
THE ENDING OF THE PRE-MARKAN PASSION NARRATIVE

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Abstract

This article argues that the pre-Markan passion narrative ended with a starkly unadorned account of the empty tomb, an account which raises as many questions about Jesus's fate as it does answers. Employing tradition and redaction criticism, I reveal that the pre-Markan empty tomb account contained no mention of an angel, Jesus's resurrection, or Galilean appearances. Rather, it straightforwardly described the women's coming to the tomb, finding the tomb empty, and fleeing from the tomb in terror and silence. The logic of the pre-Markan ending discloses that the women fled because they naturally assumed grave robbery and feared being implicated in this capital crime. Throughout this article, I interact with the views of Sakkie Spangenberg, Hansie Wolmarans, Andries van Aarde and Julian Müller, four prominent South African scholars who have commented on the empty tomb narrative.

Key Words: Pre-Markan Passion Narrative; Empty Tomb; Tradition Criticism; Redaction Criticism

Theories regarding a pre-Markan passion narrative have fallen on hard times due to the practical impossibility of reconstructing it *in toto* and to scholarly trends favouring the Gospels' interpretation in their final forms over more or less probable reconstructions of prior traditions.¹ Nevertheless, most exegetes of Mark recognise the existence of a pre-Markan passion narrative, either in oral or written form.² As Marion L Soards remarks at the end of his comparative study of thirty-five prominent commentators, "We may safely conclude that Mark uses a source in writing his PN."³ At minimum, the source recounted basic information about Jesus's betrayal by Judas, arrest, condemnation, execution, and burial.

Although so many pre-Markan traditional elements have been sufficiently reworked by Mark that the pre-Markan *Urtext* is unrecoverable, it remains the case that certain particular verses are widely regarded as belonging to that *Urtext* with a high degree of probability. Two sets of these verses are relevant to this study. First is Mark 14:53a, 60, 63, which refer to Caiaphas as simply "the high priest" without mentioning his name.⁴ As Rudolf Pesch points out, this phenomenon is most naturally explained by the

¹ C Clifton Black, *Mark*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2011:32).

² Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, AYBRL 27A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009:925).

³ Marion L Soards, "Appendix IX: The Question of a Pre-Markan Passion Narrative," in Raymond E Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 2 vols.; ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994, 2:1523).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:1506-7; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1010; William L Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974:485); Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1976:325-32); Janusz Czerski, "Die Passion Christi in den synoptischen Evangelien im Lichte der historisch-literarischen Kritik," *CollTheol* 46, 1976 Sonderheft:81-96; Dieter Lüthmann, *Das Markusevangelium*, HNT 3 (Tübingen:

hypothesis that Caiaphas (r. 18-37 CE) held the office of high priest at the time the pre-Markan passion narrative was formulated. For if the tradition were formulated after Caiaphas' reign, then there would have been a need to specify which high priest it was who found Jesus a messianic pretender. Accordingly, the *terminus ante quem* of the pre-Markan passion narrative is 37 CE.⁵ Second is Mark 15:40, 42-47, which recount Jesus' burial by Joseph of Arimathea and its observation by Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus.⁶ Here the judgment of Vincent Taylor still stands: regarding Rudolf Bultmann's positive yet somewhat tentative assignment of 15:40, 42-47 to the pre-Markan passion account, Taylor famously deemed Bultmann's estimate "a notable understatement... The narrative belongs to the best tradition."⁷

In this article I will argue that the pre-Markan passion narrative ended with a starkly unadorned account of the empty tomb, an account which raises as many questions about Jesus's fate as it does answers. To make my case, I will integrate tradition criticism and redaction criticism, the findings of which mutually reinforce one another. Via tradition criticism I will identify which elements of Mark 16:1-8 can be positively assigned to the *Urtext* of the pre-Markan passion narrative. Via redaction criticism I will identify which elements of Mark 16:1-8 can be ruled out of origination in the *Urtext* as the editorial hand of the evangelist. In the process, I will interact with the views of Sakkie Spangenberg, Hansie Wolmarans, Andries van Aarde, and Julian Müller, four prominent South African scholars who have commented on the empty tomb narrative. Spangenberg (University of South Africa) and Wolmarans (University of Johannesburg) are members of the New Reformation. Van Aarde (University of Pretoria) is a member of the Jesus Seminar. Müller (University of Pretoria) is sympathetic to the projects of the New Reformation and Jesus Seminar, pleading for an innovative understanding of God in light of a new *Weltanschauung*.

