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Trajectories in the History of Textual Scholarship on Mark's Endings: A Reconsideration

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Abstract

Since its publication in 2000 James A. Kelhoffer's *Miracle and Mission* has become the point of departure concerning the history of scholarship on Mark's endings. His investigation starts with the Danish scholar Andreas Birch (1758–1829), who had explicitly mentioned the omission of Mark 16:9–20 in Codex Vaticanus. Kelhoffer's decision is understandable, since Birch was indeed the first scholar who pointed out Greek manuscript attestation of the shortest ending. What is missing, however, is attention given to textual scholarship on Mark's endings before Birch.

Our paper, then, reconsiders the history of textual scholarship on the issue of Mark's endings. Particular attention is given to the period from the sixteenth to the late-eighteenth century, when Birch discovered that Codex Vaticanus omits the traditional ending as found in the Textus Receptus. Although direct attestation of the omission in Greek manuscripts had been unknown to most scholars of that time, textual critics had long discussed the various Markan endings, informed as they were by ancient versions and patristic sources.

Our contribution presents the opinions of important scholars such as Erasmus, Simon, Mill, and Wettstein, which in many ways anticipate discussions persisting till today. It aims to provide an overview of the scholarly history of Mark's endings and to show the elements that led to the so-called "turning point" in the late-eighteenth century. Finally, by its use of digital tools and rapid digitisation projects, our study also sheds light on discussions about the application of Digital Humanities to historical investigations such as these.