

## THE HISTORIC PRESENT AS A DISCOURSE MARKER AND TEXTUAL CRITICISM IN MARK

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### I. Introduction

Mark often uses the present finite form when the aorist or the imperfect finite form is expected. Scholars call such a usage of the present form “the historic present.”<sup>1</sup> F. Neiryck observed 150 instances of the historic present in Mark (Neiryck 1974, 224-27). From J. C. Hawkins’s list of 151 instances of the historic present (1899, 114-18), Neiryck removed Mark 6.45 which Hawkins himself doubted (Neiryck 1974, 226). In Mark 6.45, the present form ἀπολύει is attested in  $\aleph$  B D L  $\Delta$   $f^1$  892\*. 2427. 2542, but it may not be original. In Mark 6.10; 9.1; 12.36; 14.32, ἕως is followed by the subjunctive. Mark never uses the indicative after it. Thus, ἀπολύση (attested in P<sup>45</sup> A N W 33. 1424. *l* 2211 *pm*) seems to fit Mark’s style. Though ἀπολύση agrees with Matt 14.22, it is not necessarily a harmonization to it, since ἀπολύση in Matt 14.22 may also have initially followed Mark.

In comparison to Matthew (seventy-eight instances) and Luke (four or six instances; Hawkins 1899, 118-19), Mark uses the historic present much more frequently (150 instances). The historic present thus seems to reflect Mark’s style of writing (Neiryck 1974, 224-28).<sup>2</sup> For many others, however, the historic present could have been felt to be unpolished. For example, “a writer like Diodorus avoided the historic present though he had ample opportunity for using it” (Kilpatrick 1990, 16). Likewise there may have been copyists who avoided the historic present. For this reason, in textual criticism of Mark, other things being equal one may prefer readings which contain the historic present (Kilpatrick 1990, 17). In terms of this text-critical criterion, this article aims to evaluate the text of Mark printed in *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by B. Aland et al., 27th edition, Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993 (henceforth, NA<sup>27</sup>).<sup>3</sup> For this purpose, I first shall examine this criterion.

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1 “The historical or historic present is the name given to the use of the present tense in a narrative when the verb would be expected to have been in the past tense or perfective aspect” (Levinsohn 2000, 201).

2 See also Taylor 1966, 46-47.

3 NA<sup>27</sup> and NA<sup>26</sup> have the same text.

## II. The historic present as a discourse marker

When Mark contains the historic present, the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke frequently do not use the historic present. Assuming Marcan priority, this phenomenon may be interpreted as Matthew's and Luke's avoidance of Mark's historic presents. Matthew retains only twenty-one instances of Mark's historic presents, and Luke retains only one of them (Luke 8.49, ἔρχεται; Hawkins 1899, 118). Likewise some copyists may also have altered Mark's historic presents into other forms. According to the observation of E. P. Sanders, however, in the manuscripts of the New Testament and in the apocryphal gospels "the use of the historic present is increased rather than decreased" (Sanders 1969, 229). The reliability of this observation may be questioned since such observation can only be made after the original text is attained. Nevertheless, one may not exclude the possibility that copyists could at times have introduced the historic present. This possibility is supported by the fact that "the historic present occurs frequently among Koine writers influenced by classical style," for example, in Josephus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Herodian, Nicolaus of Damascus, Plutarch, and Dio Chrysostom (Fanning 1990, 237). On account of such a possibility, we may not mechanically prefer the historic present for textual criticism. Since the use of the historic present "by a particular writer can be greatly influenced by individual style" (Fanning 1990, 238), we also need to consider the author's usage of the historic present for textual criticism.

Though the historic present can be used for expressing vividness in narration (Fanning 1990, 226) or drawing "attention to an event or series of events," according to S. E. Porter, it may also mark "transition to the new unit, often including setting and participants" (1989, 196). C. D. Osburn observed that the historic present functions as a discourse marker "to denote semantic shifts to different material" (1983, 497, 500). Similarly, Fanning noted that it marks "a clear pattern of discourse-structuring functions, such as to highlight the beginning of a paragraph, to introduce new participants into an existing paragraph, to show participants moving to new locations" (1990, 232). This theory traces its origin back to H. S. J. Thackeray, who pointed out that in the LXX the historic present marks a new paragraph introducing a new scene, date, character, speaker, or "a turning-point in the march of events," and that this function works also in Mark (1921, 21-22).

This theory seems to be correct with regard to the style of Mark. Of 150 instances of historic presents, ninety-seven cases belong to this category. (1) In fifty-five instances NA<sup>27</sup>'s paragraph division clearly shows that the historic present denotes the beginning of a new paragraph (Mark 1.12, 21; 2.15; 3.13[2x], 20[2x], 31; 4.13, 35, 36; 5.35, 36; 6.7, 30, 31; 7.1; 8.1, 22[3x]; 9.2[2x]; 10.1[2x], 23, 35, 46; 11.1[2x], 2, 15, 27[2x]; 12.13, 14, 18; 13.1; 14.12, 13[2x], 17, 32[2x], 33, 34, 43, 66, 67; 15.20, 21, 22, 24[2x], 27).<sup>4</sup> (2) Eleven instances (7.5; 11.7[2x]; 11.22,

4 On the basis of the text and pericope division of UBS<sup>4</sup>, such usage is found in Mark 1.12, 21, 40; 3.13, 20, 31; 4.13, 35; 5.35; 6.30; 7.1; 8.1, 22; 9.2; 10.1, 23, 35, 46; 11.1, 15, 27; 12.13, 18; 13.1; 14.12, 27, 32, 43, 66; 15.21.

