

I've been browsing through some old posts and came upon this one from years ago, about this time. It's an interesting topic that people on the blog frequently ask me about: did scribes really change the texts of the NT on purpose, and how can we know? The answers are simply: almost certainly yes and it's difficult!

Here's an example I talked about back then, one of the most intriguing instances in the Gospel of Mark, where the scribes who changed the text ended up having almost NO effect on Bible translations today; most translators agree on the "original" form of the text. But the change is really interesting, and can show the sorts of reasons scribes were doing this kind of thing.

Here's the original post, slightly edited.

I have started giving some instances of what appear to be "intentional" changes made by scribes, as opposed to simple, accidental, slips of the pen. Here's another instance of the phenomenon I stress that these alterations "appear" to be intentional since, technically speaking, we can never know what a scribe intended to do (they aren't around for us to ask about their intentions). I use the term I simply to mean an alteration to the text that a scribe appears to have made on purpose because he wanted to change it for one reason or another. Part of the historical task is trying to reconstruct what might have been a plausible reason.

One of the most intriguing variations in Mark's Gospel comes in the Passion narrative, in the final words attributed to Jesus in the Gospel. Jesus is being crucified, and he says nothing on the cross until he cries out his final words, which Mark records in Aramaic: "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" Mark then translates the words into Greek: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus then utters a loud cry and dies.

What is striking is that in one early Greek manuscript...

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