁰ Aland and Aland, *Text und Textwert*, *1 (*Ergänzungsliste*).

of Sinaiticus in Mark suggests that either the original scribe (scribe A) or, more likely, a later scribe (scribe D) is responsible for this correction.²¹ He concludes that merely five corrections (Mark 1:1; 12:20b; 13:3; 14:22, 33) out of fifty in total were possibly made toward another exemplar, and, in my opinion, it is of course impossible to say anything about the textual character of such a hypothetical exemplar based on merely five corrections, three of which are even shared by the majority text (1:1; 12:20b; 14:33).²²

I will not go into detail concerning Malik's proposal that the correction in Mark 1:1 was made against another exemplar, other than to say that I draw a different conclusion from the data he assembled, which I think supports an accidental omission at this point. In fact, Malik presents positive evidence that the scribe not only made errors in book openings (four times), but even misread a *nomen sacrum* in 1 Cor 1:1 before making a correction.²³ This is indeed unexpected—after all, there are not many book openings with *nomina sacra* in the New Testament to misread.²⁴ More significantly, this scribe omits about 4 percent of all *nomina sacra* according to Dirk Jongkind's sample in eight biblical books (1 Chronicles, Psalms, Paul's letters, and Luke).²⁵

The next MS in the attestation of the short reading is Codex Θ (038), which has been classified as "Caesarean" in Mark. Hence, Alexander Globe spoke of the short reading as "a Caesarean omission."²⁶ This label for the short reading in Mark 1:1, however, is very misleading, not only for the fact that the "Caesarean" text type has disintegrated but the witnesses that have previously been assigned to this text-type (e.g., Θ 28 565 700 f¹⁻¹³ arm geo sy^{pal} Serap CyrJ) are divided in this variation-unit.²⁷

The closest MS of Θ (038) in Mark is 565 with 64 percent agreement (125/195).²⁸ Significantly, there is then a gap between it and the second closest MS, 700 with 51 percent agreement. The third is 2542 (50 percent). They all attest to the longer reading. The first MS within the

²¹ Peter Malik, "The Earliest Corrections in Codex Sinaiticus: A Test Case from the Gospel of Mark," *BASP* 50 (2013): 214.

²² Malik, "Earliest Corrections," 214, 238, 252. Malik finds it "noteworthy indeed" that these five corrections all agree with Codex Vaticanus (*ibid.*, 252). However, four of them are apparently shared with several other textual witnesses including Codex Bezae. A more extensive examination of the corrections in Sinaiticus would be a worthwhile topic for a doctoral dissertation.

²³ *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁴ In regard to Mark 1:1, Malik argues that the "Scribe A does not drop *nomina sacra* frequently" (apparently, only about one out of thirty times; but I wonder which scribe beats that?), and then he continues, "accidental omission in general (let alone the omission of *nomina sacra*) in the book openings is unattested in Sinaiticus" (*ibid.*, 218). I have to ask, compared to what? I find it more significant that the scribe made four singular errors in opening verses of biblical books in Sinaiticus, one of which actually involves a *nomen sacrum*, which the scribe first copied as something else before he corrected himself (1 Cor 1:1). In my opinion, the general scribal habits of Sinaiticus (the knowledge of the document) suggests that the omission in Mark 1:1 was a scribal mistake.

²⁵ Dirk Jongkind, *Scribal Habits of Codex Sinaiticus* (TS 5; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 151–52, 157–58, 176–77, 180–82, 199–200, 206–7, 208–9, 217–18, 227–28, and 237–38. See also Malik, "Earliest Corrections," 217 n. 45.

²⁶ Globe, "Caesarean Omission."

²⁷ See Globe, "Caesarean Omission," 216. I have excluded Origen who apparently used the same text before he moved to Caesarea. For the disintegration of the "Caesarean text," see Tommy Wasserman, "P45 and Codex W in Mark Revisited," in *Mark, Manuscripts, and Monotheism: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado* (ed. Chris Keith and Dieter T. Roth; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 130–56 (esp. 131–35). See Eldon J. Epp, "Textual Clusters: Their Past and Future in New Testament Textual Criticism," in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, 542–43.

