

Why Mark 16:9-20 Belongs in the Bible

A Case Study in Westcott-Hortian Silliness

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Introduction

Even before the revision committee of 1881 under Westcott, Hort, and their supporters introduced the first systematized Critical text, the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20 has been called into question on textual grounds, most notable by critics such as Tischendorf and Griesbach. This portion of the text is believed by most modernistic textual scholars to be an addition tacked onto Mark sometime during the 2nd century, and that the "original" ending for Mark's Gospel has been lost, a claim which is logically impossible to support and which appears to have been pulled out of thin air. Despite the extremely poor support for the removal of these verses from Scripture, nearly all naturalistic textual critics support the abridgment, and nearly all of the new versions, if not outright removing the verses in question, will at least bracket them and include a note stating that these verses "don't really belong in the Bible."

The case of Mark 16:9-20 allows us the opportunity to demonstrate first-hand the spuriousness of the Westcott-Hortian paradigm as it is applied to textual criticism. Based upon the evidence of a small, corrupted handful of Greek manuscripts and little else, modern textual critics remove the verse even despite the overwhelming amount of evidence in its favor. As can be easily seen, I believe, the Critical arguments against the authenticity of Mark 16:9-20, from the perspective of external evidences, rest upon the "oldest is best" canard. This is an argument which has no real merit, and which actually works **against** the position of the Critical Text supporters, as is argued in another work.¹

The External Evidences

Looking first to the Greek manuscript witness, we see that it stacks up heavily in favor of the authenticity of these verses. Bruce Terry² presents the following breakdown:

In Favor of Mark 16:9-20

- Codex Alexandrinus (A) - (5th c. uncial, Byzantine in Gospels)
- Ephraemi Rescriptus (C) - (5th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D) - (5th/6th c. uncial, Western)
- K (9th c. uncial, Byzantine)
- W (5th c. uncial, generally thought to be Caesarean in Mark 5:31-16:20)
- X (10th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- Delta (9th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- Theta (9th c. uncial, Caesarean)
- Pi (9th c. uncial, Byzantine)
- f1 and f13 (total of 16 Caesarean texts, 11th-14th c.)
- 28 (11th c. minuscule, Caesarean)
- 33 (9th c. minuscule, Alexandrian)
- 565 (9th c. minuscule, Caesarean)
- 700 (11th c. minuscule, Caesarean)

¹ See <http://www.studytoanswer.net/bibleversions/gnostic.html#oldest>

² B. Terry, *A Student's Guide to New Testament Textual Variants*, entry for Mark 16:8, referred throughout

- 892 (9th c. minuscule, Alexandrian)
- 1010 (12th c. minuscule, Byzantine)
- The Byzantine textual set
- Some of the Greek lectionaries

Opposed to Mark 16:9-20

- Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲁ) - (4th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- Codex Vaticanus (B) - (4th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- 304 (12th c. minuscule, Byzantine)
- 2386 (11th c. minuscule, Byzantine)
- Most of the Greek lectionaries (see discussion below)

Further, there is an alternate ending which is found appended after v. 8 in a few manuscripts which reads, "But they reported briefly to Peter [and] those around [him] all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself also sent out through them, from east even to west, the sacred and imperishable preached message of eternal salvation. Amen." This reading is found in:

- L (8th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- Psi (8th/9th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- 099 (7th c. uncial, Alexandrian)
- 0112 (6th/7th c. uncial, a fragment of uncial 083)
- The margin of 274 (10th c. cursive, Byzantine)
- 579 (13th c. cursive, Alexandrian)
- One Greek lectionary (1602, a Greek/Sahidic Coptic diglot)³

Looking at the evidence, we see that there is little reason to question Mark 16:9-20. The Greek manuscript witness in its favor is nearly as old as that opposed (and indeed, as will be shown below, once the testimony of Greek-speaking patristic writers is included, the Greek evidence FOR the comma is OLDER than that against). Further, we should note that the near uniform testimony of the Greek manuscript evidence is in favor of these verses (the Byzantine majority).

Most of the manuscripts listed by Terry as evidences against vv. 9-20 are less than convincing, however. For instance, while manuscript 2386 is listed as lacking this verse, we should note (as Terry does) that the reason for this lack is due to the fact that this manuscript is missing the sheet upon which these verses would appear (which makes one wonder why textual critics would bother to include it pro or con at all).

