

DOES MARK 16:9–20 BELONG IN THE BIBLE?

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is comprised of 66 books, 1189 chapters, and over 31,000 verses. In this chapter we are interested in twelve of these verses, particularly the last twelve verses of the Gospel account of Mark (16:9–20). There are two major ideas about these verses: (1) Mark wrote these verses and they constituted a part of his original Gospel record, (2) Mark did not write these verses. Of course, the second view raises questions as well: (1) Why do some believe that Mark did not write these verses, and (2) if Mark did not write these verses, where did they come from, and how did they find their way into the Bible?

Before we examine the answers to these questions, we must pause to emphasize the crucial nature of this discussion. The issue before us is no small matter. In 1920, Caspar Rene Gregory boldly declared: “Mark 16:9–20 is neither part nor parcel of that Gospel.”¹ More recently, The United Bible Society Handbook (UBS Handbook hereafter) affirms that Mark 16:9–20 is “a later addition to the (incomplete) Gospel of Mark” and that it

negatively, contributes nothing to the Church’s knowledge of her Lord, and, positively, represents him as speaking in a manner completely

foreign to his character, as revealed in the canonical Gospels.... It would be highly precarious, at the least, for the Church to base her understanding of the events of the post-resurrection period of her Lord's ministry upon such a document as the Longer Ending.²

Another view suggests that it is permissible to accept Mark 16:9–20 as long as one does not build any theological position upon these verses alone.³ Morton H. Smith drew an even narrower conclusion: "We would observe that since the ending of Mark 16 is in question, its use in seeking to establish a particular doctrine is questionable."⁴ Based upon this reasoning, one could never place very much weight (if any) upon passages like Mark 16:16 in an effort to prove the essentiality of baptism. Guy N. Woods notes that

Denominational theologians, unable to avoid the obvious conclusion that is drawn from Mark 16:15–16 regarding the design of baptism in God's plan to save, sought refuge in unbelief, alleging that Mark 16:9–20 is spurious, and thus is not a part of Mark's original inspired production.⁵

In a 1994 article in *Restoration Quarterly*, Stanley N. Helton quotes the above statement from Woods and writes, "I am unaware of any scholar past or present who reasons thus."⁶ Perhaps Helton, who criticized Woods for his "lack of critical acumen,"⁷ is actually the one guilty of the charge he makes. If Helton doubts that theologians would seize upon the textual dispute surrounding Mark 16:9–20 in an effort to dismiss the force of Mark 16:16, he need only read the following quotation from the *Moody Handbook of Theology*:

A second passage sometimes cited to suggest that baptism is necessary for salvation is Mark 16:16. The phrase "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved" is not the same as saying baptism is necessary to salvation; this is seen in the last half of the verse, which omits the reference to baptism. Condemnation comes from refusal to believe, not from a failure to be baptized. Additionally, **it is tenuous to argue the point from Mark 16:16 because some of the oldest New Testament manuscripts do not contain Mark 16:9–20** (emph. BJC).⁸

Certainly, we still could prove the essentiality of baptism even if Mark 16:16 were not in the Bible. This has prompted some to argue that since the content of Mark 16:9–20 is corroborated in other New Testament texts, it really does not matter if we concede its spuriousness. However, to argue in this fashion is to miss the real point of this discussion. Since "all scripture is

inspired of God” (2 Tim. 3:16),⁹ and since God condemns adding to or subtracting from His Word (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:6; Rev. 22:18–19), we must discover the truth about Mark 16:9–20. If these verses are inspired and genuine, it is wrong to delete them from the pages of Holy Scripture. On the other hand, if these verses were added by an uninspired hand, then they have no right to appear in the Sacred Writings. Some would propose a third option—that Mark did not write these verses but that some inspired hand concluded Mark’s Gospel for him. Hence, according to this position, Mark 16:9–20 is inspired (from God), but not genuine (from Mark’s own hand). Our task is to discover which of these views is best supported by the evidence.

Two strands of evidence are pertinent to our investigation: (1) The external evidence—the textual evidence of the manuscripts, versions, Lectionaries, and patristic quotations (citations from the early “church fathers”), and (2) The internal evidence—the vocabulary, style, and content of Mark 16:9–20, as compared to the rest of Mark’s book. The UBS Handbook on Mark claims that

the external evidence of the manuscripts themselves, and the internal evidence of the Longer Ending, as respects vocabulary, style and content, provide cumulative and finally conclusive evidence to the fact that what stands as vv. 9–20 of chapter 16 is not by the author of the Gospel of Mark.¹⁰

Is the evidence as “finally conclusive” as UBS claims? Let us see.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE CONCERNING MARK 16:9–20

Evidence from the Greek Manuscripts

Schaff confesses that “the genuineness of this closing section is hotly contested, and presents one of the most difficult problems of textual criticism.”¹¹ In order to evaluate properly the textual evidence from the manuscripts, we must possess some working knowledge of how we got the Bible. We do not have any of the original documents (i.e., “autographs”) which holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20–21). Nevertheless, we do have an abundance of copies which were made of other copies of the original manuscripts. These copies are also known as “manuscripts” (MSS), and they vary in age, content, completeness, and quality. Norman Geisler and William E. Nix point out that we have approximately five thousand

manuscripts of the New Testament.¹² This is a remarkable number considering the fact that “Christianity” was, for a time, declared illegal, and copies of God’s Word were enthusiastically captured and burned.

Some of the surviving manuscripts were originally written on rolls (i.e., “scrolls”—long sheets of material attached to spindles at either end, and read by rolling the material from one spindle to the other). Usually they were made of papyrus. These come to us from the second–fourth centuries. Eventually the scrolls gave place to the “codex,” a manuscript in book form rather than in the form of a scroll. There are two major styles of Greek manuscripts:

1. **Uncial manuscripts** were parchments in book form from the fourth–tenth centuries. These MSS were written in all capital letters with each letter formed separately. There are about 300 such uncials known to exist.¹³ They are classified by letters of the alphabet.
2. **Minuscule manuscripts** (also known as “cursives”) are dated generally from the ninth century forward. As one might guess, these were written with all lower case letters. They constitute the largest group of manuscripts we possess; nearly 2700 of these MSS have been discovered.¹⁴ They are classified by numerals rather than letters.

Regarding the uncial manuscripts, six are particularly well known:

1. Codex Sinaiticus A (Aleph) is believed to have been written in the fourth century. The manuscript was discovered by Konstantin von Tischendorf on February 4, 1859. Tischendorf said that he found the manuscript in a wastebasket in the Monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai. After rescuing the manuscript, he took it to Russia. In 1933 the British government purchased the manuscript from Russia for £100,000. Anyone visiting the British Library in London can view this famous MS on display.¹⁵
2. Codex Vaticanus (also known as Codex B) is located in the Vatican Library, where it has been since at least 1481. It also has been assigned a fourth century date of composi-

tion. In contrast to Codex Sinaiticus (described as one of the most complete manuscripts of the NT), Codex Vaticanus is missing “part of Hebrews, the Pastoral Epistles, and Revelation.”¹⁶ In spite of this huge gap, J. Harold Greenlee still views it as “probably the best single MS of the NT.”¹⁷

3. Codex Alexandrinus (Codex A) was written in the fifth century and can be found right beside Codex Sinaiticus in the British Library. It has been in England since 1627. All of the New Testament is contained therein, except for the majority of Matthew and segments of John and 2 Corinthians.¹⁸
4. Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (Codex C) was so named because, in addition to containing fragments of the New Testament, it also contains the writings of a man known as “St. Ephraem.” The document is old, dating back to the fifth century, and many of its leaves are missing. It is housed in the National Library of Paris.¹⁹
5. Codex D is also known as Codex Bezae. This sixth century manuscript is unique in that it combines the Greek and Latin on facing pages. It contains only the Gospel accounts and the book of Acts. It was brought to England from a French monastery in the year 1581. Presently, it is in the Cambridge University Library.²⁰
6. Codex W (Codex Washingtonensis or Freerianus) contains Matthew, John, Luke and Mark, in that order. Mr. C. L. Freer bought it in Egypt in 1906, and it is now on display in the Freer Art Gallery, which is a part of the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. Greenlee confesses that “it dates possibly from the fifth century.”²¹ Geisler and Nix grant that it might even date back to the fourth century.²² As we will see later in this chapter, this manuscript plays a peculiar role in the discussion of the ending of the book of Mark.

The obvious question arises: Do the aforementioned manuscripts contain the last twelve verses of Mark? The answer is an overwhelming “Yes” and an occasional “No.” It all depends upon which manuscript is under consideration. John Christopher Thomas writes: “The longer ending (Mark 16:9–20) is included in the following MSS: A C D E H K M S U X Y γ δ υ π χ φ ϕ 047

055 0211 f13 28 33 274 (text) 565 700 892 1009 1010 1071 1079 1195 1230 1242 1253 1344 1365 1546 1646 2148 2174, etc."²³ Mark 16:9–20 is found in “the immense majority of the manuscripts,” so much so that to list them all would occupy several lines worth of text.²⁴

Thomas proceeds to list the Greek manuscripts which end at Mark 16:8: “Aleph B 304 (2386 and 1420 have a page missing at this point).”²⁵ What a contrast exists between the space it takes to list the Greek manuscripts which omit the last twelve verses of Mark and those that include them! In view of this, the reader may be wondering how anyone could object to the genuineness of Mark 16:9–20, especially since it is found in the majority of MSS. In an article that appeared in the *Westminster Theological Journal*, James C. De Young posits that “If we go to the ancient Scripture library, then it is the quality of the manuscript that weighs heavily in determining the proper reading, not the quantity of manuscripts.”²⁶ James Luther Mays points us in the same direction. Concerning the Gospel of Mark, Mays wrote:

The major textual problem concerns the so-called “longer ending” (Mark 16:9–20, also called the “traditional” and the “canonical” ending) that appears in a great number of ancient manuscripts and in the Greek text used for the KJV. However, **earlier and more important manuscripts** such as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus end at 16:8 (emph. BJC).²⁷

Mays admits that Mark 16:9–20 appears in “a great number of ancient texts,” but quickly adds that “earlier and more important manuscripts such as Vaticanus and Sinaiticus end at 16:8.” Concerning Mark 16:9–20, A.T. Robertson admits: “The great mass of the documents have the long ending seen in the English versions.”²⁸ However, he swiftly proceeds to disqualify these twelve verses from the Bible on the grounds that they are not located in “Aleph and B, the two oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.” The Wycliffe Bible Commentary admits: “By far the greater number of manuscripts have the longer conclusion,” but dismisses them with the comment that “many of them are of a late date and an inferior quality.”²⁹ The UBS Handbook on Mark admits:

The Longer Ending, conventionally printed as vv. 9–20 of chapter 16, is found in most manuscripts and versions. It is omitted by the two most ancient Greek Uncial manuscripts of the New Testament, Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, both of the fourth century.³⁰

Such thinking has definitely infiltrated and affected the minds of translators of the English Bible. The following quotations are taken from explanatory notes contained in various versions:

American Standard Version: "The two Oldest Greek manuscripts and some other authorities omit verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the gospel."³¹

New King James Version: "Vv. 9–20 are bracketed in NU as not in the original text. They are lacking in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, although nearly all other mss. of Mark contain them."³²

New American Standard Version: "Some of the oldest mss. do not contain vv.9–20."³³

New American Standard Version 95 Update: "Later mss. add vv. 9–20."³⁴

Revised Standard Version: The first edition of the RSV concluded the chapter at verse 8, but added verses 9–20 in a footnote.

