

# INTRODUCTION

Commentaries are not like other books. They are books about other books, so they are woven into a fabric of other texts and the readings of texts. Most readers of this commentary probably will not read it through from start to finish. Instead, it will be a resource, probably one among several, that will be used in studying particular passages in the Gospel of Mark in preparation for teaching or preaching. At other times, the reader may consult the commentary looking for an answer to a specific question. Still others may read through the commentary over a period of time as part of their systematic study of the Bible for their own personal enrichment. Because commentaries are used for different specific purposes, they must be written so that they do not presuppose or require linear reading. In other words, the writer cannot assume that the reader has read the material presented earlier in the volume. Where such knowledge is needed, cross-references are supplied.

Writing requires the writer to make countless decisions about what needs to be said, emphasized, clarified, referenced, and documented. Inevitably these decisions in turn require that the writer make assumptions about his or her readers and how they will use the commentary. The process is also based on assumptions about the purpose and role of a commentary. The following paragraphs, therefore, are an introduction, not to the Gospel of Mark—for that see the following sections—but to the commentary.

## THE FUNCTION OF A COMMENTARY

First and foremost, a commentary should prepare the reader to read the text, in this case the Gospel of Mark. It therefore serves a mediating role. The commentator is a guide, consultant, and advisor concerning this enigmatic text. If the commentary does its job well, it will not substitute for reading and studying Mark but will prompt and motivate the reader to study Mark itself with greater interest and insight.

## Reading Beside Other Readers Whispering the Text

In this process, the commentary can explain the foreign and ancient terms, customs, and references in Mark that a modern reader may not understand. For example, Mark uses terms like “the Son of Man” (e.g., 2:10), “the sons of the bridal-chamber” (2:19), and “Corban” (7:11) that are not only foreign to us but remind us that the Gospel of Mark comes to us from another time and culture. It was not written for modern readers, except in God’s greater purpose for it, and we are outsiders to its thought world.

A commentary can also collect other texts that provide a context for our reading of the Gospel. Mark draws from the historical, social, religious, and conceptual context in which it was written. The reader will therefore find numerous references to the books of the Old Testament but also to contemporary writers and historians (Philo, Josephus, the Dead Sea Scrolls), the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, later Jewish writings (the Mishnah and Talmud), early Christian writings (New Testament Apocrypha, Church Fathers, and gnostic texts), and Greco-Roman writers. These ancient writings provide illuminating insights into the Gospel and its world and times.

Still, we cannot assume that we can simply come to Mark with fresh eyes and read it for the first time in the light of sources contemporary with it. Mark, like the other books of Scripture, has been read and interpreted continuously through the centuries. We are part of a culture and churches that have been shaped by the reading of these texts, and in this instance by interpretations of Mark.

One aspect of studying Mark’s Gospel, therefore, is becoming aware of this rich tradition of Bible reading and interpretation and the ways in which it has focused the issues, passages, problems, and interpretations that guide our understanding of Mark today. For this reason, the reader will find in the pages of this volume a sample of quotations from church fathers and medieval scholars, and images of artwork related to the text that provide interpretation in a visual medium. Finally, the introduction to the commentary, occasional references within it, the bibliography, and the endnotes acknowledge the contributions to our understanding of Mark from a vigorous com-



**Mosaic of St. Mark with the Gospel**

Large arch over cantoria. Mosaic. S. Marco, Venice, Italy.  
(Credit: Cameraphoto / Art Resource, NY)

munity of modern scholars. No one can come to the text alone, and no one can read it without the echoes of other readings conditioning what we see and hear, nor should one want to. The generations of readers who have gone before us have greatly enriched and illuminated what we can see in the text, and the community of informed readers today can guard us from idiosyncratic interpretations.

### **“Narrative Texts Create Their Own Worlds”**

By virtue of being a narrative rather than an epistle, homily, or some other form of writing, Mark has a narrator who tells the story to an implied reader, a cast of characters who interact with one another, and events or scenes that cover a span of time and form a more or less coherent plot. Mark is also based on the history of Jesus’ life and set in a particular historical context. Some readers may wish to explore questions of historicity and theories regarding Mark’s sources. For such questions they should consult other commentaries and sources. The focus of this commentary (especially in the Commentary sections) is on the text of Mark itself, its meanings, literary patterns, and themes. We ask, what was Mark saying, and why was it written in this way? The reader will therefore find that many passages, motifs, and terms are part of larger patterns in the Gospel. This commentary takes pains to point out those patterns, connect references, and trace themes so that the reader is continually reading each passage in the context of its setting and function within the Gospel as a whole.

In addition, the commentary (especially in the Connections sections) suggests ways in which the Gospel speaks to contemporary issues and concerns and provides reflections that may offer ways in which the reader can find the Gospel to be personally meaningful. The Gospel of Mark is not just a classic, ancient text; it is inspired Scripture, a part of the church’s canon of Scripture that sustains and guides worship, spiritual formation, and personal discipleship. It is our hope that this commentary will foster biblical preaching, devotional reading, and moral decision-making for those who draw inspiration from Mark. The more one studies the Gospel, the more one will see in it, and the more one will be challenged by its vision of Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection.

## FIVE ERAS IN MARKAN SCHOLARSHIP


Mark has been at the center of debate about the nature of the Gospels and their relationships to one another. The history of Markan scholar-

ship therefore offers a good overview of basic issues in the study of the Gospels. It also provides an orientation to different perspectives on the basic introductory questions: who wrote the Gospel, when, where, and why? The history of Markan studies up until the current period can be sketched in five eras: (1) the clumsy Mark (the church fathers until the rise of modern critical scholarship), (2) the chronicler Mark (the source critics), (3) the compiler Mark (the form critics), (4) the clever Mark (the redaction critics), and (5) the creative Mark (the narrative critics). The recent spate of publications on Mark has taken various directions, so it is best to leave the naming of a common theme among them (if there is one) to future surveys.

### The Clumsy Mark

The rubric “the clumsy Mark” reflects not only the general view that Mark was the abbreviator or epitomizer of Matthew but specifically the testimony of Papias that Mark wrote everything accurately but not in order and the Anti-Marcionite Prologue’s comment that Mark was “stump-fingered.”

#### Papias

 Papias (c. 120–140), according to Eusebius (c. 325): “And the Presbyter used to say this, “Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said or done by the Lord. For he had not heard the Lord, nor had he followed Him, but later on, as I said, followed Peter, who used to give teaching as necessity demanded but not making, as it were, an arrangement of the Lord’s oracles, so that Mark did nothing wrong in thus writing down single points as he remembered them. For to one thing he gave attention, to leave out nothing of what he had heard and to make no false statements in them.”

Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15; LCL 1:297

The earliest external evidence about the Gospel of Mark is preserved in fragments of the writings of Papias (c. AD 120–140). [Papias] Matthew was already becoming the church’s favorite Gospel. Marcion chose the Gospel of Luke, which he edited to excise references to the Old Testament. About the same time, Papias wrote to defend the authority of Mark, claiming that John the elder had said that Mark was the interpreter of Peter. As an associate of the principal apostle, Mark collected Peter’s words. Papias claimed that Mark wrote down what he remembered. His writings say nothing about Peter checking his work, so the implication is that Peter was not around when Mark wrote—presumably he was already dead. Then Papias

acknowledges that Mark’s account is not in order. We can contrast here Luke’s claim that he would write everything in order. Alternatively, Papias may have known of John’s different chronology. Still, Papias defends Mark against omission or error while acknowledging also that Mark adapted his material to the needs of the hearers.

The Papias tradition is tremendously important, although many scholars now doubt there was any real connection between Mark and Peter. How accurate is the tradition Papias claims to have received from

John the Elder? Papias may have had no more than 1 Peter 5:13 on which to base this tradition: “Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark.”

The Anti-Marcionite Prologue adds that Mark was called “stump-fingered” and that he wrote after Peter’s death. [The Anti-Marcionite Prologue] This prologue (traditionally dated c. 160–180 but now thought to be later) appears to be dependent upon the Papias tradition. The note that Mark was composed after Peter’s death may be an attempt to explain why Mark did not consult Peter about the order of events.

Irenaeus (c. 180) concurs that Mark was the interpreter of Peter and that he wrote his Gospel (i.e., “the things preached by Peter”) after Peter’s death. [Irenaeus] The problem is that there is no evidence that Irenaeus knew anything about Mark other than the Papias tradition. On the other hand, he agrees with the Anti-Marcionite Prologue (or the Anti-Marcionite Prologue later drew from Irenaeus) in saying that the writing occurred after Peter’s death. Clement of Alexandria adds that Peter ratified the Gospel, and Jerome adds that Mark was the first bishop of Alexandria.

The most important evidence from the patristic period is the statement by Papias, but its value is debated. Most conservative scholars accept it at face value,<sup>1</sup> while acknowledging that Mark had other sources beside Peter. The fact that its order is criticized at this early date should caution against taking Mark to be an accurate chronology of the ministry of Jesus. Because of the possibility that Papias may have been motivated by an interest in countering the Marcionites and linking Mark more closely with apostolic authority—and may have adapted 1 Peter 5:13 to this end—many scholars regard the Papias tradition with some skepticism. This skepticism is heightened by those who hold 1 Peter to be a pseudonymous writing dating from the reign of Domitian. While Mark stands solidly within the mainstream of the apostolic tradition about Jesus, and doubtlessly contains material derived from eyewitnesses, there is little in the Gospel to support Papias’s claim that it preserves Peter’s preaching. If Mark was Peter’s interpreter, it is certainly odd that he placed Peter and the Twelve in a more negative light than any of the other Gospels.

Very early, Mark suffered from neglect, chiefly because it was viewed as merely an abridgment of Matthew. This opinion, however, is clearly irreconcilable with the Papias tradition. Nevertheless, Augustine held

### The Anti-Marcionite Prologue



“. . . Mark related, who was called ‘stumpy-fingered’ [*colobodactylus*], because for the size of the rest of his body he had fingers that were too short. He was Peter’s interpreter [*interpreter*]. After the departure [or ‘death,’ *post excessionem*] of Peter himself, the same man wrote this Gospel in the regions of Italy.”