33[2x]; 14.37[3x], 41[2x]) may be added to these clear examples. (3) After a new pericope is introduced by the aorist or imperfect tense describing the background, the historic present sometimes (twenty-two times) follows to introduce a new event (Mark 1.30, 40; 2.3, 18[2x]; 4.1, 37; 5.15[2x], 22[2x], 23; 6.1[2x]; 7.32[2x]; 14.27, 53; 15.16; 16.2) or a new teaching answering the question of the disciples (7.18; 10.11). (4) Even in places where the historic present is not placed at the beginning of a pericope, it is at times used to introduce a new event (fourteen instances in Mark 2.4; 4.38[2x]; 5.38[2x], 39, 40[2x], 41; 6.48; 8.6; 10.49; 14.51; 16.4).<sup>5</sup>

This observation may not only be used for discourse analysis but also for textual criticism. Mark, however, does not always use the historic present at the beginning of a new pericope. On the basis of NA<sup>27</sup>'s paragraph division, a paragraph begins without it in Mark 1.1-4, 7, 9, 14, 16, 23, 32, 35; 2.1, 13, 23; 3.1, 7, 22, 23, 28; 4.3, 10, 21, 26, 30, 33; 5.1, 25; 6.14, 17, 21, 32, 34, 35, 45, 53; 7.6, 14, 17, 24; 8.10, 11, 14, 27, 31, 34; 9.1, 9, 11, 14, 28, 30, 33, 41, 42, 49; 10.2, 10, 13, 17, 28, 32, 41; 11.11, 12, 18, 19, 20; 12.1, 28, 35, 38, 41; 13.3, 9, 14, 18, 21, 24, 28, 30, 32, 33; 14.1, 3, 10, 22, 48, 55, 65, 69; 15.1, 2, 6, 15, 29, 33, 38, 40, 42; 16.5, 8. On the basis of the text and pericope division of UBS<sup>4</sup>, Mark is found to start a pericope without the historic present in the following passages: Mark 1.1-4, 9, 14, 16, 35; 2.1, 13, 23; 3.1, 7; 4.10, 21, 26, 30, 33; 5.1, (11), (24b); 6.6b, 14, 45, 53; 7.(14), 24; 8.11, 14, 27, 31; 9.(9), 14, 30, 33, 38; 10.13, 17, 32; 11.12, 20; 12.1, 28, 35, 38, 41; 13.3; 14.1, 3, 10, 22, 51; 15.1, 6, 33, 42. Though Mark himself may have intended a different division, these instances indicate the possibility that Mark may also have started a pericope without the historic present.

The consideration above shows that one may not make a mechanical text-critical choice of the historic present even at the beginning of a pericope. Other pieces of evidence, internal and external, also need to be considered.

### III. The historic present and textual criticism in Mark

#### A. Places where the historic present may be chosen

The observation of Mark's usage of the historic present is useful for textual criticism of Mark. The following instances may be mentioned as examples where the reading which contains the historic present is probably original in Mark. In each list of the readings below, reading (1) represents the text of NA<sup>27</sup>.

#### 1. Mark 2.25

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| (1) και λεγει αυτοις            | C L W <sup>f3</sup> 33 (700). 892 <i>pc</i>            |
| (2) και αυτος ελεγεν αυτοις     | A <sup>f1</sup> <b>π</b>                               |
| (3) και αυτος λεγει αυτοις      | 28. 1241. 1424 <i>pc</i>                               |
| (4) και αποκριθεις ειπεν αυτοις | D Θ a  |
| (5) και ελεγεν αυτοις           | P <sup>88</sup> B 565. 2427. (l 2211) bo <sup>pt</sup> |

<sup>5</sup> The remaining forty-eight instances can be explained as follows. (1) The historic present is sometimes (three times) used for a vivid description: Mark 11.4; 15.17[2x]. (2) The verb λέγω is frequently used in a present form (when an imperfect or aorist form is expected) without initiating a new pericope or event. Forty-five instances belong to this category (Mark 1.37, 38, 41, 44; 2.5, 8, 10, 14, 17, 25; 3.3, 4, 5, 32, 33, 34; 5.7, 9, 19; 6.37, 38[2x], 50; 7.28, 34; 8.12, 17, 19, 20, 29, 33; 9.5, 19, 35; 10.24, 27, 42; 11.21; 12.16; 14.30, 45, 61, 63; 15.2; 16.6).

Readings (2), (3), and (4) may be regarded as being secondary in consideration of the following observations. Since (2) and (3) are never used elsewhere in Mark, they do not seem to agree with the usage of Mark. Mark does not use *καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς*. In the New Testament, only Luke contains this expression (in 7.22 and probably also in 13.2). Hence (4) is likely to be a harmonization to Luke (6.3, *καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς . . . εἶπεν*).

