

**REVIEW ARTICLE OF ADELA COLLINS'S MARK,  
HERMENEIA COMMENTARY**

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Collins, Adela. *Mark. Hermeneia Commentary*, ed. Harold Attridge.  
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In her commentary on the Gospel of Mark in the Fortress Press Hermeneia series, Adela Collins has provided a rich source of valuable information for the understanding and interpretation of the second canonical Gospel. She has compiled a vast array of research both in ancient and modern sources in the 818 pages of text, along with a useful appendix and several indices.

Collins's commentary was reviewed at a session of the Mark Group at the annual meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature held in Boston in November 2008. Three respondents spoke to different aspects of the commentary: Rikk Watts on OT backgrounds, Keith Elliott on textual-criticism questions, and I on literary questions. Collins responded to our critiques and a discussion followed.

What I will present below could be described as a conversation between Adela and me. First, I will present a typical book review with details of the content of the commentary and my reaction to her emphases.<sup>1</sup> Next, I will provide details of our discussion at the Society of Biblical literature meetings in three steps: (1) Collins's position from her commentary and other works, (2) my critique presented at the Society meetings, and (3) her response at the Society meetings (Adela kindly provided me with a copy of her response, titled *Response to Reviewers*). However, since I want to carry on the discussion further, I will also add a rejoinder to her response, not given at the Society meetings, but based on my continuing reflection after the meetings.

Since it is easier to follow an argument on a particular topic through to its conclusion than to follow a strictly chronological presentation, I will list the discussion by topic, presenting my critique, Collins's response, and my rejoinder, as if they all took place in a present setting. This allows the reader a "front-row seat" on the discussion. Though I critique Collins's positions, this review is not meant in any way to diminish the value and importance of this commentary, nor of Collins's achievement in producing such a monumental work. I welcome further discussion.

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this review article, references to pages in the commentary will be placed in parentheses. Reference to other works by Collins will include an abbreviated title and the page reference.

*Book Review*

In keeping with the *Hermeneia* series approach, Collins has written a historical-critical commentary that begins with an extensive introduction to the text of Mark, and then proceeds to the commentary on the text. The commentary section follows the series pattern of presenting a fresh translation of the text, copious text-critical notes, discussion of literary history, context, genre, tradition history, and then commentary on the verses under discussion. It is a special characteristic of this commentary that Collins quotes numerous ancient sources at length in presenting parallels to the text of Mark. She provides not only English translation, but also the respective Greek or Latin text of the sources.

In the 125-page Introduction, Collins carefully weighs the evidence, particularly of ancient sources, and comes to conclusions that, in some cases, step away from some of the accepted positions of the last century (e.g., on Mark as history, authorship, and place of writing).

One of the great strengths of this commentary is the wonderful historical and cultural detail that Collins provides in discussing the text of Mark. A few examples will suffice to illustrate. Regarding John the Baptist in Mark 1, Collins demonstrates how the baptism of John was both parallel to and yet different from ritual immersions at Qumran. She maintains that John's baptism was new in the first century, since Jewish proselyte baptism was not done until the second century (142). Regarding eating with tax collectors in Mark 2, Collins informs us that even the Gentile author Lucian disdained to eat with tax collectors (194). Regarding purification rites in Mark 7, she illustrates (contrary to the claims of many commentators) that many Jews of the first century tried to live in ritual purity (345-349). Also in regard to the healing of the deaf/mute in Mark 7, she lists seven ways that Pliny the Elder said to use saliva in healing, what Galen said it could cure, and a story of how Vespasian cured someone's eyes with saliva (370-371).

I found the discussion of genre of special interest. Collins spends nearly 30 pages (15-43) weighing carefully the evidence for and against exactly what genre best characterizes Mark. She indicates the importance of this decision when she notes, "Assumptions about the literary form of Mark affect the way this work is allowed to function in the lives of readers, in the life of the church, and in society" (17). She concludes that Mark is best classified as an eschatological historical monograph. She parallels the work of the Evangelist to the work of Herodotus and to writers of the HB and considers that as such Mark is "a mixture of free composition and the creation of redactional links between independent blocks of material of different types and genres, some of which already existed in written form" (38).

