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Trajectories in the History of Textual Scholarship on Mark's Endings: A Reconsideration

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Published in:
Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin

Published: 01/02/2023

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Krans-Plaisier, J. L. H., & Yi, A.-T. (2023). Trajectories in the History of Textual Scholarship on Mark's Endings: A Reconsideration. *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin*, 8(2), 709-730.

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ISSN 2410-0951

COMSt
Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies
COMSt
Bulletin

Volume 8 • 2 • Special Issue • 2022

Edited by
Alessandro Bausi, Paola Buzi, Javier Del Barco,
Emiliano Fiori, Marilena Maniaci,
Eugenia Sokolinski

COMSt

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin is the biannual on-line and print-on-demand journal of the European research network Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies. Born in 2009 as a European Science Foundation Research Networking Programme, the network has been affiliated to the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/>) since 2016.

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin welcomes articles, project descriptions, conference reports, book reviews and notes on all topics connected with the written cultures of the Mediterranean Near and Middle East and related traditions or offering a comparative perspective. Contributions should be sent to Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies, Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies, Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, Alsterterrasse 1, 20354 Hamburg, Germany; eugenia.sokolinski@uni-hamburg.de. For submission guidelines and former issues visit <https://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/en/comst/publications/bulletin.html>.

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Publication date February 2023

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ISSN 2410-0951

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Special Issue

The Transmission of Mark's Endings in Different Traditions and Languages

**papers presented at the International Workshop,
Lausanne, 2-3 June 2022**

**edited by
Claire Clivaz,
Mina Monier,
and Dan Batovici**

Trajectories in the History of Textual Scholarship on Mark's Endings: A Reconsideration

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This article reconsiders the history of textual scholarship on the issue of Mark's endings. Particular attention is given to the period from the sixteenth to the late-eighteenth century, when Birch discovered that Codex Vaticanus does not contain the traditional ending as found in the Textus Receptus. Although direct attestation of the absence in Greek manuscripts was unknown to most scholars of that time, textual critics did in fact discuss the various Markan endings, informed as they were by ancient versions and patristic sources. Our contribution presents the opinions of important scholars, which in many ways anticipate discussions and arguments persisting till today. It aims to provide an exploratory overview of the scholarly history of Mark's endings and to show the elements that led to the so-called 'turning point' in the late-eighteenth century.

Introduction¹

Traditionally, discussions about the history of scholarship on the endings of Mark often start with the nineteenth-century 'critical period', especially the debate in the middle of that century between the defenders of the Longer Ending (like Burgon) and those who questioned the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20 (like Westcott and Hort).² Scholarship before that period is usually touched upon without further exploration. Kelhoffer, however, in his *Miracle and Mission*, goes beyond this scope and traces the scholarly discussions back to Birch's work published at the turn of the nineteenth century, who was the first critic who publicly introduced the absence of Mark 16:9–20 in Co-

- 1 The two authors exchanged ideas from the very beginning, distributed authors and works, and together composed the article in this published form. We thank the editors, Claire Clivaz, Mina Monier, and Dan Batovici, for their support and suggestions, and also the participants of the Mark 16 conference for their remarks and feedback, especially James Kelhoffer. Particular thanks go to Régis Burnet, who kindly shared with us the pre-published version of his article in this issue. Although Burnet's article and ours both deal with the issue of the Markan endings in the history of scholarship, the theme is approached from different angles. Whereas his focuses on the scholarly doubts about the Longer Ending, framed by the tension between Protestant and Catholic circles, our article traces and analyses trajectories and recurring themes in the scholarly debates. We also thank Tom Parker for his valuable suggestions.
- 2 E.g. Hug 1978, 12–14; Cox 1993, 56–66 (particularly on Burgon 1871).

dex Vaticanus (B, GA03).³ Indeed, because of Birch's contribution, scholars began to notice the manuscript attestation of the Shortest Ending of Mark. It significantly influenced the scholarly discussions on this issue from the nineteenth century onwards.

The present article intends to serve as a supplement to previous studies. We will reconsider the history of scholarship in the so-called 'precritical' period.⁴ Our research question can be formulated as follows: *how did critics see the text-critical issue of Mark's endings before and up to Birch?* As will be shown in our analysis through the centuries, several themes already occurred from the time of Erasmus onwards, which still recur in present-day discussions. Although there are several recent publications on Mark's endings, the scholarly history itself is seldom discussed.⁵ Consequently, the time before the information on Codex Vaticanus became available through Birch's publications merits fresh attention.

Descriptions and Analysis

In what follows, we will describe a number of representative scholars in chronological order. Our analysis will focus on their arguments on this specific issue, as well as some important parts of the reception of their contributions.

– Erasmus (1466–1536)

First of all, let us begin with the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus. His opinion on the Markan endings can be found in his annotations on Mark 16:14.⁶ These annotations mainly deal with the apparently conflicting stories about the resurrection of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. A series of exegetical problems are raised and discussed. For instance, Erasmus criticises Augustine for his interpretation of Mark 16:14, who indicates a chronological discrepancy between the Markan narrative and the version given by John. That is, Mark 16:14 speaks of Jesus' appearance to his disciples at the table as the last event (according to the rendering of the Vulgate: 'Novissime recum-

3 Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1209. Kelhoffer 2000, 6–20, especially 7. Kelhoffer refers to Birch 1801. For discussions from text-critical perspectives, see Westcott and Hort 1881, 28a–51b; Metzger 1994, 102–106; Parker 1997, 124–147.

4 This periodisation is very popular among textual critics; see e.g. Metzger and Ehrman 2005, 137–164. The period began with the *edition princeps* of the Greek New Testament by Erasmus.