Tradition Criticism of Mark 16:1-8

I turn first to those parts of Mark 16:1-8 that are bound together verbally and syntactically with the pre-Markan burial account. Verbally, the time indicators *διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου* ("the Sabbath having passed"; 16:1) and *λίαν πρωὶ τῆ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων* ("very early on the first [day] of the week"; 16:2) are tied to the pre-Markan time indicators *ὀψίας* ("evening") and *προσάββατον* ("the day before the Sabbath"; 15:42). The mention of the place Jesus was laid in the tomb, *ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν* ("the place where they laid him"; 16:6), is linked to the pre-Markan *ἔθηκεν αὐτόν ἐν μνημείῳ* ("placed him in a tomb"; 15:46) and *ποῦ τέθειται* ("where he has been laid"; 15:47). The term *μνημεῖον* rather than

Mohr Siebeck, 1987:241-9); Joel B Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988:272-82).

⁵ Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2 vols., HThKNT 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1977, 2:21, 364-77, 425); idem, *The Trial of Jesus Continues*, trans. Doris Glen Wagner (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 1996:17). Even if one regards, as I do, the pre-Markan passion narrative as significantly shorter than Pesch imagines, his dating of the narrative holds so long as Mark 14:53a, 60, 63 (or even one of these three verses) constitutes part of the *Urtext*.

⁶ Soards, "Pre-Markan," 1516-7; Brown, *Death*, 2:1238-41; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1060, 1073; Ludger Schenke, *Der gekreuzigte Christus: Versuch einer literarkritischen und traditionsgeschichtlichen Bestimmung der vormarkinischen Passionsgeschichte*, SBS 69 (Stuttgart: KBW, 1974:77-83); Josef Ernst, "Die Passionserzählung des Markus und die Aporien der Forschung," *TGl* 70 (1980:160-80); Lührmann, *Markusevangelium*, 261-2; Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu*, BZAW 69 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1994:175-6).

⁷ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966:599).

μνημα is consistently used for the ‘tomb’ in 16:2, 3, 5, 8 and the pre-Markan 15:46. The rolling away (ἀποκυλίω) of the stone from the entrance of the tomb (τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου) in 16:3-4 is the mirror image of the pre-Markan rolling up (προσκυλίω) of the stone against the entrance of the tomb (λίθον ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν τοῦ μνημείου) in 15:46. The women’s seeing is attested in 16:4 (θεωροῦσιν, “they see”) and the pre-Markan 15:40 (θεωροῦσαι, “looking on”) and 15:47 (ἐθεώρουν, “were observing”). Given the pre-Markan list of “Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome” (15:40), the next pre-Markan list which denotes the second Mary using the stylistic variant ἡ Ἰωσήτος (“the [mother] of Joses”) and omits Salome (15:47) fits extremely well with an interlocking list which refers to the second Mary using the other possible stylistic variant ἡ [τοῦ] Ἰακώβου (“the [mother] of James”) and includes Salome (16:1).⁸ Hence 15:47 and 16:1 assume each other’s existence; if one is traditional, so is the other.⁹

Syntactically, the time indicators διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου (16:1) and the pre-Markan ὀψίας γενομένης (“having become evening”; 15:42) are in *genitivus absolutus*. The four *participia coniuncta* in ch. 16 – ἐλθοῦσαι (“having come”; v. 1), ἀναβλέψασαι (“having looked up”; v. 4), εἰσελθοῦσαι (“having entered”; v. 5), and ἐξελθοῦσαι (“having gone out”; v. 8) – parallel the four *participia coniuncta* in the pre-Markan burial account – τολμήσας (“having boldness”; 15:43), προσκαλεσάμενος (“having summoned”; 15:44), γνοὺς (“having found out”; 15:45), and ἀγοράσας (“having bought”; 15:46).