²⁸ Aland and Aland, *Text und Textwert*, *5 (*Ergänzungsliste*).

attestation (reading *b*) is minuscule 28 in nineteenth place with 44 percent agreement. At the same time, this MS has majority text readings in 43 percent of its text (85/196). In other words, this MS, has no close relatives whatsoever within the attestation, and its closest ally by far, 565, has the long reading.

We move on to the next witness, which is the corrected text of minuscule 28.²⁹ The supplementary list in *Text und Textwert* for this witness includes 142 witnesses, none of which has the short reading. The closest relatives (excluding fragments) are: 2175 (68 percent); 788 and 2119 (62 percent). Apparently, this scribe misread his or her exemplar in the first verse of Mark omitting Χριστοῦ (χῠ) by accident due to *homoioteleuton*.³⁰ The MS was subsequently corrected supralinearly. We cannot be certain what the exemplar of minuscule 28 read. Many of the corrections seem to have been made against another MS, which possibly had the short reading here.³¹ However, the original reading in this case is clearly the result of a mistake, the correction of which could have been made against the same exemplar, which most probably had the long reading.

The fourth and final MS with the short reading that is included in the supplementary list is 1555.³² In his discussion of Mark 1:1, Bart Ehrman characterizes this MS, whose first hand attests to the short reading, as “an essentially Western text,” referring to Alexander Globe.³³ That is a misleading statement ultimately derived from Von Soden’s erroneous classification; in fact 1555 is essentially a Byzantine witness attesting to the majority text in ca. 88 percent of the test passages in Mark.³⁴ Of the 155 witnesses starting with 2586 (94 percent), 1301 (88 percent), 164 and 1118 (87 percent), none attests to the short reading. In addition, the MS was corrected to the long reading.

What about the remaining nine MSS in the attestation, 530 582* 820* 1021 1436 1692 2430 2533 12211? They were not included in the supplementary list because they align with the Byzantine majority text in at least 90 percent of the test passages. Hence, there is a very high probability that the short reading in these witnesses is derived from the long reading as a result of a haplography.³⁵

Apparently unaware of this evidence from *Text und Textwert*, a largely ignored resource in general, a number of scholars like Jan Slomp, Peter Head, Bart Ehrman, and Adela Collins have pointed to the unlikelihood of an accidental omission in the opening words of a work

²⁹ Aland and Aland, *Text und Textwert*, *9 (*Ergänzungsliste*).

³⁰ Clayton’s question how the short reading, Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ could have arisen, if the reading Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is original completely disregards the apparent scribal error and subsequent correction in 28 (“Gospel Text,” 109).

³¹ My examination of the minuscule shows that the corrections of small words in 28 are often made through interlinear insertion, whereas larger corrections appear in the margin.

³² Aland and Aland, *Text und Textwert*, *44 (*Ergänzungsliste*).

³³ Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 85. The characterization is ultimately based on von Soden’s flawed classifications, repeated by Globe, “Caesarean Omission,” 216, and, more recently, Collins, “Establishing the Text,” 118.

³⁴ The MS 1555 may attest to some sporadic Western readings here and there (though not in Mark 1:1), but in Mark as a whole it attests to the majority text in 175 of 196 test passages (ca. 88 percent). See Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, eds., *Text und Textwert der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments: 4.1. Die Synoptischen Evangelien; Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; ANTF 26–27; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 2:509–10.

³⁵ The exemplar of these witnesses had a series of six genitives with the -ou ending or, more probably, a series of four *nomina sacra*: ἰῠ χῠ ῠῠ θῠ, either of which could easily lead to an oversight in copying due to *homoioteleuton* on the part of the scribes.

(in this case even involving *nomina sacra*).³⁶ Instead, they suggest that the divine name was expanded at some point. Recently, Michael Holmes has adopted this reading in the SBLGNT, probably for the same reason. For Bart Ehrman, for example, the expansion is a major example of orthodox corruption in order to circumvent an adoptionistic reading of the inaugurating event of baptism, making “a slight modification of Mark’s opening words, so that now they affirm Jesus’ status as the Son of God prior to his baptism.”³⁷

Ehrman does not think it is possible to explain the shorter reading as an accident:

For then the omission would have had to have been made independently by several scribes, in precisely the same way. The explanation is rendered yet more difficult by the circumstance that the same error, so far as our evidence suggests, was not made by later scribes of the Byzantine tradition, many of whom are not known for their overly scrupulous habits of transcription.³⁸

We may now turn this argument the other way around, since there is positive evidence of multiple accidental omissions in Mark 1:1 in the textual tradition.