Having removed these secondary readings, we still need to choose between (1) and (5). Since Mark uses both *καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς* (at least fourteen times<sup>6</sup>) and *καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς* (at least eight times<sup>7</sup>), both (1) and (5) seem to fit Mark's style. However, one may prefer (1) since it records the historic present *λέγει* whereas (5) records the imperfect *ἔλεγεν*. Just as Mark 2.16-17 uses *λέγει* for Jesus's answer to the question introduced by *ἔλεγεν*, Mark 2.25 may also have used *λέγει* for Jesus's reply to the question introduced by the same *ἔλεγεν* (2.24). Thus (5) may be regarded as a result of assimilation to *ἔλεγεν* in the preceding passage (2.24) or in Mark 2.27. Consequently, (1) is more probably original (i.e., written by the author himself).

## 2. Mark 3.33

(1) <i>καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτοῖς λέγει</i>	⊗ B (C) L Δ 892. 2427. <i>pc</i> <i>aur</i> <i>vg</i> <i>bo</i>
(2) <i>καὶ ἀπεκριθὴ αὐτοῖς λέγων</i>	A D (Θ) <b>π</b> <i>f</i> <i>sa</i>
(3) <i>ἀπεκριθὴ αὐτοῖς καὶ λέγει</i>	<i>f</i> <sup>1.13</sup> 28. 700. 2542 <i>pc</i>
(4) <i>ὁς δὲ ἀπεκριθὴ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς</i>	W (33)

Readings (3) and (4) seem to be secondary, since the external evidence for them is relatively weak. (1) and (2) are both possible in Mark because Mark 15.9 has *ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς λέγων* and Mark 9.19 has *ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς λέγει*. However, (1) uses the historic present *λέγει*. Further, the parallel passages Matt 12.48 and Luke 8.21 both use *ἀποκριθεὶς*. This agreement between Matthew and Luke also supports the originality of reading (1). Hence, (1) is probably original.

## 3. Mark 8.20

(1) <i>καὶ λεγουσιν αὐτῷ</i>	B C L (Δ 579. 892). 2427 <i>pc</i> <i>vg</i>
(2) <i>καὶ λεγουσιν</i>	⊗ <i>pc</i>
(3) <i>οἱ δὲ εἶπον</i>	P <sup>45</sup> A D W Θ <i>f</i> <sup>1.13</sup> 33 <b>π</b> <i>it</i> <i>sy</i> <sup>h</sup>

Reading (3) with *δέ* instead of *καί* seems to be a stylistic improvement of (1)/(2) by copyists. As Matthew and Luke frequently alter Mark's *καί* to *δέ*,<sup>8</sup> copyists may also have changed *καί* to *δέ*.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore (3) uses *εἶπον* whereas both (1) and (2) use the historic present *λέγουσιν*.

6 Mark 1.38; 3.4; 4.13, 35; 6.31, 50; 7.18; 10.11; 11.2; 12.16; 14.13, 27, 34, 41 (8.35 *v.l.* [= variant reading]). For convenience, this article uses the text of NA<sup>27</sup> as a basis for statistics.

7 Mark 4.2, 11, 21, 24; 6.4, 10; 8.21; 9.1 (*v.l.*: 2.27; 7.9; 9.31; 11.17).

8 See Neiryck 1974, 203-5.

9 On the basis of NA<sup>27</sup>, (3) does not appear to fit Mark's style since Mark uses *οἱ δὲ εἶπαν* seven times (whereas it is used twenty-seven times in the New Testament) but never adopts *οἱ δὲ εἶπον*. The text of Mark in the *Textus Receptus* (Stephanus edition, 1550), however, adopts *οἱ δὲ εἶπον* seven times. Hence, on the basis of the *Textus Receptus*, (3) seems to fit Mark's style. For this reason, it is not easy to choose between (1) and (3) only on the grounds of the author's style.

Whenever Mark uses *καὶ λέγουσιν* (five times elsewhere), *αὐτῷ* follows immediately (1.37; 2.18; 3.32; 4.38; 6.37). Since (1) fits with such a style of Mark, (1) rather than (2) may be chosen as being more probably original.

Our observation of Mark's usage of the historic present as a discourse marker for initiation of a new pericope (or a new event) is also useful for textual criticism of Mark. Such instances are as follows.

#### 4. Mark 5.23

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| (1) <i>καὶ παρακαλεῖ</i> | ⊗ A C L 28. 33. 565. 892. 1241 <i>pc</i> sa bo <sup>ms</sup>   |
| (2) <i>καὶ παρεκαλεῖ</i> | B W Θ 0107. 0132 <i>f</i> <sup>1.13</sup> 2427 <b>π</b> lat bo |
| (3) <i>παρακαλῶν</i>     | D (it sy <sup>s</sup> )  |

According to Taylor's observation, "Parataxis, or the simple co-ordination of clauses with *καί*, instead of the use of participles or subordinate clauses, is one of the most noticeable characteristics of Mark's style" (1966, 48-49). On the basis of this observation, both (1) and (2) may be regarded as fitting Mark's style.