With the verbal and syntactical links established, I proceed to the informational links, or the data in the pre-Markan burial account presupposed by portions of Ch. 16. The description “the Sabbath having passed” (16:1) presupposes the pre-Markan burial on “the Preparation, which is the day before the Sabbath” (15:42). The use of the personal pronoun αὐτόν (‘him’) for Jesus (16:1) has its antecedent in the naming of Jesus in the pre-Markan burial account (15:43). The visit to the tomb (16:2) presupposes the knowledge of the tomb’s location (15:47). The discussion between the women concerning who would roll away the stone (16:3) presupposes the knowledge of the shutting of the tomb with the roll-stone (15:46). The women’s entrance into the tomb (16:5) presupposes the nature of the tomb (15:46).

Distinctively non-Markan grammatical features and content in Ch. 16 can also be utilised to isolate pre-Markan tradition. The chapter contains several *hapax legomena*: διαγίνομαι (‘pass’; v. 1); ἄρωμα (“aromatic spice”; v. 1); ἀποκυλίω (“roll away”; vv. 3-4); σφόδρα (‘very’; v. 4); τρόμος (‘trembling’ or ‘terror’; v. 8).¹⁰ In 16:2 the cardinal numeral μία (‘one’) is employed where the ordinal πρώτη (‘first’) would be expected in Greek: τῆ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων (lit. “on one of the Sabbath”). Moreover, it is surprising that *σάββατον* rather than the typical Greek *ἑβδομάς* (in, e.g., Exod. 34:22 LXX) should be used to denote ‘week.’ But in Late Aramaic the days of the week are designated by the cardinal numeral followed by the word ‘Sabbath’ with the preposition ܐܘܢ (‘of’ or ‘in’), rendering an Aramaic original behind τῆ μιᾶ τῶν σαββάτων perfectly smooth and comprehensible as ܘܚܘܡܫܘܬܐ ܕܝܘܡܐ ܕܝܘܡܐ, “on the first day of the week” (a reading attested in, e.g., Tg. Esth. II 2:9; 3:7; Gen. Rab.

⁸ On this score, Josef Blinzler argues that all three lists belong to the pre-Markan passion narrative (“Die Grablegung Jesu in historischer Sicht,” in *Resurrexit*, ed. Edouard Dhanis (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1974:65-8).

⁹ Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Évangile selon saint Marc* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1966:444).

¹⁰ Dale C Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005:302).

11:8).¹¹ Hence Elliott C Maloney concludes that τῆ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων “was probably a fixed formula deriving from a Jewish or Semitic system of dating” and constitutes a definite instance of a Semitism.¹² The discovery of the empty tomb “on the first day of the week” instead of “on the third day” bespeaks extremely primitive tradition, as the third day motif is prominent in the kerygma as far back as the pre-Pauline creed (1 Cor. 15:4) dating, per scholarly consensus, no later than 35 CE.¹³ This implies that the dating of the tomb’s discovery antedates the third day motif itself.¹⁴ Certainly if the discovery date were Markan in origin, then it could have hardly avoided being cast in the ancient and accepted third day motif.¹⁵ The non-Markan character of the empty tomb story’s setting “when the Sabbath was over” (16:1) and “very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen” (16:2) is evident by its contradiction to Mark’s refrain that the resurrection should occur “after (μετά) three days” (8:31; 9:31; 10:34).¹⁶

