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Contents

History of the Reception

Special Issue

The Transmission of Mark's Endings in Different Traditions and Languages

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edited by

Claire Clivaz,
Mina Monier,
and Dan Batovici

Was Salome at the Markan Tomb?
Another Ending to Mark's Gospel

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Although the NA28 text of Mark 16:1 states that three women (Mary Magdalene, Mary of James, and Salome) visited the empty tomb, there is significant variation on this detail in the earliest textual transmission. Salome is absent from the empty tomb in oldest Latin copy of Mark (Codex Bobiensis, dated 380–420 CE), as well as Codex Bezae (dated *c*.400 CE) and two other important Old Latin witnesses (Codex Colbertinus, VL 6, and Fragmenta Sangallensia, VL 16). Obviously Salome is not a participant in a minority textual strand of Mark 16. This paper explores potential editorial motives behind these variants, and suggests that ancient controversies about Salome and the perpetual virginity of Mary may have inspired some of the textual instability, to the point where a confident recovery of Mark's initial text is impossible in these verses. It will also raise the question of whether the varying names and number of women in 15:40–16:1 is connected to the broader problem of the endings of Mark.

Although it is somewhat known, it is not widely discussed that the number and names of women at Jesus's tomb vary in the oldest manuscripts of Mark 16.[1] The Nestle-Aland (NA28) text is usually understood to state that three women (Mary Magdalene, Mary of James, and Salome) visited the empty tomb, but there is significant variation on this detail in the earliest textual transmission. The oldest extant Latin copy of Mark's Gospel (Codex Bobiensis, VL 01, dated 380–420 CE[2]) states that only Mary Magdalene and Mary of *Joses* were at the empty tomb; Salome is also absent from the Markan empty tomb scene in Codex Bezae (dated *c*.400 CE)[3] and two other important Old Latin witnesses, Codex Colbertinus (VL 6)[4] and Fragmenta Sangallensia (VL 16).[5] Clearly there is uncertainty as to whether 'Mary of James' and 'Mary of Joses' were the same woman, and Salome is not a participant in a minority textual strand of Mark 16. What might be the cause of this unexpected textual variation that is so rarely addressed? This paper will explore the prob-

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1 For occasional mentions of the issue see Turner 1927, 13–14; Brown et al. 1978, 68n; Mann 1986, 658; Metzger 1994, 101.

2 Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, 1163 (= G.VII.15). See images at <https://bnuto.cultura.gov.it/biblioteca-digitale/manoscritti/> and CLA 465 record at <https://elmss.nuigalway.ie/catalogue/811>, these and other links last accessed 15 December 2022.

3 GA 05, Cambridge, University Library, Nn.2.41, see <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-NN-00002-00041/1>.

4 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Lat. 254, see <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8426051s>.

5 Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 1394, see <https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/csg/1394>.

lem, and consider several potential editorial motives in early Christianity that could have led to the creation of yet another ending to our oldest Gospel. The marked textual uncertainty around the women in these scenes may also shed some light on the broader problem of the ending(s) of Mark's Gospel.

Which Women? Conflicting Lists in Markan Manuscripts

To fully understand the scope of this textual problem, we must begin with Mark's introduction of the women at the scene of the cross in Mark 15:40. According to the NA28 text, the women who witness the crucifixion are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the lesser and Joses, and Salome (Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσῆτος μήτηρ καὶ Σαλώμη).[6] Subsequently in Mark 15:47, Mary Magdalene and Mary of **Joses** (Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰωσῆτος) see where Jesus's body is laid, and after the sabbath passes in 16:1, Mary Magdalene and Mary of **James** and Salome (Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ [τοῦ] Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη) buy spices and visit the tomb.

The change in how the second Mary is identified between Mark 15:47 and 16:1 (Mary of *Joses* vs. Mary of *James*) has created some interpretive confusion:[7] if we look at these two verses in isolation, Mary of Joses and Mary of James appear to be two different women. However, at the scene of the cross in 15:40 a few verses earlier, they are usually understood to be introduced as *one* woman named 'Mary the mother of James the lesser and of Joses' (Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσῆτος μήτηρ). Are 'Mary of Joses' and 'Mary of James' the same woman as this second Mary at the cross? If so, why does her designation change between Mark 15:47 and 16:1?[8] This question will prove

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6   In a minority view, Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσῆτος μήτηρ can be under-
     stood to refer to two separate women. See e.g. Pesch 1974, 385–386. This minority
     interpretation is ancient, as will be seen below.

7   See e.g. the comment of Brown et. al. 1978 at 71–72: 'If 15:40 was the original
     designation…the designations using the name of only one son in 15:47 and 16:1
     may be a type of shorthand. However, it has been suggested that the sequence was
     just the opposite and that 15:40 is a Marcan joining of the single-name designations
     in 16:1 and 15:47…There are difficulties in either approach and the possibility of a
     confusion of names is evident.'

8   Previous scholarship has attempted to solve the problem by theorizing an early Mar-
     kan redaction of multiple sources. See extended discussion in Pesch 1974. See also
     the comment of Ludger Schenke: 'ist es wahrscheinlich, daß V.40f durch einen Re-
     daktor, wohl Markus selbst, aus 15,47 und 16,1 zusammengestellt wurde…Vielmehr
     hat Markus aufgrund der beiden Frauenlisten in 15,47 und 16,1 eine neue, vollstän-
     digere Liste 15,40f geschaffen und so im Kontext vorwegnehmend die Spannungen
     zwischen 15,47 und 16,1 ausgeglichen. Erst von 15,40f her ist es uns möglich zu

crucial in our examination of the earliest manuscripts of the Markan tomb scene.

Although all modern editions and translations of Mark assume the above-mentioned form of text, here they mask a striking node of textual instability found throughout the transmission of Mark 15 and 16. Let us now turn our attention to the four oldest extant Markan manuscripts: Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century CE),[9] Codex Vaticanus (fourth century CE),[10] Codex Bobiensis (380–420 CE), and Codex Bezae (*c*.400 CE).[11] Each of these four manuscripts contain differing accounts of the Markan crucifixion and entombment scenes. As shown in Table 1, although the stories in these manuscripts differ considerably, they all make better sense than what is presented in the NA28 text.

Table 1. Comparison of Accounts of Crucifixion and Entombment in Mark.

