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Why it should be that virtually only two Greek manuscripts (ο1 Ξ and ο3 Β) fail to include the last twelve verses of Mark’s Gospel has puzzled exegetes of the New Testament and textual critics ever since these particular witnesses were published towards the end of the nineteenth century. A string of special studies stretching back to Dean Burgon and including, more recently, W. R. Farmer (whose SNTS monograph on the topic in 1974 is about to be updated), Joseph Hug, Kurt Aland and Paul Mirecki, has dealt with this textual crux. If T. C. Skeat’s theories in the centennial issue of this Journal are correct (‘The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Vaticanus, and Constantin’ JTS, NS 50 (1999) pp. 581–625), then the two principal Greek witnesses share a common provenance as well as date. If these two were among the fifty copies of the Bible commissioned by Constantine, and if all of the others produced under this decree likewise concluded the Gospel of Mark at 16:8 (with or without a gap following), it is interesting to speculate why the shorter ending had so little impact on the manuscript tradition thereafter.

Despite the relatively meagre and narrow text-critical support for the shorter ending, most scholars accept the special importance and reliability of the two manuscripts supporting the shorter text and argue that, whatever the original first-century author’s intention and extent of the composition of the ‘authentic’ text of the autograph may have been, we cannot now reconstruct that autograph beyond 16:8. The longer ending, the shorter ending and the varying combinations of both additions, are seen as attempts from the second century onwards to bring this truncated gospel to a satisfying conclusion.

By contrast, for those who still maintain the reliability and originality of the majority text and the text behind the English Authorized Version, namely that the last twelve verses were written by canonical Mark, and thereby go against the tide of critical editions from 1881 and modern scholarship, then obviously the exegesis of the verses will be taken alongside and equivalent to the exegesis of the rest of the Gospel. For mainstream scholarship, however, the longer ending is often treated as a mere appendix.

This monograph refuses to take the ending of Mark as a hastily assembled epitome of certain Easter stories and treats Mark 16: 9–20 within its own context—a second-century composition that does justice to that context. The title without the subtitle would be meaningless, for the book is an analysis of the origin and meaning of Mark 16: 9–20. Kelhoffer argues that this pericope was written by a single author using oral materials and the four canonical Gospels to create a paragraph with a literary unity and with theological significance. According to Kelhoffer therefore, the writer of this ending seems to have been familiar with a four-fold collection of gospels and, despite its early date (AD 130–150), treated these four with a special respect and authority.

The book emerged from its author’s doctoral thesis prepared at the University of Chicago under Adela Yarbro Collins. Dr. Kelhoffer has read widely and wisely and has produced a technical, well-researched and readable monograph which deserves to be taken seriously. Like many a dissertation, he begins with a survey of scholarship on the topic. That historical introduction forms his first chapter. Christian Bernard Amphoux’s name is absent, yet it is he who has posited that the longer ending is no mere conclusion to Mark alone, but the climax to a four-fold gospel canon in the so-called Western order in which Mark’s Gospel comes fourth. (See C.-B. Amphoux, ‘Les finales de Marc’ in Le Monde de la Bible, 47 (1987), esp. pp. 42f. and id., ‘La finale longue de Marc: un épilogue des quatre évangiles’ in C. Focant (ed.), The Synoptic Gospels, Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism (BETL 110) Leuven: Peeters and Leuven University Press, 1993, pp. 548–55.)

Chapter two is entitled ‘Literary Dependence’. Kelhoffer has no doubt about the non-Markan authorship of these twelve verses and sets out his reasons, verse by verse, as he analyses their language and style. He does this far more thoroughly than either Farmer did in his monograph or I, from a different standpoint from that of Farmer, was able to do in an article in 1971 (TZ, 27, pp. 255–62). This is a clear and thorough treatment of vocabulary, syntax and usage.

Chapter three turns to literary dependence in which links with the other canonical Gospels and Acts are explored. The chapter following then looks at other links by comparing the longer ending with analogous literary forms.