C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 119.


### Irenaeus



“And after the death of these Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing the things preached by Peter.”

Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1.2, qtd. by William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974), 9.

**Augustine**

 “Mark follows him [Matthew] closely, and looks like his attendant and epitomizer. . . . Luke, on the other hand, had no one connected with him to act as his summarist in the way that Mark was attached to Matthew.”

Augustine, *De con. evang.* 1.2.3-4; 3.6, qtd. by C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 128.

that Mark was an abridgment of Matthew. [Augustine] Ironically, where Matthew and Mark report the same events, Matthew’s account is usually briefer than Mark’s. Victor of Antioch in the fifth century says he could not find an earlier commentary on Mark,<sup>2</sup> and Mark was virtually ignored until the dawn of modern critical scholarship nearly two centuries ago.<sup>3</sup>

**The Chronicler Mark**

Comparative study of the Gospel accounts gradually led to a reversal in perspectives on Mark, from Matthew’s epitomizer to “the saint who first found grace to pen the life which was the Life of men.”<sup>4</sup> Mark became the first evangelist and the one who gave us the most reliable outline of Jesus’ ministry: “the chronicler Mark.” The crucial developments leading up to the theory of Markan priority are presented here merely in outline form.<sup>5</sup>

In 1774–1775 J. J. Griesbach published the first true “synopsis,” from which the first three Gospels were called “synoptic.” Griesbach recognized that no real harmonization of the Gospel accounts was possible, and John was left out. In 1783, Griesbach proposed his theory: Matthew was written first, then Luke, who used Matthew, then Mark, who followed both Matthew and Luke but omitted some passages where they both agreed. Both D. F. Strauss and F. C. Baur, key figures in Gospel studies in the mid-nineteenth century, accepted the Griesbach hypothesis.

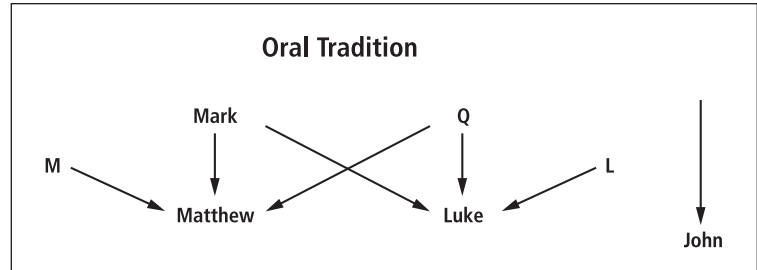
In 1782 J. B. Koppe observed that Mark cannot be explained as Matthew’s epitomizer. Koppe showed that Mark does not slavishly follow Matthew, thereby challenging the dominant view that dated back to Augustine. Karl Lachmann (1835) discovered that the order of events in all three Synoptics is based on the Gospel of Mark. When Matthew and Luke agree with each other, they agree with Mark; when they depart from Mark (and where Mark is silent), they depart from one another. From this it was inferred that Mark was the earliest Gospel. This inference was later called the “Lachmann fallacy,” but it is one of the foundations of the two-source hypothesis.<sup>6</sup> A further step was taken when C. H. Weisse (1838) theorized that Matthew and Luke were based on a “proto-Gospel” that lay behind Mark, which Matthew and Luke combined with a “sayings source.” That same year C. G. Wilke concluded that Matthew and Luke were based on Mark itself, not an Ur-Mark. He also said that Matthew and Luke used the sayings source, but Matthew also used Luke.

The “two-source” hypothesis reached its definitive form in 1863 in the work of H. J. Holtzmann. Drawing on Weisse, Holtzmann postulated that Matthew and Luke drew from some form of Mark and the sayings source, which by the 1890s was called Q. Mark therefore provides the earliest form of the Gospel tradition. With this development

Mark was thrust into the limelight. The era of its neglect was over. The priority of Mark meant that Mark could be used as the chronology for the life of Jesus. In 1924 B. H. Streeter published *The Four*

*Gospels*, the classic statement of the two-source theory in English. He proposed that Matthew and Luke used Mark as we have it, and each drew on Q and their own special sources as well (“M” and “L”).<sup>7</sup>

**Chart of Synoptic Relationships**



### The Compiler Mark

The form critics reduced the work of the evangelist to collecting the fragments, units, and brief collections of oral tradition and compiling them in a connected narrative account, hence “the compiler Mark.”

In 1896 Martin Kähler published a small book that revolutionized the study of the Gospels.<sup>8</sup> Kähler reacted against the subjective portraits and psychologizing efforts of current lives of Jesus. He reacted against the implications that the Christian faith stood or fell on the results of historical investigation so that the basis for one’s faith hung on the latest study of the historical Jesus. The living Lord, he said, is the Christ proclaimed by the apostles. To this end, he asserted that the Gospels do not provide us with historical data with which one can write a life of Jesus. Rather, they portray the Christ of faith. The Gospels have a religious purpose—to nurture faith. They are not concerned about historical detail, psychological understanding of Jesus, or biographical information. Moreover, he claimed that the Gospels should be understood as “passion narratives with extended introductions.”<sup>9</sup> Only when their purpose and content is understood in this way—as the presentation of the Christ of faith, the Christ preached by the apostles—can the Christian faith find a *sturmfrei Gebiet*, an invulnerable area. The result of Kähler’s work is that he raised serious questions about whether Mark can be taken as uninterpreted history.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the prevailing view was that Mark provides an accurate historical reflection of the life of Jesus. In particular, scholars believed that Mark accurately portrays the gradual awakening of the recognition of Jesus' identity among his disciples and their cooperation in keeping his identity secret from the general populace. William Wrede, who more than any other influenced the course of Markan scholarship in the last century, asked, "Did Jesus consider himself to be the Messiah?" and "Was Jesus regarded as the Messiah by others?" And if so, when?<sup>10</sup> Wrede called attention to four lines of evidence that Jesus deliberately suppressed the messianic character of his ministry:



#### Saint Peter dictating the Gospels of Saint Mark

Fra Angelico (1387–1455). *Saint Peter dictating the Gospels of Saint Mark*, from the predella of the Linaiuoli altarpiece, 1433–1435. Museo di S. Marco, Florence, Italy. (Credit: Nicolo Orsi Battaglini / Art Resource, NY)

(1) Jesus forbids the demons to make him known (1:25, 34); (2) he commands secrecy to those who might reveal the messianic character of his ministry—those whom he healed and his disciples (1:43–45; 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9); (3) Jesus withdraws from the crowds in order to give special or esoteric teachings (4:34; 7:17); and (4) according to Mark, Jesus taught in parables in order to

conceal the mystery of the kingdom of God from outsiders (4:10–12).

From this evidence, Wrede concluded the following: (1) The description Mark gives is historically impossible. The commands to remain silent when people were cured miraculously, and often in view of others, would have been pointless; and if the secret was revealed to the disciples, and they were taught about Jesus' death and resurrection, why were they discouraged when his prediction about his death came true? (2) Since the secrecy motif cannot be historically accurate, it must be a theological construct imposed on the account of Jesus' ministry. This conclusion was important because for the first time it raised the possibility that Mark was more theologian than historian and that he wrote the Gospel with theological and apologetic interests: ". . . as a whole the Gospel no longer offers a historical view of the real life of Jesus. Only pale residues of such a view have passed over into what is a suprahistorical view for faith. In this sense the Gospel of Mark belongs to the history of dogma."<sup>11</sup> (3) Mark 9:9 is an indication that, according to

Mark, the messiahship of Jesus was a closely guarded secret during his earthly ministry; it was made known only after the resurrection. (4) The early church originally believed that Jesus became the Messiah through the resurrection (Acts 2:36; Rom 1:4). Gradually the belief that Jesus was the Messiah was thrust back into the period of the earthly ministry of Jesus. Mark lived in the period in which the two views were in tension. Mark resolved this tension by saying that Jesus was the Messiah during his earthly life, but that he did not want others to know. Thus, his messiahship was kept secret until after the resurrection. Mark therefore developed the secrecy motif to explain how it was that Jesus was not recognized as the Messiah during his lifetime but was proclaimed to be the Messiah after his death and resurrection. (5) Finally, Wrede concludes that Mark did not originate this conception but took it from his community and heightened it in his Gospel.


Most conservative New Testament scholars now argue that Wrede forced a false dichotomy between the mind of Jesus and the mind of Mark. The emphasis on secrecy probably originated with Jesus rather than with Mark. Jesus may well have commanded secrecy to avoid the misunderstanding that he was merely a wonder worker and to discourage further suspicion from the religious and political authorities. After all, secrecy was inherent in the nature of his mission—God in the form of a servant.

About 1920 three German scholars (Karl L. Schmidt, Martin Dibelius, and Rudolf Bultmann) working independently developed a new method for the study of the Gospels: form criticism. The German name was more accurate: *Formgeschichte*, or form history. This breakthrough revolutionized Gospel studies. As we have seen, there was a keen interest in pushing behind the Gospels to their sources for more reliable material with which to write a life of Jesus. This interest led to discussion of the sources of the Gospels. The purpose of form criticism was to enable the interpreter to move behind the written sources into the period of the oral transmission of the sayings of Jesus and accounts of his deeds. Form critics isolated independent units of oral tradition (each parable, aphorism, pronouncement story, or miracle story) and studied their form. They postulated a life situation (*Sitz im Leben*) in which such tradition might be used and looked for evidences of embellishment or development beyond the basic form of the material.

