

Introduction

Most Markan scholars are preoccupied with the “originary” historical and social context of *The Gospel According to Mark* (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον).¹ If the patristic witnesses are consulted, it is usually with a critical eye on whether or not they are reliable guides on the origins of the Gospel. Their conviction, beginning with Papias of Hierapolis (in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15), that the evangelist “Mark” recorded Peter’s eyewitness recollections is upheld by many conservative commentaries.² Conversely, other critics surmise that Papias could have spun the whole tale out of an erroneous inference from 1 Peter 5:13 (cf. *Hist. Eccl.* 2.15.2; 3.39.17).³ As a consequence

1. The Gospels are technically anonymous, but I will refer to the texts of the canonical Gospels by the traditional names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John for the sake of convenience. To distinguish when I am referring to the purported authors of these texts, I will preface the names with the term “evangelist” or the context will make it clear.
2. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1913), xiii–xxix; A. E. J. Rawlinson, *St. Mark*, 4th ed. (London: Methuen & Co, 1936), xxv–xxviii, xxx–xxxii; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 5–6; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1966), 1–30; William L. Lane, *The Gospel according to Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 7–9; Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1027–30; Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament II (Mark)* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), xi–xxiv; Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 20–31; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 39–41; Robert Stein, *Mark*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 1–9.

of the debate over the historical reliability of the patristic traditions, many critics pass over their ideological function in Mark's *reception history*.⁴

It is for this reason that I will shift the attention toward the reception of Mark, from Papias to Clement of Alexandria. A close analysis brings to light a remarkable incongruity that has not been adequately resolved. On surface appearances, Mark was highly esteemed due to the virtually unanimous opinion that the Gospel is based on information deriving from a renowned apostolic figurehead. Along with the emerging legends about Peter's episcopacy and crucifixion in Rome, the imperial capital came to be reckoned as the provenance for the composition of Mark as well (cf. Clement,

3. D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St Mark*, Pelican Gospel Commentaries (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 39–40; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Mark*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Atlanta: John Knox, 1970), 25; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, EKKNT (Zürich: Benziger, 1978), 32–33; Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1976), 1:9–11; Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 6; M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary*, New Testament Library (London: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 11; Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 97; K. Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus und die Frage nach dem Verfasser des zweiten Evangeliums," *ZNW* 58 (1967): 186; Jürgen Regul, *Die antimarcionitischen Evangelienprologe*, *Vetus Latina* 6 (Freiburg: Herder, 1969), 96–97; W. R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11.
4. Some notable studies on Mark's reception history include Oden and Hall, *Ancient Christian Commentary*; Brenda Deen Schildgen, *Power and Prejudice: The Reception of the Gospel of Mark* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999); James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and Their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark*, *WUNT* 2.112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); C. Clifton Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Joanna Dewey, "The Survival of Mark's Gospel: A Really Good Story," *JBL* 123 (2004): 495–507; Willi Braun, "The First Shall be Last: The Gospel of Mark after the First Century," in *Chasing Down Religion: In the Sights of History and the Cognitive Sciences Essays in Honour of Luther H. Martin*, eds. Panavotis Pachis and Donald Wiebe (Thessaloniki: Barbounakis, 2010), 41–57; Christine E. Joynes, "The Sound of Silence: Interpreting Mark 16:1–8 through the Centuries," *Interpretation* 65 (2011): 18–29; Thomas C. Oden, *The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2011); Peter M. Head, "The Early Text of Mark," in *The Early Text of the New Testament*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Michael J. Kruger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 208–20; William R. S. Lamb, *The Catena in Marcum: A Byzantine Anthology of Early Commentary on Mark* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 2.15.2; 6.14.6). For Richard Horsley, the reduction of Mark to a “religious” text in Western Christianity began with its appropriation for a major Western Metropolis under the authority of its first ecclesiastical bishop.⁵ What is perplexing is that there seems to be no discernible motivation for appropriating Mark, for not even Peter’s reputation as one of the most revered figures of the apostolic era could rescue this Gospel from its benign neglect throughout most of its history of reception.

