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The Effect of the Jewish Christians on the Textual Tradition of the Resurrection Narratives

Jon Rainey

THE ending of Mark presents a problem which has plagued textual critics of the New Testament for centuries. Debate has raged over whether a short ending (16:1–8) or long ending (16:1–20) should be accepted, and if the latter, whether the extant version is valid, or if an underlying original has been lost. The resurrection narrative in the Gospel of Luke presents equal difficulties. Luke's account (24:1–53) is utterly devoid of any mention of a post-resurrection Galilee appearance of Christ, despite the inclusion of this event by Matthew and its intimation by Mark. The Book of Acts is equally devoid of any reference to Galilee and seems to prefer a strictly Jerusalem-centered approach to church history. Several suggestions have been offered to explain these textual phenomena, and a particularly intriguing answer may lie in the historical situation provided by the heretical Jewish-Christian sects, in particular the Ebionites.¹

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1. Throughout this paper, the term "Jewish-Christians" will be used to denote those groups who accepted Jesus as the Messiah but denied such fundamental teachings as the virgin birth, the divinity of Jesus, the authority of the New Testament apart from Matthew, and the idea that the law had been abolished. They should be distinguished from orthodox Christian Jews, such as Paul and Peter, who are

An understanding of the history and particularly the geographical location of the Jewish Christians provides the first clue to answering these questions. Epiphanius attributes the beginnings of the Jewish-Christian movement to the earliest period of Christianity in Jerusalem, the period soon after the death of Jesus.² That Jewish Christianity first appeared at the moment of its separation from the rest of Christianity is made clear by the textual evidence of the New Testament, particularly Acts, which chronicles the early history of the church. It is certain that by the Jerusalem Council of A.D. 48/49, a Jewish-Christian group had come into prominence who regarded circumcision and an adherence to the Law as necessary for salvation.³ The rejection of their position by Peter, Paul, and James marked the first step towards their separation from proto-orthodox Christianity. Two other subsequent events added additional fuel to their desire to separate themselves, not only religiously, but geographically from Jerusalem. The first was the death of the man whom the Jewish Christians considered their primary apostolic leader, James the brother of Jesus. According to Hegesippus, as recorded by Eusebius, the Ebionites revered him as “the Just One,”⁴ giving him precedence over the other apostles and full authority as their leader. His murder in A.D. 62/63 at the hands of the Jews provided yet another reason for schism between the Ebionites and their neighbors in Jerusalem.

Jewish by ethnicity, rather than doctrine. In the latter sense, there was nothing but Jewish Christianity in the formative years of the church. For further reading on Jewish-Christian sects such as the Ebionites and Nazarenes, see Philipp Vielhauer and Georg Strecker, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991), 134–52; Stephen Goranson, “Ebionites,” ABD 2:260–61; Georg Strecker, “On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,” in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ed. Walter Bauer (Mifflintown: Sigler Press, 1996), 241–85; Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (Westminster: Westminster Press, 1977).

2. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.8. He attributes the dates of the origin of the Ebionites and Nazarenes as institutional sects to the capture of Jerusalem. See *Panarion* 30.2.7.

3. This group is traditionally known as the Judaizers, Jews and Christian Jews who were compelling Gentiles to live according to Jewish customs. They were a major opponent of Paul, as is made clear by Acts and especially Galatians (see James W. Aageson, “Judaizing,” ABD 3:1089).

4. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.7.

The final event that motivated an Ebionite migration was the impending catastrophe of A.D. 70. According to Eusebius, a secret apocalyptic prophecy warned Christian leaders of the coming destruction of Jerusalem, enabling them to leave the city even before the war broke out.⁵ It seems that the Ebionites were similarly affected. Schoeps argues, after reconstructing an Ebionite “Acts of the Apostles” from the Pseudoclementine literature, that the Ebionites saw the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 as both fulfillment of prophecy and the punishment of the Jews for the death of James, and thus connected their flight from Jerusalem to these events.⁶ He sums up the significance of these events to the Ebionites by saying,

Who else in the whole of Christendom would have been interested in appealing to this event and placing it of all things at the center of an account of the history of salvation except the posterity of these exiles, the separated Jewish Christians or Ebionites.⁷

Thus, the hostility of the Jews, the internal disagreements with the Jerusalem church, and the understanding of an approaching catastrophe all combined to drive the Ebionites out of Jerusalem.

