

K. Wachtel and M.W. Holmes (eds.), *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research*, Text-critical Studies 8; Atlanta: SBL, 2011. Pp. viii + 226. ISBN 978-1-58983-624-2 Paperback, € 29.95 / \$ 34.95.

- [1] Slightly more than half of this book contains invited papers presented on the first day of a colloquium by the same name held at Münster in 2008. The rest of the book is a long introduction to the Coherence-based Genealogical Method (CBGM) written by its developer Gerd Mink, which occupied the second day of the colloquium. The impetus for the event came from the editors of the *Editio Critica Maior* (ECM). After the appearance of the final instalment of the Catholic Letters, a textual commentary was planned which would review all of the editorial decisions using the CBGM. As Wachtel and Holmes explain in the introduction to the book, ‘it seemed a propitious time to discuss the ECM’s achievements, its methods, and associated questions with interested partners and colleagues’ (2).
- [2] A particularly helpful feature of the introduction is the discussion of the term ‘initial text’. In response to theoretical concerns, raised by D.C Parker (*The Living Text of the Gospels*, 1997) and E.J. Epp (‘The multivalence of the term “original text”’, 1999), about the use of the term ‘original text’ in relation to the goal of the discipline, Mink and the ECM distinguish between the ‘authorial text’ (the original text as composed by the author), the ‘initial text’ (*Ausgangstext*), and the archetype (the MS, lost or extant, from which the MS tradition descends). Mink defines the initial text as an ‘hypothetical, reconstructed text, as it presumably existed, according to the hypothesis, before the beginning of its copying’ (6). The gap between the authorial and archetypal texts is the initial transmission phase during which the text underwent editorial changes such as the introduction of *nomina sacra* and the addition of titles for books. Thus, in reconstructing the hypothetical initial text the aim is to ‘get closer to the authorial text than the archetype’ (7).
- [3] Such definitions allow D.C. Parker (‘Is “living text” compatible with “initial text”?’ Editing the Gospel of John’) to work collaboratively on the ECM Gospel of John (see also Klaus Wachtel, ‘Conclusions’, 219). For Parker, the initial text ‘is *not* an authorial text’ and the relationship between the two ‘is outside the editor’s remit’ (15). The reasons given for this remain the same as those outlined in *Living Text*, orality and textual fluidity, a living textual tradition. Indeed, since the manuscript evidence is largely third-century or later, the initial text might even be associated with second-century collected editions of the gospels or Pauline letters. The CBGM can take us back to the initial text, but is unable to bridge the gulf to the authorial text. Whether that might be accomplished by exegetical consideration of authorial style, thought, and text, in tandem with conjectural emendation, is a question that Parker leaves open.
- [4] In contrast, Holger Strutwolf (‘Original text and textual history’) defends the traditional goal of the discipline. In examining Luke’s version of the Lord’s prayer (11:2-3), he argues that the quest for the original (or authorial) text is not obsolete but required, if the textual history – including the social and theological reasons for the rise of variants – of these verses is to be understood. Along similar lines, he questions William Petersen’s preference (in ‘What text can New Testament textual criticism ultimately reach?’, 1994) for Justin’s version of the saying about the exclusive goodness of God (Matt. 19:16-17 par.). Instead of a

pre-canonical text-form, Justin drew on an harmonised ‘school’ text, in the form of a collection of proof-texts derived from a canonical four gospel collection. It might, however, have been better to draw rein just short of that conclusion. That is, to say only that Justin drew on what were well on the way to becoming canonical gospels. In any case, Strutwolf holds to the plausible line that where there is no evidence for a radical break in transmission ‘between the author’s text and the initial text, the best hypothesis concerning the original text still remains the reconstructed archetype’ to which the manuscripts, translations, and citations point (41).

