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# Realigning with the slave-like Jesus of Mark: The shorter ending of Mark 16:1-8 as a relecture

## ABSTRACT

*Mark's shorter ending (16:1-8) is understood as a paratext, one that interrupts the existing text by forcing a relecture of the entire Gospel. It compels the intended readers to realign themselves with the provocative narration of Jesus as the atypical Messiah who challenges the physiognomic stereotypes of an honour-shame-based context. From this hermeneutical perspective, the reference text of Mark provokes a second text, the reception text, but does not replace it. Rather, it takes on motifs and themes of the first text as a kind of "interpretive development". This new reception text, which is embedded in Mark's original reference text, pushes the intended readers not only to re-read the Gospel, but also to re-understand it in light of Mark's provocative presentation of the "non-godly" bodily demeanour of Jesus. However, it would appear that the original intertextual relecture, prompted by the ending of Mark 16:1-8, did not wholly succeed. Its open-ended nature, coupled with its provocative interpretation of Jesus, probably created too much dissonance for an unknown author who eventually added the longer ending of 16:9-20 in a different vocabulary and style.*



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## 1. MARK 16:1-8 AS A RELECTURE

The ending of the Gospel of Mark is still a topic of intense academic debate.<sup>1</sup> Scholars offer various historical, text-critical, theological, and stylistic reasons for opting either for the shorter ending at 16:8, or for the longer ending at 16:20 (or for other endings in-between). In this study, yet another hypothesis is tested, namely that Mark's shorter ending (16:1-8) could also be understood as a paratext, one that does not conclude, but actually interrupts the existing text by forcing a relecture of the entire Gospel. According to Zumstein (2008:123), a paratext functions as the sum of various signs that introduce, frame, present, interrupt or conclude an existing text. It compels the intended readers to realign themselves with Jesus, given the provocative narration of an atypical Messiah that challenges the physiognomic stereotypes of an honour-shame-based ancient Mediterranean context.

In any document or text that lends itself to a process of relecture, a specific expectation is created in the mind of the readers that prompts them towards not only a rereading, but also a re-understanding thereof in light of additional and/or challenging information that is offered throughout the text. Zumstein (1996:404), who introduced the concept "relecture" in studies on the Gospel of John, states:

Der Prozess der Relecture liegt dann vor, wenn ein erster Text die Bildung eines zweiten Textes hervorrufft und wenn dieser zweite Text seine volle Verständlichkeit erst im Bezug zum ersten Text gewinnt.

Relecture is a hermeneutical undertaking that, according to Labahn (2011:138),

accepts the truth/meaning and authority of the written text ... because the written text is accepted as authority, it is not modified by a new performance of its context and/or meaning but rather by adding a new text, the reception text, to the existing text. Hence, the first text (the original text or "reference text") and the second text (the supplementation or "reception text") stand in a close intra- and transtextual relationship.

Dettwiler (1995:48-49) identifies two movements in the process of relecture, namely an "explicative reception" that explains certain aspects of the reference text in detail, thus emphasising its theological orientation, and a "thematic shift of accent" that frames the theological questions of the reference text in a new context. According to Dettwiler, the reference

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<sup>1</sup> See Danove (1993); Magness (2002); Gaventa & Miller (2005); Upton (2006); Black *et al.* (2008); Lunn (2014); Hester (2015); Morgan (2016); Skinner (2018); Lyons-Perdue (2020).

text is brought to a new level of understanding through the reception text. Not only will the reference text be re-read, but it will be re-read through the reception text. From this perspective, it is my contention that a specific tension is created in the narrative of Mark, which ends abruptly in 16:8, prompting a relecture, but not in the sense of a correction or critique of the original text. Rather, it is an interpretive movement, “einer interpretativen Bewegung” (Zumstein 1996:407), that entails more than simply reading the text backwards. This relecture intends to deepen the reference text’s physiognomic presentation of Jesus in terms of his slave-like gait and gestures.<sup>2</sup> It also clears the way for new reflections on issues that have been raised throughout the Gospel regarding the true identity of Jesus and individuals’ responses to him.<sup>3</sup> Mark 16:1-8, which serves as the paratext, enables and facilitates this interpretive movement, as will be noted in the overview of Mark’s physiognomic presentation of Jesus in the Gospel. First, however, there is the need to come to terms with the general understanding of bodily posture, gesture, and gait in the ancient Mediterranean world.