I was surprised that the section on the Synoptic Problem was only two pages long, without an expression of Collins's position. However, it becomes clear in the commentary that she favors Markan priority. The lack of emphasis on synoptic relationships in the Introduction is mirrored in the commentary with a dearth of references to parallel texts in Matthew and Luke. One is hard pressed to suggest that a commentary of 800 pages be

expanded (though one may note Luz's three-volume set on Matthew in the Hermeneia series), but I think the addition of more parallels to these two Gospels would be useful. Allow me to illustrate. In describing how Jesus dealt with the demons in the story of the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5, Collins references an apocryphal psalm and the *Songs of the Maskil* from Qumran that describe sending away demons, the first making reference to the abyss (271- 272). But the same Gadarene story in Luke 8 also refers to the ἄβυσσος (Luke 8:31) and the pigs end up in the watery grave of the lake.<sup>2</sup> It is not a large point, but the reference in Luke is corroboration of the texts from Qumran that are quoted as parallels. Perhaps Collins consciously decided to minimize reference to Matthew and Luke in order for Mark's voice to be unencumbered by "Synoptic interference." All this having been said, Collins provides what many commentaries do not—many parallel references to ancient works of the time period that help illumine the study of Mark.

### *Society of Biblical Literature Discussion and Further Reflections*

My critique contains two central points: (1) just how one knows when a text from the ancient world serves as an interpretive guide for the text of Mark (thus the question of intertextuality—a methodological question), and (2) the question of the makeup of the Pre-Markan Passion Narrative (PMPN) that Collins proposes in the commentary (a content question with literary and historical implications). Space does not permit a full discussion of the issues I and others raise, but hearing Collins's response and having the discussion, and doing more parallel reading following the meetings, has helped me to better understand Collins's perspective and interpretive style in approaching the Gospel of Mark.

### The Question of Intertextual Influence

#### *Collins's Position*

As noted above, Collins quotes profusely from ancient texts that form a historical milieu of ideas around the Gospel of Mark. Interestingly, in her Introduction she does not express a methodology for their usage except to say laconically that "This commentary emphasizes the interpretation of Mark in its original and earliest contexts" (119). However, in earlier works, Collins gives fuller expression of her methodology. In her book *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), she differentiates her methodology from that of Paul Ricoeur.<sup>3</sup> For Ricoeur, the text creates its own world that becomes separate from the intentions of the author and the author's historical context. Collins demurs, stating that the

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gen 1:1-3 with ἄβυσσος and ὕδωρ

<sup>3</sup>Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophical Hermeneutics and Theological Hermeneutics: Ideology, Utopia, and Faith* (Berkeley: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1976).

logic, the sense of a text, is discovered only when it is read in terms of a specific culture, specific historical circumstances, a particular point of view. If this point of view is not a reconstruction of the original context of the text, it will inevitably be the cultural perspective of the interpreter (*Crisis & Catharsis*, 20).

This is filled out a bit more in her book *The Beginning of the Gospel: Pro/rings of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), where she states:

The essays in this volume are programmatic studies, written between 1988 and 1991, for the Hermeneia commentary on Mark that I am preparing. They have been informed by literary approaches to Mark, but use primarily the methods of the history of religion and tradition history (*Beginning of the Gospel*, viii).

### *Critique*

I applaud Collins's emphasis on original context. I agree that the original context is vital to understanding literary documents. Literary works are acts of communication between author and audience. If a work is cut loose from its original setting it can easily become an ideological tool of whoever uses it. As Collins puts it, "the cultural perspective of the interpreter" takes over. However, I would like more clarity on the question of intertextual methodology. I do not think Collins ever insists in the commentary that an ancient text outside of the HB is clearly quoted or alluded to in Mark, but she does use surrounding texts as interpretive guides (see, e.g., the interpretation of "hand," "foot," and "eye" in Mark 9:42-50; 449-456). So, what principles guide her in this process? When is a parallel an interpretive key and when is it not?

### *Collins's Response*

Collins sees her task as one of filling in the background of the text of Mark so that it is seen within its historical setting. In agreement with Hans-Georg Gadamer, she argues for discovering the "horizon of the text" and for bringing our questions to the text, but insists that "unless we engage in a rigorous effort to understand the text historically we will fail to establish a conversation with those who originated the tradition that has come down to us" (*Response to Reviewers*).

Collins also helps clarify matters by her difference of opinion with Rikk Watts over the meaning of Jesus walking on the water in Mark 6. Watts proposes that this passage is reminiscent of YHWH walking on the sea as described in the OT and that, therefore, the Gospel of Mark teaches that Jesus is YHWH. Coffins disagrees, arguing that Mark differentiates Jesus from God. She sees Jesus' action of walking on the water as more parallel to the reports in ancient Greek texts of rulers and kings walking on water.

