

RISEN INDEED?

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Number 31

SBL Press



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Resurrection and Doubt in the Gospel of Mark

Austin Busch

SBL Press



SBL PRESS

Atlanta

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2022942252

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Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my undergraduate friends from San Francisco State, with whom I first encountered Mark in small group Bible studies whose exhilarating sense of exploration and discovery I try to re-create in my own classes today. I remain grateful to my mentors from Indiana University, especially David Brakke (now of Ohio State), Herb Marks, and the late Eleanor Winsor Leach, whose generosity and scholarship continue to inspire me. Finally, thank you to Shelly Matthews, general editor of *Early Christianity and Its Literature*, and the anonymous readers, whose insightful criticism has made this a better book than it would otherwise have become.

I dedicate it to my wife, Joy.

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Abbreviations

1 <i>Apol.</i>	Justin, <i>Apologia i</i>
1 En.	1 Enoch
1 Macc	1 Maccabees
2 Bar.	2 Baruch
2 En.	2 Enoch
2 Macc	2 Maccabees
4 Macc	4 Maccabees
AARSR	American Academy of Religion Studies in Religion
AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
Acts Paul	Acts of Paul
Acts Paul Thecl.	Acts of Paul and Thecla
<i>Aen.</i>	Virgil, <i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Aeth.</i>	Heliodorus, <i>Aethiopica</i>
<i>Aj.</i>	Sophocles, <i>Ajax</i>
<i>A.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
<i>Ann.</i>	Tacitus, <i>Annales</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Apologeticus</i>
<i>Att.</i>	Cicero, <i>Epistulae ad Atticum</i>
b.	Babylonian Talmud
BAGD	Bauer, Walter, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd. ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge

<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDF	Blass, Friedrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk. <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanien-sium
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
<i>B.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum judaicum</i>
BM	Biblical Monographs
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>Brut.</i>	Cicero, <i>Brutus</i>
BSGRT	Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wis-senschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>Catech.</i>	Cyril of Jerusalem, <i>Catecheses</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCS	Cambridge Classical Studies
<i>Cels.</i>	Origen, <i>Contra Celsum</i>
<i>Chaer.</i>	Chariton, <i>De Chaerea et Callirhoe</i>
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
CML	Corpus medicorum Latinorum
CML	<i>Classical and Modern Literature</i>
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i>
<i>Comm. Rom.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentarii in Romanos</i>
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God
CSNTCO	Claremont Studies in New Testament and Christian Origins
<i>CTJ</i>	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies

<i>Dial.</i>	Justin, <i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>
EBib	Etudes bibliques
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
ECLectures	Edward Cadbury Lectures
Ed.	Edduyot
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistula(e)</i>
<i>Eph.</i>	Xenophon of Ephesus, <i>Ephesiaca</i>
ER	<i>Ecumenical Review</i>
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
<i>Fid. orth.</i>	John of Damascus, <i>De fide orthodoxa</i>
<i>Flor.</i>	Apuleius, <i>Florida</i>
frag(s).	fragments
<i>Fug.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De fuga in persecutione</i>
<i>Geogr.</i>	Strabo, <i>Geographica</i>
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni opera
Gos. Phil.	Gospel of Philip
GP	Gospel Perspectives
GR	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>Herc. fur.</i>	Euripides, <i>Hercules furens</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Id.</i>	Theocritus, <i>Idylls</i>
<i>Il.</i>	Homer, <i>Iliad</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>

JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JTI	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Jul.	Suetonius, <i>Divus Julius</i>
KJV	King James Version
l(l).	line(s)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	<i>Lectio Difficilior</i>
Leg.	Plato, <i>Leges</i>
Leuc. Clitop.	Achilles Tatius, <i>Leucippe et Clitophon</i>
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LTT	Library of Theological Translations
LXX	Septuagint
m.	Mishnah
Mart. Pet.	Martyrdom of Peter
Med.	Celsus, <i>De medicina</i>
MGS	Montanari, Franco. <i>The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek</i> . Edited by Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder. Translated by Rachel Barritt-Costa et al. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
MnemSup	Mnemosyne Supplements
Moral.	Gregory the Great, <i>Expositio in Librum Job, sive Moralium libri xxv</i>
Mos.	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NA ²⁸	<i>Novum Testamentum graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 28th ed.
Nat.	Pliny, <i>Naturalis historia</i>
NDST	Notre Dame Studies in Theology
NedTT	<i>Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift</i>
Neot	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NGS	New Gospel Studies
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version