5 E.g. Black 2008. A rare exception is the brief account given in Kamphuis 2013.

6 Erasmus 2000, 434–437. Although the annotation is located at verse 14, Erasmus also discusses verse 9.

bentibus illis'), but in John 21 Jesus appeared again at the sea of Tiberias.⁷ By referring to the Greek ὄσπερον, Erasmus rightly notices that it does not necessarily mean 'novissime' ('lastly'), as rendered by the Vulgate. If one opts for the Greek meaning of 'later', Erasmus continues, there is no contradiction between Mark and John.

Then Erasmus turns to the traditional ending of Mark and its conflict with the other Gospels. He addresses the two solutions proposed by Jerome. The first one is, according to Jerome: 'For either we do not accept the testimony of Mark, because it is present in few [copies of the] Gospels — nearly all the Greek manuscripts do not have this section to the end.'⁸ In other words, the Longer Ending of Mark was not found in most of the Greek manuscripts of Jerome's time. In response to that, Erasmus states:

Haec solutio impia erat, si tum temporis hoc capitulum idem habebat autoritatis quod reliquum Marci Euangelium.⁹

This solution was irreverent, if at that time this section had the same authority as the rest of Mark's Gospel.

Erasmus further discusses another solution given by Jerome:

[A] Admonet autem et illud [E] Hieronymus, [A] subdistinctionem esse faciendam ante *mane*; ut intelligamus Christum vespere surrexisse, deinde *prima sabbati* visum esse Mariae, hoc modo legentes: *quum surrexisset Iesus* — et hic interposita hypostigme sequatur —, [E] *mane prima sabbati* [A] *apparuit* [E] *primo* [A] *Mariae*. Hanc distinctionem indicat et Theophylactus.¹⁰

However Jerome also suggests that before 'mane' ('early') a minor division [through punctuation] should be applied. We can then understand that Christ rose in the evening, after which he was seen by Mary 'prima sabbathi' ('on the first day'). The way of reading is then: 'When Jesus had risen—and here follows the inserted hypostygme [comma]—early on the first day he first appeared to Mary'. Theophylactus also indicates this division.

- 7 The reference is Augustine's *Cons.* Cf. Erasmus 2000, 435 (Hovingh's note on l. 126).
- 8 Jerome 1912, 481: 'Aut enim non recipimus Marci testimonium, quod in raris fertur Euangeliis, omnibus Graeciae libris paene hoc capitulum in fine non habentibus' (Erasmus has 'pene' instead; translation: Donaldson 2009, 402). It should be noted that Jerome's use of Eusebius would only become known by scholars in the nineteenth century. For an extensive discussion of Eusebius and his view on the Markan endings, see Kelhoffer 2001.
- 9 Erasmus 2000, 434 ll. 159–160.
- 10 Erasmus 2000, 434 ll. 160–164. In the ASD editions, parts marked with '[A]' are from Erasmus' first edition (1516), while parts marked with '[E]' are from his fifth edition (1535).

Here Jerome tries to resolve the conflict between the times given in Mark 16:9 and Matt 28:1. By adding a comma between ‘surgens autem’ and ‘mane’, Jerome believes that the problem can be solved.

Next to this, Erasmus discusses the addition in Mark 16:14 as reported by Jerome.¹¹ He thinks that the addition comes from some apocryphal gospels. There is an intriguing side remark here:

Caeterum ut hoc extremum Marci caput hodie habetur in omnibus quae sane viderim, Graecorum exemplaribus ...¹²

Further since this final chapter of Mark is today found in all Greek copies that I consulted

This remark could imply that Erasmus did not find any additions in all the manuscripts he consulted.

In short, Erasmus does not question the canonicity of the traditional ending of Mark. Instead, what is important for him is how to tackle the various narratives after Jesus’ resurrection. His annotations on Mark 16:14 typify his way to approach exegetical problems, namely returning to the Greek to find better ‘solutions.’ As will be shown in our exploration below, the references to Jerome and his response would then become a ‘hub’ for subsequent scholars interested in this issue. Another minor but noteworthy aspect is Erasmus’ appeal to manuscript attestation by personal inspection.

Except for the elements mentioned, it is also interesting to note what is missing in Erasmus’ annotations of the text. It is well known that he once received a list of 365 readings in the Codex Vaticanus from one of his opponents Sepúlveda. Yet, apart from a few references in his last edition, Erasmus did not make extensive use of the list.¹³ Since the list is now lost, one may wonder whether Sepúlveda’s list contained the information on the omission of the Markan ending in the Vaticanus. Because of the nature of the list, which focuses on the differences between the text of Erasmus’ edition and the ancient manuscript, it is unlikely that Sepúlveda would have included such an omission. Therefore, we can conclude that Erasmus probably did not know about the omission in the Vaticanus.

– *Cajetanus (1469–1534)*

The next representative scholar to be discussed is Erasmus’ contemporary, Tommaso de Vio, known by his Latin name Cajetanus. During the course of the last decade of his life, Cajetanus produced a series of biblical com-

11 See NA²⁸ app. *ad loc.*, and also the discussion in Donaldson 2009, 407–408.

12 Erasmus 2000, 436 ll. 175–176. In the 1535 edition Erasmus adds: ‘quod enarrat etiam Theophylactus’ (‘what Theophylact also tells’).

13 On this affair and Erasmus’ use of Vaticanus, see Krans 2020.

mentaries including most books in both Testaments. The issue of the Markan endings appeared in his annotation on Mark 16:9.¹⁴ Two elements deserve our attention. First, Cajetanus refers to Jerome just as Erasmus does. Jerome's proposals are unacceptable for Cajetanus. On the one hand, he does not think that the differences between Mark and the other Gospels are very significant. More importantly, on the other hand, it is unthinkable to have a Gospel that ends without the resurrection narrative, since the resurrection of Jesus is the essential part of faith (as Paul confirmed in 1 Cor. 15:14). In this regard, Cajetanus provides an argument that would last for centuries, namely: Mark cannot have ended with 16:8; if 16:9–20 is a later addition, the original ending must have been lost. In his own words:

Nec quisquam mentis compos asserere aut credere potest hoc ultimum quod habetur apud marcum capitulum totum adiectum esse nisi aliud quo caremus perditum fuerit: quia sequeretur euangelium marci terminari in sepultura christi, ita quod nihil penitus de resurrectione iesu marcus scripserit. Quod non solum stultum sed perfidum est cogitare.