Karl Ludwig Schmidt focused on the framework of the history of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.<sup>12</sup> He concluded that the most primitive form of the Jesus tradition is the pericope, i.e., an individual saying or narrative. The framework (*Rahmen*) or outline in which these units are set represents the work of the evangelist. The pericopae are generally arranged on the basis of topical or theological considerations, with the

exception of the Passion Narrative. Thus, even though Mark is the earliest Gospel there is no reason to assume that it provides a historically accurate sketch of the ministry of Jesus. He also noted that Mark occasionally supplied summary sections (*Sammelberichte*) as transitions. Schmidt found pre-Markan collections of material, however, and occasionally pre-Markan geographical and

### Martin Dibelius

 Mark's purpose was "... to represent Jesus as the Messiah, but without placing his work in a supernatural sphere which had no room for tradition—although this was done in the Fourth Gospel. It is also to emphasize those characteristics in the tradition which disclose Jesus as the Messiah, but at the same time to show why He was not recognized as Messiah by the people and why He was opposed, despised, and finally sent to the cross. In this way the Gospel of Mark was written as a book of secret epiphanies."

Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971), 230.

chronological references. For the most part, however, the pericopae were preserved within the community without details of time or place. Much of what appears to be chronology or geography is only the (Markan) framework that has been imposed on individual units.<sup>13</sup>

Dibelius took the life of the early church as the guide for interpreting the forms of the Gospels.<sup>14</sup> Bultmann, on the other hand, began with the text and moved from it to the setting of the forms in the life of the church. Dibelius's method has consequently been labeled "constructive" and Bultmann's "analytical." Dibelius

focused on the preaching of the early church. In his interpretation of Mark, Dibelius basically followed Wrede and observed that Mark is "a book of secret epiphanies." [Martin Dibelius]

After analyzing each pericope in the synoptics, Bultmann concludes *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* with a section on each Gospel.<sup>15</sup> He notes that Mark "has nowhere used a source which itself already portrayed a thoroughly coherent life of Jesus which could have been described as a Gospel."<sup>16</sup> In other words, Mark was the first to write a Gospel and his framework of the life of Jesus cannot be traced to an earlier source. "The only instance of close linking together over a larger portion of narrative is to be found in the story of the Passion."<sup>17</sup> He also noted Mark's use of stock scenes: lake and lakeside, house and road, synagogue, and mountain and concluded, "It is a misconception to infer from Mark's ordering of his material any conclusions about the chronology and development of the life of Jesus."<sup>18</sup>


Bultmann felt that names generally represented secondary additions to the tradition, but allowed that the passages in Mark that use the names of individual disciples may come from an early period when the idea of the Twelve had not yet influenced the synoptic tradition.<sup>19</sup> He agreed with Dibelius's characterization of Mark as a book of "secret epiphanies," saying it was "just right."<sup>20</sup> The veil of secrecy drawn over these revelations is apologetic—as "a veiling of the fact that faith in Jesus' Messiahship begins from belief in his resurrection."<sup>21</sup> In fact, Mark could have been the Gospel of Pauline, Hellenistic Christianity.<sup>22</sup>

Mark's purpose was to unite the Hellenistic kerygma about Christ with the tradition of the story of Jesus.<sup>23</sup>

As we have seen, one of the primary conclusions of Schmidt and the other form critics was that the earliest form of the synoptic materials was the individual pericope. The framework that links these pericopae into a continuous, coherent narrative was added later by the evangelist when for the first time the attempt was made to gather and organize the Gospel materials. This means, if they are correct, that the outline or framework of Mark is of questionable value for any attempt to describe the chronology or geography of Jesus' life.

In 1932, C. H. Dodd took up this question.<sup>24</sup> Dodd affirms that the pericope was the earliest form of the tradition and concedes that Schmidt has shown that the framework was superimposed on these units. Dodd argues, however, that the framework is not "indeed quite arbitrary" and "nothing more than an artificial construction of the Evangelist." He begins by pointing out that Schmidt agreed that the evangelist also received blocks or complexes of material. These complexes (like 3:7–6:13 and 8:27–10:45) include material that does not fit the theory of topical arrangement, and the complexes reflect the emphases in Jesus' teaching at particular times, e.g., sayings on the hardening of the people at the time of the collapse of his Galilean ministry, and a collection of teachings on the passion after he had made his decision to go to Jerusalem. Finally, Dodd observes that if one collects the statements and summaries from the first part of the Gospel that Schmidt identifies as the work of the evangelist, one has a neat summary of the ministry of Jesus. Moreover, if one reads these one after another, they fit together very smoothly. [The Framework of Mark] He asks, therefore, whether such would be the result of "casual links supplied here and there where the narrative seemed to demand it." Then, if the pericopae do not always seem to fit the frame it is because the evangelist had a frame he respected. If he had constructed the frame to fit the units, he could have fit them in better. Moreover, if we compare this outline in Mark with the primitive preaching in Acts (10:37-41 and 13:23-31), we find that the summaries of the early Christian preaching in Acts contain a similar outline of the ministry of Jesus. Therefore, Dodd concludes that Mark had three kinds of material: isolated pericopae, larger complexes of various kinds (continuous narratives and topical collections), and an outline of the ministry of Jesus. But the outline was too meager to indicate where all of the material fit in the ministry, and some of the complexes were already topically organized. So the evangelist did the best job he could of fitting pericopae and complexes into the outline using whatever clues the pericopae contained.

### The Framework of Mark

 Transitions in the early chapters in Mark identified by C. H. Dodd as elements of a traditional outline of Jesus' life:

(1:14-15) Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

(1:21-22) And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

(1:39) And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

(2:13) He went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about him, and he taught them.

(3:7b-19) . . . and from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon a great multitude, hearing all that he did, came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they should crush him; for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him. And whenever the unclean spirits beheld him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You

are the Son of God." And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. And he went up into the hills, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. Simon whom he surnamed Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, whom he surnamed Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

(4:33-34 omitted because it pertains to his manner of teaching; 6:7) And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

(6:12-13) So they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them. (6:30) The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

See C. H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," *ExpT* 43 (1931-32): 396-400; reprinted in his *New Testament Studies*, 1-11.

In 1955, D. E. Nineham set out to reexamine Dodd's arguments.<sup>25</sup> He observes that Dodd's conclusions are more tentative, modest, and restrained than subsequent claims. The outline was brief, and the evangelist could place only a few pericopae in it with confidence that he knew where they belonged. Moreover, about half of Mark's account of the ministry consists of material that was already topically organized. In response to Dodd's argument that the complexes reflect actual periodic emphases in Jesus' ministry, Nineham observes that "it is one thing to claim that an account of the past is historically plausible and quite another to know it to be historically accurate."<sup>26</sup>

The upshot of this debate is that the Gospels show attention both to chronological and geographical data and to topical organization. We cannot take Mark as a simple, historically accurate account. On the other hand, we cannot say that early Christians had no interest in the life of Jesus or that they preserved no information about the course of his ministry. Here it is wise to be cautioned by the fact that Paul shows little or no interest in such matters and John's Gospel gives a completely different framework. Still, it is probable that some outline existed in the kerygma. Nevertheless, it must have been brief and of limited value for organizing the independent pericopae, and it does not account for the

way in which much of the material in Mark is organized. This leads us to the question, Why did Mark organize his material and write his Gospel as he did?

### The Clever Mark

About 1954, Günther Bornkamm, Willi Marxsen, and Hans Conzelmann developed the method of study known as redaction criticism. In reaction against the excesses of form criticism in breaking the Gospels into hundreds of units and reducing the evangelists to scissors-and-paste editors, the redaction critics contended that the Gospels must be studied as whole literary units, the creations of intelligent writers who wrote with specific purposes and theological views: “the clever Mark.” Redaction criticism also focused attention on the setting of the evangelist. What was the situation that called forth the writing of the Gospels? What was the theology of the evangelist? Why did he write? What did he want to communicate to his community? In an effort to answer these questions, the redaction critics contended that the evangelist’s theology and purposes may be inferred from what he did with the tradition he received. How did he arrange it? What do the editorial comments, summaries, transitions indicate? Why has he omitted some material and expanded other verses? In this way, the redaction critics focused attention on the work of the evangelist in an effort to infer why he worked as he did.

Marxsen coined the term “redaction criticism” in 1954 and published his book, *Mark the Evangelist*, in 1956.<sup>27</sup> After a preface setting forth the basic principles of redaction criticism, Marxsen develops the method in four separate studies on Mark.

1. *John the Baptist*. In Mark, John the Baptist is a bridge between Old Testament prophecy and Jesus. Therefore Mark uses “the wilderness” theologically and separates the ministry of Jesus chronologically from that of John (1:14). Galilee appears in 1:14 as the place where Jesus preached. Later the reference is historicized by Matthew and Luke.

2. *The Geographical Outline*. Following Ernst Lohmeyer, Marxsen contends that “the second Gospel scarcely notes one biographical detail which does not have theological significance.”<sup>28</sup> The geographical references serve Mark’s theological purpose. He organized the ministry of Jesus around his preaching in Galilee, his trip to Jerusalem, and his death there. Galilee has special significance for Mark, so it becomes the place of Jesus’ activity. Mark gives scant attention to the names of cities but always notes that the decisive preaching occurred in Galilee. Places around Galilee were doubtlessly mentioned in the tradition Mark received, but it was Mark who first gave Galilee special prominence.

Mark 1:14-15 summarizes the whole Gospel. Galilee is again mentioned in 14:28 and 16:7. Why then doesn't Mark tell us of resurrection appearances in Galilee? The answer, Marxsen argues, is that Mark is writing after the resurrection, in anticipation of the Parousia. Mark, writing from Galilee, is calling Christians out of war-torn Judea to Galilee, the place of Jesus' preaching and the place of his Parousia. Mark therefore presupposes the existence of a Christian community in Galilee.

3. *Euangelion*. Mark calls his work a Gospel (1:1). Furthermore, where *euangelion* appears in Mark (1:1, 14; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9) it is always used absolutely, without qualification, and Marxsen argues it is always inserted by Mark. Thus, his Gospel is to be read as a proclamation, not as a report about Jesus. Mark introduced the term "gospel" into the traditions about Jesus, but behind Mark stands the Pauline use of the term. The proclamation Mark offers to Christians from Galilee is "I am coming soon." Thus Mark writes a sermon that is "gospel." He incorporated the Jesus tradition into "gospel" for the first time in writing.