Sinaiticus/GA 01 (4th cent. CE)	Vaticanus/GA 03 (4th cent. CE)	Bobiensis/VL 1 (4th/5th cent. CE)	Bezae/GA 05 (Gr.) (*c*.400 CE)
Mark 15:40: ησαν δε και γυναικες απο μακροθεν θεωρουσαι εν αις και μαρια η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η ιακωβου του μικρου και ιωση [C²: ιωσητος] μητηρ και σαλωμη	Mark 15:40: ησαν δε και γυναικες απο μακροθεν θεωρουσαι εν αις και μαριαμ η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η ιακωβου του μεικρου και **η** ιωσητος μητηρ και σαλωμη	Mark 15:40: *fuerunt et mulieres de longinquo spectantes in quibus fuit maria magdalene et maria iacobi minoris et iosetis mater et salome*	Mark 15:40: ησαν δε και γυναικες απο μακροθεν θεωρου-σαι εν αις ην μαρια μαγδαληνη και μαρια ιακωβου του μεικρου και ιωσητος μητηρ και σαλωμη[12]
And there were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were also Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Lesser and Jose [C²: *Joses*] and Salome.	And there were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were also Mary Magdalene and Mary **the** mother of Joses and Salome.	There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Lesser and Joses and Salome.	And there were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Lesser and Joses and Salome.

erkennen, daß der Evangelischen die beiden jeweils an zweiter Stelle der Listen 15,47 und 16,1 genannten Frauen für identisch hält.' See Schenke 1968, 27, 29.

9 GA 01, ℵ, London, British Library, Add. 43725, see <https://codexsinaiticus.org/>.

10 GA 03, B, Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. gr. 1209, see <https://digi.vatlib.it/mss/detail/Vat.gr.1209>; <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/notices/cote/67840/>

11 For a recent challenge to the palaeographic dating of manuscripts, see Nongbri 2018, 47–82.

12 The Latin side of Bezae follows the usual rendering where ϊωσητος is translated as *ioseph: maria magdalene et maria iacobi minoris et ioseph mater et salome.*

Mark 15:47–16:1: **15:47 om.** [C²: η δε μαρια η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η ιωσητος εθεωρουν που τεθιται και διαγενομε-νου του σαββατου] η δε [C² om. δε] μαρια η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η [C²: add του] ιακωβου και σαλωμη ηγορασαν αρωματα ινα ελθουσαι αλιψωσιν αυτον	Mark 15:47–16:1: η δε μαρια η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η ιωσητος εθεωρουν που τεθειται και διαγενομενου του σαββατου μαρια η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η του ιακωβου και σαλωμη ηγορασαν αρωματα ινα ελθουσαι αλειψωσιν αυτον	Mark 15:47–16:1: *maria autem mag-dalene et maria iosetis uiderunt ubi positus est et sabbato exacto abierunt et adtul-erunt aromata ut eum unguerent*	Mark 15:47–16:1: η δε μαρια μαγδαληνη και μαρια ιακωβου εθεασαντο τον τοπον οπου τεθιται και [om.] πορευθεισαι ηγορασαν αρωματα ινα αυτον αλιψωσιν[13]
[C²: *But Mary Magda-lene and Mary of Joses saw where he was laid. And when the Sabbath had passed*] But [C² *om.*] Mary Magdalene and Mary [C²: *the one*] of James and Salome bought spices so that they might come to anoint him…	But Mary Magdalene and Mary of Joses saw where he was laid. And when the Sabbath had passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary the [one] of James and Salome bought spices so that they might come to anoint him …	But Mary Magda-lene and Mary of Joses saw where he was laid. And at the end of the Sabbath, **they** went and brought spices in order to anoint him…	But Mary Mag-dalene and **Mary of James** saw the place where he was laid. And [om.] **going away**, **they** bought spices so that they might anoint him…

When comparing these four manuscripts, most noticeable is that the first hand of Codex Sinaiticus has omitted Mark 15:47 completely. This is likely a parablepsis due to the duplication of the words μαρια η μαγδαληνη και μαρια η between 15:47 and 16:1 (15:47 is added in by a later corrector). Perhaps coincidentally, the first hand's omission of the entombment scene solves the problem of the discrepancy between Mary of Joses and Mary of James, since the phrase 'Mary of Joses' does not appear anywhere in the text.

In Codex Vaticanus, the Markan narrative contains a small but important difference from the NA28 reading. An unexpected additional feminine nom-inative article (ἡ) has been included in 15:40, with the result that the second woman is more easily interpreted as two women: 'Mary of James the lesser, and *the* mother of Joses'. Apparently there are four women at the cross in this manuscript: Mary Magdalene, and Mary of James the Lesser, and the mother of Joses, and Salome (μαρίαμ ἡ μαγδαληνὴ καὶ μαρία ἡ ἰακωβου του μικρου

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13 An equivalent reading is found on the Latin side of Bezae, as well as the fifth-cen-tury *Fragmenta Sangallensia*. David Parker does not address this reading of Mark 15:47–16:1 in his study of Codex Bezae; see Parker 1992.

καὶ **ἡ** ἰωσῆτος μήτηρ καὶ σαλώμη).[14] Vaticanus has sometimes been thought to have been produced in Egypt;[15] interestingly, a distinction between 'Mary of James' and 'the mother of Joses' is also reflected in the majority Coptic versions.[16] Although this Greek variant may well be accidental, it should be underlined that a text distinguishing 'Mary of James' from 'the mother of Joses' creates major implications for the Markan entombment and empty tomb narrative. In this alternate account, 'Mary of James' (16:1) can be correlated with 'Mary of James the Lesser' (15:40), but she is now more distinct from the 'mother of Joses' (presumably the 'Mary of Joses' listed in Mark 15:47). Apparently Vaticanus and the Coptic provide a divergent but coherent story, which actually makes better sense than our received text; the additional feminine article helps to resolve the ambiguity of whether Mary of Joses was a different woman than Mary of James.

The Old Latin Codex Bobiensis, copied in North Africa in the late fourth or early fifth century, is best known as the sole Greek or Latin manuscript of Mark to conclude with only the Shorter Ending (although the manuscript contains many other unique variants as well).[17] Here we find the usual list of women at the cross in Mark 15:40 (*maria magdalene et maria iacobi minoris et iosetis mater et salome*),[18] but its transcription of Mark 15:47–16:1 is unexpected: Mary Magdalene and Mary of Joses are at the entombment, but no

14 The additional article is also found in Codex Athous Laurae (GA 044, Ψ, see footnote 24 below). See the similar conclusion of Adela Yarbro Collins: 'B Ψ attest a reading in which the article precedes the second name, with the result that the text refers to four women instead of three' (Yarbro Collins 2007, 772).