## 2. GESTURES AS WINDOWS ON THE SOUL

The process of understanding entails more than merely deciphering the meaning of spoken words; it also includes the interpretation of gesture, that is, communicative bodily acts whereby specific social meanings are conveyed.

From a physical perspective, each muscular act, which may or may not be a component of a more complex muscular act can be called a gesture: reaching for a glass is a gesture; the articulation of a language sound is an organized bundle of articulatory gestures ... a bounded intonation contour is a gesture. Gestures are the basic units of bodily action ... Gestures reflect a ‘mindful body’ in action, a body that, without being under the control of some ‘executive system’ can spontaneously perform abstract, yet meaningful, acts that provide sense for the situation and move it along (Streeck 2016:29-30).

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2 In this regard, Engelbrecht (2020:114) points out that the reception text in the relecture is not merely set against the reference text, but it is set in the reference text to create a set of new or extended meanings. The function of the reception text to the reference text is not one of negation, criticism, or correction, but one of explication and a deepening of meaning.

3 From this perspective, as Zumstein (2008:123) states, “the reception text does not simply submit a variant reading for the reference text ... Nor is the relecture simply a commentary, which (per definition) clarifies the text as faithfully as possible. Rather – and this is the crucial point – the relecture expresses a surplus of meaning. The reference text receives a creative reception that extends it into a new dimension of meaning.”

Gestures are also markers of cultural difference, since they are embedded in particular sociocultural systems. They operate as cultural means of communication that are functionally diverse, yet rich in symbolic strategies, and also historically contingent. More to the point, “unuttered” or non-vocal mannerisms and movements function as embodied, culturally grounded expressions of individuals’ positions and/or social ranks in any society, and as regulators of different interpersonal relationships, as well as individuals’ evaluative responses to those around them. Hence, different bodily features and movements are intuitively understood according to the meanings such gestures carry within different cultural contexts, each with its own sets of shared social values.

In the ancient Mediterranean world, rhetoricians were trained in the study of gesture. For instance, in the eleventh book of his well-known *Institutio oratoria*, the Roman orator, Quintilian, included numerous pages on minute bodily gestures during public delivery of speeches. He and other rhetoricians were keenly aware of the importance of gesture as part of the delivery (*hypokrisis* or *pronunciatio*) of speeches in public, which included facial expression, bodily movement, and voice quality (see Fögen 2009:23).

In ancient Roman culture, as the probable setting for the Gospel of Mark’s original audience,<sup>4</sup> individuals’ bodily comportment served as prominent visual indicators of their character and status. It was widely believed that one could look into the souls of others and make judgements about their inner disposition by studying their bodily gestures, facial

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4 It is my contention that the Gospel of Mark was written for a predominantly non-Jewish audience. It is not known whether these first readers resided in Antioch or in Rome, but the latter would seem an obvious place, as forcefully argued by Donahue & Harrington (2002:41): “The shadow of the cross, opposition from powerful leaders, divisions among Jesus’ followers, persecutions, and betrayals all these themes in Mark’s Gospel would have been especially meaningful to an early Christian community that had suffered for the name of Jesus and was expecting even more suffering. These themes fit well with the experience of Christians at Rome in the late 60s of the first century C.E. There is solid historical evidence that the Christian community [in] Rome faced persecutions, brutal executions, and intrafamilial betrayal sometime after the great fire of 64 C.E. under Nero. According to the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus, who wrote around 115 C.E., the emperor Nero fixed the guilt on the Roman Christians to shift blame for the fire from himself (Ann. 15.44).” Cf. also Bond (2020:10). At the same time, the first readers of Mark also had a working knowledge of basic Jewish customs, apocalyptic ideas, and Scriptures.

expressions, and movements.<sup>5</sup> Walking, in particular, was not simply some form of gesture in action; it was the performance of identity in motion. It revealed how the ancients

drew distinctions between work and play, body and mind, man and woman, ‘manly’ and ‘effeminate’, rich and poor, citizen and slave, emperor and subject, child and adult, philosopher and student, republic and empire (O’Sullivan 2011:8).