4. *Mark 13*. In reaction against past analyses of this chapter, Marxsen argues that it must be approached as a unity. As such it helps us locate the setting of Mark. For example, 13:1-4 looks forward to the imminent destruction of the temple. The emphasis in vv. 5-23 is on not being misled by messianic pretenders who appeared at the time of the war. Other references point to the same time: "rumors of war," "the beginning of the woes," "pray that it will not be in winter," "flee to the mountains"—to Galilee.

Like many Markan scholars before him, Marxsen asked some insightful questions, but his work raises other questions. (1) It is important to ask what Mark did with the tradition he received, but since we can only venture some tentative theories about Mark's sources from the Gospel itself, can observations about how Mark handled his sources yield information reliable enough to help us identify Mark's setting, theology, and purposes? (2) It appears that Mark gives special emphasis to "Galilee" in his Gospel, but if Mark uses "Galilee" symbolically and theologically for the place(s) where Jesus preached, why does its use in Mark compel us to think that the Gospel was written in Galilee? Would not someone writing elsewhere (Rome perhaps) be more likely to use "Galilee" symbolically? (3) Is it really credible that Mark would have written a Gospel, particularly one with such a veiled ending, if he had been intent on urging Christians to flee from Judea to Galilee in the middle of a war?

## The Creative Mark

Redaction criticism shifted attention from the history and sources behind the Gospels to the work of the evangelists. Marxsen notwithstanding, Mark posed a particular challenge for redaction critics because its sources must be reconstructed from Mark itself. Interpreters also realized that the decision to reproduce a source unchanged could potentially reflect the evangelist's situation and thought just as clearly as a decision to alter the source. Gradually interpreters became concerned more generally with the composition of the Gospel and its literary patterns: "the creative Mark."

The work of Norman Perrin and his student Werner Kelber foreshadowed the development of narrative criticism of Mark shortly later. Both viewed Mark as a response to the Jewish War after 70. Perrin characterized Mark as apocalyptic drama,<sup>29</sup> stressing that Mark was writing for Christians in his own time and that he taught them by telling a story about Jesus and the disciples. He taught about discipleship by telling about Peter. Perrin agrees with Marxsen that 14:28 and 16:7 look forward to the Parousia. The resurrection came after three days, and the transfiguration, which he claims anticipates the Parousia, came "after 6 days." Mark lived in the interim (9:9). He was writing after the destruction of the temple. The false Christs about whom he warns in 13:5b-6, 21-22 were "Parousia pretenders," men claiming to be the risen Jesus (at this point Perrin follows Kelber): "The readers of Mark are, therefore, the men and women of the church caught up in a resurgence of apocalyptic expectation occasioned by the circumstances of the Jewish war, especially the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, but led astray by false teaching."<sup>30</sup>

Mark uses "Galilee" as a symbol for the Gentile mission. He was concerned about the Gentile mission (7:26; 12:8-11; 13:10, 27; 14:9, and references to Gentiles in chs. 5-7; 15:39). Galilee in Mark, therefore, comes to "symbolize the Christian mission to the world, especially to the Gentile world."<sup>31</sup>

In his analysis of Mark 13, Perrin argues for a post-70 date by pointing out that the destruction of the temple is



**Saint Peter Dictating the Gospel to Saint Mark**

*Saint Peter Dictating the Gospel to Saint Mark.* 11th c. South Italian (?) ivory, Romanesque, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Great Britain. (Credit: Victoria & Albert Museum, London / Art Resource, NY)

the last dateable event in Mark, and it is common to date apocalyptic material by its latest dateable references (as with Daniel and Revelation). The end would come shortly. In preparation for the Parousia, Mark sought to instruct his readers in the correct understanding of Christology and Christian discipleship. In doing this he wrote not letters, or discourses or visions, but a Gospel. Perrin then points out the similarity between Mark and Revelation—both were written to instruct the church in a troubled time and during a resurgence of apocalyptic. Both have essentially the same purpose: to prepare their readers for the Parousia and tell them how Christians ought to live in the interim. The basic difference is that “Mark’s narratives are deliberately realistic; John’s deliberately symbolic.”<sup>32</sup>

Werner Kelber begins by describing the impact the destruction of Jerusalem must have had on Palestinian Christians.<sup>33</sup> Kelber focuses on Mark 1:14-15 as giving the gospel program for a new existence. He interprets these verses as proclaiming a realized eschatology (like C. H. Dodd): “The kingdom has come.” The kingdom of God has attained its earthly destination in Galilee: “Not the risen Christ, but the presence of the Kingdom in Galilee constitutes the gist of the gospel program.”<sup>34</sup> Mark therefore writes in the aftermath of the war to summon his people to undergo a change of heart and a renewal of courage in view of the presence of the kingdom. Chapter 4 in Mark is devoted to revealing the mystery of the kingdom: “the Kingdom in miniature will phase into the Kingdom which covers the length and breadth of the land.”<sup>35</sup> By their present sufferings, the people are participating in this mystery.

In chapters 5–8 the spread of the kingdom is described first in terms of its power—miracles—then in reference to the role of the disciples in carrying on the work of Jesus, and finally through the motif of crossing the sea to spread the kingdom among the Gentiles. Kelber claims the east side of the Sea of Galilee, because it was primarily Gentile, represents the Christian mission to the Gentiles. Thus there is first a Jewish feeding miracle, then a Gentile one. The polemic in this section is against the family of Jesus and against the disciples. These were associated with the church in Jerusalem. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to see Mark as a representative of northern (Galilean) Christianity. In the next section—chapters 8 through 10—we find the story centering on teaching about discipleship and this cast in terms of a journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. In terms of their understanding at least some of the disciples figuratively fall by the wayside on the journey. Through the travel narrative Mark has Jesus correct false notions of discipleship commonly held by Petrine Christians. Peter’s false understanding of Christ is corrected by Jesus’ teaching on the suffering Son of Man.

Chapter 11 drives a wedge between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of David. There is a break with Jerusalem, and the kingdom is oriented around a new center. The temple is displaced. In chapter 13, Mark looks upon the destruction of the temple as an event recently accomplished. This chapter deals with the dangers facing the Christians in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem. The danger of being misled by messianic pretenders—those who have miscalculated the time and the place of the Parousia—is real. At the same time, watchfulness is imperative because the Parousia is at hand—but not yet. Mark therefore wrote his Gospel about the beginning of the gospel of Jesus in order to provide a new beginning for Christians at the end of the war. For this reason, he retells the past (the beginning) in order to open the way for the future (the Parousia).

Kelber synthesizes many trends in Markan studies and gives adept analyses of the Gospel. His study of the relationship of Jesus to the temple, Jerusalem, and the disciples also furnishes strong arguments for a post-70 date. Nevertheless, we may be reticent about Kelber's concentration on Galilee. We know precious little about "Northern Christianity," and Mark's interest in the Gentile mission means "Galilee" may represent the Christian mission to the world in Mark, as Perrin contended.

Norman Petersen led the Literary Aspects of the Gospels Group of the Society of Biblical Literature in reading literary theory. Robert Tannehill traced the narrative development of Mark's theology in an article on the disciples in Mark.<sup>36</sup> David Rhoads and Donald Michie introduced narrative criticism of Mark to non-specialists in *Mark as Story*, in which they analyzed the role of the narrator in Mark, its narrative patterns, settings, plot, and the functions of characters.<sup>37</sup> [David Rhoads]

With the monograph by Mary Ann Tolbert, narrative criticism of Mark reached a new level of maturity. In regard to its genre, she interprets Mark as an example of Hellenistic popular literature accessible to a wide spectrum of society, an ancient novel.<sup>38</sup> Internally, Mark's narrative has two parts. The first is primarily concerned with Jesus' mission, the second with the issue of Jesus' true identity. The parable of the sower and its interpretation (4:1-20) serves as a "parabolic plot

#### David Rhoads



"In the story dying for the good news—trusting God enough to lose one's life in service for others—is the basic expression of following God's way. The narrative leads the reader to be a faithful follower of Jesus by preparing the reader to face death. In the Jerusalem scenes, the reader sees all the characters dealing with death. By identifying with these different characters, the reader experiences the desire to save one's self, the avoidance of death, and the unwillingness to deal with the weakness of the flesh. But the narrator leads the reader to reject these, to identify and align with the hero Jesus, to want to be courageous as he is, and to want to have such faith in God's salvation as to relinquish one's own life in spite of fears and desires. Then through the powerful depiction of Jesus' death, the reader experiences vicariously the isolation, the pain, the rejection, and the despair of death. By facing death vicariously through the story, the implied reader is purged of some of the fear of death and is therefore better prepared to be faithful as Jesus was."

David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 139–40.

**Mary Ann Tolbert**

“The characters, groups, and events of Division One are all portrayed as the concrete illustrations of these four fundamental kinds of responses to Jesus’ word [in the parable of the Sower]. Every episode and every character or group can be understood by the audience as an example of one of these four alternatives: the instant rejection of Jesus by the scribes and the Pharisees illustrates the first response; the immediate joy but ultimate failure of the disciples, the second; the wealth, too great to give up, of the rich man (10:17-22), the third; but what of the fourth type? The task of the material following the parable of the Sower, Mark 4:21–5:43, is to clarify the nature of the good earth that produces fruit.”

Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 124.

synopsis” through which the reader can see in miniature the various figures who surround Jesus and the meaning of their responses to his message. [Mary Ann Tolbert] Similarly, the parable of the wicked tenants functions as a plot synopsis for the coming Passion Narrative, interpreting the meaning of Jesus’ identity, rejection by the authorities, and death on the cross.<sup>39</sup>

The literature on Mark is extensive. The articles and monographs mentioned here are at best a selective sample of the available literature, chosen to provide a sense of the direction of Markan studies over the past two centuries. With this background, the reader will have a richer context for interacting with the text of the Gospel itself.