15 For discussion see Porter 1962.

16 The Bohairic reads ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲓⲁⲕⲱⲃⲟⲥ ⲡⲓⲕⲟⲩⲭⲓ. ⲛⲉⲙ ⲑⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲓⲱⲥⲏⲧⲟⲥ (see Horner 1969a, 472). The Sahidic reads ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲧⲁ ⲡⲓⲕⲟⲩⲓ ⲛ̄ⲓⲁⲕⲱⲃⲟⲥ. ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲓⲱⲥⲏ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲥⲁⲗⲱⲙⲏ (see Horner 1969b, 630). Unlike the Greek text, in Coptic the word ⲙⲁ(ⲁ)ⲩ appears in between the names ⲓⲁⲕⲱⲃⲟⲥ and ⲓⲱⲥⲏⲧⲟⲥ. This indicates that two separate women are most likely in view. Notably, since the Sahidic list differentiates between ⲁⲩⲱ and ⲙⲛ̄, it apparently indicates a different list of three women. In this case, 'Mary of James the Lesser' and 'the mother of Joses' are still distinct women, but the latter is best understood as 'the mother of Joses *and Salome*.'

17 However, several other witnesses do attest to scribal consciouness of a Markan ending with the *conclusio brevior*; see Clivaz 2020. For the most recent treatments of Codex Bobiensis, see Clivaz 2021; Larsen 2021; Larsen 2018, 116–118; and Houghton 2016, 9–10, 22–23 and 210. Clivaz concludes that 'Codex k bzw. VL 1 ein wichtiger Teil des Rätsels ist, das der Schluss des MkEv in den Handschriften des 4. Jh.s aufgibt, gleichen Ranges mit GA 01 und GA 03' (Clivaz 2021, 84); Larsen underlines that 'Nearly every folio of Codex Bobiensis contains remarkable readings' (Larsen 2021, 111).

18 Due to the lack of the definite article in Latin, this text is more ambiguous as to whether three or four women are referenced.

additional list of women is provided at Mark 16:1.[19] Instead, directly after the two Marys see where the body is placed, the text simply reads: 'at the end of the Sabbath, they went and brought spices in order to anoint him…' (*et sabbato exacto abierunt et adtulerunt aromata ut eum unguerent*). Since there is no change of subject between 15:47 and 16:1, apparently the two Marys are the only actors here—resulting in a Markan tomb scene where Salome is not present (see fig. 1).[20]

The textual uncertainty is compounded further by Codex Bezae (copied *c*.400 CE) which provides yet another version of the Markan story. Instead of the expected text where Mary of Joses witnesses Jesus's entombment, Mary of *James* is now the second woman listed in Mark 15:47. She and Mary Magdalene then depart to purchase spices and visit the empty tomb (see fig. 2).
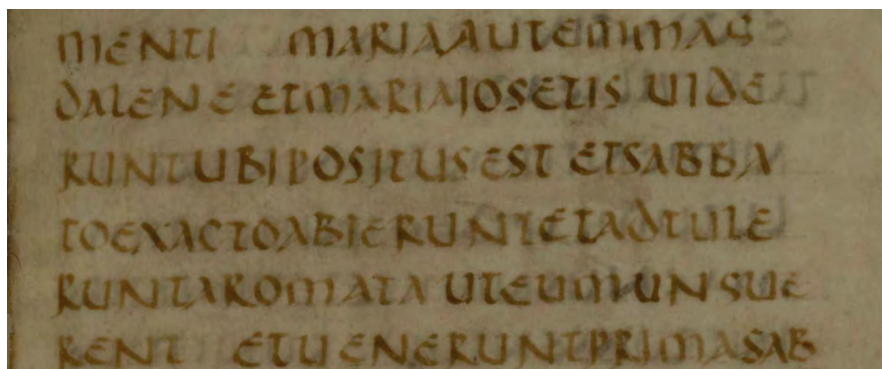
Fig. 1. Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino, G.VII.15 (Codex Bobiensis/VL 1), f. 40r, © Ministero della Cultura, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino, divieto di riproduzione.
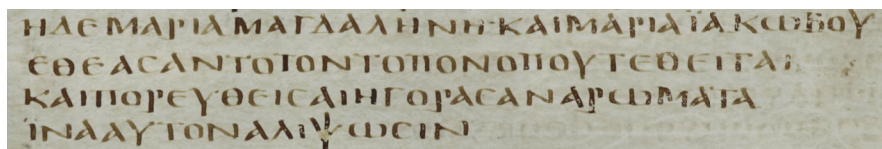
Fig. 2. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Nn.2.41 (Codex Bezae/GA 05), f. 346v, courtesy of the Cambridge University Library.

19 As pointed out in Clivaz 2021, 71.
20 It should be noted that liturgical lections usually make a distinction between Mark 15:47 and 16:1. In manuscripts where the women's names are not listed at 16:1, these characters may have seemed anonymous as the lection was read. This may have been Eusebius's understanding of the text; however, for another possibility, see footnote 28 below.

As with Codex Bobiensis, there is no additional list of women in 16:1; consequently, Salome is absent from the Markan tomb in this manuscript as well. Yet Bezae's shorter version of the text again makes good sense: the first two women listed at the cross (Mary Magdalene and Mary of James)[21] become the primary actors in both the entombment and empty tomb scenes.[22] Oddly, Codex Bezae also omits the usual mention of the passing of the sabbath (i.e. the entire phrase διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη is absent).[23]

Ambiguity in the text of Mark 15:40–16:1 is not limited to our earliest copies. The additional ἡ at Mark 15:40 is found in several other Greek manuscripts (including the eighth- or ninth-century majuscule Codex Athous Laurae[24]), and Salome is not mentioned at the tomb in the Old Latin manuscripts Codex Colbertinus[25] and Fragmenta Sangallensia. Salome's name is also absent from the Markan tomb in several important patristic quotations. Origen's *Homily 7 on Exodus* states that *Ibi namque invenies scriptum, quia 'vespere Sabbati, quae lucescit in prima Sabbati, venit Maria Magdalene et Maria Jacobi ad sepulcrum et invenerunt lapidem revolutum a monumento'* ('For there you will find it written, indeed, "on the evening of the Sabbath, which dawns on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and Mary of James came to the

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21 Due to the lack of feminine definite articles on both the Greek and Latin sides in 15:40, Bezae's list of women (μαρια μαγδαληνη και μαρια ιακωβου του μεικρου και ιωσητος μητηρ και σαλωμη/*maria magdalene et maria iacobi minoris et ioseph mater et salome*) can be understood to reference either three or four women. Either way the list is interpreted, the first two women listed at the cross in Bezae are the primary actors at the entombment and the empty tomb.