The Gospel That is Both Present and Absent

Two patristic statements sit in uneasy tension with each other: Papias’s contention that the evangelist Mark was “Peter’s interpreter” (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.15) and Augustine’s demotion of him to Matthew’s abbreviator (*de Con. Evan.* 1.2.4). The former position ensured the canonization of Mark; the latter, that Mark’s distinctive voice in the canon was silenced.⁶ Matthean priority already had a long pedigree (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1) and the Augustinian solution to the Synoptic Problem was but the final step in the relegation of Mark to the margins of the New Testament. Brenda Deen Schildgen extracts these two statements as governing the reception of Mark down to the early modern period, reasoning that “[t]his contrast explains Mark’s absence and presence, for the gospel was present in the canon but essentially absent from attention.”⁷

The neglect of Mark is evident from the frequency of Gospel citations in a standard reference work like the *Biblia Patristica*. It lists roughly 1,400 citations of Mark in comparison to 2,000 citations of John, 3,300 of Luke, and 3,900 of Matthew from the earliest period

5. Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 30.

6. Schildgen, *Power*, 35.

7. *Ibid.*, 36.

to Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian. Excluding Origen, the number of citations of Mark drops sharply to about two hundred and fifty in the third century. Compare this with the 3,600 citations of Matthew, 1,000 of Luke, and 1,600 of John. The count for Origen's citations is approximately 8,000 for Matthew, 5,000 for John, 3,000 for Luke, and 650 for Mark.⁸ From this maximalist list, Mark is clearly cited the least by far. Then again, the statistics gathered in the *Biblia Patristica* may be inaccurate. It is too generous in what it counts as textual allusions, not taking into account the survival of other oral or written sources, and offers no criteria for discerning a specific reference to Mark when it shares material with the other Synoptic Gospels.

Studies that implement methodologically rigorous criteria do not have as high a number of intertextual references to the canonical Gospels in the second century.⁹ References to Mark, however, can literally be counted on one or two hands. For Helmut Koester, Justin (*Dial.* 106.3) gives the sole sure citation of Mark before Irenaeus.¹⁰

8. I derive these estimates from Schildgen, *Power*, 40–41; cf. Dewey, “Good Story,” 506. See the *Biblia Patristica: Index des citations et allusions bibliques dans la littérature patristique*, 6 vols. (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1975–1995).

9. See Édouard Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature Before Saint Irenaeus*, New Gospels Studies 5, trans. Norman J. Belval and Suzanne Hechte, ed. Arthur J. Bellinzoni, 3 vols. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1993); Helmut Koester, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den Apostolischen Vätern, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 65. Bd. (Berlin: Akademie, 1957); Wolf-Dieter Köhler, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums in der Zeit vor Irenäus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1987); Andrew Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus*, WUNT 2.169 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Andrew Gregory and Christopher M. Tuckett, *The Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). I discuss how these studies attain some different results based on the differing criteria they employ under the heading “What Counts as a Citation of a Written Gospel Text” in chapter six.

10. Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM), 274. Koester (*Synoptische Überlieferung*, 259–60) offers the following certain references to the Synoptic Gospels: Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 1:1; 2 *Clem.* 2:4; 3:2; 4:2, 5; 5:2–4; 6:1, 2; 9:11; 13:4; Polycarp, *Phil.* 2:3; 7:2; 12:3; *Did.* 1:3, 4, 5; 9:5 (?); 15:3 (?). None of these references are to distinctive Markan material without Synoptic parallels. For instance, 2 *Clement* 2:4 could be a reference to either Mark 2:17b or Matthew 9:13b.