- [5] Two papers discuss the making of critical editions. David Trobisch (‘The need to discern distinctive editions of the New Testament in the manuscript tradition’) argues that printed critical editions need to broaden their focus from just or primarily the initial text to include documentation of distinctive textual and non-textual (palaeographical and codicological) features. This is certainly desirable, particularly as regards the gospels, although the challenge remains of how to incorporate all of these things into an edition. It might be better done, for example, in an update to the Alands’ handbook. Apropos of this, while attribution of specific features to author, reader, scribe, editor, or publisher, may sometimes be possible (especially in the case of scribes), often it will not. While there is no doubt that documentation of the oldest identifiable editions of collection units would also be valuable, the further suggestion that a critical edition should try to ‘provide pertinent information needed to reconstruct the text in its earliest published form, the *editio princeps*’ (47) is probably not attainable, at least on the basis of the manuscript evidence currently available.
- [6] Like Trobisch, J.K. Elliott (‘What should be in an *apparatus criticus*? Desiderata to support a thoroughgoing eclectic approach to textual criticism’) notes that an electronic critical edition with an exhaustive apparatus, including orthographical and grammatical variation and covering the whole NT, is now a distinct possibility. Most importantly, for Elliott’s purposes, such an edition would support a thorough-going eclectic approach to textual criticism. He provides a number of examples of variants with weak attestation which qualify, on the basis of internal criteria, as ‘original’. The methodology is straightforward: when a variant disagrees with an author’s usual practice, particularly when it can be explained text-critically, it is unlikely to be original. While new variants brought to light by an exhaustive apparatus may sometimes undermine such argumentation, Elliott argues that it is more likely that readings with little manuscript support will be ‘strengthened by the addition of further witnesses’ (135). In addition to continuous manuscripts, versions, lectionaries, and citations, he suggests that non-continuous texts, references in the Apostolic Fathers, and citations and allusions in non-canonical gospels might also be included, with appropriate qualifications, in such an apparatus.
- [7] Ulrich Schmid (‘Conceptualizing “scribal” performances: reader’s notes’) concurs with the idea that scribes were copyists (Colwell, Royse, B. Aland, Min) rather than interpreters (Epp, Ehrman). By differentiating scribal (copying or transcribing an exemplar) from non-scribal activities (reader’s annotations or comments) he can locate variants that are clearly not the result of copying in the non-scribal realm; that is, at a post-copying stage. Schmid defines reader’s notes as marginal or interlinear notes written in a ‘more informal type of script’ than the main text (55). The motivating reasons for such notes are varied. Since human error impacted the copying process, readers often made corrections.

Marginal notes were then likely to be incorporated into the main text by undiscerning scribes. A perceived lack in the text could also provide the initial impetus for a note. For example, an addition ('and she ran forward to touch him') in some Greek, Latin, and Syriac manuscripts, which provides an explanatory bridge between vv. 16 and 17 of John 20, might have started life in a margin. Conversely, other incorporated marginal notes might be identified because, although intended to clarify something in the text, in context they are somewhat dissonant (e.g., the long addition, under the influence of John 19:34, at Matt. 27:49). Still others may make perfect sense in context, but poor attestation could point to a marginal origin.

[8] Michael Holmes ('Working with an open textual tradition: challenges in theory and practice') discusses the problems resulting from cross-fertilization or mixture in what he terms an 'open' manuscript tradition. Rather than each manuscript descending from one exemplar, as in a closed tradition, in an open tradition the contents of at least some manuscripts 'derive from two or more sources'; that is, transmission 'is both vertical and horizontal' (67). As a result, the classical method of *recensio*, which works backwards from later to earlier witnesses via shared errors, cannot be applied. Both 'the lines of descent and the direction of descent are obscured' (73). Associated problems include: (a) difficulty in determining whether agreements in error are significant or accidental; (b) the date of a manuscript is of lesser importance, since the text may be much older than the manuscript; and (c) an appeal to the best tradition/manuscripts falters because at any point a reading may be secondary. Holmes does not mention that all three points, the last two in particular, would seem to support thorough-going eclecticism. Instead, he observes that reasoned eclecticism, which takes a local-genealogical approach to each individual variation unit rather than the whole tradition, attempts to overcome these problems by using historical data and insight. When these fail because the textual data is indecisive, one must fall back on a favoured textual tradition. It might be added that age does matter, not to mention the scribal character of a manuscript. An early manuscript is closer to the source, and when that manuscript exhibits a strict or normal approach to copying, it is more likely to have reproduced its exemplar with some accuracy.

[9] Although the concept of text-types has become problematic, Eldon Epp ('Traditional "canons" of New Testament textual criticism: their value, validity, and viability—or lack thereof') argues that manuscripts can be grouped into textual clusters using shared readings 'and the results assist in determining the priority of readings' (87). He provides a provisional list of internal and external criteria or probabilities which is cognizant of the history of the discipline and responsive to recent developments. The list is arranged in three, rather than the usual two, categories. Category A contains only one criterion – the variant explaining all others has priority – because both external (Category B) and internal (Category C) evidence 'can be subsumed under' it (95). There is an additional self-evident external criterion: the variant supported by two or more external criteria has greater weight. Under internal criteria, he offers a compromise criterion for the shorter/longer dilemma: depending on circumstances, either the shorter/shortest or the longer/longest reading may have priority. Despite the accumulation of evidence that suggests that scribes tended to omit more text than they added, he thinks the discipline is not ready to adopt a *lectio longior potior* criterion. A similar Attic/Koine compromise is also

proffered. Finally, in a nuanced statement of the tasks and goal(s) of textual criticism, he concludes that the criteria should enable the search for the earliest attainable text while mining other meaningful variants for insights into the early Christian world.