22 In the Greek text of Bezae, at 16:3 the two women uniquely exclaim, τι σημιον αποκαλυψ[ει] τον λιθον απο της θυρας του μνημιου ('what sign will uncover the stone from the entrance of the tomb?'). See Strutwolf et al. 2021, 823.

23 A similar omission is found in the fifth-century Fragmenta Sangallensia, where Salome is also missing. See Metzger's explanation below. Eldon Epp has argued for an 'anti-Judaic tendency' in Codex Bezae and other witnesses of the D-Text; see Epp, 1966. Many thanks to the anonymous reviewer for suggesting that Bezae's omission of the passing of the sabbath could be connected to this tendency. Epp's perspective has since been challenged; see e.g. Rius-Camps and Read-Heimerdinger 2004–2009.

24 GA 044; Athos, Great Lavra B' 52. See <https://manuscripts.csntm.org/manuscript/View/GA_044>.

25 Codex Colbertinus explicitly lists *maria magdalene et maria iacobi* at 16:1 (an apparent duplication of the names *Maria autem magdalene et maria iacobi et ioseph* listed at 15:47). Since the women are uniquely named in both Markan verses, this manuscript provides the most glaring omission of Salome in the textual tradition. However, the women's names may simply have been duplicated at 16:1 for clarity in the liturgical lection (see footnote 20 above).

sepulcher and found the stone rolled away from the tomb"'; cf. Matt 28:1, Mark 16:1–4).[26] In a puzzling statement, Eusebius of Caesarea says that there is no list of names specifying which women encountered the young man in Mark 16: '…μετὰ τὴν τοῦ νεανίσκου πρὸς τὰς τελευταίας γυναῖκας ὁμιλίαν, ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα οὐκ ἐμφέρονται, ἐπιλέγει ὁ Μάρκος · ‹Καὶ ἀκούσασαι ἔφυγον, καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπον, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ›' ('immediately after what the young man said to the final group of women, whose names are not given, Mark adds: "When they heard that, they ran away and said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid"').[27] But according to an eleventh-century homily of John Xiphilinus, Eusebius's Greek text of Mark 15:47–16:1 was similar to that of Codex Bezae. Apparently Salome did not prepare spices in Eusebius's version of the story:

> Εὐσέβιός φησιν ὁ Καισαρείας, ὡς Μαρία μὲν ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου ἡτοίμασαν ἀρώματα· οὐκ αὐταὶ δέ εἰσιν αἱ πρωὶ ἐλθοῦσαι ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου, ἀλλ᾽ ἄλλαι ἀνώνυμοι·
>
> Eusebius of Caesarea says that Mary Magdalene and Mary of James prepared spices; but these are not the women who came 'early, after the sun had risen', but other, unnamed women.[28]

26 Origen, *Homily on Exodus* 7:7, trans. Rufinus (PG 12:347). In this passage Origen seems to be creatively conflating Matt 28 with Mark 16; nevertheless the words *ibi namque invenies scriptum quia* may suggest a direct gospel citation.

27 Eusebius, *To Marinus* 7 (PG 22:996). Greek text and translation in Pearse 2010, 198–199. Pearse notes that other works of Eusebius (*To Marinus* 4:2 and the Greek fragment of *Nicetas-Marinus* 8) provide the usual list of women in Mark 16:1. He concludes, 'This is puzzling…the epitomator of *To Marinus* 4 will have known what is now the received text and changed this passage in accordance with that; and the epitome used by Nicetas will have been either inconsistent or interpolated in fr. 8 with the word ὀνομαστί. Surprising though this suggestion is, it would seem even more surprising for Eusebius to make a mistake over this point' (199n). The comment of John Xiphilinus strengthens the argument that *To Marinus* 4:2 and *Nicetas-Marinus* 8 have been altered in the course of their transmission.

28 Greek text in Pearse 2010, 220–221; my translation. If Xiphilinus has accurately preserved Eusebius's text here, the phrases ἡτοίμασαν ἀρώματα and πρωὶ… ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου suggest that when discussing the text of 'Mark,' Eusebius has read the 'unnamed women' of Luke 24:1 into a rendition of Mark 15:47–16:1 where Salome was absent. See also the following comment from Possinus's Greek Catena on Mark, which extends the quotation provided by Xiphilinus: Εὐσεβιος φησιν ὁ Καισαρείας ὡς Μαρία μὲν ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμη ἡτοίμασαν ἀρώματα…ταῦτα οὖν, φησι, περὶ ἑτέρων ὁ Μάρκος ἱστορεῖ γυναικῶν ἀνωνύμως· οὐδὲ γὰρ οἷόν τε καὶ τὴν Μαγδαληνὴν μετὰ τοσαύτας θέας ἡλίου ἀνατείλαντος ἀπορεῖν καὶ ἀγνοεῖν τίς ἀποκυλίσειε τὸν λίθον. ('Eusebius of Caesarea says that Mary of Magdala, James's Mary and Salome prepared spices… That, then, is what [Eusebius] says Mark recounts about different, unnamed, wom-

Even more striking is a quotation from Jerome's *Against Helvidius,* authored 383 CE. According to Jerome, *Marcus ponit: Maria autem Magdalene et Maria Jacobi et Josetis viderunt ubi poneretur et transacto sabbato emerunt aromata et venerunt ad monumentum…* ('Mark states: "and Mary Magdalene and Mary of James and Joses beheld where he was laid. And when the sabbath was past, they bought spices, that they might come and anoint him…"').[29] Jerome's quotation of Mark here is particularly odd,[30] because it differs so significantly from Jerome's own Vulgate translation of Mark 16:1 where Salome is explicitly named at the empty tomb.[31] Also intriguing is the fifth-century Old Latin *Antiphonale Mozarabicum,* which states that *maria magdalene et maria iacobi emerunt aromata et uenientes ut unguerent iehesum* ('Mary Magdalene and Mary of James bought spices, and came to anoint Jesus').[32] This matches the Bezan version of Mark 16:1, where (unlike the two Marys in Matthew's Gospel) the women buy spices for the purpose of anointing Jesus. Therefore in several important Markan manuscripts and related patristic quotations, only Mary Magdalene and the second Mary from the cross see where the body is laid, then buy spices and visit the tomb.[33]

A broader text-critical survey demonstrates that the greatest variation in the textual transmission concerns the identity of the second Mary at the entombment. Below is a list of the *seventeen* different descriptions of the woman—or women—who might appear alongside Mary Magdalene in Mark 15:47:[34]

en—because it would not have been possible that, after such great sights, the Magdalene should after sunrise be perplexed, and not know who would roll back the stone.') Cited and translated in Pearse 2010, 228–231. Notably, Salome has been added to the text of 'Eusebius' in Possinus's rendition. See also the Extract From the Catena of Nicetas 6, cited and translated in Pearse 2010, 193–197.

