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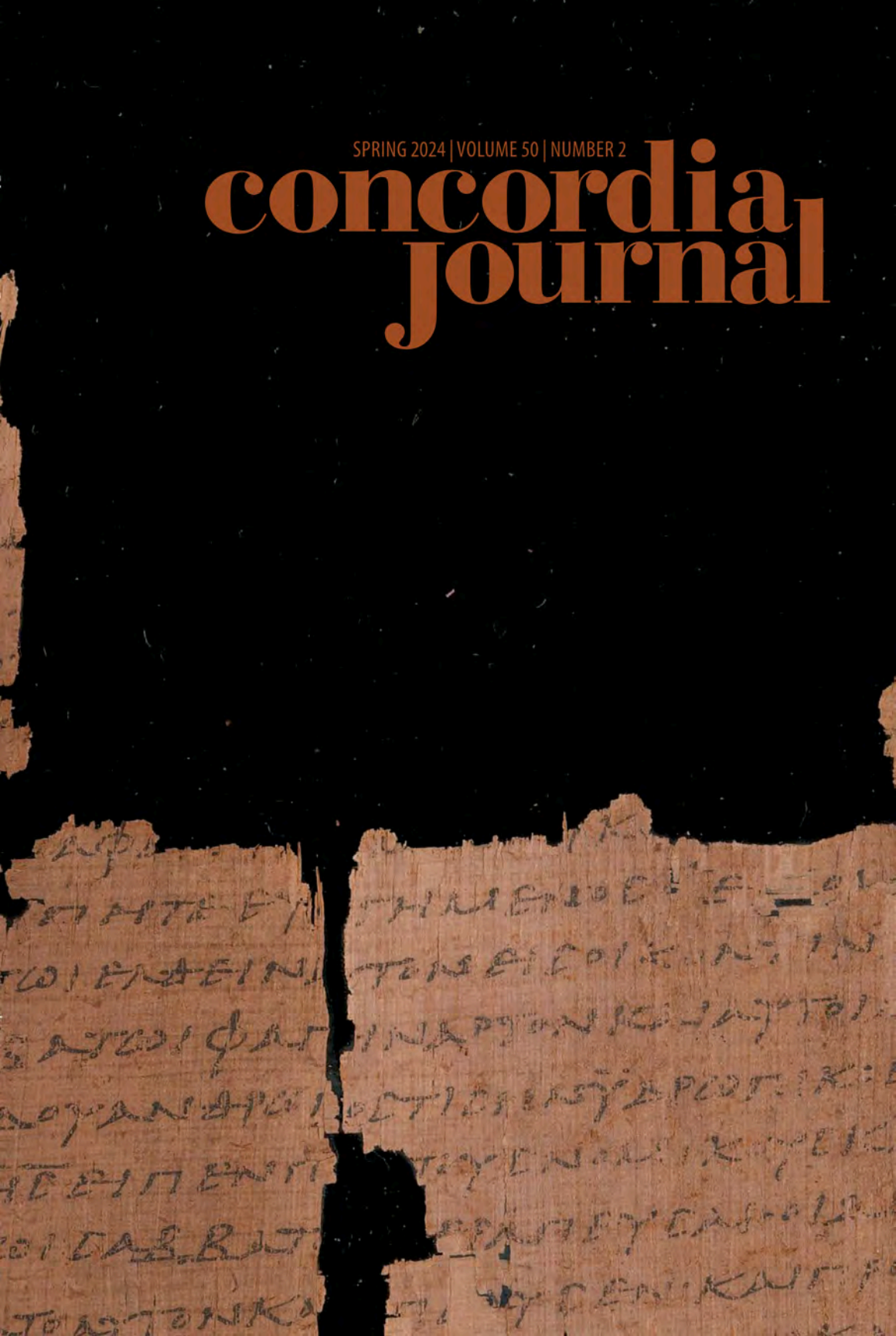

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Editor's Note

"It stands written . . ." Thus, the New Testament substantiates its teaching on the basis of the writings of the Old Testament. The reformers learned well to do the same, basing their teaching upon the word of God, namely, the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Formula of Concord confesses the reformer's practice, stating that "the Word of God alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine, to which the writings of no man should be regarded as equal, but to which everything should be subjected" (Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, 9). We continue that faithful practice today as ordination and installation vows rightly bind the servants of the word to the scriptures. Bound to the scriptures—far from a burden, the scriptures are liberating and enlivening. This edition of *Concordia Journal* offers a glimpse into the vitality of studying the scriptures of the New Testament.

Jeff Oschwald first gives attention to Luther's statement that losing the biblical languages occasions the loss of the Gospel. Luther's characteristically bold statement is even more bold in its context as Oschwald illustrates. While the prospect of losing the Gospel ought to move the servants of the word to invest themselves in the demands of Greek and Hebrew, the primary motivation is not what may be lost but what will certainly be gained. The vitality of the word of God as he has graciously given to us in Greek and Hebrew cannot be overstated. Oschwald's article calls the reader to rejoice in what the Lord has given us.

Three further articles demonstrate the beauty of rigorous study of the New Testament in Greek. All three articles engage current scholarship as the authors submit themselves to the text of holy scripture. Both James Voelz and David Lewis take up the closing of the Gospel according to St. Mark in their respective articles. Voelz gives attention to the manuscript evidence and the competing explanations for the varying endings while also paying heed to the theological concerns that manuscript evidence occasions. Amid the discussion of the manuscript evidence is a deep respect for the literary beauty of this account of the Gospel, a respect that serves the theological proclamation of the text. Lewis also displays the literary genius of Mark as he stands alongside other great ancient writers. Again, the article submits to the text's unique literary style rather than imposing upon it. Both articles are evidence of the genius of Mark's work.

Vilson Scholz takes up various "critical orthodoxies" within 2 Corinthians. The article deftly navigates those positions, assessing not only their merits (or lack thereof)

but also addressing the significance of such matters for the interpretation of the epistle. The precise reading of the text demonstrates a concern for the gospel throughout the article with a particular note in the conclusion.

At Worms, Luther famously proclaims, "My conscience is captive to the word of God." Those who follow in his train are so blessedly captive as well. Captive to the word of God given by him as he has graciously seen fit to deliver it to us—that is the theologian's life and joy.

Kevin Golden
Dean of Theological Research and Publications

Articles

The Rat the Devil Smelled
Luther on Knowledge of the Languages and the Gospel

Jeffrey Oschwald

Jeffrey Oschwald is a professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His areas of interest and expertise include the books of Luke and Acts, the history of exegesis, hermeneutics, Origen of Alexandria, and patristics.

Denn der teuffel roch den braten wol: wo die sprachen erfur kemen, wuerde seyn reich eyn fach gewynnen, das er nicht kunde leicht wider zu stopffen. Weyl er nu nicht hat muegen weren, das sie erfur kemen, dencket er doch sie nu also schmal zu hallten, das sie von yhn selbs wider sollen vergehen und fallen. Es ist yhm nicht eyn lieber gast damit yns haus komen, Drumb will er yhn auch also speysen, das er nicht lange solle bleyben. Disen boesen tuck des teuffels sehen unser gar wenig, lieben herren.[1]

For the devil smelled a rat and perceived that if the languages were revived a hole would be knocked in his kingdom which he could not easily stop up again. Since he found he could not prevent their revival, he now aims to keep them on such slender rations that they will of themselves decline and pass away. They are not a welcome guest in his house, so he plans to offer them such meager entertainment that they will not prolong their stay. Very few of us, my dear sirs, see through this evil design of the devil.[2]

Those of us whose callings tend to encourage an engagement with Luther that is very focused and very selective—the way Luther translated a particular biblical phrase, the interpretation of a particular passage of Scripture in

sermon or lecture, Luther's unique presentation of a particular point of doctrine—those of us with heads bent low over text or screen may easily forget the very large and dramatic impacts of Luther's career and of the Reformation on sixteenth-century society at large. And the impact of the Reformation on education in Germany was both large and dramatic:

> The Reformation, too, had in the beginning a disastrous effect on the existing church-dominated schools. If, as the reformers contended, many of the current doctrines and practices of the church were erroneous and dangerous to salvation, surely parents ought not to send their children to schools where these doctrines were inculcated. Princes, nobles, and municipal authorities, doubtless motivated by greed as much as by their theological principles, confiscated the endowments by which schools were supported. Luther, although a consistent advocate of what he considered to be the right kind of education, attacked existing schools in the harshest terms.[3]

For a wide variety of reasons then, in the year of our Lord 1524, Luther felt himself compelled to address city councils throughout Germany on the need to reverse the decline of schools for boys and girls and to warn them that more was at stake here than the wishes of an educated elite. Our present concern, however, is not with Luther's views on education in general but with his very specific statements concerning the need for the people of Germany to be taught the languages of the sacred Scriptures. Keep in mind that Luther is not at this point speaking specifically of the training of church workers; he is speaking of the education of boys and girls in general when he urges upon the councilmen the need for the languages and the arts.

If you lose the languages, you will lose the gospel.

And here Luther was forced to do battle not only with "the old evil foe" himself, but also with opposition coming from two different directions. On the one hand, the traditional, incumbent scholasticism saw no reason to return *ad fontes*, "to the sources." Siegfried Raeder presents the contrast between Luther's understanding of "theological work" as "aimed exclusively at the exposition of Holy Scripture," with that of scholasticism by contrasting Luther with Gabriel Biel.

> Gabriel Biel (d. 1495), for example, taught as a doctor of theology at the University of Tübingen, but never gave one exegetical lecture on the Bible. His main work was a long commentary on the *Four Books of Sentences* by Peter Lombard (d. 1160). A vast number of commentaries was written on Peter's work; until the sixteenth

> century it was the fundamental textbook for students of theology. In his preface Biel explains, why he felt it necessary to write a commentary on Peter's famous work: "The way of the Scriptures, which leads to the knowledge of God, is very broad. Therefore it is detrimental, difficult and almost futile to send out especially the beginners and the newborne children in theology on this vast, wide ocean. Because of that for the glory of the catholic faith and for promoting students Magister Petrus Lombardus . . . like a hard-working bee edited a helpful work, [extracted] from the beehives of the holy Fathers, the Books of Sentences, in which he summarizes and unifies theological doctrines together with their testimonies in exquisite and praised order." Biel, no doubt, warned beginners in theology about the dangers of studying the Holy Scriptures, because the Church had, after all, taken a beating with the so-called heretics, like John Wyclif (d. 1384) and Jan Hus (d. 1415) who used to cite the Bible to defend their doctrines.[5]

Luther, however, "eschewed scholastic authorities (although he knew them well) and instead used Scripture and the church fathers—treating them as more authoritative than his own teachers and textbooks."[6] While there was absolutely no reason to learn Greek and Hebrew to study the *Sentences* of Lombard, the mastery of such languages was a clear requirement for the "return" to the Scriptures.

On the other hand, by 1524, former associates of Luther were arguing against the need for training in the biblical languages. Radical reformers, like Andreas Karlstadt, began to call into question the need for formal education at all, including the learning of the biblical languages. The role and the authority of the text of Scripture was called into question. Luther's address to the councilmen "cannot be divorced from the concerns of his contemporaneous writings against the radical reformers who believed that it was the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit alone that gave Christians all that was necessary to interpret the Bible and live a moral life."[7]

Luther, given the deteriorating state of the schools before him and these opponents on right and left, proceeds to endorse a revival of the kind of education that classical Rome provided for its youth, where

> boys were so taught that by the time they reached their fifteenth, eighteenth, or twentieth year they were well versed in Latin, Greek, and all the liberal arts (as they are called), [that they could immediately enter] upon a political or military career. Their system produced intelligent, wise, and competent men, . . . skilled in every art and rich in experience. . . . As a result their country prospered; they had capable and trained men for every position.[8]

Luther immediately anticipates an objection to such a proposal: "'All right,' you say again, 'suppose we do have to have schools; what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? We could just as well use German for teaching the Bible and God's word, which is enough for our salvation.'"[9] To this objection, Luther responds by reminding his readers that no justification is needed for the teaching of these languages. "Languages and the arts, which can do us no harm, . . . are actually a [great] ornament, profit, glory, and benefit, both for the understanding of Holy Scripture and the conduct of temporal government." These languages are "a fine and noble gift of God," and the German people as a whole should "thank God for this precious treasure, and guard it well"—especially since the knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages had only recently been restored to them.[10] Hebrew and Greek are to be regarded as sacred because, of all the languages of the world, God chose these two in which to give to the world his holy word. "In proportion then as we value the gospel, let us zealously hold to the languages."[11]

Luther continues with the passage that demands as much careful consideration today as it did 500 years ago:

> And let us be sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit [Eph. 6:17] is contained; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; they are the vessel in which this wine is held; they are the larder in which this food is stored; and, as the gospel itself points out [Matt. 14:20], they are the baskets in which are kept these loaves and fishes and fragments. If through our neglect we let the languages go (which God forbid!), we shall not only lose the gospel, but the time will come when we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German. As proof and warning of this, let us take the deplorable and dreadful example of the universities and monasteries, in which men have not only unlearned the gospel, but have in addition so corrupted the Latin and German languages that the miserable folk have been fairly turned into beasts, unable to speak or write a correct German or Latin, and have wellnigh lost their natural reason to boot.
>
> For this reason even the apostles themselves considered it necessary to set down the New Testament and hold it fast in the Greek language, doubtless in order to preserve it for us there safe and sound as in a sacred ark. For they foresaw all that was to come, and now has come to pass; they knew that if it was left exclusively to men's memory, wild and fearful disorder and confusion and a host of varied interpretations, fancies, and doctrines would arise in the Christian church, and that this could not be prevented and the

> simple folk protected unless the New Testament were set down with certainty in written language. Hence, it is inevitable that unless the languages remain, the gospel must finally perish.[12]

Gospel Verba *and Gospel* Res

To understand Luther's point well, to see clearly just what he is arguing here, it will be helpful to recall a classical distinction that Luther himself often used: the distinction between *verba* and *res*. "*Qui non intelligit res, non potest ex verbis sensum elicere*."[13] Franzmann both translates and explains: "Luther's dictum on *res* and *verba* is a crisp summary of a widely recognized hermeneutical principle: Unless you know what a man is talking about, you will not make sense of his words."[14] *Verba* is probably recognizable to most of us as the Latin for "words," but res is a little more difficult to define, especially in this context. *Res* is the Latin word for "thing, object, matter," but here it takes on the special nuance of "the thing talked about" or "the real thing, the truth, the reality (*res*-ity)" to which the words refer. Franzmann explains the interconnectedness of *res* and *verba* in the interpretation of a text: "Interpretation is a 'circular' process (from *verba* to *res* to *verba*), and in this process the *res* is of crucial importance, since the question addressed to the text helps determine the answer to be gotten from the text."[15] As Franzmann walks us through the logic of this process and its implications for biblical interpretation, he leads us to see why the res of the biblical verba as a whole can only be the "'radical Gospel': *God, to whom man can find no way, has in Christ creatively opened up the way which man may and must go*."[16]

We could no doubt fill a small volume with the various ways that Luther himself states this biblical res, the gospel "at its very root," but for our purposes, his comments introducing First Peter will serve quite well:

> All the apostles teach one and the same doctrine, . . . everything the apostles wrote is one Gospel. And the word "Gospel" signifies nothing else than a sermon or report [*ein predig und geschrey*] concerning the grace and mercy of God merited and acquired through the Lord Jesus Christ with His death. Actually, the Gospel is not what one finds in books [*ynn buechern stehet*] and what is written in letters of the alphabet [*ynn buchstaben verfasset wirtt*]; it is rather an oral sermon and a living Word [*eyn mundliche predig und lebendig wortt*], a voice [*eyn stym*] that resounds throughout the world and is proclaimed publicly, so that one hears it everywhere. . . . it announces to us the grace of God bestowed gratis and without our merit, and tells us how Christ took our place, rendered satisfaction for our sins, and destroyed them, and that He makes us pious and saves us through His work.[17]

That serves us quite well as a beginning, but we can hardly stop here. As Timothy Wengert reminds us, "Understanding the Bible as Word of God does not have to do so much with what a text is or means [command or imperative vs. promise] or with its relative position in the canon of Scripture [Old vs. New Testament] as with what it *does* to its hearers. When the Reformers used the words *law* and *gospel* they were actually observing how God's Word works on hearers or, even better, how God uses commands and promises on us."[18] What is at stake, then, in the loss of the gospel, is not the losing of important (proof)texts, not the loss of Hebrew and Greek words or letters, but the loss of God working through his word to bestow his grace, make us pious, and save us.

Such talk of an "oral preaching," a "living word," a "voice," might seem to contradict the point Luther is making to the councilmen and to support his opponents. If the gospel is not found in the words and letters, why do we need the words and letters—especially the Hebrew and the Greek words and letters?

Here we see a fundamental—and fatal—misunderstanding of Luther's catena of analogies concerning the relationship between the languages and the gospel. We tend to hear his metaphors and conclude: "If we have the sword, why worry about losing the sheath? We have the jewel, get rid of the casket, it's in the way! We should be drinking the wine not admiring the bottle! We are feasting at the 'gospel table,' what concern is the 'linguistic pantry' to us who are already feasting?" *Luther's* point is that, even though the language and the gospel can and must be distinguished, they cannot be separated. Here it is the wine/bottle metaphor that is most helpful. How will you keep the wine if you dispose of the bottle? Hold it tightly in your hands? It will slip through your fingers before you can say, "Quick! Bring back the bottle—a glass—anything!"

Although he switches metaphors, this is, in fact, Luther's next argument for the need to maintain competence in Hebrew and Greek.

> For this reason even the apostles themselves considered it necessary to set down the New Testament and hold it fast in the Greek language, doubtless in order to preserve it for us there safe and sound as in a sacred ark. For they foresaw all that was to come, and now has come to pass; they knew that if it was left exclusively to men's memory, wild and fearful disorder and confusion and a host of varied interpretations, fancies, and doctrines would arise in the Christian church, and that this could not be prevented and the simple folk protected unless the New Testament were set down with certainty in written language. Hence, it is inevitable that unless the languages remain, the gospel must finally perish.[19]

I am reminded of the Chinese proverb: "The most extensive memory is no match

for the palest ink."[20] Divine providence and apostolic pastoral care made sure that this gospel would be recorded and preserved for us in written *verba* so that the *res* would not be lost. And yet, the access to this safeguard, this ark of the new covenant (speaking specifically of the New Testament now), is through knowledge of the Greek language. We see the way this understanding of the importance of the written text effected Luther's own reading of the Bible in his later (1533) exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:3–7. This is a passage worth quoting.

> And note how Paul again extols and exalts the testimony of Scripture and the external Word as he emphasizes and repeats the phrase "in accordance with the Scripture." To be sure, he does not do this without reason. He does this in the first place to resist the mad spirits who disdain Scripture and the external message and in place of this seek other secret revelation. And today every place is also teeming with such spirits, confused by the devil, who regard Scripture a dead letter and boast of nothing but the Spirit, although these people retain neither Word nor Spirit. But here you notice how Paul adduces Scripture as his strongest proof, for there is no other enduring way of preserving our doctrine and our faith than the physical or written Word, poured into letters and preached orally by him or others; for here we find it stated clearly: "Scripture! Scripture!" But Scripture is not all spirit, about which they drivel, saying that the Spirit alone must do it and that Scripture is a dead letter which cannot impart life. But the fact of the matter is that, although the letter by itself does not impart life, yet it must be present, and it must be heard or received. And the Holy Spirit must work through this in the heart, and the heart must be preserved in the faith through and in the Word against the devil and every trial. Otherwise, where this is surrendered, Christ and the Spirit will soon be lost. Therefore do not boast so much of the Spirit if you do not have the revealed external Word; for this is surely not a good spirit but the vile devil from hell. The Holy Spirit, as you know, has deposited his wisdom and counsel and all mysteries into the Word and revealed these in Scripture, so that no one can excuse himself. Nor must anyone seek or search for something else or learn or acquire something better or more sublime than what Scripture teaches of Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior, who died and rose for us.[21]

Luther's own experience proves the importance of this relationship between *verba* and *res*. Those not familiar with Luther's own struggles to read and understand God's

word need to hear—and those familiar will be happy to hear again—Luther himself tell the story of his mortal combat with the single word *righteousness [iustitia]*:

> Meanwhile, I had already during that year [1518?] returned to interpret the Psalter anew. I had confidence in the fact that I was more skillful, after I had lectured in the university on St. Paul's epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the one to the Hebrews. I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But up till then it was not the cold blood about the heart, but a single word *[unicum vocabulum]* in Chapter 1[:17], "In it the righteousness of God is revealed," that had stood in my way. For I hated that word "righteousness of God," which, according to the use and custom of all the teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.
>
> Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God, and said, "As if, indeed, it is not enough, that miserable sinners, eternally lost through original sin, are crushed by every kind of calamity by the law of the decalogue, without having God add pain to pain by the gospel and also by the gospel threatening us with his righteousness and wrath!" Thus I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. Nevertheless, I beat importunately upon Paul at that place, most ardently desiring to know what St. Paul wanted.
>
> At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words *[connexionem verborum]*, namely, "In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'" There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel *[revelari per euangelium iustitiam Dei]*, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally other face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me *[Ibi continuo alia mihi facies totius scripturae apparuit]*. Thereupon

> I ran through the Scriptures from memory. I also found in other terms an analogy *[in aliis vocabulis analogiam]*, as, the work of God, that is, what God does in us, the power of God, with which he makes us strong, the wisdom of God, with which he makes us wise, the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.
>
> And I extolled my sweetest word *[dulcissimum mihi vocabulum]* with a love as great as the hatred with which I had before hated the word "righteousness of God." Thus that place in Paul was for me truly the gate to paradise.[22]

It is both fascinating and illuminating to hear Luther tell his story again when we have the circular interpretive process of moving from *verba* to *res* and back again to *verba* in mind. Luther is introducing his collected Latin works, so it is natural that he here writes in Latin. The lectures on Romans that he mentions at the beginning were based on the Vulgate text, but there are clear indications throughout his glosses that he is already consulting the Greek text as well. What is immediately apparent is that Luther's previous study of Paul and the rest of the Bible, what he had been taught by his teachers, was not able to bring Luther to a clear understanding of the Bible's message. It was only this careful return to the words themselves, to the *verba*—in this case to that "*unicum vocabulum*"—and their interconnections that could lead Luther to a proper understanding of the Bible's *res*. We might say today that the version of "the Bible's story" that Luther had been given was all wrong. A new understanding of this single word—followed by others—enabled him to read the whole story, grasp the *res*, experience God's word in a new and wholesome way.