Reading (3) may be an improvement of (1). The participle construction (the indicative + participle) seems to be stylistically superior to parataxis (the indicative + *καί* + indicative). Further, as Matthew and Luke often altered Mark's parataxis to a participle construction (Neiryneck 1974, 207-8),<sup>10</sup> copyists may also have at times changed *καὶ* parataxis to a participle construction. Accordingly, (3) seems to be secondary.

As for reading (1), it fits the immediate context. Since Mark 5.22 has the present form *πίπτει*, a present form is expected after the conjunction *καί*. Further, in Mark 5.22-23, a new event starts on the background described in the preceding passage (v. 21). In such a context, the historic present may function as a discourse marker for initiating a new event. Hence, (1) may be original, and (2) seems to be a harmonization to Luke 8.41, which has an identical expression (*παραεκάλεῖ*).

#### 5. Mark 6.1

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| (1) <i>εκειθεν και ερχεται</i> | ⊗ B C L Δ Θ 892. 2427 <i>pc</i> a sy <sup>hmg</sup>      |
| (2) <i>εκειθεν</i>             | 13 <i>pc</i>   |
| (3) -                          | W  |
| (4) <i>εκειθεν και ηλθεν</i>   | A 0126 <i>f</i> <sup>1.13</sup> <b>π</b> sy <sup>h</sup> |
| (5) <i>εκειθεν και απηλθεν</i> | D  |

Among the readings above, (2), (3), and (5) may be secondary since they have weak external evidence. The choice between (1) and (4) depends on the choice between *ερχεται* (the historic present) and *ηλθεν* (the aorist). In Mark 6.1 the historic present *ερχεται* may have been used to introduce a new event on the background of a new scene (Jesus's hometown). Without noticing this function of the historic present in Mark's narrative, copyists probably altered *ερχεται* into *ηλθεν*. They may have regarded *ερχεται* (a present form) as unfitting for the immediate context (v. 1) which uses *εξεηλθεν* (an aorist form).

10 See also Kilpatrick 1965, 200.

**6. Mark 6.7**

(1) προσκαλείται τους δώδεκα και ηρξάτο *rell*  
 αυτούς αποστέλλειν δυο

(2) προσκαλεσαμενος τους δώδεκα μαθητας *D (f<sup>1</sup>, 565, 892<sup>mg</sup> pc) ff<sup>2</sup> sy<sup>s</sup>*  
 απεστειλεν αυτους ανα

Mark never uses δώδεκα and the word μαθητής together. Mark adopts τούς δώδεκα instead of τούς δώδεκα μαθητάς (9.35; 10.32; 3.16 *v.l.*). Accordingly, τούς δώδεκα μαθητάς does not fit Marcan usage. Hence reading (2) may be secondary. The origin of τούς δώδεκα μαθητάς in (2) seems to be a harmonizing influence of Matt 10.1.

Since Mark frequently uses ἤρξατο/ἤρξαντο + infinitive (twenty-five times elsewhere in Mark), (1) seems to fit Mark's usage. Further, the frequent use of the verb ἄρχομαι "as a mere auxiliary" corresponds to the usage of ܐܪܚܘܡܝ in Aramaic (Creed 1942, lxxx). Though the use of the verb ἄρχομαι "in a weak sense without emphasis upon the idea of 'beginning' is found occasionally in good Greek" (Creed 1942, lxxx), Mark's frequent use of it may be an Aramaism. Copyists of the Greek literature may not have introduced such Aramaic expressions but probably avoided them.

Further, since Mark 6.7 is the beginning of a new pericope about sending the twelve disciples, the historic present προσκαλείται may have been employed for initiating it. All these text-critical considerations support the originality of (1).

**7. Mark 11.1**

(1) ἐγγιζουσιν *rell*

(2) ἠγγιζεν *D it sy<sup>p</sup>*

(3) ἠγγισαν *f<sup>13</sup>*

External evidence for reading (3) is weak. This reading seems to be a harmonization to Matt 21.1 (*v.l.*). Copyists seem to have altered (1) into (2) (the third person singular form) to make the number agree with the following verb (ἀποστέλλει), which is in the third person singular form. Since Mark 11.1 initiates a new pericope, the historic present may have been used as a discourse marker. Consequently, (1) may be original.

**8. Mark 11.7**

(1) φερουσιν *κ<sup>2</sup> B L Δ Ψ 892. 2427 pc; Or*

(2) ἠγαγον *A D 𐤎 sy*

(3) αγουσιν *κ\* C W Θ f<sup>13</sup> 28. 2542 pc*

Even though reading (2) is supported by the multiple attestation of the parallel passages (Matt 21.7 and Luke 19.35), the historic presents (1) and (3) can function as a discourse marker in this verse. Since Mark 11.7 describes Jesus entering a new scene (Jerusalem), readings (1) and (3) can be original.

The verb φέρω fits the style of Mark. Mark usually uses the verb φέρω for the meaning "bring" (1.32; 2.3; 6.27, 28; 7.32; 8.22; 9.17, 19, 20; 11.2, 7; 12.15, 16; 15.22) except in 4.11 ("produce"). Mark adopts the verb ἄγω for the meaning "go" (1.38; 14.42). Only in Mark 13.11 does the verb ἄγω mean "bring." Since

the immediate context of Mark 11.7 requires the meaning “bring,” the verb φέρω may have been used by Mark. Further, the verb φέρω fits the immediate context since Mark 11.2 also adopts the same verb (φέρετε) for bringing a colt. Therefore, (1) may be original.