Eduoard Massaux, who reaches the polar opposite verdict to Koester's on the extensive use of Matthew in the second century, basically agrees that Mark's influence was negligible.¹¹ Adela Collins expands Koester's list slightly to include the *Papyrus Egerton 2* fragment (Mark 12:14), *Hermas Similitude* 9.7.6 (Mark 13:36), the *Gospel of Peter* 50–57 (Mark 16:1–8), and the *Gospel of the Ebionites* (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.4 [Mark 1:4–6]).¹² Lastly, the new Oxford committee on the reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers yields very little for Mark.¹³

References to Mark are more transparent in Irenaeus as he labels the evangelist's work as a written Gospel (*Adv. Haer.* 3.11.8), explicitly quotes Markan passages (3.10.5; 3.16.3) or unique Markan material (1.21.2; 4.18.4; 4.37.5), and defends Markan Christology (3.11.7).¹⁴ All the same, Mark's scriptural status does not translate into

11. Massaux (*Saint Irenaeus* 2:131–32, 174–75, 193–94; 3:125, 222–26) allows for more references to Mark than Koester, but he has a low enough number of sure citations to be listed in a footnote. He finds references in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Mand.* 4.1.6 on Mark 10:11; *Sim.* 8.6.4 on Mark 8:38 or Luke 9:26; *Mand.* 4.2.1 on Mark 3:6; 6:52; 8:17; *Vis.* 3.6.3. possibly on Mark 9:50), the *Papyrus Egerton 2* fragment (lines 43–47 on Mark 12:14 and Mark 10:2; lines 47–50 on Mark 12:14, 17; line 51 from Mark 1:43), Justin Martyr (*Dial.* 106:3), Athenagoras (*Leg.* 33:2 on Mark 10:11), the *Gospel of the Ebionites* (Epiphanius, *Pan.* 30.13.4 first three words influenced by Mark 1:4–6) and the *Gospel of Peter* (52–54 on Mark 16:3–4, 55 on Mark 16:5; 57 on Mark 16:8).
12. Adela Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 103–104; cf. F. Neiryneck, “The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark,” in *New Testament in Early Christianity/La réception des écrits néotestamentaires dans le christianisme primitif*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 86, ed. Jean-Marie Sevrin (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 143–57, 157–60, 163–67.
13. Most of the scholars found no secure reference to Mark in the Apostolic Fathers that cannot be assigned to oral tradition or to the better known Matthean or Lukan parallels. The most promising results are in Joseph Verheyden, “The *Shepherd of Hermas* and the Writings that Later Formed the New Testament,” in *Reception of the New Testament*, 302, 316–18, 324–25. He discusses potential examples of Markan influence in passages in the *Shepherd* such as *Mandate* 4.1.6 (Mark 10:11), *Vision* 3.7.3, and *Similitude* 8.6.4 (Mark 4:18–20; cf. Acts 19:5), 9.21.3 and 9.31.2 (Mark 10:13–16). Moreover, the expressions “not understanding” (συνίημι) and the hardening of the heart (ἡ καρδία with a form of πωροῶ) in *Mandate* 4.2.1 are used exclusively in Mark. However, even here the evidence may be inconclusive as the verbal agreement with Mark 10:11 may be based on common knowledge of Jesus's ruling on divorce or the parallels in *Vision* 3.7.3 or *Similitude* 8.6.4 may be common kerygmatic language.
14. Black, *Apostolic Interpreter*, 100.

an increase in influence. Out of 626 citations of the Gospels, Peter Head notes that Irenaeus explicitly attributes a passage to Mark only three times (*Adv. Haer.* 3.10.5 on Mark 1:1–3 and 16:19; 3.16.3 on Mark 1:1; 4.6.1), one of which is misattributed (4.6.1 on Matt 11:27/ Luke 10:22), and Head borrows from Swete’s classic commentary a handful of verbatim quotes in *Adversus haeresis* 1.3.3 (Mark 5:31), 1.21.2 (Mark 10:38); 2.28.6 (Mark 13:32), 2.32.1 (Mark 9:44), 3.10.5 (Mark 16:19), 3.16.5 (Mark 8:31), 3.18.5 (Mark 8:38), 4.6.6 (Mark 1:24), 4.37.5 (Mark 9:23), and 5.13.1 (Mark 5:41, 43).¹⁵ Out of an estimated 1,579 Gospel references in Clement of Alexandria,¹⁶ Carl Cosaert’s meticulous analysis covers an extensive commentary of Mark 10:17–31 in *Quis Dives Salvetur* 4.4–10 and a few other examples (Mark 8:38 in *Strom.* 4.70.2; Mark 9:29 in *Ecl.* 15.1).¹⁷