Summing up, tradition criticism establishes that the entirety of 16:1, the entirety of 16:2, the entirety of 16:3, the entirety of 16:4, the first clause of 16:5 (καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, “and having entered into the tomb”), the last clause of 16:6 (ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν), and most of the first two clauses of 16:8 (καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος, “and having gone out they fled from the tomb, for trembling seized them”) belong to the pre-Markan passion narrative.¹⁷ Some of these components may have been slightly modified or rearranged, but they all find their origin in pre-Markan tradition.¹⁸ These results undermine the position of Spangenberg, Wolmarans, Van Aarde, and Müller that the empty tomb is a later legendary development which cannot be traced back to the original Jesus movement in Jerusalem.¹⁹ Yet to be determined, however, is whether or not the angelophany, the resurrection proclamation, the foreshadowing of Galilean appearances, and the women’s silence are pre-Markan. We shall tackle these questions using redaction criticism.

¹¹ Elliott C Maloney, *Semitic Interference in Marcan Syntax*, SBL Dissertation Series 51 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981:144-9).

¹² *Ibid.*, 150, 250.

¹³ Joachim Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967:95-8); Jacob Kremer, *Das älteste Zeugnis von der Auferstehung Christi*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970); Reginald H Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (London: SPCK, 1972:10-1). Even the Jesus Seminar dated the 1 Cor. 15 Creed no later than 33 CE (Robert W Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus*, San Francisco: Polebridge, 1998:454). Gerd Lüdemann, one of the seminar’s most prominent members, flatly declares regarding 1 Cor. 15:3b-6a, 7 that “all the elements in the tradition are to be dated to the first two years after the crucifixion of Jesus” (*The Resurrection of Jesus*, London: SCM, 1994:38).

¹⁴ As Raymond E Brown comments, “The basic time indication of the finding of the tomb was fixed in Christian memory before the possible symbolism in the three-day reckoning had yet been perceived” (*The Gospel according to John*, AB 29A, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970:980).

¹⁵ Edward Lynn Bode, *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women’s Visit to the Tomb of Jesus*, AnBib 45 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970:161).

¹⁶ Allison, *Resurrecting*, 302.

¹⁷ Contra Green, *Death*, 311-2; Andreas Lindemann, “Die Osterbotschaft des Markus. Zur Theologischen Interpretation von Mk 16.1-8,” *NTS* 26 (1979/80:301-2); John Dominic Crossan, “Empty Tomb and Absent Lord (Mark 16:1-8),” in *The Passion in Mark*, ed. Werner H Kelber (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1976:136-45); Thomas E Boomershine, “Mark 16:8 and the Apostolic Commission,” (*JBL* 100.2, 1981:226 n. 40).

¹⁸ Such possible modification and rearrangement is discussed by PHEME PERKINS, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984:115-24).

¹⁹ Sakkie Spangenberg, *Jesus van Nasaret* (Cape Town: Griffel, 2009:147-52; JLP Wolmarans, *Biblical Anthropology*, (Johannesburg: Woordmeesters, 1991:61-4); Andries van Aarde, *Fatherless in Galilee: Jesus as Child of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001:28, 112); Julian Müller, *Om te mag twyfel: ’n Gelowige se reis* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2011:75, 100).

Redaction Criticism of Mark 16:1-8

Previous redaction-critical analyses of Mark 16:1-8 stand largely in agreement that the women's visit to the tomb is pre-Markan, differing only on how they parse vv. 1-4.²⁰ Hence these studies confirm our tradition-critical find to the same effect. But previous studies are divided as to whether or not the pre-Markan *Urtext* contained an angelophany.²¹ Scholars who see the primary element in any resurrection account in its relationship to the apocalyptic take the angelophany as the key to the entire pre-Markan empty tomb tradition. However, this is precisely to beg the question that the pre-Markan empty tomb tradition is, in fact, a resurrection account. Here we note that no part of the pre-Markan *Urtext* discoverable by tradition criticism suggests that we have a resurrection account on our hands.