### *Rejoinder*

I find myself somewhere between these two. On one hand, I think the theophanic overtones of Jesus walking on the water are stronger than Collins

suggests. I do not find the parallel to rulers and kings walking on water compelling, especially since these individuals are from a pagan tradition that Jesus opposes (10:41-45). In fairness, Collins states: "Although he [Jesus] lacked literal kingship, he was a true king. Whereas other rulers overreached in their claims to power, his ability to walk on water manifested his actual and potential power" (*Response to Reviewers*). However, I find it difficult to parallel Jesus to these kings in Mark 6 and then contrast him with them in Mark 10.

On the other hand, I agree with Collins that Mark differentiates Jesus from God and never explicitly calls him YHWH. But I do not find Mark's presentation incompatible with Trinitarian belief as she does. It is simply not the fully expressed Trinitarian teaching of later centuries. One can suggest that as Jesus' Messiahship is veiled in Mark, so is his divinity. In the end, I am closer to Watts than Collins on this topic.

This exchange between Watts and Collins illustrates the issues involved in my methodological question of intertextual influence. Always before us is the evidence of the passages in Mark, but the values and data expressed in Mark are weighed via the methodological yardstick of the interpreter and this leads to a determination of intertextual influence and, hence, Markan interpretation. Scholars will differ over what values predominate in Mark and what methodology best reveals them. Hence, they come to differing conclusions about intertextual parallels. I would have preferred that the Introduction contain a careful delineation of Collins's principles for assessing intertextual influence, paralleled with a description of her sense of the values expressed in the Markan text. This would have provided the reader of the commentary a useful measuring stick and guide for assessing the judgments made by Collins about individual passages.

### The Question of the Pre-Markan Passion Narrative (PMPN)

#### *Collins's Position*

Collins makes the claim in her commentary that the content (not the wording) of the Pre-Markan Passion Narrative (henceforth, PMPN) can be deduced tentatively by careful observation of the wording and transitions within the current text of Mark (625-627; *Beginning of the Gospel*, 103-106).<sup>4</sup> She argues that "it seems best to use literary criteria exclusively to recover the outlines of the source" of the PMPN (625). She posits that the PMPN consisted of the scene in Gethsemane, the arrest, the trial before Pilate, and the crucifixion, concluding with the rending of the veil at the death of Jesus. She sees these scenes manifesting clear spatial and temporal markers with a simple and straightforward narrative flow. The rest of the narrative she considers Markan composition or based on traditions that Mark makes use of. The difference between the PMPN and "traditions" is not spelled out by Collins per se, but

<sup>4</sup>Having more of this data in the commentary would obviate cross-referencing *Beginning of the Gospel* in order to be able to follow Collins's argumentation.

it is clear that the difference for her resides in the PMPN being a narrative whole.

Collins proposes that Mark 14:1-2, 10-11 does not belong in the PMPN for a variety of reasons (625-627, 635-636; *Beginning of the Gospel*, 104).<sup>5</sup> Space does not allow in this review a discussion of all the points Collins and Bultmann make, but I address the terminology "One of the twelve." One reason Collins gives for exclusion of these verses is the repetition of the phrase "one of the twelve" in Mark 14:43 when Judas comes with the crowd to Gethsemane—"This introduction would not be necessary if he had already been introduced (as 'Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve') in the same document in what is now preserved as 14:10" (*Beginning of the Gospel*, 104).

In regard to 15:38 (the rending of the veil), Collins suggests that this points to Jesus' ascent to God (and possibly the rending of the barrier between God and humanity). She maintains that the earliest NT teaching on the resurrection (1 Cor 15) is that Jesus' resurrection was spiritual in nature, not physical or bodily in the sense of requiring an empty tomb to prove it (626-627, 635-639, 735, 759-764, and 781-801, especially the excursus on "Resurrection in Ancient Cultural Contexts," 789-791; and *Beginning of the Gospel*, 119-148). Paul, indeed, she notes, does not refer to the empty tomb and in describing the resurrection he indicates that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). Furthermore, he parallels resurrection to the glory of stars (1 Cor 15:41), which Collins sees as parallel to Dan 12 and consistent with spiritual resurrection (784-785; *Beginning of the Gospel*, 123-127).