The flight to Pella marked only the first step in the founding of a new home for the Jewish Christians. Epiphanius points out that the migration of the Ebionites and Nazarenes did not stop at Pella but extended all the way to Pnias and Batanea (the northern and eastern boundary regions of Galilee).⁸ One of the prophecies of Isaiah as found in Matthew, the only canonical gospel which the Ebionites used, would have added special credence to the legitimacy of Galilee as their promised land. Matthew 4:15–16 states that Jesus’ move to Capernaum was a fulfillment of Isaiah, who said, “The land of Zabulon, and the

5. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.3.

6. Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 21–23. The supposed prophecy of Eusebius could easily be understood in the light of the saying of Jesus in Matthew 10:23, and it should be remembered that this was the only orthodox gospel used by the Ebionites.

7. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, 21–23.

8. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.7. and 30.18.1.

land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” The Ebionites could easily have understood themselves as migrating into the area which Matthew regarded as the land of promise as prophesied by Isaiah. Jerome gives further testimony by also explaining that the Ebionites and Nazarenes understood Isaiah 9:1 to mean that Jesus proclaimed the gospel first for the benefit of that land (Galilee), the land in which they themselves then resided.⁹ It would have been an eschatological fulfillment for the “true” congregation of Christians to settle precisely in the land where Christ first caused the great light to shine.

Finally, there is much evidence from the church fathers that locates Ebionites specifically to the city of Cochaba. For example, Epiphanius claims that the Ebionites lived “in Batanea and Pnias, and especially in Moabitis and Cochaba.”¹⁰ Furthermore, according to Julius Africanus, Jesus’ relatives had spread the gospel throughout Galilee, from Nazareth all the way to Cochaba in the east,¹¹ connecting the entire region religiously. This would have resulted in even further interaction and connection between the Ebionites of eastern Galilee and the Transjordan and the rest of Galilee proper. Jewish-Christian theology would have easily been integrated into the missionary message of Galilean Christianity, more strongly establishing them as a presence. Patristic and Jewish evidence connects the Nazarenes, another Jewish-Christian sect that was almost identical to the Ebionites, with Galilee as well. Epiphanius makes the obvious observation that the Jewish-Christian sect was named Nazarenes precisely because of their place of origin, Nazareth.¹² Similarly significant is evidence from the Talmudic writings, which make clear references to the heretic Jacob of Kfar Sechania, a Jewish-Christian preacher, whose proselyting activities and successful following were geographically centered in Galilee.¹³ Lastly, it should be

9. Jerome, MLP 24.129–30.

10. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.18.1.

11. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7.14.

12. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.1.

13. Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), 101–02, 107.

noted that archeological evidence favors a strong Jewish-Christian presence in Galilee as well. Bagatti has produced an exhaustive study on the ancient Christian villages of Galilee. From a survey of the remaining art and architecture, as well as the extant Christian and Jewish sources, Bagatti concludes that there were several major centers of Jewish Christians in Galilee, including Cana, Capernaum, Magdala, Sepphoris, and Tiberias.¹⁴

These historical and geographic observations are particularly relevant when looking at the book of Acts, which is clearly Jerusalem-oriented, despite the fact that Galilee is featured so prominently in the Gospels and is the country native to Jesus' family, childhood, and early ministry. There is no mention of any evangelism in Galilee, and no account of the history of the Galilean church. In fact, the only reference to Galilee in the entire work is found in Acts 9:31, which states, "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified." The near total silence of Galilee in the canonical history of the church provides the possibility that it is there that the headquarters of the Jewish-Christian church are to be located. Scholars have had difficulty identifying a reason for the absence of a post-resurrection Galilee ministry in Acts. Suggestions range from the idea that Luke simply did not have any information on the matter or that it did not concern him, that he considered the evangelization of Galilee to be the work of Jesus that had already occurred during his ministry, or that the Galilee mission was the prerogative of 'the brothers of the Lord,' as mentioned above.¹⁵ However, a few scholars have suggested that the absence of any mention of Galilee may have been a deliberate suppression of evidence that a Jewish-Christian population dwelled there.¹⁶ Interestingly, Bauckham argues that the

14. Bellarmino Bagatti, *Ancient Christian Villages of Galilee* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2001), 41-42, 47-49, 68-69, 76-77, 94-95.

15. For an excellent summary of the various scholarly suggestions, see Sean Freyne, *Galilee: From Alexander the Great to Hadrian* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1980), 344-47.

16. L. E. Elliot-Binns, *Galilean Christianity* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1956), 44. See also Freyne, *Galilee*, 346. Freyne lists many of the scholarly suggestions as to why there is no post-Easter evangelism in Galilee in Acts.

