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Introduction

THE FIRST SCHOLARLY CONSENSUS

In the latter part of the nineteenth century two Cambridge scholars, Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, published their major critical edition of *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (1881). This was one of several such publications appearing in the wake of the discovery of Codex Sinaiticus and the coming to light of Codex Vaticanus several decades earlier. Of these various scholarly works that of Westcott and Hort was perhaps the most influential. In the accompanying “Notes on Select Readings”¹ a lengthy and detailed argument was presented which forcibly proposed that Mark 16:9–20 be considered inauthentic, a view held earlier by Griesbach and Lachmann.² The absence of these verses from the two major codices provided the strongest evidence supporting their case. This was backed up with citations from church fathers and the discussion of internal evidence.

The case put forward by Westcott and Hort and other early textual critics succeeded in persuading the greater number of NT scholars and very quickly the non-originality of the final verses of Mark became one of the dogmas of NT textual criticism. The generally accepted view was that these twelve verses were appended by a later hand, probably at some stage during the second century.

However, not all were convinced by the arguments. Both at that time and still now, there have been those occupying high academic or ecclesiastical positions who have defended, on the basis of the evidence, the genuineness of the disputed passage. Of these, the following are the most notable:

- Frederick C. Cook (1804–89), Cambridge scholar and canon residentiary of Exeter, chief editor of *The Speaker’s Commentary*.
- Christopher Wordsworth (1807–85), Fellow and tutor of Trinity College, Cambridge, Bishop of Lincoln, author of *The Greek New Testament*.

1. Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, “Notes on Select Readings,” 28–51. This appendix was not present in the original MacMillan edition of 1881.

2. Croy, *Mutilation*, 20.

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- John W. Burgon (1813–88), Fellow of Oriel College and Gresham Lecturer in Divinity at Oxford, author of *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to St. Mark*.
- F. H. A. Scrivener (1813–91), Cambridge scholar and Prebendary of Exeter, author of *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, and committee member for the Revised Version.
- Richard C. H. Lenski (1864–1936), Professor, Capital University, Columbus, author of the twelve-volume *Commentary on the New Testament*.
- William R. Farmer, Professor of New Testament, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, author of *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (1974).
- Maurice A. Robinson, Senior Professor of New Testament, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, North Carolina, author of several works on textual criticism, including a contribution to *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark* (2008).

Notwithstanding this continuing opposition to the prevailing opinion, the case regarding the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20 is now largely treated as closed, an attitude reflected in the fact that many major commentaries offer no remarks on the contents of these verses.³

Though the view established in the late nineteenth century labeled the end of Mark as a later addition, this does not mean that the alternative position then put forward was that 16:8 was the actual original conclusion. Indeed, such a notion was scarcely entertained.⁴ An ending at that juncture was described by Westcott and Hort themselves as “incredible” and therefore rejected.⁵ At that time, as shown in the work of N. Clayton Croy, three theories regarding the conclusion were generally advanced: (1) there was an ending beyond v. 8 which was accidentally lost; (2) Mark intended to write an appropriate conclusion but never succeeded in doing so, perhaps on account of persecution or death; or (3) the original ending was deliberately suppressed.⁶

THE NEW SCHOLARLY CONSENSUS

Over the ensuing decades, however, a shift in scholarly opinion began to take place. Croy has demonstrated that as the twentieth century progressed the idea that 16:8 might after all have been the author’s intended conclusion came to be seriously considered, and then advocated.⁷ Appeal was made to evidence from the classics that paragraphs, major divisions, and even whole books might end with the Greek particle γάρ (“for”), as does Mark 16:8. Towards the middle of that century the case for this abrupt ending was championed by Oxford professor R. H. Lightfoot,⁸ and from then on its popularity grew steadily. By the late 1980s this view had assumed the place of the new scholarly consensus, enlisting the support

3. This is the case, for example, in the commentaries of Lane, France, Garland, Marcus, Harrington and Donahue, Boring, as well as those of Gundry and Witherington.

4. There were admittedly at this time a few voices that advocated the abrupt ending, including the OT scholar Julius Wellhausen. See Croy, *Mutilation*, 23–24.

5. Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, “Notes on Select Readings,” 46.

6. Croy, *Mutilation*, 174.

7. See the discussion in Croy, *Mutilation*, 18–32.

8. Lightfoot, *Gospel Message of St. Mark*, 80–97, 106–16.

of scholars of such caliber as Raymond Brown, James Dunn, Paul Achtemeier, and Morner Hooker. On this dramatic shift in opinion Croy remarks:

Twentieth-century scholarship thus began and ended with a firm consensus about the ending of the gospel, a consensus, however, which flipped 180 degrees in the latter half of the century. The change was gradual, but in retrospect, remarkable—so much so that persons trained in the last two decades who have not deliberately ventured into the terrain of pre-1970 Markan scholarship might be unaware of the monolithic support once enjoyed by what is now a minority position.⁹

One significant trend within the overall shift in ideas which ought to be highlighted is that while the majority of those from a biblical and theological background came to accept 16:8 as the intended ending, those from the disciplines of textual criticism and paleography tended to remain with the earlier consensus.¹⁰ This aside, the enormous shift in scholarly opinion from one position to another, one that was previously rejected, is quite extraordinary.

What were the reasons for such a drastic change? One might have supposed that new documentary evidence had come to light, but this in reality was not the case. According to Croy and others, the reason for the movement away from the old consensus is to be found simply in the development of new interpretative methodologies, especially during the latter half of the last century.¹¹ Croy explains:

[R]hetorical, narrative, and reader-response criticism began to challenge the autonomy of the text. The meaning of texts came to be seen as the product of interaction between the texts and readers. . . . As readers and their communities make a larger and larger contribution to meaning, the contribution of the text, to say nothing of authorial intent, tends to diminish. Thus, it becomes largely irrelevant whether or not the evangelist had certain intentions that may have been obscured by textual damage. The meaning that we derive as readers *is* the meaning of the text.¹²

This new approach rapidly gained popularity with reference to the Markan ending, the possibility of an open-ended Gospel lending itself readily to such methods. Very quickly the older view which dominated at the close of the nineteenth century found itself now held by a minority. The new methodologies have since progressed to such a degree that, Croy continues, we arrive at the present situation in which:

A generation of New Testament scholars has now been taught and, in turn, has helped perpetuate the majority view on Mark 16:8. As this happens it becomes increasingly difficult to espouse the contrary view and maintain credibility in the guild. The point is not that lost ending theorists are a persecuted minority, but simply that they are swimming upstream, and the current in this case may be driven more by fashion than by evidence.¹³

9. Croy, *Mutilation*, 28.

10. *Ibid.*, 33.