With regards to Mark’s manuscript attestation, or mostly lack thereof, the oldest extant fragments are from the mid-third-century Chester Beatty papyri (P46) with no other manuscript evidence before Sinaiticus and Vaticanus in the fourth century.¹⁸ Little was done about the marked absence of Markan commentaries until Jerome left behind ten sermons on Mark in the late fourth century and a catena began to be compiled in the early sixth century from

15. Head, “Early Text of Mark,” 112, 112 n. 14; cf. Swete, *St. Mark*, xxxii. Head casts doubt on a few of these citations as deriving from Mark: *Adv. Haer.* 3.16.5 is more likely a general reminiscence of a Synoptic passion prediction and 4.6.6 is more likely in reference to Luke 4:34. Interestingly, very few of these exhibit distinctive Markan features without a Synoptic parallel with some exceptions being the allusion to the baptism Jesus will undergo in Mark 10:38 (1.21.2) and the reply to the doubting father of the epileptic child in Mark 9:23 (4.37.6).
16. C. P. Cosaert, *The Text of the Gospels in Clement of Alexandria* (Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 22.
17. *Ibid.*, 118–31; cf. Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 353–56; Scott Brown, “The Letter to Theodore: Stephen Carlson’s Case against Clement’s Authorship,” *J ECS* 16 (2008): 555 n. 51. Cosaert lists a number of indeterminate Gospel references on pp. 311–35. The *Letter of Theodore*, if accepted, would add Mark 10:35–6 and 46a to the database.
18. Daniel Wallace, “First-Century Fragment of Mark’s Gospel Found,” March 22, 2012, at <http://danielwallace.com/2012/03/22/first-century-fragment-of-marks-gospel-found/> excited the academic community with the announcement of a first-century fragment of Mark, but this claim has yet to be verified.

the scattered comments of John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Titus of Bostra, and other illuminaries.¹⁹ Schildgen spots a place for Mark's early morning empty tomb scene in second-century liturgical readings in Rome, albeit from post-Constantinian sources, from which it must be hypothetically reconstructed.²⁰ She adds that the use of Mark in the paschal liturgies paled in comparison to Matthew or John, with Luke in a distant third place, as Mark was read once for every sixteen readings of John or Matthew.²¹

Alexandria may be the exception to the rule. Schildgen points out the fourth-century liturgy named in the evangelist's honor, despite its lack of distinct references to the text of Mark, and Clement's keen attention to the tenth chapter of Mark in his *Quis Dives Salvatur* and *Letter to Theodore*.²² The former expounds upon the *pericope* of the rich man (Mark 10:17-31; cf. Matt 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-30) and, in Clement's recollection, "[t]his is written in the gospel according to Mark, and in all the other accepted gospels the passage as a whole shows the same general sense, though perhaps here and there a little of the wording changes" (*Quis div.* 5).²³ The latter text ascribed to "Clement of the *Stromateis*," allegedly discovered by Morton Smith in 1958, documents the existence of an esoteric edition of Mark that privately circulated among advanced readers in Alexandria.²⁴ In

19. Although scholars commonly attribute the catena to the fifth-century presbyter Victor of Antioch based on some limited manuscript evidence, William Lamb (*Catena in Marcum*, 58-64, 71-73) makes a strong case that its compilation began between 490-553 CE on the basis of its Christological and anti-Nestorian perspective. Whether or not Victor had a hand in it, the catena was a fluid genre that grew over time. Adela Collins (*Mark*, 105) infers that Origen may have left a commentary on Mark because of the way he exegetes Markan passages in his commentaries on Matthew and Luke, but this is pure conjecture as it is no longer extant.