In Mediterranean society, females usually walked slowly and more softly. Males moved faster and with firm determination, but without attracting unnecessary attention to themselves, since hurried walking could automatically exclude them from the ranks of the upper-class male. Hurriedness was always associated with people of low public status. Therefore, nobles, in particular, had to walk slowly, but then again “not too slow, for that marked a lack of effectiveness, as well as an inactive mind” (Corbeill 2004:122). In this regard, Emperor Augustus’ cryptic motto: “σπεῦδε βραδέως” (“hurry up slowly”) was also well-known (Joubert 2015:9). Whereas the ideal male always walked with total control, it was expected of slaves to always go about in a hurry. Commands to slaves were frequently prefaced with the imperative “quick”; hence, the Roman expression *servus currens*, the running slave (see Joubert 2017:a2100).<sup>6</sup> These different codes for walking, as marks of social status, were so widespread that, according to Corbeill (2002:191), even in Roman comedies, the audience was expected to

recognize correlations between movement and character: members of the dominant class move slowly on stage, whereas slaves, attendants, and workers were marked by stereotypically swift movements (Quintillian, *Inst.* 11.3.112).

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5 The ancient Mediterranean world was a “physiognomically-conscious” world (Hartstock 2008:58). According to Joubert (2015:7-15), the Greek philosopher Aristotle (*Prior Analytics* 70b6-7) was convinced that one could judge men’s character from their physical appearance, whereas the Jewish sage Jesus Sirach (*Sir* 19:30) assumed that the way in which a man walks shows what he is. Two extant treatises on physiognomy by Pseudo-Aristotle at approximately the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE and Polemo of Laodicea in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE also testify to this long-standing fascination of the correlation between innate character and the construction of the body.

6 Corbeill (2002:191) mentions that the stereotype of “the running slave” appears so often in Roman comedy as to render the expression almost tautological. According to Strauss (2022:263), the Romans set such great store by a person’s gait that noble families even hired actors to observe their distinguished members so that an actor could impersonate a great man at his funeral, down to his way of walking.

### 3. THE “NON-GODLY” JESUS IN MARK

#### 3.1 All too ordinary a presence!

When looking at the physical demeanour of the Markan Jesus, his unassuming presence is evident throughout the gospel.

Contrary to the radiant epiphanies of Greco-Roman deities, or their splendid gait that frequently gave away their divine nature when they appeared in disguised forms, the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus very differently. Mark makes no explicit mention of extravagant garments, physical posture, demeanour, or comportment befitting the divine status Jesus possesses as the *Χριστός* and the *υἱός τοῦ θεοῦ* (1:1), at least not in terms of stereotypical ancient Mediterranean expectations. The Gospel offers no genealogy of Jesus (or any kind of *cursus honorum*), nor any description of his gait as a proper reflection of his divinity (Joubert 2017:a2100).

Mark presents only one epiphanic moment during the entire earthly ministry of Jesus. This takes place during his transfiguration on a mountain in Mark 9:2-8. In this instance, his divine identity is confirmed for a second time by God (see also 1:9-11). However, the only outward differences from Jesus’ “normal” appearance are his shiny garments, as well as the glory emitting from his body and face. Mark makes it clear that Jesus’ outward appearance or *μορφή*, in his moment of glory when his true divine presence is displayed, is not unrecognisably different from his outward form throughout his public ministry. He always is who he is, and always looks like he does in the presence of both human beings and God. Jesus does not wear a mask that is donned in public and removed again in private (see Joubert 2019).