29 Jerome, *De Perpetua Virginitate B. Mariae: Adversus Helvidium*, 12, PL 23:204. Here Jerome seems to be quoting a manuscript of Mark with an alternate form of Latin text; see further treatment below.

30 The otherwise-unattested reference to *Maria Jacobi et Josetis* may indicate that Jerome was freely translating from memory, or perhaps from a Greek version such as what is preserved in 565.

31 Jerome's Vulgate reading of Mark 15:47–16:1: *Maria autem Magdalene et Maria Ioseph aspiciebant ubi poneretur. Et cum transisset sabbatum, Maria Magdalene et Maria Jacobi et Salome emerunt aromata ut venientes ungerent Jesum. Et valde mane una sabbatorum, veniunt ad monumentum, orto jam sole…* Latin text in Nestle 1971, 135.

32 *Antiphonale Mozarabicum*, 190-R, 143. Latin text in Haelewyck 2018, 788.

33 The name of the second Mary varies in these witnesses. In Bobiensis she is 'Mary of Joses', in Colbertinus she is 'Mary of James and Joseph', and in Fragmenta Sangallensia, just as in Bezae, she is 'Mary of James'. Origen and the *Antiphonale Mozarabicum* refer to 'Mary of James', and Jerome refers to 'Mary of James and Joses'.

34 For additional detail, see Strutwolf et al. 2021, 818–819.

[a]	μαρια [η] ιωσητος	GA 01ᶜ² 03 019 037 044*
	(μαριαμ)	GA 1 1582*
	maria iosetis	VL 1
[b]	μαρια [η] ιωση	GA 04 011 017 021 030 031 036 041 044ᶜ 1278ᶜ *rell.*
	(μαριαμ)	1582ᶜ
[c]	μαρια [η] ιωσηφ	GA 02 042
	maria ioseph	VL 7 11 11A 12 15 27 30* Vulgate
[d]	μαρια ιακωβου	GA 05 1342
	maria iacobi	VL 5 8 13 16
[e]	μαρια η ιωση μητηρ	GA 032
[f]	μαρια [η] ιακωβου και ιωσητος	GA 565
	(μαριαμ)	GA 038
	maria iacobi et iosetis	Jerome (*Helv.*)
[g]	*maria iacobi et ioseph*	VL 6
[h]	η αλλη μαρια[35]	GA 61 152 555
[i]	μαρια [η] ιακωβου και ιωσητος μητηρ	*f* ¹³
[j]	μαρια ιακωβου και ιωση μητηρ	GA 124 127ᶜ 983 1654 1689
[k]	μαρια ιακωβου και μαρια ιωση	GA 191
[l]	*maria iacobi et maria ioseph*	VL 29 30ᶜ
[m]	μαρια ιακωβου και σαλωμη	GA 472 1515
[n]	μαρια ιακωβου και σαλωμη και μαρια ιωση	GA 382
[o]	ܡܪܝܡ ܗܝ ܕܝܥܩܘܒ	Sy.ˢ
[p]	*maria autem* [*magdalene et maria* om.] *iacobi et maria ioseph*	VL 48
[q]	[verse om.][36]	GA 01* 127* 544 791 792 1278* 2206

Although the quantity of differing readings in the broader transmission does not bear as much weight as Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Bobiensis, and Bezae, the sheer *variety* of readings preserved in the textual transmission of Mark 15:47 is extraordinary. The second woman differs wildly on being identified as 'Mary of Joses' [a][b] (the most common Greek reading),[37] 'Mary of Joseph' [c],[38] 'Mary of James' [d], 'Mary the mother of Joses' [e], 'Mary of James and Joses' [f],

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35 This reading is an obvious harmonisation to the Matthean text.

36 As noted above, the omission found at Sinaiticus et al. is likely due to a parablepsis between the two instances of μαρια η μαγδαληνη in quick succession at 15:47 and 16:1.

37 I translate readings [a][b] and [i][j] identically, because the name ιωση (or ιωσης) is the nominative form of the genitive ιωσητος.

38 Reading [c] may simply be a variation on reading [a]. According to Bruce Metzger, 'The name ''Ιωσῆς or ''Ιωσῆ… represents the Galilean pronunciation (יוֹסֵי) of the correct Hebrew [for ιωσηφ] (יוֹסֵף).' See Metzger 1994, 34.

'Mary of James and Joseph' [g], 'the other Mary' [h], or 'Mary the mother of James and Joses' [i][j]. The Syriac Sinaitic palimpsest reads 'Mary the daughter of James' [o], a reading also found in its rendition of Mark 15:40.[39] There are also several unique readings where Mary Magdalene has two companions at Jesus's entombment: 'Mary of James and Mary of Joses' [k], 'Mary of James and Mary of Joseph' [l], and 'Mary of James and Salome' [m][40]. Reading [n] uniquely suggests that *three* women were with Mary Magdalene at the entombment: 'Mary of James, and Salome, and Mary of Joses'. Also strange is reading [p], which omits Mary Magdalene completely from the entombment scene, instead naming 'Mary of James and Mary of Joseph'. Of 180 Greek witnesses surveyed, a striking thirty-four (19%) uncorrected and thirty-three (18%) corrected manuscripts clearly disagree with the NA28 text that names Mary Magdalene and Mary of Joses at the entombment.[41] Of the fifteen Old Latin witnesses surveyed, a remarkable seven (47%) uncorrected and eight (53%) corrected manuscripts also disagree with the NA28 text.[42]

Clearly, there is a major textual problem around the names, numbers, and identities of the women at the Markan cross and entombment. How are we to sort out these instabilities in the text? What might be their cause? It should be underlined that these questions lead directly into Mark 16, perhaps the most fraught chapter of the entire textual transmission of the New Testament. Might these problematic verses be part of the overall question of Mark 16—and could their marked textual instability even presage a breakdown in the textual transmission a few verses later at Mark 16:8?