20. Schildgen, *Power*, 50-51.

21. *Ibid.*, 52; cf. the lectionaries of Peter Chrysotogus, Maximus Taurinensis, or Leo the Great.

22. *Ibid.*, 51-52.

23. For the English translation, see G. W. Butterworth, *Clement of Alexandria: The Exhortation to the Greeks, The Rich Man's Salvation and the Fragment of an Address Entitled to the Newly Baptized*, LCL (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 281.

the excerpts cited from the “mystic Gospel” (μυστικὸν εὐαγγέλιον) (*Theod.* II.21–3.11; III.14–16),²⁵ the first introduces a backstory for the anonymous youth in a linen cloth in Mark 14:51–52, inserting an episode between Mark 10:35 and 36 about how Jesus raised the youth from the dead and initiated him into the “mystery of the kingdom of god” (cf. Mark 4:11). The second fills in a lacuna in Mark 10:46a by narrating Jesus’ refusal to receive the youth’s sister and mother as well as Salome in Jericho, but without the context to clarify his actions. Disconcertingly for Clement, the libertine Carpocratians stole the text, allowing one possible explanation for why the text was soon forgotten.

The evidence that Alexandria was the exception to the rule on Mark’s poor reception may not be as strong as it appears. How far the hagiography that grew up around Saint Mark as the first bishop of Alexandria can be traced before its earliest extant written attestation in Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* 2.16) may be indeterminate.²⁶ Clement may be an early witness for the tradition if the *Letter to Theodore*, and

24. See Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria; The Secret Gospel: The Discovery and Interpretation of the Secret Gospel according to Mark* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1974). For up-to-date surveys on the history of scholarship, see Tony Burke, introduction to *Ancient Gospel or Modern Forgery? The Secret Gospel of Mark in Debate*, ed. Tony Burke (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 2–19; Timo S. Paananen, “From Stalemate to Deadlock: Clement’s Letter to Theodore in Recent Scholarship,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 11 (2012): 87–125. I address the debate over whether the *Letter to Theodore* is an ancient artifact or a modern forgery in the appendix.
25. Scott G. Brown (*Mark’s Other Gospel: Rethinking Morton’s Smith Controversial Discovery*, ESCJ 15 [Waterloo, Ont: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005], xi) prefers “Mystic Gospel” to the standard nomenclature “Secret Gospel” as Clement does not mean that the Gospel itself is secret, only that its meaning is concealed. I will henceforth refer to this text as the “mystic Gospel” or *mystic Mark*.
26. For a full discussion of the patristic and African sources, see Oden, *African Memory*, 60–76. See also Birger Pearson, “Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Some Observations,” in *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 137–45. Hugh M. Humphrey (*From Q to ‘Secret’ Mark: A Composition History of the Earliest Narrative Theology* [New York: T&T Clark, 2006], 35) even looks to a Venetian tradition where Mark’s body was brought from Egypt to Venice under Doge Giustiniano Participazio in 828 CE. Against Oden’s defense of the underlying historicity of this Alexandrian Christian myth of origins, I will give an alternative account of its origins and rationale under the heading “The Dependence of Clement of Alexandria on Papias” in chapter three.

its account of how the evangelist deposited the mystic text of Mark in Alexandria, is accepted as genuine,²⁷ but this source is silent on the evangelist's role as a bishop or a martyr. If the tradition of Saint Mark's sojourn in Alexandria existed in Clement's day, it had no noticeable impact on the status of the text of Mark as witnessed in the citations of Clement and Origen. Clement's attention to Mark 10:17–31 may be due, not to its hypothetical place in the Alexandrian liturgy, but to his opinion that the *pericope* of the rich man was liable to misreading.²⁸ Compared to the strong manuscript attestation for John from the sands of Egypt,²⁹ a work Clement lauds as the "spiritual" Gospel par excellence (in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 6.14.7), the plain *canonical* edition of Mark was hardly privileged in second-century Alexandria.