Neither can anyone in his right mind assert or believe that this final section in Mark is an addition unless another one which we lack was lost, since it would follow that Mark's Gospel ended with Christ's burial, and Mark would have written nothing at all on Jesus' resurrection. Which to consider is not only stupid but even deceptive.¹⁵

Another notable element is that, although he would not himself doubt the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20, Cajetanus notes that many Greeks did, because of the addition in Mark 16:14 reported by Jerome,¹⁶ and because of verses 17–18 concerning the miraculous signs. Those doubts, according to Cajetanus, may have been the reason for the omission among the Greeks. Somewhat surprisingly he concludes:

Quicquid autem sit de veritate, suspicionum tamen istarum effectus est, quod haec scripta non sunt solidae autoritatis ad firmandam fidem sicut sunt reliqua marci indubitata.

Whatever may be true in all this, the result of those suspicions is that these texts do not have the same authority to establish the faith as does the undoubted remainder of Mark's Gospel.

Cajetanus offers some interesting though puzzling comments on the Markan endings. On the one hand the Gospel must have ended with a nar-

14 de Vio 1530, 83v. His annotations on Mark were completed on 2 December 1527 (cf. 84r). In the reprint edition, *Opera Omnia* (1639), the ending of Mark is discussed in vol. 4, 168b–169a. See also the discussion in O'Connor 2017, 156–157.

15 By referring to 'Christ's burial' Cajetanus creates some confusion, because he could give the impression that he has the entire chapter 16 in mind. It seems however his discussion is limited to Mark 16:9–20.

16 Jerome, *Pelag.* 2.15. A similar reading is nowadays found attested in W032.

native of the resurrection, since that is the foundation of the entire Christian faith. On the other hand he seems to be impressed by the fact that the Greeks were divided on the Markan endings.

Unsurprisingly, Cajetan's opinion became criticised by some Catholic scholars after him. For instance, Baronius reproached him for having doubted the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20. Although Jerome's approach to this issue was somewhat disappointing, for Baronius, the church father did not question the authority of the passage.¹⁷

– *Beza (1519–1605)*

In addition to the aforementioned discussions, another element concerning the different endings in Mark can be found in the Geneva reformer Theodorus Beza's annotations to his New Testament edition. Already in his first edition (1556), Beza refers to Theophylact and to Erasmus — as referencing Jerome's observation — at the place of his annotation on Mark 16:9.¹⁸ He then comments:

Ego vero in hoc capite nihil animadverto quod cum caeterorum Euangelistarum narratione pugnet, vel diversi authoris stilum arguat: et testor in omnibus vetustis codicibus quae nobis videre contigit, hoc caput inveniri. Reperimus tamen in octavo codice quaedam interiecta. Nam post ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ haec addita erant eadem manu in ipso contextu, πάντα δὲ τὰ παρηγγελμένα τοῖς περὶ τὸν πέτρον συντόμως ἐξήγγειλαν. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς καὶ ἄχρι δύσεως ἐξαπέστειλε δι' αὐτῶν τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον κήρυγμα τῆς αἰωνίου σωτηρίας: id est, Omnia autem quae ipsis fuerant imperata, celeriter Petro et ipsius comitibus renuntiavit. Postea vero etiam Iesus ipse ab Oriente ad Occidentem per eos sacrum illum et incorruptum aeternae salutis nuntium promulgavit. Sed quis haec non animadvertat a diverso prorsus autore profecta? Certe mihi mirari subit eorum audaciam quos non puduit sacra profanis tam temere permiscere.

But I do not detect anything in this chapter that contradicts the story as told by the other evangelists, or that points to the style of a different author: And I testify that the chapter is found in all the old manuscripts that we were able to consult. In the eighth manuscript however we came across some added elements: after ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ the following was added in the text itself by the same hand: πάντα δὲ τὰ παρηγγελμένα τοῖς περὶ τὸν πέτρον συντόμως ἐξήγγειλαν. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς καὶ ἄχρι δύσεως ἐξαπέστειλε δι' αὐτῶν τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον κήρυγμα τῆς αἰωνίου σωτηρίας, that is: 'And all that had been ordered they reported concisely to those around Peter. And after that Jesus himself also sent out from the East and till the West, through them, the sacred and incorruptible proclamation of the eternal salvation.' But who would not notice that this stems from a different author? It certainly

17 Baronius 1588, 196–197. See also Burnet's article in this issue for his discussion about Cajetan's opinion and its reception in Catholic circles.

18 Beza 1556, 68v. In the 1598 edition, Beza explicitly rejects Theophylact's 'solution.'

makes me wonder about the audacity of those who are not ashamed to mix profane things into sacred things so rashly.

Beza is aware of apparent contradictions as raised by some patristic authors and Erasmus, but he does not consider them unsolvable.¹⁹ He then provides a counterargument against Jerome's testimony, namely manuscript attestation of Mark 16, on the basis of his personal inspection.²⁰ But he also reports the Markan ending as found in Stephanus' 'eighth manuscript', that is, Codex Regius (L, GA 019).²¹ However, the manuscript's reading is dismissed by Beza immediately. He argues for its inauthenticity stating that the style is clearly non-Markan.