It is only when we reach chapter five that we find the significance of the monograph’s title. The mission of the Church required and expected signs to authenticate the kerygma. Two
of the miracles referred to in this longer ending, the picking up of serpents and the drinking of poison, are among such signs and these occur elsewhere outside the New Testament proper. Kelhofer identifies miracles comparable to those two in other second-century writings such as the apocryphal Acts, and in the apologetic writers of this and the following century. This is the context and the period into which this ending belongs. In this way the author locates and justifies the significance of this particular ending to Mark’s Gospel. Had it survived as a free-standing unit it would probably have been treated as an apocryphon from a long-lost gospel and been included alongside the Egerton Fragments or Oxyrhynchos Papyrus 840 in collections of early Christian apocrypha. As it is, written as part of a canonical text, it has inevitably been treated as if it were a piece of first-century writing like the Gospel to which it was attached. In this book Kelhofer, however, does this ending justice by explaining its purpose not as a mere rounding-off, by a writer from a later generation, of a canonical text, but as a witness in its own right to an important aspect of the early Church’s beliefs and teaching.

The two specific miracles in this ending are treated to extended investigations of a ‘history of religions’ type in a chapter apiece. In these, Greco-Roman and other contemporaneous depictions of serpents and drinking poison with impunity are explored.

This is an important study of a passage that excites perennial interest. It is well researched and well written. Its appearance enhances the prestigious series WUNT; we congratulate its author and the editors of the series.

J. K. ELLIOTT


This is a published version of a doctoral dissertation supervised by Professor H.-J. Venetz at the University of Freiburg, Switzerland. A refreshingly brief introduction sets the scene: there is some general methodological discussion under the heading ‘Die Relevanz der Diachronie und Der Synchronie’, a sketch of the state of the question concerning whether it is correct to think of Luke as the evangelist of women; and an outline of the structure of the book.

The body of the book falls into two main parts, the second of which is allowed to carry the conclusion. The first part has the heading ‘Die galiläischen Frauen und die lukanischen Konzeptionen von Nachfolge und Beiztsverzicht’. It begins with an exploration of what is to be the key text for the whole work, Luke 8:1–3. In the case of each block of text explored Bieberstein will pay careful attention to the place in the Lukian structure, with detailed and sometimes independent argumentation; to literary dependence and source questions; to text-critical issues (as relevant); to detailed exegesis of the text itself, as well as to larger thematic or formal considerations that may have a contribution to make. At the end of the detailed exegesis of Luke 8:1–3 she introduces what will become a key analytical concept for the book: the idea of a ‘broken concept’ (gebrochene Konzept). As travelling companions of Jesus the women are to be assigned naturally to the same category of wandering representatives of the message of the Kingdom (wandernde Jesusbotinnen) as the accompanying Twelve. And yet, in Luke’s representation, these women, unlike the men, far from having renounced all to follow Jesus, have their resources at their own disposal, indeed the travelling band is resourced from them. In the author’s view these are contradictory concepts, with the latter tending to cancel out the former. It is to this phenomenon that she gives the name ‘broken concept’. And it will be the agenda of the remainder of the first part of the book to clarify the significance of this situation. But before she moves on to do that she introduces another important idea, gleaned from a discussion of the narrative function of summaries in Luke (of which Luke 8:1–3 is one): summaries allow the reader to fill out gaps in the narrative with appropriately imagined content; summaries can both make gaps in the narrative visible and in a manner fill those very gaps. In the hands of one like Luke, summaries can be places where ideas that are important to the writer, but not at all consistently worked through, can surface. Until the passion account, the women introduced in Luke 8:1–3 will disappear entirely from sight, but 8:1–3 provide a key to break through the androcentric manner of telling that dominates for the intervening materials.

Examination of the literary context, Luke 8:1–21 (including synoptic parallels) yields only modest results. The focus in the section is sharply on ‘those who hear the word of God and do it’, which must be taken as applying to the women of 8:1–3. But Luke has managed to drop an explicit mention of women in his editing: women hover between visibility and invisibility.