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The Theology of the Gospel of Mark

This book presents the reader with a comprehensive view of the theology underlying the first narrative account of the life of Jesus. In chapter one Dr Telford introduces the background of the text and its general message, attempting briefly to place the Gospel (and therefore its theology) in its historical setting. In the second chapter, he describes and analyses the Gospel's theology, again from an historical perspective and with particular regard to its original context. In the third chapter, Telford goes on to examine the Gospel in relation to other relevant writings of the New Testament. Briefly reviewing this larger corpus and highlighting parallels and contrasts, where appropriate, he seeks to locate the Gospel's theology in its wider canonical context. The fourth and final chapter ranges even further afield, commenting on the Gospel's history of interpretation and on its significance in the contemporary context.

W. R. TELFORD is lecturer in Christian Origins and the New Testament in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Newcastle in the United Kingdom. He has written two books: *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree: a Redaction-Critical Analysis of the Cursing of the Fig-tree Pericope in Mark's Gospel and its Relation to the Cleansing of the Temple Tradition* (1980), and *Mark* (1995). Editor of *The Interpretation of Mark* (1985, 2nd edn 1995), he has also contributed to a variety of edited works and journals, including *Theology*, the *Scottish Journal of Theology*, the *Epworth Review*, the *Journal of Biblical Literature* and the *Journal of Theological Studies*.

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General Editor: James D. G. Dunn,
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This series sets out to provide a programmatic survey of the individual writings of the New Testament. It aims to remedy the deficiency of available published material which concentrates on the New Testament writers' theological concerns. New Testament specialists here write at greater length than is usually possible in the introduction to commentaries or as part of other New Testament theologies, and explore the theological themes and issues of their chosen books without being tied to a commentary format, or to a thematic structure provided from elsewhere. When complete, the series will cover all the New Testament writings, and will thus provide an attractive, and timely, range of texts around which courses can be developed.

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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 Frontmatter
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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 1999
 Reprinted 2003

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Baskerville 11/12.5 pt [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Telford, William.
 The theology of the Gospel of Mark / W. R. Telford.
 p. cm. (New Testament theology)
 Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 43366 5 (hardback) – ISBN 0 521 43977 9 (paperback)
 1. Bible. N.T. Mark – Theology. I. Title. II. Series.

BS585.2.T45 1999
 226.3'06-dc21 98-35098 CIP

ISBN 0 521 43366 5 hardback
 ISBN 0 521 43977 9 paperback

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

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W. R. Telford
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

| | |
|---|----------------|
| <i>Editor’s preface</i> | <i>page</i> xi |
| <i>Preface</i> | xiii |
| <i>List of abbreviations</i> | xv |
| The historical setting of the Gospel of Mark | 1 |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Authorship, date and provenance | 9 |
| The Markan community | 15 |
| The tradition before Mark | 18 |
| The message of Mark | 21 |
| 2 The theology of Mark | 30 |
| The person of Jesus | 30 |
| The message of Jesus | 54 |
| The mission of Jesus | 88 |
| Support and opposition: heroes and villains in the Markan drama | 116 |
| The purpose of Mark’s Gospel | 137 |
| 3 Mark and the New Testament | 164 |
| Mark and Paul | 164 |
| Mark and Q | 170 |
| Mark and the Gospels | 173 |
| Mark and Acts | 182 |
| Mark and the Letters of Peter | 188 |
| Mark and Hebrews | 198 |
| Mark and Revelation | 205 |
| 4 Mark in the church and in the world | 214 |
| Mark in history | 214 |
| The contemporary significance of Mark | 217 |

Cambridge University Press
0521433665 - The Theology of the Gospel of Mark
W. R. Telford
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|-----|
| x | <i>List of contents</i> | |
| | <i>Select bibliography</i> | 242 |
| | <i>Index of references</i> | 249 |
| | <i>Index of names</i> | 268 |
| | <i>Index of subjects</i> | 273 |

Cambridge University Press
0521433665 - The Theology of the Gospel of Mark
W. R. Telford
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Editor's preface

Although the New Testament is usually taught within Departments or Schools or Faculties of Theology/Divinity/Religion, theological study of the individual New Testament writings is often minimal or at best patchy. The reasons for this are not hard to discern.

For one thing, the traditional style of studying a New Testament document is by means of straight exegesis, often verse by verse. Theological concerns jostle with interesting historical, textual, grammatical and literary issues, often at the cost of the theological. Such exegesis is usually very time-consuming, so that only one or two key writings can be treated in any depth within a crowded three-year syllabus.

For another, there is a marked lack of suitable textbooks round which courses could be developed. Commentaries are likely to lose theological comment within a mass of other detail in the same way as exegetical lectures. The section on the theology of a document in the Introduction to a commentary is often very brief and may do little more than pick out elements within the writing under a sequence of headings drawn from systematic theology. Excursuses usually deal with only one or two selected topics. Likewise larger works on New Testament Theology usually treat Paul's letters as a whole and, having devoted the great bulk of their space to Jesus, Paul and John, can spare only a few pages for others.

