

The end?

A canonical exploration of the conclusion(s) of the Gospel of Mark

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Prologue

The concept of canonicity has occupied an indisputably integral role in Christian history, theology, and doctrine for millennia. Its development and persistence are likely linked to the bibliophilic tendencies present from the movement's earliest strata—tendencies which may seem perfectly sensible to the modern, largely literate public but were relatively exceptional among religious groups of the ancient Greco-Roman world.¹ In its initial stages, this passionate devotion to the written word was manifested not only in the frequent appropriation of sacred writings from the Jewish tradition, but also in the creation and circulation of a remarkable amount of additional authoritative literature intended to provide instruction, illumination, and regulation. Apart from the works which were ultimately incorporated into the New Testament and a few other fortuitously preserved examples, the majority of this corpus has long since been lost; only scattered traces testify to its once-considerable magnitude. The sixth-century catalog known as the *Decretum Gelasianum*, for instance, lists gospels according to Matthias, Barnabas, Peter, Thomas, and Andrew; acts of Philip, Peter, Thomas, Andrew, Paul, and Thecla; revelations of Thomas, Paul, and Stephen; and a host of other exotic items.² Seasoned scholars and specialists are well aware that, just as contemporary readers revere the time-honored contents of the biblical canons, so some of their forebears venerated the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the *Gospel of Truth*, and *Jesus' Correspondence with King Abgar*, among others.³ While an exhaustive inventory of early Christian literature is hardly necessary to offer a simple estimation of its vast dimensions, any number of analogous illustrations are readily available.

The reliance upon written documents as indispensable sources of definitive teaching and dogma, coupled with the significant array of available options, necessitated the establishment of judgments or guidelines as to which written documents were entitled to serve in this capacity and which were not. Bart Ehrman and others have helpfully isolated and outlined basic criteria such as the familiar fourfold dictum of antiquity, apostolicity, universality, and orthodoxy that came to be applied by leading members of the proto-orthodox party and thus eventually established the boundaries of sanctioned scripture for the majority of Christendom.⁴ The taxonomic terminology associated with this process varied amongst its earliest individual practitioners. The noted bishop and historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-c. 340 CE) speaks of four broad (and possibly intermingled) categories: the **ὁμολογουμενα** (“accepted” or “acknowledged”), the **αντιλεγόμενα** (“disputed” or “spoken against”), the **νοθα** (“spurious”), and blatantly heretical offerings.⁵ In due course, however, the term **κανων** (“rule” or “standard”), which originally referred to an actual mechanical tool designed to ensure straightness but later acquired the metaphorical connotation of a benchmark by which other things are measured or assessed, found widespread acceptance.⁶ This noun, together with its verbal and adjectival forms, continues to be used generally and in specialized discussions involving the current compilations of biblical books, the manner in which they were compiled, their selection over and against notable competitors, and questions raised or actions taken at any point regarding their legitimacy and authority. These issues are by no means limited to the distant past; Martin Luther’s abortive attempt to remove the Letter of James from the New Testament in 1522, the occasional objections to the continuing presence of Book of Revelation, and calls for the legitimation of other books which were not so endorsed in the patristic period are invariably and accurately described in canonical terms.

This absurdly brief summary is intended not to serve as a superlative or innovative treatment of the origins and applications of canon in Christianity—numerous such treatments, penned by justifiably renowned experts, are already in print—but rather to expose and probe its long-standing *intertextual* core. For the overwhelming majority of its employment, canonization has served to certify or reject the authoritative auspices of entire literary works on the basis of their relationships with other approved works, or with a list of criteria defined in part by the contents of other approved works. As Bruce Metzger observes, it “has an active sense, referring to those books that serve to mark out the norm for Christian faith and life; it also has a passive sense, referring to the list of books that have been marked out by the Church as normative.”⁷ It has not rendered piecemeal judgments; individual chapters, verses or excerpts have not been canonized or decanonized apart from the larger wholes to which they belong. This includes works which feature thorny textual problems such as those surrounding the conclusion of the Gospel of Mark; in these cases it has been determined “that the question of canonicity pertains to the document *qua* document, and not to one particular form or version of that document.”⁸ Or as David Parker has succinctly stated in his assessment of early Christian textual transmission, “[W]hile early Christianity may have come to make lists of authoritative *books*, there were no authoritative *copies* of them.”⁹

Thus virtually all recent reappraisals of the subject have addressed the potential addition or excision of books in their entirety, questions whose answers in turn identify the fundamental nature of the canon as either “open” or “closed.” Metzger mentions a few interesting proposals, from the inclusion of Martin Luther King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” some portion of the rich cache of tracts discovered near Nag Hammadi,

or the Ignatian epistles to the removal of Revelation, the Second Letter of Peter, or the Letter of Jude. In the end, however, he finds that “the Church has received the canon of the New Testament as it is today... the canon cannot be remade—for the simple reason that history cannot be remade.”¹⁰ Eugene Ulrich has similarly concluded that the fixity at the culmination of the canonical process is utterly intrinsic and prevents any subsequent editorial manipulation; “[i]f the canon is by definition a closed list of books that have been considered, debated, sifted, and accepted, then talk of an open canon is confusing and counterproductive.”¹¹ On the other hand, Robert Funk has argued for the creation and circulation of *multiple* New Testaments in an assortment of shapes and sizes to support the fact that “[n]o body of tradition can be its final and complete expression. In recognition of that limit, the canon of scriptures should itself be given a plurality of forms.”¹² Numerous anthologies have answered this call, assembling diverse groupings of biblical, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphical texts as supplements or alternatives to traditional collections of scripture. Bestsellers such as *Lost Scriptures*, *The Lost Books of the Bible*, *The Other Bible*, and *The Gnostic Bible*¹³ are merely the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