Gospel of the Ebionites may have been intended as a kind of alternative to the story of the Jerusalem church as portrayed in Acts.¹⁷ Thus, it served as a substitute that provided a completely different theological agenda. Just as Luke puts the emphasis on Jerusalem to steer his reader away from Galilee,¹⁸ so the Ebionite gospel may have done just the opposite. In fact, one of the most interesting doctrines of the Ebionite sect is a specific polemic against the Jerusalem church and institution. Perhaps as a result of their rejection by the church at Jerusalem, the Ebionites embraced a complete abandonment of the temple cult and sacrifice, something which seems never to have been a problem for the pre-A.D. 70 orthodox Christians of Judea. In the Gospel of the Ebionites, Jesus is reported to have said, "I have come to destroy the sacrifices. And if you do not stop making sacrifice, God's wrath will not stop afflicting you."¹⁹ A similar injunction is found later in the gospel, when the disciples say, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover lamb? And Jesus responded, 'I have no desire to eat the meat of this Passover lamb with you.'"²⁰

Luke's focus on Jerusalem in Acts is similarly paralleled by this same focus in his gospel, particularly in his resurrection narrative. While the first third of his gospel necessarily discusses Galilee in the context of Jesus' ministry there, the rest of his gospel points toward Jerusalem, and the culmination of the post-resurrection appearance which is to take place there. By the conclusion of chapter 9, Luke

17. Richard Bauckham, "The Origin of the Ebionites," in Peter J. Tomson and Doris Lambers-Perry eds., *The Image of the Judaeo-Christians in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 173. He makes the same assertion for the Ascents of James, another Jewish-Christian text which is one of the sources for the Pseudo-Clementina, and which is probably based on the Gospel of the Ebionites.

18. Although Luke is describing the Jerusalem church of the forties and fifties in which the Ebionites were still present and James, the Ebionite hero, is leader, the book of Acts was written in the 70s or 80s, after their expulsion, and Luke may be projecting back into his narrative a historical situation with which he was contemporary.

19. As translated in Bart Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14; and recorded by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.16.4–5.

20. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.22.4.

begins to steer his audience towards Judea, with a large section from 9:51 to 19:10 purely encompassing Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Indeed, Luke includes most of his unique material here, and the effect is that this section of his gospel is drawn out much more than it is in the other Synoptics, perhaps theologically so, to focus his readers' attention on the final climax in Jerusalem. His Jerusalem ministry follows, from 19:11 to the end of chapter 23, including, of course, Luke's Passion narrative.

Chapter 24 features Luke's resurrection narrative, and it is here that Luke's geographical bias is most apparent. While Mark mentions in several places that a resurrection appearance will occur in Galilee, and Matthew places a post-resurrection appearance and the injunction to the apostles to carry forth the gospel message in Galilee, Luke completely omits any mention of Galilee in his resurrection narrative. Instead, we read in Luke 24:33–36,

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" . . . While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Luke specifically places the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in Jerusalem. In verse 47, he assumes that the mission of the church is to originate from Jerusalem as well, as Jesus says, "and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Again, the emphasis is different from what we find in Matthew's gospel. Luke ends his gospel with these words:

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. (Luke 24:50–53)

Luke's message is clear. The crucifixion, resurrection, post-resurrection appearance, command to preach, and ascension all happen in or very near Jerusalem. The emphasis is singularly located in the city of Christ's passion, and nowhere else. This marks a significant

deviation from the two gospels that preceded him, and the theological reasons behind this decision need to be addressed.

The significance of Luke's ending is best seen in the light of the resurrection narrative of Mark, where any discussion is forced to begin with the question of the long or short ending. It is agreed by virtually all scholars today that the authentic text of Mark ends at 16:8, and that verses 9–20 are scribal additions.²¹ The question is whether or not Mark intended to end at 16:8, or whether he had written an original, longer ending that is no longer extant. There are various alternative endings. An intermediate ending simply concludes with, "But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation."²² The longer ending, found in the KJV and stemming from the Textus Receptus, is present in several witnesses. Finally, an expanded form of the long ending also existed, mentioned by Jerome and verified by the discovery of the Codex Freerianus in the early twentieth century.²³ Internal evidence is against the authenticity of any of these options. The intermediate ending has a high percentage of non-Markan words, and its tone is markedly different. The long ending of the KJV also has 17 non-Markan words, and lacks a smooth transition from verse 8 to 9. The expanded ending has extremely limited textual support, and has an apocryphal tone which is again out of place.²⁴ This leaves 16:1–8 as the only remaining original text. The other endings are simply attempts to provide a conclusion to what seemed an unlikely way to end Mark's gospel.

