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Title:

Typing Mark's Ending: Electronic Transcription as an Interpretation of Complex Textual Evidence

Abstract:

One of the oldest classic problems of New Testament textual criticism is how the Gospel of Mark ends. It has been assumed that there was no stone left unturned. Yet, the question of its composition history remains open. As part of the SNSF-funded project MARK16, I have been providing electronic transcriptions of the Gospel of Mark's last chapter in New Testament manuscripts, in different languages. The experience of working on this section shows that the complexity of evidence requires more than the knowledge of coding principles in order to maintain an accurate transition of data to the digital platform. Emphasis on the accuracy of transcription should include the context and presentation of the text in the manuscript. Therefore, the precision of electronic transcription, case-by-case decisions must be made. These decisions are interpretive choices that reflect the understanding of the transcriber, and this also requires a level of creativity in implementing these decisions, beyond the solid guidelines of TEI principles. Monier will show several examples in which the transcriber faces the need for an interpretive approach to the text in hand. Cases include catenae in which the canonical text is interwoven in the commentary, or the short introductory comments of the successive copyists, or even different views that make it difficult whether to conclude which end is original, and how this results in the production of different codes for the same text. This leads to see the need to view electronic transcription not as an automated process subject to regulatory rules which, by resorting to *standardisation* methods, fails to meet the complexity of textual evidence. Rather, it is a living process of interpretation, which requires a learned and creative mentality in order to meet the historical and literary peculiarities of special textual cases such as Mark's ending.