It was only this careful return to the words themselves, to the verba *and their interconnections that could lead Luther to a proper understanding of the Bible's* res.

And Today?

In the year of its 500th anniversary, does Luther's argument still stand? Do we still believe that, if we lose the languages, we will not long be able to preserve the gospel? Roger Bacon had complained in his day (the thirteenth century) of the inadequacy of the then available translations of Aristotle, which had been translated from Greek into Arabic then into Latin: "Learned men can get a distant whiff of [Aristotle's] meaning, but not taste it. For a wine that has been poured into three successive containers does not keep its virtue in all its strength."[23] Are preachers today who cannot or do not "drink the Scriptures

right out of the original bottle," just getting a whiff of God's word, are they not drinking in the Scriptures in all their strength? Luther himself had warned the councilmen that "although faith and the gospel may indeed be proclaimed by simple preachers without a knowledge of languages, such preaching is flat and tame; people finally become weary and bored with it, and it falls to the ground."[24]

I suggest we add to Luther's list of metaphors by borrowing from a well-known and well-loved biblical episode: the languages are like the flour jar and oil jug of the widow of Zarephath (cf. 1 Kgs 17:8ff). We think that by emptying them once we have exhausted the good gifts of God contained within, so we can then dispose of jar and jug. But these are the very containers that God keeps "refilling" with his ever new and ever powerful gospel—He never lets these containers empty themselves, run dry. Am I doing violence to a biblical image? If so, then what did the confessors mean when they referred to "the prophetic and apostolic *writings* of the Old and New Testaments" as "the pure, clear *fountain* of Israel"?[25] They are *Brunnen or fontes*, "springs, fountains," springs of water welling up to eternal life (cf. Jn 4:14). These are the sources from which the preacher, the teacher, the theologian, the child of God is to draw the always clear, unfailingly strong, ever fresh words of eternal life.

Need for access to the original verba *is supported by the contemporary study of language and meaning.*

Such need for access to the original *verba* is supported by the contemporary study of language and meaning. Consider, as just one example, George Steiner's claim in *After Babel: Aspects of Language & Translation:*

> Where language is fully used *meaning is content beyond paraphrase*. This is to say that where even the most thorough paraphrase stops, meaning begins uniquely. This uniqueness is determined by the conjunction of typographical, phonetic, grammatical facts with the semantic whole. Because it is not the passage itself, all paraphrase—analytic, hermeneutic, reproductive—is fragmentary (even where it is wordier than the original). Paraphrase predicates a fiction: it proceeds as if 'meaning' were divisible from even the barest detail and accident of oral or written form, as if any utterance could ever be a total stand-in for any other. This fiction is, of course, indispensable to human communication, to the conventions of approximate equivalence which underlie everyday speech. But a passage of serious poetry or prose reminds us that this fiction, however fundamental to man and society, has a limited status.

> Where language is charged to the full, paraphrase is less and less "like the thing itself."[26]

The Hebrew Scriptures of the OT and the Greek Scriptures of the NT—"language charged to the full" as no other language in human history—are not only "the one true guiding principle, according to which all teachers and teaching are to be judged and evaluated,"[27] they are also the wellspring from which God continues to pour out fresh understanding, new insight, and an inexhaustible store of imagery and figure and wording to use in the proclamation of his gospel. Thus, Luther can claim: "But where the preacher is versed in the languages, there is a freshness and vigor in his preaching, Scripture is treated in its entirety, and faith finds itself constantly renewed by a continual variety of words and illustrations."[28]

In commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the founding of Concordia Seminary, Martin Franzmann wrote an essay entitled "*Hear Ye Him: Training the Pastor in the Holy Scriptures.*" In his essay, Franzmann explained to the church at large just what the exegetical department does. *That* he could state very simply: "We teach men to listen."[29] (And recall Luther quoting the dictum: "He who cannot hear well, invents well."[30]) As he goes on to explain why the learning of Hebrew and Greek still must be part of that "learning to listen," Franzmann echoes Luther's entreaty to the councilmen in remarkable ways. He begins, "Time and history have set up a barrier between us and the voice of the Good Shepherd in the Holy Scriptures. The Gospel has moved westward, and Hebrew and Greek are no longer our speech. But we can hear that voice still; if time has built fences to keep us out, God has built stiles to get us over the fences."[31] Franzmann proceeds to catalogue the vast array of language tools produced in the previous seventy-five years (leading up to 1964), with the result that the church of his day has more tools "for mastering the languages of the Bible than any generation in the church before us."[32] Luther could speak in the same way of the Germany of his day, which possessed "the finest and most learned group of men, adorned with languages and all the arts, who could also render real service if only we would make use of them as instructors of the young people."[33] What was true in Luther's day, what was true in Franzmann's day, is truer still today: God has so richly blessed his church with unprecedented resources for the learning of biblical languages that it would be sheer ingratitude not to take advantage of them: "We cannot all learn the biblical languages, and it is not necessary that we should. But for those who can—and most people can; they are not at all so difficult as many people think—it would be sheer nonsense not to learn them, nonsense and ingratitude to God."[34]

Franzmann adds a final thought to an already compelling case:

> To be able, with a little effort, to move one step closer to the Good Shepherd, and not take that step? To be able, with a little effort, to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd more distinctly and more

> fully, and not make the effort? That is nonsense; and for one who is to be a shepherd of the flock of God, to feed the sheep of Christ—for a man with that privilege and that responsibility not to take the trouble to hear the Chief Shepherd in His own tongue—what shall we call it but ingratitude to the God who has given us both the languages and the means of mastering them? The languages are not a burden; they are a gift and a privilege.

Are We Losing the Languages?

Why is the *Concordia Journal* beginning an issue on "New Testament Studies Today" by revisiting Luther's 500-year-old appeal to teach Hebrew and Greek to young people? *Certainly not* because the languages have been forgotten. Time, energy, and labor—from both faculty and students—are still invested in the learning of languages daily, and with good result. Still, now as always, the church has to make difficult decisions with regard to the stewardship of time and resources. The teaching of languages takes time, and if students don't already know these languages, time at the seminary must be devoted to the teaching of these languages—including English. And maintaining languages takes time, time and more time, practice and more practice, and the daily use of the languages in classroom and language lab. Can the urgency of the need allow for such time? Is it a luxury that our stewardship of student time and church resources cannot afford?

Moreover, if we take Luther's context and point seriously, this is not just a matter for the seminaries, universities, and "the church." Luther is talking about the education of all children and the difference one type of education over another will make for society as a whole. There are questions here for all parents, not just the parents of future church workers. "How do we today bring up our children in the way they should go?" "What do my children need to learn and to know to live well in the land as children of God, as 'little Christs' to their neighbors?"[35]

Like the mayors and city councils of sixteenth-century Germany, like the Missouri Synod of the 1960s, we today need to hear again the warnings as well as the encouragement:

> O my beloved Germans, buy while the market is at your door; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; make use of God's grace and word while it is there! For you should know that God's word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. It has been with the Jews, but when it's gone it's gone, and now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks; but again when it's gone it's gone, and now they have the Turk. Rome and the Latins also had it; but when

> it's gone it's gone, and now they have the pope. And you Germans need not think that you will have it forever, for ingratitude and contempt will not make it stay.[36]

Without a doubt, higher education in our country is facing very serious challenges. Changes are being made and will continue to be made that will impact every level of education from preschool to post-doc. No generation has lacked voices crying out: "It's already gone; we've already lost the gospel. Our world—educational, familial, cultural, societal, political, economic—every aspect of our world has turned its back on the gospel, and now it has moved on." Our response to such voices cannot be to dismiss them as misguided doomsayers but must be to ask ourselves whether or not we can prove them wrong. Such voices are simply a call, and a helpful one, to "take up and read," to turn again to the word that still remains, even if we or others have stopped reading it.

Our understanding of language and meaning, our grasp of the possibility and principles of translation from one language to another, our knowledge of Luther's experience and the church's, leave us no other option: we, too, must admit that if we lose the languages, the gospel will soon be lost. How shall we then live? All of us together, parents and teachers, students and professors, pastors, principles, deaconesses and chaplains, missionaries and translators, leaders of churches and leaders of cities, need to work together to ensure that the languages are not lost, to encourage, support, participate in and steadily improve, the study of the biblical languages. The devil should be "smelling that rat" not only on our seminary and university campuses but in our elementary and high schools, *and in our living rooms and around our kitchen tables.* Despite the challenges education is facing, this is still a time "sunshine and fair weather" when it comes to learning the sacred languages of the Holy Scriptures. Almost unlimited resources are as close as the phones in our pockets. When a question arises in private reading or family devotions or Sunday morning Bible class, look to the languages. Find out who in the room, around the table, knows these languages or knows someone who does. Pick up a commentary. Ask your pastor. Email a seminary professor. As Franzmann said, most people can learn these languages; "they are not at all so difficult as many people think."[37] Let's make these languages at home in our homes, giving them "rich and nourishing rations" and "abundant entertainment," letting them know they are welcome guests among us. And, if the devil doesn't like the smell, he can leave.

Now as always, the church has to make difficult decisions with regard to the stewardship of time and resources.

Endnotes

1 Martin Luther, "An die Burgermeyster und Radherrn allerley stedte ynn Deutschen landen," *WA, Schriften* 15:36.

2 Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," *LW* 45:358.

3 "Introduction" to "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:342.

4 See the full introduction to Luther's appeal in *LW* 45:340–346. Also very helpful is H. Ashley Hall, "Introduction," and his annotations to "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," pp. 235–279 in *The Annotated Luther. Volume 5: Christian Life in the World* ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

5 Siegfried Raeder, "The Exegetical and Hermeneutical Work of Martin Luther," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. Volume II: From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2008), 365–366.

6 Timothy J. Wengert, "Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon on the Care and Feeding of [Future] Pastors," Dialog 59:2 (2020): 131.

7 H. Ashley Hall, "Introduction" to "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," in The Annotated Luther. Volume 5: Christian Life in the World ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 236.

8 Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:356.

9 Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:357.

10 Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:358–359.

11 Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:359–360.

12 Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools," *LW* 45:360. Cf. *WA, Schriften* 15:38: "Und last uns das gesagt seyn, Das wyr das Euangelion nicht wol werden erhallten on die sprachen. Die sprachen sind die scheyden, darynn dis messer des geysts stickt. Sie sind der schreyn, darynnen man dis kleinod tregt. Sie sind das gefess, darynnen man disen tranck fasset. Sie sind die kemnot, [Matth. 14, 20] darynnen dise speyse ligt. Und wie das Euangelion selbs zeygt, Sie sind die koerbe, darynnen man dise brot und fische und brocken behellt. Ja wo wyrs versehen, das wyr (da Gott fur sey) die sprachen faren lassen, so werden wir nicht alleyn das Euangelion verlieren, sondern wird auch endlich dahyn geratten, das wir wider lateinisch noch deutsch recht reden odder schreyben kuenden. Des last uns das elend grewlich exempel zur beweysung und warnung nemen ynn den hohen schulen und kloestern, darynnen man nicht alleyn das Euangelion verlernt, sondern auch lateinische und deutsche sprache verderbet hat, das die elenden leut schier zu lautter bestien worden sind, wider deutsch noch lateinisch recht reden oder schreyben konnen, Und bey nahend auch die natuerliche vernunfft verloren haben.

Darumb habens die Apostel auch selbs fur noettig an gesehen, das sie das newe testament ynn die Kriechische sprache fasseten und anbuenden, on zweyffel, das sie es uns daselbs sicher und gewis verwareten wie ynn eyner heyligen laden. Denn sie haben gesehen all das ienige, das zukunfftig war und nu also ergangen ist: wo es alleyn ynn die koepff gefasset wuerde, wie manche wilde, wueste unordnung und gemenge, so mancherley synnen, dunckel und leren sich erheben wuerden ynn der Christenheyt, wilchen ynn keynen weg zu weren noch die eynfelltigen zu schuetzen weren, wo nicht das newe testament gewis ynn schrifft und sprache gefasset were. Darumb ists gewis, wo nicht die sprachen bleyben, da mus zu letzt das Euangelion unter gehen.

13 Martin Luther, *WA, Tischreden* 5:26 (#5246). As many have pointed out, Luther is here stating a principle that goes back at least as far as Augustine.

14 Martin H. Franzmann, *Seven Theses on Reformation Hermeneutics* (Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations; The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1969), 2.

15 Franzmann, *Seven Theses,* 2.

16 Franzmann, *Seven Theses,* 4.
17 Martin Luther, "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," LW 30:76–77. Cf. *WA, Schriften* 12:259.
18 Timothy J. Wengert, *Reading the Bible with Luther: An Introductory* Guide (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 31. This is one reason Luther and Melanchthon insisted that rhetoric be added to the curriculum.
19 Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," LW 45:360.
20 廣記不如淡墨.
21 Martin Luther, "Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15," *LW* 28:76–77.
22 Martin Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings (1545)," LW 34:336–337. Cf. *WA, Schriften* 54:185–186. Additions in brackets are my own.
23 Roger Bacon, *Moral Philosophy*, VI, 267. Cited from Umberto Eco, *From the Tree to the Labyrinth: Historical Studies on the Sign and Interpretation trans.* Anthony Oldcorn (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 114. Though wine afficionados of my acquaintance have challenged the validity of Bacon's analogy, as respected an authority on wine as "Dr. Vinny," writing for Wine Spectator, warns (posted July 23, 2014): "Can you 'over decant' a wine? Yes, but typically, only if it's old—upwards of 10 or 15 years. When you decant a wine that old, in my experience the flavors can start to fade in as little as 30 minutes." One would think the Scriptures qualify as an "old vintage."
24 Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:365.
25 FC, SD, "*Concerning the Binding Summary, Basis, Rule, and Guiding Principle*," [3]. Italics added.
26 George Steiner. *After* Babel: Aspects of Language & Translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998): 394–395. Italics original.
27 FC, SD, "*Concerning the Binding Summary, Basis, Rule, and Guiding Principle*," [3].
28 Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:365.
29 Martin H. Franzmann, "Hear Ye Him: Training the Pastor in the Holy Scriptures," *Toward a More Excellent Ministry* ed. Richard R. Caemmerer and Alfred O. Fuerbringer; (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 81.
30 Martin Luther, "Lectures on Habakkuk," *LW* 19:152. The quote in context reads: "Now, a wise man must necessarily be able to speak well; this can never fail. But to him who does not hear well or is not sufficiently conversant with a language, to him a speech may seem faulty because he hears or understands hardly half of the words. That has been our experience to date with Scripture. That is why we, too, groped in the dark so, aped others, and often missed the mark and arrived at another meaning. As the saying goes: He who cannot hear well, invents well."
31 Franzmann, "Hear Ye Him," 83.
32 Franzmann, "Hear Ye Him," 84.
33 Martin Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:351.
34 Franzmann, "Hear Ye Him," 85.
35 And, if we haven't read it in a while, we should turn immediately to Luther's "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," which will also sound as if it were addressed specifically to us in the 21st century. Cf. *LW* 46:208–258.
36 Luther, "To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany," *LW* 45:352–353.
37 Franzmann, "Hear Ye Him," 85.

The Long Ending of the Gospel According to Mark
Still Not to Be Embraced?

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"It is only since the appearance of Griesbach's second edition [1796–1806] that Critics of the New Testament have permitted themselves to handle the last twelve verses of S. Mark's Gospel with disrespect." So begins John W. Burgon's second chapter of his monumental study, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to S. Mark vindicated against recent critical objectors and established.*[1] Such critics operate under the supposition that the last genuine words written by the Gospel writer are ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ ("for they were afraid") (Mk 16:8). This would be true, whether the true ending/final verses have been lost or removed or never written (Burgon's view of his opposition's position[2]), or whether Mark intended to end his narrative there (the popular contemporary view). But there has always been resistance to such an increasingly common handling of the Gospel according to Mark "with disrespect." Significant voices have contended for the

Author's note

This essay, in a slightly different form, was presented to Mark Passion Narrative seminar at the national meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature on November 18, 2023, in San Antonio, Texas. All papers for this seminar are circulated to members prior to the meeting; during the sessions themselves, only a summary of each paper is read, followed by lengthy discussion. The reaction to this paper was wide-ranging and intense.

genuineness of the long ending, 16:9–20, asserting that it is the true ending of the Gospel according to Mark.

John Burgon gives the best presentation of the evidence for this traditionalist position. It is not that Burgon has the best *argument* for 16:9–20 being the genuine ending of the second Gospel— in my view, we will get to a better one at the conclusion of this essay—but it seems to me to be the best *gathering of sources and resources* that support keeping 16:9–20 as the conclusion of Mark chapter 16. Examining Burgon's evidence and evaluating that evidence will be the focus of this paper.

The Evidence for *Embracing the Long Ending as the Conclusion to the Second Gospel*

The trove of evidence that Burgon brings to the fore and reviews is the basis for virtually all judgments that promote Mark 16:9–20 as genuine Marcan material and/or the true ending of Mark, whether Burgon's own or that of any other such textual critic.[3]

External Evidence

For Burgon, the foundational and overarching argument for the retention of 16:9–20 as the conclusion of Mark is the universal spread of these long ending verses in the texts of the Greek manuscripts and the strikingly early appearance of quotations of or references to material that appears to be contained in them. Burgon supports this foundational argument on three main pillars: the evidence of Greek manuscripts, the evidence of the early church fathers, and the evidence of the early versions.[4]

Burgon establishes his Greek manuscripts case on the simple fact that the only Greek manuscripts that do not contain 16:9–20 at the conclusion of Mark are only two in number: codices B and א.[5] The next earliest major codices, A, C, and D, are later, as he observes, but not by that much, and these contain the long ending, as do all later minuscules.[6] (No later discoveries challenge Burgon's observations on this point.[7])

In many ways, evidence of the fathers is the main pillar of Burgon's argument. "What is at least beyond the limits of controversy, whenever *the genuineness of a considerable passage of Scripture* is the point in dispute, the testimony of the Fathers who undoubtedly recognize that passage, is beyond comparison the most valuable testimony we can enjoy."[8] Burgon concedes that the Fathers often allude to or paraphrase rather than quote directly, but he asserts that "the *substance* . . . inasmuch as it lay wholly beyond their province, may be looked upon as an indisputable *fact*."[9] His proof is impressive, especially that related to the second and third centuries.[10]

- Justin Martyr, in Apology 1.45.5 (ca. 150), says of the disciples after Jesus's ascension: ἐξελθόντες πανταχοῦ ἐκήρυξαν, which closely parallels 16:20.[11]

- Irenaeus, in *Against Heresies* 3.10.5 (ca. 180), says, closely following 16:19: *In fine autem Evangelii ait Marcus,* et quidem Dominus Jesus, postquam locutus est eis, receptus est in caelos, et sedet ad dexteram Dei.[12]
- Hippolytus (190–227) quotes 16:17–18 in Περὶ Χαρισμάτων,[13] and in a homily describes the ascension of Jesus with the verb ἀναλαμβάνω, which (Burgon contends) is never used in the creeds of the Ascension (the creeds employ ἀνέρχομαι), which verb is used in 16:19 (ἀνελήμφθη).[14]

Also noteworthy are references or quotations in the Apostolic Constitutions (iii–iv),[15] Eusebius (325),[16] Ambrose (374–439),[17] Chrysostom (400),[18] Jerome (420),[19] and Augustine (395–430).[20] He concludes by saying concerning these men that they do not

> belong to one particular age, school, or country. They come, on the contrary, from every part of the ancient Church: Antioch and Constantinope,—Hieropolis, Caesarea and Edessa,—Carthage, Alexandria, and Hippo,—Rome and Portus. And thus, upwards of nineteen early codexes [sic] have been to all intents and purposes inspected for us in various lands by unprejudiced witnesses,—*seven* of them at least of more ancient date than the oldest copy of the Gospels extant.

Much as with the Fathers, Burgon trumpets the evidence of early translations of the Gospels into languages other than Greek:

> it must now be added that second only to the testimony of Fathers on such occasions is to be reckoned the evidence of the oldest of the Versions. The reason is obvious. (*a.*) We know for the most part the approximate date of the principal ancient Versions of the New Testament:—(*b.*) Each Version is represented by at least one very ancient Codex:—and (*c.*) It may be safely assumed that Translators were never dependant (sic) on a single copy of the original Greek when they executed their several Translations.[21]

He then proceeds to show that the Syriac (especially the "Peshitto" [ii] and Curetonian [v]), the Latin, including both the Old Latin (ii) and the Vulgate (iv), the Gothic (Ulphilas, 350), the Egyptian (the "Thebic"[22] [iii] and "Memphitic"[23] [iv–v]), as well as the Armenian (v) all evidence 16:9–20.[24] Properly, Burgon sees these version as important because they "do not so much shew [sic] what individuals held, as what Churches have believed and taught concerning the sacred Text,—mighty Churches in Syria and Mesopotamia, in Africa and Italy, in Palestine and Egypt." [25]

The Nature of Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus

Burgon's second argument concerns the character of the witnesses against the inclusion of 16:9–20 as the conclusion of the Gospel according to Mark, namely codices B and א. Here his critique is scathing and intense. He understands these key witnesses as deeply flawed—"mutilated" is his word.[26] Burgon contends, upon analysis of their treatments of the Four Gospels, that the two manuscripts are full of omissions (e.g., the omission of the phrase ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, "the one who is in heaven," at the end of Jn 3:13),[27] interpolations (e.g., introducing the piercing of Jesus's side on the cross at the end of Mt 27:49),[28] and corruptions (e.g., an "insipid gloss" in Lk 6:48).[29] He also notes throughout his discussion differences between codices B and א themselves. In sum, Burgon believes that these two uncials are *not reliable witnesses generally*—not only at the conclusion of Mark, but also throughout the totality of their NT text.[30] Indeed, this contention is central to his argumentation.

Internal Evidence

Burgon also deals with internal evidence, specifically the evidence of language in the long ending, especially its Greek profile compares to the Greek profile of 1:1-16:8, as well as the evidence of Mark's narrative structure.