### 9. Mark 11.15

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| (1) ερχονται εις Ιεροσολυμα. Και εισελθων εις το ιερον | <i>rell</i>           |
| (2) εισελθων εις Ιεροσολυμα και οτε ην εν τω ιερω      | D                     |
| (3) και εισελθων εις το ιερον                          | 28 (sy <sup>p</sup> ) |

Readings (2) and (3) have relatively weak external evidence. (2) is further identical to its parallel passage (Luke 19.45). Accordingly, it seems to be a harmonization to Luke 19.45.

Reading (1) fits Mark’s style. In the New Testament, ἔρχονται εις is used only in Mark (5.38; 8.22; 10.46; 11.15; 14.32). This seems to reflect Mark’s typical style. Further, since Mark 11.15 initiates a new pericope, ἔρχονται (the historic present) may have been used as a discourse marker. These considerations support the originality of (1).

### 10. Mark 12.14

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (1) ελθοντες λεγουσιν αυτω                         | <i>rell</i>  |
| (2) επηρωτων αυτον οι Φαρισαιοι                    | D ( <i>pc</i> ) (c ff <sup>2</sup> ) k                                   |
| (3) ελθοντες ηρξαντο ερωταν αυτον εν δολω λεγοντες | f <sup>1,13</sup> 28. <i>al</i> (it, sy <sup>s</sup> ) sa <sup>mss</sup> |
| (3') ελθοντες επηρωτων αυτον εν δολω λεγοντες      | Θ 565, 700   |
| (3'') ελθοντες ηρξαντο επερωταν αυτον εν λογω      | 2542   |
| (4) ελθοντες ηρξαντο ερωταν αυτον εν δολω          | W 2542 <i>pc</i>   |
| (5) ελθοντες οι Φαρισαιοι επηρωτων αυτον λεγοντες  | <i>pc</i>  |

Whereas readings (1), (3), (3'), (3''), (4), (5) all have ἐλθόντες, only (2) does not have it. Accordingly, (2) is likely to be secondary.

Reading (3'') has weak external evidence. In the Synoptics, ἐν λόγῳ is used only in Matt 22.15. Thus, ἐν λόγῳ in (3'') seems to be the result of assimilation to ἐν λόγῳ in Matt 22.15. (4) is also supported by relatively weak external evidence. This reading seems to have come from (3) by deleting λέγοντες which may have been regarded as unnecessary.

The alteration of ἤρξαντο + infinitive into a finite form of the verb may have been made by copyists in Mark 5.17 (Δ Θ 565. 700. 1424 *pc* a sa<sup>mss</sup>) and Mark 14.69 (B 2427 co). Likewise, ἐπηρώτων in (3') and (5) seems to have come from ἤρξαντο ἐρωτᾶν in (3).

Having removed the secondary readings, (1) and (3) remain as candidates for the original reading. (3), which has ἤρξαντο ἐρωτᾶν, fits the usage of Mark, since Mark frequently uses ἤρξατο/ἤρξαντο + infinitive (twenty-six times elsewhere in Mark). Further, the use of ἤρξατο/ἤρξαντο + infinitive in Mark could be an Aramaism (see above textual criticism on Mark 6.7). In addition, since both Matt 22.16 and Luke 20.21 have λέγοντες, λέγοντες could reflect the original state of Mark’s text.

Nevertheless, the agreement between Matt 22.16 and Luke 20.21 can also be regarded as a case of accidental overlap in Matthew's and Luke's redaction of Mark. Further, in Mark the historic present is frequently used in the beginning of a new pericope as a discourse marker. (1), having λέγουσιν, agrees with such usage in Mark. Matthew and Luke frequently avoid the historic present of Mark (Neiryck 1974, 223-28). Matthew and Luke altered Mark's historic presents of Mark 1.41; 4.38; 5.38; 6.7, 30; 11.2 (Neiryck 1974, 223). Copyists may also have changed (1)'s λέγουσιν into λέγοντες according to the same tendency. In addition, (3) seems to have relatively weak external evidence. These considerations support the originality of (1).

### 11. Mark 15.24

- (1) σταυρουσιν αυτον και B (L) Ψ 892. (2427) it (sy<sup>hmg</sup>)  
 (2) σταυρωσαντες αυτον ⳨ A C D Θ 0250 <sup>f.13</sup> 33 Ⳛ lat sy<sup>h</sup>

Reading (1) is not necessarily a result of assimilation to v. 27 (σταυροῦσιν), since (2), which avoids parataxis by using a participle, can also be a stylistic improvement of (1). Just as Matthew and Luke often alter Mark's parataxis into a participle construction (Neiryck 1974, 207-8; Kilpatrick 1965, 200), copyists may also have made such an alteration. Otherwise, (2) can be a harmonization to Matt 27.35. Further, Mark could have used the historic present as a discourse marker since a new pericope (on Jesus's crucifixion) starts with Mark 15.24. Therefore, (1) seems to be original.