Evidently the weight of Petrine authority did not compel an active readership of Mark. The reason for this limited use may lie in Mark's glaring absences. Elements missing included the lofty Christological language of John, the ethical guidelines of the Sermon on the Mount or Plain, or the popular infancy or resurrection stories. Scribes felt compelled to amend Mark's text, tampering with its conclusion and perhaps introduction that they held to be unsatisfactory.³⁰ The

27. See, for example, Oden, *African Memory*, 198–208.

28. See my discussion of the problems with Smith's thesis on the liturgical use of the canonical and mystic texts of Mark under the heading "Was Mark a Part of an Alexandrian Lectionary in the Second Century" in chapter five.

29. Colin Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 61; Charles Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 148–52.

30. For a review of scholarship on Mark's longer ending, see Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 1–46. I follow the vast majority of scholars in accepting the secondary nature of Mark 16:9–20, but for a robust challenge to the consensus, see William R. Farmer, *The Last Twelve Verses of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); James Snapp Jr., *Authentic: The Case for Mark 16:9–20* (Amazon Digital Services, 2011). As for Mark 1:1, while a few scholars disregard the whole verse as a scribal interpolation, most of the text-critical debate centering on the point where the manuscript and patristic witnesses divide over the inclusion of the words τοῦ θεοῦ. See Peter M. Head, "A Text-Critical Study of Mark 1.1: 'The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,'" *NTS* 37 (1991): 621–29; Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*:

perception of major holes at the beginning, middle, or ending of Mark's story may have encouraged the production of new narrative lives of Jesus. Taking Markan priority as a starting premise, Matthew reproduces 90 percent of Mark's content but, by correcting Mark's grammar or style, retains 51 percent of Mark's wording. Matthew inserts whole blocks of material into Mark's narrative framework (Matt 5–7), edits or deletes offensive Markan passages (Mark 2:21; 3:19b–20; 6:5; 7:19b, 32–35; 7:33–34; 8:22–26; 10:18), and updates Mark's version of events in light of a new authorial situation (Matt 23).³¹ Luke makes similar stylistic revisions and retains 51 percent of Mark's content, mostly due to the omission of huge blocks of Markan material (Mark 6:45–8:26) or the substitution of alternative sources in place of Mark (Luke 4:16–30; 5:1–11; 22:14–38).³² To be sure, a minority of scholars view Mark as an abridgment or conflation of Matthew and Luke,³³ but, in this scenario, Mark displays curious editorial decisions in omitting the infancy and resurrection stories and much of the didactic material while enlarging individual *pericopae* with odd details (Mark 3:21; 7:32–35; 8:23–26; 11:13b; 14:51–52).³⁴

The redaction of Mark by Matthew and Luke, therefore, affords another window into Mark's earliest reception. I agree with David

The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 85–88; J. K. Elliott, "Mark 1:1–3—A Later Addition to the Gospel?" *NTS* 46 (2000): 584–88; N. Clayton Croy, *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 114–39; Tommy Wasserman, "The Son of God was in the Beginning (Mark 1:1)," *JTS* 62 (2011): 20–50. For further discussion, see the section entitled "The Evidence from the Scribal Corrections to Mark" in chapter six.

31. See David C. Sim, "Matthew's Use of Mark: Did Matthew Intend to Supplement or to Replace His Primary Source?" *NTS* 57 (2011): 178–81.
32. *Ibid.*, 182–83; Michael Kok, "The Flawed Evangelist (John) Mark: A Neglected Clue to the Reception of Mark's Gospel in Luke-Acts," *Neotestamentica* 46 (2012): 246–47.
33. See William Farmer, *The Synoptic Problem* (London: Macmillan, 1976); John Bernard Orchard and Harold Riley, *The Order of the Synoptics: Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 3–108.
34. For good introductions to the case for Markan priority, see Robert H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* (Nottingham: InterVarsity, 1987), 48–88; Mark Goodacre, *The Synoptic Problem: A Way through the Maze* (London: T&T Clark, 2001), 56–83.