Revised Standard Version, Second Edition: The Preface to the Second Edition of the RSV contains the following explanation: "The Second Edition of the translation of the New Testament (1971) profits from textual and linguistic studies published since the Revised Standard Version New Testament was first issued in 1946. Many proposals for modification were submitted to the Committee by individuals and by two denominational committees. All of these were given careful attention by the Committee.

Two passages, the longer ending of Mark (16:9–20) and the account of the woman caught in adultery (Jn 7:53–8:11), are restored to the text, separated from it by a blank space and accompanied by informative notes describing the various arrangements of the text in the ancient authorities."³⁵

New Revised Standard Version: "Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. One authority concludes the book with the shorter ending; others include the shorter ending and then continue with verses 9–20. In most authorities verses 9–20 follow immediately after verse 8, though in some of these authorities the passage is marked as being doubtful."³⁶

New International Version: "[The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9–20.]"³⁷

English Standard Version: "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9–20."³⁸

Contemporary English Version has the heading, "ONE OLD ENDING TO MARK'S GOSPEL." The footnote reads, "Verses 9–20 are not in some manuscripts."³⁹

New Living Translation: "The most reliable early manuscripts conclude the Gospel of Mark at verse 8. Other manuscripts include various endings to the Gospel. Two of the more noteworthy endings are printed here."⁴⁰

"The Message" has this misleading note. "Note: Mark 16:9–20 [the portion in brackets] is contained only in later manuscripts."⁴¹

The foregoing quotations make it abundantly clear that in the minds of the vast majority of textual critics and translators, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus reign supreme. Schaff regards them as "the two oldest and most valuable uncial manuscripts."⁴² UBS calls them "the most reliable manuscripts."⁴³ In his commentary on the Gospel accounts, W.B. Godbey came to Mark 16:8, and wrote:

I must here observe, in reference to Mark's Gospel, that this eighth verse winds it up, the following twelve verses having been added by an unknown hand after Mark had laid down his pen. This fact of these last twelve verses not appearing in the old and authoritative manuscripts, does not necessarily invalidate their claims to inspiration, the author might have been inspired for ought we know, though we can have no idea as to his name.... From the simple fact that in all of this writing I have used the Greek Testament by Tischendorf, on the basis of the Sinaitic manuscript...and as it closes Mark's Gospel with this eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter, I shall neither quote nor expound the ensuing twelve verses; for, like John 8:1–11, and not a few other isolated passages, they are not in my book.⁴⁴

In Godbey's mind the absence of Mark 16:9–20 from the Sinaitic manuscript was proof enough for him that the passage did not deserve even to be quoted, much less explained.

Because Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus carry the distinction of being the most **ancient** manuscripts available, it is assumed that they are the most **accurate**. The reasoning is that the closer a MS is to the time of the original composition of the Scriptures, the less chance there is for it to have been corrupted. Hence, because the minuscule MSS are not as close to the apostolic age, their importance is often denigrated by textual critics. Greenlee notes: "Being later than the uncials, most of the minuscules may be assumed to have an inferior text."⁴⁵ Geisler and Nix agree that "most minuscule manuscripts do not possess the high quality of the earlier uncials."⁴⁶ They further assert that the KJV translators had access to only one of the most ancient codices (Codex D) and that "it was used only slightly in the preparation of the Authorized Version."⁴⁷ Thus, in the view

of Geisler and Nix, "this fact alone indicated the need of a revised version based on better manuscripts long before it was actually accomplished."⁴⁸

While there is an element of truth in the "antiquity argument," antiquity is by no means a 100% foolproof guarantee of the accuracy of a document. Interestingly, even after arguing the inferiority of the minuscule MSS, Greenlee conceded: "This, however, is not always true. A twelfth century minuscule, for example, might be only half as many copies removed from the autograph as an eighth century uncial and might also have an ancestry of more accurate copying."⁴⁹ Geisler and Nix also admit that "some miniscules are late copies of good and early texts."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in determining controversies of textual criticism, the antiquity of Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus is considered by many to be the "trump card" in determining whether Mark 16:9–20 belongs in the Bible.

Such an argument leaves the erroneous impression that Mark 16:9–20 is lacking the support of any ancient witnesses. Yet, McClintock and Strong wrote that the passage "is found in all codices of weight, including A, C, D."⁵¹ This means that of the five oldest Greek manuscripts which are available, (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus, Ephraemi Rescriptus, and the Freer Gospels), the latter three include the verses. Therefore, of the five oldest manuscripts, it is three to two in favor of Mark 16:9–20. Bickersteth affirms: "The assumed greater antiquity of the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts does not diminish the undeniable authority of A, C, and D."⁵² He also reminds us: "There is a strong resemblance between the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts; so that practically the evidential value of these manuscripts amounts to little more than one authority."⁵³ Concerning these same MSS and their relationship to Mark 16:9–20, F. C. Cook writes:

When those manuscripts are supported by other old MSS, especially, A, C and D, by ancient versions, and by early Christian writers, their testimony is now generally accepted as conclusive. This, however, as will presently be shewn, is not the case here; their evidence, weighty as it may be, stands on its own merits; and though both omit the paragraph, their testimony is not identical.⁵⁴

After listing the reasons why some oppose the last twelve verses of Mark, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown respond:

But these reasons seem to us totally insufficient to counter-balance the evidence in favour of the verses in question. First, they are found in all the Uncial or earlier Greek manuscripts...including A, or the Alexandrian manuscript, which is admitted to be not more than fifty years later than the two oldest, and of scarcely less, if indeed of any less, authority.⁵⁵

Even John Christopher Thomas, who opposes the inclusion of these verses, admits: "The external evidence for the longer reading is old and has good family representation.... Such weight is quite impressive and should—by mere bulk, variety and date—be cause for further consideration."⁵⁶

The "Rest of the Story" About Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus

While it is true that Codex Vaticanus stops at Mark 16:8, it is also true that this Codex acknowledges that something is missing because, after verse 8, an entire column is left blank.

The Vatican omits it, but with a space left blank between the eighth verse of Mark 16., and the beginning of St. Luke, just sufficient for its insertion; as though the writer of the manuscript, hesitating whether to omit or to insert the verses, thought it safest to leave a space for them.⁵⁷

Concerning Codex Vaticanus (B), Schaff writes: "It is true, after ending the Gospel with Mark 16:8 and the subscription *KATA MARKON*, leaves the remaining third column blank, which is sufficient space for the twelve verses."⁵⁸ However, Schaff downplays the importance of this fact:

Much account is made of this fact by Drs. Burgon and Scrivener; but in the same MS. I find, on examination of the facsimile edition, blank spaces from a few lines up to two-thirds and three-fourths of a column, at the end of Matthew, John, Acts, 1 Pet. (fol. 200), 1 John (fol. 208), Jude (fol. 210), Rom. (fol. 227), Eph. (fol. 262), Col. (fol. 272). In the Old Testament of B, as Dr. Abbot has first noted (in 1872), there are two blank columns at the end of Nehemiah, and a blank column and a half at the end of Tobit. In any case the omission indicates an objection of the copyist of B to the section, or its absence in the earlier manuscript he used.⁵⁹

Notwithstanding Schaff's dismissal of the significance of the blank column, McClintock and Strong refer to this blank column as "a phenomenon nowhere else found in the N.T. portion of that codex."⁶⁰ The Bible Knowledge Commentary suggests that the scribal decision to leave a blank space after verse 8 is tantamount to the admission that he knew of the existence of a longer

ending, but did not have it in the particular manuscript from which he was making his copy.⁶¹ Therefore, the blank space in the Vaticanus, rather than being evidence against the long ending, provides testimony that the long ending was known at this time. Even the UBS Handbook admits that this suggests “that the copyist of B knew of an ending but did not have it in the manuscript he was copying.”⁶² (At the close of this chapter we will investigate the possible reasons for this absence.)

Blank space aside for the moment, how far should we go with the argument that the age of a MSS is the determining factor as to whether or not a text belongs in the Scriptures? After all, Mark 16:9–20 is by no means the only section of Scripture missing from Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. John 21:25 does not appear in either of these MSS. Does the NIV therefore separate this passage from the rest of John and provide an ominous explanatory note about its absence from the two most ancient manuscripts? No! There is no note, and no indication of any problem. Why? Because although John 21:25 is not found in Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, **it is found in the overwhelming number of other manuscripts available to us**, and therefore has more than adequate attestation as a part of the New Testament text. The same thing is true about Mark 16:9–20.