A similar problem arises when dealing with ms. 304. While this manuscript is usually cited by textual critics as lacking the long ending of Mark, the evidence for this assertion may be less sound than they believe. Maurice Robinson states,

³ *The Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism*, entry for "Lectionaries"

"The primary matter [in 304] is the commentary. The gospel text is merely interspersed between the blocks of commentary material, and should not be considered the same as a 'normal' continuous-text MS. Also, it is often very difficult to discern the text in contrast to the comments....Following γαρ at the close of [16:8], the MS has a mark like a filled-in 'o,' followed by many pages of commentary, all of which summarize the endings of the other gospels and even quote portions of them. Following this, the commentary then begins to summarize the ετερον δε τα παρα του Μαρκου, presumably to cover the non-duplicated portions germane to that gospel in contrast to the others. There remain quotes and references to the other gospels in regard to Mary Magdalene, Peter, Galilee, the fear of the women, etc. But at this point the commentary abruptly ends, without completing the remainder of the narrative or the parallels. I suspect that the commentary (which contains only Mt and Mk) originally continued the discussion and that a final page or pages at the end of this volume likely were lost....I would suggest that MS 304 should not be claimed as a witness to the shortest ending...."⁴

Another set of evidence that Terry lists as being against vv. 9-20 is the Greek lectionaries, the majority of which are said by Critical Text supporters to lack this passage. However, this is not really the case. Pastor James Snapp points out that the source for the claim that most Greek lectionaries lack these verses is James Brooks in his commentary.⁵ Snapp contradicts Brooks' assessment, and states, "The Greek lectionaries abundantly support Mark 16:9-20. I know of not a single one intact that does not include Mark 16:9-20 as a lection-unit."⁶ Pastor Snapp's statement is corroborated by the testimony of the lectionaries themselves, which demonstrate the scheduled reading of Mark 16:9-20 on the 5th Thursday after Easter, as well as for the Matins on All Saints' Day and the ten subsequent Sundays, according to the standard Byzantine Synaxarion calendar.⁷ Thus, what is listed and claimed as evidence against the authenticity of the long ending of Mark is not really so.

Essentially, the primary Greek witness opposed to these verses consists of the vaunted "oldest and best" manuscripts, Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. Thus, on the basis of these two preferred texts and little else, textual scholars hope to overturn the vast body of manuscripts in favor (which are buttressed by additional evidences, as we shall see below). Their argument, though, is further undercut by the fact that one of these two, Vaticanus, actually contains an entire blank column after v. 8 which is close to the right size to fit vv. 9-20, suggesting that the scribe who copied this manuscript was aware of the existence of this ending, and was unsure whether to omit the passage, so leaving a space should it need to be filled in later. It should also be noted that the four uncial manuscripts given above as containing the shorter, alternative ending after v. 20 each also refer to the longer ending by itself as an alternate reading, indicating some uncertainty on the part of their scribes.⁸

⁴ M. Robinson, cited in *The Encyclopedia of New Testament Textual Criticism*, entry for Manuscript 304

⁵ J.A. Brooks, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture - Mark*, Vol. 23, p. 272

⁶ J. Snapp, via email correspondence

⁷ "Lectionaries," *op. cit.*

⁸ Cf. H.B. Swete, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 105-107

Further evidence mounts in favor of Mark 16:9-20 from other ancient translations. Terry cites numerous ancient versions as favorable to the longer ending. Among the oldest versions which supply evidence in favor, we see the Syriac Peshitta, translated somewhere between the middle of the 2nd century and the end of the fourth (scholarship on this question is still unsettled), whose manuscripts contain the verse. Likewise, most other Syriac versions contain Mark 16:9-20, including the Curetonian (~425 AD), Palestinian (5th c.), and most of the Harclean (7th c.). Even in the minority of Harclean Syriac manuscripts which lack it in the main body of the text, the longer ending is found in the margins.