In consequence, there is little incentive on the part of teacher or student to engage with a particular New Testament document, and students have to be content with a general overview, at best complemented by in-depth study of (parts of) two or

Cambridge University Press
0521433665 - The Theology of the Gospel of Mark
W. R. Telford
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xii

Editor's preface

three New Testament writings. A serious corollary to this is the degree to which students are thereby incapacitated in the task of integrating their New Testament study with the rest of their Theology or Religion courses, since often they are capable only of drawing on the general overview or on a sequence of particular verses treated atomistically. The growing importance of a literary-critical approach to individual documents simply highlights the present deficiencies even more. Having been given little experience in handling individual New Testament writings as such at a theological level, most students are very ill-prepared to develop a properly integrated literary and theological response to particular texts. Ordinands too need more help than they currently receive from textbooks, so that their preaching from particular passages may be better informed theologically.

There is need therefore for a series to bridge the gap between too brief an introduction and too full a commentary where theological discussion is lost among too many other concerns. It is our aim to provide such a series. That is, a series where New Testament specialists are able to write at a greater length on the theology of individual writings than is usually possible in the introductions to commentaries or as part of New Testament Theologies, and to explore the theological themes and issues of these writings without being tied to a commentary format or to a thematic structure provided from elsewhere. The volumes seek both to describe each document's theology, and to engage theologically with it, noting also its canonical context and any specific influence it may have had on the history of Christian faith and life. They are directed at those who already have one or two years of full-time New Testament and theological study behind them.

University of Durham

JAMES D. G. DUNN

Cambridge University Press
0521433665 - The Theology of the Gospel of Mark
W. R. Telford
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface

My interest in the Gospel of Mark began when in 1972 I embarked on doctoral work at Cambridge (England) under the expert supervision of Dr Ernst Bammel, whose recent death has brought great sadness to all those who knew him and benefited from his immense erudition and scholarship. My fascination with the Gospel has further developed during my time of teaching and research in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Newcastle. My thanks, in the first instance, therefore, go to those students of mine whose diligence and enthusiasm has always made the business of teaching such a pleasant and stimulating one for me. This book was written over a period of two years, and for the most part in a number of concentrated sessions spent in Cambridge and in Hawarden. I should also like to thank, therefore, the Staff of the Cambridge University Library (that venerable institution within whose redoubtable walls I have spent so many productive hours!), the Bursar and Staff of Westcott House, Cambridge, and the Trustees, Warden, and Staff of St Deiniol's Library, Hawarden (this unique institution which offers such a welcome and such a service to all those engaged in the pursuit of what Gladstone himself described as 'divine learning'). All of these have given me in my limited periods of research the facilities and the incentive to finish the book. Particular thanks go to the Trustees of St Deiniol's for awarding me a Murray McGregor Fellowship, and to Dr Peter Jagger, and his worthy successor as Warden, Revd Peter Francis, for their friendship and encouragement. For making it possible for me to have a period of study leave, my appreciation goes to my colleagues at

Cambridge University Press
0521433665 - The Theology of the Gospel of Mark
W. R. Telford
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xiv

Preface

Newcastle, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and the University Research Committee, and for general encouragement as well as helpful advice, thanks are due to my colleagues in Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS) and at the British New Testament Conference. A particular word of thanks should be given to Professor Jimmy Dunn, the Editor of this series, for his infinite patience. This quality was also exhibited in no small measure by my loving wife, Andrena, whose enduring forbearance and cheerfulness have been a constant source of strength.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| BETL | Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium |
| <i>BjRL</i> | <i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> |
| <i>BTB</i> | <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i> |
| BZNW | Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche |
| <i>CBQ</i> | <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> |
| <i>DBI</i> | <i>The Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation</i> , eds. R. J. Collins, J. L. Houlden (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1990) |
| <i>ETL</i> | <i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i> |
| <i>EvTh</i> | <i>Evangelische Theologie</i> |
| <i>ExpT</i> | <i>Expository Times</i> |
| <i>IDB</i> | <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , ed. G. A. Buttrick (New York and Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962) |
| <i>IDB(S)</i> | <i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume</i> , ed. K. Crim (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976) |
| <i>Int</i> | <i>Interpretation</i> |
| <i>JAAAR</i> | <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i> |
| <i>JBL</i> | <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> |
| <i>JR</i> | <i>Journal of Religion</i> |
| <i>JTSouthAfr</i> | <i>Journal of Theology for South Africa</i> |
| <i>JNT</i> | <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> |
| JNSTSS | Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series |
| <i>JTS</i> | <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> |

Cambridge University Press
0521433665 - The Theology of the Gospel of Mark
W. R. Telford
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| xvi | <i>List of abbreviations</i> |
| <i>NovT</i> | <i>Novum Testamentum</i> |
| <i>NTA</i> | <i>New Testament Abstracts</i> |
| <i>NTS</i> | <i>New Testament Studies</i> |
| <i>PerspRelSt</i> | <i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i> |
| SBL | Society of Biblical Literature |
| SBLDS | Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series |
| <i>§JT</i> | Scottish Journal of Theology |
| SNTSMS | Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series |
| <i>TZ</i> | <i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i> |
| WUNT | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament |
| <i>ZNW</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> |
| <i>ZThK</i> | <i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i> |