Three aspects in Beza's remarks are relevant for our current discussion. First, Erasmus is directly referred to for the information on Jerome. Second, manuscript attestation plays a central role for his argumentation supporting the traditional reading. The third and perhaps most interesting aspect is the introduction to scholarship of a different ending, the one found in Codex Regius. On the one hand he mentions and even cites and translates this additional ending, but on the other hand he rejects it because of the stylistic differences, that is, on the basis of an *internal* argument. This 'weapon' would be frequently employed in the centuries to come. Beza does not connect the existence of this Codex Regius ending with the question of the authenticity of the Longer Ending.

- 19 In fact, Beza offers solutions different than Erasmus for the harmonisation problem between Mark 16:9 and Matt 28:1 (see the annotations on both verses).
- 20 It should be noted however that Beza can present as personal inspection any information on manuscripts of which he is aware, for instance the collations made by Henricus Stephanus that were made available to him.
- 21 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 62, f. 113r (the so-called 'Shorter Ending'). In fact, this manuscript contains both the Shorter and the Longer Endings (ff. 113r–114r). In f. 113r, the last line of v. 8 is succeeded by ornamental marks (after column a, line 24), followed by a note (φέρετέ [for φέρεται] που και ταῦτα) that precedes the Shorter Ending. Then another note (ἔστιν [for ἔστιν] δὲ και ταῦτα φερόμενα μετὰ τὸ ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ) was inserted between the two endings. For Beza's use of manuscript evidence, see Krans 2006, 211–216. His knowledge of the Markan endings in L (GA 019) probably derived from (Henricus) Stephanus' collation book. The information is not found in (Robertus) Stephanus' 1550 edition. From other annotations by Beza, it is clear that Henricus' collation book contained more information than what was eventually used in the 1550 edition. It is also known even from the 1550 edition itself that the collation book must have contained more than just variant readings (see, e.g., the textual notes at 1 Cor. 15:32 and 15:33). For various historical reasons, it is highly unlikely that Beza himself consulted Codex Regius. On the issue of the 1550 edition and its apparatus, see Yi 2019.

– *Lucas Brugensis (1549–1619)*

Next scholar in line is Franciscus Lucas Brugensis. In his extensive commentary on the Bible, published in 1580, no reference can be found on the Markan endings.²² In his later work, a series of notes on the Greek text of the New Testament, however, Lucas Brugensis provides a long discussion on this issue.²³ No new light is shone there, as he refers to Jerome’s words and responds by pointing to many other patristic sources and manuscript witnesses for the traditional ending. Moreover, the ‘Shorter Ending’ as attested in Codex Regius is cited and translated.²⁴ The information must have been copied from Beza’s edition, but as often he keeps silent about his sources.²⁵ The conclusion given by Lucas Brugensis is that it is important to retain the Longer Ending as printed in the editions at his time.

Although he does not provide new information concerning the endings of Mark, Lucas Brugensis does summarise what was at stake in the contemporary scholarly debates. Apart from his interesting silence on his use of Beza’s annotation, another point absent in his work may need some explanation. That is, in his notes Lucas Brugensis occasionally refers to an ancient manuscript in the Vatican, which often agrees with the renderings of the Vulgate. That manuscript is in fact our Codex Vaticanus.²⁶ Nevertheless, on the occasion of Mark 16:9–20, no reference regarding this manuscript can be found. Most probably Lucas Brugensis did not know the absence of the passage in the Vaticanus at all, since his knowledge of the manuscript was only partial and secondary: he received some collations given by others.²⁷ If he had known that the manuscript omits the Longer Ending, he would likely have mentioned it in his notes.

– *Maldonatus (1534–1583)*

Another Catholic critic, Joannes Maldonatus, deserves our attention regarding his opinion on the Markan endings. More than a decade after his death, in 1596 and 1597 his commentaries on the four Gospels were edited and pub-

22 Lucas Brugensis 1580. After Mark 15:47 (page 370), there are no further comments on the text of Mark. The reason is probably that there his focus is the Latin Vulgate, not the Greek text.

23 Lucas Brugensis 1606, 1042b–1043b.

24 Lucas Brugensis 1606, 1043a.

25 It is possible that, as a Catholic scholar, Lucas Brugensis tended to avoid mentioning Protestant scholars by name.

26 In Lucas Brugensis 1580, less than twenty of his notes on the New Testament text refer to Codex Vaticanus, all of which concern the four Gospels.

27 Lucas Brugensis explicitly mentions that he obtained a printed Greek New Testament edition containing a collation of the Gospels against an ancient Vatican manuscript by D. Werner. See Lucas Brugensis 1580, 21.

lished by his disciples. Maldonatus' comments on this issue can be found in the first volume, containing Matthew and Mark.²⁸ On the one hand, Maldonatus thinks that Jerome's remark concerns the entire chapter: 'I am very amazed about one thing from all antiquity: that Jerome in his third question to Hebidia recalls that in many manuscripts this entire chapter of Mark was not found, and that some authors had doubts about it.'²⁹ He finds the idea absurd. For Maldonatus, Jerome should have stated more clearly the authenticity of the chapter, since there is not a single hypothesis that sufficiently compelling to conclude that the chapter was added. If contradictions are a problem, then there would seem to be larger tensions between Luke or John and Matthew than between Mark and Matthew.³⁰

On the other hand, Maldonatus states that it is not even allowed to raise doubts regarding the authenticity of Mark's Longer Ending because the Council of Trent affirmed the canonicity of the books, including all their chapters. According to him, there has never been a Catholic author who doubted it. Moreover, he further points out that Irenaeus already used this chapter and explicitly mentioned parts of verses 16:19 and 1:1 as written by Mark. In Maldonatus' own words:

'Usus est Irenaeus lib. 3. adversus haereses cap. II. Et quidem ita usus, ut aperte dixerit hunc Euangelii finem, qui est ver. 19. *Et Dominus quidem Iesus postquam locutus est eis, assumptus est in caelum*, et principium illud capituli. I. versu 1. *Initium Euangelii Iesu Christi*, ab eodem Marco fuisse conscriptum.³¹

Irenaeus used it, *Adversus haereses* book 3 chapter 2. And indeed he used it in such a way, that he clearly said that the end of this Gospel, verse 19 'So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven' and the beginning of chapter 1, verse 1 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ' had been written by the same Mark.