Burgon focuses, as do many textual critics, upon vocabulary and short phrases or expressions in the long ending, comparing them with their usage in Mark 1:1–16:8. For example, considering the use of ἐκεῖνος (ἐκείνη, ἐκεῖνοι) "absolutely," that is, not as a demonstrative pronoun modifying an arthrous noun (i.e., one with the article), but as a subject (similar to ὁ δέ, ἡ δέ, οἱ δέ) in 16:10,11,13, and 20, he says:

> It is declared that ἐκεῖνος "is nowhere found absolutely used by S. Mark . . ."
>
> (1) Slightly peculiar it is, no doubt, but not very, that an Evangelist who employs an ordinary word in the ordinary way about thirty times in all, should use it "absolutely" in two consecutive verses.
>
> (2) But really, until the Critics can agree among themselves as to *which* are precisely the offending instances,—(for it is evidently a moot point whether ἐκεῖνος be emphatic in ver. 13, or not,)—we may be excused from a prolonged discussion of such a question.

Indeed, he notes that these types of issues are not as simple as critics may think, particularly when we consider how rare certain sayings or expressions are. He presents the following as a solid example: "It surprises me a little, of course, that S. Mark should present me with πρώτη σαββάτου (in ver. 9) instead of the phrase μία σαββάτων, which he had employed just above (in ver. 2). But it does not surprise me much,—when I observe μία σαββάτων *occurs only once in each of the Four Gospels*."[31]

Also consider the following: "The phrase οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ γενόμενοι [16:10] occurs

nowhere in the Acts or in the Gospels, *except here*. But why *should* it appear elsewhere? or rather, how *could* it?"[32] Indeed. The aorist participle is appropriate only at this point in Mark's narrative. In fact, Burgon specifically considers *twenty-seven* such items in all, and explores them in detail.[33]

Concerning narrative/literary structure, Burgon aptly draws a strong parallel between 16:9–20 and 1:9–20.[34] He demonstrates that these two sections are similar in describing a series of incidents involving Jesus in quite a summary fashion, without Mark's frequent close attention to vivid detail (as, for example, in 2:1–12 or 11:1–11). In 1:9–20 we find in rapid succession the baptism of Jesus by John (1:9–11), the temptation of Jesus (1:12–13), Jesus's appearance preaching (1:14–15), and his calling of his first disciples (1:16–20), which may be compared, in the long ending, to Jesus's approach to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection (16:9–11), as well as to two disciples traveling (16:12–13), his appearance to the eleven, followed by his commissioning of them and his instructions to them (16:14–18), his ascension (16:19), and the proclamation of the Gospel in the world (16:20). This is interesting argumentation and is deserving of a detailed response.

It is fair to say that Burgon pays much closer attention to the issues of internal evidence than do most textual critics.

What Burgon concludes, then, following his extensive analysis is the following: "certain copies of the second Gospel *had experienced mutilation in very early times* in respect of these Twelve concluding Verses." Therefore, what is not true is that "S. Mark's Gospel *was without a conclusion from the very first*," that is that "the Gospel according to S. Mark, as it left the hands of its inspired Author, *was in this imperfect or unfinished state*."[35] Therefore, he insists, 16:9–20 is a genuine passage penned by the evangelist St. Mark and is the original conclusion to the Gospel.[36]

Assessment of the Evidence for Embracing the Long Ending as the Conclusion to the Second Gospel

We should not underestimate what John W. Burgon has given us in his book under consideration. He has presented mountains of evidence (we have only begun to dig into it in this survey), and he has shown an admirable readiness to engage textual issues. Finally, however, we must assert that his position and his arguments relative to the long ending must be *rejected*. A number of reasons for this assessment will be forthcoming. We will take the issues he presents in reverse order.

Internal Evidence

Burgon's treatment of language is *fundamentally flawed*. First, he treats all instances as having equal weight and value. But some instances are truly revelatory of authorial tendencies (a linguistic facial tic, as it were). An excellent example (as stated above), is the use of a nominative form of a demonstrative pronoun alone and "absolutely," that

is, as the subject of a clause/sentence to mean the virtual equivalent of "he/she/they." As Burgon admits, this usage does not occur elsewhere in the Gospel of Mark; neither is it present in the Gospel of Matthew or of Luke. But, it is *extremely frequent in the Gospel of John*; see ἐκεῖνος in John 2:21; 4:25; 5:46; 9:11; 16:13; 18:17, 25; ἐκείνη in Jn 11:29; 20:15, 16; ἐκεῖνοι in Jn 19:15; 20:13.[37] The use of the *demonstrative pronoun* alone/absolutely as a *subject* is a *Johannine*, not a Marcan, authorial characteristic and provides an important piece of evidence of almost unconscious authorial proclivity. Burgon's dismissal of this type of evidence, as noted above, completely underestimates the *linguistic* significance of these types of key occurrences.

Second and more serious is the fact that Burgon is much too individualistic, focusing exclusively on words and short phrases in his analysis (as noted above). Serious *syntax* is neglected. In general, the syntax of a number of verses in the long ending is different when compared to normal Marcan syntax. This is a point that cannot be ignored.

- The use of predicate position participles to modify an attributive position participle (τοῖς μετ' αὐτοῦ γενομένοις πενθοῦσιν καὶ κλαίουσιν) in 16:10 is unknown elsewhere in the Gospel according to Mark and is unusual.
- The complex final genitive absolute of 16:20, including an attributive position participle connected with it (τοῦ κυρίου συνεργοῦντος καὶ τὸν λόγον βεβαιοῦντος διὰ τῶν ἐπακολουθούντων σημείων ["as the Lord was working with them and confirming their message through the accompanying signs"]) is quite non-Marcan. In fact, it has a striking parallel in Hebrew 2:4 (συμεπιμαρτυροῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ σημείοις τε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου μερισμοῖς κατὰ τὴν αὐτου θέλησιν [while God was bearing witness in support with signs and wonders and variegated miracles and apportionments of the Holy Spirit according to his will]).
- The placement of μετὰ τό plus an infinitive *after* an explicit subject and not at the beginning of the sentence in 16:19 is not Marcan (cf. 1:14; 14:28).

In fact, the Greek profile of 16:9–20 is different from what one encounters in 1:1–16:8 and is virtually fatal to Burgon's analysis.

Considering narrative/literary structure several points can be made. First, one cannot underestimate the importance of the less than smooth transition from 16:8 to 16:9. This cannot be gainsaid. The transition between 16:8 and 16:9 is extremely awkward grammatically. It reads as if a separate document has been preserved and has been appended mechanically to a prior document, without a serious effort to produce a smooth connection. Note that there is no explicit subject in 16:9, even though a number of translations add "Jesus" at this point.[38] One may note that there is a dearth of explicit subjects in the opening chapters of this Gospel as well,[39] but

there is an important difference between standard Marcan usage early in his Gospel and 16:9. In chapter 1, Jesus is explicitly mentioned as the character doing the action of the narrative in 1:14 (also in 1:17). After that, all third person singular verbs have him as their subject, and logically so (see, e.g., 1:16, 20, 21, 22, and after Jesus is mentioned again as subject in 1:25, he is the logical subject of the verbs in 1:34, 35, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44 [perhaps also 1:29]). When other singular persons or entities are the subjects of verbs in this section of the Gospel, they are explicitly mentioned or indicated (e.g., 1:23, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 36, 40, 42, 45). In 16:1–8, Jesus is *not* the actor in the narrative; he is only spoken about. The main actors are the young man and the women. Thus, when 16:9 begins to detail the resurrection and the appearance of someone, then, according to standard Marcan usage, that person needs to be mentioned explicitly as the subject of any verb, or, *by implication, he will be someone from the narrative immediately prior.* As written, therefore, the logical subject of 16:9 is the young man of 16:5—which is clearly not what the narrative conveys. Regarding the transition under discussion, one may also note that Mary Magdalene is described and identified in 16:9 as if she has not appeared previously in the story, but she has already been named in 15:40,47, and 16:1.

Equally important is what may be called the "linguistic clothing" of the narrative of Mark, a feature that sets the socio-cultural scene, as it were, for the hearer/reader. The first half of Mark has a distinctively different linguistic profile than does the latter half (with a gradual change occurring within chapters 5–7).[40] The first half, when the narrative setting is in Galilee, is characterized by more Semitic features; the second half, when the setting is in more cosmopolitan Jerusalem and its surrounds, is characterized by more Hellenic features. A salient example of each is Mark 3:1–6 and 15:6–15. Note now that 16:1–8, which is oriented toward Galilee narratively (see 16:7), returns to the language profile of the narrative of Jesus in Galilee, that is, the narrative of the early chapters of Mark, especially with the dominance καί as the basic conjunction connecting clauses and the notable lack of the conjunction δέ: καί occurs in 16:1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (*bis*), 8 (bis), while δέ occurs only once, to switch subjects in reaction to a plot development, in 16:6. The twelve-verse section of chapter 1 that Burgon presents as parallel to 16:9–20, namely 1:9–20, also has *precisely these characteristics*: καί occurs in 1:9, 10, 11, 12, 13 (bis), 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 (*bis*), while δέ is completely absent. But—and this is critically important—16:9–20 displays quite different characteristics. The conjunction καί links clauses in 16:11, 13, 14, 15, 18 (*bis*), while δέ provides such a transition in 16:9, 12, 13 (οὐδέ), 14,[41] 16, 17, 20. Indeed, there is a hodge-podge effect to this pattern; it does not provide the kind of consistency one sees when δέ is dominant, that is, in 15:1–15.[42] This use of basic conjunctions, I contend, is a significant factor (another linguistic facial tic) in determining the profile of authorial linguistic usage.[43]

The Characteristics of Codices Vaticanus and Sinaiticus

As described above, Burgon is unrelenting in his criticism of codices B and א. But such distrust is warranted *only* if it overthrows virtually all canons of modern textual criticism, especially the salient canon as expressed by Bruce M. Metzger: "Perhaps the most basic criterion for the evaluation of variant readings is the simple maxim 'choose the reading which best explains the origin of the others.'"[44] Codices B and א are consistently solid on this matter. *But here we strive to make a different, and much more important, point.* It is noteworthy that in his analysis of the failings of B and א, Burgon adduces as evidence almost exclusively instances of difficulties from the Gospels according to Matthew, Luke, and John, and precious few from Mark.[45] This is of central importance. I have argued elsewhere[46] that one should determine the contours of Gospel writer's linguistic profile on the basis of the widest possible range of manuscript evidence, that is, on the basis of Greek manuscripts representing all so-called textual traditions (Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine[47]), and then determine which Greek manuscripts best represent that authorial linguistic profile.[48] I have also argued that when one does this for Mark, a linguistic profile for this Gospel can be developed,[49] and, concomitantly, that certain Greek manuscripts reflect this profile more clearly than do others. *"Specifically, manuscript Vaticanus (B) provides a strong witness to the characteristics of Marcan Greek (as generally established), as do a number of manuscripts normally allied with it (א L Δ Ψ 565 579 and to a lesser degree C and 33)."* [50]

If this understanding is correct, then *the (supposed) characteristics of codex B (and also of its chief ally, codex א) in the* other *Gospels (as well as more generally) is* irrelevant *to the discussion of the Gospel according to Mark.* In fact, Burgon's analysis supports our contention, for seldom does Burgon impugn the character of manuscript B's readings in Mark itself, as noted above.[51] But that is precisely the point at issue—*codex B (and א) in Mark*—and for this reason, Burgon's rejection of the reliability of codex B (and of א) to establish the Greek text of the second Gospel is itself to be firmly rejected. Indeed, the understanding presented here is supported by the little-appreciated fact that the textual tradition of Mark is somewhat different from that of the other three Gospels in one important respect. In codices Δ and Ψ, the textual tradition of the Gospels according to Matthew, Luke, and John, is, generally, Byzantine, while that of Mark is recognized as more typically Alexandrian, similar to that of L, which is an important close ally to B and א. Codex Θ and minuscule 565 (also the minuscules of family 1) have a similar configuration, with their Marcan texts different than that of the other Gospels, though not especially similar to that of B and its allies[52] The text of Mark must be treated separately, and Burgon does not recognize this fact.

External Evidence

Burgon relies heavily on external evidence, namely the evidence of manuscripts as such, the testimony of the Fathers, and the evidence from the versions. We will consider each in turn.

We will not seek to rebut Burgon's assessment concerning the sheer number of Greek manuscripts that testify to ending Mark at 16:8; he is right about the small number. But it is worth pointing out several things. First, there are a number of Greek manuscripts that contain a so-called short ending, a single, summary verse that provide a quick conclusion to the Gospel; these include L (vii), Ψ (ix–x), 083 (vi–vii), 099 (vii), as well as 579 (xiii): πάντα δὲ τὰ παρηγγελμένα τοῖς περὶ τὸν Πέτρον συντόμως ἐξήγγειλαν. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς καὶ ἄχρι δύσεως ἐξαπέστειλεν δι᾽ αὐτῶν τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἄφθαρτον κήρυγμα τῆς αἰωνίου σωτηρίας. ἀμήν. "And they announced briefly all the things that were commanded to those surrounding Peter. And after these things, also Jesus himself sent out through them from east unto west the sacred and imperishable kerygma of eternal salvation. Amen." No Greek manuscript ends Mark simply with this short ending . Any that do contain this verse also append the long ending after it (including L, Ψ, and 579, which are allies of B).[53] *The mere presence of the short ending testifies to the fact that Mark did not proceed from 16:8 to 16:9–20 directly from the very first.* It testifies to having access to Greek manuscripts that end Mark at 16:8, which to many would seem inadequate. In addition, the appending of *both endings testifies* to a desire to preserve all possibilities, so that nothing be lost, as it were—once again, also testifying to the fact that 16:9–20, the long ending, is neither the natural nor the universally accepted ending of the second Gospel.

Second, and congruent with this point concerning the short ending, is the fact that there is *actual discussion in the manuscripts* of the problem of the ending of this Gospel.[54] This is highly unusual, even unprecedented, in the NT. After 16:8, the manuscripts of family 1 have the following comments: "In some of the copies up to here the evangelist writes in full [πληροῦται], until where also Eusebius the follower of Pamphilus wrote his canons/drew the line/set the canon [ἐκανόνισεν].[55] And in many also these things are presented [ἐν πολλοῖς δὲ καὶ ταῦτα φέρεται]." Mark 16:9–20 then follows. After the short ending and before the long ending, Greek manuscripts L Ψ and several others, including several versional manuscripts, include the following comment: "these things are also presented after the (clause) 'for they were afraid'" (ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ταῦτα φερόμενα μετὰ τὸ ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ). These comments also testify to the fact that 16:9–20, the long ending, is neither the natural nor the universally accepted ending of the second Gospel.

Finally, there is also the silent witness, one might say, of the pages of codex Vaticanus itself. Codex B is, unusually, a *three*-columned manuscript (with each column of writing several inches wide). Generally, the scribe did the following as he

copied: When the final words of a given book were written, he left the remainder of the column that contained those words blank, and then he began the next book on the top of the next column. This is consistently the case—*except* for the Gospel according to Mark! The text of Mark's Gospel ends with ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ in the middle of the second column on the page. The rest of that column is left blank, as normal, but *the third column is also blank.* (The Gospel according to Luke begins on the first column of the following page.) The blank third column seems to indicate that the scribe knew of more material that could have concluded the Gospel, as it does in other manuscripts, and he rejected that. Burgon knows the phenomenon of the blank column,[56] but his evaluation, namely that it proves that the scribe believed the additional verses of the LC to be genuine, does not seem to be the right one.[57]

In many ways, as noted above, Burgon considers the testimony of the early church fathers to be the central pillar of his argument.[58] And he has a case. But his case founders on Eusebius. Eusebius comments on the ending of Mark explicitly in his letter to Marinus (*Ad Marinum*), and that at some length. He asserts that what we call 16:9–20 "is not presented in all of the copies of the Gospel according to Mark" (μὴ ἐν ἅπασιν αὐτὴν φέρεσθαι τοῖς ἀντιγράφοις τοῦ κατὰ Μάρκον εὐαγγελίου). He then goes on to say that "the accurate ones of the copies circumscribe the end of the narrative according to Mark" (τὰ γοῦν ἀκριβῆ τῶν ἀντιγράφων τὸ τέλος περιγράφει τῆς κατὰ τὸν Μάρκον ἱστορίας) with the words of the young man who appeared to the women and spoke to them, followed by the words of 16:8, which end with ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. Finally, Eusebius asserts: "For in this way, just about in all of the copies of the Gospel according to Mark the end is circumscribed" (ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ σχεδὸν ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς ἀντιγράφοις τοῦ κατὰ Μάρκον εὐαγγελίου περιγέγραπται τὸ τέλος).[59] It is important also to observe that, congruent with his analysis, Eusebius does not extend his "canons" (the so-called Eusebian Canons, which are a type of early "synopsis" or cross-referencing system of the Gospels) to cover either the long ending or the short ending.[60]

Further, Jerome says something similar in a letter to a lady named Hedibia,[61] speaking of the possibility of "reject[ing] the testimony of Mark [in 16:9–20], which is met with in scarcely any copies of the Gospel,—almost all the Greek codices being without this passage."[62] Hesychius of Jerusalem also says something similar: "In the more accurate copies the Gospel according to Mark has its end at 'for they were afraid.' In some copies, however, this also is added,—'Now when He was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.'"[63] In addition, Victor of Antioch knows of ending the second Gospel at 16:8,[64] but he contends that copyists expunged 16:9–20 deliberately[65] and that "accurate copies" contained the long ending.[66]

Burgon seeks to diffuse these testimonies in three ways: First, he argues that, despite Eusebius's statements about accurate copies, Eusebius does support the long

ending by his subsequent argumentation that "its contents are not inconsistent with what is found in the Gospels of S. Matthew and S. John."[67] Second, he argues that the assertions of Jerome and of Hesychius, which seem to support Eusebius's claims, are, essentially, merely translations or reproductions/transcriptions of what Eusebius said; they are not independent witnesses or sources of information.[68] Third, he emphasizes the testimony of Victor of Antioch.[69]

But there are serious problems with Burgon's defense. First, other early church fathers continued to translate/cite/quote Eusebius' words stating that most manuscripts of the Gospel according to Mark, including the best ones, end at 16:8. Why did they do so? Someone does not continue to hand down a tradition concerning the majority of manuscripts and the accurate ones if that tradition is clearly faulty and should be rejected. Second and more important is the matter of accuracy—the mention in *Ad Marinum* of "the accurate ones of the copies" (τὰ γοῦν ἀκριβῆ τῶν ἀντιγράφων) ending the Gospel with the words ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (16:8). This should not be minimized, since Eusebius could simply have observed that "in just about all the copies" the end of the book is at what we call 16:8 and omitted any mention of accuracy completely.[70] But the matter of accuracy is of supreme importance. Note that what Eusebius says in *Ad Marinum* clearly supports the judgment that codex Vaticanus (and its chief ally, codex Sinaiticus) can be placed among the "accurate ones of the copies," given that they end with the description of the women being afraid, just as "the accurate ones" do. Such an understanding is supported by the painstaking research of T. C. Skeat,[71] who contends that codex Vaticanus was among the fifty Greek manuscripts prepared by Eusebius at Caesarea in response to the request of Emperor Constantine[72] in AD 330 to provide him with fifty copies of the Bible[73] for the new churches in Constantinople.[74] If this was the origin and provenance of codex Vaticanus (codex Sinaiticus is related to it as a prior but uncompleted effort according to Skeat[75]), then likely it (along with Sinaiticus secondarily) was, indeed, among the "accurate . . . copies," and not a "mutilated" copy, as Burgon contends.[76]

Finally, there is the matter of the translations of the Greek text of the NT into other languages. Here two points are relevant. First, while Burgon does mention the Armenian versions as early, and many of its Greek manuscripts as containing the long ending, he gives short shrift to the facts that a number of Armenian manuscripts end at 16:8, while others stop there, add a comment regarding Mark ending there, and then append 16:9–20. The significance of this cannot be discounted. Second, regarding the Syriac: Burgon wrote his defense of the long ending before the publication of the text of the Sinaitic Syriac version in 1894 by Agnes Smith Lewis, entitled *A Translation of the Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest* and published in London by Macmillan. (It was discovered in 1892.) Here is the Lewis rendering of the end of Mark: "And when they had heard . . . they went out; and

went and said nothing to any man, for they were afraid." Here endeth the Gospel of Mark.[77] This version is generally considered to have the oldest Syriac text of Mark[78] and puts paid to the notion that all early versions support the inclusion of 16:9–20 at the conclusion of the second Gospel.

Conclusion

Burgon has put forth strong arguments for seeing 16:9–20 as the original and genuine ending of the Gospel according to Mark, but they are not nearly strong enough. For me, the internal evidence of language, and the testimony of Eusebius (especially following the studies of T. C. Skeat) are determinative,[79] and these factors do not support his position.

How, then, did Mark end? It is highly likely that Mark ended it at 16:8, especially considering literary evidence and the nature of Mark's Gospel narrative. David Lewis, in his paper to this seminar, will be arguing along similar lines.[80] In other words, I do not believe that the Greek manuscripts that end the second Gospel were mutilated early on, losing the true ending, as Burgon believes. But it is not completely impossible that the true ending of Mark has been lost from very early times. If so, the solution of J. Keith Elliott is worth considering, namely that both the beginning and the end of Mark have been mutilated, as suggested by the use of καθώς in Mark 1:2.[81]

How, then, does one explain the existence of the long ending? Here the work of James Kelhoffer is of inestimable value. Kelhoffer considers 16:9–20 extensively from the standpoint of its authorship, provenance, and content in his monograph *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark*.[82] Kelhoffer understands the long ending to be composed by a single author in the early to mid-second century AD[84] drawing upon the other three canonical Gospels (and Mark, as well as Acts) as resources.[85] In Kelhoffer's words, "the long ending's author did not intend to create a novel account, but wrote in conscious imitation of traditions he, for whatever reason, esteemed. . . . The influence of Matthew, Luke, and John further indicates that this author did not intend for Mark 16:9–20 to be perceived as a novel composition,"[86] though he did compose it to bring the Gospel of Mark to completion.[87] A number of Kelhoffer's conclusions are confirmed by our linguistic studies of 16:9–20 and are worthy of consideration, though our concern in this essay is not with such historical explorations.[88]

Finally, is there any way to "save" the long ending as a/the genuine ending of Mark? I do not think so, but the best attempt I have encountered is that put forth by James Snapp, Jr., who does his work principally electronically on the internet.[89]

Snapp contends that the long ending is *not* the original ending of Mark, properly speaking; he believes that the transition from 16:8–16:9 is too awkward. Rather, he says, *Mark wrote the material we now know as 16:9–20 as a separate, stand-alone*

piece, perhaps as an Easter season reading. Later, he says, this piece was joined to Mark 1:1–16:8 by disciples of Mark, to give a more complete Gospel. Finally, he contends, that hybrid composition became the *Ausgangtext* (my term) for later copies, which explains the early and wide distribution of the second Gospel with its sixteenth chapter, as it were, ending at verse 20. Indeed, he compares this situation to the ending of the Gospel according to John, with a congruent explanation for the addition of chapter 21 (also written by John) to John 1–20. I do admire this rather clever reconstruction—the parallel to John's Gospel is apt—but the Greek profile of 16:9–20 is not consonant with that of 1:1–16:8, unlike what one finds when comparing the Greek profile of John 21 with John 1–20. I would, however, recommend the Snapp solution to all who simply cannot bring themselves to embrace the second Gospel ending at 16:8.