11. An account for the shift is given in Croy, *Mutilation*, 32–44.

12. Croy, *Mutilation*, 36 (*italics original*).

13. *Ibid.*, 39.

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The correctness of Croy's remarks is substantiated by the recent Markan literature itself. Here the new method, with its focus upon the role of the reader rather than authorial intent, is quite consciously applied by Markan scholars, as the following citations testify:

[L]iterature which expresses more than it says demands an act of finding which forces readers into a future of which the text is the foundation but they themselves are the builders.¹⁴

[T]he readers find themselves as active participants in the story rather than just passive observers.¹⁵

More specifically with reference to Mark's putative ending at 16:8, the role of the reader is ostensibly granted priority over the text:

Resurrection-with-appearances would bring closure to the narrative, a closure which characterizes the other three Gospels. Mark's ending is no end; only the reader can bring closure.¹⁶

[W]hen readers supply this ending they participate in it and experience it more fully than if the writer had supplied it to them.¹⁷

Recent reader response criticism offers perhaps the best explanation for this hanging conclusion. Mark wants to draw the reader into this account.¹⁸

Mark may well have intended to bring his reader up short with this abrupt ending—a clever way to make the reader stop, take a faltering breath, and ask: *What?*¹⁹

The accomplishment of Jesus' promises is not found *in the text*. The existence of the Markan community and its story of Jesus indicate that it is taking place *among the readers of the text*, in the experience of the original hearers (and readers) of Mark.²⁰

The application of the new methodology has given rise to a considerable series of articles and chapters, as well as book-length treatments, during the course of the last few decades.²¹

14. Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 17.

15. Wallace, "Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion," 34.

16. Williamson, *Mark*, 285.

17. Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 47.

18. Garland, *Mark*, 622.

19. Ehrman, *Whose Word is It?* 68.

20. Moloney, "Writing a Narrative Commentary," 111 (*italics original*).

21. See, for example, Topel, "What Were the Women Afraid of?"; Joynes, "Sound of Silence"; Iverson and Skinner (eds.), *Mark as Story*; Wallace, "Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion"; Anderson and Moore (eds.), *Mark and Method*; Spencer, "Denial of the Good News"; Galenta and Miller, *Ending of Mark and the Ends of God*; Upton, *Hearing Mark's Endings*; Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*; Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*; Holmes, "To Be Continued"; Williams, "Literary Approaches"; Juel, *Gospel of Mark*; Hester, "Dramatic Inconclusion"; Tate, *Reading Mark from the Outside*; Danove, *End of Mark's Story*; Moore, *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives*; Lincoln, "Promise and the Failure"; Houlden, *Backward into Light*; Magness, *Sense and Absence*; Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*; Boomersshine and Bartholemew,

In an attempt to support such interpretations evidentially the assertion is not infrequently made that other books exist in the canon of scripture which are left opened-ended. Jonah and Acts, it is pointed out, are of such a nature.²² The former concludes with God putting a question to the prophet which remains unanswered, and the latter with Paul under confinement in Rome awaiting his pending trial. In neither case does the book itself supply a resolution. Yet the comparison of these with Mark is not really justified since there are radical differences respecting the Gospel. Firstly, the narrative of Mark has been preparing the reader, through multiple explicit predictions, for the climactic event of Christ's resurrection. Jonah and Acts, contrariwise, in themselves contain no build up of expectation towards any specific outcome. Secondly, and more importantly, there is a huge gulf in the significance and relevance of the absent conclusions. Determining the attitude of an OT minor prophet and the outcome of the trial of a NT apostle on one hand cannot legitimately be paralleled with the resurrection of the Lord and Savior of the church on the other. The latter is absolutely foundational to the church's faith, an event without which that faith would be "in vain" (1 Cor 15:14). The other two outstanding issues are not even "on the radar" in that regard.

INTERPRETATIONS OF AN ENDING AT 16:8

Recent literary interpretations of an abrupt Markan ending are extremely diverse. Joel Williams has outlined the various major viewpoints.²³ A summary will demonstrate the diversity and in some cases the contradictory nature of the alternative approaches:

(1) *A positive response to the miraculous.* Here the fear and silence of the women is interpreted favorably as the initial reaction of awe to a supernatural event. The fact that the women did eventually break their silence is assumed.

(2) *A disaster for the disciples.* According to this view the ending is strongly negative, in which the women fail to inform the other disciples who then in turn fail to meet with Jesus in Galilee. In such an interpretation Mark presents the disciples negatively as part of a deliberate polemic against false teachers.

(3) *An irony to provoke reflection.* Some propose that the ending is not to be understood literally. That the women did report to the disciples who then kept their rendezvous with Jesus is taken for granted. Rather than spell this out the author chose to end on this note of irony. This latter element lies in the fact that in the body of the Gospel those who had been commanded to silence regarding the miraculous actually spoke out,²⁴ while here in 16:8 those commanded to tell are silent.

(4) *An unstated apostolic commission.* This viewpoint reads the sudden ending as "an attempt at reverse psychology."²⁵ Mark intends that the silence of the women should shock readers into the realization that in the face of Jesus' resurrection silence is wrong and that

"Narrative Technique of Mark 16:8"; Peterson, "When is the End Not the End?" This list is by no means exhaustive.

22. See, for example, Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 1094; Wallace, "Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion," 34–35.

23. Williams, "Literary Approaches," 26–35.

24. As, for example, in Mark 7:36–37 and 10:48.

25. Williams, "Literary Approaches," 32.

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the message ought to be declared. The ending then would function as an implicit appeal for others to broadcast the gospel.