Sim that an expanded and revised Gospel narrative rendered Mark as redundant at best.³⁵ The Lukan prologue states as much in that Luke's well-ordered (καθεξῆς) account supersedes the many who "attempted" (ἐπεχείρησαν) to draw up a narrative (1:1-3). Loveday Alexander denies that this prologue meant to subtly denigrate earlier accounts as much as extol the Hellenistic literary virtue of a proper arrangement as καμοὶ (and I) puts Luke in the same class as its predecessors,³⁶ but the implication of ἐπιχειρέω is that the past attempts were unsuccessful (cf. Acts 9:29; 19:13).³⁷ Given Mark's lackluster reception in the patristic period, it is astounding that it survived at all once its contents were almost completely reabsorbed in Matthew and Luke. It could have disappeared without a trace like the other Synoptic sources lost to the dust of antiquity (cf. Luke 1:1-3).

A Solution for Mark's Survival

To account for the anomaly of Mark's survival, Joanna Dewey conjectures that Mark captivated audiences at the grassroots level when they heard the text in oral performance well into the second century.³⁸ In a primarily oral culture, the Gospels were mostly heard rather than read and Mark must have achieved wide circulation from early on to become known independently to a number of Gospel

35. Sim, "Matthew's Use of Mark," 182-83.

36. L. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1*, SNTSMS 78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 115-16, 133-36.

37. David Laird Dungan, *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (Doubleday: New York, 1999), 14; Sim, "Matthew's Use of Mark," 188-89; Kok, "Flawed Evangelist," 248; Francis Watson, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 123. Laird reviews negative examples in the LXX (cf. 2 Chron 20:11; Ezra 7:23; 1 Esd 1:26; Esther 9:25; 16:3; 2 Macc 7:19; 9:2; 10:15; 15:33; 3 Macc 6:24; 7:5; 4 Macc 1:5; Sir 9:4) and notes that Origen interprets the Lukan prologue negatively in reference to other "heretical" Gospels (*Comm. Jo.* 10). Alexander (*Preface*, 109-10) reaches similar findings on the derogatory implications of the use of ἐπιχειρέω in the third person in other Hellenistic prefaces, but downplays it as a stylistic convention that the Lukan prologue adopted without intending the negative implications.

38. See Dewey, "Good Story."

writers in diverse geographical locales and to Papias in Hierapolis. However, her main supporting evidence—the high number of textual variants, fewer extant manuscripts, and sharp drop-off of citations of Mark at the beginning of the third century—does not quite prove her case.³⁹ Her first two arguments may suggest that Mark was infrequently copied, leading to more variants as there were fewer controls, and the last misses that the bulk of the references to Mark in the first volume of the *Biblia Patristica* are concentrated in select writers like Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, or Tertullian.⁴⁰ Further, its statistics may be misleading as the most authoritative studies have a drastically lower count of citations of Mark. It is conceivable that Mark retained a degree of popularity for some lay communities, but the scarcity of citations and manuscripts confirms that it was not favored by the Christian *literati* who preserved the texts. Solely the authority of Peter's name, once attached to Mark, rescued it from oblivion.

There must be a reason for why such a poorly received text was imputed to one of the most revered founding figures within Christian memory. The tradition cannot be easily swept aside as an accidental misreading of 1 Peter 5:13 because Mark does not function as Peter's scribe or interpreter in this text and Papias credits the elder John as his primary source.⁴¹ We are left with two choices. The first is that the tradition is correct that Mark is a storehouse of Petrine reminiscences, a memory that overrode whatever literary or theological qualms the Christian *intelligentsia* had with the Gospel. Since many critical

39. *Ibid.*, 505–507.

40. See Stephen Carlson, "Dewey, 'Survival of Mark's Gospel' in Fall 2004 JBL," October 11, 2004, at <http://hypotyposis.org/weblog/2004/10/dewey-survival-of-marks-gospel-in-fall-2004-jbl.html>.

