The CBGM in Theory and Practice

The previous chapter has traced the development and reception of the CBGM from its beginnings in the 1980s up through its mature use in the ECM2. By the time this second edition was published in 2013, the CBGM had become indispensable to the editors. This rising prominence gave rise to the need to explain the method to those outside of Münster. But unfortunately, through a combination of the method’s own complexity and the density of some of Mink’s most important essays, these explanations have not always succeeded in clarifying the method. The result has been that even seasoned textual critics have struggled to understand it properly. As others have noted, the CBGM is not easy to explain briefly. Nevertheless, the method must be understood correctly in order to evaluate it. To that end, this chapter aims to do the seemingly impossible: explain the CBGM clearly but also thoroughly and accurately. Such an explanation will prepare the way for our own evaluation and may even prove useful to those put off by the method’s complexity. A burden in this chapter is to present the method at its very best in an effort to discourage bias. In that vein, the reader is reminded that description should not be taken as endorsement in this chapter.

The chapter unfolds in two parts. The first part describes the principles and procedures of the method. Here we consider what assumptions ground the method, what the different types of coherence are and how they function, what the three types of stemmata are, and how and why textual flow diagrams are used for investigating genealogical coherence. This section is the more abstract of the two and may, for that reason, require more effort on the part of the reader. But grasping these features of the method is key to understanding how it works and how it has been used to edit the New Testament text. The second part of the chapter turns from a description of the method to its application in the Catholic Epistles. In this section, we consider how the CBGM has changed

the editors’ practice of reasoned eclecticism and how this has affected specific textual decisions. We discuss four examples where the editors have changed previous decisions as a direct result of their use of the CBGM. Such cases illustrate how the CBGM comes to bear on actual textual variants and, in lieu of the once-promised textual commentary on the ECM, they provide a small window on the CBGM’s influence on the text of our critical editions.

1 Understanding the CBGM

1.1 Basic Principles

1.1.1 Purpose

The CBGM is first and foremost a genealogical method and so it shares similar goals with other such methods. These goals are to help elucidate the development of a textual tradition and to help reconstruct the starting point of that development. The importance of genealogy for reconstructing the text of the New Testament is well captured by Westcott and Hort in their second principle of textual criticism: “ALL TRUSTWORTHY RESTORATION OF CORRUPTED TEXTS IS FOUND UPON THE STUDY OF THEIR HISTORY, that is, of the relations of descent or affinity which connect the several documents.”

In a tradition where each witness has been copied from a single exemplar, reconstructing manuscript relationships can be achieved by careful observation of what are known as “indicative errors,” the principle being that agreement in such error implies agreement in origin. The problem for the New Testament, as Westcott and Hort knew well, is that its manuscripts were not always copied from a single exemplar. The result is a significant amount of mixture or

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2 The exact nature of this “starting point” will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. For now, readers are reminded that the starting point achieved by traditional stemmatics is not necessarily the author’s original text. See Paul Maas, Textual Criticism, trans. Barbara Flower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 2–3; Günther Zuntz, The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum, Schweich Lectures (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 14.

3 B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, The New Testament in the Original Greek: Introduction, Appendix, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1896), 40; emphasis original. Although Hort is known to have penned this introduction, I refer to both authors throughout in order to reflect Hort’s concern that Westcott’s contribution to their thinking be represented (see ibid., 18).

4 Maas, Textual Criticism, 42. For the most up-to-date introduction to this method, see Paolo Trovato, Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lachmann’s Method: A Non-Standard Handbook of Genealogical Textual Criticism in the Age of Post-Structuralism, Cladistics, and Copy-Text, Storie e linguaggi (Padova: Libreriauniversitaria.it, 2014).