## MARK’S LEADING THEMES

The commentary that follows highlights Markan themes and makes numerous cross-references between related passages. Nevertheless, the following overview of five of these themes will help the reader be alert to them when they appear in the Gospel.

### Jesus’ Identity as the Son of God

The Gospel begins by announcing that it is the “gospel” of Jesus Christ, and most of the manuscripts add “the Son of God.” See the discussion of this verse and the textual variants in the commentary on Mark 1:1. Normally textual criticism favors the shorter text, a principle that rules against accepting “the Son of God” as part of the earliest text of Mark 1:1, but in this case there are offsetting considerations: (1) the reference to Jesus as “my son” by the voice from heaven in Mark 1:11 and 9:7; (2) the occurrence of the title in the centurion’s confession following Jesus’ death (15:39); (3) the sequence of the two christological titles in Mark 1:1 that foreshadows the strategic placement of the confessions of Jesus by Peter and the centurion in the Gospel’s narrative Christology; and (4) the fact that the title might have been dropped by accident if it was abbreviated (see the commentary on Mark 1:1).

Regardless of one’s decision about the occurrence of “the Son of God” in Mark 1:1, the Gospel builds to the disclosure of Jesus’ identity not

merely as the Messiah (“Christ”) but specifically as the Son of God. The secrecy motif, noted so influentially by Wrede, focuses the reader’s attention on the question of how Jesus’ true identity was revealed. Mark’s theological achievement was that he integrated the traditions of the life and ministry of Jesus with the proclamation of the gospel of the cross.<sup>40</sup> The teachings of Jesus were being used in preaching and instruction. Collections of Jesus’ miracles may have been used to justify the activities of some apostles (for example, the “super apostles” to whom Paul refers in 2 Cor 11:5; 12:11). Perhaps following Paul’s lead, Mark placed priority neither on Jesus’ words nor on his works but on his death and resurrection. In Mark, therefore, the reader finds that no one confesses that Jesus is the Son of God as a result of hearing his parables or witnessing his mighty works. It is only in the context of his death that his identity can be understood (14:62), so it is only when he is hanging dead on the cross that the Roman centurion can confess his true identity. [**“Son of God” in Mark**]

The centurion’s confession, “Truly, this man was the Son of God” (15:39), is strikingly emphatic, as though to deny that any other could be confessed with this title. Craig Evans surveyed the use of the title “Son of God” in divine epithets of the Roman emperors from Julius Caesar to Vespasian.<sup>41</sup> Based on this evidence and other parallels with the veneration of the emperors, Evans concluded that “the Markan evangelist presents Jesus as the true son of God and in doing so deliberately presents Jesus in opposition to Rome’s candidates for a suitable emperor, savior, and lord.”<sup>42</sup> If the effect of Mark’s presentation of the “good news” of Jesus was to present Jesus as the true “Son of God” in contrast to the emperor—and *euangelion* was often used in reference to the accession and activities of the emperor—Mark’s Gospel would have set in dramatic relief the choice the early believers faced: choose between Jesus and Caesar! Jesus is Lord, not Caesar.

## The Testing of God’s Son

Conflict pervades the Gospel of Mark. Jesus is tested in turn by Satan, unclean spirits, forces of nature, religious authorities, his hometown, his family, and even his disciples. The effect is that Jesus is progressively

### “Son of God” in Mark

**ΑΩ** 1:1 “The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

1:11 The voice from heaven: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

3:11 “[the unclean spirits] fell down before him and shouted, ‘You are the Son of God!’”

5:7 “[The Gerasene demoniac] shouted at the top of his voice, ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’”

9:7 The voice from heaven: “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

14:61 “Again the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’”

15:39 “Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’”

isolated as the nature of his mission and its eventual cost become clearer with each new trial.

The Gospel begins in the place of Israel's testing: the wilderness. As soon as Jesus is baptized by the wilderness prophet, the Spirit drives him into the wilderness, where he is "tested" (1:12-13). The Greek verb *peirazein* means primarily to "try, make trial of, put to the test" and by extension to "tempt."<sup>43</sup> This scene sets the theme that is developed through the rest of the Gospel. In the synagogue in Capernaum Jesus is confronted by the first of a series of unclean spirits and demons who challenge his authority (1:24, 34, 39; 3:15 *passim*). The crowds press around Jesus and threaten to hinder his work (1:37-39; 3:7-10; 6:30-31, 54-55; 8:1). In Mark 2:1-3:6 Jesus is repeatedly challenged by the religious authorities, and the section ends with the first reference to their intent to kill him. Scribes from Jerusalem come to investigate his activities (3:22), and his own family comes to take him home (3:31). In the first of his parables, Jesus likens his ministry to plundering Satan's house after having bound "the strong man" (3:27). Jesus is like a farmer who sows, but Satan "immediately" takes the seed (4:15). Storms at sea seem to be a metaphor for the life-threatening opposition Jesus and his disciples will face in proclaiming the coming kingdom among the Gentiles (4:35-41; 6:45-52). Again the Pharisees and the scribes challenge Jesus for not teaching "the tradition of the elders" (7:5-13). In the region of Tyre a Syrophenician woman tests Jesus (7:24-30). The Pharisees test him, demanding a sign (8:11) and asking about divorce (10:2; cf. 12:15). Peter, his own disciple, becomes "Satan" when he objects to Jesus' announcement that he must suffer and die (8:32-33). A crowd, some scribes, and an unclean spirit confront Jesus after his transfiguration (9:14, 17, 29). The disciples' lack of understanding and hardness of heart and finally their abandonment and denials test Jesus (6:52; 8:14-21, 32-33; 9:33-34; 10:35-45). The corruption of the temple tests Jesus (11:15-17), and his prophetic action there leads the chief priests and scribes to renew their determination to kill him (11:18). Repeatedly, the religious and political authorities challenge Jesus' authority (11:27-12:44).

The night before Jesus' death is also a time of testing, first through the failure of the disciples (14:29-31, 32-42, 51, 66-72), then through the trials before the Jewish authorities (14:53-65) and Pilate (15:1-20). Jesus is interrogated, challenged to prophesy, confronted with false witnesses, mocked, flogged, and then crucified. The mockers taunt Jesus for not saving himself and for claiming he would destroy the temple and build another (15:29-32). Even God's failure to intervene tests Jesus (15:34).

Through it all Jesus remains steadfast in his mission to proclaim the kingdom and confront the forces that oppose it. Peter, like a man who could see but not clearly (8:22-26), sees that Jesus is the Christ (8:27-30) but cannot fully grasp who he is or what his work will require of him. The centrality of the cross in revealing Jesus' true identity as the Son of God is underscored by the fact that it is only after his death that anyone—the Roman centurion—is able to offer this confession (15:39).

The testing of Jesus reveals not only his identity but also the means by which God will defeat Satan and the demons and establish the kingdom. It also sets the example for all who take up the cross and follow him (8:34).

### The Testing of Jesus' Disciples

Jesus' life is set in the context of persecution. John the Baptist comes preaching. He is arrested and subsequently killed. Jesus preaches the kingdom, is arrested, tried, and crucified. His disciples too—not surprisingly—will face similar hostility.

Jesus calls the Twelve and appoints them to “be with him” and to be sent out to preach and to cast out demons (3:14-15). [*Peirazein, To “Tempt” or “Test,” in Mark*] As insiders, they have the secret of the kingdom, but still they do not understand Jesus' parables (4:10-13). The disciples will face “trouble or persecution on account of the word” (4:17). When the storm arises on the sea, they are terrified, and Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith: “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” (4:40). When Jesus sends them out by twos with strict instructions, “They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them” (6:13), but their success is fleeting. The disciples are at a loss to know how to feed the crowd (6:35-36). When they see Jesus walking on the sea, they are terrified and “they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened” (6:52). Their lack of understanding is underscored by Jesus' questioning. They are no more understanding than outsiders (8:14-21). They are like the man who could see but not clearly (8:22-26), and in stark contrast to Matthew's account of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi (Matt 16:17-19), in Mark Jesus rebukes Peter (8:30, 32-33).

From this point on, the disciples move from lack of understanding to renewed self-seeking as they seek personal greatness, advantage over

#### *Peirazein, To “Tempt” or “Test,” in Mark*

**ΑΩ** 1:13 “He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan.”

8:11 “The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him.”

10:2 “Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’”

12:15 “But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, ‘Why are you putting me to the test?’”

others, and places of honor (9:32-34; 10:35-45). By contrast, when the blind Bartimaeus receives his sight he follows Jesus “on the way” (a phrase Mark uses for discipleship and the way to the cross, 10:52; cf. 1:2-3; 8:27; 9:33-34; 10:32; 12:14). In the course of prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of false prophets and false messiahs who would mislead the people, Jesus warns the disciples that “they will hand you over to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings because of me” (13:9). They “will be hated by all because of my name” (13:13). They will have to be on guard against those who will mislead the elect (13:5-6, 21-22). Like a trusted doorkeeper, they should keep alert and watch (13:33-37). The events of the night Jesus was betrayed by Judas prove that they are incapable of watching with Jesus for even one hour. Judas betrays Jesus to the authorities (14:10-11, 43-45), Peter is unaware of his own vulnerability (14:29-31), and the three closest to Jesus sleep while he prays (14:32-42). Finally, the disciples all abandon Jesus (14:50-52), and Peter denies Jesus three times (14:66-72).

Others too are tested: the leper (1:40-45), the four who bring the paralytic to Jesus (2:1-12), Jesus’ family (3:31-35), the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20), Jairus and the woman with a hemorrhage (5:21-43), Jesus’ hometown (6:1-6a), John the Baptist (6:14-27), the Syrophenician woman (7:24-30), the blind man (8:22-26), the father of the epileptic boy (9:17-27), Bartimaeus (10:46-52), and the authorities, Jewish and Roman.