<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NPNF	Schaff, Philip, and Henry Wace, eds. <i>A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> . 28 vols. in 2 series. 1886–1889.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OACL	Oxford Approaches to Classical Literature
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts
<i>Od.</i>	Homer, <i>Odyssey</i>
<i>Oed.</i>	Seneca, <i>Oedipus</i>
OG	Old Greek
<i>Or.</i>	Libanius, <i>Orationes</i>
<i>Or. cat.</i>	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Oratio catechetica</i>
OrChrAn	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
par(r).	parallel(s)
<i>Pass. cruc. Dom.</i>	<i>De passione et cruce Domini</i>
PG	Migne, Jacques-Paul, ed. <i>Patrologia Graeca</i> [= <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca</i>]. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1866.
PMS	Patristic Monograph Series
PNTC	Penguin New Testament Commentaries
<i>praef.</i>	<i>praefatio</i>
PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
PT	<i>Poetics Today</i>
PWHMM	Publications of the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum
<i>Quom. hist.</i>	Lucian, <i>Quomodo historia conscribenda sit</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>Res.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De resurrectione carnis</i>
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RMCS	Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies
<i>Rom.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Romulus</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTR	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
Sanh.	Sanhedrin
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SC	Sources chrétiennes
<i>Scorp.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Scorpiace</i>
<i>SE</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica I, II, III</i>
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
<i>Serm.</i>	Augustine, <i>Sermones</i>
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
<i>Smyrn.</i>	Ignatius, <i>To the Smyrnaens</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature (Lang)
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StPatr	Studia Patristica
<i>STR</i>	<i>Southeastern Theological Review</i>
Str-B	Strack, H. L., and P. Billerbeck. <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> . 6 vols. Munich, 1922–1961.
<i>Strom.</i>	Clement, <i>Stromateis</i>
SVTQ	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
Ta'an.	Ta'anit
TB	Theologische Bücherei: Neudrucke und Berichte aus dem 20. Jahrhundert
<i>TDNT</i>	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, ed. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TED	Teología: Estudios y Documentos
Theod.	Theodotion
<i>Theog.</i>	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i>
THL	Theory and History of Literature
<i>Trid. spat.</i>	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>In tridui spatio</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>Urb. cond.</i>	Livy, <i>Ab urbe condita libri</i>
UTPSS	University of Texas Press Slavic Series
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>Vit. Apoll.</i>	Philostratus, <i>Vita Apollonii</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

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Introduction

On initial consideration, a book on resurrection in Mark's Gospel seems incongruous. Mark devotes only half a chapter to Jesus's resurrection (16:1–8)—far less than any other New Testament gospel—and the risen Jesus never appears. The only other recent book on the topic, Paul Fullmer's *Resurrection in Mark's Literary-Historical Perspective*, devotes more attention to *comparanda* than to Mark itself.¹ A handful of relevant articles have appeared,² but one more often encounters scholarly claims that Mark assigns meager importance to Jesus's resurrection, especially in comparison with his death, than scholarship probing resurrection's meaning in the Second Gospel. This study aims to fill that lacuna by arguing that Mark represents resurrection so as to invite skepticism about it and by exploring the literary implications and theological significance of the doubt Mark promotes.

This study argues for a new way of reading Mark faithfully. To the extent that Mark locates skepticism at the center of its good news about the resurrections of Jesus and of others, readers may find their response to the Second Gospel reflected in the father of the demon-possessed lad whom Mark's Jesus restores. When Jesus challenges this man's skepticism about whether he can help his endangered son, the father responds with a qualified declaration of faith that acknowledges doubt's persistence: "I have faith; help my lack of faith" (πιστεύω· βοήθει μου τῆ ἀπιστία, 9:24).³ His

1. Paul Fullmer, *Resurrection in Mark's Literary-Historical Perspective*, LNTS 360 (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

2. E.g., Robin Scroggs and Kent Ira Groff, "Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising with Christ," *JBL* 92 (1973): 531–48; Andy Johnson, "The 'New Creation,' the Crucified and Risen Christ, and the Temple: A Pauline Audience for Mark," *JTI* 1 (2007): 171–91; Richard C. Miller, "Mark's Empty Tomb and Other Translation Fables in Classical Antiquity," *JBL* 129 (2010): 759–76; Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," *JBL* 108 (1989): 283–300.