Harmonization, Salomean Controversy, or Perpetual Virginity?

At this point it is important to consider the early Christian environment in which these textual variants arose, including potential motivations behind the various readings. Bruce Metzger does not address the abovementioned textual variation at Mark 15:47, although he does theorise a harmonistic possibility for some of the variants at Mark 16:1:

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39 The Syriac translator has apparently translated μαρια η ιακωβου as 'Mary the daughter of James'. The reading at Mark 15:40 is ܡܪܝܡ ܒܪܬ ܝܥܩܘܒ ܐܡܗ ܕܝܘܣܦ ('Mary the daughter of James, the mother of Joseph').

40 Readings [i][j] may also intend to suggest that two women accompanied Mary Magdalene ('Mary of James, *and Joses's mother*'); however, this reading is ambiguous and could alternatively be read as 'Mary the mother of James and Joses'.

41 These Greek statistics assume that μαρια ιωση and μαρια ιωσηφ are variants of the name μαρια ιωσητος (i.e. not in disagreement with each other).

42 The Vulgate reading is *maria ioseph*; VL 1's reading *maria iosetis* is likely a variant translation.

> The omission by D itᵏ of the names of the two women (who are identified in the
> previous sentence) is clearly in the interest of simplification, and the omission by
> D itᵈ⋅ⁿ of mention of the passing of the sabbath allows the purchase of the spices to
> take place on Friday (as similarly Lk 23:56). The overwhelming preponderance of
> attestation of all other witnesses supports the text adopted by the [UBS] Committee.[43]

Metzger's thesis about harmonization is important to note, since a Markan
tomb story with only two Marys does more closely match the text of Matt
27:61 and 28:1, where 'Mary Magdalene and the other Mary' are the only
women mentioned.[44] These versions of Mark 16:1 that do not mention Salome
and/or the passing of the sabbath may thus simply be simplifications or har-
monizations to the Matthean (and perhaps Lukan) story.[45]

        Yet there are several other editorial possibilities here as well. In 1927,
Cuthbert Turner went so far as to suggest that the version of the text without
Salome 'appears to be right; if the ordinary text had lain before Matthew and
Luke, why does neither of them make any mention of Salome in the Res-
urrection narrative?'.[46] Turner suggested that the majority reading in Mark
16:1 reflects harmonization in the *opposite* direction, that is, he thought that
Mark 16:1 retains an interpolation influenced by Matthew's choice to name
the women at three separate points in the story (Matt 27:56, 27:61, and 28:1):

> the genesis of the ordinary text…is due to the influence of the text of Matthew…Be-
> cause Matthew had the names three times, Mark must have them three times also…
> the interpolators, with the fondness of interpolators for fullness, make, as it happens,
> the insertion not of the two names of Matt. xxviii 1 but of the three of Matt. xxvii
> 56 = Mark xv 40.[47]

In 1974 Rudolf Pesch made a similar suggestion, although he thought that
Mark himself had duplicated the women's names in 16:1, based on a different
source that listed three women at the cross in 15:40: 'Die erste Erzählung
[15:40] weist keinerlei Spuren redaktioneller Bearbeitung auf; die zweite
Erzählung [15:47] ist vielleicht am Beginn in V. 1 um die dritte (aus 15,40

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43 Metzger 1994, 101.
44 Matt 27:61: Ἦν δὲ ἐκεῖ Μαριὰμ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία, καθήμεναι
    ἀπέναντι τοῦ τάφου. Matt 28:1: Ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν
    σαββάτων, ἦλθεν Μαριὰμ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία θεωρῆσαι τὸν τάφον.
    Unlike Mark, neither of these verses display any significant textual variation.
45 But see footnote 23 above on possible anti-Judaic tendencies in Codex Bezae and
    related witnesses.
46 Turner 1927, 13. Many thanks to Claire Clivaz for calling this article to my atten-
    tion.
47 Turner 1927, 14.

gewonnene?) Namenliste [16:1] erweitert worden. Jedenfalls ist von den drei Namenlisten, wenn überhaupt eine, nur die dritte sekundär.'[48]

Also worth considering is the potentially controversial role of a woman named Salome in some early Christian circles. In Matthew's and Luke's presumed use of Mark's Gospel, Salome has been edited out of the scene at the cross (and perhaps the empty tomb as well). Instead of Salome, Matthew names the 'mother of the sons of Zebedee' at the cross (Matt 27:56), and (as noticed by Turner) both Matthew and Luke refrain from listing Salome alongside the other women at the empty tomb (cf. Matt 28:1 and Luke 24:10). Morton Smith suggests that 'though Luke did mention the other women elsewhere, he eliminated Salome's name. Matthew deleted the name of Salome from the first list (27:56) and removed her figure entirely from the second (27:61; 28:1)…Obviously, Salome was a controversial figure…the orthodox material has been edited to diminish her importance as a witness.'[49] Silke Petersen makes similar observations:

> In Mk 15,40 steht [Salome] zusammen mit Maria Magdalena und der Maria des Jakobus des Kleinen (und) der Mutter des Joses unter dem Kreuz. Matthäus (27,56) streicht Salome aus dieser Liste und fügt an ihrer Stelle die Mutter der Zebedaiden ein…Das zweite Mal wird Salome in Mk 16,1 zusammen mit Maria Magdalena und der Maria des Jakobus erwähnt, als berichtet wird, wie die Frauen sich nach dem Einkauf von ἀρώματα auf den Weg zum leeren Grab machen, um den Leichnam Jesu zu salben. Auch an dieser Stelle läßt Matthäus den Namen Salome weg (Mt 28,1), ebenso wie Lukas, der die Liste der Frauen später in der Erzählung nachträgt (Lk 24,10), wobei er neben Maria Magdalena noch Johanna und die Maria des Jakobus nennt. Es ist auffällig, daß beide Seitenreferenten Salome aus den Listen streichen, zumal sie die anderen bei Markus genannten Frauen übernehmen, wenn auch mit einer gewissen Konfusion hinsichtlich der zweiten von Mk genannten Maria.[50]

Petersen further notes that Salome goes unmentioned in the *Epistula Apostolorum* and the *Gospel of Peter*, whose authors were likely also familiar with Mark's Gospel.[51] A woman named Salome does indeed play a prominent role in many early circulating apocryphal texts including the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Protevangelium of James,* the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the *First Apocalypse of James*, the *Pistis Sophia*, and various Manichaean literature, all of which would eventually be rejected as unorthodox;[52] some Church Fathers even ac-