While Metzger, Ulrich, Funk, and the myriad of similar surveys reach a variety of disparate conclusions concerning the meaning and flexibility of canon, they tend to share a myopic regard for it as an exclusively *intertextual* entity. This unfortunate inclination leads to the pervasive obstruction or ignorance of another core component, one which has especially emerged and evolved in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment eras: the impact of intellectual advances such as historical Jesus research and the disciplines of historical, source, form, and textual criticism upon the credibility and influence of portions of previously endorsed writings. In particular, the last of these has broached a number of exceptionally

provocative, hegemonic issues which scholars have not satisfactorily addressed. Blithe dismissals such as those of Metzger and Ulrich, with their curt claims that textual diversity does not significantly impinge upon matters of canon, are overly simplistic and unhelpful; they display a complete disregard for the fact that the results of text-critical analysis, where only one reading is normally classified and treated as “original,” inherently impact the authority of the remaining options under review. If the canon is indeed closed, what precisely is enclosed within it? Even Funk—who rightly realizes that the study of Jesus apart from theological claims and convictions, and the inconsistencies and contradictions revealed through the critical dissection and comparison of the New Testament gospels, represent strong challenges to conventional views of canonical authority—fails to adequately extend this insight when he entertains the possibility of the redefinition of the term. Instead he merely advocates the acceptance of additional books without referencing the subject of variant versions of the biblical text.¹⁴ It is clear, then, that the prospect of textual criticism as an interrelated, *intratextual* element of canon requires further examination. The multiplicity of extant endings of Mark, and the familiar debates which surround them, provide a suitable representative sample for this task.

The many endings of Mark

The extant manuscript, versional, and patristic testimonies of the last verses of Mark comprise a veritable Gordian Knot of diverse readings, ranging from an abrupt confrontation between the grieving women and a mysterious angelic figure at the empty tomb to post-resurrection appearances and discourses of Jesus. The various witnesses have been helpfully classified and catalogued by a large number of scholars, and their conclusions may be simply and generally classified according to three types: the Short, Intermediate, and

Long Endings.¹⁵ Additionally, the last of these is once supplemented by an extensive codicil known as the Freer Logion.

In the witnesses which conclude with the Short Ending, the narrative closes with the terrified flight of those women who reached the empty tomb, and their subsequent silence in spite of explicit instructions to proclaim Jesus' rising and impending arrival in Galilee: “[s]o they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (και εξελθουσαι εφυγον απο του μνημειου ειχεν γαρ αυτας τρομος και εκστασις και ουδενι ουδεν ειπαν εφοβουντο γαρ; Mark 16:8). The great uncial codices of the mid-fourth century, Codex Sinaiticus (standard text-critical symbol: \aleph ; Gregory-Aland catalog number: 01) and Codex Vaticanus (symbol: B; catalog number: 03), which represent the most highly regarded Greek witnesses to the text of the New Testament and the earliest extant witnesses to this portion of Mark,¹⁶ both contain this reading. It also appears in early translations of the gospel into languages including Georgian, Syriac, Sahidic Coptic, and Armenian and in the writings of the church fathers, some of whom indicate that it was present in the best or the majority of manuscripts known to them.¹⁷ From a negative standpoint, Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215 CE) and his reputed pupil Origen (c. 185-254 CE) show no knowledge of any text beyond this point, nor does the original form of the Eusebian canons, an early tool designed to aid readers in the identification of parallel passages in the gospels.¹⁸ In the cases of Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, enormous multiple-quire manuscripts copied by carefully trained scribes operating in *scriptoria*,¹⁹ the very ways in which these words were written may provide indications of opinions towards other potential readings. The former ends with the uncial characters ΤΟΓΑΡ occupying approximately one-third of a line; the rest of the line and also

the entirety of that beneath contain vaguely decorative calligraphy, a feature which is not repeated at other similar points in the codex such as the end of the Gospel of Luke.²⁰ As for the latter, the characters ΤΟΓΑΡ once again occupy a portion of the final line, followed by an ornamental marking which in this case occupies a piece, but not all, of the remainder. Unusually, both the balance of the column of text *and* the entirety of the next are blank. Accordingly some have suggested that the linear embellishments of Codex Sinaiticus reflect a desire to prevent the insertion of any further words,²¹ while others have countered that the entirely empty adjoining column of Codex Vaticanus represent the intention of one of its scribes to include additional text.²² Regardless of these highly hypothetical contentions, it is indisputably clear that these critically important manuscripts, and a few other notable witnesses, conclude with what is now known as Mark 16:8. The statements of Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome (c. 347-420 CE) that the best copies of their own time are of this type are especially interesting, as so few exemplars have survived from this early period.

Immediately following the assertion of the silence of the women “for they were afraid” (εφοβουντο γαρ; 16:8) some manuscripts continue with an apparent contradiction: “And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation” (παντα δε τα παρηγγελμενα τοις περι τον Πητρον συντομως εξηγγειλαν μετα δε ταυτα και αυτος ο Ιησους απο ανατολης και αχρι δυσεως εξαπεστειλεν δι αυτων το ιερον και αφθαρτον κηρυγμα της αιωνιου σωτηριας). This is familiarly known as the Intermediate Ending. Only the Old Latin Codex Bobbiensis (4th-5th c.; standard symbol: it^k; one of the earliest manuscript witnesses to Mark, albeit in translation) presents it without appending any further material; a small

number of uncials copied between the sixth and tenth centuries, a few minuscules and lectionaries, and early translations into Sahidic Coptic, Bohairic Coptic, and Ethiopic give it before the Long Ending. Its limited external support, together with the patently apologetic character of the sudden reversal of the behavior of the women and the dogmatic flavor of the phrase “sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation”—the terms *αφθαρτον, κηρυγμα,* and *σωτηριας* are all *hapax legomena* in Mark—suggest a later date of composition. As Parker flatly notes, “Nowhere in the Gospels do we find such a phrase... or anything like it.”²³ Nevertheless it appears in the vein of biblical transmission at a relatively early point, and in a variety of textual forms.