21. The last twelve verses in Mark are absent in the two earliest parchment codices, B and \aleph , the old Latin manuscript K, the Sinaitic Syriac, many manuscripts of the old Armenian version, the Adysh and Opiza manuscripts of the Old Georgian version, and a number of manuscripts of the Ethiopic version. Church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Ammonius are similarly unaware of the existence of these verses (see Bruce Metzger and Bart Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 322–23).

22. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 323.

23. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 323.

24. See Metzger, *Text of the New Testament*, 323–25 for this statistical data.

Similar debate has raged over whether or not Mark's original text ended at verse 8 or not. The majority of modern scholars think that it did.²⁵ Their argument is that the semi-veiled and paradoxical ending is in line with Mark's overall tone and style, which itself is filled with paradox and brevity. Nevertheless, there are many significant reasons for assuming that Mark did not intend for his gospel to end at verse 8. The first regards the fact that Mark's gospel is an ancient biography. In such a genre, it would make sense that the main character's persona or identity would be fully revealed at important and climactic moments. The first verse sets this theme with, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ." If the gospel ended at 16:8, Mark's biography would be missing a perfect opportunity to both confirm the theme and shed additional biographical light on the person of Jesus. What more fully illustrates his identity than his resurrection in glory? Witherington has studied the biographical issue at length, and has compared Mark to other well-known ancient biographies, such as Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* or Tacitus' *Agricola*.²⁶ He points out that Plutarch ends with the gods vindicating Caesar with visible signs and appearances in the heavens, and that Tacitus ends with similar praise and embellishment.²⁷ In the tradition of ancient biography, Mark's ending at 16:8 simply would not have been sufficient, as it provides no explanation of the empty tomb, nor any vindication of Jesus by God.²⁸

Linguistically, the ending of Mark in the Greek is also odd. The final sentence is simply, "ἐφοβούντο γάρ (*ephobounto gar*)," ending with the postpositive particle γάρ (*gar*), an extremely uncommon way

25. See R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 670 for a summary of the scholarship.

26. Although Witherington compares Mark to ancient biographies, he prefers to read Mark as a compilation of chreiai, or condensed stories, rather than bios. See Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 1–12.

27. Plutarch, *Caesar* 69.2–5; Tacitus, *Agricola* 46. See also Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 42–45.

28. Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 43. Witherington is quick to point out that the appropriateness of abrupt endings to modern novels should not lead us to assume that such an approach was appropriate in the case of ancient biographies.

to end a sentence, let alone a book. Some attempts have been made to show that this is an acceptable way to end a work, but the rarity of the occurrence must still be maintained. Van der Horst has attempted to show examples of sentences or paragraphs that end with γάρ in an effort to support the short ending of Mark. However, he is at a loss to show any example of a book that ends this way, and only presumes that it could be likely, the absence of evidence notwithstanding.²⁹ A more cautious view is that there is no evidence whatsoever for this being an appropriate ending for a whole document, especially a work of the biographical nature as we have in Mark. Even if he had wanted to make a brief closing statement similar to verse 8, his own text shows in other places that there was a better way of doing it than by ending the sentence with γάρ. Mark 9:6 ends with an almost identical phrase, but words it much differently: ἔκφοβοι γάρ ἐγένοντο (*ekphoboi gar egenonto*). There, the brevity and succinctness are still present, but in a much more grammatically acceptable form. Clearly, if Mark had truly intended for his gospel to end at verse 8, he could have done so in a much smoother way.

Lastly, an ending at verse 8 would not fit Mark's overall apocalyptic and eschatological theme, where the fulfillment of God's purposes plays a central role. One simple example of Mark's style is found in the apocalyptic imagery at the baptism of Jesus. Whereas Luke and Matthew have the heavens merely open (ἀνοίγω) to allow the descent of the dove, Mark uses the verb σχίζω (*schizo*) "to tear open," in good, apocalyptic fashion, to describe the event. The temptation scene which follows then includes references to wild beasts and angels. Witherington also sees apocalyptic overtones at the transfiguration and the crucifixion, leading the reader to expect one more at the end of the work.³⁰ The inclusion of the heavenly ascent of Jesus after his resurrection would have been a perfect conclusion to the eschatological slant of his gospel, yet it is not there at all.

29. P.W. Van der Horst, "Can A Book End with γάρ? A Note on Mark 16:8," *Journal of Theological Studies* 23 (1972): 121–24.

30. Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 259–65, 397–98.