We turn to the angelophany. Some scholars have argued that the *νεανίσκος* ("young man," 16:5) is simply a human figure, even the author of Mark himself.²² But the *νεανίσκος* is almost certainly intended by Mark to be an angel, as evident from the term's clear reference to angels in 2 Macc. 3:26, 33-34; Luke 24:4; Gos. Pet. 9; Josephus, *Ant.* 5.277 and the traditional angelic white robe (Dan. 7:9; Rev. 9:13; 10:1). Further, Matthew interprets Mark as describing an angel since Matthew puts the Markan message in the mouth of an angel clothed in white (Matt. 28:2-3, 5-7). It is widely recognised that angels often function as a literary device to signal a divine message or communicate theological truth.²³ Mark 16:5 is not the only appearance of the *νεανίσκος* in the Gospel but the second, with the first occurring in the arrest scene at Mark 14:51-52. Here too the angelic identity of the *νεανίσκος* is implied by the fact that all Jesus' human disciples deserted him and fled (*ἔφυγον πάντες*, "all fled"; 14:50) while still the *νεανίσκος* was following him (14:51).

Forming a virtual bookend to the story of Jesus' passion, each manifestation of the *νεανίσκος* exists in binary opposition to and thus presupposes the other manifestation, so that neither is fully explicable without the other. In Mark 14:51-52 the *νεανίσκος* has only a linen garment covering his naked body and, when seized by the soldiers, left the linen garment behind and fled naked. That only the loose-fitting linen garment covered his naked body was shameful enough in Jewish culture, but to actually be forced to avoid capture by fleeing naked brings an ultimate sense of shame.²⁴ How important this was to the author is apparent from the repetition of *σινδῶν* ("linen garment") in the space of two verses. In Mark

²⁰ Perkins, *Resurrection*, 115-8; David Catchpole, *Resurrection People: Studies in the Resurrection Narratives of the Gospels* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002:3-4); Jacob Kremer, "Zur Diskussion über 'das leere Grab,'" in Dhanis, ed., *Resurrexit*, 152-4; Ludger Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung und leeres Grab* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968:54); Maurice Goguel, *La foi à la résurrection de Jésus dans le christianisme primitif* (Paris: Leroux, 1933:182); Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1959:321); Engelbert Gutwenger, "Zur Geschichlichkeit der Auferstehung Jesu," *ZKT* 88 (1966:274); Emanuel Hirsch, *Die Auferstehungsgeschichten und der christliche Glaube* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1940:30-1).

²¹ For a survey of these studies see Frans Neiryneck, "Marc 16, 1-8 tradition et rédaction," *ETL* 56 (1980:56-62).

²² Lüdemann, *Resurrection*, 85-6; Herman C Waetjen, "The Ending of Mark and the Gospel's Shift in Eschatology," *ASTI* 4 (1965:117); Neill Q. Hamilton, "Resurrection Tradition and the Composition of Mark," *JBL* 84.4 (1965:417).

²³ Bode, *Easter*, 166-7; Kremer, "Grab," 148-50; Raymond E Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1973:122-3).

²⁴ Howard M Jackson describes how, even in the best of circumstances, the *σινδῶν* – a sleeveless rectangle of cloth wrapped or draped around the body without any belt or fasteners to hold it on – was likely to slip off even with normal bodily movements ("Why the Youth Shed His Cloak and Fleed Naked: The Meaning and Purpose of Mark 14:51-52," *JBL* 116.2, 1997:280).

16:5 the honour of the *νεανίσκος* is restored, as he has been clothed in a white robe (*περιβεβλημένον στολήν λευκήν*).²⁵ Rather than being shamefully accosted, moreover, the *νεανίσκος* is treated respectfully by the women. Since the *νεανίσκος* in Mark 14:51-52 is almost universally regarded as a Markan composition, the *νεανίσκος* in Mark's empty tomb account should be regarded as a Markan redaction of the pre-Markan passion narrative. Thus Bode concludes "that the angel appearance does not belong to the historical nucleus of the tomb tradition," which nucleus he takes to be the pre-Markan passion narrative.²⁶