Collins appears to modify this view along the lines of the work of Jeffrey Asher,<sup>6</sup> which she follows extensively (789-791). She notes that "The story of the empty tomb in Mark is compatible with Paul's view as expressed in 1 Corinthians 15 only if Paul's language of change and investiture signifies the transformation of the earthly body into a heavenly body" (791). Nevertheless, Collins still presents her position concerning 15:38 as the likely end of the PMPN with Jesus' ascent to heaven, as noted above, stating:

As the first to write such an extended account, Mark was faced with the challenge of expressing the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection in narrative form. He chose to do so by narrating the discovery of the absence of Jesus' body in the tomb because his understanding of resurrection, *unlike Paukr*, involved the revival and transformation of Jesus' earthly body, as well as the exaltation of his inner self (781, emphasis supplied).

As will become clear, Collins's position is that Paul teaches the "exaltation of the inner self," but not necessarily the revival of the earthly body. She parallels Mark 15:38 to the book of Hebrews' discussion of the heavenly

<sup>5</sup>She also references Rudolf Bultmann's discussion in *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. John Marsh from the 2d German ed., 1931 (New York: Harper & Row, 1963; rev. ed. with additions from the 1962 supplement, 1968), 262-263.

<sup>6</sup>Jeffrey Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15*, HUT 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000)

sanctuary and the entry of Jesus into the presence of God (626-627). For the preservation of the PMPN she suggests a liturgical setting most likely linked with an annual commemoration of Jesus' death or with the Lord's Supper (638, 774; *Beginning of the Gospel* 118).

Collins argues that the burial and resurrection scenes should be excluded from the PMPN on the basis of vague spatial markers of the location of the tomb in Mark and because 15:40-41, referring to the women who came with Jesus from Galilee, seems like an afterthought (626, 773-774).<sup>7</sup> She argues for 15:40-16:8 being traditional material added on to the PMPN and wishes to disconnect it from the previous section on literary grounds (626, 773-774; *Beginning of the Gospel*, 129-138). She maintains that the Evangelist may freely have invented 16:1-8 because he believed in the bodily resurrection of Jesus and made up the details to accord with his sense of what must have happened (626, 781; *Beginning of the Gospel*, 145-146). In support of this viewpoint, Collins (*Beginning of the Gospel*, 145) cites the words of the ancient historian Thucydides (*The Peloponnesian War*, 1.22) about constructing speeches in his history of the Peloponnesian War: "my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said."

### Critique

I question the content of the PMPN as reconstructed by Collins. I suggest that both 14:1-2, 10-11 (the plot against Jesus and Judas's perfidy) and 15:40-16:8 (the burial and resurrection) should be included. In line with Collins's argument, noted above, that literary criteria exclusively be used to determine the outline of the PMPN, my comments arise from the perspective of narrative analysis.

Aside from the fact that in 14:10 the phraseology is Ἰουδᾶς Ἰσκαριώθ ὁ εἷς τῶν δώδεκα ("Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve") is more specific, while in 14:43 the phrase is simply εἷς τῶν δώδεκα ("one of the twelve"), there is a storytelling reason for using the title "one of the twelve" in both locations in the PMPN. In 14:10, with the reference τῷ Ἰσκαριώθ ("Iscariot") and the use of the article, the phrase gives specificity to which Judas is being referred to - he is (possibly) from the town of Kerioth in Judea and he is the close associate of Jesus. But the use of the phrase also lends a certain gravitas to the entire scene - how could *one of the twelve*, the closest associates of Jesus, do such a deed? Collins notes this well in her translation of the phrase at 14:10 as "the

<sup>7</sup>Collins, it seems to me, undercuts this contention by a statement in *Beginning of the Gospel*, 141, when she says, "The focus on the tomb in Mark may have been inspired by the importance of the graves of the heroes in the Greco-Roman world. Even if the location of the tomb of Jesus was unknown to the author of Mark, and even if there were no cultic observances at the site of the tomb, it would still be important as a literary motif in characterizing Jesus as herolike." (emphasis original). But if the tomb is important as a literary motif for the Evangelist, why, in his editorial invention, did he miss the opportunity to create a specific place reference to the tomb (Collins's reason for excluding the passage from the PMPN)?