We have already observed that Codex Vaticanus is an incomplete copy of the New Testament. Guy N. Woods notes that this manuscript of the New Testament “terminates at Hebrews 9:14, thus omitting the remaining portion of that treatise, and the books of James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude; and Revelation.”⁶³ Where is the line in the NIV to separate Hebrews 9:15–Revelation 22:21 from the rest of the New Testament text? Where is the explanatory note which reads: “One of the most ancient and reliable manuscripts does not have Hebrews 9:15–Revelation 22:21?” Woods writes: “Are we to conclude from this that these books never were part of the original text? The argument against Mark 16:9–20 is no more weighty.”⁶⁴

Woods also comments on another aspect of contending that the content of the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus should decide what belongs in our Bibles today:

Moreover, a little known fact is that included in the Sinaitic manuscript are apocryphal books with portions of Tobit, Ecclesiasticus, and other non-canonical writings. If the omission of Mark 16:9–20 from

this document proves the passage to be spurious, does the inclusion of these apocryphal portions establish their reliability?⁶⁵

Thus, it is evidenced that the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts cannot be relied upon alone to settle the question of whether or not Mark 16:9–20 belongs in the Bible.

Evidence from the Early Versions

In addition to the Greek MSS, there are many other ancient writings, called “versions.” The versions are translations of the Scriptures from Greek into other languages. **It is exceedingly important to know that many of these versions are quite old, even older than many Greek manuscripts.** Such recognition prompted brother Woods to write:

It should be observed that when it is said, “two of the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament omit it,” this is far from being the same as saying the oldest copies of the New Testament are without it. These manuscripts are documents containing the text of the New Testament in Greek. The versions are translations into the languages then in current use.⁶⁶

What is the testimony of these versions regarding Mark 16:9–20? Bickersteth notes:

The Peshito Syriac, which dates from the second century, bears witness to its genuineness; so does the Philoxenian; while the Curetorean Syriac, also very ancient, far earlier than the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts bears a very singular testimony. In the only extant copy of that version, the Gospel of St. Mark is wanting, with the exception of one fragment only, and that fragment contains the last four of the disputed verses. The Coptic versions also recognize the passage.⁶⁷

Woods hammers home the point even more forcefully:

The Old Syriac translation appeared and was in use in the shadow of the apostolic age—within the lifetime of many early Christians who could and did know John the apostle personally. Mark 16:9–20 is in this translation. It also appears in the Ethiopic, Egyptian, Old Italic, Sahidic, and Coptic translations appearing soon after the end of the first century, all much older than the two Greek manuscripts omitting it, evidencing the fact that the manuscript or manuscripts from which they were made all contained the segment. **Two hundred years before the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts were copied, it was in the Scriptures then being used** (emph. BJC).⁶⁸

Furthermore, “the earlier version of the Vulgate, called the Old Italic, has it. The Gothic Version of Ulphilas (fourth century) has the passage from ver. 8 to ver. 12.”⁶⁹

Those who oppose the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20 are anxious for us to know that some versions do not contain the text. What they are not anxious for us to know is just how few these witnesses are in number. The fact still remains that there is overwhelming evidence in the ancient versions for the inclusion of Mark 16:9–20, but very sparse testimony against it. The number of versions omitting Mark 16:9–20 is negligible.⁷⁰ Virtually every single one of the ancient versions contains Mark 16:9–20. Moreover, some of these versions are much more ancient witnesses than Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus.

As we have already observed, the argument is that the antiquity of these MSS gives them more weight than the other manuscripts which followed. Accordingly, if this argument has any merit at all for **excluding** Mark 16:9–20, then it is only fair and consistent to allow the greater antiquity of the versions to carry the same (or even more) weight for **including** these twelve verses. To put it another way, why is antiquity an excellent argument in the minds of some when applied to Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, but totally meaningless when applied to the versions?

If one argues that there is more weight in a Greek manuscript than in a version of the New Testament in another language, it must be remembered that Greek manuscripts were the ultimate source of the early versions. Therefore, any of the early versions which include Mark 16:9–20 stand as witnesses to the fact that **Mark 16:9–20 was present in the Greek manuscripts from which those early versions were translated.** Hence, it must follow that there were Greek manuscripts, much earlier than Sinaiticus and Vaticanus which contained Mark 16:9–20. To be consistent with the antiquity argument, one would have to grant more weight to the MSS from which the early versions were translated than to manuscripts of the fourth century.

Those who oppose the genuineness of Mark 16:9–20 are also anxious for us to know that one of the versions, Old Latin manuscript k, contains what has come to be known as the shorter ending of Mark. Immediately after 16:8, this version reads as follows: “And all that had been commanded them they told briefly to those around Peter. And afterward Jesus himself sent out through them, from east to west, the sacred and imperish-

able proclamation of eternal salvation."⁷¹ In certain MSS this shorter ending is sandwiched between Mark 16:8 and 16:9–20.⁷² Joel F. Williams, who strenuously opposes the longer ending, also rejects the shorter ending: "There is little reason to argue concerning the authenticity of the so-called shorter ending in light of the lack of manuscript evidence."⁷³ There is simply no comparison between the evidence for the shorter ending and the so-called long ending (Mark 16:9–20). Evidence for the former is less than sparse; evidence for the latter is abundant and overflowing.

Evidence from Patristic Quotations

Smith's Bible Dictionary aptly notes: "Manuscripts, it must be remembered, are but one of the three sources of textual criticism. The versions and patristic quotations are scarcely less important in doubtful cases."⁷⁴ J. N. Darby wisely observes:

But none of the oldest MSS, not even several together, can be of themselves conclusive testimony as to the absolute correctness of a reading.... They need to be controlled however by other evidence, as that of the Cursive MSS, versions, and in many cases, by patristic citations.⁷⁵

Hence, one of the most important bodies of literature available to us in this investigation is the writings of the "church fathers," religious men who lived in the centuries near the close of the apostolic age. The writings of these men are saturated with citations from the Holy Scriptures. In fact, Sir David Dalrymple was once asked: "Suppose that the New Testament had been destroyed and every copy of it lost by the end of the third century; could it have been collected together again from the writings of the Fathers of the second and third centuries?"⁷⁶ After exhaustive research, Dalrymple reported his findings:

Look at those books. You remember the question about the New Testament and the Fathers? That question aroused my curiosity, and as I possessed all the existing works of the Fathers of the second and third centuries, I commenced to search, and up to this time I have found the entire New Testament, except eleven verses.⁷⁷

Many of the patristic writings are older than our oldest Greek MSS. Some would dismiss the quotations of these "church fathers" on the grounds that their citations were often loose paraphrases of the Scriptures, to which John W. Burgon responds:

On the other hand, it cannot be too plainly pointed out that when—instead of certifying ourselves of the actual words employed by an evangelist, their precise form and exact sequence—our object is only to ascertain whether a considerable passage of Scripture is genuine or not; is to be rejected or retained; was known or was not known in the earliest ages of the Church; then instead of supplying the least important evidence, Fathers become by far the most valuable witnesses of all.⁷⁸

Concerning the quotations of the “church fathers,” Kurt Aland writes: “Next to the New Testament manuscripts they constitute our most important witness to the text, and they have the additional advantage of representing the text at a known time and place.”⁷⁹

Donald Guthrie concedes, relative to the “Long Ending” of Mark that “the earliest Christian writings which show acquaintance with Mark assume their genuineness.”⁸⁰ Indeed, the testimony of the early fathers is very impressive. Burgon cites Papias as an early witness to the last twelve verses of Mark. He writes:

It is impossible to resist the inference that Papias refers to Mark 16:18 when he records a marvellous tradition concerning “Justus surnamed Barsabas,” “how that after drinking noxious poison, through the Lord’s grace he experienced no evil consequence.” ... The allusion to the place just cited is manifest. Now, Papias is a writer who lived so near the time of the Apostles that he made it his delight to collect their traditional sayings. His date (according to Clinton) is A.D. 100.⁸¹

According to Eusebius (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, I, 12), Justus (also known as Joseph) was one of the 70 (Luke 10:1). There is no Biblical evidence to corroborate this claim, and, by citing this statement from Papias, we are not necessarily suggesting that Justus actually recovered from drinking poison or that, if he did, it was due to a miracle from God. Mark 16:18 did promise such a possibility to first century believers, but there is no Biblical evidence that one named Justus ever experienced such a miracle. This statement from Papias is cited for no other reason but to show that the men of antiquity were familiar with the last twelve verses of Mark. Not everyone agrees that Papias was referring to Mark 16:18. Author Mark Heuer writes:

It is incredible that Burgon cites such a vague patristic reference as proof for the early existence of the “traditional” text. Papias (in Eusebius) quotes no words at all from the Majority Text of Mark 16:18. There is nothing whatever in the account of Papias to prove that he had

Mark 16 in mind at all. It is just as likely that Papias recalls the account of Paul's miraculous deliverance from a deadly snake bite in Acts 28:3-6 or that he alludes to no NT passage at all. Patristic evidence such as this is not evidence but merely speculation.⁸²

What is incredible is that Heuer could think that Papias would have been thinking about a passage about snakebites (Acts 28) when he was talking about drinking poison. The passage in Acts 28 says nothing about drinking poison; so how could that have been the text about which Papias was thinking? Heuer charges Burgon with mere speculation but at least the passage Burgon thinks Papias was talking about was one which actually mentions the drinking of poison. Furthermore, although Heuer cannot see how Papias could have been thinking about Mark 16:18, other Bible students are not nearly as skeptical. In an article about "Joseph Barabbas," C. M. Kerr notes that "Papias records the oral tradition that he drank a cup of poison without harm (compare Mark 16:18)."⁸³

In consideration of other patristic quotations, it is very possible that Justin Martyr referred to Mark 16:20. Even the UBS Handbook on Mark admits that the "Verbal similarity between v. 20 and a statement by Justin Martyr I.45 (c. A.D. 148 AD) makes it possible (though not conclusively so) that he knew the passage."⁸⁴ Burgon cites the Greek phrase employed by Justin Martyr and concludes that it is "nothing else but a quotation from the last verse of S. Mark's Gospel."⁸⁵ He continues, "And thus it is found that the conclusion of S. Mark's Gospel was familiarly known within fifty years of the death of the last of the Evangelists."⁸⁶

A man by the name of Tatian also weighs in as an early witness for Mark 16:9-20. About A.D. 170 he compiled a harmony of the Gospels, which is known as the *Diatessaron* (meaning "through the four").⁸⁷ Tatian's work included the last twelve verses of Mark.