Several aspects are interesting in Maldonatus' annotations. First, he is confused about Jerome's term 'capitulum.' Taking the word as referring to the entire chapter, he considers it unthinkable that the author would have stopped at Mark 15:47, and thus would have left out not only the resurrection narrative

28 Maldonatus 1596, cols 905–907 (on Mark 16:1 and 16:12).

29 Maldonatus 1596, col. 905: 'Vehementer miror unum ex omni antiquitate Hieronymum quaestione 3. ad Hedibiam meminisse totum hoc caput Marci in multis codicibus non reperiri, et a nonnullis de eo auctoribus dubitari.'

30 Cf. Maldonatus 1596, cols 741–747 (on Matt 28:1).

31 Maldonatus 1596, col. 905. The reference is to Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.10.6 (Irenaeus uses a division that starts the second chapter of book 3 at *Haer.* 3.9.1). This citation and its text-critical issues can be found in the Münster database of *New Testament Patristic Citations* <<http://intf.uni-muenster.de/patristik/index2.php?submit=10081>> (accessed 11 August 2022).

but also the women's encounter at the empty tomb.³² Second, the way Maldonatus refutes the issue is remarkable. Apart from the reference to the authority of the Council of Trent—which is understandable—, he also cites Irenaeus as a counterexample to Jerome. From a historical perspective, this was the first time that the words from this second-century patristic author were brought to the fore. From then on Irenaeus' testimony would become an important piece of evidence for those supporting the Longer Ending of Mark. Third, in his commentary on John, Maldonatus mentions several variant readings of Codex Vaticanus. And yet, he does not seem to have been aware of the absence of Mark 16:9–20 in this manuscript.³³ As a consequence, scholars had to wait for two more centuries for the Vaticanus information on this specific passage.

– *Simon (1638–1712)*

Richard Simon's treatment of the Markan endings is worthwhile for discussion. The issue is addressed lengthily in his *Histoire critique du texte du Nouveau Testament* (1689).³⁴ Simon first mentions the Greek attestation as reported by Jerome. He points out that the word 'capitulum' ('chapter' or 'section') has to refer not to chapter 16 as a whole, but rather to Mark 16:9–20. This is clear from the discussion and from the fact that the word 'capitulum' meant something else at the time. And, Simon adds, it also concurs with the manuscripts that he was able to consult, as we will show.

Then Simon provides summaries of other scholars' accounts, including Grotius, Maldonatus, and Baronius, followed by his own evaluation. In particular, early attestation proven through patristic citations is discussed.³⁵ Yet Simon considers that Jerome's presentation of the attestation was correct (in Jerome's time), as traces can still be found through his own study of manuscripts. He first discusses Codex Regius, and suggests that the Longer Ending in this manuscript can be a later addition or a remark. According to Simon, the possible reconstruction is:

On peut facilement juger de là, que ceux qui ont décrit cet Exemplaire Grec qui est ancien, ont crû que l'Évangile de Saint Marc finissoit par ces mots ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ.

32 Maldonatus himself was troubled with the possible contradiction between Mark 16:1 and Matt 28:1, so perhaps this led him to misunderstand Jerome's expression. Besides, here Maldonatus seems to depend on Erasmus' work without mentioning the name.

33 E.g. Maldonatus 1597, col 635 (on John 5:2), col 786 (on the *pericope adulterae*). Interestingly, no information on Codex Regius was given by Maldonatus, although he did consult Beza's work.

34 Simon 1689, 114a–122a (chapter 11, in the title 'Des douze versets de cet Évangile qui ne se trouvent point dans plusieurs Exemplaires Grecs MSS').

35 Simon 1689, 114a–116b. The works under his discussion are Grotius 1641, 587–588; Maldonatus 1596, col 905; Baronius 1588, 196–197.

Ils ont néanmoins ajouté le reste écrit de la même main, mais en forme de remarque seulement, parce qu'on ne le lisoit point dans leur Eglise. Ce qui est entierement conforme au témoignage de St. Jérôme dans sa Lettre à Hediba.³⁶

Compared to Beza's judgement cited above, Simon provides a more cogent argument on the basis of his personal inspection of manuscripts. He also discusses another manuscript kept in Paris and the remark at Mark 16:8–9 as he noted during his examination.³⁷ Moreover, he points out that the Ammonian sections do not continue. Somewhat surprisingly, Simon concludes by simply accepting the authority, age, and canonicity of the Longer Ending.

In Simon's work, an interesting and conflicting combination can be observed. On the one hand, he examines the available manuscript witnesses to offer a critical evaluation of Jerome's words. Remarks made by scribes and the absence of the Ammonian sections seem to support the description Jerome gave. Similarly, based on his inspection of manuscripts, Simon offers a correct understanding of the word 'capitulum', as the reference to Mark 16:9–20 only. On the other hand, despite all the critical notes he gives, he still accepts the Longer Ending.

To be retained from Simon's contribution is the fact that paratextual elements can have bearings on text-critical discussions, and that is essential to study the manuscripts themselves instead of relying on second-hand information. In these respects, Simon is a pioneer: Simon introduced to scholarship the importance of the Ammonian sections on the authenticity of the Longer Ending.