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48 Pesch 1974, 386.
49 Smith 1973, 190–191.
50 Petersen 1999, 197.
51 Petersen 1999, 197.
52 See *Gospel of Thomas* 61; *Protevangelium of James* 19–20; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3:6.45, 3:9.64, 3:9.66, 3:13.92, *Exc. ex Theod.* 67; *First Apocalypse of James* 40:25; *Pistis Sophia* 54, 58, 132, 144; *Manichaean Psalm Book, Part II* 192:21,

knowledged that a woman named Salome was a leader in 'gnostic' circles.[53] Could Salome have been such a controversial figure that some early copyists deliberately edited her out of the Markan empty tomb scene?[54] Contra Smith and Petersen, Richard Bauckham thinks that a number of non-polemical references to Salome in more 'orthodox' sources speak strongly against Salome as a problematic character.[55] According to Bauckham, Matthew and Luke decided not to include Salome because 'the two Marys were well-known as witnesses of the burial and the empty tomb and so both Matthew and Luke retain their names from Mark. But the less well-known Salome is dropped by both Matthew and Luke in favour of women who featured in their own traditions.'[56] By this reasoning, perhaps it was simply Salome's lack of fame that caused her name to be dropped from the Markan empty scene in some manuscripts.

There is another potential editorial motive that should also be addressed here, especially when considering fourth-century debates around the virginity of Mary. At the time when our earliest extant Markan manuscripts were being copied, heated arguments were taking place between ascetic-minded commentators (e.g. Ambrose, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome) who made the case for Mary's perpetual virginity, and Helvidius and Jovinian, who argued that Mary and Joseph had normal marital relations.[57] Epiphanius wrote a refutation of the Antidicomarians, who 'have dared to say that after the birth of Christ, the holy Mary had relations with a man, I mean with Joseph himself'.[58] Jerome thought it necessary to fervently dismiss the apparently well-known views of Tertullian and Victorinus of Pettau, who also believed that Jesus had biological brothers;[59] this 'Helvidian' position seems to have had adherents

194:19; Manichaean Turfan fragment M 18:3. For a helpful survey, see Smith 1973, 190. See also Bauckham's assertion that Salome the disciple should not be confused with Salome the sister of Jesus (Bauckham 1991, 246–267).

53 See. e.g. Origen's mention of the 'Harpocratians' who learned from Salome in *Contra Celsum* 5.62, and Epiphanius's note that Jesus had a sister named Salome (*Pan.* 78:8.1; 78:9.6).

54 I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Petersen for this suggestion. For more about Salome in earliest Christian interpretation, see Petersen 1999, 195–241.

55 Bauckham cites Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis,* Book 3, the Syriac *Testament of our Lord*, a Greek fragment of the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. See Bauckham 1991, 259–65, 268, 270.

56 Bauckham 1991, 256.

57 For a detailed treatment of the subject see Hunter 1993, 47–71.

58 ἐτόλμησαν λέγειν τὴν ἁγίαν Μαρίαν μετὰ τὴν τοῦ Χριστοῦ γέννησιν ἀνδρὶ συνῆφθαι, φημὶ δὲ αὐτῷ τῷ Ἰωσήφ. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 78:1 (PG 42:700). My translation.

59 *Adversus Helvidium* 19; cf. Tertullian, *De Carne Christi* 7, 23:2–3 (CCSL 2:913) and *Adversus Marcionem* 4:19.

for centuries.[60] At the same time, Epiphanius and Jerome were furthering a view that had been asserted by Origen over a century earlier: '…we ought to refute the heretics' usual objections…they assert that Mary had marital relations after the birth of Jesus. But they have no source of proof. For the children who were called Joseph's were not born of Mary. There is no passage in Scripture that mentions this'.[61] Clearly it was important to some early Christians that there was 'no passage in Scripture' to suggest that Mary had sons other than Jesus.

Due to the powerful influence of Origen, Epiphanius, Jerome and other ascetic-minded writers,[62] the doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity was eventually cemented in the broader church tradition.[63] Indeed, Jerome wrote his treatise *Against Helvidius* precisely 'to show that the mother of [Jesus], who was a mother before she was married, continued a virgin *post partum*'.[64] It is pertinent for this study that Jerome openly acknowledges that Mark 15:40/ Matt 27:56 had become an important scriptural prooftext for those who asserted Jesus's mother had given birth to other sons (cf. Mark 6:3 and Matt 13:55):

> *Ecce, inquit, Jacobus et Joseph filii Mariae, iidem quos Judaei fratres appellaverunt. Ecce Maria Jacobi minoris et Josetis mater.*

> Behold, [Helvidius] says, James and Joseph are the sons of Mary, and the same persons who were called brothers by the Jews. Behold, Mary is the mother of James the Lesser and of Joses.[65]

Such a view was, of course, directly contrary to the position that Jerome and others advocated so fiercely, where Mary was being upheld as a model of per-

60 See Lightfoot 1865, 258; see also the more recent position of Hunter, who argues that Helvidius was 'appealing to positions which had a genuine place in the tradition of the early Church' (Hunter 1993, 70).
61 Εἴ ποτε οὖν τοιοῦτοι λόγοι ὑπὸ αἱρετικῶν προαχθῶσιν, οὕτως ἀποκριτέον… Ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ ἔχουσιν αὐτὴν ἀποδεῖξαι, ὅτι συνουσίᾳ ἐχρήσατο μετὰ τὴν ἀπότεξιν τοῦ σωτῆρος· οἱ γὰρ υἱοὶ Ἰωσὴφ οὐκ ἦσαν ἀπὸ τῆς Μαρίας, οὐδὲ ἔχει τις τοῦτο παραστῆσαι ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς. Origen, Homily on Luke 7:4. This translation in Lienhard 1996, 29–30.
62 See also the comments of Athanasius in his early fourth-cent. *First Letter to Virgins*: '[the Savior] teaches that his mother Mary remained in virginity forever…Mary, the bearer of God, remains a virgin [so that she might be a pattern for] everyone coming after her.' Athanasius, *First Letter to Virgins*, 10–11. This translation in Brakke 1995, 277.
63 I am grateful to Andrew Koperski for his 2022 conference paper and his suggestion that Jerome may have influenced Chrysostom's views on the brothers of Jesus.
64 Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium 2: Ipse quoque Deus Pater est imprecandus, ut matrem Filii sui, virginem ostendat fuisse post partum, quae fuit mater antequam nupta* (PL 23:194).
65 *Adversus Helvidium* 12 (PL 23:204). My translation.