The effect of this constant testing is to underscore Jesus’ warnings to the disciples about the necessity for self-denial, cross bearing, faithfulness, and vigilance. The failure of the disciples not only dramatizes the consequences of failure to meet the tests of persecution, but also heightens Jesus’ faithfulness in continually returning to bring sight to the blind and a second chance for those who stumble: “Go to Galilee, there you will see him” (16:7). Eduard Schweizer’s comment aptly interprets the other side of Mark’s oppressive emphasis on the disciples’ failure: “So man’s continued inability to understand is contrasted with Jesus’ promise to go before them and accomplish what human hearts cannot do; despite every failure he would call the disciples again to discipleship and would encounter them in a way that would enable them to see him.”<sup>44</sup>

### **The Temple Not Made with Hands**

Early in the Gospel Jesus begins to call together a new community, one that crosses all geographical, social, and ethnic boundaries. He casts out demons and touches a leper (1:40-45). He eats with tax collectors and

sinners (2:15-17). He travels to “Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon” (3:8). He visits a cemetery in a Gentile region (5:1-20). He is touched by a woman in a state of impurity and accepts her faith (5:24-34). Then he takes the hand of a dead girl and raises her to life (5:35-43). He shows that it is not what enters a person that defiles but the thoughts of the heart and the “evil things [that] come from within” (7:23). A Syrophenician woman (7:24-30), a deaf and mute man from the region of the Decapolis (7:31-37), a blind man who requires a second touch (8:22-26), a persistent father (9:14-29), blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52), and a widow who gave all she had are among those who represent the new community of the kingdom. In this new community prevailing conventions are overturned: one who would be great must be the servant of all (9:35; 10:42-45), children are valued and accepted (9:36-37; 10:13-16), women and marriage are protected (10:2-12), and those who have much should sell all they have and give to the poor (10:17-22).

In Jerusalem Jesus condemns the corruption of the temple, recalling the words of Isaiah and Jeremiah (11:17). The temple has become like a fig tree that gives every appearance of health but bears no fruit (11:12-14, 20-21). After Jesus’ death the temple will be destroyed (13:14-20). False witnesses say they heard Jesus say he would destroy the temple and build another not made with hands (14:58), and mockers at the cross repeat the charge (15:29). Although false witnesses introduce the charge, its repetition in a context in which the other things are said in mockery is ironically a true call for further reflection. Jesus’ death will lead to the establishment of a new community of faith in which those like the centurion who confess Jesus find a new Lord, a renewed faith, and the presence of God among them (16:7). They will continue the work of the kingdom that Jesus began, preaching the gospel to all nations (11:17; 13:10). To these Jesus promises,

Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. (10:29-30)

## **The Hope of the Kingdom**

Because the Gospel of Mark was written for a persecuted community, it is first and foremost a gospel of hope. Nothing else compares to the announcement that God’s eschatological sovereignty has torn the heavens, crossed the boundaries, and been proclaimed by God’s Son.

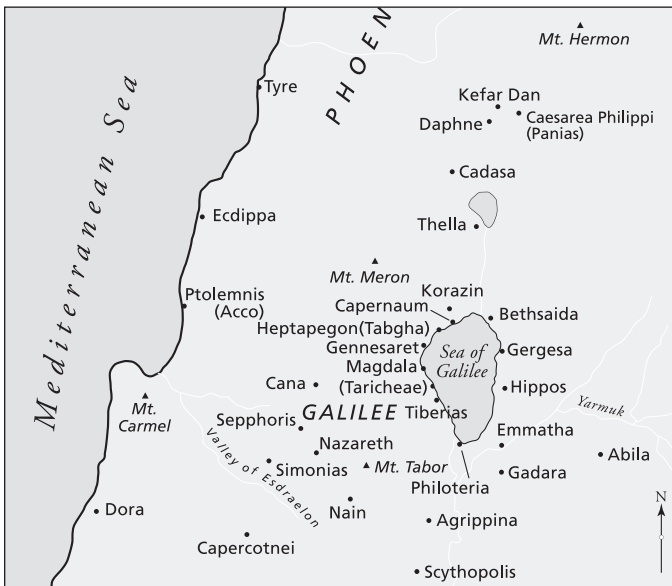
The long-expected Messiah had come, accompanied by wonders and mighty works associated with Moses (testing in the wilderness, crossing the sea, and feeding the multitude), Elijah and Elisha (giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf), and the words of Isaiah (hardness of heart). He had condemned the corruption of the temple (like Jeremiah) and announced its destruction—a cataclysmic event that was either imminent and clear when Mark was written or else had already occurred.

Jesus prophesied that his followers would be persecuted, just as he was and just as John the Baptist had been. Indeed, discipleship is defined by taking up the cross and following him (8:34). But the kingdom will not be defeated. Although Jesus had been crucified, God raised him from the grave. The angel at the tomb had commissioned the women to tell his disciples and Peter to go to Galilee. The fact that they failed to deliver this good news either implies that it was delivered in other ways or that it is now the reader's duty to do what the women failed to do.

In Mark, Galilee is the place of the kingdom, where the kingdom was announced and where its power was seen in Jesus' words and works, in the exorcism of demons, and in the response of the people. Mark therefore challenges the followers of Jesus to carry on the work of the kingdom and preach the gospel among the Gentiles, in fact to "all nations" (13:10).

All of these events are a sign, like a fig tree in leaf (13:28-29). The signs of the kingdom confirm to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear that the Son of Man is coming (9:1; 13:26-27) to vindicate and

gather the faithful (8:38; 13:27; 14:62). Therefore the faithful should "take heart" (6:50) and watch, like a doorkeeper watching for the return of his master (13:34-37). Do not be misled by the false claims of other messiahs and prophets or by the claims of governors and kings (13:5-6, 9, 21-22). Even the Roman emperor who is worshiped as divine, a savior, and God's son, pales by comparison. Jesus alone is truly the Son of God



Map of Galilee

(15:39), and those who follow him will be vindicated and gathered with the elect when the Son of Man “comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (8:39).

## MARK’S SETTING

Locating the setting of the Gospel is important not because it would confirm the authenticity or historical accuracy of Mark or the tradition about it but because identifying the setting of the Gospel creates a context for reading it that may illuminate or bring new significance to otherwise obscure features. The problem is that the early testimonies about the Gospel are of questionable value and reconstructing the Gospel’s setting depends heavily on data derived from the Gospel itself. Some circularity is inevitable and the issues remain unsettled, so at best our conclusions must be tentative and serve as theories to be tested by further close reading of the Gospel.

We have already noted that Mark makes specific references to the persecution of Jesus’ disciples “because of Jesus and the gospel” (4:17; 8:35; 10:29; 13:9). Moreover, Mark gives evidence of having been written for a particular community or a group of house churches in a specific locality. In support of this contention and reasons for rejecting the notion that Mark was written for the church at large, as proposed by Richard Bauckham,<sup>45</sup> H. N. Roskam adduces evidence that there was a close relationship between Mark and his readers: the readers are familiar with certain persons (Alexander and Rufus, 15:21; James the Younger and Joses, 15:40) and various Galilean sites (Magdala, 15:40, 47; 16:1, and Dalmanutha, 8:10).<sup>46</sup> Roskam also concludes that Mark’s readers were associated with each other and that they were Christians; they are familiar with titles such as “Son of Man” and accept Christian interpretations of Old Testament passages.<sup>47</sup>

### The Case for Galilee

Building on the work of earlier scholars, especially, R. H. Lightfoot, Willi Marxsen, and Werner H. Kelber, the argument in favor of Galilee or Syria as the provenance for the Markan community is based on observations regarding Mark’s handling of geographical references, especially “Galilee” and the Syrophoenician woman, the accuracy of its description of the rural context of Jesus’ ministry,<sup>48</sup> and Josephus’s account of Galilee during the Jewish War (AD 66–70).

H. N. Roskam argues that Mark’s knowledge of the geography of Galilee is more accurate than his description of the sites in Judea, the



### Galilee

(Credit: Jim Pitts)

Decapolis, or the Transjordan.<sup>49</sup> The confused reference in Mark 7:31, that Jesus “returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis,” he argues, reflects ignorance not of Galilee but of the location of Sidon.<sup>50</sup> Joel Marcus (drawing on the work of Gerd Theissen) concludes that while the reference to the “Syrophoenician” woman would make no

sense in Syria if it designated a particular kind of Phoenician, it may have denoted a particular kind of Syrian and the entire pericope reflects an interesting knowledge of the local social setting (see the commentary on 7:24-30).<sup>51</sup>

Mark seems to presume a rather detailed knowledge of the course of the war in 13:14-20, especially in the aside, “let the reader understand.” The appearance of the desolating sacrilege was the signal that they should “flee to the mountains” (13:14). Joel Marcus reasonably suggests that “The sort of detailed knowledge of the course of the Jewish War that seems to be reflected in Mark 13 is most easily explained by the theory that the Gospel was composed in geographical and temporal proximity to it.”<sup>52</sup> Galilee was a war zone between AD 66 and 70, however, making it difficult to think that anyone found the time to write a Gospel there at this time, and there is no evidence that Christians were persecuted in Galilee during the war. Marcus favors Syria rather than Galilee.<sup>53</sup> Roskam, on the other hand, argues that Galilee was more pro-Roman than has often been alleged and that Mark reflects the persecution of Christians in Galilee by Jewish and Roman authorities after the war.<sup>54</sup>

### The Case for Rome

The argument that Mark originated from Rome can be traced to (and some argue that it derives from) Papias. Clifton Black notes that the connection between Mark and Rome in early Christian literature is always through Mark’s association with Peter and never appears in the

absence of this association.<sup>55</sup> Early in the twentieth century, B. W. Bacon's *Is Mark a Roman Gospel?* focused attention on Mark's affinities with Pauline teaching (or at least interpretations of Pauline teaching) and argued for the Roman origin of Mark.<sup>56</sup>

Bacon's arguments summarized the data for a debate that continues to the present. First, Bacon examined the tradition from Papias and concluded that Papias had nothing more to work from than the statement in 1 Peter 5:13. Nevertheless, 1 Peter shows special respect for Mark and holds that past association with Peter was the basis for this respect. Since it is likely that 1 Peter was written from Rome, this tells us that Mark was held in special regard in Rome near the end of the first century.