(5) *A balance between promise and failure.* Others maintain that Mark deliberately places side-by-side the promise of restoration in 16:7 and the example of failure in v. 8. The purpose here, it is claimed, is that these two concepts should be kept in balance. While human agents may fail in their commissions, divine promises will nevertheless remain firm and receive ultimate fulfillment. Christian experience, we are told, “involves an interplay between divine promise and human failure,” and therefore Mark concludes his narrative with both an encouragement respecting the one and a warning respecting the other.²⁶

(6) *A deconstructionist conclusion.* Some understand that at 16:8 the logic of the whole story collapses, leaving its ending completely indeterminate.²⁷

Other perspectives could no doubt be added to those mentioned by Williams. Yet these serve to illustrate the diversity of thinking among modern interpreters. So while a new scholarly consensus looks to Mark 16:8 as the author’s intended ending, there is no similar concurrence regarding how that ending is to be understood. Undoubtedly some proponents of the present consensus would value such conflicting interpretations precisely because of the polyvalence the ending succeeds in generating. Yet the existence of such a variety of possible viewpoints suggests that, if 16:8 were the actual conclusion, Mark is closing his Gospel on a very indistinct note. This, to the mind of the present writer, can only serve to diminish any impact it might have had in its original early Christian setting.

DOUBTS REGARDING 16:8 AS THE INTENDED ENDING

We will eventually come to advance new arguments which will significantly impact the issue of an ending at 16:8. For the present, however, we express other doubts, often outlined in the relevant literature, concerning the improbability of this being the actual conclusion. We treat these in brief under nine separate headings.

1. Early Christian kerygma

It cannot be doubted that the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was an intrinsic component of the early Christian message. The primitive kerygma as reflected in the book of Acts makes abundant reference to this event within the context of the speeches attributed to the apostles Peter and Paul.²⁸

This man . . . you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men, whom God raised up, having freed him from the pangs of death, because it was not possible that he should be held in its power. (2:23–24)

26. Ibid., 34.

27. Moore, *Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives*, 24. Williams (“Literary Approaches,” 303–34) consigns this viewpoint to a footnote.

28. Here and throughout the remainder of this work, translations from the NT writings are the author’s own. As will be evident, the translation style is fairly literal, falling within the tradition represented by such versions as NRSV, NASB, ESV.

Foreseeing this, he [David] spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. (2:31–32)

You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. (3:15)

They [the Jews] killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and caused him to be seen. (10:39–40)

When they had carried out all that was written concerning him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead; and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people. (13:29–31)

And that he [God] raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken thus, “I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.” Therefore he also says in another place, “You will not let your Holy One see corruption.” (13:34–35)

He whom God raised did not see corruption. (13:37)

For he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man he has appointed, and he has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead. (17:31)

In certain instances the reference to resurrection is ostensibly the primary or climactic element of the speech. Following the citation of the passage from Joel about the outpouring of the Spirit the bulk of Peter’s Pentecost address concerns the resurrection of Jesus (2:22–32). The same event occupies the central place in Paul’s speech in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (13:30–37). What is seen in the apostolic kerygma appears also in the apologia before Jewish and Gentile rulers (5:30; 23:6–8; 26:8, 23), where the resurrection receives similar emphasis. Further, Luke’s own narrative summary of the preaching of Paul says that through the scriptures he demonstrated that “the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead” (17:3). From all this we understand that the resurrection-event was not in the nature of an optional “add-on” but rather, respecting both kerygmatic and apologetic concerns, an essential part of the early Christian witness.

2. Early Christian creedal formulations

In keeping with the content of the speeches found in Acts, early traces of creed-like formulae in the NT likewise embrace confession of the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul lays out the basic tenets of the gospel that he preached:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he

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was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (vv. 3–5)

We observe that this was something which the apostle himself had received, that is, it was a message that existed prior to his own proclamation of it. Gordon Fee states that “it is generally agreed that in vv. 3–5 Paul is repeating a very early creedal formulation that was common to the entire church.”²⁹ In this passage Paul includes those four elements which he considered to be “of first importance.” Each is here introduced by the Greek particle ὅτι, “that”:

that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures,
and that he was buried,
and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures,
and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.³⁰

There are the two fundamentals—the fact that “Christ died” and that “he was raised.” To each of these he adjoins a modifying phrase—“for our sins” and “on the third day” respectively. He also adds to each of these the phrase “according to the scriptures,” underlining the fact that they were not random but divinely preordained events. It occasions not the least surprise that the death and resurrection of Jesus form the very essence of this formulation. Yet these two events do not stand by themselves. These form the first and third elements of the four that Paul lists. To each of these is appended another ὅτι clause. The statement concerning Jesus’ death is followed by “and that he was buried,” and that concerning his resurrection is followed by “and that he appeared.” These other two assertions serve to confirm the former two. With respect to the burial David Garland observes that “this detail verifies the reality and finality of Christ’s death.”³¹ Regarding the appearance to witnesses Fee explains that this “emphasizes the objective reality of the Resurrection.”³² Each of the principal claims of the Christian faith is thus backed up with objective evidence. In his analysis Fee has commented on the text’s balanced structure, such that “as line 2 functions to warrant line 1, so this line [4] warrants line 3.”³³ Fitzmyer notes the parallelism and labels the various elements a’ b b’.³⁴ The primitive kerygma, therefore, was encapsulated in this brief but comprehensive formulation, consisting of two events concerning Jesus Christ each with its supporting evidence. Clearly the parallelism and inner logic of the text expresses a unity and completeness. The four assertions hold together—death and burial, resurrection and appearance.

Concerning the debate over the conclusion to the second Gospel, it can hardly be doubted that the tradition upon which Paul draws pre-dated the writing of Mark. On 1 Corinthians 15:3–5 Fitzmyer comments: “Paul repeats the basic Christian *kērygma*, ‘proclamation,’ which eventually developed into the gospel tradition and gave us the four canonical

29. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 718; cf. also Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 16–17; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 683.

30. For this analysis of the passage, see Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 541; cf. also Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 684.

31. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 686; cf. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 725.

32. Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 728.

33. *Ibid.*, 728.

34. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 541.

Gospels.”³⁵ Needless to say, the fourfold formulation expressed in these verses is not present in Mark without a longer ending. Mark 16:1–8 may express verbally, through the words of the young man in the tomb, that Jesus had risen, but there is certainly no record of any appearance, as expressed in the Pauline credo and in the other canonical Gospels.