3. Throughout this study, I cite and translate NA²⁸.

statement's internal dialogization finds an echo in the report of the boy's healing. Witnesses declare that Jesus's restoration of the lad constitutes a resurrection, but the narrator neglects to affirm that view, leaving readers to wonder whether Jesus really can defeat death (9:25–27). I discuss this passage in detail in chapter 1, anticipating that treatment here to identify the stakes of my argument: Mark thematizes both faith in and doubt about resurrection, and it prescinds from resolving that tension in favor of faith. This tendency comes into relief when Mark's narrative is compared to the other gospels, which deal with resurrection more straightforwardly. Though it may seem a counterintuitive response to the good news about Jesus's restoration to life that Mark presents, the Second Gospel raises questions about resurrection that it will not resolve. Reading Mark faithfully thus involves exploring the possibility of trust in resurrection, but also understanding the skepticism that Mark's narrative authorizes.

Weighing Death and Resurrection in Mark's Gospel

Notwithstanding some voices in opposition,⁴ the idea that Mark places extraordinary emphasis on the death of Jesus represents the standard view, which often overlooks the Second Gospel's complex thematization of resurrection. This study challenges that perspective, arguing for resurrection's centrality to Mark's theology and ideology. I therefore begin by probing the arbitrariness of scholarly claims that Mark emphasizes Jesus's death. Despite its earlier influence, I pass over work positing that Mark privileges Christ's suffering and death over his resurrection glory in reflection of christological disputes supposedly underlying early ecclesiastical conflicts.⁵ The popularity of these theories has waned,⁶ yet even without their framework, scholars still insist that Mark highlights Jesus's death at the expense of his restoration to life.

4. E.g., Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Holly J. Carey, "Is It as Bad as All That? The Misconception of Mark as a Gospel Film Noir," in *Mark, Manuscripts, and Monotheism: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado*, ed. Chris Keith and Dieter T. Roth, LNTS 528 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 3–21.

5. E.g., Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); Joseph B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark" *JBL* 80 (1961): 261–68.

6. For an early death knell, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The 'Divine Man' as the Key to Mark's Christology—The End of an Era?," *Int* 35 (1981): 243–57.

Now that scholars increasingly view Paul and his letters as influencing Mark,⁷ the same insistence on Mark's emphasis of Jesus's deadly suffering sometimes surfaces in this newly prevalent literary-critical context, which is less speculative since it allows for Mark's treatment of Jesus's death and resurrection to be measured against Paul's. Joel Marcus, perhaps the most influential scholar on Mark's Gospel in recent history, in positing Paul's influence on Mark notes:

Both Paul and Mark lay *extraordinary* stress on the death of Jesus.... In both Paul and Mark the death of Jesus on the cross is understood as an apocalyptic event, the turning point of the ages.... Jesus's subsequent resurrection *confirms* this eschatological change, but does not supersede it.... [Mark] prescinds from describing resurrection appearances [and] shapes his narrative in such a way that it climaxes with the point of apocalyptic revelation at which a human being for the first time recognizes Jesus's divine sonship—which is precisely the moment of his death (15:39).⁸

For Marcus, Jesus's death is the central eschatological event of Mark's Gospel, as it is for Paul (Marcus cites 1 Cor 1–2; Gal 6:14 as proof). Jesus's resurrection merely corroborates his death's apocalyptic significance. Scot McKnight also places Paul's Christology in dialogue with Mark's and is similarly impressed by the latter's emphasis on the cross over resurrection. However, according to McKnight, Mark diverges from Paul: "if Paul has a 50/50 relationship of death to vindication ... Mark has a 75/25 relationship. For Mark, the cross gains a heavy emphasis."⁹

Though this comparative approach offers a putative basis for gauging Mark's emphasis on Jesus's suffering and death against an established reference, interpretations employing it are sometimes more impressionistic than carefully measured, as McKnight's makeshift ratios suggest. Yet

7. See especially the important collections Oda Wischmeyer, David C. Sim, and Ian J. Elmer, eds., *Two Authors at the Beginnings of Christianity*, part 1 of *Paul and Mark: Comparative Essays*, BZBW 198 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014); and Eve-Marie Becker, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Mogens Mueller, eds., *For and Against Pauline Influence on Mark*, part 2 of *Mark and Paul: Comparative Essays*, BZBW 199 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), cited throughout.