Note to Readers:
I did not include a discussion of the use of verses from the long ending in the writings of the Lutheran Confessions in the essay that I presented at the SBL, because such an issue is not relevant in a general scholarly setting. I have a detailed discussion of this important matter elsewhere;[90] here I will present a summary of its salient features.

- Three passages in the Confessions (AC XXVIII 7 [Latin text]; FC SD V 4; FC SD XI 28) refer to or cite Mark 16:16: πορευθέντες εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει, "Upon going into all the world, proclaim the Gospel to all the creation."
- One passage (FC SD VIII 27) refers to 16:20 concerning "the Lord working with them [the 11; cf. 16:11] and confirming their word/discourse (τὸν λόγον) through the accompanying signs (διὰ τῶν ἐπακολουθούντων σημείων)."
- Eleven passages (Ap XXIV 18; SA III VIII 7; SC IV 8; LC [Brief Preface] 21; LC IV 4–5, 23, 24, 30 33, 34; FC SD XI 39) cite or refer to 16:16 (in whole or in part): ὁ πιστεύσας καὶ βαπτισθεὶς σωθήσεται, ὁ δὲ ἀπιστήσας κατακριθήσεται, "The one who has believed and has been baptized will be saved, but the one who has not believed will be condemned."

Three points can be made. First, the phenomenon we are describing is to be expected, because the Greek text of the NT used by sixteenth-century interpreters contained Mark 16:9–20;[91] the existence of manuscripts that end the Gospel according to Mark at 16:8 as mentioned by Eusebius had become only a vague memory.[92] Second, theological points made on the basis of each of these passages are clearly supported by passages elsewhere in the NT.[93]

- Congruent with Mark 16:15 are Matthew 28:19 and Luke 24:46–47, concerning preaching the Gospel to all.

- Congruent with Mark 16:20 are Acts 14:3 and Hebrews 2:4, concerning the ascended Lord working with the apostles and confirming their message with signs.
- Congruent with Mark 16:16 are 1 Peter 3:21, concerning "the power, effect, benefit, fruit, and purpose of baptism"[94] to save; Acts 2:38–41 concerning believing before baptism; Matthew 28:19 concerning the divine origin of baptism; John 3:18 concerning the condemnation of those who do not believe.

Third, the citation of a passage from the main body of the Gospel of Mark (not from the long ending) that contains what is now considered to be a variant reading also occurs in the Book of Concord, a point rarely considered. AC XXVI 36–38 quotes Mark 9:29 thus: τοῦτο τὸ γένος ἐν οὐδενὶ δύναται ἐξελθεῖν εἰ μὴ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ νηστείᾳ, "It is not possible that this kind of being come out in any way except by prayer and fasting."[95] The AC then uses these words, along with 1 Corinthians 9:27 concerning bodily discipline, to make points regarding fasting and personal conduct. Manuscripts B, א, and Old Latin manuscript k do not contain the words καὶ νηστείᾳ ("and fasting"),[96] and (again) contemporary English translations follow the shorter text of these three witnesses, omitting any reference to fasting.[97] This has not occasioned controversy.

Endnotes

1 Oxford: James Parker, 1871 (reprint ed.), 5.
2 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 4.
3 This can be seen in the argumentation of James Snapp, Jr. The evidence he produces parallels the presentation of Burgon in striking fashion. See further the discussion in the Conclusion.
4 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 19.
5 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 70-71.
6 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 20-21.
7 The papyri were not available to Burgon, but P45, P84, and P88, which contain sections of the Gospel according to Mark, have nothing of chapter 16. Uncial W (iv–v century) and all other uncials that contain the end of Mark (K [iv], L [vii], Γ [x], Δ [ix], Ψ [ix–x], 083 [vi–ii] 099 [vii]) have 16:9–20 or some portion thereof, as do all minuscules (including 274 and 579). (All but W K Γ and Δ also contain the short ending.)
8 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 22. It is important to note that all italicizing, capitalization, dashes, and other highlighting in the quotations of Burgon have been retained in my renderings.
9 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 22.
10 In addition to the evidence that follows, Burgon adduces Papias (early ii century) as alluding to 16:18 regarding drinking poison (Burgon, *Last 12 Verses*, 23), but the connection seems much weaker than are his other proofs.
11 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 23.
12 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 23.
13 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 24.

14 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 25.
15 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 25.
16 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 26. It must be noted specifically that Burgon is well aware of the fact that several early church fathers comment on the ending of Mark and indicate specific knowledge of the Gospel ending at 16:8. The most important of these is Eusebius, with his assertion in his letter *Ad Marinum*/To Marinus not only that not all manuscripts of Mark end at 16:20, but that most, especially the accurate ones, end after the words ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ. We will consider this issue in detail in the next major section of this paper.
17 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 27.
18 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 27.
19 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 27–28. Important to Burgon is that Jerome included the verses of the long ending in his Vulgate Latin translation.
20 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 28–29. See especially footnote c on page 28. Augustine quotes from the long ending, including the special addition in verse 14 that we know chiefly from manuscript W.
21 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 32.
22 What we know as Sahidic.
23 What we know as Bohairic.
24 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 32–37.
25 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 36. Burgon supplements the three pillars detailed above with the evidence from *ancient lectionaries* (chapter 10). He observes that the church took the practice of the reading of specific portions of Scripture on specific occasions or at specific times from synagogue practice (192), that it was widespread (191), and that though specifically documented only in the iv century and especially the viii century, it must have occurred before these later times (196, 203). He then observes that 16:9–20 was established as the lesson for Matins on Easter and for several Sundays later (203).
26 "it is evident that we are logically *forced* to adopt the far easier supposition that (not S. Mark, but) *some copyist of the third century* left a copy of Mark's Gospel unfinished, which unfinished copy became the fontal source of the mutilated copies which have come down to our own time" (Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 17). He observes that this was Bengel's understanding (Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 17, note b).
27 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 78–80. The omitted words are read by the Majority manuscripts but are omitted also by P^{66} and P^{75}.
28 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 80.
29 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 81. See also chapter 12, *passim*.
30 Codex B is not complete in the NT in the original hand. It lacks 1 Timothy through Philemon, and then everything from Hebrews 9:14 through the end.
31 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 147. Observe, however, that the phrase occurs twice in the Gospel of John, at John 20:1 and 19.
32 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 155.
33 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 146, note p. These items are listed in the note and explored in the succeeding pages.
34 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 143–145.
35 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 243–244.
36 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 253–254 and chapter 12, *passim*.
37 See also a similar use of οὗτος in John 1:2, 7, 41. Note that it is characteristic of John to use a nominative demonstrative pronoun resumptively, after an initial nominative clause. See John 1:18, 33; 5:11; 14:21, 26 for ἐκεῖνος and Jn 15:5 for οὗτος. In Mark's writing, such a resumptive usage is present only in Jesus's discourse in Mk 7:20 (with the neuter singular ἐκεῖνο). (The nominative ἐκεῖνοι in 4:20 functions as a basic demonstrative pronoun and is neither resumptive nor "the virtual equivalent of 'he/she/they.'") It is also noteworthy that the use of ἐκεῖνος (κἀκεῖνοι, ἐκεῖνοι) detailed in the paragraph above also occurs in the long variant reading at the end of 16:14 in codex W.

38 See the KJV, NIV, TEV. (The NKJV has a capitalized and italicized "*He.*") The awkwardness of the transition to the long ending is greatly obscured if "Jesus" is added at the beginning of 16:9. Manuscript F, the minuscules of f^{13}, and several manuscripts of the Old Latin tradition add "Jesus" as the explicit subject, but other manuscripts do not.

39 James W. Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 7.

40 Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 10–12.

41 The textual witnesses are split about whether δέ occurs in 16:14.

42 Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 11.

43 Of interest also is the *lack of explicit subjects* in the more Semitic sections of the Gospel according to Mark. This is characteristic also of 16:1–8. But it is not characteristic of the Greek of the LE; indeed, the use of demonstrative pronouns "absolutely" as subjects works against this characteristic on at least four occasions.

44 Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Oxford: University Press, 1964), 207. Scholars who support the long ending as genuine to the Gospel of Mark often argue for the superiority of the so-called "Byzantine" text, which would be largely congruent with the Majority manuscripts, when compared to so-called "Alexandrian" texts such as manuscripts B and ℵ. See, e.g., Maurice A. Robinson, "New Testament Textual Criticism: The Case for Byzantine Priority," available online at rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v06/Robinson2001.html.

45 See Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses,* 78–86. He references Mark's work on only four occasions, twice in footnotes (78, note p; 82, note z) and twice in the text itself (84, 85). These pale in comparison to examples from the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John.

46 Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 25.

47 The notion of a separate Caesarean tradition is increasingly called into doubt.

48 In other words, the first step is not to determine the "best" or "most reliable" manuscript(s) generally.

49 See Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 2–9. For much more detail, see James W. Voelz, "The Greek of Codex Vaticanus in the Second Gospel and Marcan Greek," *Novum Testamentum* 47 (2005): 2009–2049.

50 Voelz, *Mark 1:1–8:26*, 25 (emphasis original).

51 What is said here applies also to manuscript ℵ, but to a slightly lesser extent. Burgon's criticism in the four places mentioned in footnote 47 focuses to a greater extent on manuscript ℵ.

52 Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 58–63.

53 The SE is also present in manuscripts of the Syriac, Egyptian, and Ethiopic traditions.

54 See the critical apparatus of NA^{28} for the Greek citations. They are presented before 16:9 of the long ending.

55 The verb κανονίζω denotes drawing a line of demarcation and thus is appropriate for delineating a canon. But here it is likely a reference to the so-called "Eusebian Canons."

56 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses,* 87.

57 See also the next section for further comment on this blank column in codex B.

58 The material in this section is heavily dependent upon the presentation in James W. Voelz, *Mark 8:27–16:8*, bound with Christopher W. Mitchell, *Mark* 16:9–20 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), 1201–1202, 1227–1228.

59 Eusebius, *Ad Marinum,* 1. The Greek text is taken from "*Quaestiones evangelicae ad Marinum*" in Cardinal Angelo Mai, ed., *Novae Patrum Bibliotheca* (Rome: *Typis sacri consilii propagando Christiano nomini,* 1847), 4:255 (emphasis added).

60 See the gutter of the pages of the NA^{28} text in chapter 16. The type of numbering present in the first eight verses, i.e., Arabic numbers over Roman numerals, does not extend to 16:9–20. For a discussion of Burgon's convoluted and unconvincing argument against the evidence of the Eusebian canons and their non-presence along with the verses of the long ending, see Voelz, *Mark 8:27–16:8*, 1233–1234. It is not his finest moment.

61 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 51.

62 This quotation is drawn from Burgon (*Last Twelve Verses*, 53).

63 This quotation is drawn from Burgon (*Last Twelve Verses*, 57).

64 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 62–64.

65 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 64–65. Burgon provides the following text of Victor (64): "*Notwithstanding that in very many copies of the present Gospel, the passage beginning, 'Now when [JESUS] was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene,' be not found,—(certain individuals having supposed it to be spurious,)*."

66 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 64–65. The quotation of Victor of Antioch in the previous footnote continues on these pages: "*Yet* we, at all events, inasmuch as in very many we have discovered it to exist, have, out of accurate copies, subjoined also the account of our Lord's Ascension, (following the words 'for they were afraid,') in conformity with the Palestinian exemplar of Mark which exhibits the Gospel verity." (Burgon's citation after the initial word is in small capital letters.)

67 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 66.

68 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 53, 55, 67 and 57–58, respectively; see also 251. He says the same regarding Victor of Antioch's statements testifying to the Gospel ending at 16:8 (64–65).

69 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 67–68.

70 In connection with this point, we observe that whatever "Palestinian exemplar" Victor of Antioch may be referring to in his statement regarding the ending of the Gospel of Mark, Eusebius would have been aware of it, since he lived and worked in Caesarea in Palestine. Such an "exemplar" was clearly not regarded by Eusebius as among the "accurate" copies.

71 T. C. Skeat, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine," in *The Collected Biblical Writings of T. C. Skeat,* ed. J. K. Elliott, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 193–235.

72 The letter in Greek appears in Skeat, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine," 215–216. Skeat himself summarizes several of the key points thus (216–217):

1. Eusebius is to supply 50 copies of the Holy Scriptures for use in the numerous churches now being built in Constantinople.
2. The manuscripts are to be in codex form, written on parchment.
3. They are to be easy to read and transportable, written by expert and highly trained calligraphers.
4. Orders have been sent to the *Rationalis* (finance officer) of the Diocese, authorizing him to provide Eusebius with everything necessary for the execution of the order, and Eusebius personally is to ensure that it is completed as speedily as possible.

73 These were not simply manuscripts of the NT text; the OT in Greek was also included (Skeat, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine," 216–217, note 28).

74 Skeat, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine," 209, 215–216, 220–228.

75 Skeat, "The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus and Constantine," 220–228.

76 Burgon, *Last Twelve Verses*, 244. What we have said concerning the investigations of T. C. Skeat supports our assessment of the blank column in codex Vaticanus. The scribe of Vaticanus was likely following Eusebius's instructions to reproduce the accurate copies, while the additional blank column testifies, in all probability, to the existence of something like the long ending.

77 The final sentence comprises a postscript in the manuscript.

78 According to Metzer *(Text of the New Testament,* 68), though the Sinaitic Syriac manuscript is from the iv century, the form of the text that it preserves "dates from the close of second or beginning of the third century."

79 It is also fortunate for him that the evidence of the Sinaitic Syriac had not been discovered by the time he wrote his defense of 16:9–20.

80 See my own argumentation concerning literary factors in the introduction of *Mark 1:1–8:26*, especially 54–61.

81 J. Keith Elliott, "Mark 1.1–3—A Later Addition to the Gospel?" *New Testament Studies* 46 (2000): 584–588. See also J. Keith Elliott, καθώς and ὥσπερ in the New Testament," *Filologia neotestamentaria* 4 (1991): 55–58.

82 Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000. He is not arguing specifically or principally for authenticity in this effort.

83 Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission,* 47, note 181; 121.

84 As far as date is concerned, Kelhoffer (*Miracle and Mission,* 47, note 181) says:
One can ascertain rather precisely the date of the long ending's composition. The *terminus post quem* is the point at which the four NT Gospels had been collected and compared with one another (probably not before ca. 110–120 CE). The long ending must have been written before Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* [*Against Heresies,*] 3.10.5) cited Mark 16:19 as a part of Mark's Gospel around 180 CE. Since it can also be demonstrated that Justin Martyr (*Apol.* 1.45.5), writing ca. 155–161 CE, reflects knowledge of Mark 16:9–20, the long ending should be dated to ca. 120–150 CE.

85 Kelhoffer (*Miracle and Mission*, 121–122) provides a detailed chart of thirty-seven words/phrases traceable to one of the canonical Gospel or Acts. He asserts further (53) that "no extracanonical writing resembles the long ending in ways that are distinctive from the NT Gospels. This would exclude the possibility that other written traditions influenced the long ending's author."

86 Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 121.

87 Kelhoffer (*Miracle and Mission,* 46–47) says that since "the author of the long ending wrote in light of the four NT Gospels . . . Mark 16:9–20 is not a fragment of another, now lost, work, but was composed for the purpose of completing Mark's Gospel."

88 Kelhoffer is particularly interested in the role of miracles in the Christian mission and spends significant time on the matter of signs and miracles, including the handling of snakes and the drinking of poison mentioned in 16:18; see chapters 5–7 and the handy summary in note 182 on page 47.

89 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hD-75YkHe5E
https://textandcanon.org/a-case-for-the-longer-ending-of-mark/

90 Voelz, *Mark 8:27–16:8*, 1234–1238 (Excursus 19, section D).

91 What we now know as verses 9–20 of chapter 16 were included in Erasmus's *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516, the first edited edition of the Greek NT to be published. Its second edition (1519) provided the basis for Luther's translation of the NT into German in 1522, and its fourth edition (1527) eventually (through other editors) provided the basis for the KJV of 1611. See *Voelz, Mark 8:27–16:8*, 1235, note 78 for further details.

92 The twelfth-century commentator Euthymius Zigabinus (cited by Burgon [*Last 12 Verses,* 69]) says: "Some of the Commentators state that here [at 16:8] the Gospel according to Mark finishes; and that what follows is a spurious addition." Note that Euthymius mentions no manuscript evidence for ending the Gospel at 16:8.

93 See Voelz, *Mark 8:27–16:8*, 1235–1236 for greater detail.

94 LC IV 24.

95 Emphasis added in both the Greek text and the translation.

96 These three witnesses also do not contain the LE.

97 Usually, such translations insert a footnote indicating that "other witnesses" include the phrase "and fasting."

Suspended Endings in Ancient Literature

A Comparison of the Gospel of Mark with Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*

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The Ending of Mark's Gospel

After the end of Mark 16:8 (the final sentence is ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ), the 28th edition of the Nestle Aland text of the New Testament prints the so-called conclusio brevior ("short ending") and "long ending" (Mk 16:9–20) within double brackets, indicating that this is material "known not to be of the original text."[1] The editors choose to identify 16:8 as the final verse of the Gospel of Mark, yet they present the longer endings within double brackets to show that there are manuscripts that contain additional content. One issue for the interpreter to consider at the close of Mark's Gospel, then, is what the reader will identify as the final verse—16:8, 16:8 plus the *conclusio brevior*, or 16:20.[2]

In addition to the question of which verse is the final verse of Mark's Gospel there is another question concerning *the ending* of this narrative. J. Lee Magness argues that, given the problem of the variant readings, there are actually three possible endings for the Gospel of Mark. For interpreters who believe that the longer ending is part of the text, the narrative concludes at 16:20. For those who consider 16:8 to be the final verse, however, there are two possible options. Either 16:8 is the intended ending of the narrative as well as the final verse or the intended ending is missing. With the third option, the reader identifies 16:8 as the last verse of Mark's Gospel, yet it is not the ending intended by the author.[3] The real ending is lost or the work is unfinished and so incomplete.[4] Having rejected both of the longer endings as later additions, this third interpretation nevertheless sees the termination at 16:8 as no ending to the Gospel. The

narrative should continue but does not. Instead, Mark's Gospel closes on a seemingly uneven, inconclusive, and perhaps even harsh note:

> Καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις· καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.
>
> And after they had gone out, they fled from the tomb, for trembling and amazement had them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

Why do some interpreters reject 16:8 as *the intended ending* of the narrative, even if they acknowledge it at the final verse? The argument against 16:8 as a possible ending is made on two levels—grammatical and literary.[5] The grammatical argument notes that the last sentence in 16:8 closes with the post-positive conjunction γάρ, and they argue that a sentence (or book) cannot end with this post-positive conjunction.[6] There is evidence, however, that demonstrates both that this grammatical argument is invalid and that 16:8 would not be unique if it did conclude its narrative with γάρ.[7]

The literary argument against Mark 16:8 as the intended ending of Mark's Gospel is more challenging. The argument is that 16:8 appears too inclusive to be the proper ending for the narrative. If this is the end, then there are no post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to the disciples (as there are in the other three canonical Gospels). The young man at the tomb does tell the women that he is risen and to inform Jesus's disciples that he will meet them in Galilee; however, the narrative itself does not describe such a reunion. The narrative does not say if the women do as the young man tells them. *In fact, the narrative suggests that they do not.* What is more, the final verse indicates that the women were afraid. The women were apparently not afraid before finding the young man and the empty tomb; they were only concerned about the stone at the entrance of the tomb (see 16:4). Now the narrative introduces this new problem of the women being afraid and speaking to no one, and yet this problem remains unresolved. In spite of the young man's announcement of the resurrection of Jesus in 16:6, the narrative concludes with an incident that can strike some readers as very negative: The women leave the tomb afraid. They are afraid, and so they do not report the young man's message to anyone. This is not the upbeat finale a reader might expect of a Gospel.

Indeed, some interpreters further object that such a purposefully abrupt, inconclusive, open-ended ending would show a mark of *modern* literary sophistication that should not have been possible for an ancient author. For instance, this is the opinion of W. L. Knox:

> To suppose that Mark originally intended to end his Gospel this way implies both that he was totally indifferent to the canons of popular storytelling, and *that by pure accident he happened to hit on a conclusion which suits the technique of a highly sophisticated type of modern literature.* The odds against such a coincidence (even if we would for a moment entertain the idea that Mark was indifferent to canons which he observes scrupulously elsewhere in his Gospel) seem to me to be so enormous as not to be worth considering [emphasis added].[8]

In response to this literary argument, this paper will attempt to provide evidence that such an ending as found in Mark 16:8 is not unique in its ancient context. The paper will examine two classical works in particular, Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. These works also evidence open-ended, suspended endings. While the ending of the *Iliad* does not display an ending quite as abrupt or inconclusive as an ending of Mark at 16:8, its ending is nevertheless open-ended and does not embrace "the whole story" of the Trojan War. The suspended ending of the *Aeneid*, however, is more radically abrupt and inconclusive, leaving the reader to ponder this more "problematic" conclusion.[9] If other ancient narrative works make use of the literary device of the suspended ending, then the contention of Knox (and others) that this is a mark of "modern sophistication" is erroneous.

What is a suspending ending? [10]
A suspended ending does not include important elements of a story that the reader might expect to find in the narrative. The *expectation of the reader* is fundamental when identifying an ending as suspended. First, the reader might have the "whole story" in mind before even reading the narrative. In addition, the narrative itself may create an expectation in the reader for a fuller story. In both cases, the narrative ending does not deliver on these expectations for a fuller story. *Such an ending is a suspended ending.*

If other ancient narrative works make use of the literary device of the suspended ending, then the contention that this is a mark of "modern sophistication" is erroneous.

When comparing the endings of other literary works with that of Mark's Gospel, the interpreter must consider both what the reader may know about the "whole story" outside of that particular narrative *and* what expectations the narrative itself may create. If there are expectations for a longer story that this particular narrative does not deliver, then the ending of this narrative is a suspended ending.