Perhaps the most potent early witness for Mark 16:9-20 is Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180). He is often regarded as the most scholarly writer among the Christians in the period immediately following the apostolic age. He was a student of Polycarp, who was close to the apostle John.⁸⁸ Hence, Irenaeus was in a perfect position to know which documents and writings were regarded as authentic in the era immediately following the completion of the New

Testament. His writings contain over 1,800 quotations from the New Testament.⁸⁹ In fact, the UBS Handbook on Mark concedes that “in his work *Adv. Haer.* III.x. 6 he says, ‘Also, towards the conclusion of his Gospel Mark says...’ and quotes v. 19.”⁹⁰ What an admission this is! This statement means that Irenaeus is a witness for Mark 16:9–20 at least 200 years before Vaticanus and Sinaiticus were even written. Irenaeus provides us with compelling evidence that **in his time there was no doubt** as to the genuineness and authenticity of the passage.

Regarding the canonicity of Mark 16:9–20, McClintock and Strong assert that “the citation of v. 19 as Scripture by Irenaeus appears sufficient to establish this point.”⁹¹ The quotation from Irenaeus proves that Mark 16:9–20 was present in the copies of God’s Word used in the decades immediately after the first century. Not to belabor the point, but if the argument from antiquity has as much merit as textual critics claim, then a second century citation, crediting Mark with the authorship of Mark 16:19, certainly outweighs the omission of this text from the fourth century MSS of Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

Those who argue against the genuineness of Mark 16:9–20 also believe that the “church fathers” support their position of omitting it from the text. Helton lists the names of such men as Clement, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Tertullian, and stands amazed that there is no record of these men ever having quoted any of the last twelve verses of Mark. Frankly, the weakness of such an argument is the amazing thing. The implication of this argument is that because Clement (c. 150–c. 215) did not quote Mark 16:9–20 in his writings, it was, therefore, not yet a part of the New Testament.

In the first place, such an argument, taken to its logical extreme, would mean that any passage not quoted by Clement, or any other early writer for that matter, should be considered spurious. Clement did not quote verses at all from Philemon, James and 2 Peter.⁹³ Should we, therefore, doubt the authenticity of these books? We suppose that Stanley Helton has written quite a few articles about Biblical subjects in his lifetime. In the course of so doing, I am sure that he has cited a number of Scriptures. However, according to Helton’s own reasoning, if one combs his writings and discovers that there are Scriptures to which he has not specifically referred, then such will prove that

Helton considers those Scriptures to be spurious, or that he is unaware of their existence. What kind of argument is that? How sad to see men who claim to be scholars base their cases on such transparently groundless argumentation.

In the second place, although Helton lists Tertullian (c. 160–c.220) as a witness **against** Mark 16:9–20, John Thomas (whom we identified earlier as an opponent of Mark 16:9–20), nevertheless identifies Tertullian as a favorable witness to these verses.⁹⁴ This is interesting because Tertullian was a contemporary of Clement of Alexandria.⁹⁵

The most commonly cited patristic quotations against Mark 16:9–20 come from Eusebius (*Questions to Marinus 1*, ca. A.D. 325) and Jerome (*Epistle 120. 3; ad Hedibiam*, ca. A.D. 407). It is claimed that both of these men personally rejected verses 9–20 because they were missing from Greek manuscripts known to them. However, a more careful investigation of their statements, and their own treatment of these verses, renders the matter at least doubtful. A man by the name of Marinus wrote to Eusebius, asking him to answer the following question: “How is it, that, according to Matthew [28:1], the Saviour appears to have risen ‘in the end of the Sabbath;’ but, according to Mark [16:9], ‘early the first day of the week?’”⁹⁶

Before we investigate the reply of Eusebius, it must be observed that the very fact that Marinus asked a question based upon Mark 16:9 shows that the last twelve verses of Mark were known to him; therefore, it is inescapably true that the last portion of Mark was known to those who lived during the time of Eusebius. Hence, the question asked by Marinus serves as a witness to the inclusion of this passage. In reply to the question asked by Marinus, Eusebius penned the following words:

This difficulty admits of a twofold solution. He who is for getting rid of the entire passage, will say that it is not met with in *all* the copies of Mark's gospel: the accurate copies, at all events, making the end of Mark's narrative come after the words of the young man who appeared to the women and said, ‘Fear not ye! Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth’...to which the Evangelist adds, —‘And when they heard it, they fled, and said nothing to any man, for they were afraid.’ For at those words, in almost all copies of the Gospel according to Mark, comes the end. What follows, which is met with seldom, [and only] in some copies, certainly not in all,) might be dispensed with; especially if it should prove to contradict the record of the other Evangelists. **This, then, is what a**

person will say who is for evading and entirely getting rid of a gratuitous problem (emph. BJC).⁹⁷

Eusebius continued:

But another, on no account daring to reject anything whatever which is, under whatever circumstances, met within the text of the Gospels, will say that here are two readings, (as is so often the case elsewhere;) and that **both** are to be received—inasmuch as by the faithful and pious, this reading is not held to be genuine rather than that; nor that than this.⁹⁸

After presenting the two methods which might be used in answering the question of Marinus, Eusebius wrote: "Well then, allowing the piece to be really genuine, our business is to interpret the sense of the passage."⁹⁹ Eusebius then proceeded to give a detailed treatment of the question. At no time in his own answer did Eusebius treat Mark's account as doubtful, nor does Eusebius claim the comments against Mark 16:9–20 as his own. In fact, Burgon points out:

Eusebius in a manner repudiates them; for he introduces them with a phrase which separates them from himself and, 'This then is what a person will say,' is the remark with which he finally dismisses them. It would, in fact, be to make this learned Father stultify himself to suppose that he proceeds gravely to discuss a portion of Scripture which he had already deliberately rejected as spurious.¹⁰⁰

The case involving Jerome's comments about Mark 16:9–20 is fascinating to consider, because reading them is almost like reading Eusebius all over again. A woman named Hedibia is reported to have sent a number of difficult questions to Jerome, three of which, oddly enough, are, word-for-word, identical to the questions asked by Marinus of Eusebius.¹⁰¹ Moreover, Jerome's reply is virtually a word-for-word match with the reply of Eusebius to Marinus. Jerome began his response to Hedibia with the words: "This difficulty admits of a twofold solution"—exactly the same phrase employed by Eusebius.

If Jerome had merely used one phrase identical to Eusebius, that would be one thing, but such is not the case. Burgon sets the Latin of Jerome over against the Greek of Eusebius and in comparing them proves that they are virtually identical. Actually, this is not all that surprising due to Jerome's own admission of the method he often used in answering questions which were sent to him. When he was asked a number of questions by two Egyptian monks, he sent them a reply, with the following preliminary explanation:

Being pressed for time, I have presented you with the opinions of all the Commentators; for the most part, translating their very words; in order both to get rid of your question, and to put you in possession of ancient authorities on the subject.... This has been hastily dictated in order that I might lay before you what have been the opinion of learned men on this subject, as well as the arguments by which they have recommended their opinions. My own authority, (who am but nothing,) is vastly inferior to that of our predecessors in the Lord.¹⁰²

After giving a glowing commendation of the work of Origen and Eusebius, and many others, Jerome explained: "My plan is to read the ancients; to prove all things, to hold fast that which is good; and to abide steadfast in the faith of the Catholic Church. I must now dictate replies, either original or at second-hand, to other Questions [which lie before me."¹⁰³ Thus the evidence shows that Jerome's comments on Mark 16:9-20 are not his own comments, but his reproduction of the words of Eusebius.

As we have already shown, the comments of Eusebius are certainly open to a different interpretation from what they have often been given. The words of Eusebius on Mark 16:9-20 can very legitimately be interpreted to be nothing more than the way he imagined some would try to answer the question of Marinus.

Thus, it is easy to see how Jerome could have mistakenly concluded that Eusebius personally believed Mark 16:9-20 did not belong in the inspired text, when in fact he was doing nothing more than speaking hypothetically about how someone might try to solve the difficulty presented to him. Suppose for a moment that Jerome misapprehended the import of Eusebius' words. Suppose further that someone else depended upon Jerome for what Eusebius thought about the matter. Then imagine that this chain of dependence continued on and on until the misconception was widespread.

If one quotes a source, and that source is erroneous, then he is wrong even though he does not mean to be wrong, and even though he has documented his source. In turn, if someone quotes this writer, and they document us as their source, they are unwittingly perpetuating an error. If others then trust their quotation as a reliable source, and so on, it is very easy to see how quickly erroneous information can proliferate. Therefore, it is entirely possible that scholars of today, in quoting their predecessors regarding Eusebius, are unintentionally perpetuating an erroneous view of where Eusebius really stood on the issue.

We should make it clear that we are not denying that some documents, known to Eusebius and Jerome, did omit Mark 16:9–20. What we are denying is that it is certain that Eusebius and Jerome dogmatically rejected the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel as a consequence.

Someone may point out that Jerome's comment regarding Mark 16:9–20 affirms that "almost all the Greek codices" were without this passage.¹⁰⁴ At the risk of being redundant we must point out that Jerome's statement was but a reproduction of the words of Eusebius. Furthermore, the claim that "almost all copies of the Gospel of Mark" end at verse 8 is not stated by Eusebius to be his own view, but rather the words **that another person might say**. Eusebius allowed the piece to be genuine, and went about the business of interpreting the passage.