The focus on the clothes is an indication of the theological significance Mark ascribes to the related events, namely, Jesus' arrest and empty tomb. The shame of the barely clothed, and then naked, angel discloses the shame of Jesus as he is betrayed by Judas, apprehended by the soldiers, and deserted by his disciples. In addition, the angel's departure from Jesus makes the theological point that God has stopped protecting, and even abandoned, Jesus (cp. Mark 15:34). But the angel's restoration to honour at the empty tomb denotes that, on Mark's assessment, Jesus has been restored to honor – the shame of his passion has been undone by his bodily resurrection. The God who had once forsaken Jesus has now fully vindicated him in the most realistic of senses, physically reversing the effects of the passion. Accordingly, the shame-honour motif forms a characteristically Markan *inclusio* framing the story of the cross; the last one who has been with and then abandons Jesus is also the first one to announce his resurrection.²⁷

That the *νεανίσκος* is a Markan creation is also evident by the verb *ἐξεθαμβήθησαν* ("they were utterly amazed"; 16:5), which reflects the typical reaction to the miraculous as an epiphany of the divine in Mark (6:49; 9:6, 15; 14:33).²⁸ Further, ascribed to the *νεανίσκος* is the designation of Jesus as *ὁ Ναζαρητός* ("the Nazarene"; 16:6), which constitutes a peculiarly Markan attribution (1:24; 10:47; 14:67). Similarly, the angel's description of Jesus as *τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον* ("the one having been crucified") and claim that *ἡγέρθη* ("he was raised"; 16:6) are kerygmatic, coloured by the vocabulary of preaching. Combining the results of tradition and redaction criticism, we find that while the opening clause of 16:5 and the final clause of 16:6 are pre-Markan, the *νεανίσκος* and his proclamation of the resurrection are Markan. This corroborates the verdict of Spangenberg, Wolmarans, Van Aarde, and Müller that the *νεανίσκος* is a mythological construct that formed no part of the earliest preaching of the kerygma.²⁹

Preserving the connecting elements between these clauses and deleting everything else,

²⁵ *Contra* Lüdemann's interpretation of the white garment as symbolizing baptism (*Resurrection*, 86) and the presumption that the *νεανίσκος* is the type of the baptized initiate (Robin Scroggs and Kent J Groff, "Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising with Christ," *JBL* 92.4, 1973:540-3). There is no evidence for disrobing as baptismal ritual until the second century CE.

²⁶ Bode, *Easter*, 166; concurring with Bode are Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 4th rev. ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970:20); Gerhard Koch, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi*, BHT 27 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959:164); Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1959:191); Schenke, *Grab*, 71; CF Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, SBT 12 (London: SCM, 1970:76-7); John E Alsup, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel Tradition: A History-of-Tradition Analysis* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1975:106); Karl M Fischer, *Das Ostergeschehen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980:59); Lorenz Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung der Auferweckung Jesu in geöffneten und leeren Grab," *ZNW* 73 (1982:178).

²⁷ For the importance of *inclusio* to Mark see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006:124-7).

²⁸ Perkins, *Resurrection*, 119.

²⁹ Spangenberg, *Jesus*, 149; Wolmarans, *Anthropology*, 63; Van Aarde, *Fatherless*, 112; Müller, *Om te mag twyfel*, 100.

we may propose the following as, *mutatis mutandis*, the probable reading of the pre-Markan *Urtext* underlying 16:5-6: καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον Ἰησοῦν οὐκ εἶναι ἐκεῖ, τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν (“and having entered the tomb, they saw that Jesus was not there – the place where they laid him”). This reconstruction is confirmed by the fact that it requires nothing more drastic than positing the Markan changes from ἐκεῖ (‘there’) to ὧδε (‘here’), from an infinitive (εἶναι) to an indicative (ἔστιν) verb, and from an accusative (τὸν τόπον) to a nominative case (ὁ τόπος). These changes are trivial, especially the latter two. The first may not even be a change at all, for it is possible to regard ὧδε as the pre-Markan term, which would heighten the vividness and the immediacy of the scene. Our reconstruction also conforms to the view of most Markan exegetes that the pre-Markan passion narrative related the *emptiness* of the tomb. As Dale Allison rightly notes, “The reduction of the empty tomb to Markan creativity, whatever the redactional motive postulated, is not a compelling point of view.”³⁰ To get the emptiness of the tomb while avoiding the *νεανίσκος*, one needs to posit something extremely similar to our reconstruction.