– *Mill (1645–1707)*

In John Mill's Greek New Testament edition of 1707, he discusses the issue of the Markan endings in a few places. The most extensive one is found in the section on Gregory of Nyssa.³⁸ There Mill not only comments on the patristic author's explanation but also addresses the absence of Mark 16:9–20 in the Ammonian sections.³⁹ For Mill, other patristic references like Irenaeus should also be taken into account. That is, the Longer Ending has been well known from very early onwards. Hence Mill comes to the conclusion:

36 Simon 1689, 118b.

37 Simon 1689, 120b–121a (on BR 2868), that is, GA 15 (now Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 64). The remark is found at the bottom of f. 98v in the manuscript.

38 Mill 1707, lxxvii a–b; also see cxi b and his critical notes at Mark 16:8.

39 It should be noted that, instead of the attribution to Gregory of Nyssa, the referenced passage is now commonly attributed to Severus of Antioch. See Donaldson 2009, 403–404 and also 396 n. 34.

Verum nec ἐναντιοφάνεια ista supra dicta, nec sectionum Ammonianarum conclusio ad versum octavum Capitis huius, obstant quo minus subsequencia omnia, quae in nostris habentur Codd. et Editt. pro Marci genuinis haberi debeant.

However neither such *apparent contradictions* (ἐναντιοφάνεια) mentioned above, nor the conclusion of the Ammonian sections at the eighth verse of this chapter, opposes regarding all the subsequent verses, which are found in our manuscripts and editions, as genuinely Markan.

In short, although he is aware of evidence against the traditional ending, Mill still considers Mark 16:9–20 as an authentic Markan passage, as attested in all manuscripts and printed editions of his day.

Despite all the opinions and information that he gathered, Mill does not contribute anything new to the discussion. In a way he typifies a default position of accepting the Longer Ending, even when evidence against it is mounting.

– Bentley (1662–1742)

Although he never published his proposed New Testament edition, Richard Bentley in fact had advanced knowledge concerning the issue of the Markan endings. In his working edition, Bentley notes down some variant readings on the pages where Mark 16 is found.⁴⁰ Notably on the top of one of the supplement pages, some relevant notes can be found. He cites several passages from Jerome, as many others do. More importantly, among his notes one concerns the absence of the Longer Ending in Codex Vaticanus: ‘9 [sign for omission] quae sequuntur in Cod Rom.’ (‘wanting is what follows in the Roman manuscript’).⁴¹ However, Bentley does not seem to have considered changing his text, despite his knowledge of the attestation in Codex Vaticanus. Otherwise, such a change would have been another piece of evidence showing his novelty and pioneering nature.

Historically speaking, Bentley’s role is both extremely important and hopelessly marginal: he was the first to know, from Mico’s collation, about Codex Vaticanus and the Longer Ending, but he did not convey this knowledge to the scholarly world. Neither did he, apparently, doubt the authenticity of the Longer Ending based on the new information.

– Wettstein (1693–1754)

In his famous *Novum Testamentum Graecum* of 1751–1752, Johann Jakob Wettstein accepts the verses Mark 16:9–20 and does not mark them for omission. He cites many sources from Greek manuscripts, versions, and patristic

40 Bentley 1716–1729, 79–80. Cf. Bentley 1862, 11–12 (as usual, Ellis makes some editorial changes).

41 This note is found in Bentley 1716–1729, 80 sup., on the top of the page. His knowledge of Vaticanus is of course based on the collation of Mico, made at his request.

citations, but does not give his own opinion.⁴² The most interesting element is perhaps his report on L019. Based on his personal examination, Wettstein provides both the Shorter Ending and the textual notes as found in the manuscript. He even tries to imitate the ornamental marks given by the scribe. It may be worthwhile to reproduce his efforts here:

γάρ] + 3 3 3 3 3 φέρετέ που και ταῦτα· πάντα δὲ τὰ παρηγγελμένα τοῖς περι τὸν Πέτρον συντόμως ἐξήγγειλαν. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα και αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς και ἄχρι δύσεως ἐξαπέστειλε δι' αὐτῶν τὸ ἱερὸν και ἄφθαρτον κήρυγμα τῆς αἰωνίου σωτηρίας — — — ἐστιν δὲ και ταῦτα Φερόμενα μετὰ τὸ ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. Ἀναστάς δὲ κ. τ. λ. L.⁴³

This remark signifies the growing awareness of manuscript attestation as well as paratextual elements in Wettstein's time. Besides that, his contribution does not introduce new material. Although he tried to obtain information on Vaticanus, he remained unaware of the absence of the Longer Ending therein.

– *Griesbach (1745–1812)*

Johann Jakob Griesbach's treatment of the Markan endings can be divided into two stages, namely before and after his knowledge of the attestation in Vaticanus.

In the first stage, Griesbach already paid attention to this text-critical issue. In the first edition of his synopsis, he addresses the issue by beginning with the evidence attested in the scholia of some manuscripts known to him:⁴⁴

Quae sequuntur [sic] inde a commate nono, in nonnullis, imo in plurimis, in accuratioribus, in omnibus pene Graeciae libris, deesse; in aliis vero raris, accuratis, multis, plurimis, extare, testantur scholia codicum L 1. 22. 24. 34. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. etc.

What follows from verse nine onwards is absent in some — indeed very many — in the more accurate ones, in almost all Greek books. However, in a few others, accurate ones, many, very many, it is present. This is evident from the scholia of the manuscripts L, 1, 22, 24, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, etc.

42 Wettstein 1751, 639–640; among the others are the Syriac, Jerome, Cajetanus, and Simon.

43 Wettstein 1751, 639; cf. also 41 (under the siglum L). Wettstein's description of L019 can already be found in Wettstein 1730, 19–20, in which the manuscript belongs to the second class of his division, and the description ends with an asterisk to indicate his personal inspection. In fact, it was Wettstein who identified the manuscript as the eighth one (η') used by Stephanus in the 1550 edition.