Additionally, if Jerome was so certain that Mark 16:9–20 was missing from "almost all the Greek codices" why did he presume to include them in the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Scriptures?¹⁰⁵ Some would respond to this question by pointing out that the Vulgate was but a revision of a much older translation, the *Vetus Itala*, and that this version contained Mark 16:9–20; therefore, Jerome left them in the Vulgate since they were already in the translation from which he was working. Even if this is true, it does not discredit the case for Mark 16:9–20; rather, it strengthens the case because it demonstrates the antiquity of the passage. Also, the external evidence we have previously investigated shows that it is untrue that these verses were missing from "almost all the copies of the Gospel of Mark." Finally, it is interesting to note that in his writings, Jerome quoted two of the last twelve verses of Mark (16:9, 14), not to refute them, but to substantiate a point he was making.¹⁰⁶

It is not uncommon to see Gregory of Nyssa, Hesychius of Jerusalem, and Severus of Antioch all listed as witnesses against Mark 16:9–20.¹⁰⁷ In the works of Gregory of Nyssa, in a piece titled "Homily on the Resurrection," appears the following statement:

In the more accurate copies, the Gospel has its end at "for they were afraid." In some copies, however, this is also 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."¹⁰⁸

Besides the fact that this quotation appears to be very similar to the statements given by Eusebius and Jerome, there is something else unique about this quotation—it is “word for word the same Homily which Combefis in his “*Novum Auctarium*,” and Gallandius in his “*Bibliotheca Patrum*” printed as the work of Hesychius, and vindicated to that Father, respectively in 1648 and 1776.”¹⁰⁹ As if this were not confusing enough, it has also been discovered that large portions of this same homily appear “word for word under the name of ‘Severus of Antioch,’ which homily was printed by Montfaucon in his ‘*Bibliotheca Coisliniana*’ (1715) and by Cramer in his ‘*Catena*’ (1844).”¹¹⁰

There is a good bit of debate as to whether Hesychius of Jerusalem, or Severus of Antioch, is the author of this piece. Burgon sagely concludes:

In short, here are three claimants for the authorship of one and the same Homily. To whichever of the three we assign it—(and competent judges have declared that there are sufficient reasons for giving it to Hesychius rather than to Severus—while no one is found to suppose that Gregory of Nyssa was its author)—who will not admit that no further mention must be made of the other two?

Thus, although this piece appeared in the works of Gregory of Nyssa, it was authored either by Hesychius or Severus. Be that as it may, whomever we attribute these words to, his comments may have been nothing more than a reflection of a growing misapprehension of the context of Eusebius’ statements, and Jerome’s interpretation of them. Burgon offers some compelling evidence to show the likelihood that Hesychius was merely a copyist of Eusebius.¹¹¹

The most important piece of evidence regarding this homily is how the author brought it to conclusion: “At the end of his discourse, he quotes the 19th verse entire, without hesitation, in confirmation of one of his statements, and declares that the words are written by S. Mark.”¹¹² It is unusual behavior, to say the least, for a man to reject verses in one paragraph only to turn around a few paragraphs later and depend upon the very verses he believes to be spurious. This makes it even more likely that the earlier words about Mark 16:9–20 were not the opinion of the author, but someone the author was quoting for the purpose of dealing with a so-called contradiction in the resurrection accounts. On the other hand, even if Hesychius (or Severus) personally opposed Mark 16:9–20, we would gladly pit the

ancient testimony of Irenaeus against their testimony. This is not to say that Hesychius (or Severus) was intentionally dishonest in his views. It is to say that Irenaeus is a much more informed and credible witness about whether or not Mark 16:9–20 was **originally** included in Mark's Gospel.

Finally, we turn our attention to Victor of Antioch, who lived sometime during the first half of the fifth century. It is alleged by some that he is a hostile witness against our text, because his commentary on Mark contains a number of lines, which appear to be written in opposition to these verses. However, Burgon sets forth unassailable proof that much of Victor's commentary is but a compilation of the writings of other men. For instance, all of the commentary on Mark 15:38–39 comes from Chrysostom's 88th Homily on the Gospel of Matthew.¹¹³ In fact, much of it is word-for-word the same commentary given by Chrysostom, and yet Victor give no indication that he plagiarized. He never identifies Chrysostom as his source. The note in his commentary on Mark 16:9 contains a segment from the reply of Eusebius to Marinus. Hence, quite often, Victor "comes before us rather in the light of a Compiler than of an Author."¹¹⁴ Yet, occasionally Victor "would come forward in his own person, and deliver his individual sentiment."¹¹⁵ This is precisely what he does at the close of his commentary:

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)**—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: that is to say, from the words, "Now when [Jesus] was risen early the first day of the week," &c., down to "with signs following. Amen" (emph. BJC).¹¹⁶

This information is devastating to the position of men like Stanley Helton, who argue that Victor of Antioch's commentary "not only passed on the tradition from Eusebius, but also lacked any direct comment on vss. 9–20, suggesting that the gospel text from which Victor worked lacked them."¹¹⁷ Victor's comments at the close of his commentary prove that Helton is either misinformed, or guilty of the same charge he leveled at Thomas B. Warren and other faithful brethren. What charge did he make?

Actually, in his article on Mark 16:9–20, Helton made several *ad hominem* arguments. He ridiculed the scholarship of David Lipscomb, describing him as “oblivious to the details of the discussion” concerning Mark 16:9–20.¹¹⁸ As earlier cited, he chided Guy N. Woods for his “lack of critical acumen.”¹¹⁹ He criticized N. B. Hardeman for not bringing “the text critical data” surrounding Mark 16:16 into his discussion with Ben Bogard.¹²⁰ Worst of all, Helton’s article impugns the motives and questions the honesty of brethren who engaged in debates on the subject of baptism in the twentieth-century. He claims:

[I]t became necessary for the debaters to “prove” the authenticity of Mark 16:9–20 in order to use verses 15 and 16 to demonstrate the essentiality of baptism. In this context of debate the text-critical issues became secondary to the polemical concern to prove the essentiality of baptism. Consequently, **the debaters selectively sorted and misrepresented the data, even to the point of fabricating evidence** (emph. BJC).¹²¹

Helton is not content to leave this charge in the realm of the generic. He gets downright personal toward Thomas B. Warren. He writes, “Beginning no later than 1953, Thomas B. Warren would misconstrue, even more than Wallace, the textual data towards his polemical ends.”¹²² He takes exception to the chart on Mark 16:9–20, which Warren introduced into his debate on the plan of salvation with L. S. Ballard. Helton accuses Warren of deliberately misrepresenting the date of certain manuscripts and “church fathers”:

He dated Codex W a century too early, and, even though he claimed to have seen the actual manuscript while in Washington, he failed to mention the “Freer Logion,” an addition after verse 14, which occurs only in that manuscript. His citations of the “Church Fathers” are fraught with inaccuracies. For example, he placed the second century in the order “Irenaeus, Papias, and, Justin Martyr,” giving the appearance that Irenaeus is earlier than the others. Warren’s use of Papias as a witness shows dependence ultimately upon Burgon and cannot be supported.¹²³

It is apparent that Helton thinks that Warren may have been lying when he claimed to have seen the actual manuscript of Codex W. On what basis does Helton make such a groundless accusation?

Furthermore, although Helton claims that Warren dated Codex W a century too early, Geisler and Nix write, “This dates from the fourth or early fifth century.”¹²⁴ Helton claims that

Warren manipulated the evidence because he was desperate to use Mark 16:16 in his debate on baptism. But, wait a minute. Geisler and Nix do not believe that baptism is essential for salvation. Would Helton charge Geisler and Nix with deliberately misconstruing the textual data toward their polemical ends? If not, what could possibly have motivated them to admit that Codex W can potentially be dated back to the fourth century? Could it be that the evidence really does show that Codex W is earlier than Helton dates it? Helton implied that Warren deliberately dated Codex W a century earlier than the evidence will allow, all for the purpose of manipulating the evidence to suit his polemical aims. Why did not Helton reveal the evidence Warren gave in the debate to substantiate his claim? Ballard challenged Warren to prove that Codex W was as old as he claimed. Warren responded:

Here's a book by Mr. Tischendorf, who was the discoverer of the Sinaitican Manuscript (Reading from *Codex Sinaiticus*) "Unfortunately, we have no Biblical Manuscripts coming down to us from the first three centuries of our era. From the fourth century when Christianity emerged victorious from the Roman persecutions, we possess only three Manuscripts, one of which has now found a place in our National Museum." That's the Washington Manuscript. That's the one that I saw. It has the entire sixteenth chapter of Mark in it.¹²⁵

Was Mr. Tischendorf deliberately distorting the evidence to suit his own polemical ends when he dated Codex W in the fourth century? If the answer is no, then perhaps Mr. Helton will tell us why it was dishonest for Warren to date Codex W in the fourth century, but not dishonest for Tischendorf to do the same. Furthermore, could it be that Helton is himself guilty of "selectively sorting" the data by not providing us with this information?

But what about the "Freer Logion"? Why did Warren not mention it? As we mentioned at the commencement of this study, Codex W was purchased by Mr. C.L. Freer in 1906. Presently, it is housed in the Freer Art Gallery in Washington D.C. This manuscript contains Mark 16:9–20 but also contains the following unusual logion (saying), or ending after Mark 16:14:

And they excused themselves, saying, 'This age of lawlessness and unbelief is under Satan, who does not allow the truth and power of God to prevail over the unclean things of the spirits. Therefore reveal thy righteousness now'—thus they spoke to Christ. And Christ replied to them, 'The term of years for Satan's power has been fulfilled, but other

terrible things draw near. And for those who have sinned I was delivered over to death, that they may return to the truth and sin no more; that they may inherit the spiritual and incorruptible glory of righteousness which is in heaven."¹²⁶

The above paragraph is found in only one Greek manuscript. Even those who oppose Mark 16:9–20, do not place the “Freer Logion” on equal footing with verses 9–20. After citing the manuscript evidence for both of these endings, Thomas writes concerning the longer ending (vss. 9–20): “The external evidence for the longer reading is old and has good family representation.... Such weight is quite impressive and should—by mere bulk, variety, and date—be cause for further consideration.”¹²⁷ On the other hand, he writes that the “Freer Logion” can be dismissed as an expanded form of the longer ending.¹²⁸ Bruce Metzger also dismisses the “Freer Logion,” noting that “The obvious and pervasive apocryphal flavour of the expansion, as well as the extremely limited basis of evidence supporting it, condemns it as a totally secondary accretion.”¹²⁹

As to why Warren did not take the time to mention it, several possibilities exist. In the first place, the “Freer Logion” was not the matter under consideration in the debate. Its contents say nothing about how to be saved. Besides, in all likelihood, Ballard himself would have rejected the “Freer Logion,” so why should Warren have been obligated to bring it up, especially when it has nothing to say about the subject of debate? The only thing Warren was trying to prove is that Mark 16:9–20 had abundant manuscript evidence to support it. He cited Codex W because it is one of the witnesses, but not the only one, that contains these verses.

