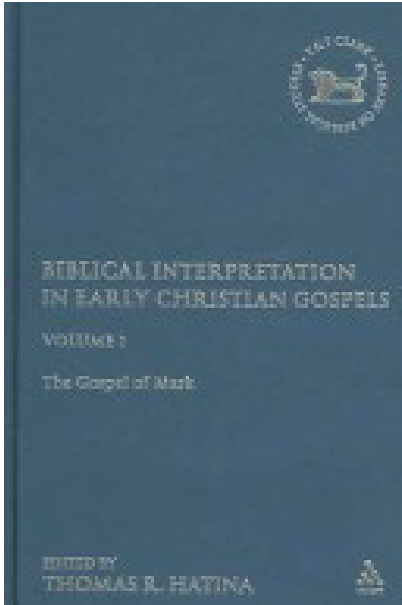


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Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels, Vol. 1: The Gospel of Mark

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In recent years a number of studies on the use of Scripture in the Gospel of Mark were published, among them an important study by Thomas Hatina (*In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark's Narrative* [JSNTSup 232; SSEJC 8; 2002]). In the wake of that study Hatina now has collected a number of essays on the same topic by a number of scholars, most of whom had previously written on the topic or on related issues. The volume constitutes the first volume of the five-volume *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Christian Gospels*, of which four volumes will be dedicated to the four canonical Gospels and a fifth to the use of Scripture in the extracanonical Gospels.

The present volume comprises eleven essays by some well-known scholars such as Edwin Broadhead, Craig Evans, and Stanley Porter. The following thematic complexes are covered in the volume: (1) S. Porter compares authoritative citation in Mark's Gospel and in ancient biography; (2) most of the essays treat the use of scripture in a particular Markan text: 1:1–15, especially 1:2–3 (T. Shepherd); 1:11 (T. Hatina); 6:1–44 (S. A. Cummins); 7:15 (J. Svartvik); 14:53–56 (E. Broadhead); 15:1–39 (D.L. Bock); (3) two essays treat the use of a specific text from Scripture in particular Markan texts: Hos 6:2 in the passion predictions of Mark 8:32–34 and its parallels by M. Proctor; the book of Zechariah in the Markan passion narrative by C. Evans; and (4) consideration of the

influence of larger scriptural complexes on the whole of the Markan narrative: Exodus material by L. Perkins and the Servant of the Lord complex in Deutero-Isaiah by J. R. Edwards. Unfortunately, the essays are presented in the alphabetical order of the surnames of the authors, which hampers quick access to the common structure and themes covered by the essays.

Due to restrictions of space, I obviously can here neither present the contents of all essays in any detail nor provide an adequate critical discussion and evaluation of the different approaches. A very short indication of some central aspects of the essays will therefore have to suffice:

Porter (116–30) compares the use of authoritative citation in Mark and in Satyrus's *Life of Euripides* (P.Oxy. 1176) and evaluates this for the question of the literary genre of the Gospel. This is an innovative essay that certainly should be followed up with a systematic survey of modes of intertextuality in ancient biographical and historiographical literature and its implications for our understanding of early Christian Gospels.

Shepherd (151–68) in his essay “The Narrative Role of John und Jesus in Mark 1.1–15” presents a careful discussion of the narrative structure of the Markan prologue but touches only marginally on the common theme of the volume. Interesting, however, is the fact that he considers the scriptural quotations to be a function of the narrative structure of the Markan text and therefore to be controlled by the (new) context. Perkins (100–115), on the other hand, suggests that it is not sufficient to consider the controlling function of the narrative context of embedded scriptural texts. According to him, one should also reckon with a referential function of quotes, allusions, and intertextual motifs, that is, that they refer the reader to their source texts and invoke these texts (in this case Exodus and Isa 40–55; see also the Edwards's contribution) as controlling factors in the reading process. Hatina (81–99), taking his point of departure in the fact that texts do not have meaning but that meaning is ascribed to texts by readers, argues that an embedded text could (as in the case of Mark 1:11) allow not only for one “correct” reading but for several potential plausible readings. The criterion for evaluating intertextuality should be textual coherence, but in case several interpretations cohere with the narrative the exegete has to be satisfied with a plurality of options.