41. Black, *Apostolic Interpreter*, 87–88.

scholars no longer consent to the patristic opinion on the matter,⁴² Willi Braun has entertained a second option to resolve this paradox.

Braun conjectures that the patristic ambivalence over Mark may be a clue that it initially gained a receptive audience on the wrong side in the rivalry between Christian factions. By the means of scribal redactions and patristic traditions superimposed on Mark, the text was taken back by the eventual winners of the contest. Braun reckons that Mark was amenable to radical Paulinists yet stamped with a Petrine imprimatur to make it safe for the canon.⁴³ To wrest Mark from the control of their adversaries, the patristic authorities credited the text to Peter as the symbolic figurehead of their communities, irrespective of what little regard they had for Mark's literary merits on its own terms. Braun does not back up his hypothesis that Mark received a more favorable reception among rival Christian groups with much textual evidence, though he flags up the interest in *mystic Mark* by an "Alexandrian secrecy group" and the so-called "anti-Marcionite" prologues in some Gospel manuscripts as potentially fruitful lines of inquiry.⁴⁴ His examples may or may not withstand critical scrutiny and there may be other overlooked textual evidence in support of his theory that Mark became the subject of intra-Christian custody battles.

42. There are notable exceptions as I interact with the following authors in chapter two: Robert Gundry, "The Apostolically Johannine Pre-Papian Tradition Concerning the Gospels of Mark and Matthew," in *The Old is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations*, WUNT 178 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 49–73; Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 46–58; Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ* (London: SCM, 2000), 79–89; Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History, History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000; rpt. Leiden: Brill, 2002), 272–92; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 202–39; Mike Bird, "Mark: Interpreter of Peter and Disciple of Paul," in *Paul and the Gospels: Christologies, Conflicts and Convergences*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Joel Willitts (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 30–61.

43. Braun, "The First Shall be Last," 53–54.

44. *Ibid.*, 48, 54, 56.

My research is dedicated to testing Braun's theory on the appropriation of Mark as an "apostolic" document to serve the social agendas of its second-century Christian readership, regardless of its originary "authorial intentions." The outline will be as follows. In the next section, I will subject the patristic association of the evangelist with Peter to historical-critical scrutiny. Chapters one and two survey the ideological trends of different periods of New Testament scholarship that affected assessments of the authorship of Mark. My overview of the arguments for and against the Petrine origins in Mark is essential because, if there is historical substance behind the Papiian tradition, there is no reason whatsoever to pursue a different solution for why the patristic writers consistently attribute the text to Peter. Chapter three will reexamine the external references to a figure named "Mark" in the New Testament and early patristic literature to locate when and where he came to be attached to Peter. It is not enough to deconstruct the traditional view of Mark as a Petrine Gospel unless a positive case can be made about *why* the patristic writers belabored this identification.

The second section will substantiate Braun's hypothesis on why Mark was propped up with Petrine authority. Chapter four will lay out the methodological groundwork for studying the legitimizing strategies utilized by competing Christian social formations. Linking the names of the apostolic "founders" of one's community to anonymous first-century texts was to stake a claim of rightful ownership over them. In chapter five, I explore the ambiguity underlying select patristic sentiments about Mark's literary or theological qualities. There must have been some function for Mark other than providing the Christian *literati* with a text of merit. Chapter six will survey the textual evidence to demonstrate that there was a battle for the control and proper interpretation of Mark among second-century Christians. Elite Christian writers who paid

any attention to Mark at all often did so in the context of refuting readings of Mark condemned as “heretical.” Finally, an appendix will take up the controversial debate over whether the *Letter to Theodore* can be admitted as supplementary evidence of the contested ownership of Mark. The heart of my thesis is that the patristic traditions may not have much historical value for inquiring about the origins of Mark, but that does not mean that they cease to be worth studying for they may be a window into the ideological struggles of Mark’s second-century Christian readership.