The verses appear from the beginning in the Latin Vulgate, with Jerome choosing, as will be seen below, to include them even though he parroted Eusebius' remarks about their absence in many Greek manuscripts. Yet, we should also recognize that Jerome by his own admission was revising the Latin witness of his day (or one of them, at least, given Augustine's fears about the multiplicity of Latin versions prior to the Vulgate) using Greek manuscripts available to him.⁹ Given the long history of citation of these verses by Greek patristics (see below) which indicate a definite presence of the long ending in that language witness despite Eusebius' claims, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Greek manuscripts which Jerome used contained the verses, else Jerome might have felt more impetus to disinclude them from his Vulgate. Further, we can reasonably surmise that the long ending also appeared in the Old Latin witness which Jerome was in general revising and attempting to standardize. The Old Latin was translated from Greek around 150 AD or a couple of decades thereafter.¹⁰ The Italic form of the Old Latin formed the basis for the later Waldensian Bibles of the Middle Ages, which received little influence from the prevailing Catholic Vulgate version (indeed, the Roman Catholic church was a source of oppression for the Waldensians, and these would have been little likely to adapt their Latin Bible to that of the papacy). These Bibles contained the long ending of Mark. The Tepl codex, a German manuscript translated from the Waldensian Bible, also contains this passage. We can extrapolate backwards and suggest from these evidences that Mark 16:9-20 was indeed found in the Old Latin which originally underlay all this later transmission, due again to the lack of evidence that there was any greatly significant influence upon the Waldensian Latin Bibles from the Vulgate.

It should be noted that only a single Old Latin manuscript (*k*, Bobbiensis, c. 400 AD) lacks the longer ending, and it is unique in that it completely replaces the longer ending with the shorter alternate ending, instead of merely emending it before v. 9. In fact, Bobbiensis is *completely* unique, as it is the only manuscript in any language that the shorter ending is the *only* ending included after v. 8, instead of being added in before vv. 9-20. This manuscript, further, is textually suspect due to the presence of some unusual interpolations appearing between vv. 3 and 4, and due to its omission of part of verse 8. As such, this manuscript's witness against the longer ending is rendered suspect.

Additionally, we note that what Gothic evidence (translated circa 350 AD) there is available supports the presence of the long ending. This passage appears in much of the pertinent Coptic witness, and is also found in all of the Ethiopic manuscript witness that contains Mark 16. The claim that important Ethiopic mss. are missing the long ending is commonly cited by textual

⁹ Jerome, *Preface to the Four Gospels*, a preface for his Vulgate version, in a letter of 383 AD to Damasus in Rome

¹⁰ H.S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, p. 236

critics, such as Bratcher and Nida, who report that the long ending is omitted from "important codices of the Armenian, Ethiopic, and Georgian versions."¹¹ This is, however, contradicted by Metzger who withdrew his earlier claims that the verses were lacking in the Ethiopic manuscript body, and instead now acknowledges that the long ending is abundantly witnessed in this manuscript set. He notes, "The present writer, having examined the ending of Mark in sixty-five Ethiopic manuscripts, discovered that none, contrary to statements made by previous investigators, closes the Gospel at xvi.8, but that most (forty-seven manuscripts) present the so-called shorter ending directly after vs. 8, followed immediately by the longer ending (verses 9-20)."¹²

Lacking this passage are the Sinaitic Syriac version (4th c.) and one Sahidic Coptic manuscript. The verses are also absent from two Ethiopic lectionaries - though not from any actual copies of Mark's Gospel - but this evidence is actually quite irrelevant for making a case against the longer ending since these lectionaries are quite fragmentary anyway, and the lack of the longer ending is most likely due simply to the damage done to the mss. The Armenian texts generally witness against the longer ending. However, we must at the same time note that an Armenian bishop from the 5th century, Eznik of Golp, quotes from the longer ending in his *Against the Sects* (441-449 AD).¹³ Colwell notes the objection to this raised by Lyonnet,¹⁴ which was that Eznik's allusion does not really fit that closely to either the Greek or to the Armenian Vulgate. This argument, however, was primarily directed at Conybeare's assertion that Eznik's use proved that he had "the Armenian version of today." Yet, we know that Eznik was also involved in the early translation and revision work on the Armenian version of the Bible, which would seem to suggest otherwise, concurrently with Lyonnet's rebuttal. The present Armenian Vulgate was not settled until around 976 AD. Eznik returned to Armenia from the Council of Ephesus with copies of the Greek Scriptures, and used these to work on that early Armenian version, and his allusion may support the original presence of the passage in that version, as he likely considered the verses to be genuine and might have included them into his work.

From the evidence of the other ancient versions, we see that the weight of catholicity and age both support the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20. The verses can be found in versions whose translations trace back earlier than the age of the oldest Greek witness against (Sinaiticus and Vaticanus).