The Gospel of Mark and the Whole Story of Jesus

When comparing the Gospel of Mark (with 16:8 as its ending) to the other three Gospels, one of the most obvious distinctions of Mark's narrative is the lack of any post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. The lack of such appearances of the resurrected Jesus can be a problem in and of itself if the Christian reader expects a record of such events. Because of this alone, an ending at 16:8 becomes all the harder to accept as a genuine ending. If the author intentionally ended the narrative at this point, however, then this is an example of a suspended ending: The narrative closes when the reader expects a longer, fuller story. Thus, again, the *expectation of the reader* is a key element in demonstrating that the ending of a narrative is a suspended ending.

Again, this "expectation of the reader" is created in two ways: First, if the reader is already familiar with the story told in narrative at hand *from another source outside of the narrative*, then the reader could have specific expectations about where the narrative should conclude. For example, a Christian reader of Mark's Gospel would already know from the preaching and teaching of the church of the resurrection of Jesus and his post-resurrection appearances to his disciples.[11] The "whole story" of Jesus's ministry that the church proclaims includes these events.[12] (Furthermore, modern readers of Mark's Gospel know that the other three canonical Gospels report post-resurrection appearances of Jesus.) Knowledge of the whole story may create in the reader an expectation to see these events in the narrative of Mark's Gospel. Therefore, if the narrative concludes without any post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, then Mark 16:8 is a suspended ending.

The second way that a reader may have an expectation for a longer, fuller story is when the narrative itself creates such an expectation. Thus, for example, Mark foreshadows Jesus's sufferings and death in the three passion predictions (Mk 8:31, 9:30–31, and 10:32–34). As predicted, Jesus does suffer and die. These predictions also include the promise that Jesus will rise again on the third day. What is more, Jesus promises the disciples in 14:28 that not only will he rise again, but also that afterwards the disciples will see him in Galilee. The words of the young man to the women at the tomb in 16:6 confirm that Jesus has risen from the dead, yet his words in 16:7 then also remind the reader that Jesus and his disciples will meet again in Galilee. Such a reunion of Jesus and his disciples, however, is absent from the narrative.[13] Thus, an ending at 16:8 is a suspended ending because the narrative itself creates the expectation for a fuller narrative.[14]

The Iliad[15]

The *Iliad* of Homer does not display an ending as abrupt and problematic as an ending of Mark at 16:8. The *Iliad* concludes, rather, on a quieter note with the burial of the Trojan hero Hector. Commentators of the *Iliad* also see its ending as well rounded, reaching an anticipated end.[16] Yet the *Iliad* is worth considering in this discussion

because its narrative operates on the literary level in a way similar to the Gospel of Mark if it concludes at 16:8. The *Iliad* is a story that is set with the context of a larger story, but the larger story—the "whole story"—is not included in the *Iliad*. To understand this narrative, the reader must be aware of the larger context in which this epic is set. What is more, the narrative itself alludes to many of the details of this larger story, yet again they are not specifically narrated. The author assumes that the reader knows these details.[17]

The Iliad was composed sometime between the twelfth and sixth centuries BC.[18] The epic consists of twenty-four books centered around the theme of "the wrath of Achilles," that is, how this Greek warrior becomes alienated from his comrades and how he is eventually reconciled to them. The story takes place in the tenth year of the ten-year Trojan War. Achilles and Agamemnon, the commander of the Greek forces, get into a dispute over the division of spoils (namely, a woman), and so in anger Achilles deserts from the Greek army. The war continues. Eventually, the Trojan warrior Hector kills Achilles's friend Patroclus after Patroclus chooses to fight in Achilles's place. The death of his friend brings Achilles back into the conflict. In the climax of the narrative, Achilles and Hector meet in single combat, and Achilles kills Hector and thus avenges his friend. Achilles then desecrates Hector's corpse by dragging it about in his chariot. Yet when Priam, Hector's father, comes and begs for the return of his son's body, Achilles, moved by compassion, delivers it over to the Trojans. The Trojans then bury Hector, and the epic concludes with a final sentence:

> ὣς οἵ γ' ἀμφίεπον τάφον Ἕκτορος ἱπποδάμοιο.[19]
> Thus they saw to the funeral of Hector, tamer of horses.[20]

Of this ending, G. S. Kirk writes:

> It is in many ways an extraordinary ending . . . [It] serves as a perfect culmination of the whole poem: a pathetic yet noble end to all the fighting, and an unsentimental restitution of Achilles to the more admirable side of hero-hood with the final obliteration of his destructive wrath, and an overwhelming demonstration of the respect owed by men to destiny, to death and to the gods.[21]

Kirk argues that the epic reaches a satisfying conclusion. The problem of Achilles's wrath is finally resolved when he relinquishes the body of Hector and so returns to the "more admirable side of hero-hood." Kirk also notes that at the end of the *Iliad*, with the truce to allow for the burial of Hector, there is "a pathetic yet noble end to all the fighting." According to this interpreter of the *Iliad*, there is resolution to the conflict of his narrative and so this conclusion to the narrative is a fitting conclusion.

That this ending is actually a suspended ending, however, can be asserted from the context of the larger story in which the *Iliad* is set. This is the story of the Trojan War.

Rather than tell the whole story of the Trojan War, Homer is concerned only with certain events that occur in the midst of that war.

There are events in this larger story that proceed the *Iliad*—Paris steals Helen from Menelaus, the Greek forces mobilize to retrieve her, and nine years of warfare follow. There are then the events that follow—Paris kills Achilles, the Greeks recover and bury Achilles' body, and, by the ruse of the Trojan horse, the Greeks defeat the Trojans, sack Troy, and finally retrieve Helen.[22] Rather than tell the whole story of the Trojan War, Homer is concerned only with certain events that occur in the midst of that war. He alludes to some of the events from the larger story, but these events themselves are suspended from the narrative.[23]

Therefore, the ending of the Iliad can be interpreted as more problematic when the reader considers how the course of the war continues after this particular epic concludes. The *Iliad* closes on an almost peaceful note. Achilles wrath ends, he shows tender respect for Priam, and there is a truce for the burial of Hector. In this particular narrative, the fighting has stopped.[24] *Yet outside of this particular narrative the fighting continues.* Given the whole story, however, this ending becomes paradoxical. The truce at the close of the *Iliad* that allows for Hector's burial will not persist. The war continues. Achilles will die. The Greeks will sack Troy. Achilles's son will kill Priam, the very man to whom Achilles showed mercy. The readers of the *Iliad* know this if they know the whole story of the Trojan saga. The ending of the *Iliad* may appear satisfactory in light of this particular narrative itself, but there is still the larger story about the Trojan War of which the reader of this one narrative is aware *and* which the author also assumes. Kirk notes that this ending brings "a pathetic yet noble end to all of the fighting."[25] Yet the fighting has only stopped in this particular narrative. In the larger story (of which both the author and the reader are aware), the fighting continues until its true conclusion—the sack of Troy and the defeat of the Trojans.

Beside the wider context of the Trojan War, there is also the wider context of the story of Achilles. Homer does not tell the whole story of Achilles's life because, as mentioned before, the *Iliad* is about a particular set of incidents in Achilles's life—namely, his alienation and reconciliation with his Greek comrades in the tenth year of the war and the final restoration of his status as a genuine hero when he relinquishes Hector's body for burial. Yet the *Iliad* does create an expectation for Achilles's impending death. Although the narrative does not relate his actual death, there is still an allusion to Achilles's death. As he is dying, Hector predicts Achilles's ultimate demise:

> ἦ σ' εὐ γιγνώσκων προτιόσσομαι, οὐ δ' ἄρ' ἔμελλον
> πείσειν· ἦ γὰρ σοί γε σιδήρεος ἐν φρεσὶ θυμοός

φράζεο νῦν, μὴ τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι
ἤματι τῷ, ὅτε κέν σε Πάρις καὶ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων
ἐσθλὸν ἐόντ' ὀλέσωσιν ἐνὶ Σκαιῇσι πύλῃσιν.[26]

I recognize you well as I look upon you, and would never
have persuaded you. Truly your heart in your breast is made of iron.
Now is the time for you to consider whether I may not be cause
of divine anger against you
on the day when Paris and Phoebus Apollo
destroy you, good fighter though you are, at the Scaean gate.[27]

In the larger story of the Trojan War, Achilles dies as Hector predicts when Paris shoots an arrow and Apollo guides it to strike his heel. This event, however, is not related in the *Iliad* even though Hector's dying words create an expectation for this. Those words allude to what both the author and the reader already know from the larger story outside of the *Iliad*. Therefore, although the narrative itself creates an expectation to see the fulfillment of Hector's prophecy, this event is suspended from this particular narrative.

From this examination of the ending of the *Iliad*, there is one important point of comparison on the literary level with the Gospel of Mark if it concludes at 16:8. Both works begin after the larger story has begun and both end before the larger story concludes. The *Iliad* depicts one series of incidents within the larger context of the Trojan War without narrating either the beginning of the war or its end. The Gospel of Mark begins suddenly with the ministry of John the Baptizer; there is no birth or boyhood narratives as found in Matthew and Luke. If 16:8 is the intended ending, then the narrative of Mark's Gospel concludes with the women leaving the tomb after the young man proclaims Jesus's resurrection; there is no account of a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. Both of these ancient literary works are stories set within a framework of a larger story that both the author and the reader know, and thus both stories purposefully suspend many events that the larger story assumes.

Both works begin after the larger story has begun and both end before the larger story concludes.

This analysis shows that the Gospel of Mark, if it concludes at 16:8, is not a unique example of an ancient author employing a suspended ending. The Iliad, one of the great Greek epics, also employs such a suspended ending.

The Aeneid[28]

The *Aeneid* of Virgil has an ending that more strikingly resembles the suddenness of Mark 16:8 both in the abruptness of its ending and in its omission of important elements of the whole story. Not only do both Mark's Gospel and the *Aeneid* appear to end before the narrative reaches some of its anticipated goals, but they also both end on a jarring and perhaps even negative note. The Gospel of Mark concludes with the women fleeing from the tomb in fear and not telling anyone the good news of the resurrection; there is then no post-resurrection appearance of Jesus or promised reunion with the disciples in Galilee. The *Aeneid* ends with its hero "out of character" as he savagely kills his already defeated rival who has begged for mercy; there is no mention of the hero's deeds after this killing. In this way, both of these endings leave the reader to question the purpose of such a conclusion to the narrative—or, for some readers, perhaps even to question whether these were the true endings intended by the author.

The Aeneid *can be viewed in part as a literary work written to support the then-present political order in Rome.*

The *Aeneid* was composed between 30–19 BC as the great national epic of Rome when Emperor Augustus commissioned Virgil to produce an epic in Latin worthy of the Greek classics.[29] This epic tells of the adventures of Aeneas, a mythical Trojan warrior who supposedly founded Lavinium, the mother city of Rome. After rejecting several other ideas, Virgil chose the subject of Aeneas because of his legendary connection to the founding of Rome. Virgil then shaped the existing mythology concerning Aeneas for his own narrative goals.[30] What is more, the family of Julius Caesar, Augustus's uncle and adopted father, claimed descent from Aeneas though his son Albans/Iulus, and Virgil alludes to this claim in the epic.[31] Therefore, the *Aeneid* can be viewed in part as a literary work written to support the then-present political order in Rome.[32] However, commentators note that Virgil's epic is more than just a patriotic piece of literature. The *Aeneid* also considers the human condition, exploring matters such as fate and destiny, the ultimate failure of virtue, and "the often-discordant facets of human experience."[33]

Because Virgil shaped a story out of existing stories, it is useful first to distinguish the plot of the mythology from the plot of the *Aeneid*. In the mythology, the Trojan Aeneas was the cousin of Hector and second only to Hector in ability as a warrior among the Trojans. After the sack of Troy, Aeneas fled the city with other warriors. Then, according to a strand of this mythology that developed in Rome, Aeneas led the Trojan survivors on a journey that took them first to Carthage and then to Italy. In Italy Aeneas became involved in a struggle with the barbarian Rutulians and their

leader Turnus over the princess Lavinia, a woman whom both men wanted to marry. After killing Turnus and defeating the Rutulians, Aeneas married Lavinia, sired a son, and then founded the city Lavinium. Then finally, after his death, he ascended into the heavens.[34]

Virgil's epic consists of twelve books that tell the story of Aeneas's journeys and wars, and these follow the general outline of the mythology. Books VII–XII (the second half of the epic) tell of Aeneas's prolonged war with the Rutulians. The cause of this war is that Latinus offers Aeneas the hand of his beautiful daughter. The goddess Juno then uses this event to stir Turnus, who was also Lavinia's suitor, to jealousy. This then initiates the war. In the conflict that follows, Turnus kills Aeneas's friend Pallas (just as Hector kills Achilles's friend in the *Iliad*). Finally, at the end of book XII, Aeneas and Turnus meet in single combat. Aeneas defeats and wounds Turnus with a spear. Turnus then begs for his life, renouncing his rights to Lavinia, and Aeneas almost spares Turnus's life. Yet when Aeneas sees that Turnus is wearing the belt of Pallas, he kills his enemy in a furious rage. Thus, the epic concludes with these two final sentences:

> Hoc dicens ferrum adverso sub pectore condit
> Fervius. Ast illi solvuntur frigore membra,
> Vitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras.
> (Book XII, lines 950–952)
>
> So speaking he in fiery passion plunged
> Full into his breast the blade. The other limbs
> Are loosed in cold death, and with a groan
> His life disdainfully flies beneath the shades.[35]

These words abruptly conclude the epic.

This ending does bring resolution to the immediate conflict between Aeneas and Turnus. *Yet does it bring resolution to the plot of the entire epic*? It is significant what is *not* narrated in the *Aeneid*. The epic does not tell of the final defeat of the Rutulians, Aeneas's marriage to Lavinia (which was the entire cause of this war), or the founding of Lavinium. These were important plot elements of the mythology outside of the *Aeneid*, but the epic does not include them. The final lines only resolve the struggle of the two combatants. As for providing closure to the entire epic, this ending is problematic. The "real ending" appears to be absent. What is arguably most important, Aeneas's ultimate success after killing Turnus, is simply suspended from the narrative.[36]

This ending is striking also because it appears to place a negative, rough edge in its portrayal of Aeneas. Commentators of the Aeneid argue that the Rutulians represent the barbarous peoples of the earth while it portrays Aeneas and the Trojans as civilized, disciplined, and obedient to the gods.[37] Aeneas himself, therefore, is depicted as a character who is virtuous and longsuffering. In the final lines of the epic, however,

Aeneas suddenly *and uncharacteristically* turns savage and vengeful, killing a now defenseless enemy who has begged for mercy and whom Aeneas himself almost decided to spare. The epic concludes not from the point of view of its hero, Aeneas, but from that of his enemy, Turnus, as "with a groan his life disdainful flies beneath the shades."

Like an ending of Mark at 16:8, the close of *the Aeneid* is a suspended ending. First, Virgil worked with an existing mythology with which his readers were already familiar. Furthermore, since the Julians claimed descent from Aeneas, this was, in part, their origin story. This story—the fuller story—should include the aftermath of the war with the Rutulians. An expected conclusion might have been the founding of Lavinium, or the birth of Aeneas's son Silvius whose descendants were to found Rome. These events would appear to be the natural goal for the epic. The Aeneid, however, does not reach these goals. It stops suddenly with the killing of Turnus.[38]

A second point that argues that Virgil's readers could have anticipated more in the narrative is that the narrative itself creates such an expectation. Among the events that the narrative anticipates is the founding of Lavinium—*dum conderet urbem* ("till he could found a city").[39] The narrator declares this goal in the very opening of the *Aeneid.* From the beginning of the narrative, then, the goal of Aeneas's journey from Troy—and hence the expectation for the reader that the narrative will include this event—is that he will found Rome's mother city. The narrative raises this same expectation later in a conversation between Jove and Cytherea (Aeneas's mother) in Book I. Jove promises Cytherea that Aeneas will succeed in his ordained task of defeating the Rutulians and founding Lavinium, and she herself will see this.[40] Thus, again, there is an expectation created by the narrative that the founding of this city is the ultimate goal of Aeneas's adventures. Yet the epic concludes with this event untold. Ironically, though Jove promises that Cytherea will see the founding of this city, *the reader will not see this since the narrative ends with the death of Turnus.*

According to the mythology, Aeneas was also to marry Lavinia and sire a son by her. This event is foretold in Book VI, before Aeneas even meets Lavinia. This section of the poem relates how Aeneas ventures into the underworld and meets his father, Anchises. Anchises gives the following prediction to his son:

> Expedium dictis, et te tua fata docebo.
> Ille, vides, pura iuvenis qui nititur hasta,
> Proxima sorte tenet lucis loca, primus ad auras
> Aetherias Italo commixtus sanguine surget,
> Silvius, Albanum nomen, tua postuma proles;
> Quem tibi longeavo serum Lavinia coniux
> Educat silvis regem regumque parentem. . .
> (Book VI, lines 759–765)

I will rehearse and shew thee of they fates.
That youth—thou see'st—who leans on pointless spear,
Next place by lot he holds to reach the light;
Italian blood commingling in his veins,
He first shall rise to the air of upper world
Silvius, an Alban name, thy youngest born;
Whom late thy wife Lavinia shall rear. . .
To be a king and parent of our kings. . .[41]

The poem mentions Aeneas's future wife by name Lavinia. It also mentions by name Silvius, the son he will sire by her. It also says that Silvius will found a line of kings. The prediction goes on to say that this line will culminate in Romulus who will found Rome.[42] All of this is foretold to Aeneas in Book VI; therefore, the expectation is created for these events to be fulfilled in the narrative. The reader might expect at least to find in the narrative the marriage of Aeneas and Livinia as a satisfying conclusion to the narrative. The story ends, however, before the predicted marriage takes place. Again, that this event is suspended from the narrative is all the more acute when considering that the whole cause behind the war with the Rutulians in Books VII–XII concerns the rivalry between Aeneas and Turnus for Livinia's hand. This should culminate in one of the two men marrying her, but the narrative ends instead with the killing of Turnus.

There is further evidence that the ending, the duel between Aeneas and Turnus, appears to be abrupt. Commentators of the *Aeneid* note Virgil's deliberate modelling of the plot and characters of Books VII–XII of the *Aeneid* after the Iliad.[43] In the *Iliad*, Achilles slays Hector for killing his friend Patroclus; in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas slays Turnus for killing his friend Pallas.[44] The *Iliad* then narrates how Achilles desecrates the body of Hector but then later returns Hector to the Trojans for proper burial. Since Virgil used the Greek epic as his model up to this point, any reader familiar with the *Iliad* might expect a similar fate for Turnus. Yet the story ends instead only with Turnus's death. Any further description of what happens to Turnus's body is suspended from the narrative.

Thus far, it has been demonstrated that the ending of the *Aeneid* is a suspended ending because the reader is led to anticipate a fuller story then the epic actually tells. This ending further shows a more radical example of a suspended ending in that it comes suddenly and inconclusively and so leaves behind unanswered and unresolved problems. The portrayal of the hero Aeneas throughout this epic is that he is a man who is civilized, disciplined, and longsuffering, yet this image is tarnished when he wreaks savage revenge upon Turnus in the final episode. Commentators have noted that the *Aeneid* often differs from the *Iliad* in that its protagonist displays higher principles than the heroes of the Greek epic. Unlike Achilles, for instance, Aeneas is not rash and arrogant.[45] At the end of the *Aeneid*, however, this portrayal of the hero is suddenly

shattered and not to be rehabilitated. A. S. Gratwich writes of this "moral breakdown" at the end and how this might affect the reader's expectations:

> but we know that the character of Aeneas is different, more civilized, more just than that of Achilles. Consequently we are confident that in the moment of victory he will show mercy; he will not display the arrogant joy of Achilles; he will surely spare the conquered.
> This parallelism with Homer makes it all the more shattering when Aeneas does not in fact spare his victim, but rejects his pleas precisely as Achilles had rejected Hector's. After a thousand years it is exactly the same in the end; the victor in his wild anger (is it "righteous" anger?), takes vengeance by killing his victim.[46]

Gratwich goes on to discuss how this sudden turn in Aeneas's portrayal has created a problem among commentators as to whether Aeneas's actions should be defended or condemned, if he is still heroic or suddenly villainous.[47] The ending of the *Aeneid* thus is a more radical form of a suspended ending because of this suddenly uneven and unresolved portrayal of the hero. Where the *Iliad* portrays the arrogant Achilles as becoming humane when confronted by Priam, the *Aeneid* portrays the honorable Aeneas as savage, unforgiving, and inhumane.

This examination of the *Aeneid* allows for several point of comparison between Virgil's epic and the Gospel of Mark. First, both narratives have suspended endings. Both narratives end before the "whole story" is told and leave untold events that the reader should anticipate. The expectation for these events is created both by what the reader knows about the larger story outside of these particular narratives and then by the narratives themselves. The *Aeneid* ends before Aeneas defeats the Rutulians, marries Lavinia, and builds Lavinium. Both the mythology outside of this epic and then the narrative itself create such expectations. Yet the story in the *Aeneid* concludes before it reaches these goals. Likewise, the Christian reader of Mark's Gospel is familiar with the larger story of Jesus's ministry. What is more, the narrative of this Gospel creates an expectation to see certain events unfold. As foretold in the three passion predictions, Jesus does suffer and die (and rises as proclaimed by the young man in 16:6). What is more, Jesus's promise in 14:28 creates the expectation that the risen Jesus will reunite with his disciples in Galilee, and this expectation is reinforced by the young man's promise in 16:7. Yet the reunion of Jesus and his disciples is suspended from the narrative if it concludes at 16:8. As with the *Aeneid*, the ending of Mark's Gospel is a suspended ending.

As with the Aeneid*, the ending of Mark's Gospel is a suspended ending.*

A second point of comparison

between these two endings is found in their abruptness and problems raised for the reader. The *Aeneid* closes with its hero viciously stabbing his enemy to death. Why is Aeneas's behavior here so uncharacteristic of his overall portrayal in the narrative? Why conclude the narrative from the point of view of the dying antagonist Turnus rather than that of the protagonist Aeneas? What are the implications of this ending for the original readers/hearers of the *Aeneid*, in particular for Augustus, Aeneas's supposed heir, and the other Romans who were to receive this literary work?

Effective use of this literary tool could be evidence of sophistication rather than sloppiness.

