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The Long Ending of Mark in Codex Bezae: Second-Century Tradition or Fourth-Century Revision?

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Abstract

A review of the literature on Codex Bezae reveals a certain consensus regarding the date of its divergent readings, namely, that they represent in essence a very old tradition likely dating to some point in the second century. This view of Bezae's readings as transmitting a second-century non-mainstream tradition has been imputed to its version of the Markan long ending, which has likewise been regarded as a very ancient tradition. In this paper, I examine the four distinctive readings of Bezae's Markan long ending — readings not attested in the Greek mainstream or other minority Greek traditions, observing that these readings do have parallels in the Latin version and, moreover, bear telltale marks of having arisen first, not in Greek, but in Latin translation prior to their rather clumsy appropriation into the Greek form we find in Codex Bezae. Considering that Bezae's version of the Markan long ending otherwise presents a rather conventional mainstream text, it is reasonable to conclude that its four exclusive parallels with the Latin version were imported later into its Greek text, presumably in a context in which the Latin version and its readings enjoyed a high level of prestige.