Several essays discuss in some detail the complex interplay between intertextuality and intratextuality, that is, between embedded text and (new) narrative context. Cummins does this, for example, with respect to Mark 6 for the Elijah narratives and the book of Esther (31–48) and Bock with respect to Mark 15 for Ps 22, Isa 40–55, and the book of Amos (1–17), whereas Broadhead argues that the interplay of intertextual references to Pss 2 and 110:1 and Dan 7:13 and intratextual connections within Mark's Gospel generate

a climactic christological confession in Mark 14:53–65, which resolves the messianic secret (18–30). Svartvik argues with regard to Mark 7 that the role of embedded scripture within the plot structure of Mark’s narrative suggests that Mark 7 does not belong to the controversy cycles of the Gospel and that 7:15 should be understood as a warning against evil speech (!) (169–81).

The contribution of Evans (64–80) differs from the other essays in that he not only argues that the passion narrative contains many allusions to the book of Zechariah but also attempts to demonstrate that it played an important role in the compositional history of Mark’s Gospel. He also suggests that some Zecharian influence could be traced back to Jesus himself. In the same vein, Edwards (49–63) not only argues for broad employment of Isaiah’s Servant of the Lord motifs in Mark’s Gospel but also contends (on the basis of Mark 4:1–9!) that Isaiah’s Servant of the Lord served as a paradigm for Jesus’ ministry. To my mind the arguments for Jesuanic origins in both instances are not convincing; certainly they are not conclusive. The contribution of Proctor (131–50) also has a peculiar profile. Proctor claims that Mark’s use of the phrase *meta treis hemeras* (understood as “after three days,” i.e., “on the fourth day”) in the passion predictions functions as a critical revision of early Christian usage of Hos 6:2 LXX as a proof text for the resurrection “on the third day,” also that in Mark it directs attention away from Jesus’ resurrection in order to focus on his death. But both intratextual coherence (according to Mark 16:1 Jesus’ resurrection actually did happen on the third day) as well as the use of *meta duo hemeras* in Mark 14:2 (see also the inclusive use by Paul in Gal 1:18: *epeita meta ete tria*) suggest that the phrase *meta treis hemeras* in Mark is not used in the sense of “after three days” but rather means “within [the span of] three days.” Given the fact that the connection between Hos 6:2 and the early Christian resurrection tradition in itself is very tenuous, Proctor’s interpretation must surely be considered improbable.

According to the editor (vi, 1) it was a conscious editorial decision not to organize the essays according to predetermined categories in order not to “formulate assumptions that may be counterproductive in promoting methodological integration.” As a result, the essays differ significantly in their basic assumptions, in methodological approach, and in their general orientation. This is simultaneously a drawback and the strength of the volume. The book is valuable precisely for the reason that it presents very different approaches and in this manner clearly documents the state of the question under consideration: notwithstanding (or rather because of?) the recent studies of Marcus, Watts, Svartvik, and Hatina himself, the question is a burning issue in Markan research that demands scholarly attention. Especially questions regarding the definition of scriptural allusions, the relation of embedded texts to their (new) literary context, the value of the source contexts of quoted texts for understanding the Gospel, and so forth constitute a challenge to Markan scholarship. Because of the catalogue of open questions

for future consideration provided and discussed by Hatina in his introduction (5–7), the book gains even more in value.

The volume is completed by a common bibliography, an index of text references, and an author index. The technical standard is high—I encountered very few errors. All in all Hatina and the contributors have provided a very useful and therefore recommendable volume of essays on biblical interpretation in Mark's Gospel.