Approximately ninety percent of the surviving witnesses, however, contain the excerpt labeled as the Long Ending, now known to modern readers as Mark 16:9-20. These include the especially prominent and frequently cited uncials Codex Alexandrinus (5th c.; standard symbol: A; catalog number: 02), Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (5th c.; standard symbol: C; catalog number: 04), and Codex Washingtonianus (standard symbol: W; catalog number: 032; known as the “Freer Gospels” after its purchaser, Charles Lang Freer); prominent minuscules from Minuscule 33 (9th c.; hailed as the “Queen of the Minuscules” or the “Queen of the Cursives” due to its similarities to the leading uncials) to the members of Family 13 (standard symbol: *f*¹³; known as the Ferrar Group); and almost all representatives of the statistically dominant Byzantine text-type, although some of these set it apart with asterisks, other sigla, or brief commentary.²⁴ Beginning with brief resurrection appearances to Mary Magdalene and a pair of unidentified men which are reported to the larger community but are not believed (vv. 9-13), it moves to an exchange between Jesus and the Eleven where the latter group is upbraided for its “lack of faith and stubbornness”

(*απιστιαν... και σκληροκαρδιαν*; v. 14). This is followed by a statement of commission (v. 15), an assurance that the faithful will be granted powers over demons, glossolalia, imperviousness to poisonous snakes and other substances, and the ability to heal the sick (vv. 17-18), and finally the ascension of Jesus and brief benedictory remarks (vv. 19-20).

Readers possessing a cursory knowledge of the cumulative contents of the canonical gospels and acts should recognize many blatant parallels between these works and the condensed drama of the Long Ending. The appearance of the risen Jesus to Mary and again to the men in the countryside recalls corresponding scenes in John and Luke, respectively (John 20:11-17; Luke 24:13-35); the commissioning of followers, the “Great Commission” of Matthew (Matt 28:19); the successful handling of dangerous snakes, Paul’s miraculous encounter with the viper (Acts 28:3-5). The ascension of Jesus is also repeated (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Beyond these striking narrative correspondences, James Kelhoffer has argued persuasively that the presence of numerous linguistic catchphrases indicates a demonstrable literary dependence upon all of the canonical gospels.²⁵ Other scholars are less definitive as to its origins, but equally certain that it does not belong to the earliest recoverable text of Mark. In the judgment of Pheme Perkins, “This longer ending has very little connection with Mark’s gospel. The Acts of the Apostles as well as apocryphal acts traditions are the closest theological relatives of this bit of narrative.”²⁶ In short, it seems probable that the Long Ending was a later pastiche woven together from portions of other accounts in response to the unacceptable, negligent reactions of the women. Through its presence in most ancient manuscripts and subsequent inclusion in modern translations, however, it has long been counted as sacred scripture by the majority of the Christian world.

A final fragment which must be included in a discussion of endings of Mark is not an ending in its own right but is introduced into Codex Washingtonianus following Mark 16:14, in the midst of the Long Ending. As this codex is alternatively known as the Freer Gospels, the passage has been dubbed the Freer Logion. While no other existing manuscripts include it, a slightly different version is preserved in the writings of Jerome. It consists of a fascinatingly bizarre exchange between the disciples and their master inspired by his biting criticism of their refusal to believe in the reports of his resurrection:²⁷

And they [the disciples] excused themselves, saying, “This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal your righteousness now”—thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, “The term of years of Satan’s power has been fulfilled, but other terrible things draw near. And for those who sinned I was handed over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more, that they may inherit the spiritual and imperishable glory of righteousness that is in heaven” (κακεινοι απελογουντο λεγοντες οτι ο αιων ουτος της ανομιαις και της απιστιας υπο τον σαταναν εστιν ο μη εων τα υπο των πνευματων ακαθαρτα την αληθειαν του θεου καταλαβεσθαι δυναμιν δια τουτο αποκαλυψον σου την δικαιοσυνην ηδη εκεινοι ελεγον τω χριστω και ο χριστος εκεινοις προσελεγεν οτι πεπληρωται ο ορος των ετων της εξουσιας του σατανα, αλλα εγγιζει αλλα δεινα και υπερ ων εγω αμαρτησαντων παρεδοθην εις θανατον ινα υποστρεφωσιν εις την αληθειαν και μηκει αμαρτησωσιν ινα την εν τω ουρανω πνευματικην και αφθαρτον της δικαιοσυνης δοξαν κληρονομησωσιν)

The common apocalyptic motifs of a period of demonic hegemony and the imminence of further sufferings are immediately apparent. It is also striking that the term “imperishable” (αφθαρτον), which is otherwise unattested in the gospels and extremely rare in the New Testament as a whole,²⁸ appears twice in the various closings of Mark: here and in the final phrase of the Intermediate Ending. The appearance of other unusual words such as αμαρτανω, απολογεω, αληθινος, and υποστρεφω (*hapax legomena* in Mark) and δεινος, ορος, and προσλεγω (*hapax legomena* in the entire New Testament) which became

increasingly common in later Christian writings make it a likely product of “a second or third century scribe who wished to soften the severe condemnation of the Eleven.”²⁹ Despite its relative rarity and exotic impression upon the contemporary reader, it too was revered as scripture by some communities—and like other concluding sections mentioned above, may have arisen to correct perceived problems in the text.

The quest for the original ending

Which of these remarkably disparate options, then, is supremely authoritative? Which is the proper ending of Mark? When we speak of the ending of Mark as part of the canonical history of Christianity, to which one are we referring? Since the advent of critical study of the biblical text in the early modern era, most scholars have sought to identify and exegete the original or earliest recoverable reading of a particular passage, often ignoring, marginalizing, or even discarding supposedly less creditable candidates in the process. The results of these efforts are shown in a variety of ways, from the analytical judgments delivered in their commentaries to the editorial symbols and marginal notes included in the hefty study Bibles which they prepare for churches, classrooms, and individuals alike. In each such case, regardless of intent, authorial or editorial preference towards one reading invariably alters the estimations of the reader concerning the clout of the remainder.