The epistle to the Romans also contains several statements recognized by scholars as creed-type formulae:

... his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1:3–4)³⁶

... who was delivered on account of our trespasses and raised for our justification. (4:25)³⁷

Christ Jesus is the one who died, and furthermore was raised, who is at the right hand of God. (8:34)³⁸

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10:9)³⁹

In each of these expressions of faith Christ’s resurrection is included, showing that it was not just in the early church’s proclamation that the resurrection-event held an essential place but also in communal and individual confession.

To the above we may add another similar formulation, traditionally attributed to Paul in the second letter to Timothy:

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel. (2:8)⁴⁰

Evidently this brief statement supports the idea that the resurrection was viewed as being of the essence of what is here termed the “gospel.” One wonders, therefore, whether what Mark introduces as the “gospel” (1:1) may in fact be considered as such without any account of the resurrection.

There is one further important text of this kind. While in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul concludes the creedal section with a reference to preaching and believing (v. 11, “. . . this is what we preach, and this is what you believed”), two elements incidentally also occurring

35. Ibid., 541.

36. Cranfield, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 1, 57, writes “That in these two verses Paul is making use of the language of an already existing confessional formula . . . seems highly probable”; cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 17.

37. Byrne, *Romans*, 161, “The introductory relative pronoun *hos*, the parallelism of form and content and the use of traditional language (esp. the use of the verb *paradidonai*) point to the citation of a creedal or liturgical formula”; cf. Schreiner, *Romans*, 243, who terms this “a creedal type statement.” In this case, to the mind of Kelly (*Early Christian Creeds*, 20) “the creed-like note is unmistakable.”

38. Identified by Kelly (*Early Christian Creeds*, 17) as an extract from a creed.

39. According to Schreiner (*Romans*, 559) “the formulation in verse 9 may reflect pre-Pauline confessional tradition”; cf. Byrne (*Romans*, 321), “Both clauses echo early Christian formulas.” Also Witherington, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 262.

40. Cf. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 17.

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at the end of Mark,⁴¹ another creed-like text exists in which the action of preaching and the response of believing are included within the formulation itself. This text is 1 Timothy 3:16:

He was manifested in flesh,
vindicated in the Spirit,
seen [ὥφθη] by angels,
proclaimed [ἐκηρύχθη] among the nations,
believed [ἐπιστεύθη] on in the world [ἐν κόσμῳ],
taken up [ἀνελήμφθη] in glory.

The creed takes us from the incarnation to the ascension. Though not part of our particular concern, it is not completely clear what is intended by “vindicated in the Spirit.” Since the wording is reminiscent of Romans 1:4 and 1 Peter 3:18, it is most probably speaking of the resurrection.⁴² The line “seen by angels” is taken by most commentators to refer to the post-resurrection appearances. It could hardly mean the worship of the ascended Christ by the angels of heaven, as claimed by Kelly,⁴³ since the ascension forms the concluding line. The term “angels” is ambiguous since it might mean either spirit beings or human messengers.⁴⁴ This latter would be the apostles who witnessed the resurrection and who were entrusted with the proclamation of the message, which is the subject of the next line. Literal angels were also present at the resurrection (Matt 28:2; Luke 24:23; John 20:12), so this could equally well be the meaning. Whichever is intended it is apparent that the earthly appearances of the risen Jesus are in view. The same verb form ὥφθη (“was seen/appeared”) is used here as in the creedal formulation of 1 Corinthians 15 (v. 5), and also with reference to the resurrected Christ in Luke 24:34 and Acts 13:31.

Taking “vindicated in the Spirit” as indicating the resurrection and “seen by angels” as referring to the appearances, the remaining three lines in the statement concern the preaching of the message, the response of faith, and the ascension of Jesus. Here we draw attention to the fact that all these elements have close parallels in the Markan ending, the same sequence of verbs occurring in Mark 16:15–16, 19 (κηρύξατε . . . ὁ πιστεύσας . . . ἀνελήμφθη), while the term “world” is also found in both contexts (ἐν κόσμῳ, εἰς τὸν κόσμον). Correspondences with the endings of the other Gospels at this point are fewer.⁴⁵ On this basis one

41. Having spoken of the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances, Paul brings the opening section of 1 Corinthians 15 to a close with reference to “what we *preach*” and “what you *believed*” (v. 11). Including the longer ending Mark concludes his Gospel not just with the same fourfold sequence of death, burial, resurrection, and appearances but with the preaching and believing also (vv. 15–16). In their post-resurrection material preaching is explicit in Luke (24:47) and implicit in Matthew (28:19), while in both belief is only implicit.

42. Cf. Lea and Griffin, 1, 2 *Timothy, Titus*, 125–26, where it is stated that “Since the first line of the hymn refers to being manifest in the realm of the flesh, it seems that the parallel in line 2 is suggesting that Christ was vindicated or declared righteous in the sphere of his spiritual nature. The resurrection becomes the means of publicly declaring this vindication. What Paul was saying is that just as Christ was manifested in human flesh, so he was proved to be what he claimed to be in the spiritual realm. The resurrection of Christ declared that he was God’s Son.”

43. Kelly, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 91; cf. also Lea and Griffin, 1, 2 *Timothy, Titus*, 126.

44. Cf. Towner, *Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 281. Here Towner expresses the view that “it is possible to take ‘angels’ as a reference to human witnesses of the resurrection,” though he himself favors non-human beings.

45. The term “nations” recalls Matthew 28:19 and Luke 24:47, pointing to the fact that the creedal statement relates to the execution of the apostolic commission as recorded in the Synoptics following the resurrection.

could argue that Mark adheres even more closely to the form of the confession as expressed in the earliest layers of the NT. Death, resurrection, appearances, gospel-proclamation, belief, ascension, as a complete sequence are only located in the 1 Timothy formulation and the longer conclusion to the second Gospel.