[notorious] one of the twelve" (644). The reassertion of the phrase in 14:43 in the Gethsemane scene serves the narrative role of reemphasizing the perfidy of one of the inner circle of Jesus in betraying him to his enemies. Thus, from a narrative perspective, the reintroduction of the phrase is not a problem and this literary reason for excluding the 14:1-2, 10-11 from the PMPN is removed. This statement does not address the question as to whether the PMPN included other material between Mark 14:11 and 14:43. Just the inclusion of 14:1-2, 10-11 would suggest the need for other material between the two passages since the jump from one scene to the other would be abrupt otherwise. But the exclusion of 14:1-2, 10-11 based on the use of the term "one of the twelve" does not seem to have sufficient grounds on a narrative level.

Interestingly, the plot against Jesus in 14:1-2, 10-11 is the outer story of one of Mark's intercalations and that may be related to Collins's rejection of 14:1-2, 10-11 from the PMPN (*Beginning of the Gospel*, 104). The inner story of the intercalation is of a woman who anoints Jesus with precious perfume (Mark 14:3-9). The point of the intercalation is that the woman illustrates true discipleship, while Judas, one of the twelve, illustrates a failed discipleship of perfidy.<sup>8</sup> An interesting question we will return to later is the interface between historical occurrence and testimony in story. Does the use of a storytelling technique rule out historicity or inclusion within the PMPN? Does it make it less probable? If so, why? If not, why not? In other words, what is the relationship between what happens and what is told and the way in which it is told?<sup>9</sup>

Regarding the proposal of the PMPN ending at Mark 15:38, the question can be asked, who would preserve a passion-narrative ending simply with the rending of the veil? Collins refers to the PMPN as a "transitional text" that was "probably discarded eventually" (625), but this seems to beg the question. Although she links 15:38 to the book of Hebrews' discussion of the heavenly sanctuary and the entry of Jesus into the presence of God, the parallel to Mark is not as strong as she suggests. The reference to the veil is fine, but there is nothing more narrated beyond this in the PMPN as reconstructed by Collins. However, all other NT references to what happened to Jesus refer either to him being raised and/or alive again (Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15, 26; 4:10; 5:30; 13:30-37; Rom 4:24-25, 6:4, 9, 7:4, 8:11; 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 4:14; Gal 1:1; Rev 1:18) or to Jesus entering the presence of God (Heb 6:20, 9:11-12), sometimes with both described or implied (Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; 1 Thess 1:10; 1 Peter 1:21). It is striking that ending the PMPN at 15:38 does not narrate Jesus as risen, alive, or as entering the presence of God. That the action of 15:38 is done

<sup>8</sup>For more on the narrative definition and function of intercalation see Torn Shepherd, *Markan Sandwich Stories: Narration, Definition, and Function*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, 18 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1993); and idem, "The Narrative Function of Markan Intercalation," *New Testament Studies* 41 (1995): 522-540.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Richard Bauckham's interesting discussion of the meaning of testimony in *Jesus and the Eye Witnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 472-508.



by God with the veil torn "from above to below" is clear.<sup>10</sup> But it is an action done to the veil and not to or by Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Standing alone, 15:38 hardly appears to suggest Jesus' entrance into the presence of God.

This sense of the incompleteness of 15:38 can be expressed in another way from a parallel passage that Collins notes (781-791; *Beginning of the Gospel* 123-127). In the description of the gospel in 1 Cor 15:1-8, Paul uses four main verbs to describe the content of the message—Christ *died* (ἀπέθανεν, 15:3), he was *buried* (ἐτάφη, 15:4), he was *raised* (ἐγήγερται, 15:3), and he was *seen* (ὤφθη, 15:5-8). It is exactly these ideas (though not always the same words) that are found in the Markan Passion Narrative (he *expired*, ἐξέπνευσεν, 15:37; Joseph of Arimathea *placed him in a tomb*, ἔθηκεν αὐτὸν ἐν μνημείῳ, 15:46; he was *raised*, ἠγέρθη, 16:6; you *will see* him, αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, 16:7). The PMPN reconstructed by Collins contains only the first of these concepts.