He does not have a different divine persona, alter ego, or even a significantly different physical appearance in his glorified form than during his conventional appearances (Joubert 2017:a2100).

Even after his resurrection from the dead, and unlike the other Gospels, Mark does not refer to a glorious, post-resurrection body for Jesus.

#### 3.2 Walking like a slave

Jesus is constantly on the move in Mark (1:9, 12, 14, 21, 29, 35; 2:13, 23). References to the way/road (*ὁδός*) are used seventeen times throughout the Gospel, while the adverbs *εὐθύς* and *εὐθέως* (“at once/immediately/straight away”) are also used with extraordinary frequency. Coupled with the rush of narrated events, urgency is the order of the day throughout Jesus’ public

ministry *en route* to Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> The more than forty repetitions of εὐθύς are not simply an idiosyncratic stylistic feature on the part of the author.<sup>8</sup> Through this adverb, Mark intentionally presents us with a “fast-paced” Jesus against the backdrop of a physiognomically conscious world. Jesus constantly hurries to come to the rescue of the sick, the impure, the sinners, the social outcasts, or his disciples. In this environment, where bodily posture, movement, and gesture serve as visible indicators of a person’s identity, character, and social status, Jesus looks and walks very differently from the typical honourable Mediterranean male. Over against the typical, leisured philosophical stroll of the nobles, which was intended for casual and intellectual conversations, Jesus’ bodily comportment and movement are comparable to those of a slave.<sup>9</sup>

In line with the assumption of Corbeill (2004:6) that common gestures in antiquity did not arise arbitrarily but through some mimetic connection between the body and the external world, the “Jesus walk” in Mark provides the interpretive framework for his provocative words and deeds such as his constant transgressions of the religious purity codes of the religious leaders of the day, by forgiving sins (Mark 2:1-12), feasting with

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- 7 According to Burrige (2005:37-38), pace and vividness are also imparted by Mark’s predilection “for the use of the ‘historic present’, dropping into the vivid present tense when narrating a story in past time ... Mark does this 151 times in his gospel ... This sense of urgency can also be noted in Mark’s use of time. While Luke carefully anchors his account of Roman and Jewish civil and religious dates (Luke 3:1-2), for Mark the time is always now and things are urgent”.
- 8 Scholars generally understand εὐθύς as a typical Markan mannerism. For instance, Carnley (2020:139), does not interpret εὐθύς as an adverb of time, but as a basic connecting device, due to the fact that Mark uses “kai euthus” 25 times. For him, this is equivalent to “kai idou” in the other Gospels. In turn, Riley (1989:217) states that, when εὐθύς corresponds to an equivalent word in Matthew and/or Luke, it is clear that it requires the sense of “immediately”. When there is no corresponding word, the more natural translation is, in almost every instance, “then”. Riley concludes: “the appearance of peculiar speed in Mark’s narrative is therefore partly due to his selection of incidents, rather than teaching material, and partly due to mannerism. The effect is unintentional: Mark has a colloquial style”. Indeed, it would be fair to say that Mark has a peculiar literary style. In Mark 1:21-28, for instance, “kai” is used 13 times, including twice in conjunction with εὐθύς. It is my contention, however, that the communicative impact of all the narratives in Mark, which are connected by means of εὐθύς, should also be understood within the formative framework of physiognomy in the ancient Mediterranean world, and also in terms of Mark’s understanding of the physical comportment of Jesus.
- 9 According to O’Sullivan (2006:138), “[w]alking for leisure was not only a privilege of the cultured Roman elite, but also Roman negotiation of Greek culture. The intellectual discussion that often accompanied such walks, the spaces in which these walks occurred, even the notion of leisure as a goal to be pursued – all were marked as Greek in the Roman imagination and were attributed to the Hellenization of a Roman aristocratic culture that continued throughout Roman history but was associated with the second century B.C.E.”

sinners (Mark 2:13-17), allowing his disciples to pluck grain on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28), and so forth. Jesus is indeed the *servus currens*, the slave-like Son of God whose hurried walk is explained in his own words that he came not to be served, but to serve and lay down his own life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).