Our local stemma for this variation-unit in Mark 1:1, so far based on *pre-genealogical evidence*, can be represented by figure 1, as long as we do not decide whether reading *a* or *b* is the *Ausgangstext* (note that we are now making genealogical decisions for the first time):

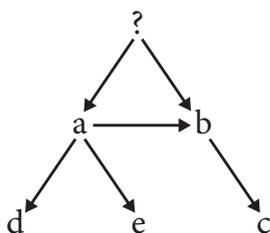


Figure 1: Local Stemma in Mark 1:1

If we were to prefer reading *b*, the shorter variant, as the initial text (A), then it would have multiple sources. At least in the Byzantine witnesses, reading *b* is very likely derived from reading *a* due to a scribal error (and in a number of witnesses it is corrected to the long reading, which is another indication of scribal error—a philological correlation of an incoherent attestation). Paradoxically, then, these particular witnesses to the short reading are in fact witnesses against it in light of transcriptional probability based on *pre-genealogical evidence*.³⁹

The question is whether the attestation of reading *b* in the four non-Byzantine witnesses is also derived from reading *a* (and not the *Ausgangstext*).

⌘* ⊕ 28^c 1555*

Minuscule 1555 is a mixed witness, close to the Byzantine majority, and, consequently it has hundreds of close relatives in attestation *a*. In addition, it has been corrected in Mark 1:1. The other three witnesses are distant from each other, and all their closest relatives attest to reading *a*. Two of them have been corrected. On the other hand, their top ranked closest potential an-

³⁶ Slomp, “Are the Words,” 148; Head, “Text-Critical Study,” 629; Ehrman, “The Text,” 150; idem, *Orthodox Corruption*, 86. The argument is apparently also decisive for Yarbrow Collins: “The reading [‘Son of God’] ... is most likely secondary, because an accidental omission in the opening words of a work is unlikely” (*Mark: A Commentary*, 130).

³⁷ Ehrman, *Orthodox Corruption*, 88.

³⁸ Ibid., 86.

³⁹ See my proposed new criterion relating to transcriptional probability: “A reading with imperfect genealogical coherency among its attesting witnesses is more likely the creation of scribes, since it seems to have arisen several times in the tradition by coincidence” (Wasserman, “Criteria,” 606).

cestors are not as close—the extant manuscript tradition is not as rich for these stages of texts, so the results are somewhat less certain for these three witnesses.

Nevertheless, we can see already at this stage that the attestation *b* lacks coherence and reflects coincidental multiple emergences, which are signs of posteriority. This does not mean that reading *b* cannot represent the initial text. On the other hand, we can assume that reading *a*, with its broad attestation, has very good, if not perfect coherence.

Genealogical Assessment of Mark 1:1

So far we have only looked at the coherence in the attestations based on quantitative data (*pre-genealogical evidence*). In the next phase, the editors of the ECM take into account “a preliminary distinction of text-historically important Greek witnesses.”⁴⁰ I have expressed a desire for more transparency in this area. Thus, I posed the following question in my chapter in *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research*, implying that this has so far been a black box of the method:

Further, there is a need to evaluate which role the traditional external criteria play in the initial stage of the procedure, not only in the prior exclusion of a large number of MSS applying the quantitative analysis (*Teststellen* method), but also when local stemmata of the selected MSS are drawn up in light of “pre-genealogical evidence.” Whereas the initial calculation of textual agreements among witnesses is uncontroversial, scholars may have different opinions about the assessment of the character of the textual witnesses in the initial stages.⁴¹

In regard to the editorial work on Acts, Klaus Wachtel has recently presented more details about this side of the initial stage of the CBGM. He lists the following “reference values” for a preliminary rating of witnesses:

- Rate of agreement with the initial text according to UBSGNT₃₋₅ and NA²⁶⁻²⁸;
- Rate of agreement with the majority text;
- Affiliation to “Western” witnesses.⁴²

Wachtel suggests that the *pre-genealogical coherence* is “independent of any subjective element. It is based on the degree of agreement between witnesses.”⁴³ I agree that the quantitative data is objective, but these particular reference values used to rate the witnesses in the initial phase (where decisions are made in most variant passages) do seem to involve a subjective genealogical assessment, and, in fact, they relate to the traditional scheme of text types, which apparently still plays a certain role. As soon as these “reference values” affect the first local stemma, the editors introduce genealogical evidence, which generates new genealogical evidence (a ratio of prior and posterior readings for each witness resulting in a textual flow be-

⁴⁰ Klaus Wachtel, “Constructing Local Stemmata for the Editio Critica Maior of Acts” (paper presented at the 69th General Meeting of *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* in Szeged, 8 August 2014), 3; See Mink, “Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence,” 161: “When in the initial phase of the editing process the local stemmata of variants are constructed for the first time ... [t]he editor will bring along ideas about the value of certain witnesses, some of them well founded, others less so.”

⁴¹ Wasserman, “Criteria,” 606.

⁴² Wachtel, “Constructing Local Stemmata,” 3–4. Indirectly, age is also an important factor, since the text of NA²⁶/UBSGNT 3 was “reconstructed afresh, based above all on a selection of the oldest manuscripts. In many cases the papyri played a decisive role. Hence the resulting text form represents, although by no means without controversy, the state of the art after the discovery and appraisal of the extensive papyrus finds of the 20th century” (*ibid.*, 3).

⁴³ Klaus Wachtel, “The Coherence Method and History,” *TC* 20 (2015): 3.

tween any other witnesses in one of two directions). Thus, there is a preliminary genealogical assessment, based on “reference values,” that precedes and parallels the *genealogical coherence* generated successively by decisions in local stemmata. One of Wachtel’s “rules for the assessment of variants” in Acts reflects this combination:

A strong argument for assessing a variant as initial text is provided by an attestation which combines coherence and a broad range of witnesses closely related to A. Ideally such an attestation comprises, apart from witnesses from the 4th–5th centuries, one or more papyri, representatives of the “Western” text and Byzantine witnesses which are usually found at the top of larger strands of transmission in textflow diagrams.⁴⁴

If we apply this particular rule to Mark 1:1, we note that several witnesses to the long reading date to the fourth–fifth centuries. There are representatives of the “Western” text and most Byzantine witnesses. Further, we can be entirely certain that a broad range of witnesses are closely related to the *Ausgangstext* in the whole Gospel of Mark.

On the other hand, the best manuscript witnesses to the short reading are Ⲙ* Θ 28^c 1555*. Given that these witnesses are not closely related to each other, one is tempted to think that this is a “wide” attestation, suggesting that the reading is ancient, but here is neither coherence, nor a broad range of witnesses closely related to the *Ausgangstext*.

In this connection, however, we must note that a significant early papyrus amulet from Oxyrhynchus that attests to the short reading has been published—P. Oxy. 76.5073 (dated to the late third or early fourth century).⁴⁵ We cannot say much about the textual character of this fragment, but it is indeed an important witness by virtue of its age, although it is not part of a continuous text manuscript (on the other hand, there are some other papyrus amulets that attest to the long reading) and therefore will not be included in the standard text-critical editions according to current practice. In the text-critical evaluation of an individual passage, however, an early fragment like this can and should be included.⁴⁶

Further, if we turn to patristic and versional evidence, both readings have early and diverse support.⁴⁷ The CBGM allows the editor to take into account all classes of external evidence, as well as internal evidence (intrinsic and transcriptional evidence) when drawing up any local stemma.⁴⁸

The CBGM as an Iterative Process

An initial set of local stemmata for Mark, or any other book, will be drawn up with differing degrees of certainty; in some cases the stemmata will be preliminary, and in a few cases it may not be possible to determine the source variant. On the other hand, most of the passages in this initial set of local stemmata will be assessed with relative certainty, and the results of the first phase will generate genealogical data to be used in a second phase in order to confirm or revise preliminary decisions and to solve the more complex cases in an iterative process. The

⁴⁴ Wachtel, “Constructing Local Stemmata,” 5.