Concurring with the majority of Markan exegetes (including Spangenberg, Wolmarans, Van Aarde and Müller), we identify Mark 16:7 as a Markan interpolation into the pre-Markan passion narrative.³¹ For Mark 16:7 refers back to Mark 14:28, which is almost always considered Markan in origin and outside the bounds of the pre-Markan passion narrative, beginning with Jesus’ betrayal. The unmotivated ἀλλά (‘but’; 16:7) also shows that material has been added which did not belong to the primitive tradition.³² Interestingly, Mark 16:7 contradicts the reaction of the women in the fourth clause of Mark 16:8 – καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν (“and they told no one anything”). Since the women would not have disobeyed the command of an angel to ὑπάγετε εἶπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι Προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν (“go tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee”; 16:7), it is impossible for Mark 16:7 and the fourth clause of Mark 16:8 to come from the same hand. Hence the Markan character of 16:7 proves the pre-Markan character of the fourth clause of 16:8.

Thus far we have seen in 16:8 that καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος and καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν formed part of the pre-Markan passion narrative. There is convincing reason to believe that the remaining components are Markan. For while τρόμος is *hapax legomenon*, φοβέομαι (“be afraid”; cp. Mark 4:41; 5:15, 33, 36; 6:50; 9:32; 10:32; 11:18) is the standard Markan term for fear and bewilderment when confronted by the supernatural. Similarly, ἔκστασις is found in Mark 5:42 and denotes ‘amazement’ in the divine presence. In fact, never in the NT does ἔκστασις carry a non-supernatural connotation (Luke 5:26; Acts 3:10; 10:10; 11:5; 22:17). So for Mark, ἔκστασις and φοβέομαι presuppose the evangelist’s divine *νεανίσκος*, while τρόμος carries no such implication. It simply denotes trembling or terror; elsewhere in the NT τρόμος refers exclusively to a naturally, humanly induced fear (1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; Eph. 6:5; Phil. 2:12).

³⁰ Allison, *Resurrecting*, 301.

³¹ Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 21, 120; Schenke, *Grab*, 43-7; Evans, *Resurrection*, 78; Bode, *Easter*, 35-7; Kremer, “Grab,” 151; Fuller, *Formation*, 53, 60-1; Brown, *Resurrection*, 123; Spangenberg, *Jesus*, 150; Wolmarans, *Anthropology*, 68; Van Aarde, *Fatherless*, 160; Müller, *Om te mag twyfel*, 103.

³² Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man*, 2nd ed., trans. Lewis L Wilkins and Duane A Priebe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1977:102).

Conclusions

We have found that the ending of the pre-Markan passion narrative ran as follows: 16:1-4; *καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον Ἰησοῦν οὐκ εἶναι ἐκεῖ, τὸν τόπον ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν* (parts of 16:5-6); *καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος, καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν* (parts of 16:8). The pre-Markan passion narrative contained no mention of either an angel or Jesus' resurrection; indeed, the ending of the pre-Markan passion narrative is not a resurrection story. Rather, it is a simple and straightforward account of the women's coming to the tomb on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body, surprisingly finding the stone already rolled away and the tomb empty, and fleeing from the tomb in terror and silence. The logic of the pre-Markan ending discloses that the women fled because they naturally assumed grave robbery and feared being implicated in this capital crime.³³ Thus the pre-Markan passion narrative originated quite independently of the pre-Pauline resurrection tradition of 1 Cor. 15:3b-6a, 7. Contrary to its Markan redaction which presupposes the resurrection kerygma, the pre-Markan passion narrative was a tragedy from beginning to middle to end, i.e., from Jesus' betrayal to Jesus' crucifixion to unknown and presumably hostile actors refusing Jesus the dignity of an undisturbed burial. In the final irony, even when it appeared that Jesus would get a proper burial due to Joseph of Arimathea, any modicum of respect that could have been paid to the corpse was ultimately rescinded.