In regard to the Pauline perspective on resurrection raised by Collins, Paul does not merely say that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. He also describes the *flesh* of various types of creatures and uses this along with other ideas to indicate that there is a spiritual *body* (15:39-49). Resurrection is never described as disembodied. Thus the reference in 1 Cor 15:50 to "flesh and blood" likely refers to the *earthly* body. Furthermore, the type of resurrection Paul describes does not occur for saints until the Parousia, at which time "we will be changed" (likely from earthly to spiritual bodies, 1 Cor 15:52, cf. Dan 12:1-3—"many who sleep in the dust will awake"). Thus these eschatological ideas also support a bodily resurrection, since a "spiritual" resurrection would more naturally be thought to occur at death. Furthermore, in Dan 12 (and *1 En* 91-104) the resurrected ones are described as shining like the stars, not as stars themselves. The saints will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever. The saints do not become these astral bodies or the expanse of the heavens, but rather they shine like them. Collins notes Dan 12:2-3 (784-785), but indicates that "the context does not say anything about the earthly bodies of 'the wise'" (785). One can counter that it does describe them when it says they will awake, and when referring to them as a group, they are described as being "the wise," "those who lead the common people to righteousness." It is their earthly deeds that mark them, hence a reference to them would imply their bodies. The concept, it seems to me, is fairly different from the deification of pagan heroes that Collins refers to in her commentary (791-794).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> ἐσχίσθη "it was torn is clearly a divine passive.

<sup>11</sup> Some commentators argue a parallel between the baptismal scene in Mark 1:9-11 and the scene at the cross in 15:33-39 and suggest that the rending of the veil is from the Spirit leaving Jesus. But Collins rejects this idea as problematic and bizarre (763).

<sup>12</sup> One of the major differences is the one deity of the HB and the NT versus the many gods of the pagans, and that, for the pagans, people/heroes can become gods. This is different than, for instance, angels who are at an order of being below the one God.

In regard to Collins's view on the burial and resurrection scenes, we can note that the vague spatial markers are at the end of the burial story and at the beginning of the resurrection story. This is significant, because the narrative emphasis of the two stories is on *the events* that take place and *the people* who observe them rather than on *the location* of the tomb. Indeed, the lists of women in the burial and resurrection scenes take up much narrative space and shift subtly from one scene to the next, emphasizing their importance. In regard to the spatial marker of the tomb, on a narrative level the location of the tomb is deemphasized (thus not mentioned specifically) as part of the thrust of the passage—"He is risen, he is not *here*." As to 15:40-41 being an "afterthought," these verses would probably be better described as a bridge. They refer back to the events of the women coming with Jesus from Galilee, but look forward to those who will be witnesses of the resurrection.

Collins, as noted above, suggests that 16:1-8 may be a Markan invention and that the Evangelist was doing something analogous to what Thucydides describes in his writing. However, this seems to me a poor fit. Thucydides not only delimits the extent of invention ("adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said"), he also goes on to indicate his rigorous attention to detail:

And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time.<sup>13</sup>

What Collins posits that Mark did is quite different \_ free invention of a narrative because he *believed* it actually occurred.

Thus, on several levels, it seems to me unlikely that the PMPN would be preserved in the form Collins suggests. Its proposed ending in the tearing of the temple veil seems incomplete as a narrative and has no other precedent in the NT as a depiction of what happened after Jesus died. For example, in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul speaks of death, burial, resurrection, and appearance (found in Mark only with both the burial and resurrection narratives included), emphasizing the bodily nature of the resurrection.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.

<sup>14</sup>A further indication of the difficulty of a proposed passion narrative without a resurrection scene is found in the difference between Jesus' death and that of

Thus the vague spatial markers in the burial and resurrection theme have a narrative purpose — emphasis on the resurrection. The liturgical setting of the preservation of the PMPN that Collins suggests seems reasonable, but that very setting, as we will note below, is counter to her reconstruction of the content of the PMPN.

### *Collins's Response*

Collins maintains that there is a clear difference between the parts of the Markan Passion Narrative that she includes in the PMPN and those she does not. She refers to the spatial and temporal markers and the simple sense of flow that her reconstruction of the PMPN has, while the other parts of the Markan Passion Narrative contain episodic material not unlike that found in Mark 1-13 stitched together, in her view, with editorial links.

After 15:38, Collins sees a major shift in Markan composition, stating:

No longer do we have a seamless sequence of events with clear specifications of time and place. The statement that follows the rending of the veil portrays the centurion (who is suddenly introduced here for the first time) as recognizing Jesus as God's son. Since the idea of Jesus as God's son is a major theme in Mark, it is more likely that Mark composed this saying than that it was part of his source (*Response to Reviewers*).