The “Jesus walk” is always purposeful. Undoubtedly, the Markan Jesus would concur with Plautus’ Curculio (*Curc.* 288-291), who complains about the thoughtless Greek noble pedestrians who constantly get in the way of the focused “running slave”.<sup>10</sup>

Jesus hurries about to bring the Kingdom of God to the demon-possessed (1:21-28), the unclean (1:40-45), the sick (1:30-35; 10:46-52), the lost (2:13-14), the fearful (4:35-41; 6:45-52), the dead (5:35-43), the hungry (6:30-44), non-Israelites (7:31-37), women and children (7:24-30; 10:13-16), and so forth. Jesus also hurries towards the cross to sacrifice himself on behalf of all (Mark 8:27-10:52). In exemplary fashion, he now leads the way before his disciples *en route* to Jerusalem to drink his cup of suffering and to fulfil his mission (Joubert 2020:68). At the institution of the Lord’s Supper on the Thursday evening, shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus tells his disciples that he will be the “sacrificial lamb” when he sacrifices his own body and blood on the cross for many (14:22-24).

#### 4. NO SHAME!

Apart from verbal utterances to perform exorcisms and miracles (for example, Mark 1:25; 2:11; 4:39; 7:29; 10:52), Jesus frequently uses his hands to heal ritually unclean people. Among others, he touches a leper (1:41); takes the daughter of Jairus by the hand and raises her from the dead (5:41); puts his fingers in a deaf man’s ears, spits and touches his tongue (7:33), and casts out a demon by taking a young boy by his hand and raising him to his feet (9:27). These visible gestures are used in conjunction with his verbal expressions/commands in the presence of disease and impurity, but at times also serve as complements, supplements or even substitutes to them.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Jesus’ hands mimic his words, and vice versa.

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10 Quoted in O’Sullivan (2006:136): “tum isti Graeci palliati, capite operto qui ambulat ... obstant, obsistunt, incedunt cum suis sententiis (And then there’s those cloak-wearing Greeks who walk around with their heads covered, ... they stop, they stand in your way, they saunter along with their aphorisms)”.

11 See, in this regard, Kendon (2004:11), who defines gestures as “movements seen as deliberate, conscious, governed by an intention to say something or to communicate”.



Jesus' gestural language, as well as the physical responses of the sick and the unclean, by touching his hands and his garments (5:27; 6:56), create new visual metonymies for faith in Mark. However, within the hierarchical ancient Mediterranean culture, with its pivotal values of honour and shame, Jesus' gestures and words also communicate that he has no sensitivity for his own public reputation. He brings shame on himself by, among others, being visibly recognised by demons (1:23-26; 3:11-12); being humiliated by his own family who try to remove him from the public sphere to minimise their own shame (3:19-21); being ridiculed in public by mourners in Jairus' house (5:38-43); being rejected by his hometown Nazareth (6:1-6); being humiliated by Israel's religious leaders (14:61-62), and being crucified at the hands of the Romans (15:22-23).

In a world where people's honour is dependent on individuals' value in their own eyes, as well as in the eyes of their social groups, the religious leaders of Galilee and Judea (who adhere to different codes of religious purity) find no proof of God's presence in his scandalous teachings and inglorious outward appearance. Without any external distinguishing marks to confirm his divine status, they are convinced that he is, in fact, the devil incarnate (3:22). He is henceforth labelled a demon-possessed blasphemer and a transgressor of the sabbath who deserves a shameful death. Ultimately, Jesus' constant disregard for the generally accepted codes of his physiognomically conscious society, but also his offensive physical movements, which contradict his own messianic claims, brings about his crucifixion. Jesus' opponents would undoubtedly concur with Cicero when he states:

Isn't it true that when we consider many people worthy of our contempt when they seem, through a certain kind of movement or posture, to have scorned the law and limit of nature? (quoted in Corbeill 2004:203).