By interpolating the *νεανίσκος*, the resurrection proclamation, and the foretold Galilean appearances, Mark thoroughly reversed the force of his pre-Markan source, transforming a story of defeat and abject humiliation into a story of triumph and final vindication. But the pre-Markan empty tomb report lacks any signs of theological or legendary development. The starkness of the pre-Markan empty tomb account, coupled with its early date and the embarrassing presence of its women witnesses, furnish good reason to regard it as historical.³⁴ This judgment corroborates the view of most contemporary scholars that the tomb was found empty by a group of Jesus' women followers.³⁵ Our findings on the ending of the pre-Markan passion narrative breathe fresh life into the verdict of Geza Vermes:

But in the end, when every argument has been considered and weighed, the only conclusion acceptable to the historian must be that the opinions of the orthodox, the liberal sympathizer and the critical agnostic alike – and even perhaps of the disciples themselves – are simply interpretations of the one disconcerting fact: namely that the women who set out to pay their last respects to Jesus found to their consternation, not a body, but an empty tomb.³⁶

While the empty tomb does not prove Jesus' resurrection, it does rule out the attempt of Van Aarde and Müller to reinterpret Jesus' resurrection in such a way that his tomb remained occupied.³⁷ Despite his concession that “a resurrected corpse cannot but leave an

³³ We know from Cicero (*Leg.* 3) that *violatio sepulchri* was a crime under Roman law, and the Nazareth Inscription (first century CE) prescribes the death penalty for the offense. The initial reaction of the women is preserved in John 20:2, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him”.

³⁴ Josephus relates that the witness of women was considered so unreliable that they were not even permitted to testify in Jewish courts of law (*Ant.* 4.219).

³⁵ In a comprehensive survey of the literature from 1975 to 2005, Gary Habermas found that approximately 75% of exegetes regard the empty tomb as historical (“Resurrection Research from 1975 to the Present: What are Critical Scholars Saying?” *Journal of the Study of the Historical Jesus* 3.2, 2005:141).

³⁶ Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981:41).

³⁷ Van Aarde, *Fatherless*, 112-3; Müller, *Om te mag twyfel*, 72-8.

empty tomb behind,” Müller protests that “this is definitely not how we should think about the resurrection of Jesus.”³⁸ Müller argues that Jesus’ resurrection concerns the existential transformation of Jesus’ followers into persons who can become one with ultimate reality and so live authentically. For Müller, we should refuse to answer ‘yes’ to the question whether Jesus’ tomb is empty because the fact that Jesus lives and rises in the believer has nothing to do with a factual statement about an empty tomb. But this is a *non sequitur*. Even if we grant that Jesus’ living and rising in the believer does not presuppose an empty tomb, the question of whether Jesus’ tomb was empty can only be answered on historical grounds. Hence Müller is incorrect to state that “the question about the empty tomb is loaded with fundamentalistic theological points of departure and misunderstandings, and to answer yes to this question would also mean to say yes to a certain theological paradigm.”³⁹ For one can believe in the historicity of the empty tomb without subscribing to a supernatural theological worldview. One can maintain, for example, that the disciples stole Jesus’ body (cf. Matt. 28:11-15) or that Jesus’ body was moved by the Jewish leaders, the Roman authorities, or members of Jesus’ family. Such explanations involve nothing supernatural. Hence our analysis of the pre-Markan passion narrative serves as a reminder that theological presuppositions, whether traditional or progressive, cannot validly be used to settle historical questions.

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³⁸ Müller, *Om te mag twyfel*, 75.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

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