Bacon then turned to the internal evidence, maintaining that whatever Aramaisms there may be in Mark prove no threat to Rome as its place of origin. Although Aramaic oral or written sources probably lie behind Mark, the Gospel itself was not composed in Aramaic and is not merely a translation.

Mark uses more Latin terms than any other Gospel, but many of these are terms that would have been known widely, and his preference for them over Greek terms does not necessarily indicate he was writing from Rome (cf. 15:39, 44, 45; 6:27; 7:4, 8). More persuasive are 12:42 and 15:16 in which Mark explains Greek terms with Latin terms.



**Rome**

(Credit: Jim Pitts)

Mark's editorial glosses and explanations (e.g., 7.3-4) habitually explain to the readers things and customs peculiar to a Jewish setting—even *abba* (14:36). Mark finds it necessary to explain Palestinian climate and seasons (11:13). Such explanations would have been superfluous in Palestine. Mark also appears to have only a fuzzy knowledge of Palestinian geography (e.g., Gerasa in 5:1-20 and Sidon, the Sea of Galilee, and the Decapolis in 7:31). Mark shows a lack of understanding about local history (e.g., 6:17 using “king” for the tetrarch Antipas). He also seems ignorant of the complicated family relationships of the Herods.

Bacon found in Mark an affinity with the sentiments of “the strong” in Romans 14. In particular Bacon argued that Mark reflects a

hardening of the attitude of “the strong” in Romans 14, that is, the anti-judaic attitude of the Paulinists against the Petrine conciliatory attitude of “the weak.” Bacon did not claim that Mark knew the Pauline epistles, but was positive that Mark shows a direct dependence upon the teachings of Paul: “Our contention is that the paulinism of Mark is precisely of the type Paul seeks to hold in check. It has little to do with the literary Paul, but is characterized by exactly this overbearing, inconsiderate, intolerant attitude of the ‘strong’ toward the Jewish ‘distinctions.’”<sup>57</sup> These observations led Bacon to conclude that Mark originated in Rome.

More recently Brian J. Incigneri revisited the issue in a volume tellingly titled *The Gospel to the Romans*.<sup>58</sup> He responds to Marxsen’s argument that Mark’s emphasis on Galilee indicates that the Gospel was written there by pointing out that Christians continued to identify with Galilee because it was the place of Jesus’ ministry and the origin of the movement, and Mark reads like a text written at a distance: “In Rome, adherents of foreign cults were used to stories and images of their religion’s origins in another land.”<sup>59</sup> His response to the contention that Mark reflects the local color and rural setting of Galilee or Syria is similar: these elements of the Gospel derive from traditional

material rather than from the setting of the Gospel’s composition.

The significance of the Latinisms in Mark has been debated. The sheer number of Latinisms is significant in itself. Kelber responded that Mark’s Latinisms are mainly military, administrative, and commercial terms that could have been spread by the Roman army and known anywhere in the Roman Empire,<sup>60</sup> but Incigneri and Gundry point out that some of the Latinisms in Mark do include domestic, social, and religious terms, some of which are listed above. Twice Mark uses Latin terms to explain Greek terms: Mark 12:42 explains that two *lepta* are a *kodrantēs* and Mark 15:16 explains that the courtyard, *aulēs*, was a *praitōrion*. [Latin Terms in Mark] The most likely setting for such frequent use of Latin in a Greek document is Rome,

#### Latin Terms in Mark

### ΑΩ

<i>dēnarion</i>	a denarius (coin)	6:37; 12:15; 14:5
<i>kenturion</i>	a centurion	15:39, 44, 45
<i>kēnsos</i>	[census] tax	12:14
<i>kodrantēs</i>	copper coin, a quadrans	12:42
<i>legiōn</i>	a Roman legion	5:9, 15
<i>modios</i>	a measure of grain	4:21
<i>phragello</i>	flog	15:15
<i>praitōrion</i>	quarters of a Roman governor	15:16
<i>pykmē</i>	“with a handful of water” (Hengel)	7:3
<i>spekoulatōr</i>	executioner	6:27
<i>symbolion</i>	a council	15:1
<i>to hikanon</i>	to satisfy	15:15
<i>poiēsai</i> ( <i>satisfacere</i> )		
<i>xestēs</i>	a liquid measure, a sextarius	7:4

Martin Hengel, “Mk 7.3 *pykmē*: Der Geschichte einer exegetischen Aporie und der Versuch ihrer Lösung,” *ZNW* 60 (1969): 182-98; Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark’s Gospel* (BIS 65; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003), 101; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 45, 657. See also the commentary on 15:18.

“where the Latin and Greek languages were closely intermingled as nowhere else at that time.”<sup>61</sup>

Other factors support a Roman provenance: the tradition from the church fathers (Papias, the Anti-Marcionite Prologue, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria), the fact that the persecution of Christians in Rome is more strongly attested than anywhere else in the first century, and the evidence assembled by Craig Evans that Mark makes use of terms and motifs from the emperor cult.<sup>62</sup> The latter would again have been significant in other provincial centers (though presumably not in rural Syria), but Rome was its epicenter.

One other consideration, though inconclusive, fits Rome better than Galilee or Syria. One might have assumed that Mark would be forgotten after it was incorporated into Matthew and Luke. The survival of Mark may be due in part to the belief that it was thought to contain Peter’s preaching, but also to the probability that an important Christian center stood behind it—Rome.

After examining what is known of the ethnicity and social background, economic and social standing, religious organization, and political turbulence of the sixties in Rome and what may be inferred from Mark, Clifton Black concludes, rightly I think, that “our relevant evidence is strong enough to lend support to a location of Mark’s Gospel in Rome; at the same time it remains too equivocal to nail that theory down.”<sup>63</sup>

## THE DATE OF THE COMPOSITION OF MARK

Considerations regarding the date of Mark are again rather evenly divided between those that favor a date in the late 60s and those that favor a date in the early 70s. The difference is significant because the year 70 marks the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish War (although a group of Zealots held out on Masada until 74). The fact that scholarship is virtually unanimous in dating the Gospel in the decade from 65 to 75 should not be missed in the arguments for and against the earlier or latter part of this decade. No other Gospel can be dated with such precision.

Earlier critical scholarship assigned the Gospel to the mid-60s, following the persecution of Christians in Rome under Nero. More recently Mark 13 and Mark’s relationship to the course of the Jewish War have overshadowed the Neronian persecution. As Joel Marcus notes, “If Mark 13 really came out of the Neronian persecution, would we not expect it to focus more, as Daniel and Revelation do, on a bestial, anti-God figure?”<sup>64</sup> For some interpreters Mark 13 supports a pre-70 date because the prophecy it contains does not match the course

**Pre-70 Date**

“So I believe that in contrast to the other Gospels, we can determine the time of the composition of the second Gospel relatively accurately, as also its author and the tradition which shaped him. It presumably came into being in the politically turbulent time after the murder of Nero and Galba and before the renewal of the Jewish War under Titus, i.e. say between the winter of 68/69 and the winter of 69/70.”

Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 28.

of events exactly: the temple was not completely destroyed (“not one stone will be left here,” 13:2), and there is no mention of the great fire that accompanied the destruction. See the discussion of Mark 13:14-20 in the commentary and the outline of the chronology of the war (see [Chronology of the Jewish War, AD 66–70]). Martin Hengel has been one of the recent advocates for a pre-70 date for Mark. [Pre-70 Date]

Proponents of a post-70 date argue that the Gospel should be dated after the latest specifically identifiable events in it, which would include the flight of believers in Jerusalem to Pella (in 68) and the destruction of the temple (13:2; 15:38) and the removal of Jewish authorities and insurgents in Judea. Roskam proposes that the transfer of authority in AD 70 is reflected in Mark 12:9.<sup>65</sup> Before 70 Judea was administered by Roman governors who were subordinate to the legate of the province of Syria. After 70, Judea became a separate province, and the Jewish Sanhedrin no longer exercised the authority over internal affairs that it had earlier. Mark writes to reassure the community and challenge it to remain faithful amid the agitation of false prophets and the speculation that the fall of Jerusalem meant that the end was near.<sup>66</sup>

S. G. F. Brandon proposed that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome in the year following Titus’s march of triumph through the streets of Rome, as an apology for the Christians who worshiped a Jewish teacher who was crucified by the Romans. Mark shows special interest in the veil of the temple (15:38), and according to Josephus (*J.W.* 7.162) the veil of the temple was among the items displayed during the march of triumph in Rome. So Mark did not find it necessary to explain its significance, as he does other Jewish words and customs. There is also late tradition in the rabbinic materials that Titus had split the veil with his sword. Brandon argues that Mark includes this detail to say that the temple had been made obsolete long before the death of Jesus.

Brandon relates the “abomination of desolation” (13:14) to Titus, pointing out that in Mark the term is masculine.<sup>67</sup> Gaius in AD 39 had attempted to erect Roman standards in the temple, and that is often thought to be the reference here. Brandon says Mark points out that what was threatened by Gaius in 39 was accomplished by Titus. So Mark uses a well-known reference to make a potentially inflammatory claim. The Roman Christians would have understood.

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The argument over the date of the Gospel will continue, although most scholars date it between AD 68 and AD 73, which is already a narrow range.