## 5. AN OPEN-ENDED ENDING, A RELECTURE

In Mark 15, the hurried, purposeful "Jesus walk" is brought to an abrupt end at the cross, where he dies a shameful death on the Friday of Passover. However, on the Sunday, the women find his tomb empty, together with the news that he has risen from the dead (16:7). An angelic figure tells them that they must share this news with his disciples who need to catch up with Jesus in Galilee, as he had promised in 14:28. But Mark does not refer to a glorified new body for the resurrected Jesus. In a world where individuals' bodies served as microcosmic maps of reality (Glancy 2010:20), one would at least have expected a reference to a new

replacement body for Jesus after he had died on the cross, stripped of all honour and totally godforsaken. But nothing of the sort. According to Mark, the risen Jesus is still who he is. He remains in character, by doing what he has been doing all along, by going before his disciples to Galilee (*πρόαγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν*), where his public ministry began. Mark thus emphasises that the true character of Jesus is not tied up to, or revealed in a new resurrection body. Paradoxically, his death on the cross opens up a different understanding of reality. In this instance, the world is indeed turned upside down.

The three women at the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome are amazed at this news (see the use of *ἐκθαμβέω* in 16:5, 6). However, their amazement immediately makes way for fear (as expressed by the use of the terms *τρόμος*, *θοβέω*, and *ἔκστασις*). Hastily they run away from the grave, intent on not telling anybody of their experience (16:8).

According to *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*, the two oldest Greek manuscripts, deriving from the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Gospel ends abruptly in 16:8 with the words *ἐθροβοῦντο γάρ*.<sup>12</sup> In spite of numerous explanations for this strange ending of Mark (see fn. 1), it would seem as if the author does not want to provide narrative closure in terms of answering all the questions and curiosities of the intended readers. However, his rather unusual grammatical style, by ending his Gospel with the particle *γάρ*, together with the open-ended references to the fear and the silence of the three women, turns Mark 16 into a paratext that facilitates a relecture of the Gospel.<sup>13</sup>

According to Zumstein (1996:404), the function of a paratext is to introduce, frame, interrupt, or summarise another text. From this hermeneutical perspective, the reference text thus provokes a second text, called the reception text, but does not replace the first text. Rather, as Lewis (2008:52) explains, “the second text takes on motifs and themes of the first text as a sort of ‘interpretive development’”. This new reception text, which is embedded in Mark’s original reference text, creates a surplus of meaning (Zumstein 2008:123). It compels the intended readers not only to re-read the gospel, but also to re-understand it in light of Mark’s

12 The longer ending of Mark (16:9-20) first appears in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and later in less reliable manuscripts. Church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen had no knowledge of these verses, while Eusebius and Jerome confirmed that it was extant from almost all Greek copies of Mark that they knew.

13 In the words of Juel (2005:4): “An ending can achieve closure, pulling together loose threads from a story, or it can resist closure, refusing to answer burning questions posed in the course of the narrative.”

provocative presentation of the “non-godly” bodily demeanour of Jesus. Their theological understanding of him, as well as their understanding of reality are now brought under scrutiny. To re-align themselves with him, according to Joubert (2019), they now also have to face the fact that

Jesus is not merely an exemplar of general, ethical qualities; or a stereotyped deity. On the contrary, his presence, as well as his teachings and selfless deeds, reveal a new understanding of reality, including fresh new categories of honour and shame. Jesus turns reality upside down. His story, as it unfolds throughout the Gospel, is embedded in a positive, imitable evaluation of humiliation (shame), suffering, selfless sacrifice, and servanthood.