⁴⁵ *Editio princeps*: G. S. Smith and A. E. Bernhard, “Mark I 1–2: Amulet,” in *Oxyrhynchus Papyri LXXVI* (ed. D. Colomo and J. Chapa; Graeco-Roman Memoirs 97; London 2011), 19–23 (no 5073 and plate 1).

⁴⁶ For a fuller discussion of P. Oxy. 76.5073 and other amulets containing Mark 1:1, see Wasserman, “Son of God,” 23–25.

⁴⁷ Wasserman, “Son of God,” 26–39.

⁴⁸ Thus, Eldon Epp, “Textual Clusters,” 564–65, is only partly correct in his critique of the CBGM that the method only accommodates continuous Greek MSS and that other classes of evidence disappear from the radar screen.

variation-unit in Mark 1:1 is definitely a complex case, where other classes of evidence than the Greek continuous-text MSS must be taken into account.

If we turn to Acts, where the method has recently been applied, Wachtel reports that there are 7,638 variant passages in Acts among the included witnesses in the ECM of Acts.⁴⁹ In the first stage, decisions were made in no less than 7,213 passages (ca. 94 percent) based on *pre-genealogical evidence*, whereas merely 425 passages (ca. 6 percent) were left to the second phase where *genealogical evidence* will be taken into account.⁵⁰

Conclusions

I have discussed a well-known textual problem in Mark 1:1 and used it as a test case to evaluate the initial stages of the CBGM, in particular the evaluation and use of *pre-genealogical coherence* as a preparation for drawing up a local stemma, in order to see how the method and its results can be correlated to historical and philological observations.

My review of the *pre-genealogical coherence* of the Greek MSS in Mark 1:1, based on the quantitative data published in *Text und Textwert*, shows that the shorter reading without $\nu\iota\omicron\upsilon\theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ (“Son of God”) has imperfect coherence—the reading has apparently emerged several times in the textual tradition due to accidental omissions. This has most likely happened in a number of Byzantine witnesses whose closest potential ancestors have the long reading. In light of the strong indication that some witnesses reflect a haplography, the connectivity of the variant is low.

It is more difficult to determine whether the words “Son of God” (written as $\Upsilon\Upsilon\Theta\Upsilon$) were accidentally omitted by the original scribe of Codex Sinaiticus (01 \aleph), the most important textual witness of the shorter reading. Nevertheless, an examination of the scribal habits shows that this scribe frequently made mistakes when copying *nomina sacra*; there is even evidence of such an error in another book opening.

I have not been able to evaluate the *genealogical coherence* in Mark 1:1 since the CBGM has not yet been applied to the Gospel of Mark. On the other hand, it is possible to make a preliminary genealogical assessment, based on traditional text-critical principles and the dominant view of the history of the text. My assessment of the manuscript evidence favours the long reading, attested by a broad range of witnesses, which will be closely related to the *Ausgangstext* in the whole Gospel of Mark.

On the other hand, a recently discovered papyrus amulet attesting to the short reading (P. Oxy 76.5073) and patristic and versional evidence show that both readings are early and widespread. In the CBGM, these classes of evidence can be taken into account in the construction of local stemmata. It is quite likely that this complex variation-unit in Mark 1:1 will be left to a later phase when more genealogical data becomes available.

As seen in the case of Acts, a great majority of the decisions in local stemmata will be based on *pre-genealogical evidence* and traditional text-critical criteria, which will generate an overall genealogical hypothesis—a global stemma for Mark. This overall hypothesis will be used to inform and control the decisions in the remaining difficult passages to see if the local stemma in an individual variation-unit is coherent with the accumulated genealogical data for the book or corpus.

Thus, in my opinion, the traditionally accepted philological principles of textual criticism and the dominant view of the textual history of the New Testament exert considerable control in the application of the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method.

⁴⁹ Wachtel, “Constructing Local Stemmata,” 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 6. The results of the second phase have not been made public.