### 12. Mark 15.27

- (1) σταυρουσιν *rell*  
 (2) εσταυρωσαν B 565. 2427 *pc* it vg<sup>ms</sup> co; Eus  
 (3) σταυρουνται (et λησται) D

Reading (3) may be regarded as secondary on account of its relatively weak external evidence. (1) may be preferred to (2) since Mark 15.27 initiates a new pericope, and the historic present can be expected as a discourse marker. The originality of (1) is further supported by (3), which is also in a present form.

## B. The places where the historic present may not be chosen

Though Mark frequently uses the historic present, Mark also employs the aorist and the imperfect. Even for the initiation of a new pericope Mark does not exclusively use the historic present. For this reason, the historic present may not be automatically preferred for textual reconstruction of Mark. Various kinds of text-critical evidence need to be examined together in the search for the original readings. The following instances are examples where the historic present may not be regarded as evidence of originality.

### 1. Mark 8.24

- (1) ελεγεν ⳨<sup>2</sup> A B L <sup>f</sup> 2427 Ⳛ  
 (2) ειπεν P<sup>45</sup> ⳨\* C Θ *pc*  
 (3) λεγει D N W <sup>f</sup> 13 565 *pc*



Matthew alters Mark's ἔλεγεν (ἔλεγον) to εἶπεν (εἶπον) about ten times (Allen 1912, xxi). Likewise, copyists seem to have altered ἔλεγεν to εἶπεν in Mark 5.30 (D W Θ 565 700); 6.16 (P<sup>45vid</sup> A D W 0269 f<sup>1.13</sup> π); Luke 3.11 (W); John 5.19 (A D W Θ Ψ f<sup>3</sup> 33 π); 8.23 (Ψ 0250 f<sup>1</sup> 33 π sy<sup>h</sup>), whereas on the basis of the critical apparatus of NA<sup>27,11</sup> the inverse alteration is observed only in John 7.39 (P<sup>66</sup> κ pc). Further, there seems to have been a scribal tendency of altering the imperfect (which is frequently used by Mark) to the aorist. Just as Matthew and Luke frequently avoided Mark's imperfect (Neiryneck 1974, 230-35; Allen 1912, xxi-xxii), likewise copyists may also have avoided the imperfect form and changed it into the aorist. According to B. Weiss, there actually was a scribal tendency of changing the imperfect into the aorist (1899, 60-62).<sup>12</sup> Thus, (2) may be secondary.

Though (3) is an instance of the historic present, it is not necessarily original. The alteration of ἔλεγεν to λέγει by copyists seems to have taken place in Matt 9.24 (C L N W Θ π sy); Mark 8.24 (D N W f<sup>13</sup> 565 pc); Luke 3.10 (A C<sup>2</sup> D Θ Ψ π); John 5.19 (f<sup>1</sup> 1241 pc j), though the inverse could have taken place in Mark 2.25 (A f<sup>1</sup> π). These statistics indicate that the alteration from (1) to (3) probably occurred. In addition, the frequency of usage indicates that (1) may have been less familiar than (2) and (3). Elsewhere in the New Testament, (1) is used seventy times, (2) 613 times, and (3) 338 times. In the LXX (except the Apocrypha), (1) occurs seven times, (2) 2,542 times, and (3) 732 times.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, (1) may be original.

## 2. Mark 12.17

- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| (1) ο δε Ιησους ειπεν             | κ B C L Δ Ψ 33. 579. 892. 2427 pc (sy <sup>p</sup> ) sa bo <sup>ms</sup> |
| (2) και αποκριθεις ο Ιησους ειπεν | A (D) f <sup>1.13</sup> π (lat) sy <sup>(s).h</sup>                      |
| (3) και αποκριθεις ειπεν          | W (Θ 565)  |
| (4) και λεγει                     | 1424   |

Though (4) uses the historic present, its external evidence is too weak. (3) also has relatively weak external evidence. Further, elsewhere in Mark (3) occurs only once (11.14), whereas Luke uses it four times (while it is used just five times elsewhere in the New Testament). Thus, (3) is more Lucan than Marcan. (3) seems to have come from (2), from -ΕΙΣ ΟΙΣ (= -εις ο Ιησους) by haplography (Nevius 1967, 24).

One may argue for (1)'s originality, since Mark's narrative uses δέ for changing the character who is speaking (Mark 3.4; 5.34, 36; 6.24, 37, 38, 50 v.l.; 7.6, 20, 28; 8.5, 28, 33; 9.12, 19, 21, 23, 25, 39; 10.3, 4, 5 v.l., 14, 18, 20, 21, 24, 26, 36, 37, 38, 39 [2x], 48, 51; 11.29; 12.7, 15, 16 [2x], 17 v.l.; 13.5 v.l.; 14.4, 6, 20, 29,

11 The alteration from ἔλεγον to εἶπον is observed in Matt 9.11 (D Θ 0233 f13 π); John 8.25 (W pc).

12 See Kilpatrick (1965, 199): "This suggests that, where our manuscripts vary between the imperfect and the aorist, we should, other things being equal, regard the imperfect as original and the aorist as a stylistic correction."

13 In this article, for convenience the text of Rahlfs's *Septuaginta* has been used as a basis for counting. For statistics, Bible Works for Windows 6.0 has been used.