From the latter half of the second century until the rise of the discipline of textual criticism in the nineteenth century, the linkage of the Long Ending with the bulk of the gospel was virtually unchallenged. In the intervening period, the majority of the scholarly community has recognized the Short Ending as the original or earliest recoverable conclusion of Mark. The principal arguments in favor of this position have been efficiently

summarized by Adela Yarbro Collins in her recent commentary. Not only is the reading attested in the earliest and best uncials, but its extreme brevity and distressing tenor best explain the creation of other alternatives.³⁰ Against the protests of some grammarians that an ancient Greek text could not end with a post-positive particle such as *γαρ* (the final word of Mark 16:8), at least one treatise of the Neoplatonist Plotinus (c. 204-270 CE) and one of the Stoic Musonius Rufus (1st c. CE) ended with the term.³¹ Similarly, the contention that the verb *φοβεω/φοβεομαι* (from which the imperfect form *εφοβουντο* is inflected) requires an ensuing object, infinitive, or clause ignores the fact that it appears alone on five other occasions in Mark (*εφοβηθησαν* 5:15; *φοβηθεισα* 5:33; *μη φοβου* 5:36; *φοβεισθε* 6:50; *εφοβουντο* 10:32), and that the source of the women’s fear—their encounter with the angelic figure in the tomb—had already occurred. Moreover, Neil Hopkinson has remarked that throughout Greek literature, “Fear is a common reaction to divine epiphany,”³² an observation which legitimates the emotional reactions of the awestruck Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome.

Collins also suggests that a chronological survey of early Christian literature reveals an evolving hermeneutical continuum of the resurrection of Jesus ranging from an inauguration of heavenly exaltation (e.g., Phil. 2:9-11) to a bodily restoration and visitation of his closest followers (e.g., his dramatic appearance to his brother James in the apocryphal *Gospel of the Hebrews*). As Mark is the earliest extant gospel,³³ and was written “near the beginning of this process, the tradition about the appearances of Jesus does not seem to be an integral part of the stories of Jesus.”³⁴ The plausibility of this argument increases in light of the formulaic references to death and resurrection, but not post-resurrection appearances, in the included passion predictions (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). John R. Donahue and

Daniel J. Harrington have added that the curt climax of the gospel demonstrates literary and thematic continuity with its opening scenes: it “ends as it began, with a message from God (1:3; 16:7) pointing to a meeting with Jesus the Messiah and Son of God.” In this matrix of resolution, the assurances given to the women indicate that “[the] blindness that characterized the disciples throughout... will be lifted.”³⁵ For William Wrede and Marvin Meyer, the Short Ending is not only compatible with the framework of the remainder of the gospel, it is practically essential. In view of the “messianic secret” famously isolated by the former, the silence of the women in the wake of their explicit instructions to do otherwise is reminiscent of the repeated failure of the disciples to comprehend and believe.³⁶ And in the estimation of the latter, the tension of the Short Ending is intended to inspire the stunned listener or reader to take on the role of a true witness and proclaim Jesus throughout the world; “[o]nly the hearer, the implied hearer or reader, can resolve the tension so... ingeniously created at the conclusion of the gospel. It is perhaps too much to propose that an altar call is needed at the end of Mark, but something similar is implied.”³⁷ In these and other analogous treatments, the discussion of the remaining readings is usually significantly less detailed, and is primarily focused upon categorizing them as later additions.³⁸

Other commentators, however, remain unconvinced that the Short Ending is the original ending of Mark. Many of the proponents of this assumption hold that the gospel must have continued on the basis of internal evidence but that the authorial conclusion was lost, leading to the production of the Intermediate and Long Endings. The most influential member of this group is likely Rudolf Bultmann, who maintains on the basis of the angel’s assurance of an impending reunion in Galilee (16:7) that a pericope of fulfillment must have followed.³⁹ Metzger, Wilfred Lawrence Knox, and N. Clayton Croy are among those who

suggest that the chaotic array of readings was instigated by the loss of the final words of the autograph due to death, fire, or other accident—a proposal which is highly dependent upon the use of the codex form for the autographic text of Mark (as an individual leaf of a codex would be much more easily detached and misplaced than a corresponding piece of a scroll).⁴⁰ Writing prior to the widespread publication of the aforementioned treatises of Plotinus and Rufus, Knox adds that while γαρ may have finished paragraphs in casual conversation or correspondence, there is no evidence that that it did so in a genre approximating that of Mark: a “popular narrative, whether written or oral.”⁴¹ Finally, though some see a strong connection between the character of the Short Ending and that of the gospel, others are incredulous that “this gospel would begin with ‘good news’ and end with ‘fear.’ It seems that something more is expected.”⁴² Knox pushes still further and states that if the author actually ended with εφοβουντο γαρ, he “was totally indifferent to the canons of popular story-telling” which required an explicitly positive ending.⁴³ Here, just as in the argumentation of advocates of the Short Ending, little or no mention is made of the Intermediate and Longer Endings as they apparently do not relate to the original state of the gospel.