3. The shape of the other canonical Gospels

It is not only in light of the church's kerygmatic and confessional tradition that the ending of Mark at 16:8 appears incomplete, but also with respect to the form of the other canonical Gospels. The debate concerning whether or not the Gospel genre is entirely unique in the ancient Greco-Roman world still continues, yet the four books obviously enjoy a relationship not shared in exactly the same way by other comparable literature.⁴⁶ Following his baptism each individual record narrates the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Such an outline distinguishes the canonical Gospel format from many of the non-canonical works bearing the same label.⁴⁷

While at the beginning of the Gospels, there is more individual selectivity in the contents of the narratives, the closing sections show much closer correspondence in the pattern of basic events. Neither Mark nor John contain birth narratives, yet this may relate to the fact that Jesus' birth, other than the fact of his Davidic descent, did not figure specifically in the earliest formulations of the church's faith and message. Jesus' childhood is even less of a concern, there being just one incident recorded in Luke (2:41–52). When the passion narrative is reached, however, each of the accounts reduces its pace considerably,⁴⁸ and the events recorded conform to the same basic sequence in all four versions. Coming to the closing portions of this sequence the correspondences between the four are as follows:

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus' death	27:45–56	15:33–41	23:44–49	19:28–37
Jesus' burial	27:57–66	15:42–47	23:50–56	19:38–42
Empty tomb	28:1–7	16:1–8	24:1–12	20:1–9
Jesus appears	28:8–20		24:13–53	20:10–21:25

Such a tabulation of the parallel material makes the absence of resurrection appearances from Mark a glaring omission.

The deviation seen at this point in Mark seems even more unusual when it is considered that Mark in all probability is chronologically the first of these books. Mark is also the only one that specifically appropriates to itself the label "gospel" (1:1). Arguably, therefore, Mark's work is establishing for his successors a compositional template, or at least an exemplary precedent, as a literary embodiment of the primitive church's kerygma and confession.⁴⁹ Yet, if 16:8 were his actual ending, it is remarkable that none of the other three Evangelists follow him in this. We can only concur, therefore, with the statement in one

46. See Hurtado on "Gospel (Genre)," 278; also Adams, *Parallel Lives of Jesus*, 19–21.

47. Hurtado, "Gospel (Genre)," 278.

48. Adams, *Parallel Lives of Jesus*, 35.

49. Cf. Wallace, "Mark 16:8 as the Conclusion," 2, where Wallace states that Mark "*created a genre*" (*italics original*).

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recent commentary that “An ending of the Gospel of Mark at 16:8 is thus . . . an aberration among the canonical Gospels.”⁵⁰

4. Resurrection predictions in Mark

Next is the fact that within the body of the second Gospel the author records several times Jesus’ prediction of his coming passion, which each time includes the foretelling also of his subsequent resurrection:

. . . after three days to rise. (8:31)

. . . after three days he will rise. (9:31)

. . . after three days he will rise. (10:34)

In addition to these there is the plain statement following the transfiguration of the coming resurrection:

As they were coming down from the mountain, he gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept that matter to themselves, discussing what rising from the dead meant. (9:9–10)

In connection with such features attention is sometimes drawn to the fact that in Mark’s Gospel predictive utterances of this kind are generally portrayed as being fulfilled. As Robert Gundry comments:

Mark has repeatedly and in detail narrated the fulfillments of Jesus’ other predictions so far as those fulfillments occurred during Jesus’ time on earth. . . . They include the seeing of God’s kingdom as having come with power at the Transfiguration, the finding of a colt, some disciples’ being met by a man carrying a jar of water, the showing of the Upper Room, the betrayal of Jesus by one of the Twelve, the scattering of the rest of the Twelve, the denials of Jesus by Peter, and of course the Passion . . .⁵¹

In this light, having created the strong expectation of a resurrection through repeated predictions it conflicts with his practice elsewhere for Mark not to incorporate a narration of the fulfillment of these predictions.⁵² Consequently, it is extremely unlikely that this Gospel did not originally include such an account of the risen Jesus.

More space will be given to these resurrection predictions in a later chapter dealing with thematic evidence. There it will be argued that these predictions form a programmatic statement respecting the final chapters of the Gospel, not only for the coming passion but for the resurrection event also.⁵³

50. Edwards, *Gospel according to Mark*, 502.

51. Gundry, *Mark*, 1009. The same is reiterated in Evans, *Mark* 8:28—16:20, 539.

52. Cf. Edwards, *Gospel according to Mark*, 501–2, “it seems incongruous for Mark to conclude with a resurrection announcement rather than with a resurrection appearance.”

53. Jesus also promises to appear after his resurrection to his followers in Galilee (14:28; cf. 16:7). Since the longer ending fails to specifically record the narrative fulfillment of this latter appearance, it

5. The acceptability of the final clause

Much ink has been spilled over the question of whether or not a book may conclude with the Greek word γάρ (“for”). Grammatically this is a post-positional discourse particle and therefore may not head the clause within which it occurs. Since the final clause of Mark 16:8 consists of a single verb together with this particle then there is no option but to place γάρ last, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (“for they were afraid”).

Looking elsewhere in Greek biblical literature we find several other instances where γάρ is located in the sentence-final position, as illustrated by the following texts from both the LXX and NT:

But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid [ἐφοβήθη γάρ].
(Gen 18:15)

But his brothers could not answer him, for they were troubled [ἐταράχθησαν γάρ]. (Gen 45:3)

But the quantity of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall not reduce any of it, for they are idle [σχολεύουσιν γάρ]. (Exod 5:8)

When men give it to a learned man, saying, “Read this,” he says, “I cannot, for it is sealed [ἐσφράγισται γάρ].” (Isa 29:11)

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you speak correctly, for so I am [εἰμὶ γάρ].”
(John 13:13)

The foregoing cases suggest that there is nothing ungrammatical about closing a sentence in this manner. Naturally then the same feature appears in extra-biblical literature. Hundreds of examples of final γάρ have been identified at the sentence level.⁵⁴ Further, if a sentence may terminate in this way, then it would evidently still be grammatical to finish a larger literary unit, such as paragraph or chapter, with the same particle.⁵⁵ But what of an entire book? Theoretically if a correctly formed sentence may end with γάρ then there is no linguistic reason why such a sentence may not be final even in a whole book.⁵⁶ In this connection three works are often cited as demonstrating this very manner of conclusion. These are Plato, *Protagoras* 328c; Plotinus, *Ennead* 5.5; and Musonius Rufus, *Tractatus* 12. Yet closer scrutiny reveals that the evidence provided by these writings is of questionable relevance. The clause from Plato, while definitely final, in actual fact terminates a section rather than the whole work.⁵⁷ Regarding the fifth book of Plotinus, it is now generally

could be posited either that Mark is not consistent in relating the fulfillment of each and every prediction in his Gospel or, more significantly, that this ending is not original and the omission of such a Galilean episode is one indication of that. It will later be argued (chapter 9), however, that Mark does in fact intend his readers to understand, on the grounds of their prior knowledge, that the appearance in Galilee forms part of the telescoped narrative contained in 16:9–20.