In regard to 15:40-41 (the women who came with Jesus from Galilee), Collins maintains her view that this seems like an awkward afterthought. In her view, the women should be mentioned earlier in the Gospel of Mark and thus the reference to them in 15:40-41 seems editorial.

Regarding 1 Corinthians 15, Collins feels that if Paul had known the tradition of the empty tomb he would have mentioned it. In her perspective, Paul's view of resurrection is bodily as in Daniel 12, but it does not necessitate an empty tomb. She states: "The 'bare seed' seems to refer to whatever one would like to call the inner self, the personal identity that provides continuity between the earthly body and the spiritual body that God will give" (*Response to Reviewers*). She finds that the resurrection narrative in Mark has a much stronger sense of bodily resurrection and is more kerygmatic in nature than that described in 1 Corinthians 15. In her view, if the narrative in Mark were mere factual reporting it would list where the tomb was and would narrate the women reporting the resurrection to the disciples.

### *Rejoinder*

Concerning the Pauline view of resurrection, I think there are elements that Collins and I have in common. The dispute may be more over the nature of the

Socrates as described by Collins (754). Whereas Socrates welcomed death and spoke of mundane matters as he parted life in calmness, for Jesus death was all darkness. Without the resurrection, darkness hangs over the cross and over the book of Mark, and we can add, over the PMPN.

spiritual body. She sees this in contrast to Mark's emphasis on the empty tomb, I do not. She does note, however, that "The story of the empty tomb in Mark is compatible with Paul's view as expressed in 1 Corinthians 15 only if Paul's language of change and investiture signifies the transformation of the earthly body into a heavenly body" (791). This is exactly what I suggest Paul teaches. In Rom 8:10-11, the Apostle speaks of "your mortal bodies" (τὰ θνητά σώματα ὑμῶν) that "the one who raised Christ from the dead will make alive." The reference to Christ's resurrection linked with the future tense points toward the eschatological resurrection of the saints, a resurrection of the "mortal body."<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting that Collins settles on the spatial *and* temporal markers in the Markan Passion Narrative as the criteria for inclusion in the PMPN. It is quite common in scholarship to see the passion narrative as a much more cohesive whole than the rest of the Gospel accounts. This cohesive sense clearly revolves around spatial and temporal markers. However, Collins's real concern in her reconstruction of the PMPN seems to be spatial markers. This is what she focuses on in excluding the scene of the burial and the resurrection. The temporal markers, in contrast, are quite specific both at the beginning of the Markan Passion Narrative with references to the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread in 14:1 and 14:12 and at the end with references to the Preparation, Sabbath, and First Day of the Week in 15:42 and 16:1.<sup>16</sup>

What are these specific spatial markers that Collins uses as indicators for inclusion in the PMPN? They are Gethsemane, the Praetorium, and Golgotha. It hardly seems appropriate to make these three specific locations carry such weight in determining the PMPN. While Collins argues for specificity of time and space and a "seamless sequence of events," one can as easily argue for the sequential nature of almost the entire Passion Narrative in Mark and for both specific and nonspecific spatial and temporal markers that link together to make a whole.<sup>17</sup>

Collins also contends that the absence of the location of the tomb in the text of Mark points toward editorial invention by the Evangelist. First, this suggests that the PMPN was consistent throughout in its use of spatial markers. Second, it suggests that any variance from this presupposed consistency is a sign of redaction and is consistent with invention of the entire passage. Both contentions are questionable—the first, since every written source can have variance in its approach to spatial and temporal markers and there is no way to test such variance since we do not have the PMPN, and the second, because it

<sup>15</sup>See Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia Commentary, ed. Eldon Epp (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 492-493.

<sup>16</sup>The nonspecific temporal markers that occur elsewhere in the Markan Passion Narrative fall within the context of these more specific markers.

<sup>17</sup>One exception may be 14:3-9 (the anointing at Bethany), but this story finds its specificity through the intercalation device of story telling. See Shepherd, *Sandwich Stories*, 241-266. We also can note the rather specific spatial marker "Bethany" in 14:3.

is far too sweeping in its contention that exclusion of one point from a source would lead to a view of wholesale invention of a passage.

Collins dismisses the importance of the personal names that serve as markers of specificity in the burial and resurrection scenes (*Beginning of the Gospel*, 129-130). In response to her claim that the women in 15:40-41 should have been referenced earlier in the narrative of Mark, we can note that it is the typical pattern in Mark that characters appear in the narrative where they first play a role. In the narrative, the important role of the women is exactly at this point of the burial and resurrection.