The nature and impact of these occasionally bitter debates are highly significant in the continuing study of canon. The widespread search for an original or earliest recoverable reading consistently creates a textual hierarchy in which various alternatives are weighed and assigned corresponding levels of validity and authority—key canonical components. Nowhere are these circumstances more blatantly apparent than the editorial presentation of modern translations such as the New International Version (NIV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which were released in 1978 and 1989, respectively. In his

provocative critique of text-critical notations in recent English translations, Holger Szesnat provides a detailed outline of the format adopted by the editors of the NIV: 1) the text of Mark 16:1-8 is printed normally; 2) a horizontal line appears following the close of the Short Ending; 3) a bracketed note is inserted which reads, “The earliest [or most reliable] manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20”; 4) the Long Ending is printed normally. The Intermediate Ending and Freer Logion are not included.⁴⁴ The editors of the NRSV print all three endings, with the last two enclosed within separate sets of double brackets beneath headings identifying them as “The Shorter Ending of Mark” and “The Longer Ending of Mark.” These initially puzzling divisions and titles are briefly explained in adjoining notes which give some explanation of the assortment; the Freer Logion is also given here, albeit in a smaller font. In view of the obvious presentational disparities between the diverse readings, it seems utterly unreasonable to assume that they possess equivalent levels of authority, and consequently equivalent states of canonicity, in the mind of the reader. Thus passages which have served as scripture for previous generations, sometimes for centuries, are at least partially “decanonized” for many contemporary believers.⁴⁵ New possibilities arise, however, if the isolation of the original ending as the principal goal of textual criticism is transcended.

Towards a new paradigm

Although the identification of the original text has served as the principal goal of textual criticism for the vast majority of its history, several relatively recent studies and proposals offer fresh perspectives on biblical readings—even those which have been deemed unoriginal—and the possibility of a reevaluation or redefinition of their positions within the canon. The work of Eldon Epp is an especially important contribution in this regard. In his

estimation, the deceptively simple term “original text,” whether bracketed by qualifying quotation marks—as in the more cautious modern handbooks of the subject—or otherwise, is imbued with not one but many cogent and viable meanings. The recognition and exploration of this fact will greatly expand the horizons and possibilities of the text-critical enterprise. In an enlightening historical synopsis, he notes that as early as 1808 Johann Hug readily conceded the possibility of multiple “originals” of the New Testament writings due to scribal errors,⁴⁶ and that Samuel P. Tregelles adopted a rather reserved definition of textual criticism with the goal of reconstructing a text “as far as possible” and “as nearly as can be done on existing evidence.”⁴⁷ But many others continued to equate the original and the autographic texts and identified this conjoined entity as the principal, if not singular, disciplinary goal. Prior to the last decades of the twentieth century most understandings of the term still “appear to have in view a single, original text of the New Testament writings, with the assumption... that this original is to be identified with the autograph (at least ideally) and apparently with little thought given to questioning this assumption.”⁴⁸ Most significantly, no one had yet broached the question, “[W]hat can “canonical” mean when each of our 5,300 New Testament manuscripts... was considered authoritative—and therefore canonical—in worship and instruction... *when no two manuscripts are exactly alike?*”⁴⁹

Epp recognizes and affirms, however, the achievements of several scholars who have waged war against the traditional notions of originality, including Helmut Koester, Bart Ehrman, and himself. Koester remarks that the second-century manuscript evidence of the New Testament is virtually nil—four papyri, with an additional four dating to the turn of the century—and that most serious textual corruptions occur within the first few generations of transmission. Consequently, many deviations from the writings of the apostles may be

nearly undetectable to readers today.⁵⁰ For his part, Ehrman outlines a number of readings potentially implemented by “proto-orthodox” scribes in an attempt to render scripture less accessible to the attacks and appropriations of the heterodox, and also observes that some of his contemporaries are beginning to appreciate “what a reader read” in addition to “what an author wrote.”⁵¹ These efforts lay the foundations for new trajectories. Within New Testament textual criticism alone, the predecessor text (the vestigial literary or oral tradition which lies beneath the canonical form), autographic text (the text as completed by its original author), canonical text (the text as it was authoritatively accepted by the church), and interpretive text (the text as reimagined, reevaluated, or rewritten by its recipients) may now be individually or collectively pursued; often they will impinge upon one another.⁵² In sum, the early modern hope for the recovery of a single original text of the New Testament must be abandoned in the wake of flagging evidence and increasing discord over the meaning and usage of the term “original.” Furthermore, critics must recognize that the questions which arise in the course of this debate are simultaneously text-critical and canonical.⁵³

In addition to his persistent probing of the multifaceted connotations of the slippery original text, Epp has approached the issue from another angle, arguing for a more “variant-conscious” approach to the study and presentation of the Greek New Testament. In particular, he advocates the creation and publication of a new edition of the text in which the variants “would be, as the saying goes, in your face!”⁵⁴ The placement of variants alongside the earliest recoverable text eliminates much of the visual marginalization which inevitably occurs upon their relegation to the distant corners of the printed page, and demonstrates their possession of intrinsic worth. While he freely acknowledges that the prospect of such an edition is but a pinpoint upon the academic horizon, the advantages for interested readers

are indisputably weighty and manifold: “[n]ot only would they better understand how the text has been transmitted to us through numerous manuscripts containing multiple variations, but they would be enriched by the various interpretations within the Christian communities that the variants disclose.”⁵⁵ Within this innovative presentational and hermeneutical framework, the implications for the endings of Mark are especially invigorating. The opportunity to appreciate the Intermediate Ending, Long Ending, and Freer Logion as active scriptures of viable communities rather than later corruptions will likely lead to new advances in the study of the world of early Christianity.

The writings of David C. Parker converse with and build upon the efforts of Epp and his collaborators. In the groundbreaking *The Living Text of the Gospels*, he directly challenges the notion that textual criticism can or should recover the original text of a work, ultimately concluding that “the concept of a gospel that is fixed in shape, authoritative, and final as a piece of literature has to be abandoned.”⁵⁶ Instead of the former quest for the original text, the diligent editor is charged with the evaluation of all available material, a process which presents a different set of evaluative challenges but which raises some safeguards against the adoption of one reading and the swift disposal of the remnants. In light of this model, variant readings should be examined together in order to provide the contemporary reader with a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the continually evolving textual tradition; the numerous surviving forms of the Lord’s Prayer are a particularly pertinent example. He delineates six versions of the prayer within the synoptic testimony: 1) that of Matthew, which does not contain a doxology; 2) that of Matthew, which does contain a doxology; 3) that of Luke, without supplements from Matthew; 4) that of Luke, supplemented with Matthew, as found in Codex Bezae (5th c.; standard symbol: D;