54. Cf. Cox, *History and Critique*, 223–27.

55. van der Horst, “Can a Book End with GAR?” 123–24.

56. Williams, “Literary Approaches,” 25.

57. See Wayte, *Protagoras*, 27.

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agreed that this was extracted from a larger work.⁵⁸ The short tractate of Musonius Rufus does indeed end with γάρ.⁵⁹ Yet being a philosophical discourse, its genre, like that of the other two works, differs substantially from that of the Gospel. In other words, none of these three consists of narrative prose, the genre of Mark 16:8.⁶⁰ Robert Stein fairly sums up the situation when he says, “it is debatable whether these are legitimate examples of a ‘book’ ending with γάρ.”⁶¹

At the most, then, it could be said that though it might be grammatically possible for a book to finish this way, its actual occurrence at the close of a narrative is unattested. The remoteness of the probability that Mark could conclude his account with this particle is a telling argument against those who advocate 16:8 as the intended ending. Westcott and Hort themselves rejected this possibility,⁶² and the two following citations express the doubt of certain modern scholars concerning this view:

Given the vast Greek literary corpus, which consists of more than sixty million words, it is scarcely compelling evidence to cite three documents ending with *gar* as a precedent for Mark’s ending.⁶³

We cannot gainsay the *possibility* of *gar* ending a book. But to point out the obvious, all things that are *possible* are not equally *probable*. The limited use of “final *gar*” sentences in narrative prose and their extreme scarcity at the end of narrative works (I am not aware of any such instance) argues *against* the likelihood that Mark concluded his entire Gospel with such a clause.⁶⁴

Since, on the other hand, instances of final γάρ in lesser spans of discourse are not so unusual, it is here taken as more reasonable to suppose that ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ in Mark 16:8 forms the conclusion to a pericope, that of 16:1–8, rather than to the whole Gospel. It is to be noted that Mark 6:52; 10:22; and 14:2, while not concluding with the particle itself, nevertheless also attest pericope-final γάρ constructions.⁶⁵

That the words ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ constitute the intended ending of Mark’s Gospel is, therefore, an extremely unlikely possibility, there being not a single indisputable parallel in the mass of Greek literature of any comparable work finishing in such a manner.⁶⁶

58. Stein, “Ending of Mark,” 91; van der Horst, “Can a Book End with GAR?” 123–24; Croy, *Mutilation*, 49. Croy comments that “the writings of Plotinus have been cut up and rearranged by his pupil, Porphyry. This ‘final *gar*’ example actually did have a continuation prior to being edited.”

59. Hense, *Musonii Rufi Reliquiae*, 67.

60. It is significant that as far as leading textual scholar Bruce Metzger was concerned, “no instance has been found where γάρ stands at the end of a book.” See Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 228.

61. Stein, “Ending of Mark,” 91.

62. Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, “Notes on Select Readings,” 47.

63. Edwards, *Gospel according to Mark*, 501.

64. Croy, *Mutilation*, 49 (italics original).

65. Cf. also the paragraph-final instances of γάρ in 1:38 and 11:18. In none of these references, however, is γάρ the final word. For this to be so, then the entire clause can consist of only one other word, which naturally would be exceptionally rare.

66. The question regarding whether the verb ἐφοβοῦντο requires a direct object will be considered in the next chapter.

6. The contrast with the beginning

One further objection to concluding Mark with the clause “for they were afraid” is the stark contrast of such a putative ending to the manner in which the Gospel is commenced. The first verse introduces the book as “the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Altogether the noun *εὐαγγέλιον* (“gospel/good news”) occurs eight times in Mark, including once in the longer ending (1:1, 14, 15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9; 16:15). In comparison, the much longer Gospel of Matthew contains just four instances (4:23; 9:35; 24:14; 26:13), two in parallels with Mark, while Luke and John have none, though Luke employs the cognate verb several times.

The study of Rikki Watts tracing the influence of Isaiah’s new exodus on Mark sees this distinctive place given by the latter to the term “gospel” as one aspect of the Evangelist’s dependence upon the Isaianic theme.⁶⁷ This being so, it is significant that in its original context, the prophetic presentation of the “good news” is linked to the prohibition to fear. This we find in the very first occurrence of “good news” in Isaiah (40:9):

Go up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news,
Lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news;
Lift it up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!”

In the setting of the proclamation of this good news, therefore, the emotion of fear is evidently to be renounced. The two ideas do not sit together well.

It is not easy then to conceive that the Gospel-writer who had begun his work on such a positive note would conclude so negatively. Westcott and Hort, we note, considered it incredible that Mark’s “one detailed account . . . should end upon a note of unassuaged terror.”⁶⁸ The same mind on the matter was more recently expressed by Metzger, who stated, “Despite the arguments which several modern scholars have urged in support of such a view, the present writer cannot believe that the note of fear would have been regarded as an appropriate conclusion to an account of the Evangel, or Good News.”⁶⁹

7. Lack of historical interpretation

If Mark’s Gospel did originally close with 16:8 it is remarkable that no biblical scholar ventured an interpretation of this verse as the Gospel’s conclusion until relatively recent times. Obviously such an exposition would require the inclusion of certain elements that would be unnecessary if the abrupt ending were not judged to be the actual conclusion. The chief of these would be to make sense of a Gospel ending on a note of fear, and how an account of Christ’s resurrection appearances could be excluded. Yet this twofold lack of resolution, which has provoked so much interest within recent biblical scholarship, receives no comment whatsoever in the earlier exegesis of the church over a span of many centuries. Within the patristic period, while several church fathers record the existence of manuscripts that omit the final verses, there are none at all who offer an interpretation of 16:8 as the Gospel’s

67. Watts, *Isaiah’s New Exodus*, 99, where Watts speaks of “Mark’s explicit identification of the Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ with Isaiah’s NE [new exodus].”

68. Westcott and Hort, “Notes on Select Readings,” 47.

69. Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 228. A similar opinion is expressed in the commentary of Edwards (*Gospel according to Mark*, 501).

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actual conclusion. The same holds true for the medieval and reformation periods, and for commentaries on Mark up to the mid-nineteenth century.