- [10] Space and current commitments do not permit a comprehensive review of Gerd Mink's demanding paper, 'Contamination, coherence, and coincidence in textual transmission: the coherence-based genealogical method (CBGM) as a complement and corrective to existing approaches'. That would require digestion of his 'Introductory Presentation', a nearly 600-page PDF tutorial (available at [http://egora.uni-muenster.de/intf/service/downloads\\_en.shtml](http://egora.uni-muenster.de/intf/service/downloads_en.shtml)), as well as familiarity with Genealogical Queries, five web-based modules that facilitate investigation of genealogical relationships in the NT textual tradition (also available at the INTF website). It will suffice to make several cautious observations as suggested by a first encounter with the CBGM.
- [11] At the beginning of the process, internal and external criteria are applied cautiously. Both may or will need to be revised in light of the overall picture produced by the CBGM. Reasoned eclecticism cannot provide such a picture, so circularity – good witnesses contain good readings, while good readings come from good witnesses – associated with the traditional text-type approach is counteracted. This represents a vote of no confidence in one of the established bases of reasoned eclecticism (the 'traditional text-type approach, in particular, should be avoided' [148]). However, the result is not thorough-going eclecticism, but a focus on the genealogical structures that emerge, including the relationships between individual witnesses and their places in transmission history.
- [12] With so many manuscripts lost, the bulk of the witnesses come from the second millennium. Importantly, the word 'witness' is defined as 'text' only and not 'manuscript'. In the case of the Catholic Letters, the witnesses used are restricted, using *Text und Textwert* (vol. 1) and K. Wachtel, *Der byzantinische Text der katholischen Briefe* (1995), to those at some distance from the majority text (plus a modicum of Byzantine witnesses). Thus, while the focus is the textual history of the first millennium, older variants must be traced in later witnesses. So the genesis of the CBGM is in previous INTF work on the later (i.e., second millennium) not the earlier (i.e., first millennium) witnesses. From this perspective, the textual evidence takes on a coherence that a point of departure in the earlier textual evidence could not afford. But there is no other way for every witness to be taken into account.
- [13] The result is that quite reasonable basic assumptions (151-5), from the perspective of the later evidence, are stated too positively, from the perspective of the earlier evidence. The following justification is offered for the discrepancies. 'It is a consequence of the loss of so many links between surviving witnesses that they appear to be heavily contaminated. The larger the distance from the Byzantine text the more links are missing. For the witnesses traditionally labelled "Alexandrian" this is true for virtually all the links. Even if contamination is progressing at a low level from copy to copy, the resulting contamination may be considerable after some time. Consequently, it appears to have been much stronger than it actually was historically, especially if most of the manuscripts are lost' (155).
- [14] This conclusion would be impossible had the method worked forward from the earlier evidence instead of backwards from the later (something often lamented

in the past). Another sadly familiar tune is the focus on text to the detriment of the vehicle that carries it. In this connection, there is the question of whether a text-only approach can account for the scribal, palaeographical, and codicological characteristics of the Bodmer and Beatty papyri. For example, the basic assumptions overlook what is happening in the early papyri in terms of deliberate scribal change. This results in an overly optimistic view of singulars: ‘the absence of all very closely related potential ancestors [...] is probably the reason why peculiar variants have no further attestation’ (157).

- [15] There is no doubt that the CBGM is an exciting and stimulating development. But it would appear ill-equipped to do justice to the earlier evidence. Moreover, the focus on text rather than manuscript and text means that it cannot answer traditional questions, as put by Holmes, about contamination or ‘mixture’ (see Wachtel, ‘Conclusions’, 222). Is there block mixture because the scribe alternated between exemplars, or simultaneous mixture because two manuscripts were continuously consulted while copying, or incidental mixture resulting from correction against a second exemplar? There is a sense that the limitations of the textual evidence have led to an inevitable methodological ‘solution’, but one that may not entirely satisfy the next generation of textual critics.

*Scott Charlesworth*  
*Pacific Adventist University, Papua New Guinea*

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