catalog number: 05); 5) that of Luke, supplemented with Matthew, as found in the Byzantine text-type; 6) that of Luke, with the phrase “your holy spirit come upon us and cleanse us” in place of “your kingdom come.”⁵⁷ Perhaps sensing the inherent impossibility of the permanent repudiation of a preferred reading, he admits that, were he editing a Greek New Testament, he would print the first and third of these options. Nonetheless, he insists that “all six forms contribute to our understanding of the tradition.”⁵⁸ Most, if not all, arose at an early point—as the bulk of the discrepancies in the written transmission of tradition appeared within a century and a half—and circulated relatively widely. Moreover, once contemporary readers are confronted with the prospect of multiple readings, there is no turning back. Ultimately “[w]e may supply additions to the short version of the Lord’s Prayer, or subtract expansions from the long form. But we are unable to read either as though the other did not exist.”⁵⁹ The interplay between readings in the mind of the reader represents yet another way in which the text continues to evolve.

Parker’s discussion of the endings of Mark begins with references to other stories which boast a variety of known endings, from the traditional tale of Little Red Riding Hood to Gluck’s retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice to John Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, which deliver a subtle suggestion that the obsessive search for a single satisfactory conclusion is unnecessary. Following a summary discussion of the manuscript, versional, and patristic evidence, he identifies the Short Ending as that which precipitated the creation of the rest, “For who would replace verses 9-20 with the Intermediate Ending, or excise it totally to end so baldly as verse 8 does?”⁶⁰ But as the previous example of the Lord’s Prayer intimates, the apparent originality of this ending does not enable the sensitive historian or exegete to unutterably sever it from the additions which followed. Indeed,

The fact that we have decided that the Intermediate and Long Endings are secondary does not mean that we have forgotten that they exist, or that we can now read Mark with its short ending as though we had never read it with its long ending. We are therefore not in a position to say that the Long Ending can be forgotten... Thus, even if one insists on a single original text of Mark, one cannot escape the need to be aware of the fact that all the text forms affect our interpretation of it.⁶¹

Interestingly, the primacy of the Short Ending need not result in a crippling hemorrhage of authority among its later appendages, as they possess their own individual places within the history of the tradition. This is confirmed by the succeeding discussion of the theological tendencies of the Long Ending, a topic which has since been examined in meticulous detail by James Kelhoffer.⁶² Given the relative lack of attention to the content of this excerpt in comparison with other Markan pericopes, even casual conjectures that the strong condemnation of the unbelief of the disciples reflects authorial unease over their previous behavior are welcome and worth pondering. The section concludes with a brief homage to textual criticism for its retrieval of the original ending of Mark and the bearing of this accomplishment on the subsequent exegesis of the book as a whole.⁶³ Nevertheless, the satisfied critic cannot rest on his or her laurels for long; the elimination of the exegetical boundaries imposed by the original text leaves the reader perpetually awash in the steady currents of the tradition. Some questions have received an answer, but others, such as the impact of electronic formats upon the scriptures, are arriving to take their place.⁶⁴ In particular, the repeated assertions of the enduring interpretive linkage between the assorted conclusions and the need to move beyond the obsessive search for the ever-elusive original text and examine all available evidence as links to the living Christian communities which counted them among their scriptures—convictions shared by Epp—are well taken.

Philip W. Comfort's newly published and highly readable commentary of New Testament variants and their representation within English translations represents a practical example of an alternative approach to the matter of multiple readings similar to that envisioned by Epp. Designed to present the most significant exegetical and translational variants "in a format that is communicative and informative to English readers as well as those who know Greek,"⁶⁵ it includes thousands of variations in Greek and English translation, in a unique parallel format together with the supporting witnesses and explanatory notes. Normally the reading of the Nestle-Aland/United Bible Societies text, the standard critical edition of the Greek New Testament used by most scholars, is given first, followed by each variant in turn. If the reading of the earlier editions of the Textus Receptus (based upon the editions of Erasmus beginning in 1513) and Westcott-Hort (1881) differs from that of Nestle-Aland, this is noted as well. While the initial listing of the reading of the standard critical edition may strike some readers as prejudicial, the orderly presentation of every variant, one after another, in identical formats and fonts, offers a much more neutral and accessible arrangement of evidence than the brilliantly concise but frustratingly complicated sigla and abbreviations of Nestle-Aland. The simple, straightforward layout is well-suited for an analysis of the jumbled testimony of the final verses of Mark; each option is listed in its entirety without the need to resort to minute text or obscure footnotes. The additions of essays and glossaries introducing the reader to textual criticism, the major witnesses, the most significant English translations, and other key terms overcome much of the technical jargon which prevents many introductory students from assimilating and enjoying the discipline. Works such as this will undoubtedly further the significant study and use of readings beyond those given in the main text of the critical edition.

These ongoing interpretive challenges and changes, and a number of similar endeavors, have not gone unnoticed. In an article published in 2006, Werner Kelber dramatically declared, “The Copernican revolution Epp, Parker and others are in the process of instituting consists in the abandoning, or at least partially abandoning, text criticism’s disciplinary fascination with privileging the one-fixed point in the tradition... and instead taking each scribal variant seriously on its own terms.”⁶⁶ As this study has repeatedly suggested, changes in the criteria through which material is considered to be meaningful and authoritative are inseparable with canonicity itself. If these attributes are defined according to verification as the original reading, then those units which do not meet these standards are not especially canonical, as they hold no intrinsic value and therefore play no role in the instruction or development of the church. But if, as Parker suggests, “all the developments of the material” are studied,⁶⁷ the substance and the trajectory of some or all of the canon may change, just as the acceptance of the Short or Long Ending may lead the critic to formulate wholly dissimilar interpretations of the gospel.