In the second place, Warren, certainly knew of the “extremely limited basis of evidence” supporting this saying, and, therefore, did not waste precious time cluttering up his speech with a statement for which there is no support. In a debate format, time is of the essence, and the talented debater (which Warren was) must home in on his subject like a laser without introducing extraneous material.

Had this ending contained material germane to the discussion, and had it possessed the same amount of manuscript support as Mark 16:9–20, then Warren would no doubt have introduced it into the discussion. Even Helton admits that this ending is found in only one MS. Why, then, did it deserve so much

attention? Although we may never know the reason or means whereby this statement was inserted into the text, it does not cancel the fact that Mark 16:9–20 was supported long before the “Freer Logion” ever came to be. If the “Freer Logion” is on the same plane as Mark 16:9–20, why is it not included in the ancient versions? Why is it not well attested by the quotes of the “Church Fathers”?

What about the charge that Warren misrepresented the order of Irenaeus, Papias, and Justin Martyr? First of all, there is nothing on the chart Warren presented to indicate that he was claiming any exact and precise chronological order for the authorities he presented. In the second place, it may very well be that Warren placed the names in the order that he did because he was ranking them in order of the weight of their testimony. Burgon himself was willing to grant that of the three witnesses, Irenaeus provided the most decisive testimony.¹³⁰ Thus, Helton has no proof that Warren intended anything sinister by the order in which he wrote their names on the chart.

Evidence from the Lectionaries

It is an historical fact that the early church adopted the practice of orally reading passages from the New Testament in their assemblies. The documents containing these passages are known as “Lectionaries.” Geisler and Nix explain:

A final testimony to the text of the New Testament, which has hitherto been generally undervalued, are the numerous Lectionaries, church service books, containing selected readings from the New Testament. These Lectionaries served as manuals, and they were read throughout the church year.¹³¹

There are about two thousand Greek Lectionaries known to exist today.¹³² Again, Geisler and Nix, observe: “In view of this multitudinous witness to the New Testament text, it is difficult to understand why they have not hitherto enjoyed a more significant role in textual criticism.”¹³³ Burgon points out that one great value of these Lectionaries is that they represent more than just the testimony of one man or one manuscript. Rather, these Lectionaries were commonly accepted and employed by a multitude of churches.¹³⁴

The dating of these Lectionaries is a matter of some dispute. Geisler and Nix admit that “the Lectionaries are difficult to date.... Most Lectionaries probably originated at a date ranging

from the seventh to twelfth centuries, with a dozen leaves and fragments dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries, five or six of which are papyri."¹³⁵ However, Burgon argues that it is "quite certain" that the Lectionary system was known to exist in the fourth century, if not earlier. He cites as evidence of this a statement from Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 348) in which he described how his sermon on the Ascension of the Lord just happened to coincide with the subject of "the appointed lessons."¹³⁶

Perhaps even more compelling is the fact that Chrysostom, in the latter portion of the fourth century, invited his hearers "to sit down, and study attentively beforehand, at home, the Sections (Greek, *pericopas*) of the Gospel which they were about to hear in Church."¹³⁷ There is evidence that Eusebius, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria consistently employed the same Greek term (Greek, *pericope*) as did Chrysostom, and Burgon contends that this term was "the technical term for an Ecclesiastical Lection."¹³⁸ Burgon's conclusion is that "a Lectionary system of some sort must have been in existence at a period long anterior to the date of any copy of the New Testament Scriptures extant."¹³⁹

Schaff claims that Burgon overrates the antiquity of the Lectionaries. He asserts that "The lection-systems cannot be traced beyond the middle of the fourth century."¹⁴⁰ However, regarding Mark 16:9-20, Scrivener writes that it has a place in the Lectionaries, or selections of Scripture for public reading, which were in use in the Eastern Church "certainly in the fourth century, **very probably much earlier**" (emph. BJC).¹⁴¹ The point is that in these Lections Mark 16:9-20 appears again and again and again. Therefore, long before the Sinaiticus or Vaticanus MSS were even produced, the last twelve verses of Mark were being read in church services all over the world. The passage "has always been treated as genuine by the Christian church."¹⁴²

INTERNAL EVIDENCE CONCERNING MARK 16:9-20

Holman's Bible Handbook minces no words regarding the implications of the style of Mark 16:9-20: "The decisive consideration is that the grammar and vocabulary of both the long and short endings are definitely non-Markan. Nothing after verse 8

therefore is original."¹⁴³ The UBS Handbook on Mark agrees: "A consideration of the evidence to be inferred from the nature of the Longer Ending itself should conclusively establish the judgment that it was not written by the author of the Gospel of Mark."¹⁴⁴ It is claimed that three distinct strands of internal evidence demonstrate that Mark could not have written the last twelve verses of the Gospel book bearing his name: (1) Vocabulary (2) style, and (3) content.

Evidence from the Vocabulary of Mark 16:9–20

Excluding irrelevant words such as proper names, connectives, numerals, prepositions, negative particles, and the definite article, there is left a total of 75 different significant words in the section. Of these 75 a total of 15 (including 10 verbs) occur which do not appear in Mark, and 11 others are used in a sense different from that in which they are used in Mark. This means that in the passage slightly over one-third of the significant words used are not "Markan," that is, either they do not appear in Mark or they are used in a way differing from that in which Mark uses them. When due allowance is made for the different subject matter, which requires a different vocabulary, it would appear that the marked degree of difference between the vocabulary of Mark 16:9–20 and the Gospel of Mark argues strongly against a single author for both.¹⁴⁵

Along these same lines, Robert Morgenthaler argues that "word-statistical research" decisively refutes Markan authorship of the last twelve verses.¹⁴⁷ For instance, Morgenthaler argues that the number of times *kai* appears in the longer ending is lower than the average in Mark 1:1–16:8. However, Burton Coffman demonstrates the other side of this argument:

The most distinctive feature of Mark's Gospel is the recurrence of the connective *and*. It is used 43 times in Mark 13, 86 times in chapter 14, 64 times in Mark 15, and 33 times in Mark 16 — 226 times in 176 verses, or an average of approximately 1.3 times per verse. The 12 verses we are considering have it 19 times, a little more than the 1.3 average. Furthermore, verses numbered 9–20 (the same numbers as here) in Mark 13 have this connective 19 times, exactly the same as in verses 9–20 at the end of Mark! And something else, the omission of "straightway" from Mark 16:9–20 is exactly paralleled by its omission from Mark 13:9–20.¹⁴⁸

To demonstrate the subjective nature of vocabulary evidence, consider the fact that some have concluded that Mark wrote some of the last twelve verses, but not all of them. For example, Linnemann does not believe that Mark 16:9–14 is from Mark's pen, but he does believe that 16:15–20 is Markan.¹⁴⁹

William Farmer remarks that "evidence for non-Markan authorship seems to be preponderant in Verse 10. Verses 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, and 19 seem to be either basically, or in balance, neutral. Evidence for Markan authorship seems to be preponderant in verses 9, 11, 13, 15, and 20."¹⁴⁹ Thomas admits that parts of Mark 16:9–20 are very much like Mark's style but he claims that this is "due to the compiler's attempt to imitate Markan style."¹⁵⁰

C.E.B. Cranfield claims that all twelve verses are "non-Markan" in style and vocabulary.¹⁵¹ Yet, he is completely inconsistent in his reasons for so concluding. Throughout his commentary on the Gospel of Mark, Cranfield repeatedly refers to Mark's writing style as "awkward." He labeled Mark 4:31 as "rather awkward." However, when Cranfield comes to Mark 16:9–20, he dismisses Mark as its author because of the awkwardness of the passage. Cranfield cannot have it both ways. Burton Coffman has every right to ask: "[I]f clumsiness, awkwardness, redundancy, and carelessness are Markan throughout the Gospel, how does a single example of such a thing suddenly become non-Markan in the last 12 verses?"¹⁵²

One of the best demonstrations of how frail the vocabulary argument is comes from the pen of J. W. McGarvey. He reported that he examined the last twelve verses of Luke's Gospel and found nine words which are not elsewhere used in his narrative, and among them are four which are not elsewhere found in the New Testament. He writes that

...none of our critics have thought it worthwhile to mention this fact, if they have noticed it, much less have they raised a doubt in regard to the genuineness of this passage. Doubtless many other examples of the same kind could be found in the New Testament; but these are amply sufficient to show that the argument, which we are considering is but a shallow sophism.¹⁵³

McGarvey also pointed out that the change of subject matter at the end justified the use of different words. Further, he noted that though some of the words in 16:9–20 were not used in their simple forms in the Gospel, they were nonetheless constantly used in composition with prepositions.¹⁵⁴

In concluding our examination of the vocabulary argument, we agree that "the argument from difference of style and vocabulary has been overstrained, and can not be regarded as in itself decisive."¹⁵⁵ McClintock and Strong agree, noting that "Internal

evidence is too subtle a thing, and varies too much with the subjectivity of the writer, for us to rely on it exclusively."¹⁵⁶ Jamieson, Faussett, and Brown add:

The argument from difference of style is exceedingly slender—confined to a few words and phrases, which vary, as everyone knows, in different writings of the same author and even different portions of the same writing, with the varying aspects of the subject and the writer's emotions.¹⁵⁷

Charles Spurgeon provides an excellent summary statement regarding the arguments from vocabulary, style, and content:

These last verses of Mark's Gospel have, as some of you know, been questioned as to their inspiration and authenticity; but they are so like Mark that you cannot read them without feeling that they are part and parcel of what the Evangelist wrote. Set any critic you please to work; and if he knows the idiom and style of Mark's writing, he will be bound to say that this is part of the Gospel according to Mark; and God the Holy Spirit, blessing these words to our hearts, as I trust he will, will set his seal to what we believe and know to be his inspired Word.¹⁵⁸

Evidence from the Style of Mark 16:9–20

The UBS Handbook on Mark argues that the stylistic evidence from these verses is an even more potent witness against Markan authorship than the evidence from the vocabulary. It insists that a comparison between the literary style of the Gospel of Mark and of the Longer Ending will lead one to the irresistible conclusion that Mark did not author these words. Its authors are offended that the last twelve verses of Mark say nothing specific about the women carrying out the commission given unto them by the angel. They insist: "By all counts, if the evangelist had continued the story after v. 8 he would have related how the women carried the message "to the disciples and Peter" as commanded by the angel."¹⁵⁹ How do the UBS authors know what Mark would have done?