44 Griesbach 1774, 290 n. f (same in Griesbach 1777, 135 n. a).

In the light of the comparison between the synoptic Gospels, Griesbach further expressed his doubts about the traditional ending of Mark in one of his annual lectures in Jena in 1789:⁴⁵

Quae inde ab hoc commate leguntur apud Marcum, dubia sunt. Si vero genuina esse censens, facile videbis a tabula nostra, ea esse partim ex Matthaeo partim e Luca desumpta et in epitomen quasi redacta, (quod posterius tamen a more Marci abhorrere videtur,) adpersis etiam nonnullis, quae in neutro illorum occurrunt.

This [Mark 16:9] and the remaining verses of Mark are dubious. If you regard them as genuine, you will easily see from our table that they are taken partly from Matthew and partly from Luke, and are, as it were, reduced to a summary (which seems, looking back, to be inconsistent with Mark's usage) and interspersed with a few things which do not occur in either.

Remarkable are his observations: (1) that Mark 16:9–20 appears to have been abstracted from the resurrection narratives in Matthew and Luke, (2) that the wordings do not seem to be Markan, and (3) that interspersions can be found here and there.

Then in the second stage, after the ground-breaking report from Birch about the omission of the traditional ending in the ancient majuscule manuscript kept in Rome, Griesbach elaborated his discussion in his next annual lecture, given in 1790. Now he also referred to the evidence of Vaticanus:⁴⁶

Si ultima Marci commata, a nono inde usque ad vicesimum, genuina essent, aut Marcus commate iam octavo finem libello suo imposuisset, illius omissionis ratio probabilis reddi omnino non posset. Sed deesse ista commata in codice pereximio vaticano, et abfuisse olim a multis libris manuscriptis, scimus. Attamen omni veri specie caret, Marcum commate octavo verbis ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ librum finivisse. Itaque coniciere licet, genuinam Evangelii clausulam, in qua procul dubio itineris in Galilaeam mentio facta erat, casu periisse, et seculo primo finiente aut secundo ineunte ab ignoto homine utcumque suppletam esse; quoposito, non erit profecto, cur istam omissionem miremur.

If the last verses of Mark, from the ninth until the twentieth, were genuine, or if Mark had consciously ended his Gospel at the eighth verse, it is impossible to offer a probable explanation for this omission at all. But we know that these verses are missing in the esteemed Vatican manuscript, and were once lacking in many other ancient manuscripts. Nevertheless, it is very unlikely indeed that Mark ended his book at the eighth verse with ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. It is therefore reasonable to conjecture that the genuine ending of the Gospel (one that undoubtedly mentioned the journey into Galilee) was accidentally lost, and that another ending was supplied either at the end

45 Griesbach 1789, 11 n. ff, translation by Orchard in Griesbach 1978, p. 211 n. 39. Although this lecture was given later than Birch's publication, Griesbach was probably unaware of that work while preparing his lecture.

46 Griesbach 1790, 6–7, translation after Orchard in Griesbach 1978, 127. See also Griesbach 1796, 253 n. e.

of the first century or at the beginning of the second century by someone unknown; and if this be so, there is surely no need to be surprised by this omission.

For the existence of the Gospel without the Longer Ending, Griesbach now has, besides Jerome's words, Codex Vaticanus, the knowledge of which made him strengthen and elaborate his previous position as explained above. Thus, he formulates even more clearly a position still current today, namely—echoing more or less Cajetanus' *horror vacui*—that it is inconceivable that Mark's Gospel ended with verse 8 ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. Both the Shortest Ending and the traditional Longer Ending are questionable. In his reconstruction, the original ending was lost, and someone else supplied the Longer Ending as we know it.

Thus the 'new evidence' of Codex Vaticanus provided by Birch does not really make Griesbach change his position, for instance reconsidering the possibility that Mark's Gospel really ended with 16:8. To him Codex Vaticanus is not an ultimate authority, but just a building block in his argumentation.

His specific proposal was probably influenced by his own solution to the synoptic problem, which argues that Matthew was written first and Mark last. If Mark did actually end at verse 8, then this would become a serious drawback for his theory. For it is inconceivable that the author of Mark would have *intentionally* omitted all the resurrection materials available to him through Matthew and Luke.⁴⁷

In Griesbach's discussion, we see how new scholarly tools such as his synoptic edition helped him formulate new theories, in this specific case a hypothesis on the secondary nature of the Longer Ending. It is salient to note that Griesbach is acutely aware of the scholarly obligation he has to explain all the available evidence.

– Birch (1758–1829)

It is well known that the Danish scholar Andreas Birch reported the absence of Mark 16:9–20 in Codex Vaticanus in his 1788 *Quatuor Evangelia Graece*, an edition of the four Gospels containing the Textus Receptus and a rich collection of variant readings.⁴⁸ Up until present-day scholarship, however, little is

47 This observation is pointed out by Parker 1997, 131–132.

48 Birch 1788, xxi–xxii, 315–316. While he does mention the 1788 edition, Kelhoffer only uses the 1801 edition in his *Miracle and Mission*. Birch 1801 was actually a reproduction of this 1788 edition, including only the prolegomena and the collection of variants (with some modifications). Had Kelhoffer begun his discussion from Birch onwards with the 1788 edition, his periodisation would have been 'From Birch to Burgon (1788–1871)' instead of 1801–1871. See Kelhoffer 2000, 6–7. See the same phenomenon in Lyons-Pardue 2020, 6–8, esp. nn. 9–11, in which a discussion of Birch's 1788 edition is missing.

known about his publications before 1788. In fact, already in 1785 Birch published two works based on his inspection of manuscripts. The first one was written in Danish, and thus its reception was insignificant except for some colleagues from his own country.⁴⁹ The other publication, a German article of the same year in the journal *Orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek*, has drawn much more attention.⁵⁰ In this article Birch announces his finding of the omission when he introduces several of the remarkable variant readings found in Vaticanus:⁵¹

Marci XVI, 8. Mit den Worten Εφοβουντο γαρ, wird der Evangelist beschlossen, so das der neunte und folgende Verse bis zum Ende des Kapitels in der Handschrift mangeln.