Finally, we have two specific references to the promise Jesus makes to show himself to the disciples in Galilee. In Mark 14:28, we read, “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Again in 16:7, only one verse before the gospel ends, Mark says, “But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.” It is as if he is reminding his readers of his promised conclusion and setting us up for the fulfillment of that promise which is about to follow. It makes little sense that Mark, with his eschatological leanings and normal fulfillment of promised events, would leave us with so little.

The references to Galilee in Mark 14:28 and 16:7 provide a clue as to what might have been the specific content of Mark’s original and now lost ending. As should be clear by now, it almost certainly included a Galilee resurrection appearance. Such an ending finds support in the gospel of Matthew, which uses Mark as a template and largely follows its structure and content. Witherington has suggested that the content of Matthew’s resurrection narrative would have been a redaction of what Matthew found in his Markan source.³¹ Such would have included an appearance to the women and a brief account of his promised appearance in Galilee to the Eleven. This seems particularly likely from a comparison of Mark 16:7 with Matthew 28:7 which reads, “Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’” The striking similarity between these two accounts strongly suggests that what originally followed Mark 16:8 is that which is found in Matt 28:8–18. What happened to Mark’s original ending is open to speculation. Some possibilities have been offered, such as that it was written but then accidentally lost, or even that the ending was never written in final form due to illness or death. If the former, the original ending would have been lost at a very early date, but after Matthew had already incorporated it into his gospel, subsequent to becoming the more popular gospel and thus the more frequently and carefully copied. Another suggestion, however, is that

31. Witherington, *Gospel of Mark*, 49.

the ending was deliberately removed, and it is here that the discussion of Jewish Christianity becomes relevant.

If Mark records promises of a Galilee resurrection appearance throughout his gospel, and Matthew without question features this appearance and connects it with his mission commandment to the apostles, why has Luke, who definitely used Mark and maybe Matthew as his sources, deliberately chose to place all resurrection events in Jerusalem? A beginning to this answer may be seen in the later date of Luke. Most scholars today place the writing of Luke's gospel after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, often as late as 80–85.³² What had occurred by the time of Luke's composition, particularly in Galilee, that would have affected his decision not to give Galilee the central role that Mark and Matthew did? An interesting possibility, based on the evidence of the Jewish Christians presented at the beginning of this study, is that Galilee had been incorporated as the headquarters of the heretical Jewish-Christian church. In attempt to divert his readers away from the apostate church in Galilee, and to bring their focus to the orthodox church led by Peter in Jerusalem, Luke thus made a conscious decision to end his gospel in that city, and to make Jerusalem the focus of his historical chronicle of the church in Acts. What better propaganda existed for the legitimacy of a church than the claim that Christ had personally visited that area after his resurrection?

In addition, perhaps the reason that Mark's original ending was later excised from the text is precisely because it mentioned a Galilee appearance which would have bolstered the legitimacy of the Jewish Christians there. With a purpose similar to Luke's, the proto-orthodox church removed the ending altogether, either leaving it at 16:8, or as later scribes would do, supplanting it with a new and benign ending.³³ In fact, the longer ending seems simply to be a conflation of elements

32. Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, vol. 26 AB (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1981), 57. See also I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1978), 34–35.

33. It should be observed that none of the three spurious endings include any account of a Galilee resurrection scene.

from the resurrection narratives of Matthew and Luke.³⁴ That the proto-orthodox church was involved in the alteration of scripture for theological purposes has been amply illustrated. Bart Ehrman specifically mentions the Ebionites as one of the main heretical groups whose views led proto-orthodox scribes to modify their texts of scripture.³⁵ Many of these alterations dealt with anti-adoptionistic or anti-docetic corruptions of scripture, but it seems equally plausible that certain historical factors were at play as well. The textual tradition of the Ebionites also reveals a theological bias, as is to be expected. Of all the later canonical gospels, the Ebionites accepted only Matthew, with its Galilee resurrection narrative, into their canon of scripture. Even their distinct scripture, such as the Gospel of the Ebionites, is usually thought to be a redaction of the Gospel of Matthew.

The polemical dialogue between Jewish Christians and proto-orthodox Christians took many forms in the first centuries of early Christianity. The textual tradition of the resurrection narratives provides one example of the effect that such dialogue had on the transmission of the scriptural text which has been passed on for succeeding generations. Only with a thorough look at the historical context surrounding the creation and transmission of the New Testament text can an adequate and plausible suggestion be offered to answer the questions surrounding textual issues such as the original ending of Mark and the discrepancies between the synoptic resurrection narratives.

34. For example, Mark 16:12–13 seems to be a reference to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus from Luke 24:13–27.

35. Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 50.