## AUTHORSHIP

Papias claims that the Gospel was written by Mark, Peter's interpreter. The relationship between the Gospel and Peter is probably more indirect than Papias claimed, though it may still be related to the Petrine tradition.<sup>68</sup> On the basis of this tradition, Papias's Mark has been identified as John Mark, who appears in Acts (12:12, 25; 15:37, 39). By tradition, the Mark referred to in Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24; and 1 Peter 5:13 is also John Mark. Clifton Black distinguishes the "minimalist reconstruction" that questions these identifications from the "maximalist reconstruction" that accepts the traditional identifications.<sup>69</sup> Mark was one of the five most common Latin names in all periods of Roman history,<sup>70</sup> so the New Testament writings may refer to more than one Mark, who may or may not have been the Mark to whom Papias refers.

In favor of accepting the Papias tradition is the consideration that Papias links the Gospel only indirectly to an apostle, when the church was moving toward claiming apostolic authority for the canonical writings. There is no reason to doubt that the Gospel was written by Mark, who in all probability was John Mark. Nevertheless, this traditional identification is only of limited value for reading the Gospel. A popular view has suggested that the young man in the garden who fled naked was the evangelist himself, John Mark, but this is nothing more than interesting speculation. We know so little about John Mark that the contention that he is the evangelist makes little practical difference for the interpretation of the Gospel. Whoever wrote the Gospel drew on early tradition of the miracles, teachings, and passion of Jesus, and interpretation must begin with the Gospel itself rather than tradition about its authorship. The Gospel tells us more about the evangelist and his setting than the tradition of Papias does. The Gospel, moreover, remains one of the pillars of the Christian faith and tradition, one that is endlessly fascinating, inspiring, and pivotal for our understanding of Jesus.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 1026-41, who contends that Papias wrote between AD 101–108 and that the elder John was the apostle John.

<sup>2</sup> C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 131, 213.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 135 n. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Laurence Housman, *Songs of Praise*, no. 228, quoted by A. M. Hunter, *Saint Mark* (London: SCM Press, 1948), 15.

<sup>5</sup> For full accounts of this history see Seán P. Kealy, *Mark's Gospel: A History of Its Interpretation from the Beginning until 1979* (New York: Paulist, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> William R. Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (Dillsboro: Western North Carolina Press, 1976), 66.

<sup>7</sup> For a history of the study of synoptic relationships, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (trans. Howard Clark Kee; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 38-80; Farmer, *Synoptic Problem*.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Kähler, *The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ* (trans. Carl E. Braaten; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>10</sup> William Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (1901) (trans. J. C. G. Grieg as *The Messianic Secret*; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1971).

<sup>11</sup> Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, 131.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Ludwig Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (Berlin: Trowitzsch & Sohn, 1919).

<sup>13</sup> Schmidt, *Rahmen*, v.

<sup>14</sup> Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971).

<sup>15</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (2d ed.; trans. John Marsh; Oxford: Blackwell, 1968).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 338.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 340.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 347-48.

<sup>24</sup> C. H. Dodd, "The Framework of the Gospel Narrative," *ExpT* 43 (1931–1932): 396-400; reprinted in his *NTS*, 1-11.

<sup>25</sup> D. E. Nineham, "The Order of Events in St. Mark's Gospel—An Examination of Dr. Dodd's Hypothesis," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R. H. Lightfoot* (ed. D. E. Nineham; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 223-39.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 228.

- <sup>27</sup> Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969).
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.
- <sup>29</sup> Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction* (2d ed.; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 143-45, 149.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.
- <sup>33</sup> Werner H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 1-2.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>36</sup> Robert Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JR* 57 (1977): 386-405.
- <sup>37</sup> David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982; rev. ed. with Joanne Dewey, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999).
- <sup>38</sup> Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), esp. 70-79.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-23, 232.
- <sup>40</sup> Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark* (trans. Donald H. Madvig; Atlanta: John Knox, 1970), 380-86.
- <sup>41</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), lxxxii-lxxxiii.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxix.
- <sup>43</sup> BDAG, 792-93.
- <sup>44</sup> See Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, 373.
- <sup>45</sup> Richard Bauckham, ed., "For Whom Were Gospels Written?" in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 9-48.
- <sup>46</sup> H. N. Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in Its Historical and Social Context* (NovTSup 114; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004), 15.
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.
- <sup>48</sup> Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 102-103.
- <sup>49</sup> Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 104-14.
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.
- <sup>51</sup> Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 32; Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 245-49.
- <sup>52</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 35.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.
- <sup>54</sup> Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 139.
- <sup>55</sup> Black, *Mark: Images*, 224-25.

<sup>56</sup> Benjamin W. Bacon, *Is Mark a Roman Gospel?* (Harvard Theological Studies 7; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>58</sup> Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel* (BIS 65; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>60</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark*, 129 n. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans*, 102.

<sup>62</sup> Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, lxxxi-xciii.

<sup>63</sup> Black, *Mark: Images*, 237.

<sup>64</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 33.

<sup>65</sup> Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 83-84.

<sup>66</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark*, 117.

<sup>67</sup> Francis J. Moloney comes to the same conclusion in *The Gospel of Mark* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 259.

<sup>68</sup> Black, *Mark: Images*, 236.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-7.

<sup>70</sup> Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark*, 80 n. 17; citing H. Solin, "Names, Personal, Roman," in S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1024-1026, esp. 1024.

## AN OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

- I. Introduction 1:1-13
  - A. The Herald of Jesus 1:1-8
  - B. The Baptism of Jesus 1:9-11
  - C. The Temptation of Jesus 1:12-13
- II. The Authority of Jesus Revealed 1:14–3:6
  - A. Introduction 1:14-20
    - 1. The Proclamation of the Kingdom 1:14-15
    - 2. The Call to Discipleship 1:16-20
  - B. Conflict with the Demons: Jesus' Authority over Sickness 1:21-45
    - 1. The Authority of Jesus in Teaching and Healing 1:21-28
    - 2. The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-law 1:29-31
    - 3. The Healings in the Evening 1:32-34
    - 4. The Departure from Capernaum 1:35-39
    - 5. The Cleansing of a Leper 1:40-45
  - C. Conflict with the Religious Leaders: Jesus' Authority over Sin 2:1–3:6
    - 1. Authority to Forgive Sins 2:1-12
    - 2. Authority to Eat with Outcasts 2:13-17
    - 3. Authority to Dispense with Fasting 2:18-22
    - 4. Authority over the Sabbath 2:23-28
    - 5. Authority to do a Good Work 3:1-5
  - D. Conclusion: The Plot to Kill Jesus 3:6
- III. The Authority of Jesus Rejected 3:7–6:6a
  - A. Introduction 3:7-19
    - 1. Summary Statement 3:7-12
    - 2. The Call to the Twelve 3:13-19
  - B. The Rejection of Jesus by His Family 3:20-35
    - 1. Jesus and the Crowd 3:20-21
    - 2. Jesus and Beelzebul 3:22-30
    - 3. Jesus and His Family, the Crowd 3:31-35
  - C. The Kingdom of God Proclaimed in Parables 4:1-34
    - 1. The Parable of the Sower 4:1-9
    - 2. The Purpose of the Parables 4:10-12
    - 3. The Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower 4:13-20
    - 4. A Collection of Exhortations 4:21-25
    - 5. The Parable of the Growing Seed 4:26-29
    - 6. The Parable of the Mustard Seed 4:30-32
    - 7. The Use of the Parables 4:33-34
  - D. The Kingdom of God Manifest in Miracles 4:35–5:43
    - 1. The Power of Jesus over the Sea 4:35-41
    - 2. The Power of Jesus over Demons 5:1-20

3. The Power of Jesus over Sickness and Death 5:21-43
  - a. The Request of Jairus 5:21-24
  - b. The Woman with a Hemorrhage 5:25-34
  - c. Raising the Daughter of Jairus 5:35-43
- E. Conclusion: The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth 6:1-6a
- IV. Gathering a New Community 6:6b–8:30
  - A. Introduction 6:6b-34
    1. Summary Statement 6:6b
    2. The Mission of the Disciples 6:7-34
      - a. The Commission of the Twelve 6:7-13
      - b. Interlude: The Death of John the Baptist 6:14-29
      - c. The Return of the Twelve 6:30-34
  - B. The Feeding of the 5,000 and Sequels 6:35–7:37
    1. The Feeding of the 5,000 6:35-44
    2. The Crossing and Landing (Walking on the Water) 6:45-56
    3. Controversy with the Pharisees: Defilement 7:1-23
    4. The Children's Bread 7:24-30
    5. Transition: The Healing of the Deaf Mute 7:31-37
  - C. The Feeding of the 4,000 and Sequels 8:1-26
    1. The Feeding of the 4,000 8:1-9
    2. The Crossing and Landing 8:10
    3. Controversy with the Pharisees: Signs 8:11-13
    4. The Leaven of the Pharisees 8:14-21
    5. Transition: The Healing of a Blind Man 8:22-26
  - D. Conclusion: "You are the Christ" 8:27-30
- V. The Journey to Jerusalem: The Way of the Cross 8:31–10:52
  - A. The First Prediction Unit 8:31–9:1
    1. Prediction 8:31
    2. Misunderstanding 8:32-33
    3. Teaching about Discipleship 8:34–9:1
  - B. Appended Teachings 9:2-29
    1. The Lord's Glory Revealed 9:2-13
      - a. The Transfiguration 9:2-8
      - b. Teaching the Disciple 9:9-13
    2. The Unclean Spirits Resist 9:14-29
      - a. The Boy with an Unclean Spirit 9:14-27
      - b. Teaching the Disciples 9:28-29
  - C. The Second Prediction Unit 9:30-37
    1. Prediction 9:30-31
    2. Misunderstanding 9:32
    3. Teaching about Discipleship 9:33-37
  - D. Appended Teachings 9:39–10:31
    1. Relations with Other Believers 9:38-50

- a. The Success of the Non-disciple 9:38-40
- b. Teaching the Disciples 9:41-50
- 2. Divorce 10:1-12
  - a. The Pharisees and Divorce 10:1-9
  - b. Teaching the Disciples 10:10-12
- 3. The Little Children 10:13-16
  - a. The Presentation of the Children 10:13
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