Epilogue

Like so many studies, the perennial constraints of time and space have rendered the above efforts woefully incomplete; much more could, and probably should, have been said on a number of fronts. Hopefully, however, they have shown that the perfunctory declaration that the concept of canon is unrelated or impervious to the results of the critical study of the canonical texts is much too simplistic. The core of the canonical process is the establishment of an authoritative inspirational and instructional corpus and the consequential reclassification of excluded writings to a secondary status at best, and utter rejection at worst. Such activities are invariably and inextricably related to issues of content; indeed, without

content there is nothing to canonize. If it is true that the ecclesiastical leaders, synods, and councils of the formative patristic period did not or could not establish definitive editions of the writings which they approved, neither did they endorse mere titles apart from their included subject matter. Thus any action which potentially impinges upon the authority of a given biblical reading may be said to possess some canonical consequences. The placement of one or more endings of Mark within brackets or marginal notes, for instance, visually and mentally differentiates these words from those which are not so presented. It is extremely unlikely that the reader, when presented with these readily discernible indications of varying status, would subsequently determine that the alternatively presented options were just as valuable—or, we might say, just as canonical—as the other sections.

As the study of the interplay between canon and textual criticism remains in its infancy, its ultimate ends remain unknown. Already, however, the innovative efforts of Parker, Epp, Comfort, and others have called attention to the subject and have revealed that it is possible to present and study a multiplicity of readings not only as competitors to be ranked and treated accordingly but as telling remnants of religious communities which used, preserved, and transmitted them. Moreover, all extant readings belong to the evolution of the most significant book in the history of Western civilization and have something to offer as such. It is an especially exciting time for those interested in the developing nature of the Christian scriptures. Like the Short Ending of Mark, what happens next has not yet been revealed.

Notes

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- Unless otherwise indicated, all English quotations of the biblical text are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).
 - Unless otherwise indicated, all Greek quotations of the biblical text are taken from *Novum Testamentum Graece* (8th pr; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001).
 - Names, dates and symbolic designations of manuscript witnesses, and the details of their readings of the ending of Mark, are taken from the critical apparatus of *Novum Testamentum Graece* and the excellent lists included in Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 2008), 157-159, and John Christopher Thomas, "A Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 26.4 (1983), 407-408.
 - Dates of patristic figures are taken from Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church: A Comprehensive Introduction* (trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007).
 - ¹ Cf. the comments of Bart Ehrman in his *Misquoting Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2005), 17-43, which note the disparities between the Judeo-Christian tradition with its emphasis upon written tradition and Greco-Roman religion with its emphasis upon practice.
 - ² Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "The So-Called Decretum Gelasianum," in idem, *New Testament Apocrypha Volume I: Gospels and Related Writings* (rev ed; trans R. McL. Wilson; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 38-40.
 - ³ An extensive list of writings regarded by various Christian groups as authoritative is included as an appendix in David L. Dungan, *Constantine's Bible: Politics and the Making of the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 151-154; see also the patristic lists appended to Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, *The Canon Debate* (henceforth *CD*; 3rd pr; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2008), 585-597, and those of Bruce Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (new ed; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 305-315.
 - ⁴ A concise summary of these general criteria is given in Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 242-243. Bruce Metzger suggests a tripartite standard of orthodoxy, apostolicity, and church consensus (*The Canon of the New Testament*, 251-254).
 - ⁵ Everett R. Kalin, "The New Testament Canon of Eusebius," in *CD*, 391. There is some debate as to whether Eusebius speaks of three or four categories; according to the former theory, the disputed and spurious writings would belong to the same larger group. In any case, the lack of scholarly consensus indicates that the formal categorization of potentially authoritative writings was still in progress.
 - ⁶ Cf. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 289-293.
 - ⁷ *Ibid*, 283.
 - ⁸ *Ibid*, 270.
 - ⁹ David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 188; italics added.
 - ¹⁰ Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament*, 271-275. The quotation is found on p. 275.
 - ¹¹ Eugene Ulrich, "The Notion and Definition of a Canon," in *CD*, 34. Citing Metzger, Ulrich agrees that "it is the book, and not the textual form of the book, that is canonical" (30). But like Metzger, he does not explore the consequences of this statement.
 - ¹² Robert Funk, "The Once and Future New Testament," in *CD*, 556.
 - ¹³ Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); William Hone, *The Lost Books of the Bible* (New York: Random House, 1979); Willis Barnstone, *The Other Bible* (new ed; San Francisco: Harper One, 2005); idem and Marvin Meyer, *The Gnostic Bible* (Boston : Shambhala, 2008). A myriad of similar titles are available in local bookstores or through the internet.
 - ¹⁴ Funk, "The Once and Future New Testament," 552-557.
 - ¹⁵ While scholars and translators have used a number of roughly equivalent designations, these are adopted by David Parker; their very simplicity makes them particularly attractive to this study. See *The Living Text of the Gospels*, 124-126.
 - ¹⁶ On the date and recognition of the text of Codex Vaticanus as "textually the best of any," see D. C. Parker, "Codex Vaticanus," in David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (henceforth *ABD*; 6 vols; New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1992), 1.1074-1075; on the date and value of Codex Sinaiticus, see James Charlesworth, "Codex Sinaiticus," in *ABD* 1.1074.
 - ¹⁷ The subsequent discussions of the textual support for each ending are based upon the critical apparatus of *Novum Testamentum Graece* and Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, 157-159. Eusebius of Caesarea is the first to comment that the best manuscripts and the majority of the tradition contains only the Short Ending; his comments are repeated virtually verbatim by Jerome. See Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, 134-135; Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (3rd ed; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 226.
 - ¹⁸ *Ibid*.
 - ¹⁹ On the quality and scale of the production of Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, cf. Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 80; also his "Bible and Book" in Michelle P. Brown, *In the Beginning: Bibles Before the Year 1000* (Washington: The Smithsonian, 2006), 33.