31a, 31b *v.l.*, 62, 63, 68, 71; 15.2, 4, 9, 12, 13, 14 [2x], 36, 39; 16.6). However, *καί* also occurs in such a context (1.25, 38, 41 *v.l.*; 2.17, 19, 25, 33; 4.11, 39, 41; 5.9, 19, 31; 6.4, 37; 7.18, 27, 29; 8.4, 5 *v.l.*, 12, 16 *v.l.*, 17, 20 *v.l.*, 21, 24, 29; 9.29; 10.52 *v.l.*; 11.22; 12.16, 32 *v.l.*, 34; 14.13, 30; 15.35). On account of these numerous exceptions, (1)'s originality may not necessarily be claimed on the basis of Mark's usage of *δέ*.

Reading (1) seems to be quite Marcan, since it is used about eight times elsewhere in Mark 9.23; 9.39 *v.l.*; 10.5 *v.l.*; 10.18, 38, 39; 11.29; 14.6 (whereas it is also used eight times by Matthew, and two times by Luke and nowhere else in the New Testament). Nevertheless, *δέ* seems to be a stylistic improvement over *καί*. As Matthew and Luke altered Mark's *καί* into *δέ*,<sup>14</sup> copyists may also have made such an alteration. Further, *ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν* seems to be stylistically inferior to *εἶπεν* (Kilpatrick 1963, 126). It appears to be a Semitism which goes back to *ויען ויאמר* (Greeven and Güting 2005, 612). Thus, (2) is more probably the original reading, rather than (1).

### 3. Mark 12.43

(1) *εἶπεν*    ⌘ A B D K L Δ Θ Ψ 33. 565. 579. 700. 892. (1424). 2427 *al a k*; Or  
 (2) *λεγεῖ*    W *f*<sup>1.13</sup> **ⲙ**

Elsewhere Mark uses (2) sixty-two times, whereas he uses (1) fifty-seven times (except 16.15). Thus, both (1) and (2) seem to fit Mark's style.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, (1) is used 612 times whereas (2) is employed 338 times. In the LXX (except the Apocrypha), (1) occurs about 2,542 times, whereas (2) occurs about 732 times. Accordingly (2) seems to be less familiar. Further, in the immediate context (2) is the historic present.

The alteration from (2) to (1) seems to have occurred in Matt 8.22 (L W Θ *f*<sup>13</sup> **ⲙ**); 17.20 (C D L W **ⲙ** latt sy<sup>s.p.h</sup>); 20.21 (B 209 *pc sa*); Mark 2.25 (D Θ a); 3.33 (W 33); John 7.50 (P<sup>66</sup> ⌘ f); 13.24 (P<sup>66c</sup>); 18.4 (⌘ A C<sup>3</sup> L W Θ Ψ 0250 *f*<sup>13</sup> 33 **ⲙ**); 20.29 (⌘ W *f*<sup>13</sup>); 21.17 (B C *f*<sup>13</sup> **ⲙ** r<sup>1</sup> *vg*<sup>cl</sup>); 21.21 (⌘ W *pc fr*<sup>1</sup> *vg*<sup>cl</sup>); Rev 17.15 (A *vg*); thus (2) could be original. However, (1) could also be original since the alteration from (1) to (2) also seems to have occurred in Matt 4.9 (L W Θ 0233 *f* **ⲙ**); 13.52 (B<sup>1</sup> *pc f*; D 892. 1424 lat sy<sup>p</sup>); Mark 12.17 (1424); 12.43 (W *f*<sup>1.13</sup> **ⲙ**); Luke 5.24 (D 1424 *pc*); 5.27 (⌘ D *f*<sup>13</sup>); 6.8 (D b f); 6.10 (D); 18.4 (D); 20.42 (D a c *ff*<sup>2</sup>); John 21.6 (⌘<sup>2</sup> W l 2211 *pc it* *vg*<sup>cl</sup>); Rev 21.5 (1854. 2030. 2377 *pc*); 21.6 (⌘ *pc*); 22.6 (1611<sup>s</sup>. 1854 **ⲙ**<sup>k</sup>). Further, the external evidence for (1), which is supported by ancient Alexandrian manuscripts (⌘ B) and so-called "Western" manuscripts (D a k), seems to be stronger than the external evidence for (2). Therefore, (1) may be original.

### IV. The historic present and revision of the text of Mark in NA<sup>27</sup>

The observation of Mark's frequent use of the historic present may at times help us revise the text of NA<sup>27</sup>. By adding the following three instances of the historic present, we attain a list of 153 historic presents in Mark.

<sup>14</sup> Neiryck 1974, 203-5; Allen 1912, xix, xxxvi; Kilpatrick 1965, 201.

In Mark 4.36, the text of NA<sup>27</sup> records ἀφέντες, whereas some manuscripts employ the historic present ἀφίρουσιν.