petual virginity. The interpretive issues at stake in this passage may have even provoked Jerome to further action, as can be witnessed in the Vulgate text he delivered to Pope Damasus. In the Vulgate reading for Mark 15:47–16:1, Jerome selected the following text:

> *Maria autem Magdalene et Maria Ioseph aspiciebant ubi poneretur. Et cum transisset sabbatum, Maria Magdalene, et Maria Iacobi, et Salome emerunt aromata ut venientes ungerent Iesum. Et valde mane una sabbatorum, veniunt ad monumentum…*

> Mary Magdalene and **Mary of Joseph** were watching where he was laid. And when the Sabbath was past, **Mary Magdalene and Mary of James and Salome** bought spices and went so that they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the tomb…

Although the Vulgate reading matches the majority Greek text, it differs sharply from Jerome's quotation of the exact same verses in *Against Helvidius,* where he quotes a different form of Mark 15:47–16:1:

> *Marcus ponit: Maria autem Magdalene et Maria Jacobi et Josetis viderunt ubi poneretur et transacto sabbato emerunt aromata et venerunt ad monumentum…*

> Mark states: 'and Mary Magdalene and **Mary of James and Joses** saw where he was laid. And when the sabbath was past, **they** bought spices and came to the tomb…'[66]

The version of Mark that Jerome cites does not include Salome at the empty tomb, and references 'Mary of James and Joses' as one person. Thus, Jerome's selection of the longer Vulgate text may indicate his preference for a reading which makes a clearer distinction between 'Mary of Joses/Joseph' and 'Mary of James'—especially since some (like Helvidius) were arguing that 'Mary the mother of James the Lesser and of Joses' should be identified as Jesus's mother. If Jerome's arguments in *Against Helvidius* were not fully persuasive, his selection of the longer Vulgate reading at Mark 15:47–16:1 could help serve the same purposes: the longer version (which would become the majority text) hampers the interpretation that Jesus's mother can be identified as 'Mary the mother of James and Joses'. Might the key to our textual uncertainty be found in the comparison of Jerome's shorter and longer texts, alongside his stated goal of 'proving' the perpetual virginity of Mary? Anxiety around 'proof' of Mary's virginity dates back to the second century (as demonstrated in the *Protevangelium of James*); Jerome may have thus preferred a reading that reflects a more ancient editorial decision to deliberately separate 'Mary of James' from 'Mary of Joses' in Mark's story, thereby discouraging any potentially embarrassing comparisons with Jesus's mother in Mark 6:3.

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66 *Adversus Helvidium*, 12 (PL 23:204).

Conclusion

Contra Metzger and Turner, caution should be exercised before asserting certainty about the editorial motives behind these early endings of Mark's Gospel. Although harmonisation may explain some of these textual variants, the possible suppression of Salome's presence at the tomb and/or the protection of Mary's perpetual virginity may well have been powerful editorial motivations in the third and fourth centuries.[67] Then again, an editorial *addition* of Salome in Mark 16:1 could have served to increase the number of witnesses at the empty tomb (one thinks of Origen's objection to Celsus's accusation that '[Jesus] appeared secretly to just one woman and to those of his own confraternity'[68]). Could Mark have authored an empty tomb scene featuring only the two Marys named at the entombment? Matthew's text does align far more easily with Bobiensis's and Bezae's versions of the Markan entombment and empty tomb scenes (as well as Origen's *Homily 7 on Exodus* and Jerome's rendition of the story in *Against Helvidius*), and, as Pesch suggests, the list of women at Mark 16:1 could have been editorially sourced from Mark 15:40. If Matthew had access to a version of Mark with only the two Marys at the empty tomb, it could explain why Matthew only references 'Mary Magdalene and the other Mary' in 28:1. By this theory, Codex Vaticanus may retain an early pro-ascetic revision of the Markan text at both 15:40 and 15:47–16:1. With just a few slight editorial changes, 'Mary the mother of James the lesser and Joses' could have been purposely divided into two women (i.e. Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ Ἰωσῆτος μήτηρ becomes Μαρία ἡ Ἰακώβου τοῦ μικροῦ καὶ **ἡ** Ἰωσῆτος μήτηρ). Such an interpolation would have served the purposes of influential theologians like Origen, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and Jerome, who insisted that no other sons were born of Mary, and that 'there is no passage in Scripture that mentions this'. Since the majority text indeed hampers the interpretation that Jesus's mother was 'Mary the mother of James and Joses' (asserted by Helvidius to be the same Mary of Mark 6:3 and Matt 13:55), it is understandable why a more clear-cut division between 'Mary of Joses' and 'Mary of James' would have been desirable in the transmission of the Markan text.

Of course, yet another possibility is that the additional feminine article at Mark 15:40 accidentally dropped out of the textual transmission at the earliest

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67 For further examples of early editorial activity that 'protected' Mary's virginity, see discussion of textual variants in Luke 2:33, 2:41, and 2:43 in Metzger 1994, 111–112.

68 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2:70 (PG 11:905). Origen retorts, 'it is not true that he appeared to just one woman. In Matthew's Gospel it is written that "late on the Sabbath day as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre…"' This translation in Chadwick 1953, 120.

stages;[69] perhaps Mark really did intend to present four women at the cross! If so, the absence of Salome in some copies is perhaps best explained by a deliberate harmonisation to the Matthean and Lukan texts, along with possible forgetting (or perhaps suppression) of her presence at the empty tomb. With so many potential errors and editorial motives at play, perhaps it is no surprise that our earliest manuscripts demonstrate such significant variation around the names and numbers of these important Markan characters.

So, what can be concluded about this Markan textual problem? Since reasonable cases can be made for both the addition and omission of Salome in the earliest circulating text, as well as either a deliberate or accidental division of the second Mary at the cross, it must be admitted that a confident recovery of Mark's initial text is impossible in these verses. Multiple controversies raged around all of the women named in Mark 15:40–16:1, and this very likely played a role in the verses' striking textual instability. Greater awareness should certainly be raised in New Testament scholarship about this major textual problem. Considering these troubled verses' proximity to the ending(s) of Mark, one might also consider whether controversy around these women is directly connected to Mark's 16:8's truncated comment ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ, or the early decisions to rewrite the ending to the first authored gospel.

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69 For another potential example of a single letter dropping out of the textual transmission at John 7:52, see Smothers 1958.

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