- 20 For invaluable collections of high-quality digital photographs of Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus, and other key early manuscripts of the New Testament, see the electronic index of the Center for the Study of New Testament manuscripts: <http://www.csntm.org/Manuscripts.aspx>. See also the remarkable, groundbreaking electronic edition of Codex Sinaiticus, a collaborative effort between the British Library, the National Library of St. Petersburg, the Library of the University of Leipzig, and the Holy Monastery of St. Catherine, which will be completed in July 2009: <http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/>.
- 21 E.g., Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (rev ed; trans Errol F. Rhodes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 292-293.
- 22 E.g., F. H. A. Scrivener, *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (4th ed; 2 vols; London: George Bell and Sons, 1894), 2.337-344.
- 23 Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, 137.
- 24 For an itemized listing of the manuscripts which mark the Long Ending with in special way, and detailed descriptions of their means for doing so (including the text of marginal notes), see Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 804-805.
- 25 James Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries in the Longer Ending of Mark* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 121.
- 26 PHEME PERKINS, *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 157.
- 27 The Greek text of the Freer Logion follows that of Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, 158.
- 28 It occurs on only seven other occasions: Rom. 1:23; 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Pet. 1:4, 23; 1 Peter 3:4.
- 29 Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 123.
- 30 Collins, *Mark*, 797.
- 31 *Ibid*, 798. Although many classical scholars have argued that the thirtieth, thirty-first, thirty-second (which concludes with $\gamma\alpha\rho$), and thirty-third treatises of Plotinus were originally a single work, there is evidence that they were deliberately divided by Porphyry; cf. Thomas, "A Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark," 413.
- 32 Neil Hopkinson, *Callimachus, Hymn to Demeter: Edited with an Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 27; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 132; quoted in *ibid*, 800.
- 33 A large majority of scholars acknowledge Mark as the earliest extant Christian gospel, written c. 70 CE; cf. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1997), 163-164; Collins, *Mark*, 11-14.
- 34 *Ibid*, 801.
- 35 John R. Donahue, S. J. and Daniel J. Harrington, S. J., *The Gospel of Mark* (Sacra Pagina 2; Collegeville: Liturgical, 2002), 261.
- 36 William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans J. C. G. Grieg; Edinburgh: James Clarke, 1987); for a concise introductory treatment of the idea of the messianic secret, see C. M. Tuckett, "Messianic Secret," in *ABD*, 4.797-800.
- 37 Marvin Meyer, *Secret Gospels: Essays on Thomas and the Secret Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 175.
- 38 E.g., Perkins, *Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels*, 157-163 (which also includes a discussion of the Secret Gospel of Mark).
- 39 Rudolf Bultmann, *A History of the Synoptic Tradition* (re ed; New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 285. Also cited in Collins, *Mark*, 799.
- 40 Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 228; N. Clayton Croy, *The Mutilation of the Gospel of Mark* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 165-166; Wilfred Lawrence Knox, "The Ending of St. Mark's Gospel," in *Harvard Theological Review* (henceforth *HTR*) 35.1 (1942), 13. Metzger and Croy suggest that the autograph or a primordial copy were damaged in a fire or some similar event; Knox poses these possibilities and adds that Mark may have died before completing the gospel.
- 41 *Ibid*, 14.
- 42 Thomas, "A Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark," 415. While Thomas does not explicitly endorse this position, he states that it could be adopted by those "in support of a lost ending."
- 43 Knox, "The Ending of St. Mark's Gospel," 23. Also quoted in Thomas, "A Reconsideration of the Ending of Mark," 413.
- 44 Holger Szesnat, "Some Witnesses Have: The Representation of the New Testament Text in English Bible Versions," in *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 12 (2007), 3.
- 45 Eldon Jay Epp ("Issues in the Interrelation of New Testament Textual Criticism and Canon," in *CD*, 513-514) is one of the few scholars who have recognized this fact thus far.
- 46 *Idem*, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism," in *HTR* 92.3 (1999), 245.
- 47 *Ibid*, 252.
- 48 *Ibid*, 254.
- 49 *Idem*, "Issues in the Interrelation of New Testament Textual Criticism," 514; italics original.
- 50 Helmut Koester, "The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century," in William L. Petersen, *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission* (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 3; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 19-37. Cited in Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text,'" 255.
- 51 Bart Ehrman, "The Text as Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity," in *idem* and Michael W. Holmes, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestonis* (SD 46; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 361 n. 1. Quoted in Epp, "The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text,'" 260.

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- 52 Ibid, 276-277.
- 53 Ibid, 256-257: “Whether or not textual critics acquiesce in all of these charges [posed by Koester], a strong challenge remains, for they are left not only with text-critical questions—for example, which variants of Mark are most likely original?—but also with penetrating canonical questions, such as, which Mark is original?”
- 54 Idem, “It’s All about Variants: A Variant-Conscious Approach to New Testament Textual Criticism,” in *HTR* 100.3 (2007), 298.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, 93. Quoted in Epp, “The Multivalence of the Term “Original Text,”” 265.
- 57 Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, 69.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid, 74.
- 60 Ibid, 137.
- 61 Ibid, 147.
- 62 Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*. This project originally represented Kelhoffer’s doctoral dissertation, completed under the supervision of Adela Yarbro Collins at the University of Chicago in 1999. His detailed exposition of the literary relationships between the verses of the Long Ending and the possible theological and sociocultural location of the author is largely unprecedented; hopefully, however, similar studies of this and other notable variants will follow.
- 63 Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, 147.
- 64 The full influence of electronic texts remains to be seen; cf. idem, “Through a Screen Darkly: Digital Texts and the New Testament,” in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25.4 (2003), 395-411; also “Manuscripts of the Gospels in the Electronic Age,” in *Restoration Quarterly* 42.4 (2000), 221-231.
- 65 Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, ix.
- 66 Werner H. Kelber, “Social Memory and Biblical Studies: Theory, Method, and Application,” in *Biblical Theology* 36 (2006), 19. Quoted in Epp, “It’s All about Variants,” 292.
- 67 Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, 6.