Richard Bauckham has noted the importance of such specific names in numerous Gospel stories and posits that these names are present as markers of the eyewitness testimony of the individuals named.<sup>18</sup> It is quite telling and important to notice the subtle shift in the names from 15:40 to 15:47 to 16:1. The one constant name always referred to in the same way is Mary Magdalene. In 15:40 she is joined by Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses and by Salome. But in 15:47 Salome is absent and the second Mary is linked only to Joses. Then in 16:1 Mary Magdalene is accompanied by Mary again, but this time linked only to James, and by Salome. In each case there are at least two individuals, but the specific details shift from list to list. The subtle shifts point to the importance these individuals play in the narrative and the Evangelist's concern with these details. While Collins is correct to insist that specific markers such as time and space be criteria for determining the PMPN, she has, nevertheless, failed to give due weight to the *variety* of markers that indicate such specificity. In regard to 15:40-16:8, she deemphasizes very specific temporal and personal markers. I suggest that the specificity of spatial markers has disappeared in 15:40-16:8 for the narrative emphasis that "He is not *here*" and that this is replaced with very specific temporal and personal markers that serve to emphasize the veracity of the account.

Collins rules out the burial and resurrection scenes as part of the PMPN based primarily on nonspecific spatial markers. However, she posits the preservation of the PMPN within a liturgical setting of commemorating Jesus' death annually at the time of Passover or in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. But this creates a problem that I think she is aware of. She notes that the PMPN was a "transitional text probably discarded eventually" and that in its liturgical usage the "resurrection or exaltation of Jesus was probably assumed, but not narrated in this early document" (625, 774). Here is the rub—the reconstructed PMPN does not contain the burial or resurrection scenes, but is used in a liturgical setting where the resurrection is presupposed and celebrated. This creates a tension between liturgy and text that Collins never fully resolves. Placed in the context of the rest of the NT's univocal testimony about what happened to Jesus after his death, and in light of the narrative characteristics of the Markan Passion Narrative noted above, Collins's reconstruction of the PMPN seems unlikely.

<sup>18</sup>See Bauckham, 49-51, 114-147.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to come back to the issue of the relationship between history and testimony in texts. In her response, Collins makes an interesting statement in this regard:

Mark has the *women* find the tomb empty since he has portrayed the disciples as having fled. His account of the finding of the empty tomb is more kerygmatic than historical or apologetic. If he were making a historical point, he would have indicated where the tomb was and probably would have included a report of the women conveying the news to the disciples (*Response to Reviewers*, emphasis original).

I find it significant that Collins distinguishes between historical discourse and kerygmatic address. Perhaps this indicates one of the underlying criteria Collins uses to determine the PMPN. The difficulty is that it applies a dichotomic perspective of history and testimony to a text that clearly does not share the same point of view. The problem, it seems to me, is well expressed by Richard Bauckham when he critiques the historiographic epistemology of R. G. Collingwood:

Collingwood's account of historiographic epistemology has seemed plausible to some historians, as well as to other readers, because it is not completely wrong. It is really a considerable exaggeration of the undoubted fact that modern historical work has not only developed more searching critical methods of assessing the reliability of testimony but has also come to depend greatly on asking questions the sources do not profess to answer and on enabling the sources to give evidence "in spite of themselves." This can make the historian feel in control of her material rather than dependent on it. Intelligibly, perhaps, this exaggerated sense of the historian's independence of the past has now been challenged by a postmodern view of historiography that finds it barely distinguishable from fiction freely created by the historian. As in other fields, Enlightenment individualism has led to postmodern skepticism.<sup>19</sup>

History is dependent on testimony. Testimony is transmitted in story. A PMPN that ends with the rending of the veil seems an unlikely story, particularly in comparison with the other ways early Christians shared their testimony concerning Jesus. This calls into question the usefulness of utilizing a dichotomic view of history and testimony in determining the underlying story of a text such as Mark.

Regardless of these disputes, Collins has clearly produced a monumental work that advances the study of Mark and brings to easy access ancient references that help illuminate the text of this Gospel. Its wealth of information from the ancient world, its thoughtful introduction, its textual notes, and its argumentation concerning the meaning of Gospel of Mark will make it an important voice in the continuing interpretation of this Gospel.

<sup>19</sup>Bauckham, 486.