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| (1) αφεντες τον οχλον       | <i>rell</i>   |
| (2) αφιρουσιν τον οχλον και | P <sup>45</sup> D W Θ f <sup>13</sup> 28. 565. 700. 2542 <i>pc</i> it |
| (3) αφεντες αυτον           | A   |

Since the participle ἀφέντες is also used elsewhere in Mark (1.18, 20; 7.8; 12.12; 14.50), ἀφέντες agrees with Mark's usage. The participle, however, can also be a scribal improvement of καί parataxis. According to Kilpatrick's observation, "Where Mark has two main verbs joined by καί, Matthew and Luke frequently have one main verb and a participle" (1965, 200). Likewise, copyists could also have made such an alteration. Further, since a new event begins with Mark 4.36, the historic present may be expected as a discourse marker. Therefore, reading (2) ἀφίρουσιν τὸν ὄχλον καὶ may be original.

In Mark 6.35, where the following readings are found, the text of NA<sup>27</sup> has ἔλεγον, but the historic present λέγουσιν may be original.

- |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| (1) αυτω οι μαθηται αυτου ελεγον   | ⲛ <sup>1</sup> B L Δ 0187 <sup>vid</sup> . 33. 892. (2427) <i>pc</i>   |
| (1') οι μαθηται αυτου ελεγον       | ⲛ* Θ 579   |
| (2) αυτω οι μαθηται αυτου λεγουσιν | W (f <sup>1.13</sup> ) 2Π (aur c f q sy <sup>p</sup> ) sy <sup>h</sup> |
| (3) οι μαθηται αυτου λεγουσιν αυτω | D K 565. 700. (l 2211) <i>pc</i> (a b) sy <sup>s</sup>                 |
| (4) οι μαθηται αυτω λεγουσιν       | A <i>al</i>  |

Mark 14.45 uses the present form of the verb λέγω after the participle of the verb προσέρχομαι (προσελθὼν αὐτῷ λέγει). The present form λέγουσιν agrees with such usage since it occurs after the participle προσελθόντες. Further, since Mark 6.35 introduces the story of a miraculous multiplication of five loaves and two fishes, the historic present may have been used as a discourse marker. Among the readings above, (2), (3), and (4) have the historic present λέγουσιν. (4), however, may be removed from the candidates for the original reading on account of its relatively weak external evidence. No matter which reading is chosen between (2) and (3), the historic present λέγουσιν is part of the original reading.

The text of NA<sup>27</sup> may also be revised in Mark 11.7 where the following readings are found.

- |              |                                 |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) εκαθισεν | <i>rell</i>                     |
| (2) εκαθησαν | ⲛ* <sup>vid</sup> <i>pc</i>     |
| (3) καθιζει  | D W f <sup>1</sup> 28. 565. 700 |

The text of NA<sup>27</sup> has ἐκάθισεν. Reading (3), however, is the historic present. This reading fits the immediate context where the present forms are used (φέρουσιν, ἐπιβάλλουσιν). Though (3) could be a result of assimilation to the present forms, further examination leads us to choose (3). In Mark 11.7 the historic present may function as a discourse marker to indicate the beginning of a new event on a new scene (Jesus's entry into Jerusalem). Moreover, (1) and (3), having the same verb καθίζω, support each other, whereas (2) has a different verb κάθημαι. Further, (3) is less familiar than (1), since in the LXX (except the Apocrypha) (1) occurs seventy-one times whereas (3) does not occur at all. Therefore, (3) seems to be original.

## V. Conclusion

Mark uses the historic present much more frequently (about 150 instances) than Matthew (about seventy-eight instances) and Luke (four or six instances). Such frequency seems to characterize Mark's style. Hence, a reading which contains the historic present has a good possibility of originality as far as Mark is concerned. As Matthew and Luke frequently avoided Mark's historic presents, copyists may also have sometimes avoided them. For this reason, textual critics of Mark need to consider seriously the possibility that the readings which contain the historic present may be original.

In this article, the already-observed 150 instances of the historic present in Mark are categorized as follows: Mark often uses it to introduce a new pericope (sixty-six instances) or a new event (thirty-six instances). The historic present is sometimes used for vivid description (three times). All the other instances of the historic present in Mark are observed in passages where the verb λέγω is used in the present form (forty-five times).

The observation that Mark frequently used the historic present for initiating a new pericope leads us to propose revision of the text of NA<sup>27</sup> in three places. In Mark 4.36, the historic present ἀφίουσιν τὸν ὄχλον καὶ may be preferred to ἀφέντες τὸν ὄχλον that was chosen by NA<sup>27</sup>. In Mark 6.35, the historic present λέγουσιν may be chosen instead of ἔλεγον of NA<sup>27</sup>. In Mark 11.7, the text of NA<sup>27</sup> records ἐκάθισεν, but the historic present καθίζει is more probably original. These three instances of the historic present may be added to the list of 150 instances of the historic present in Mark.

When the present-tense form has a narrative function of initiating a new pericope, one may translate the form in other languages by the present form if they also use the present form for the same narrative function. Otherwise, we need to use a linguistic element which can initiate a new topic, such as "Now" in English. If such a linguistic element is not found in a target language, one may simply use paragraph divisions.

When the historic present must be translated by the past form, text-critical choices between the historic present and the past form make no difference in translation. When a target language also has the historic present or some other linguistic element for initiating a new pericope, however, such text-critical choices are significant. My suggestion of adding three instances of the historic present in Mark (4.36; 6.35; 11.7) can make a difference for translation of Mark in such target languages.

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