8. Lack of anti-Christian polemic

Following on closely from the above is the fact that none of Christianity's early opponents, of which there were many, made any recourse to a Gospel lacking appearances of the risen Jesus. Since the bodily resurrection of its founder was one of the new faith's distinctive tenets, and one which ran counter to the prevailing anthropological and philosophical views of the day, one might have expected the omission of a resurrection narrative in one of Christianity's founding documents to have been the object of some contention. Early Christian writers wrote extensively against both heretics and pagan philosophers. Certain of these latter, such as Porphyry, were familiar with Christian scripture. Yet none of these antagonists draws upon the absence of a resurrection account in one of the four Gospels as a potential argument. This situation, it is significant to observe, is markedly different from that of the present day where opponents of Christianity frequently employ the supposed ending of Mark at 16:8 as ammunition against belief in the resurrection, as illustrated in the preface.

9. The objections of modern scholarship

Finally we note that, while the idea of an abrupt ending currently enjoys great popularity amongst contemporary biblical scholarship, a good number still hold to the earlier scholarly consensus. Scholars of note who have expressed serious doubts concerning 16:8 as the intended ending include such names as Rudolph Bultmann, Oscar Cullman, and C. H. Dodd.⁷⁰ Space prevents anything but a few samples of the objections that are raised.

C. E. B. Cranfield (1959), author of a classic commentary on Mark, states that although in recent years the view that Mark intentionally concluded his Gospel at 16:8 "has received considerable support," it nevertheless "should surely be rejected." He adds, "Since the fact of Resurrection appearances was clearly an element of the primitive preaching . . . it is highly improbable that Mark intended to conclude his gospel without at least one account of a Resurrection appearance."⁷¹

Similarly, NT scholar G. E. Ladd (1975) considered it "highly improbable that Mark would have told the Easter story without relating appearances of the risen Jesus," and concluded that "Mark 16:8 is a mutilated ending of the gospel."⁷²

Later, famed professor of biblical exegesis F. F. Bruce (1984) gave expression to his doubts, saying "I find it extremely difficult to believe that Mark intended to conclude his record at this point."⁷³

Reflecting on this issue, NT commentator I. Howard Marshall (1992) remarked that "I confess to an intuitive feeling that Mark 16:8 is not the original, intended end of the Gospel, and that it is not beyond the bounds of probability that the Gospel proceeded further."⁷⁴

70. Croy, *Mutilation*, 29, 175.

71. Cranfield, *Gospel according to Saint Mark*, 471.

72. Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection*, 84.

73. Bruce, "Date and Character of Mark," 74n16.

74. Marshall, "Luke and His Gospel," 276.

In his voluminous commentary on Mark, Robert Gundry (1993) devotes several pages to reasons why 16:8 should *not* be considered the conclusion.⁷⁵ Amongst these he includes the argument that “the manuscript tradition betrays massive dissatisfaction with an ending beyond v 8, a dissatisfaction best explained by knowledge that Mark did not originally end there.”⁷⁶

Besides biblical scholars, a number of leading textual critics have also advocated the original existence of a continuation beyond 16:8. Among these are Bruce Metzger (1992) and Philip Comfort (1992).⁷⁷

Coming to the present century, we find a whole succession of recent commentaries and other works by reputable scholars in which an ending at 16:8 is forthrightly rejected:

The appropriateness of modern abrupt endings to novels should not lead us to think that such an approach was equally appropriate in the case of ancient biographies. . . . It is hard to believe that Mark wanted to leave his audience with a picture of the women’s disobedience and denseness *after* Easter. . . . If this gospel is meant to help meet the need to proclaim the good news about Jesus the Son of God to all the Gentile nations, this ending is hardly in keeping with that aim. . . . [W]e should not build vast theological and literary castles on the uncertain foundation that 16:8 *must have been* Mark’s original intended ending. (Ben Witherington, 2001)⁷⁸

The cumulative effect of this evidence . . . tips probability in favor of the view that v 8 was not the intended ending of the Gospel. (Craig Evans, 2001)⁷⁹

It is one thing to emphasise and exploit paradoxical elements within the story of Jesus’ ministry and passion . . . but quite another to conclude his gospel with a note which appears to undermine not only his own message but also the received tradition of the church within which he was writing. It is this extraordinary *faux pas*, as it seems to be, that has prompted the constantly growing number of attempts nonetheless to find a plausible literary and communicative function of Mark’s ending, assuming that 16:8 was where he intended his story to end. . . . I do not find any of them persuasive, because they all seem to presuppose an inappropriately “modern” understanding of literary technique both in terms of how writers wrote and of how readers might be expected to respond. The natural response to v. 8 is surely to assume that this apologetically damaging anti-climax *cannot* be the end. (R. T. France, 2002)⁸⁰

In my judgment . . . the argument is not persuasive. The suggestion that Mark left the Gospel “open ended” owes more to modern literary, and particularly to reader-response theory, than to the nature of ancient texts, which with very few exceptions show a dogged proclivity to state conclusions, not suggest them.

75. Gundry, *Mark*, 1009–12.

76. *Ibid.*, 1012.

77. Croy, *Mutilation*, 176.

78. Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 44, 45, 49 (italics original).

79. Evans, *Mark 8:28–16:20*, 539.

80. France, *Gospel of Mark*, 683–84 (italics original).

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Several important arguments can be adduced in favor of the view that 16:8 was not the original, or intended, ending of Mark . . . (James Edwards, 2002)⁸¹

This is the point at which contemporary criticism has hastened to assure us that we should be content with 16:8 as the proper conclusion. To look for a different ending, perhaps a “happy” one, we are told, betokens literary or theological naivety. . . . There are, however, powerful reasons for questioning this theory, and for proposing that Mark did indeed write a fuller ending . . . (N. T. Wright, 2003)⁸²

As a result of these (and other) arguments, I agree with “the conjecture that the [present] text is incomplete” because I feel “compelled to do so by the text itself.” (Robert Stein, 2008)⁸³

Certain words and phrases expressed here by these scholars show the strength of their convictions on this issue. As far as they are concerned, an ending at Mark 16:8 “should surely be rejected” since it is “extremely difficult to believe” and “*cannot* be the end.” The case presented in favor of an abrupt ending is “not persuasive” and “powerful reasons” exist for doubting it. As a result, interpretations offered presupposing 16:8 as the actual conclusion are based upon an “uncertain foundation.”