Some object that this is not a strong argument since we do not have manuscripts from these other versions which date back to the original translations, and therefore we do not know if these verses originally appeared in them, or if they were added later because of pressure from the Vulgate. This objection lacks force for several reasons. First, there is again the simple fact of the catholicity of these favorable versions. All over the ancient world, we find the same passage being included in the same way with the same readings (with perhaps very slight variations). Further, the fact that these slight variations exist is itself evidence that the appearance of vv. 9-20

¹¹ R.G. Bratcher and E.A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, p. 506

¹² B.M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament*, p. 234

¹³ See F.C. Conybeare, *The Expositor*, 5th series, II, pp. 401-421

¹⁴ E.C. Colwell, "Mark 16:9-20 in the Armenian Version," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1937, p. 384; apparently referring to the argument raised by S. Lyonnet in *Les Versions Armenienne et Georgienne du Nouveau Testament*

in these translations is genuine, instead of being due to late additions artificially introduced from the Byzantine text form.

Second, many of these versions were translated and subsequently propagated in areas outside of the sphere of Vulgate influence (such as the Coptic, Ethiopic, and Syriac) or were primarily used before the Vulgate arrived at its overwhelming dominance (Gothic). Third, it must be noted that the critical objection suffers in that it can be turned back on itself - the **Greek** witness upon which Critical objections focus so much attention, all date to nearly three centuries after the original autographs. If the appearance of these verses in so many ancient versions can be attributed to addition by later scribes, why cannot the **absence** of these verses in the "oldest and best" Greek manuscripts be chocked up to their **deletion** by means of a lost leaf containing these verses from an early manuscript, from which the deletion made its way into daughter copies and down to us as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus?¹⁵ This question especially bears hard when we note, as will be seen below, that many Greek patristics from long before the Alexandrian exemplars cite this passage, which indicates that they had Greek manuscripts containing the long ending.

In addition to the various textual evidences, the testimony of the early patristic writers is in favor of Mark 16:9-20. Beginning with the earliest, we find a probable allusion to Mark 16:18 in the words of Papias, as recorded by Eusebius.¹⁶ Papias, a contemporary with several of the Apostles and their companions, records an instance in which Justus Barsabbas (from Acts 1:23) drank a deadly poison and was preserved by the grace of God. Papias' comment comes within the context of some other miraculous events which he had received as traditions from those with the Apostles. His specific choice to point out such a miraculous preservation, alongside another type of miracle (the raising of the dead) associated with Christ, seems to suggest Papias' familiarity with the long ending of Mark, and his association of that text with the Lord Jesus Christ. He may have chosen this tradition as an object demonstration of Mark 16:18 occurring in practice.

Around 165 AD, we find Justin Martyr making a probable allusion to Mark 16:20.¹⁷ In a passage where Justin is explaining the Christian doctrine of Christ's ascension and present reign in heaven on the right hand of the Father, uses the phrases του λογου (of the word) and εξελθοντες πανταχου εκηρυξαν (went forth and preached) together in a description of the activities of His Apostles after Christ's ascension. The juxtaposition of these terms, and the fact that they appear (but for the switching of the order of two words) exactly as the same phrases in Mark 16:20, and the context of Justin's statement in his passage, would suggest that this patristic was familiar with the passage in the longer ending of Mark, and was alluding to it here.

At roughly the same time, Irenaeus quotes Mark 16:19 outright¹⁸ (~177 AD), and Tatian the Assyrian included the ending in his Diatessaron,¹⁹ a document attempting the harmonization

¹⁵ Indeed, Hort admitted this as a very real possibility; B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, "Notes on Selected Readings," p. 49

¹⁶ Eusebius, *Church History*, Bk. 3, Ch. 39.9

¹⁷ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, ppg. 45

¹⁸ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Bk. 3, Ch. 10.6

¹⁹ D.E. Hiebert, *Mark: A Portrait of the Servant*, p. 412

of the four Gospel narratives (~175 AD). Tertullian refers to Mark 16:19 around 215 AD,²⁰ and Tregelles reports²¹ that Hippolytus (~235 AD) quotes Mark 16:18-19 at least twice. In Cyprian's account of the 7th Council of Carthage (256 AD), he records a strong allusion made by Vincentus of Thibarus to Mark 16:17-18.²² The Apostolic Constitutions (3rd-4th c. AD) quote Mark 16:16,²³ as well as alluding to Mark 16:15 twice elsewhere. Macarius Magnes (~390 AD) reports that Mark 16:18 was an object of attack by the Neoplatonist Porphyry or his student Hierocles (whose works are generally dated about a century earlier), discussing both their objections to the message of the verse (but not its authenticity) and Macarius' own defense of the same.²⁴ The Syrian patristic Aphraates (~345 AD) cites the ending as well,²⁵ showing that it was accepted within Syriac Christianity.