Additionally, many textual critics claim that naming Mary Magdalene by name in Mark 16:9, when she had already been introduced by name in verse 1, is proof that someone other than Mark wrote verse 9. However, this argument falls flat on its face in view of the fact that in the verse immediately preceding verse 1, Mark refers to Mary Magdalene (Mark 15:47), only to turn around and do it again in the very next verse. Does this mean that Mark is not the author of verse 1? Of course, in view

of the fact that there are so many "Marys" in the Bible, it is perfectly logical that Mark would so frequently identify which Mary he is talking about with the phrase "Mary Magdalene." What is so mysterious about that? Those who oppose Mark 16:9–20 must be desperate to introduce such a weak and transparent argument for their case.

Actually, there are compelling stylistic arguments against Mark's Gospel record's ending at 16:8. From a linguistic standpoint, it would be highly unorthodox for the Gospel to end there because that would make the Greek word *gar* the final word of the book. Thomas concedes that "this ending would be strange indeed, for only a handful of sentences can be offered in support of this unconventional ending."¹⁶⁰ However, those who oppose the inclusion of vrses 9–20 believe that they have found a champion in P. W. van der Horst, who allegedly answered this objection by discovering a treatise by Plotinus, which ends with *gar*.¹⁶¹ The whole truth should be told on this matter. While it is true that Plotinus did end his thirty-second treatise with the Greek word *gar*, it has been proved that treatises 30, 31, 32, and 33 were formerly one extended treatise.¹⁶²

Mr. van der Horst is often praised for developing the "commonsense argument that if a sentence can end with *gar*, then a book can end with such a sentence."¹⁶³ However, there is a huge difference between the context of a single sentence in a philosophical discussion, and the conclusion of Mark's Gospel record. Furthermore, the question is not so much whether a book **could** conceivably end with *gar*; the question is whether it would have **been appropriate** for Mark to do so. Thomas credits van der Horst with shedding new light on the discussion, and then added: "but one must wonder if van der Horst is completely justified in claiming that 'the argument that a book cannot end with the word *gar* is absolutely invalid.'"¹⁶⁴

Evidence from the Content of Mark 16:9–20

The UBS Handbook on Mark ominously proclaims: "It is in a consideration of the contents of the Longer Ending, however, that the gravest objections are to be found to the opinion that it is part of the Gospel of Mark." The *Handbook* lists two objections: (1) the rebuke administered to the disciples by Jesus (v. 14) and (2) the signs promised to the believers (vv. 17–18).¹⁶⁵ It is argued

that the words of Mark 16:14 are inconsistent with the character of Jesus Christ, especially as revealed elsewhere in the book of Mark. According to UBS, it is impossible that Jesus would have ever issued such a strong and stern rebuke to His disciples.

Yet, a closer look at Mark's Gospel record reveals that Jesus rebuked His disciples on more than one occasion (4:40; 8:17–21). For Jesus to say to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mark 8:33) is about as strong a rebuke as one could ever find. Should we therefore suspect that Mark 8:33 was not a part of Mark's original MS? Different occasions call for different words, and Jesus knew best which words were needed on which occasion. To dictate to Jesus what He could or could not say on a given occasion is, at best, sheer speculation, and, at worst, arrogant and presumptuous.

The presumption of UBS continues in its final objection to Mark 16:9–20:

It is the nature of the "signs" promised to "the believers," however, that raises the strongest objection against receiving vv. 9–20 as part of the Gospel. The bizarre promise of immunity from snakes and poisonous drinks is completely out of character with the Person of Christ as revealed in the Gospel of Mark, the other Gospels, and in the whole of the New Testament. Nowhere did Jesus exempt himself or his followers from the natural laws which govern this life, nor did he ever intimate such exemptions would be given those who believed in him. That such miracles have in fact occasionally taken place is a matter of record; what is to be doubted is that the Lord should have promised them indiscriminately to all believers as part of the blessings which would be bestowed upon them. It is this very "natural" desire for signs which Jesus so strongly rebuked in the Pharisees (Mark 8:11–13); yet in the Longer Ending he is portrayed as promising the believers "signs" as crassly materialistic and supernatural as any the Pharisees would have asked for!¹⁶⁶

Once again, UBS knows best. The *Handbook* authors may label our Lord's Words as "bizarre" all that they want to, but the event in Acts 28, when Paul was bitten by a snake and "shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm," is proof that Mark 16:18 is not as bizarre as they would have us believe. Furthermore, the claim that Jesus never exempted Himself or His followers from the natural laws which govern this life is obviously untrue in view of Mark's own record of Jesus calming the storm at sea (4:39), the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes (6:41–44; 8:14–21), and our Lord's walk upon the water (6:49).

Finally, it is completely unfair to compare the request of the Pharisees for a sign with the promise of signs in Mark 16:17–18. The Pharisees were rebuked for requesting a sign because they had already seen sufficient signs of the Deity of Christ, but they had refused to accept the implications of these signs. Hence, when they came seeking another sign, Jesus knew that they were insincere. This is not even comparable to the purpose of the signs promised at the close of Mark's Gospel. These signs would serve to confirm the credibility of the Word preached (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:4). When Nicodemus saw the signs which Jesus did, he became convinced that He was a teacher sent from God (John 3:1–2). The miraculous ability to speak in languages one had never studied served as a sign to convince unbelievers and start them on the path from sin to salvation (Acts 2; 1 Cor. 14:22).

How can anyone legitimately classify the noble purpose and effect of these signs as being "crassly materialistic," and like those requested by the Pharisees? It is amazing and sad to see the lengths to which the opponents of Mark 16:9–20 will go to support their position. To make such an argument is beneath the "scholarship" these men claim to possess.

In fact, other scholars, such as William Farmer, believe that the mention of serpents and drinking poison in Mark 16:18 is actually a witness to the authenticity of the passage. How so? The argument is this:

If the last twelve verses of Mark are not original, in what context could they have been accepted and in turn produced? As Farmer points out, there has been no evidence produced to demonstrate an area in Christendom that would either condone these actions or be powerful enough to impose them on the Church at large through an addition to the text of the second gospel.¹⁶⁷

Did Mark End His Gospel at Mark 16:8?

If Mark's record of the Gospel originally ended at 16:8, then the last phrase of Mark's account would read, "for they were afraid." In the past, the majority of scholars thought it highly unlikely that Mark would have deliberately ended his Gospel in this manner. However, in more recent years, it has become increasingly popular among "the scholars" to suggest that Mark intentionally ended his Gospel at verse 8 with this phrase. Ernest Best suggests:

Finally it is from the point of view of drama that we can appreciate most easily the conclusion to the Gospel. By its very nature the conclusion forces us to think out for ourselves the Gospel's challenge. It would have been easy to finish with Jesus' victorious appearances to comfort the disciples: they all lived happily ever after. Instead the end is difficult....¹⁶⁸

Some treat the ending of Mark as an attempt at reverse psychology by the narrator:

According to this literary approach, Mark uses the negative response of the women as an implicit appeal for others to succeed where the women failed. The disobedience of the women forces the reader to realize that silence is wrong and calls on the reader to respond differently by proclaiming the good news about Jesus and his resurrection in spite of fear.¹⁶⁹

Williams also argues that ending the record at 16:8 would blend together perfectly with what he calls "the persistent theme in Mark of the disciples' failure."¹⁷⁰ He cites their inability to understand the parable of the sower (Mark 4:10–13), their repeated faithlessness in the "boat scenes" (4:35–41; 6:45–52; 8:14–21), their quest for positions of prominence in the kingdom (9:33–34; 10:35–41), their sleepiness at the hour of crisis (14:32–41), their defection at the time of their Master's arrest (14:50), and Peter's blatant denials of Jesus (14:66–72). Williams concludes: "Given the pervasive narration of the disciples' problems, it is not improbable that Mark would end his Gospel with yet another example of failure on the part of Jesus' followers."¹⁷¹

On the other hand, G.W. Trompf argues that, if Mark ended at verse 8, he abandoned his pattern of always ending a section with Jesus' comforting words. Mark's usual pattern (cf. 1:27; 2:12b; 4:41; 5:42–43; 6:2, 52; 7:37; 9:6–7; 10:32–33; 11:18; 15:44; 16:5–6) would indicate that Jesus should appear and dispel the women's fears.¹⁷²

How Do We Explain the Absence of Mark 16:9–20 from Some Sources?

Despite the desperate attempts to explain how Mark could have deliberately ended his Gospel at Mark 16:8, such is untenable. It is asking too much for us to believe that Mark began his Gospel account with "good news" (Mark 1:1) and ended it with "fear" (Mark 16:8). Also, "considering the centrality of Jesus throughout the book, one would expect an appearance of the

resurrected Christ, rather than just an announcement of His resurrection."¹⁷³ Nevertheless, because of the omission of verses 9–20 in certain manuscripts, speculation began as to what might have happened to bring about such an abrupt ending. The following suggestions have been offered.