Likewise, in Mark's Gospel the ending comes suddenly and harshly on the note that the frightened women did not tell Jesus's disciples the words of the young man. It is not known at the narrative level if the women ever do fulfill the young man's command, in fact, the narrative clearly indicates that they do not do this. So then, do the disciples ever hear the young man's message? Do they go to Galilee and see Jesus there? Why should the final scene show the point of view of these frightened women rather than the victorious Jesus (Mt 28:16–20) or the disciples after they are reconciled with Jesus (Lk 24:52–53)? How did this ending affect Mark's original readers—and his readers today? The abruptness of the endings of both the Aeneid and Mark's Gospel raise problems and force the reader to confront them.

Finally, a suspended ending is certainly not a bad ending, but an ending that employs a certain literary device. Effective use of this literary tool could be evidence of sophistication rather than sloppiness. This is how Gratwich interprets the open-ended suspended ending of the *Aeneid*:

> The poem ends with confusion, with paradox; the poet would have us ponder. This is the measure of the greatness of the poem—it shirks no issues, it aims at no specious falsifications. Nothing could have been easier than to avoid the dilemma: Aeneas's spear-cast could have killed Turnus instead of wounding him, and the final situation would not have arisen. But it is Virgil's intention, here as elsewhere in the poem, to involve his readers in a dilemma concerned with human issues as he saw them in the Roman world.[48]

An interpreter could also say of Mark that nothing would have been easier than to depict an appearance of the risen Jesus to his disciples and their faithful response. Yet he does not, and so the reader must confront this absence.

Based upon this comparison of Mark's Gospel and the *Aeneid*, the interpreter might conclude that a similar level of sophistication which Gratwich finds in the ending

of Virgil's epic is also characteristic of the ending of Mark's Gospel. What is more, this comparison once again demonstrates that Mark's Gospel is not unique among the ancient authors in employing a suspended ending, even one as abrupt as found in Mark 16:8.

Conclusion

When he finished the *Aeneid*, Virgil continued to revise the poem until the time of his death. As he was dying, he wished that his friends would burn his work because it was still incomplete. However, what was incomplete was not the story itself, but Virgil's efforts to rework and restructure the poem.[49] All evidence suggests that he ended the epic where it ends, with the death of Turnus at the conclusion of Book XII. Instead of destroying Virgil's work, his friends published it after he died, and it then became what it was intended to become, the Latin epic of Rome to rival the epics of Greece. It also quickly became the standard for excellence in Latin literature and a primary text for the study of this language, its author hailed as an expert in the language.[50]

That the epic ended without the story reaching its "real conclusion" did not appear to be a scandal. Later, however, a Renaissance poet felt obligated to "complete" the *Aeneid* by adding additional lines to make the epic conform to the "larger story" including the burial of Turnus, Aeneas's marriage to Livinia, the founding of Lavinium, and finally Aeneas's ascension into heaven.[51]

If Mark 16:8 is the ending intended by the author, then this Gospel is not alone among other ancient literary works. It shares with the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* the use of a similar literary device—the suspended ending. This is especially true of the *Aeneid* since it had become the standard work of Latin in the Roman world by the time Mark wrote his Gospel.[52] Both the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of Mark cut their story short. They do not reach certain narrative goals that the reader might expect and that the narratives themselves create. They both end suddenly and inconclusively. They end on a problematic note, leaving the reader to ponder. In addition, these suspended endings seem to have prompted later readers to "finish the story," for, just as the *Aeneid* was later "completed," so also later scribes "completed" the Gospel of Mark by adding the two longer endings. When the reader fails to understand why an author employs a suspended ending it might be easiest to assume the work is incomplete. Thus, there are the longer endings to *both* the *Aeneid* and the Gospel of Mark.

An examination of these other ancient literary works demonstrates that the ending of the Gospel of Mark is not unique but shows a strong, stylistic relationship with both the *Iliad* and then especially with the *Aeneid*. On the grounds of this comparative analysis, Mark 16:8 as an ending to the Gospel's narrative is neither impossible nor unbelievable in its ancient context. Rather, if 16:8 is the intended ending o Mark's Gospel, then this Gospel is a work of literature that employs an effective open-ended suspended ending, as do both the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*.

Endnotes

1 See *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed. rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012), 55*, 174–175.

2 See Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Mark* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), ciii–cxiii. Regarding the *conclusio brevior*, Henry Barclay Swete argues that this short ending was an attempt on someone's part "to soften the harshness of so abrupt a conclusion [16:8], and at the same time remove the impression which it leaves of a failure on the part of Mary of Magdala and her friends to deliver the message with which they had been charged" (Swete, cviii). This commentator clearly sees the potential problems that an ending at 16:8 poses for the reader if indeed the women "say nothing to anyone for they were afraid."

3 J. Lee Magness, *Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1986), 1–2. Note that Magness does not consider the *conclusio brevior*, though it is a variant, to be an option for a possible ending of Mark's Gospel. See also James W. Voelz, Mark 1:1–8:25 Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 55–60 for a full discussion of the ending on Mark's Gospel.

4 See C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), 470–471. Cranfield provides a summary of the various scholarly speculations on why the ending is not there after Mark 16:8. Cranfield himself argues that the ending is lost, or the work is incomplete, and that this opinion was the majority view at the time that he wrote.

5 Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 6–10. Magness also mentions a "theological argument" to support the view that the end is missing after 16:8. This argument arises from the expectation that because the resurrection of Jesus was so fundamental to the early-Christian kerygma, there has to be a post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in a gospel narrative (see also Cranfield, 471 for such an argument). In a sense, however, this "theological argument" follows from the expectations readers already have before they come to the text. Therefore, if the narrative intentionally excludes what the readers expect to find in it, the interpreter should first evaluate this phenomenon on the literary level. Thus, the so-called theological problem is first a literary problem.

6 See, for instance, Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 609.

7 R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1950), 85–86; F. W. Danker, "Meander and the New Testament," in *NTS* 10 (1964): 366; and P. W. van der Horst, "Can a Book End with gar? A Note on Mark xvi.8" in *JTS* 23 (1972): 121–124.

8 W. L. Knox, "The Ending of Mark's Gospel," in *Harvard Theological Review* 35 (1942): 22–23. For more recent arguments that concur with Knox, see R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* in the New International Greek Text Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 683–684 and the discussion in Clayton N. Croy, *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 51–63.

9 Magness defends a comparison between these classical epics and the Gospel of Mark; he argues, "these epics became standards and sources of Greco-Roman literature and were universally known in the Hellenistic world. So, although far different from a gospel generically, their conclusions can be compared profitably to that of Mark, another ancient narrative . . ." (Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 28).

10 Though he does not provide a definition of the term "suspended ending," Magness uses this term for endings of narratives that are open ended or problematic. Thus, the use of "absence" in the title of his book refers to such "suspended endings" which convey meaning through what is not there—*sense* in *absence*. See Magness, 19–20.

11 See, for instance, 1 Corinthians 15:1ff.

12 See Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 8–9.

13 It can be noted here that the reunion between Jesus and the disciples recorded in the long ending (Mk 16:9–20) apparently takes place in Jerusalem, mirroring the accounts recorded in Luke 24 and John 20. Such a reunion in the south is neither what Jesus predicts in 14:28 nor what the young man predicts in 16:7. This provides a strong reason to reject the long ending as the ending intended by the author based on

the narrative itself: the long ending does not record the promised reunion in Galilee, so it is not the intended conclusion.

14 Yet see Voelz, 59–61 for an argument for why the narrative of Mark's Gospel does yet also anticipate an ending at 16:8. Voelz argues that Jesus's reply to the Pharisees' request for a sign in Mark 15:32 anticipates the ending at 16:8. Jesus offers no sign to his opponents—not even the sign of Jonah, and so the reader should not expect any post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in the narrative (60). Rather, the Gospel of Mark asks the reader to take Jesus at his word that he arose on the third day without seeing Jesus risen in the narrative itself (61).

15 See Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 28–31.

16 Moses Hadas, *A History of Greek Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 21 and G. S. Kirk, "Homer" in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 73–74.

17 Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 29–30.

18 Kirk, "Homer," 47–48.

19 *Homer's Iliad*, Books XIX–XXIV, ed. Edward Bull Clapp (Boston: Ginn, 1899), 381.

20 Kirk, "Homer," 73.

21 Kirk, "Homer," 73–74.

22 Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lendaron, *Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed. (New York: David McKay, 1977), 306–307.

23 Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 29–30.

24 See Kirk, "Homer," 73–74.

25 Kirk, "Homer," 74.

26 *Homer's Iliad*, 199–200.

27 Kirk, "Homer," 72.

28 See also Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 34–36.

29 Moses Hadas, *A History of Latin Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 153; and Harold N. Fowler, *A History of Roman Literature* (New York: Appleton, 1905), 107.

30 A. S. Gratwich, "The Aeneid," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. II, ed. E. J. Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 334–335.

31 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 334. A direct reference is made to Julius Caesar as one of Aeneas's descendants in Book I, lines 286–288. See also *The Aeneid of Virgil*, original text with translation by T. H. Delabère May (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1930), 18–19.

32 Fowler, *A History of Roman Literature*, 107; Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 336; Hadas, *A History of Latin Literature*, 154; and J. W. MacKail, *Latin Literature* (New York: Scribner, 1994), 100–101.

33 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 339, 344, and 368. See also Hadas, *A History of Latin Literature*, 155.

34 See Morford, *Classical Mythology*, 450–455.

35 *The Aeneid of Virgil*, 622–623.

36 That this ending is open-ended and draws the reader into filling in a gap in the narrative is perhaps evident in an article on the *Aeneid* in *Encyclopedia Britannica*. This article's summary of the plot of the epic includes Aeneas's marriage to Lavinia and the founding of Lavinium *although neither of these events is related in the narrative itself*. The author of the article appears to have naturally filled in the rest of the story without comment based upon knowledge of the larger narrative outside of the *Aeneid* itself. See "Aeneid" in *The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropaedia,* vol. 1 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1987), 118.

37 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 334, 335–336, 355 and Hadas, *A History of Latin Literature*, 156. Both commentators on the *Aeneid* agree that Aeneas and the Trojans in the story represent the Romans who now under Augustus were experiencing peace and ascendancy and credited this to their discipline, civility, and virtue.

38 Morford, *Classical Mythology*, 450–455. Here he argues that other Roman poets took up the task of relating the events that took place after the death of Turnus but are described in the *Aeneid* (454).

39 *The Aeneid of Virgil*, 2–3.

40 *The Aeneid of Virgil,* 16–19.

41 *The Aeneid of Virgil*, 290–291. At this point in the poem, Anchises shows Aeneas the place in the underworld where souls are waiting to be incarnated. Among these souls is Aeneas's yet unborn son, Silvius.

42 *The Aeneid of Virgil*, 292–293.

43 See Fowler, *A History of Roman Literature*, 107–108; Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 339–340; Hadas, *A History of Latin Literature*, 155–156; and MacKail, *Latin Literature*, 99. These commentators agree that Virgil copied both the style and plot of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Books I–VI mirror the *Odyssey* as they depict an account of the hero's journeys after the fall of Troy, complete with a lovely woman who detains him and a descent into the underworld. Books VII–XII mirror the *Iliad* as they depict an account of a war over a woman and the hero avenging the death of his friend.

44 Gratwich and Hadas disagree over whether Aeneas should properly identify with Achilles (Hadas, *A History of Latin Literature*, 156) or with Hector, who in the new epic kills the Achilles figure (Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 340). Thus, Gratwich argues that the ending of the *Aeneid* is problematic because the civilized Aeneas—the "new Hector"—ends up acting more like the savage Achilles. Yet both commentators agree that there is a connection with the *Iliad*.

45 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 346–347, 352.

46 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 352.

47 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 352.

48 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 353.

49 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 344–346. Gratwich describes Virgil's composition of the *Aeneid*. Virgil first composed the story in prose, divided it into twelve books, and then began to convert the story from prose to poetry (344). The epic is "incomplete" because Virgil did not finish this process of revising the prose to poetry to fit the proper meter. What is more, he attempted other revisions of the narrative itself. Therefore, there is some confusion in some sections of the epic (e.g., in Book VI Virgil was reworking the plot so that the Sybill would be Aeneas's escort through the underworld rather than his father Anchises; he died before he completed this restructuring of the narrative (305)). See also Fowler, 108 on the incomplete transition from prose to poetry in the *Aeneid*.

50 Gratwich, "The Aeneid," 333, 369 and MacKail, *Latin Literature*, 97–98.

51 Magness, *Sense and Absence*, 35.

52 See MacKail, *Latin Literature*, 97–98.

Deconstructing Critical Orthodoxies in the Exegesis of 2 Corinthians

Vilson Scholz

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Critical orthodoxies: what is that? As far as I know, the expression was coined by J. A. T. Robinson in his *Redating the New Testament* (1976). Determined to revise the late dates attributed to the books of the New Testament (his thesis being that most of them, if not all, were written before AD 70), Robinson states the following in one of his conclusions:

> Closely connected with the supposed requirements of development is the manifold tyranny of unexamined assumptions. Even (perhaps most of all) in their reactions *against* each other, different schools of critics take these over from their predecessors, and of course individual commentators and writers of introductions take them over from each other. Fashions and critical orthodoxies are established which it becomes as hard to go against in this field as in any other. […] Solutions of the synoptic problem (including the relation of John to the synoptists) have tended to become accepted for extended stretches as assured—and therefore reassuring—results. Some of this is sheer scholarly laziness.[1]

Unexamined assumptions, positions taken over from predecessors, sheer scholarly laziness: these are harsh words. Can they be applied to the exegesis of 2 Corinthians? Can we say that there is "critical orthodoxy" in the exegesis of 2 Corinthians? Writing

in the early days of the twentieth century,[2] Theodor Zahn refers to a consensus criticorum ("consensus among critics") on one point: the existence of an intermediary letter, that is, the existence of a letter written after 1 Corinthians and before 2 Corinthians.[3]

The "intermediary visit" followed by the "tearful letter" (supposedly written shortly after the visit) is just one element of this critical orthodoxy. Also assumed (and required, so that the intervening events may be accommodated) is a longer interval or span of time between the writing of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. This topic will be taken up later. Initially, I would like to discuss other aspects of this 'critical orthodoxy' regarding 2 Corinthians that have been deconstructed, are currently in the process of being deconstructed, or still need some sort of deconstruction.

2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 as a non-Pauline fragment or a misplaced Pauline fragment

Since at least the middle of the nineteenth century, interpreters have called attention to a "sudden dislocation of the argument" at 2 Corinthians 6:14.[4] Before that, in the so-called pre-critical era, interpreters apparently did not see anything strange in that passage. Chrysostom did not notice any unevenness in the transition from 6:13 to 6:14, for at one point he simply says, "and therefore he [Paul] added verse 14." Writing in the late sixteenth century, Tileman Heshussius treats 6:14 as the beginning of the second part of chapter 6, which means that he recognizes a break after 6:13. He then takes 7:1 quite naturally as the beginning of chapter 7, saying that "Paul concludes with an exhortation concerning the practice of good works, avoiding the company of idol worshippers, and preserving a clean conscience in the whole course of life."

Now, 2 Corinthians 6:14 (μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις) is clearly asyndetic. However, so are the previous sentences, τὸ στόμα ἡμῶν ἀνέῳγεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς (6:11) and οὐ στενοχωρεῖσθε ἐν ἡμῖν (6:12). And Paul is still addressing the same audience (ὑμεῖς, "you all"). However, at the beginning of the twentieth century, as indicated by Farrar, interpreters began to put forth the view (or supposition) that 6:14–7:1 "is either an after-thought written by the apostle on the margin of the Epistle after it was finished; or even an interpolation."[5] Writing in 1915, Alfred Plummer also called attention to the strangeness of the section. And Lenski, in the mid-1930s, has "a word regarding the 'criticism' which would remove 6:14–7:1 from its place in this epistle."[6]

A new development took place after the discovery of the so-called Qumran documents.

A new development took place after the discovery of the so-called Qumran documents in the Judean wilderness (1947–1956). Many

scholars were at that time "infected" by "Qumranitis," this attempt to explain everything (or at least a lot of things) in the light of the Qumran documents. A notorious example is Joseph Fitzmyer, who, in 1961, wrote an essay on "Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6, 14–7, 1."[7] It may be surmised that back then it was a given that 6:14–7:1 is an "interpolated paragraph."

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 in detail, for the main purpose here is to indicate how critical orthodoxies in the exegesis of 2 Corinthians are being deconstructed or revised.[8] The fact is that the number of scholars who would argue that 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 is non-Pauline is growing smaller. As Christopher D. Land puts it, "currently, Pauline scholarship is experiencing a renewed appreciation of Paul's Jewishness, so that fewer and fewer scholars are willing to question the authenticity of the passage on account of its abhorrence of impurity and its preoccupation with communal purification."[9]

Thomas Schmeller, in a commentary published in 2010, is in no doubt about the authenticity, that is, the Pauline authorship of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1. However, he sees it as an interpolation. In his view, what seems most likely (sic) is that a redactor inserted in this context a text that comes from a different context in Paul's letters.[10] This different context is, believe it or not, the "empty space" between 2 Corinthians 9 and 2 Corinthians 10![11] Schmeller's conclusion is this: "It is my view that, for reasons that can still be recognized, the text of 6:14–7:1 was omitted from an early copy of 2 Corinthians. However, this section was written down separately, preserved and after some time reinserted in 2 Corinthians, only in the wrong place."[12] I will let the reader judge whether this piece of "exegetical romance" will ever carry the day.

On the other end of the spectrum, Christopher D. Land, who defends the integrity of 2 Corinthians, argues that 6:14–7:1 sounds odd because we have misunderstood the surrounding context. He writes:

> Granting that Paul and Timothy are not defending themselves or appealing for affection in 6.1–13, but rather preparing their readers to undertake a costly obedience of some kind, the transition into 6.14–7.1 becomes much less abrupt and much easier to explain. Indeed, I would go so far as to claim that it requires no real comment at all. It is only when 6.1–13 and 7.2 are mistakenly related back to Paul's authorial agenda in 2.14–5.21 that the material in 6.14–7.1 becomes disruptive. . . . But when 6.1–13 is read as an appeal for obedience directed at reluctant readers, the alleged abruptness of 6.14 disappears entirely and the commands in 6.14–7.1 become fully predictable as an elaboration of the opening appeal in 6.1.[13]

Partition theories: 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 as independent letters

As far as we know, it was Johan Salomo Semler who, in 1776, first suggested that 2 Corinthians 9 preserves a writing that was addressed to a church in Achaia other than the church of Corinth. Later, this separate letter would have been attached to the main body of Second Corinthians. Here is what Semler wrote (and which few have read):

> περὶ μὲν γὰρ τῆς διακονίας—The subject is the same, so that almost only the phrases differ; and therefore, it may seem altogether strange that in the same Epistle almost the same argument is repeated. If there were any historical light remaining for us about that first time when the writings or commands of the Apostles were collected, it would be permissible to speculate and guess that some of the Epistles were later composed as if into one body, from various smaller fragments, which, for example, were taken through Achaia, into this and that city, by these messengers, by Titus, by someone else, by a third one. Now they were collected and added to the larger part which Titus carried with him; and thus, at last they came together in one body. This suspicion of ours (*Ista nostra suspicio*), if it appears to some that it is not free from various dangers of subjects and doctrines, can easily be dismissed; but neither is there a lack of pious and upright Christians who understand that there is no impiety in being persuaded in this way. For the Christian religion rests on the holy doctrines themselves, and not on this decision that all the Epistles of Paul were written in their entirety from the beginning in one tenor and order. I think it is very certain, although the learned hardly dare to look back at that observation, that that chapter 16 which is attached to the Epistle to the Romans clearly does not belong to the Romans, because it deals with people from Asia and other places overseas. If, therefore, this ninth chapter was added to the Epistle itself and afterwards inserted (*Si igitur hoc caput nonum ipsi Epistolae fuerit adiectum atque postea insertum*), because it was absolutely worthwhile to preserve this part, after it had been read by the elders of the church in this or that city of Achaia; yet nothing has been added to the Epistle itself, in which indeed Paul's doctrine is presented to us, or something of authority has been taken away (*aut auctoritatis aliquid detractum est*), which in this part concerning the collection of money contains nothing divine and necessary for us (*nihil divini et nobis necessarii continet*).[14]

What Semler advanced as a "suspicion" soon became an assured result of Pauline scholarship.

What Semler advanced as a "suspicion" soon became an assured result of Pauline scholarship. At least for a great number of scholars. In 1985, Hans Dieter Betz published a commentary on 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 in the Anchor Bible Series. The title speaks for itself: 2 *Corinthians 8 and 9: A Commentary on Two Administrative Letters of the Apostle Paul*. Now, there is no denying that, at the beginning of 2 Corinthians 8, Paul moves in a different direction. Having said that he was rejoicing "because in everything I can rely on you" (7:16), Paul begins his report about what God's grace was accomplishing in the churches of Macedonia. However, 2 Corinthians 8:1 is not a new beginning, let alone the beginning of a new letter. Paul writes, γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν ("And we make known to you"). The marker δέ cannot be or should not be overlooked. It is "a marker linking narrative segments."[15] It is Paul's way of saying that he has more to say (or write). It may be argued that in modern English this "And" at the beginning of a section is not necessary or should be avoided in the interest of good style. However, in this case, given the fact that the theory of independent administrative letters is out there, a translation such as ESV ("We want you to know, brothers, . . .") is less adequate than "*Moreover* . . . we make known" (NKJV), "*Next*, brothers, we will tell you . . ." (NJB), "*And now* . . . we want you to know" (NIV). (Emphasis added.) The same point can be made (and will be made) with reference to 2 Corinthians 10:1.[16]

Focusing more specifically on 2 Corinthians 9, which by critical standards is a better candidate for an independent letter, one must initially concede that a little break or gap is noticeable before περὶ μὲν γάρ ("For on the one hand concerning . . ").[17] Already in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, for example, the copyists left an empty space between what for us is the end of 2 Corinthians 8:24 and 2 Corinthians 9:1.[18] When chapter divisions were introduced at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the numeral 9 was inserted at that point, which was possible only under the assumption that some sort of new beginning can be made at that point.[19]

However, the existence of a little gap should not be exaggerated.[20] And, once again, modern translations can reinforce the impression that there is a seam in the text. This time, NIV is found wanting, for it simply says, "There is no need for me to write . . ." ESV is better: "*Now* it is superfluous for me to write." (Emphasis added.)