Die Auslassung dieser verdächtigen Verse ist merkwürdig. In mehreren Handschriften finden sich bey dem neunten Verse Randanmerkungen die den Mangel dieser Verse in mehreren alten Handschriften bezeugen; doch kante man bisher keine Handschrift in der sie würrklich ausgelassen werden, die Vatikanische Handschrift ist die einzige.

He then refers to (and even cites) Jerome's testimony, indicating that at that time only a few Greek manuscripts contained the Longer Ending. Marginal notes found in two manuscripts he examined in Venice also confirm the doubt of the traditional ending.⁵² Further, Birch points out that the Eusebian Canons commonly end at Mark 16:8, without any indication of the last twelve verses.⁵³ Here, without mentioning, he follows Simon.

For Birch, the 'discovery' of the omission in Codex Vaticanus becomes the strongest evidence for supporting Jerome's report. From the perspective of scholarly history, this has indeed become a watershed for the discussion of the Markan endings. Interestingly, Birch himself only speaks of the omission to be 'remarkable' ('merkwürdig' here probably does not mean 'strange' or 'peculiar') and does not provide his opinion on whether it represents the original ending. Instead, the omission in Vaticanus is mainly used to support the antiquity of the manuscript: it must be very ancient since this omission confirms the information given by Jerome and (indirectly) by the Eusebian Canons.

49 Birch 1785b; the issue of the Markan endings, including the omission in Vaticanus, is discussed in 66–72.

50 Birch 1785a; the issue is discussed in 146–149.

51 Birch 1785a, 146–147.

52 The two referred manuscripts should be GA 209 (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Gr. Z. 10 (394), ff. 1–381) and GA 2886 (Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Gr. Z. 6 (coll. 336)), both of which belong to the Family I group.

53 Birch mentions that there are manuscripts in which the numbering of the sections is continued, but these are invariably of a later date and often the additional numbers have been added by another hand (Birch 1785a, 149).

In his 1788 publication, Birch repeats his position and provides some more details, notably on the subscription in Vaticanus, on patristic evidence other than Jerome's testimony, and finally on the Eusebian Canons as found in manuscripts in Rome and Venice.⁵⁴

In the end Birch's contribution is not so much his own opinion on the original ending of Mark, but the inescapable fact that finally an old manuscript is known to the entire scholarly world that ends with Mark 16:8.

Trajectories and Evaluation

As we have shown, the discussion on the endings of Mark far predates Birch's publication of his collations. It should be noted that no scholar before the nineteenth century thought Mark had intentionally ended his Gospel at 16:8. And even if that is the earliest attainable (attested) state of the text, various critics stated that in that case the original ending must have been lost.⁵⁵

Especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries issues of harmonisation loom large, though the positions do vary. Some deny any contradiction between Mark 16:9–20 and the other Gospels, even by means of some intricate exegesis, but some others, such as Cajetan, still detect problems in parts of Mark 16:9–20. Alleged contradictions can play a different role in the discussion, namely, to explain why scribes omitted the Longer Ending, which they unnecessarily thought to be too much at odds with the other resurrection narratives. So, what clever exegetes can explain, naive scribes simply took away.

Even before Birch's publications, critical information on Mark's endings was growing gradually. The Shorter Ending as cited in L019 was known from Beza onwards, and the argument from (the silence in) the Ammonian sections was first pointed out by Simon.

Some of the reconstruction proposals, such as the one by Griesbach, are still found today. Also, the typical statement that Mark's Gospel must have had a resurrection narrative in order to be a true Gospel is found already in Cajetan's discussion, with an obvious reference to Paul's famous chapter 1 Cor. 15.

54 Birch 1788, xxi–xxii.

55 E.g. Griesbach (discussed above). Another interesting proposal was offered by Michaelis, who conjectured that Mark could have composed his Gospel in two editions ('Ausgaben'): first the text up to Mark 16:8, based on Peter's memories, and second the complete Gospel including the last twelve verses, written in another place after the interruption of Peter's martyrdom. According to this hypothesis the entire chapter 16 was still written by the same author Mark. See Michaelis 1788, 1052–1060 (§ 141), in which he refers to Birch's 1785 German article (1059). He seems to think Codex Vaticanus contains that first edition. See also the article by Burnet in this issue.

The moment Codex Vaticanus enters the discussion, it does not tip the balance in favour of a Gospel ending with 16:8, but merely intensifies the problem. Therefore, to see Birch's publications as the turning point of this issue does not seem to be historically accurate. It is another building block to the century-long debate.

Let us make some final remarks on the aspect of Digital Humanities. Our study as presented here was only possible thanks to current-day digital tools and rapid digitisation projects.⁵⁶ Thereby it also sheds light on discussions about the application of Digital Humanities to historical investigations such as these. More than before, we are privileged to hear the voices from the past. And while it remains important to avoid the temptation of anachronism, that is, to impose our questions and concerns on the scholarship of previous centuries, this historical approach, as part of Digital Humanities, allows for a more comprehensive and more critical evaluation of issues such as the Markan endings.⁵⁷

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56 To be sure, one should always be aware of the danger of focusing only on those materials that have been digitised, in order to prevent unbalanced scholarship and one-sided conclusions.

57 We are very grateful for the Mark 16 VRE made available by the SNSF Mark 16 project. It should be noted, however, that thus far their website does not cover most of the material discussed in our contribution. Including important samples of the scholarly history on the endings of Mark could considerably enhance the project, and make it more encompassing than it already is.

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