The mere citing of authorities does not, of course, decide the matter. Yet, as Croy points out, it does justify “bringing the issue to the table again.”⁸⁴ Accordingly, it cannot fairly be assumed that the abrupt ending has been satisfactorily demonstrated by modern scholarship to have been Mark’s intended conclusion.⁸⁵ Far from being the case, the weight of the evidence in the minds of a not insignificant minority points rather to an original continuation beyond 16:8.

THE AIMS OF THE PRESENT VOLUME

In the chapters that follow we renew the discussion of not just one but of the two issues mentioned in this introduction. Both the present scholarly consensus, an ostensibly open question, and the earlier consensus, considered a closed matter by all except a handful, are

81. Edwards, *Gospel according to Mark*, 502.

82. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 619; cf. 623, “The better answer is that Mark did indeed write more, and that what he wrote was lost—by accident most likely . . . or, just conceivably, by malicious action.” Earlier Wright had written, “I tried for some years to believe that Mark was really a postmodernist who would deliberately leave his gospel with a dark and puzzling ending, but I have for some time now given up the attempt. Grammatically, the gospel could have ended with ‘for they were afraid’ (*ephobounto gar*); structurally, it could not have ended without the story of the risen, vindicated Jesus” (“Resurrection of the Messiah,” 136).

83. Stein, *Mark*, 736. Stein is citing an earlier article by W. L. Knox.

84. Croy, *Mutilation*, 29. Croy adds, “The impressive roster of persons sympathetic to the thesis [i.e., that 16:8 was not the intended ending] should work to remove the thesis from everyone else’s list of idiosyncratic or obsolete ideas.”

85. More realistic proponents of the abrupt ending openly admit that the matter is not closed. Paul Danove (*End of Mark’s Story*, 1), for example, acknowledges that though the weight of scholarly opinion inclines to the abrupt ending, the debate is nevertheless on-going. Likewise, Joel Marcus (*Mark 8–16*, 1096) affirms that “we cannot be dogmatic: there is not enough evidence to say definitely whether Mark intended his work to end at 16:8.”

here rejected. Contrary to the former, the view taken here is that the evidence does not support Mark 16:8 as the planned ending, but rather that the author included further material beyond this point. Contrary to the earlier consensus, we maintain that the ending, though lost from certain limited strands of the manuscript tradition, was preserved intact in the more extensive part. That original ending, it is here argued, is that which the Christian community has traditionally accepted as such for the greater part of the church's existence, that is, the verses now known as Mark 16:9–20. However, it is not tradition, we hasten to add, that forms the basis upon which the case will be grounded. The argument against the possibility that Mark 16:8 constitutes the book's intended ending is that the material contained in 16:9–20 shows indications, mostly previously unnoticed, of being that ending. Evidence at a number of different levels involving features of various kinds will be identified, all of which make a strong, if not overwhelming case, that these last twelve verses are in fact an integral part of Mark's original composition.

Thus, the view put forward in this volume consciously conflicts with the bulk of scholarly thinking on these matters over the last century and a half. It is no easy task to challenge an almost universally accepted dogma. It is anticipated that, even before reading it, many will be strongly biased against the position to be advanced. Nevertheless, since a significant amount of the material that follows has not previously been considered in the context of this debate, it does not seem unreasonable to request a fair hearing for this and that the reader's mind not be closed against the possible correctness of the conclusion from the outset.

THE CONTENTS OF THE PRESENT VOLUME

To begin, detailed consideration will be given to those arguments commonly brought against the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20. The chief of these is the evidence adduced from ancient manuscripts. This will be examined extensively and shown not to be as conclusive as commonly supposed. Rather the evidence may be interpreted as indicating the existence of a fairly localized textual variant which had no earlier explicit witness before the fourth century (chapter 2). Alongside this there is the important testimony of early patristic citations. Since these unquestionably include references to the disputed ending dating from the second century, the weight of this evidence lies squarely on the side of the antiquity of the ending, proving its certain existence long before the earliest manuscripts that omit it. Included here are some significant previously overlooked allusions to the Markan ending in the Apostolic Fathers who border chronologically on the NT period itself (chapter 3). Also widely used in the case against the longer ending is the supposed distinction in language and style of these verses from the rest of Mark. This issue is thoroughly investigated by way of comparison with other passages in the same Gospel and the conclusion reached that the language of Mark 16:9–20 in fact falls within the observable parameters of Markan usage, while some other undisputed Markan texts exhibit even greater linguistic variation (chapter 4). The linguistic evidence is then taken a stage further and shown to actually provide evidence that supports Markan authorship. A range of deeper-level linguistic features present in the ending, previously unexamined within the context of the debate, point to the same authorial hand as the rest of the Gospel (chapter 5). The remainder of the book investigates areas of evidence which have not hitherto formed a major part of the discussion. An examination of various literary devices, recognized from other books of the biblical canon, reveals that the longer ending forms an integral element in the overall design of the Gospel.

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This final passage shows significant parallels and intratextual links with other portions of the same work (chapter 6). Next certain Markan themes are traced which extend into the ending. Here, among other things, consideration is given to the new exodus motif, strongly present in both the body of the Gospel and its ending. Also treated is the prominence of resurrection predictions in the latter half of the book which find their fulfillment in the disputed verses (chapter 7). A chapter is then given to the important matter of the knowledge and use of Mark by other Gospel-writers, especially by Luke. It is here demonstrated that both in the final chapter of his Gospel and in certain Petrine passages in the book of Acts Luke shows, through unmistakable verbal resonances, acquaintance with a Gospel of Mark that included 16:9–20 (chapter 8). Having made a case for the originality of the ending, the next chapter then offers some treatment of elements occurring in the passage commonly taken as difficult. Firstly, solutions are proposed to the problems involved in the manner of linkage between the two halves of chapter 16. Within this is included the oft made objection concerning the omission by the ending of any resurrection appearance in Galilee. Following this, the issues of baptismal regeneration, picking up snakes and drinking poison are dealt with (chapter 9). A discussion of the issue would not be complete without some investigation of what might have caused the textual problem at the end of Mark. Though no certainty is possible here, two potential explanations are examined, one accidental, the other deliberate (chapter 10). Finally, the whole is concluded with a chapter summarizing the various strands of the argument (chapter 11).