Probably the earliest objector to Mark 16:9-20 was Eusebius, who reported that most of the Greek manuscripts with which he was familiar lacked these verses.²⁶ His statement, however, comes within the framework of his attempt to harmonize the Gospel accounts, and Eusebius' reasoning for supporting the deletion on the basis of his harmonization was based upon evidence which was not as strong as he believed it to be.²⁷ It should not be surprising that the manuscripts with which Eusebius would be familiar should largely lack the longer ending, as they were Alexandrian in origin, and in fact were probably closely related to Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, which have been suggested by some to be actual original copies from among the fifty Eusebius prepared for Emperor Constantine in or around 315 AD.²⁸ Eusebius would likely have lacked much access to the wider catholic body of manuscripts available elsewhere in the Empire and which did contain the disputed ending, which were used by the likes of Irenaeus and Papias. Further, Eusebius' objection is presented as one of two options for harmonization, with the other actually being an argument based upon punctuating Mark 16:9 in a certain way so as to attain what Eusebius considered to be sufficient harmonization. This suggests that Eusebius himself was not only aware of the ending, but that it also existed in a greater body of manuscripts than his prior statement would suggest, else he would likely have just dismissed the verses as false and been done with them altogether.

Jerome (~395 AD) is often pointed to as another important patristic who objected to Mark 16:9-20. However, as Burgon pointed out, Jerome's statement is little more than a verbatim restatement of Eusebius' objection, and it is doubtful that it has much independent determining value. This is further diminished when we note that, in practice, Jerome certainly showed no objections to Mark 16:9-20, quoting Mark 16:14 in his writings and including it in his Vulgate revision of the Old Latin. Remember also that Jerome revised the Latin with Greek manuscripts in his possession, and it stands to reason that if the passage had been lacking in the Greek he was using, that he would not have retained it in the Latin which he was revising. This would suggest

²⁰ Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, Ch. 2.1

²¹ S.P. Tregelles, *An Account of the Printed Text*, p. 252

²² *The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian*, Statement of Vincentus of Thibarus

²³ *Apostolic Constitutions*, Bk. 6, Sec. 15

²⁴ Macarius Magnes, *Apocritus*, Chs. 16 and 24 respectively

²⁵ Aphraates, *Demonstration One: Of Faith*, Sec. 17

²⁶ Eusebius, *Questions to Marinum*, Ppg. 1

²⁷ See J. Morison, *A Practical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, pp. 468-469

²⁸ Metzger, *op. cit.*, p. 24

that a fair share of the Greek manuscripts to which he had access contained the long ending, even despite his repetition of Eusebius' charge.

The copious citation of this ending by many other patristics helps to confirm that the general view of Christians in the first several centuries of Christian history was to accept these verses as genuine and consider them to have equal authority with the rest of Mark's Gospel and Scripture. Burgon provides an extensive list of patristics and literary works, in addition to those already mentioned, which quote or allude to these verses: The *Acta Pilati* and the heretic Celsus from the third century; the Syriac Table of Canons, Didymus, the Syriac Acts of the Apostles, Leontius, Pseudo-Ephraem, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius, Ambrose, Augustine (who cites them in several Resurrection sermons, showing its broad acceptance in the Western lectionary), and Chrysostom in the fourth century; and by Leo, Nestorius, Cyril of Alexandria, Patricius, Marius Mercator, Hesychius, Gregentius, Prosper, John of Thessalonica, and Modestus in the fifth and sixth centuries.²⁹

When we weigh all of this together, there would, to the unbiased observer, seem to be an overwhelming force of evidence from the Greek witness, the other ancient versions, and the patristic writers in favor of the inclusion of Mark 16:9-20 and its acceptance as genuine Scripture. Yet, despite all this, Critical Text supporters still find other objections on which to try and fall back.