Older commentators had different ways of explaining the short gap before 9:1 (if a gap it is). Farrar, for example, says that "perhaps, on reperusing the last paragraph before resuming the subject he [Paul] observed that, after all, he had not directly mentioned the contribution, and therefore explains that he thought it superfluous to do so."[21]

This is not the time to review all possible explanations, for the only point I am trying to make is that what seems to be a break is a far cry from the opening of a letter. In fact, five years after the publication of Betz's commentary, Stanley K. Stowers drove the last nail in the coffin of this partition theory in his essay on "Peri men gar and the integrity of 2 Cor 8 and 9." As Stowers puts it, "PERI MEN GAR signals that Paul is treating the main point, which is not the contribution for the saints or liberality in general, but the Corinthian reception and preparation for the delegation."[22] Quite significantly, Thomas Schmeller treats 2 Corinthians 8:16–9:5 as a unified section.

Partition theories: 2 Corinthians 10–13 as the "letter of tears"

Christopher D. Land, who defends the integrity of 2 Corinthians, states that "10.1 represents the most widely accepted point of discontinuity in 2 Corinthians."[23] Sure enough, there is a transitional δέ at the beginning of 10:1, which, by the way, tends to be omitted from translations and helps to create the impression that 2 Cor 10–13 is a separate "letter" or communication.[24] However, it is δέ and not μέν or γάρ.

Since the days of Adolf Hausrath, in 1870, scholars have been willing to see the last four chapter of 2 Corinthians as a separate letter.

These seams or bumps are not unusual in Paul's epistles. The best-known is probably the one before Philippians 3:2. However, the reader of Paul's letters encounters unexpected (but seldom noticed) transitions between 1 Corinthians 9 and 1 Corinthians 10, Romans 8 and Romans 9, Galatians 2 and Galatians 3. In 2 Corinthians, the passage of 2:14 comes with a bit of surprise, so much so that Margaret Thrall saw this as the beginning of a second (it would be the first and only) "thanksgiving period" in 2 Corinthians.[25] But one could argue that there is an even wider gap between 2:11 and 2:12. The first listeners of the letter in Greek might even have thought that Paul had more to say about Satan. After all, ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς τὴν Τρῳάδα simply means that someone (masculine singular) came to Troas.

Coming back to 2 Corinthians 10–13, it is well-known that at least since the days of Adolf Hausrath, in 1870, scholars have been willing to see the last four chapter of 2 Corinthians as a separate letter.[26] The next step was to say that 2 Corinthians 10–13 is the "letter of tears" that is implied in 2 Corinthians 2:4. However, as it has repeatedly been pointed out, Paul was not mourning when he wrote chapters 10–13; he was angry. He was not weeping; he was fighting. So, the number of scholars willing to defend this thesis is crumbling.

Many scholars will argue that the canonical letter as we know it makes perfect sense. Theodor Zahn describes it nicely, saying,

> The readers follow Paul from Ephesus to Troas to Macedonia (2 Cor 1–7); then they stay with Paul for a while in the churches of Macedonia (2 Cor 8–9); finally, they look ahead to the conditions in the church at Corinth from the point of view of Paul's upcoming visit there. The three sections of the letter treat the immediate past with its misunderstandings and explanations, the present with its practical problems, and the near future with its anxieties.[27]

This, however, does not mean that our basic question has been answered. After all, what accounts for the different tone in the latter chapters of 2 Corinthians? Of the many solutions that have been proposed, I mention only two. One solution (which Thomas Schmeller calls "highly speculative") is that Paul has different addressees in view. In 2 Corinthians 1–9, he would be addressing the church members that were on his side and/or willing to repent. In 2 Corinthians 10–13, Paul would be addressing the church members that were still resisting his authority (another possibility is that he was addressing his opponents). Schmeller thinks that Paul is addressing the same problem or situation all the way through. He only deals with it differently because he has different goals in view. In 2 Corinthians 1–9, Paul paves the way for Titus's visit; in 2 Corinthian 10–13, he prepares the ground for his own visit.[28]

A painful visit and a tearful letter (2 Corinthians 2:1, 4)

One of the ingrained "critical orthodoxies" in the interpretation of 2 Corinthians is, according to Theodor Zahn's description, "the theory (sic) that after Timothy's return from Corinth Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians which he sent to them by Titus—a letter now lost and supposedly referred to in 2 Corinthians ii. 3, 9, vii. 8."[29] This theory, says Zahn, was first put forth and defended by Friedrich Bleek, in 1830. After that, it was adopted with varying degrees of confidence by Karl August Credner, in 1836, by August Neander, in 1859, and Albert Klöpper, in 1869. What Zahn does not mention, most likely because it is a later development, is the "painful visit" that Paul is said to have paid the Corinthian church before the writing of that letter.

The reconstruction of the historical situation behind 2 Corinthians (which is far more than a "critical orthodoxy," for it is found also in conservative Introductions to the New Testament) can be told in different ways, but the painful visit and the intermediary letter are a constant. A typical example is Scott Hafemann's article on "Letters to the Corinthians" in *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (first edition):

> At the time he wrote 1 Corinthians, Paul intended to return to Corinth after staying in Ephesus until Pentecost and then visiting Macedonia (cf. 1 Cor 16:5–8). In the meantime he sent Timothy to

> visit the Corinthians on his behalf (1 Cor 16:10–11; Acts 19:22). Timothy found the tension between Paul and the Christians at Corinth to have escalated, due most probably to the arrival of opponents of Paul from outside Corinth. In response, Paul set out for Corinth immediately for what became a "painful visit," during which Paul's authority and gospel were severely called into question by the church. Paul himself was opposed and offended by one of its leaders (cf. 2 Cor 2:1, 5–8; 7:8–13; 11:4). Paul left Corinth under attack, determined not to make another such "painful visit" to the Corinthians (2 Cor 2:1–2). Instead he sent Titus to them with a "tearful letter" of rebuke and a warning as an attempt to win them back (cf. 2 Cor 2:3–9; 7:8–12).[30]

Any attempt to deconstruct this reconstruction in a few strokes would be overambitious. Notice, however, that as soon as the author begins to describe what Timothy supposedly found in Corinth, he is unable to produce one single biblical reference in support of what he is describing. One may safely assume (especially based on 2 Corinthians 10–13) that the tension between Paul and the Corinthian church had escalated, but how can one know for sure that this information was relayed to Paul by Timothy? The arrival of opponents from outside Corinth is a possibility, but there is no textual evidence for that. If Paul's opponents were on the scene, they might have arrived even before the writing of 1 Corinthians. Paul's "painful visit," which is seen as a fact so well-established that it is shown on maps that depict Paul's travels, is based on a reading of 2 Corinthians 2:1 which is far from certain. (I will come back to this in a moment). Paul's authority and gospel were called into question by the church. This may be assumed, but how do we know that it happened specifically during this intermediary visit? The thesis that Paul was offended by one of the leaders of the church is based on 2 Corinthians 2:1, 5–8; 7:8–13; 11:4. However, there is no reference to any "offense" in 2 Corinthians 2. Paul speaks about someone who caused pain, and he clearly states that this was not caused to him. (Oh, yes, Paul is resorting to irony!) In 2 Corinthians 7:12, Paul refers to ὁ ἀδικήσας, "the one who did the wrong" or, going by the semantic description in BDAG, "the one who acted in an unjust manner." An offender does what is wrong, but many more things can be described as ἀδικία. So, it is quite a stretch to say that, in a veiled manner, Paul is referring to a leader of the church who offended him. And how credible is the view that Paul left Corinth "licking his wounds"? (This seems to be derived from Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10:10, the complaint that his letters are weighty, but his bodily presence is weak.) He left Corinth and then, from Ephesus, he sent a furious letter. Does that make sense?

Before tackling some of the exegetical issues that require closer examination,

let it be pointed out that all these events (which are plausible, but far from certain) cannot be fitted into a short period of time (six months, for example). A long interval between 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians is necessary to accommodate this new development, this different scenario, this transition from a church beset by internal problems (different parties or factions) to a church that is now at odds with its pastor. And, conversely, this new scenario makes more sense considering a putative long interval.

Gordon Fee argues that the "rhetorical situation" of 1 Corinthians is not that different from what is found in 2 Corinthians, and vice-versa.

However, this "new scenario" has not gone unchallenged. It is quite possible that scholars are assuming a new scenario for 2 Corinthians because they misread the evidence that leads people to believe that the original scenario (depicted in 1 Corinthians) was different. Gordon Fee, for example, argues that the "rhetorical situation" of 1 Corinthians is not that different from what is found in 2 Corinthians, and vice-versa. In other words, in both epistles the apostle is dealing with what can be described as "a conflict between Paul and the church (or at least the majority of the Corinthian church)." This means that the thesis of a faction-ridden church in 1 Corinthians has been overemphasized. In fact, the "parties" don't play a major role in 1 Corinthians. The view that Paul is just giving an illustration when he talks about parties in Corinth is as old as Chrysostom, who was able to read Paul's rhetorical intention and did not take his words literally (considering what Paul himself explains in 1 Corinthians 4:6.). Thus, the only "faction" in Corinth is the one that separates the Corinthians (or a group of Corinthians) from Paul. According to this reading, one cannot say, as Hafemann does, that "by the time Paul wrote 2 Corinthians everything had changed."[31]

The drawback of a long interval between 2 Corinthians and 1 Corinthians is that the second letter is read in isolation, without (extensive) reference to 1 Corinthians. (The clearest example is 2 Corinthians 2, which is no longer seen as related to what appears in 1 Corinthians 5.) However, 2 Corinthians makes much more sense if read in the company of 1 Corinthians. Long discussions about Paul's opponents in 2 Corinthians could perhaps be kept short.

The Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 2:1

Now it is time to examine the exegesis that supposedly supports the view that Paul paid the Corinthians a visit that turned out being painful. Be it added that, if this "painful visit" ever took place, it must not have been an "intermediary visit,"

although that is the most common assumption. Going by what is found in most modern translations, this is a settled matter, and Paul is saying that his intention was to avoid "another painful visit" (2 Cor 2:1). However, the Greek text (τὸ μὴ πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν) is not so straightforward. A lot will depend on the exegesis of πάλιν ("again"). As Lenski puts it, "on the strength of πάλιν Paul's second visit to Corinth is dated after First Corinthians and is made a grief visit from which Paul, badly insulted and hurt, hurried back to Ephesus and wrote 'the tear letter.' Thus on the basis of πάλιν the critics build up their hypotheses and remove Second Corinthians from its connection with First Corinthians."[32] The adverb πάλιν can modify ἐν λύπῃ (πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ, "again with sorrow"). Most translations take πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ as a unit ("again in sorrow" = another painful visit), which means that the adverb (πάλιν) modifies the prepositional phrase (ἐν λύπῃ).[33] However, πάλιν most likely goes with ἐλθεῖν (πάλιν ἐλθεῖν, "come again"). If so, both the adverb (πάλιν) and the prepositional phrase (ἐν λύπῃ) can be related to the verb (ἐλθεῖν). Paul would then be saying, "to come to you again and to come (this time) in sorrow." This interpretation is not purely theoretical. It is found in NJB, which says, "that my next visit to you would not be a painful one." Only Paul and the Corinthians, who shared the same cognitive environment, could tell for sure if there had been a previous painful visit or not. All subsequent readers must beware of hasty mirror-readings which can easily lead to "theological romance."

The Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 2:4

The "tearful letter" is derived from 2 Corinthians 2:4, where we have "tears" but no "letter" per se, and 2 Corinthians 7:8, where we have a "letter" but no tears. Paul tells the Corinthians, "I wrote to you with many tears" (2 Cor 2:4). What writing is on Paul's mind? It seems obvious that he is referring to a letter, but not necessarily to a whole discrete letter. This is even more so if τοῦτο αὐτό in 2 Corinthians 2:3 is understood as "this very thing," as NKJV has it ("I wrote this very thing to you"). Paul may have in mind sections of 1 Corinthians, such as 1 Corinthians 5:1–6:11 and 11:17–22.

This is, of course, the traditional view on this. And it is not exclusive to so-called conservative scholars. Consider, for instance, Ferdinand Christian Baur's view on this. Yes, Baur, the leading figure of the Tübingen school, the scholar who is known for his Hegelian reading of the history of the New Testament. In his book on Paul, published in 1845, Baur first summarizes the view that "our second Epistle does not stand in that close connection with the first which is commonly supposed,"[34] and that "something more intervened between our two Epistles than merely the news brought to the Apostle by Titus about the effect produced by the first Epistle."[35] Then he pronounces the following verdict:

> I cannot consider this opinion to be well grounded, and it seems to me that what we know of the Apostle's character affords no adequate reason for taking the relation of the two Epistles to each other to be different from what has been commonly supposed. We need only remember with what vehemence and indignation he speaks of the occurrence mentioned in 1 Corinthians v. 5, and how, as soon as he has said what he had to say on the chief subject of his letter, this is the first of the more special subjects to which he addresses himself. The Apostle takes up this matter seriously enough, and at the same time it so notoriously concerns one particular individual, that it is against all probability that the individual who is spoken of in the same pointed way, 2 Corinthians ii. 5, should have been any other than the one referred to, 1 Corinthians v.[36]

By Way of Conclusion

It is quite clear that much of this discussion about 2 Corinthians, and also my observations above, relate to what is behind the text as background or "up in the air," as part of a shared cognitive environment. In other words, it is essentially mirror-reading based on the text. Is it worth discussing? We may be inclined to agree with Frederic Farrar's remarks about the so-called intermediary visit: "We know nothing whatever about the details of the visit, even if there was one, and the question, being supremely unimportant, is hardly worth the time which has been spent upon it."[37] Does it make a difference? To a certain degree, yes. One may argue that it does not matter if 2 Corinthians 2:5–11 is dealing with the incestuous Corinthian Christian of 1 Corinthians 5 or a leader of the Corinthian church who dared to stand up against Paul. Paul's teaching on forgiveness for the sinner remains the same. Sure enough. However, there is a difference between seeing 2 Corinthians as standing in close connection with 1 Corinthians and reading 2 Corinthians as a letter addressed to a much different Corinthian church. But when all is said and done, what Martin H. Franzmann wrote about the "attempts to penetrate into the substrata of the Gospels" (and here he is dealing with form criticism and source criticism) can be applied to the study of any biblical book, including Second Corinthians:

> The Lord of the church has given us in our generation abundant materials for the study of their geography; He has given us practically none for the study of their geology. Perhaps our main business is geography, not geology . . . There will be unanswered questions and unrelieved tensions enough even so; but the big

questions, the question of life-and-death import, the question of the Christ, will be answered; and men can learn to live well and die peacefully without having answers to the others.[38]

Endnotes

1 John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 345.

2 Zahn's *Introduction to the New Testament*, translated from the German, was published in 1909.

3 Zahn is quoting Heinrich Lisco, *Die Entstehung des zweiten Korintherbriefes*, 1896, who wrote that there was beginning "to be a *consensus criticus*" on one point, namely, the existence of an "intermediary letter." Zahn says that instead of *consensus criticus* ("critical consensus") one should say, *consensus criticorum* ("a consensus among critics"). This is a clear indication that at that time not everyone had yet jumped on the bandwagon. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 312.

4 Frederic Farrar, "II. Corinthians" in *The Pulpit Commentary* (New York and London: Funk&Wagnalls, n.d.), 147.

5 Farrar, "II. Corinthians," 147.

6 Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians* [ICC] (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1915), 204; R. C. H. Lenski, *St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937), 1093.

7 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor 6,14–7,1," CBQ 23 (1961): 271–280.

8 One of the damaging side-effects of this suspicion regarding 6:14–7:1 is that it tends to be ignored both exegetically (it is a nice Greek text!) and theologically (it will hardly be found in a Theology of Paul the apostle).

9 Christopher D. Land, "The Benefits Outweigh the Costs: Divine Benefaction and Human Obedience in 2 Cor 6,1–7,2." *ZNW* 112 (2021): 70.

10 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther* (Ostfildern: Patmos-Verlag), Vol. 1 (2010), 370.

11 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 379.

12 Schmeller, *Der zweite Brief an die Korinther*, 381.

13 Christopher D. Land, *The Integrity of 2 Corinthians and Paul's Aggravating Absence* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015), 155.

14 *D. Io. Sal. Semleri Paraphrasis II. Epistolae Ad Corinthios*, Halae Magdeburgicae, Impensis Carol. Herm. Hemmerde. 1776, 238–239. (My translation.)

15 According to BDAG, the first meaning to be ascribed to δέ is "a marker connecting a series of closely related data or lines of narrative." "And" is suggested as translation equivalent. The second meaning listed in BDAG is "a marker linking narrative segments." "Now," "then," "and" can be used as translation equivalents in English. "But" is meaning number 4, in BDAG.

16 In his provocative essay, "A Case for De-familiarizing 2 Corinthians" (page 236), Philip H. Towner (quite surprisingly) bemoans the fact that CEV (which he uses as just one example), by inserting section headings before and after 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 (considered "an insertion of some kind" or an "intervening unit"), "disguises these textual seams, smooths the bumps in the text caused by the insertion of material, and creates for the modern reader the illusion of flow and unity." One is left wondering how the insertion of section headings can possibly disguise textual seams. Be that as it may, my complaint goes in the opposite direction: by ignoring the markers which link narrative segments, translations create for the modern reader the illusion of textual seams or bumps in the text!

17 Frederic Farrar, for example, wrote that "the express mention of the collection after he [Paul] has been practically writing about it through the whole of the last chapter looks as if he had been interrupted, or had left off dictating at the end of the last verse." Farrar, "II. Corinthians," 218.

18 In Codex Vaticanus it is just a little gap, while in Sinaiticus it is an empty space that amounts to almost half of a stichos. However, going by what is seen in the inner margin of Nestle-Aland, chapters 8 and 9 were considered as one *Kephalaion* (# 9) in some sectors of the early church.

19 It is odd that scholars accepted quite uncritically the chapter division made centuries before. Then they moved this process one step further, seeing 9:1 as the beginning of a letter! Sure enough, an editor or redactor must have omitted the opening of the letter, so the argument goes, creating a somewhat smoother transition.

20 Had Paul written or dictated περὶ δέ, in a way that resembles what he does in 8:1 and 10:1, it would be easier to see 9:1 as the beginning of a new communication.
21 Farrar, "II. Corinthians," 218–219.
22 Stanley K. Stowers, "Peri men gar and the integrity of 2 Cor 8 and 9," NT 32 (1990): 347.
23 Christopher D. Land, *The Integrity of 2 Corinthians and Paul's Aggravating Absence*, 196. Land goes on saying that "Nothing is *less* disputed in 2 Corinthians scholarship than the presence of a significant change of some kind at 10.1."
24 Luther translated the marker δέ, saying, *Ich aber, Paulus* ("But I, Paul"). KJV does likewise: "*Now* I Paul myself." (Emphasis added.)
25 Margaret E. Thrall, "A Second Thanksgiving Period in II Corinthians," *JSNT* 16 (1982): 101–124.
26 Hausrath wrote a 28-page long essay titled *Der Vier-Capitel-Brief des Paulus an die Korinther. His thesis is that der Brief, den 1—9 voraussetzt, bestand aus den vier Capiteln am Ende* ("the letter that is assumed in chapters 1–9 consisted of the four chapter that appear at the end"). Hausrath does not say (at least not explicitly) that 2 Cor 10–13 is to be identified as the "letter of tears."
27 Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 312.
28 See Thomas Schmeller, "No Bridge over Troubled Water? The Gap between 2 Corinthians 1–9 and 10–13 Revisited." JSNT 36 (2013): 73–84.
29 Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 312.
30 Scott J. Hafemann, "Letters to the Corinthians." *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 176. A more recent version is found in George Guthrie's commentary on 2 Corinthians, which I reproduce in summary fashion: Timothy arrived in Corinth perhaps in early spring of 54. Things were not well in the church. As soon as shipping opened in late spring of 54, Timothy headed to Ephesus to report this to his apostle (or perhaps he sent a letter). Paul immediately left for Corinth for a grievous, crisis visit (2 Cor 2:1–2). During this crisis visit to Corinth, the apostle experienced emotional turmoil and even humiliation; in short, the confrontation with the church was deeply painful. Either before or shortly after he traveled back to Ephesus, the apostle was openly attacked, and the majority of members in the church failed to respond appropriately by defending their apostle (2:5–11). So, to address the first problem [i.e., to set things right with the church in Corinth], in the summer of 54, the apostle sent Titus to Corinth with the painful letter mentioned in 2 Cor 2:3–4. George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 20–21. One should add that essentially the same reconstruction is found in the second edition of DPE (released in 2023), in an article written by B. G. White.
31 Hafemann, DPE, 174. Ryan Schellenberger writes: "It is asserted that whereas 1 Corinthians concerns tensions within the Corinthian community, 2 Cor 10–13 is written to address the influence of outsiders. But this very widespread assertion inexplicably overlooks the fact that the work of other apostles was already at the root of what Paul denounced as factionalism in 1 Cor 1:12." Ryan S. Schellenberger, *Rethinking Paul's Rhetorical Education*: Comparative Rhetoric and 2 Corinthians 10–13 (Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 70.
32 Lenski, *I and II Corinthians*, 866–867.
33 The adverb's primary function is to modify verbs, but it may also be used to modify substantives, especially in prepositional phrases. Stanley E. Porter, *Idioms of the Greek Testament* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 126.
34 Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, his Life and Work, his Epistles and his Doctrine* (Second English Edition, 1876), 297.
35 Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 298.
36 Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ*, 298–299.
37 Farrar, "II. Corinthians," 36. What Farrar did not know back then is that subsequent interpreters are very much confident that they can give their readers "details of the visit," despite the silence of the text.
38 Martin H. Franzmann, *The Word of the Lord Grows* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 217–218.

Homiletical Helps

Lectionary Kick-start for the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

The following are portions of *Lectionary Kick-start*. This podcast is one of the series produced by Concordia Seminary's Department of Theological Research and Publication (the same department that brings you the *Concordia Journal*). *Lectionary Kick-start* gives weekly support to church workers as they write sermons and lesson plans. Jessica Bordeleau, MAR hosts 25-minute discussions with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger, professors of homiletics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Their conversations about the week's lectionary texts are designed to be a first step in planning for Sunday. You can find more episodes of *Lectionary Kick-start* at concordiatheology.org, CSL Scholar, and most major podcast apps.

In this episode the group discusses the fourth Sunday after Pentecost. Dr. Schmitt shares sermon structures based on the Gospel of Mark and Dr. Peter Nafzger explores the epistle reading from 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

Jessica: Welcome to *Lectionary Kickstart*. We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon or teaching lesson. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger. They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they are pretty good preachers. Alright, let's get started! David, where are we in the church year?