1. Something happened to Mark at this point to prevent him from completing his task; perhaps persecution forced him to flee, or perhaps he died suddenly in the midst of writing his conclusion.
2. Just as Luke wrote another volume (the book of Acts) after he wrote the Gospel of Luke, Mark likewise intended to write another book; thus he would not therefore have considered 16:8 as the virtual end of his story.
3. Mark issued a first edition that ended at 16:8 and later came out with a second edition to satisfy the request for a happier ending.
4. Some say that the words of Matthew 28:16–20 were originally Mark's ending and that they were transposed to the book of Matthew.¹⁷⁴
5. Mark's original ending was purposely omitted by some scribe in the third century who was offended that Mark would represent the apostles in such an unfavorable light after the resurrection (Mark 16:14).¹⁷⁵
6. Alexandrian scribes omitted 16:9–20 to remove apparent contradictions with the other Gospel accounts and embarrassing items such as the promises in v. 18 about snakes and poisons.¹⁷⁶
7. J. Jeremias has suggested that Mark stopped where he did in order to keep from pagan readers what was to follow.¹⁷⁷
8. The longer ending of Mark was added by someone or some group within early Christianity who was particularly enamored with the topic of miraculous gifts.¹⁷⁸
9. The last leaf of the original copy was accidentally lost before other copies were made.¹⁷⁹
10. An Armenian MS of the tenth century attributed verses 9–20 to "the presbyter Ariston," probably Aristion, a contemporary of Papias (A.D. 60–130) who was purport-

edly a disciple of the apostle John.¹⁸⁰ If this hypothesis were so, why would it take ten centuries for this information to show up in a MS?

The common thread in the above suggestions is that “the abruptness of the ending of Mark at 16:8 was solved by the early church with shorter or longer (16:9–20) textual additions.¹⁸¹ However, there are a couple of other possibilities which must be considered. Picture this: At some point the last leaf of a MS containing the gospel of Mark is accidentally lost or torn away,¹⁸² the contents of which are Mark 16:9–20. At some time, this MS is passed on to a scribe so that he might make another copy. He copies all of the pages to which he has access, but it just so happens that, because of the loss of the last page, his copy ends at Mark 16:8. Subsequently, someone else copies his copy and, of course, stops at Mark 16:8. This process continues until a number of copies begin to be circulated without the last twelve verses of Mark.

For the sake of argument, imagine that one of these defective copies is eventually passed on to the scribe who copied Codex Vaticanus. Imagine that this scribe comes to the end of the copy in his possession and observes that this particular copy ends at Mark 16:8. The scribe is puzzled by this, because he is familiar with other copies which contain twelve more verses. In fact, he might even remember having copied another MS of Mark which had a longer ending. However, this scribe is conscientious about the rule that a copyist should copy only what is found in the MS from which he is copying. Hence, he decides to leave the verses out, but he leaves a blank column to demonstrate his familiarity with a longer ending. This scenario is by no means impossible, and it would explain why the passage is found in some MSS and not in others. In fact, this explanation would be just as plausible as the explanation that someone was dissatisfied with the shorter ending and thus decided to compile a longer ending and so added verses 9–20 to the end of Mark’s Gospel account.

Another possibility is promoted by Burgon. Mention was made earlier of the Lectionaries used by the church following the New Testament age. Passages of Scripture were divided into sections (Lections) and it was customary to write *telos* (“The End”) after Mark 16:8, to show the ending of that particular Lection. Burgon suggests that Mark 16:9–20 was an original

part of Mark's Gospel, but that it was omitted in some valuable copy by a misunderstanding of the word *telos*, which often is found after Mark 16:8. He elaborates: "What if, at a very remote period, this same isolated liturgical note...should have unhappily suggested to some copyist the notion that the entire Gospel according to S. Mark came to an end at verse 8?"¹⁸³

CONCLUSION

We noted earlier that the initial edition of the Revised Standard Version relegated the last twelve verses of Mark to a footnote. We also indicated that the Second Edition of the RSV changed this policy. Why did they do so? In 1976, this writer's father, Ted J. Clarke, wrote Thomas Nelson, Inc., and asked this very question. The following quotation is the reply which he received:

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DIVISION OF EDUCATION AND MINISTRY**

Miss Emily V. Gibbes, Associate General Secretary

**REVISED STANDARD VERSION BIBLE COMMITTEE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, PRINCETON, N.J. 08540**

May 28, 1976

Mr. T. J. Clarke
Green Valley Church of Christ
Noblesville, Indiana 46060

Dear Mr. Clark, [sic]

Your letter of April 14th addressed to Thomas Nelson Inc., of Camden, N.J., was sent on to the National Council of Churches in New York, and then to me for answer.

In reply to your query why the current second edition of the RSV New Testament includes Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11 in the body of the text (though separated by a white line from the rest of the text), may I say the following. The RSV Committee in this case decided to

follow the lead of the United Bible Societies Committee on the Greek New Testament, which in its third edition restores to the text these two passages. The reason, in both cases, which prompted the UBS Committee to make this change was consideration of the antiquity the passages and in deference to the evident regard in the early Church for the passages, especially that of Mark. For further information concerning the manuscript evidence for each, reference may be made to the present writer's book, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, New York, 1971, pp. 122 ff. and pp. 219 ff.

Sincerely yours,

Bruce M. Metzger

This letter contains two startling admissions. According to Metzger, (1) the antiquity of Mark 16:9–20 (2) and the “evident regard in the early church” for this passage influenced the RSV committee and the UBS committee to restore these verses to the text. In this one statement Metzger admits that the evidence for Mark 16:9–20 far precedes Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus.

Indeed, the ancient testimony of the versions, of men like Irenaeus, and the overwhelming presence of Mark 16:9–20 in the MSS and Lectionaries give us every reason to recognize these verses as “God-breathed” and “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16–17)!

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99. Ibid.
100. Ibid., p. 128.
101. Ibid., pp. 129-131.
102. Ibid., p. 130.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid., p. 131.
105. Geisler and Nix inform us that in A.D. 382 Pope Damascus commissioned Jerome to produce this translation, p. 335.
106. Burgon, p.106.
107. Helton, p. 38.
108. Burgon, p. 117.
109. Ibid., p. 118.
110. Ibid.
111. Ibid., pp. 135, 347-48.
112. Ibid., p. 137.
113. Ibid., p. 139.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid., p. 142.

116. Ibid., p. 140.
117. Helton, p. 39.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid., p. 44.
120. Ibid., p. 42.
121. Ibid., pp. 40–41.
122. Ibid., p. 44.
123. Ibid., pp. 45–46.
124. Geisler and Nix, p. 280.
125. Thomas B. Warren, *Warren-Ballard Debate On The Plan Of Salvation* (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, 1965), p. 183.
126. Thomas, p. 408.
127. Ibid., p. 409.
128. Ibid.
129. B. M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 227.
130. Burgon, pp. 114-115.
131. Geisler and Nix, p. 295.
132. Ibid., p. 295.
133. Ibid.
134. Burgon, p. 271.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid., p. 275.
137. Ibid., pp. 275–76.
138. Ibid., p. 276.
139. Ibid.
140. Schaff, *History of Christian Church*, electronic ed.
141. W.A.T. Clarke, *College Press NT Commentary on Mark*, electronic edition.
142. W.H.T. DAU, "Baptism," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft.
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144. *UBS Handbook on Mark*, Electronic Edition. Biblesoft.
145. Ibid.
146. Robert Morgenthaler, *Statistik des neutestamentlichen Wortschatzes* (Zurich, 1958), pp. 58–60.

147. Burton Coffman, *Commentary On Mark*, ACU Press, Electronic Edition.
148. Thomas, p. 410.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid., p. 418.
151. C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge, England: The University Press, 1966), p. 472.
152. Coffman, electronic edition.
153. J.W. McGarvey, *The New Testament Commentary: Vol. I. Matthew and Mark* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1875), p. 380.
154. In an article which appeared in the 1994 Restoration Quarterly, Stanley N. Helton affirmed that J.W. McGarvey later changed his position and eventually adopted "a less conclusive position" (p. 37). While quotations from McGarvey's later writings in the *Christian Standard* do seem to indicate a shift in his thinking as to whether Mark actually wrote the last twelve verses, McGarvey stopped far short of dismissing Mark 16:9-20 as inspired Scripture. He believed that it was an authentic piece of history. Nevertheless, even if we grant that McGarvey changed his position on the last twelve verses of Mark, what difference would that make? Did Irenaeus change his mind that Mark 16:19 was written by Mark? No, he did not. It would be far more significant if someone like Irenaeus, so close to the apostolic age, had changed his mind about the authorship of these verses. While we appreciate overall the scholarship of J.W. McGarvey, we also recognize that he was a human being; he was not infallible. Therefore, while we ought to seriously consider what a man of his stature has to say on this matter, we are not bound by it as if it were the one and only word on the subject.
155. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Electronic Edition.
156. McClintock and Strong.
157. Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft.
158. Spurgeon's Sermons, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by Biblesoft.
159. UBS Handbook on Mark, electronic ed.
160. Thomas, p. 418.
161. Ibid., p. 413.
162. Ibid.
163. Williams, p. 25.
164. Thomas, p. 413.
165. UBS Handbook on Mark.
166. Ibid.

167. Thomas, p. 410.
168. Daniel B. Wallace, "Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament Textual Criticism," *Grace Theological Journal* 12:46.
169. Williams, p. 33.
170. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
171. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
172. Williams, p. 414.
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175. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*.
176. Larry W. Hurtado, "Book Review of the Last Twelve Verses of Mark By William R. Farmer," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18:54.
177. J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London, England: Scribners, 1966), p. 132.
178. James Luther Mays, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, Mark 16:9 (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1996, c1988).
179. Metzger, p. 228.
180. *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, electronic ed.
181. Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed. Baker reference library; Logos Library System (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997, c1996).
182. Williams asks, "Is it possible to conceive that the last page of a manuscript could be lost? One obstacle to this view is that nearly all the documents from the first century are scrolls. Since the scroll would expose the beginning of the text it is difficult to comprehend how this would be conducive to a theory that the end of Mark was accidentally lost. On the other hand, Peter Katz has suggested that the Gentile Christians early adopted the codex-form for their Scriptures instead of the roll-form, in a deliberate attempt to differentiate the usage of the Church from that of the synagogue" (p. 413).
183. Burgon, p. 306.