The Internal Evidences

In addition to flawed Westcott-Hortian presuppositions, Critical Texters also direct their attention to many supposed inconsistencies between the style of Mark 16:9-20 and the rest of Mark's Gospel. It is argued from these theorized stylistic differences that the "original" ending of Mark was lost, and was replaced sometime in the mid-2nd century with the present "long" ending. This argument is buttressed by pointing to the concurrent "shorter ending" which, as was noted above, is found in a small number of later Greek manuscripts, but which is completely lacking in any patristic references and in other ancient versions except for a single Old Latin exemplar (which itself suffers from the same "oldest is [not] best" problem as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus have). The shorter ending is not itself proposed as a serious authentic contender as the "real" ending of Mark, but is used to demonstrate that there were scribes who prepared their own endings for this Gospel, and thus it is supposed that this lends merit to the Critical arguments against the longer ending as being itself a scribal addition.

Of course, this does beg the question somewhat. The reasoning is circular in that for the Critical argument to be believable, one must already accept that the longer ending was indeed a scribal addition of the mid-2nd century. Only by presupposing this can the claim that the fact of a scribal addition of the 6th century adds any weight to the scribal addition claim for the longer ending have any standing. If one does not accept that the longer ending was added in the mid-2nd century as a pious fraud, then there is no reason to assume that a 6th century addition necessarily supports the existence of a theorized 2nd century analogue.

²⁹ These coming from J. Burgon, *The Revision Revised*, p. 423

And what of this claim that the longer ending was added to replace the "lost original" ending of Mark? We should note that the claim that this occurred in the mid-2nd century is little more than a blind guess on the part of the Westcott-Hort crowd, and one which is designed to try to explain away the appearance of patristic quotations of these verses from the period **preceding** the testimony of the supposed "oldest and best" Alexandrian exemplars. The Critical Text supporters invest much in the authority of these exemplars, primarily Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, both from the mid-to-late 4th century. To have patristic writers from two hundred years **previous** citing and referring to these verses upsets the apple cart, so to speak. It causes the Critics' conviction to fit because it undercuts the textual authority of the exemplars. Thus, the reaction on the part of Westcott-Hortians is to simply invent the claim that this ending **must** have been added in the mid-2nd century, around the time when these verses first begin to be quoted extensively. In other words, they are trying to force the data to fit their theories, instead of questioning whether the underlying bases for their theories might be incorrect.

And of course, the evidence we have available renders the "pious addition" charge little more than wishful thinking. We've seen that it is likely that a patristic from even earlier than this period, from the turn of the 1st/2nd centuries, alluded to Mark 16:18 because of the peculiar reference to the poison-drinking experience of Justin Barsabbas which was recorded. Further, Mark 16:9-20 enjoys the support of catholicity, being found in numerous ancient versions, and being widely distributed across the whole of the ancient Christian world and in the vast bulk of the Greek manuscriptal evidence. As well, patristics from all across the Empire support the long ending. Where the "pious addition" argument fails is that it lacks an explanation for how a scribal insertion managed to become so widespread across the whole ancient world and find enough support to be copied along with the rest of Mark on so numerous of occasions as to enjoy the predominance it has today. Why is the opposing evidence supporting the section's exclusion only found in and around Egypt and in a tiny number of versions (and then only partial) based upon the Alexandrian line?

In recourse against the logical paucity of their position, Critical Texters such as Metzger have supposed a number of internal stylistic evidences which purport to show that the longer ending is different from the rest of Mark, and could not have been produced by the same writer. A succinct summary of the arguments along this line are provided by Metzger,

"The long ending, though present in a variety of witnesses, some of them ancient, must also be judged by internal evidence to be secondary. For example, the presence of seventeen non-Marcian words or words used in a non-Marcian sense; the lack of a smooth juncture between verses 8 and 9 (the subject in vs. 8 is the women, whereas Jesus is the presumed subject in vs. 9); and the way in which Mary is identified in verse 9 even though she has been mentioned previously (vs. 1) -- all these features indicate that the section was added by someone who knew a form of Mark which ended abruptly with verse 8 and who wished to provide a more appropriate conclusion."³⁰

Probably the most rigorous of these to deal with would be the first, Metzger's claim concerning the non-Marcian words in the long ending. However, upon investigation, this argument is not nearly as convincing as some would prefer it to be. Holland presents a very solid