David: We are at the fourth Sunday after Pentecost, a time when the church celebrates the work of the Holy Spirit and the growth of the church.

Jessica: Peter, what are the texts for this week?

David: The readings are from Ezekiel 17, the first chapter of Psalm, 2 Corinthians, and Mark 5.

Jessica: As always, I ask each of you to tell me which text you would choose to preach on. David, will you go first?

David: I would preach on the first set of parables in Mark's gospel. Jessica, if you could read that first parable verses 26 through 29.

Jessica: And he said "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps and rises night and day and the seed sprouts and grows. He knows not how the earth produces by itself. First the blade, then the ear, full grain in the ear, but when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come."

David: I like this parable because it has what I would call the mysterious middle. The parable begins and ends with certain action on the part of a human character. We go out, we're scattering seed in hope of what's going to happen. Then it ends with that person again; the grain is ripe and at once he puts in the sickle. So it begins with certain hope, it ends with certain joy. But in the middle what you have is that phrase, "he knows not how." The guy who's doing the work of scattering the seed and doing the work of the reaping in the middle, he has absolutely no clue how it happens.

And the reason I like that is that I know a lot of people who are living in the mysterious middle. You just wish you could help them celebrate the certain beginning and help them hope for the certain end. I'm thinking of a person who has a child who has walked away from the faith. She baptized him, she raised him in the church. Now he went away to college and is kind of walking away from the faith. You're in the mysterious middle. You don't know. I've known people who seemed to have walked away from the faith and come back. I can't say that will happen for sure, but the parable kind of gives us this picture, this paradigm of what life can be like in God's kingdom. There's a long period, a whole period when all of this grows. An entire season when you don't know what God's doing!

Peter: It makes me think about "he sleeps and rises night and day"; it invites this long-haul perspective. How many people go to sleep worrying about things and wake up and it's not taken care of? They go to bed the next day and still the worries and the concerns, the uncertainties are still there. That mysterious middle can be really long.

David: You've got this way in which God works beyond our understanding, his ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts. And yet he is at work. He will not allow a bruised reed to be broken. He's not going to snuff out a smoldering wick. He's going to seek to find and save. I think you can think of examples in scripture of people who lived in that mysterious middle.

Peter: Well, even the middle between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, the uncertainty and the fear. Jesus had already told them he was going to rise from the dead multiple times. And yet that middle is a time of fear and uncertainty and that's where we live.

David: The gospel handle is that when Jesus is crucified, where is he? He's in the middle between two thieves. He is in the mysterious middle and out of that mysterious middle, he's able to bring salvation.

Peter: You could also do the middle between heaven and earth, between God and man.

David: Between heaven and earth and between now and a new creation. I would brainstorm other people whose stories I could tell as having a mysterious middle.

Peter: We live in this culture where knowledge helps us deal with things. How many times will people say, "If I just knew X, Y, Z, then I could handle it." Right? And it's particularly hard when we have so much knowledge at our fingertips, we are conditioned to require that knowledge.

David: And this gives space and permission to not know exactly what God's doing in this time. I keep bees. The mysterious middle for bees is basically January, February, and March. You're not sure if they're going to make it. They've kind of huddled through the winter. Are they going to have enough honey stores to survive? Are they going to make it or not? You open that hive and it's cold, they're just going to die, they're going to freeze. There's a way in which Christians can be encouraged to hold on even though they don't understand everything. In a culture that so values knowledge, like you said, we think it's through knowledge that we're going to be able to fix everything. But that's what I think Jesus is doing in the parables. Every parable has this mysterious middle to it that hasn't yet been revealed and that is the work of the Son of God dying and rising for salvation at the heart of the parables. It's not revealed yet.

Jessica: I think this will be so encouraging to those of us sitting in the pew because we are all in the middle. The other day on our way to school, my young son asked "Is Jesus really going to come back again? It's just been so long. Maybe we have it wrong." He's trying to understand it. It's okay if there are questions in the middle, while all the hard things are going on around us. It will be so good for us in the pew to hear you telling us that it's okay. It's okay if we're in the middle and it stinks right now. It doesn't mean that our faith isn't right or that God doesn't hear us. This is just the middle part; this isn't the end.

David: Jesus came in the middle. He'll be in the middle of the mess. He'll be in the middle of our sin and bring us with him into the end.

Jessica: Peter, what about you? What would you preach on?

Peter: I would like to preach on the Second Corinthians five passage. One of the challenges with a text like this, is not to try to do *everything*. The thing that draws me to this passage is actually a textual detail. We've talked about using Greek and Hebrew before and to be careful how much you bring into a sermon because most people don't speak Greek and Hebrew. But there's a really interesting translation decision in verse 17, that set me on this path. Jessica, would you read verses 16 and 17?

Jessica: From now on, therefore we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold the new has come.

Peter: Verse 17 is a confirmation verse. It's one of these verses that people know. What I find interesting about this is, in the Greek it just says, "if anyone is in Christ, a new creation." It doesn't say *he* is a new creation. To me, this is very interesting because if anyone is in Christ, it's not just that *he*'s new. *Everything* is new.

David: Everything is new. I like that.

Peter: So, when I think about preaching . . . we've talked about this before as kind of "world making."

David: You have a great article on that in the *Concordia Journal*. It's called "The Preacher as World Maker," right? [Vol. 45, no. 1 (Winter 2019)]

Peter: Yeah, it is. And the idea is that when you are in Christ, when God grants you faith in his son Jesus, you are not just changed, everything has changed. Your whole world. All of creation is changed in Christ.

You have to make some decisions with what you do with the rest of the text. You can't do everything. There are some options you have, but the way I'd suggest you frame it is to pick up the second half of verse 17. "The old has passed away, the new has come." To me, that invites a sermon that is kind of a compare and contrast, where we can contrast something old with something new. The big picture is the new creation. Well, what aspect of the creation are you going to focus on in this sermon? Well, I think you got a couple of different options. I think I'd rather go with one big "old and new" just to keep the sermon focused. But you've got several options and so I just want to point out a couple of the options and then I'll point out the one that I would go with. You could pick up on verse 16. "Therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh." Alright? The old way is to regard others according to the flesh, which is to say to look at outward appearances. So, the old world, the old creation is when we look at people and whatever we can see, that's what we judge. The new is that we regard others according to God's perspective.

You could also go back to verse seven where Paul says, "we walk by faith, not by sight." The old way of doing things is to operate by what we can see instead of living by faith. That one would be a little bit broader than the one regarding others. The regarding others is really how do we think of other people? This is just in general walking by faith, not by sight. Another way you could do this looks at verses14 and 15. Would you read those Jessica?

Jessica: For the love of Christ controls us because we have concluded this: That one has died for all, therefore all have died and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake, died and was raised.

Peter: So, the old way in verse 15 would be living for themselves. We live for ourselves. The new way would be that the love of Christ controls us, leads us to live for others. Again, I think I would not try to do all these in one

sermon. It would take us in too many different directions. But the one I think that I would maybe lean into is the phrase "we are always of good courage." He says that in verse six, and then he repeats it again in verse eight. Yes, we are of good courage. I would contrast maybe what's the opposite of courage. What would you say?

Jessica: Fear.

Peter: Fear. That's what my first thought was.

David: Timidity.

Peter: Timidity, maybe hesitancy. I think fear is so dominant in our culture. I think we live in a lot of fear.

David: Well, the interesting thing is with courage. Courage is one of those virtues that is a mean. It's a middle between fear and foolishness. If you're foolish, you rush in without any forethought and you just do what you're doing because you're foolhardy. If you're fearful, you run away. But courage is that ability to act without letting fear take over and without letting foolishness take over. And I think when we think about situations in the church and the church's interaction with the world, we've got those who are foolish and just rushing in and doing all sorts of things, and we've got those who are fearful and just pulling away. Courage is that middle space where you're thoughtful and you're faithful and trusting that God will be present.

Peter: Yeah, I mean you could say instead of "good courage," you could say "confidence." There's overconfidence and sometimes there's kind of a lack of confidence, right? But Paul is saying here, the ones who are in Christ, the ones for whom there is a new creation, live confidently in good courage. And so, there's no place, there's no need for fear in the Christian life. The old has passed away, the new has come. The new life that we have in Christ now removes fear. You can think about what Paul says to Timothy that we've not been given a spirit of timidity, but of love and power and self-control.

If I were in the parish right now, every meeting I had, every visit in the hospital or in a nursing home . . . I would go to my youth group. I would ask the people in my congregation to name what causes them to be afraid or diminishes their confidence or takes away their courage. And I would spend a week listening to my hearers talk about what scares them. That would shape the direction I'd go.

David: I like the way you rephrase the question where you said, not just what makes you afraid or what are you afraid of, but what takes away your confidence? What causes you to lack confidence? I think that is helpful because it'll cause me to name very particular experiences that are draining me, that you can address. Yeah, I liked that way of phrasing your question.

Peter: So earlier this year, you guys know I was over in Africa teaching some MA students, and it was interesting to talk to them about fears that Christians have in East Africa. And there are a lot of fears that are similar probably. But one fear that was different, very different than at least what I'm afraid of . . . they talked about a fear of witch doctors and of evil spirits. We were talking about the real-life fear of witch doctors. And I asked, well, how do you handle that as pastors and as Christians here? And they said "We tell people, don't worry. Jesus is stronger than the witch doctors. Have confidence, be of good courage. The one who is for you, the one in whom you are a new creation, he's stronger."

David: If anyone is in Christ, a new creation.

Jessica: That's interesting because they could have said "Witch doctors aren't such a big deal, the spirits aren't as strong as you think they are. The things you're afraid of are small." But they said "The thing that saves you is bigger. It still acknowledges the awful things.

Peter: I mean you might even do this in the sermon, Paul reflecting on himself; he is a new creation. There's a new creation for him. Since he's been in Christ, the whole world is different. He's no longer afraid of persecution. He's no longer afraid of anything that would sap or drain his courage. And I think the goal of the sermon would be to encourage, instill courage in your hearers. That's not thoughtless, foolish, it's not faithless, but it's standing firm.

Jessica: What if those of us sitting in the pew hear that, and we're worried that if we are afraid it means we don't have faith?

Peter: I think it would be helpful maybe, just to name that. This is where I think it'd be helpful to spend some time in conversation with the members of your congregation this week. If you get the sense that people are afraid that they don't believe hard enough or that somehow they haven't conjured up enough faith. What's neat about this phrase "in Christ," and this is where

the gospel needs to be proclaimed, to be "in Christ" is to be declared . . . God promises through his word, through baptism that he brings us "into Christ." We're united with Christ. If that's a fear that members of your congregations have, then I'd definitely address that head on and point them away from their need to conjure up faith and point them to the promise of Christ.

David: Yeah, I mean they're being "in Christ" has nothing to do with what they're doing. It's what God has done for them. You are in Christ. I'm telling you that. I'm not inviting you to be in Christ, to *try* to be in Christ, by having no fear. No. You're in Christ. God did that.

Peter: I think it's a real-life question what you said Jessica, because sometimes the way we talk about faith almost as something we have to come up with. That's not what Paul's talking about here. This is a promise that you are in Christ. The sermon would proclaim that promise. You are in Christ, and you are a part of this whole new world, this new creation.

Jessica: I always like it when you describe your sermons as something that doesn't tell me to have more courage but conjures up courage. That always encourages me.

David: Yeah. There's that idea that in preaching that to foster faith, you give the goods that people trust in. So rather than telling you to have faith, I tell you the things that God has done for you, and you believe in them.

Peter: It's like from Walther's *Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel*. He talks about a missionary going to Native Americans. He never mentions the word "faith" but preaches the gospel so clearly and so purely that even if the guy were to be killed before he could even say "faith," his speaking of the promise would create a whole congregation of people who live by faith. You don't have to talk about faith to have faith.

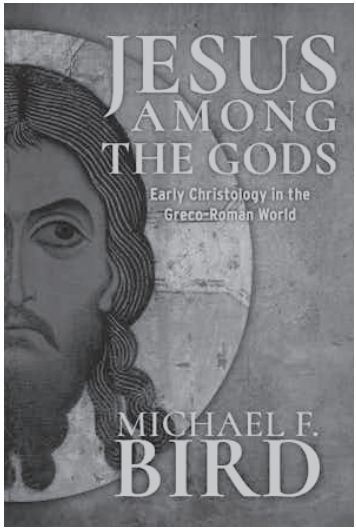
David: Right, yeah.

Jessica: Thanks guys. That's all for today. We have free resources to guide your next step in planning at concordiatheology.org. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau. Join us next week here at *Lectionary Kick-start* when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

Reviews

JESUS AMONG THE GODS: Early Christology in the Greco-Roman World. *By Michael F. Bird. Baylor University Press, 2022. Hardcover. 480 pages. $59.99.*

The Christology of ecumenical councils like Nicaea and Chalcedon has frequently been criticized by both ancient and modern critics since several key terms and categories (e.g., *homoousios*) are not found in the scriptures. Thus, one of the preoccupations of the study of Christology in the New Testament and early Christianity has been an examination of whether, how, and when Christians in the first century viewed Jesus as fully God, equal to the Father. In his most recent book, Michael Bird offers a significant contribution to these conversations. Bird is undeniably well read in both the primary sources and in the secondary literature. Thus, Bird, in addition to the contributions of his own argument, offers a helpful and up-to-date overview of several major issues and charts a promising path forward for future work in this area.



Bird's work is divided into two parts. The first part focuses on divine ontology in the ancient world. While many have argued that ontology was a foreign concept to ancient Mediterranean discussions of divinity, Bird argues that ontology was often a significant part of how ancient people talked about divine beings. The second part focuses on the comparison between Jesus and "intermediary figures" such as angels, divine hypostases, exalted patriarchs, and so on.

In the first chapter Bird argues that in the first several centuries both orthodox and heretical Christian groups agreed that Jesus was in some sense divine. They disagreed on what this meant: "All these views affirm Jesus' divinity, but they differ over how he acquired it, how it manifests in Jesus' life and the economy of redemption, and how it relates to the divinity of God the Father" (11–12). Bird goes on to discuss how there were multiple ways in the ancient world to affirm that something or someone was divine. The Greco-Roman world in particular featured a varied hierarchy of divine beings. The inclusion of human figures like kings and emperors in the divine hierarchy shows that divinity was not just an immutable characteristic but an honor that could be attained. While Jews made a sharp distinction between the

one God of Israel and other spiritual beings, it is a long-standing debate as to what degree "monotheism" is an apt description of Judaism in the Second Temple period. Bird thinks that mainstream Second Temple Judaism can indeed be described as monotheistic in a qualified sense. However, this does not mean that there was only one way in the Jewish conceptual universe for Jesus to be divine. For example, Jesus could theoretically be divine in a similar way that Moses is talked about as being divine in Exodus 7:1, Philo, and *Ezekiel the Tragedian*. This is why, according to Bird, many scholars have been "allergic" to divine ontology in New Testament Christology. Instead, many insist that Jesus is not portrayed as sharing the being of God but only sharing God's functions, that is, what God *does*.

Thus, in chapter 2 Bird shows how discussions of divinity in the ancient world used ontology to make distinctions among various "divine" figures. In particular, Bird argues that there were two basic classes of divinity: euergetic divinity and absolute divinity. In other words, "a divinity by nature and a divinity by merit. It is the failure to distinguish these two classes of divinity that for my mind creates some of the confusion about divinity in relation to Greco-Roman mythology, Jewish monotheism, intermediary figures, and the Christology of the early church" (43). This can be seen, for example, in the contrast between the Olympian gods which were gods by nature and deified emperors or heroes who were granted divinity as an honor. The deification of Roman emperors was sometimes criticized precisely because the emperors did not possess divinity by nature. Thus, while claiming that someone or something was divine was not always to make an ontological claim, "ontological commitments were part of the theological repertoire when discussing divine beings and their natures" (82). Bird goes on to argue that several authors in the New Testament, especially John and Paul, discuss Jesus as divine by nature and not by merit.

In the second part Bird focuses on Jesus and intermediary figures. Chapter 3 offers a brief survey of the various positions major scholars have taken on the relevance of intermediary figures for making sense of divine claims about Jesus. Chapter 4 is far and away the longest chapter of the book. In fact, it comprises the majority of the book, running for 266 pages out of 411. In this chapter Bird offers an extensive discussion of various kinds of intermediary figures. Bird discusses instances of these figures in both Greco-Roman and Jewish texts and then discusses how Christian texts (including canonical, orthodox, and heretical texts) talk about Jesus in similar terms. The particular categories of intermediary figures include (1) demiurge, logos, and wisdom; (2) angels; (3) exalted patriarchs; and (4) ancient ruler cults. In the final chapter Bird unpacks the results of this tour through ancient Mediterranean intermediary figures, emphasizing especially how while Jesus

could indeed be portrayed as similar to any of these kinds of figures, there was frequently an awareness that Jesus was substantially different from all of them (383). Bird continues with a nuanced discussion of how to responsibly make use of parallels with both Jewish and Hellenistic material without descending into rank "parallelomania." While Bird argues that Jewish context is indeed primary, he maintains that all Judaism was Hellenized to one degree or another, and that Hellenistic language and categories had some direct influence on Christian presentations of Jesus. Bird closes with a discussion of what it means to claim that Jesus is "unique" among divine figures in the ancient Mediterranean world. While avoiding a simplistic apologetic claim for absolute uniqueness, Bird maintains that Jesus is still unique in several fundamental ways.

Bird's study has several important strengths. I found his discussion of divine ontology to be particularly helpful and interesting. While much biblical scholarship has long insisted that ontology is foreign to the New Testament, Bird shows that this assumption is unnecessary and may obscure the claims that New Testament authors make. Bird also offers an extremely extensive engagement with a wide variety of primary texts. Where relevant Bird utilizes the scriptures, classical writings, the Apocrypha, the Pseudepigrapha, inscriptions, the Dead Sea Scrolls, patristic writings, and heretical writings. He offers the reader a broad view of the relevant phenomena in the texts available to us and engages well with major criticisms of the so-called "early high Christology club" (e.g., Hengel, Bauckham, Hurtado).

The main weakness in this book is that the two parts of the book do not fit together nearly as well as I would have hoped. At times it seems like two separate books that have been bound together. I would have appreciated if Bird had more clearly shown how the discussion of divine ontology and the discussion of intermediary figures fit together. Additionally, I believe that most readers will find chapter 4, what Bird himself calls a "mega-chapter" (5), excessively long and tedious. While I appreciate Bird's thoroughness, it was not always clear to me why this level of detail was necessary for the comparative points that Bird wants to make. Overall, I found the first part of the book much more interesting and consequential for present discussions, and the second part did not develop the ideas introduced in the first part as well as I had hoped. However, readers interested in an overview of the relevant material and current debates in this area of scholarship would do well to read Bird's contribution.

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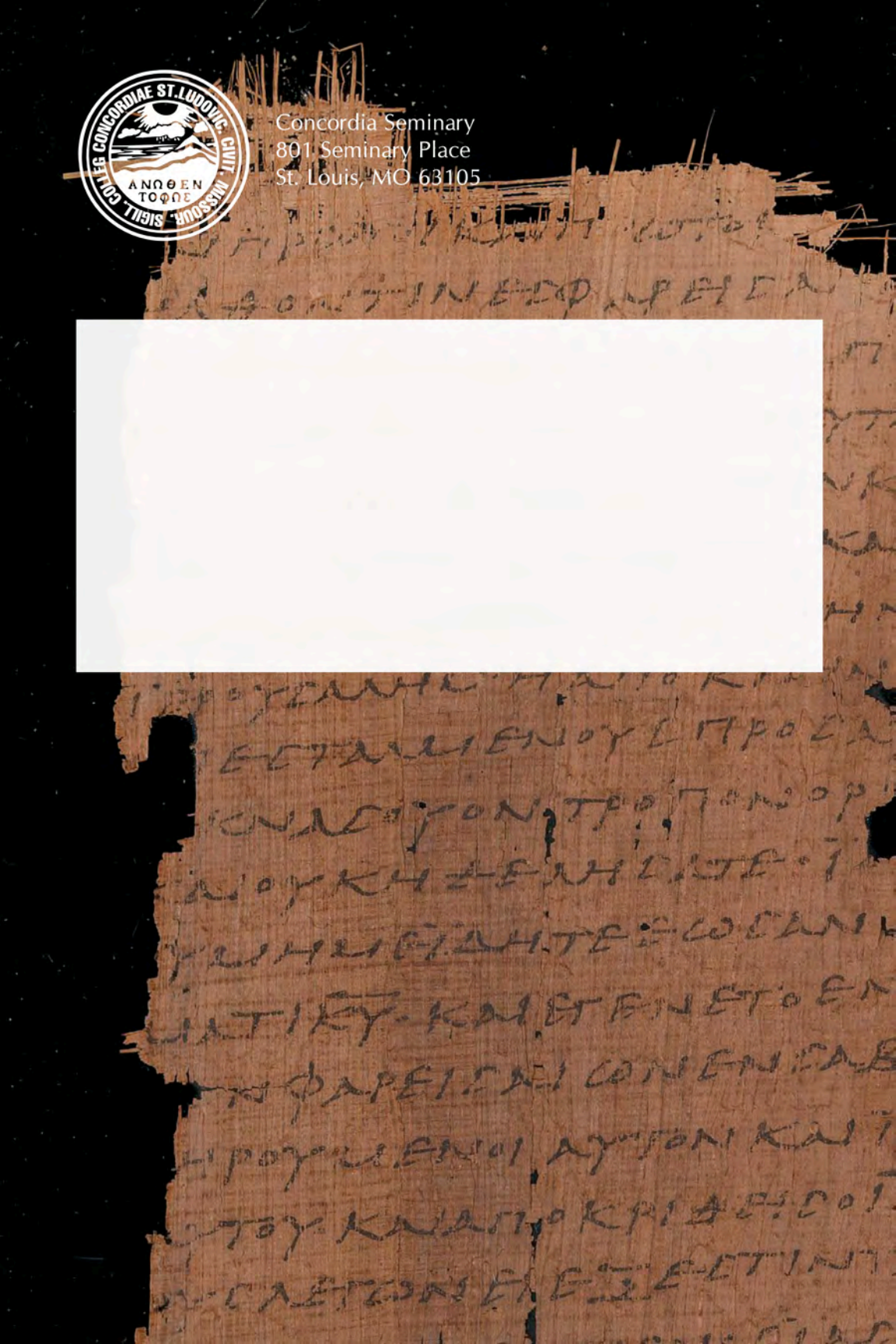

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