Mark’s relecture facilitates a theological shift in accent, one where the physiognomic presentation of Jesus, in terms of his personal bearing, demeanour, behaviour, and gestures, leads to a new understanding of honour and shame. More to the point, his physical appearance, his mighty deeds, and his hurried movements, which reflect his humble and unassuming, yet powerful presence, provide the paradigm

for a new understanding of honourable gesture and behaviour. Jesus is a new type of honourable figure, worthy not only of attention, but also to be followed in a similar, slave-like manner (Neufeld 2014:9).<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, the paratext of Mark 16:1-8 facilitates an interpretive development of what the “correct response” to the risen Jesus entails. The fear of the women at the empty tomb and their (initial) silence correspond to other examples elsewhere in the New Testament, where theophanies and miracles also take place (see Luke 5:26; Acts 3:10; 19:10; 11:5; 22:17). Their bewilderment or *ἔκστασις* is not based on a misplaced apprehension over some imagined consequences from speaking the news of Jesus’ resurrection.

It is numinous awe in response to this dumbfounding miracle. The description of their fear combined with their ‘alarm,’ ‘trembling,’ and ‘bewilderment’ all serve to accentuate the overpowering mystery of this news of the resurrection (Garland 2015:555).

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14 According to Neufeld (2014:9), “Mark’s portrayal of Jesus having a strong sense of honour and shame, expressed in a willingness to accept the hazards of being seen, indicated positively by reading and listening audiences that he might well be someone that met the eye – while unconventional, he was not a deviant deserving of crucifixion. By situating Jesus’ story within the larger framework of cultural meaning, value and symbolism ... Mark infused his story with agonistic urgency requiring audience reaction.”

This added layer of theological explanation facilitates a reassessment of people's responses in the Gospel whenever Jesus' true identity is grasped, such as that of the individuals who saw him raise the daughter of Jairus from the dead (5:42; see also 4:41-44; 6:50; 9:7, 32). Thus, from an intertextual perspective, Mark 16 prompts the need for an expanded understanding of individuals' fear responses to Jesus, as modelled by the awe of women, not in the sense of some "ill-defined trepidation," but as an expression of wonderment that something extraordinary has taken place.

## 6. FAILURE OF THE ORIGINAL RELECTURE? THE LONGER ENDING OF MARK

According to Coloe (2021:403), relecture is an intertextual phenomenon that has to be analysed both synchronically and diachronically, due not only to the rereading of the original text, but also to the development and application thereof to different contexts. From this perspective, it would appear that the original intertextual relecture, prompted by the ending of Mark 16:1-8, did not wholly succeed. Its open-ended nature, coupled with its provocative interpretation of Jesus, probably created too much dissonance for an unknown author who eventually added the longer ending of 16:9-20 in a different vocabulary and style (Garland 2015:539-541). This author deliberately tried to address the "deficiency" of Mark's abbreviated ending by means of a forced harmonisation with other New Testament texts such as John 20:11-18; Luke 24:13-43, and Matthew 28:16-19, as well as a number of texts in Acts. Clearly, his more conventional picture of Jesus in 16:9-20 was intended to place Mark in the same mould as the other Gospels, and with similar endings. Perhaps this kind of tampering with the original text to bring Jesus in line with the more conventional picture of him – one that started taking place in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century – is indicative of what Käsemann (1977:87) stated some years ago:

People and institutions do not like to be kept continually on the alert, and they have constantly devised screens to protect themselves from too much heat. In fact, they have even managed to reduce Jesus' red-hot message, which promised to kindle a fire throughout the world, to room temperature.

## 7. CONCLUSION

As paratext, Mark 16:1-8 compels the intended readers to come to new terms with the “non-godly” Jesus of Mark and with his “servile walk”. As the risen Jesus, he still offers no easy route for his followers. In Mark 16:1-8, he leads them on a missional road back/forward to Galilee. The baton has now been passed on to them (Joubert 2020:68):

with Jesus now not merely ‘a step ahead’ of his disciples, but ‘a journey ahead.’ Their challenge is to keep following the risen Jesus who has completed his mission. Since hurriedness and urgency have been part and parcel of ‘the Jesus walk’ en route to the cross, his disciples have to follow suit. They have to emulate his walk as participants in the *missio Christi* towards the needy, the lost, the hungry, the outcast. They have to transform their surroundings by proclaiming the kingdom of God, as new wine is being poured into new wineskins (2:11-14).

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