³⁰ Metzger, *op. cit.*, p. 227

refutation of Metzger's argument on this point.³¹ He notes that, while it is true that Mark 16:9-20 contains a number of word forms which are not found elsewhere in Mark (all of the "unique" words **are** forms of words found elsewhere), this is not exactly a singular phenomenon in the New Testament. Out of the 183 words in the Greek text of the longer ending, 53 do not appear elsewhere in the Gospel of Mark, and 21 do not appear elsewhere in the entirety of the New Testament. While this seems to be strong evidence in favor of Metzger's argument, this large number of unique words in such a relatively short body of text, it is not so. Holland points out that Luke 1:1-12, a passage of similar length, there are 20 words or word forms which are unique to that portion of text alone in the New Testament. Further, the Gospel of Mark outside of the longer ending contains no less than 102 words or word forms which are unique to this book alone. Likewise, the other three Gospels all contain numerous unique words or word forms (Matthew with 137, Luke with 312, and John with 114). Hence, unique variance in any portion of Mark (or elsewhere in the New Testament, for that matter) is certainly not sufficient evidence upon which to base a claim such as the Critical Texters make concerning Mark 16:9-20. Bruce Terry also provides a similar, though much more in-depth, analysis of Marcan vocabulary and style which similarly arrives at the conclusion that the typical Critical objections to Mark 16:9-20 on this point are quite overstated.³²

Concerning Metzger's other arguments against the long ending's authenticity, they are quite minor and easily dispensed with. He argues that the disjuncture between verses 8 and 9 point to a later addition tacked onto an abrupt (or lost) ending at v. 8. Yet, there are several examples of similar disjunctions throughout the Gospel accounts, in which the subject, location, etc. change drastically within the narratives. In the narratives of Matthew and Mark, we see that Peter is shown to be following the group that had arrested Jesus (Matthew 26:58, Mark 14:54), after which unrelated material is presented, and then the narratives return to Peter's denial of Christ (Matthew 26:60-75, Mark 14:66-72). This is a break in the flow of the story concerning Peter, in which his narrative account is interrupted by non-related material. Another example would be found in Mark 5:22-43, where we find the healing of the woman with the issue of blood contained within the narrative of Christ's raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead. There is a strong break in the flow of the story at this point, with not even an attempt to integrate the nested story into the greater point of the resurrection of the girl. Both of these represent disjunctures as "egregious" as that which occurs between Mark 16:8 and 9, yet neither are used to question the authenticity of these other passages.

The repetitive identification of Mary Magdalene in verse 9 is also pointed to by Metzger. However, as Holland points out,³³ the fact that there was another Mary (the mother of James) identified along with Mary Magdalene in verse 1 would seem to require a specific reidentification of Mary Magdalene in verse 9 to distinguish her as the particular Mary to whom the risen Savior appeared. Of course, the fact that she is identified further as the one from whom seven demons were cast is not unique to this passage, finding repetition in Luke 8:2. As such, these Critical objections to Mark 16:9-20 do not seem to have any real validity.

³¹ T. Holland, *Crowned With Glory: The Bible From Ancient Text to Authorized Version*, pp. 231-234

³² See Terry's online article at <http://bible.ovc.edu/terry/articles/mkendsty.htm>

³³ Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 230

Conclusions

It is difficult to understand why Critical text supports are so enamored with the removal of Mark 16:9-20 from the Word of God. As seen above, the external evidence from the Greek witness is strongly in favor of their retention. The witness of other ancient versions strongly sides with this passage. Even the internal evidence, so much relied upon to support failed Critical arguments from the external, turns out to be very unconvincing. Yet, Critical text supporters continue to count the exclusion of Mark 16:9-20 as the "scholarly" position to take - any other makes you an uneducated bumpkin or a purposeful obscurant. In their attitudes and methodology, many of these Critics (and not just on this single issue) are very much like the evolutionists. Evolutionists will claim that their theory is supported by "mountains of scientific evidence," yet they cannot produce a single piece of this evidence which will stand up to the test of reasoned and scientific inquiry. Further, practically the entire abiogenetic foundation of evolutionary theory of origins rests upon arguments which can be debunked by appeal to knowledge gained from undergraduate science courses. Likewise, Critical text supporters will cite "the scholars" and "mountains of evidence" to support their positions, but will inevitably fall back onto some version of the less-than-cogent "oldest is best" argument, and will usually completely disregard other evidences (such as patristic quotations, etc.) which are destructive to their reconstructions.

Regardless, the Christian who desires the entire council of God need not fear that Mark 16:9-20 does not belong there. When all the Critical text supporters can offer are circular reasoning and partial evidences spun to their satisfaction, there is really no reason for the practical Christian to give much credence to their arguments.