8. Joel Marcus, "Mark—Interpreter of Paul," *NTS* 46 (2000): 479–80, emphasis original.

9. Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 356.

scholarship relying on a more thorough assessment of textual evidence to draw the same conclusion displays similar problems. Take as an example Darrell Bock's article "Son of Man" in InterVarsity Press's *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. It adopts a conventional interpretive approach in its synthesis of relevant scholarship.¹⁰ Since so many of Mark's Son of Man sayings deal with Jesus's death and/or resurrection, it presents a useful case study.

Bock employs statistical analysis in support of his view that Mark

highlights Jesus as the suffering and rejected Son of Man. With nine ... passages [mentioning the Son of Man: 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21 (2×), 41], Mark has three times the number of suffering sayings as he does the other two categories [i.e., about Jesus's "present ministry" (2:10, 28) and "apocalyptic sayings" (8:38; 13:26; 14:62)].... The bulk of his references in the core of his Gospel involve the prediction of the Son of Man's suffering.¹¹

The tripartite scheme Bock employs to support this conclusion, though common,¹² lends itself to manipulation. Three logia included within the category of "suffering sayings," whose purpose is to "highlight ... the suffering and rejected Son" (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34), actually culminate in a prophecy of resurrection. Can one reasonably claim that statements assuring the Son of Man's restoration to life within days of his death highlight his suffering and rejection at all? Would not deliverance from death as suffering's terminus necessarily be the emphasized feature?¹³ Bock's categories enshrine a convention so grounded in scholarly tradition that it may seem unfair to call out his reliance on them ("suffering saying" is a

10. Cozier calls the first edition of this widely used reference book "an excellent source for surveying primarily English-speaking scholarship on Jesus and the Gospels that leans towards more conservative conclusions." See Clint L. Cozier, review of *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Norman Perrin, *JSNT* 49 (1993): 125. For a similar assessment of the second edition, see Paul Foster, "A New Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels," *ExpTim* 126 (2015): 195.

11. Darrell L. Bock, "Son of Man," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Norman Perrin, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 899.

12. See Heinz Eduard Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton, NTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965) and standard reference books, e.g., George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Son of Man," *ABD* 6:137–50, esp. 143–44.

13. See George H. Boobyer, "St. Mark and the Transfiguration," *JTS* 41 (1940): 124.

synonym for the ubiquitous “passion prediction”), but the consequential imprecision should be avoided.¹⁴

Bock’s decision to include Mark 9:9 among the suffering sayings raises particular questions, for this verse refers only to the Son of Man’s resurrection, without any reference to his rejection, suffering, or death. If this is not a mistake, since Bock understands 9:9 to lead into the prophecy of the Son’s murderous contempt in 9:12 (ἐξουδενηθῆναι), he may view the verse’s prediction of resurrection as a shorthand allusion to the Son’s suffering and death culminating in restoration to life. In this case, his insistence that 9:9 emphasizes suffering it does not even mention would complement his categorization of 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33–34 as suffering sayings although they end in resurrection prophecies.

Bock’s decision to count 14:21 as two separate suffering sayings because that verse twice mentions the Son of Man raises similar concerns. Mark 14:21 seems to be a single saying with complementary clauses, as the μέν ... δὲ construction suggests. Bock may believe Mark combined two Son of Man sayings that circulated independently, though this seems not to be the standard view,¹⁵ and in any case Bock never presents it as his reasoning. If this is not evidence of interpretation slanted toward a presupposed conclusion, Bock’s decision to count the verse twice may also represent an error.

Bock’s analysis of the Markan Son of Man sayings, on which he bases his conventional interpretive claim that Mark “highlights Jesus as the suffering and rejected Son of Man,” overcounts references to the Son’s suffering and death. Some of the complications troubling his analysis may be traced to overreliance on standard classifications. Others may amount to the kind

14. Other scholars, though their conclusions about the Markan Son of Man sayings basically agree with Bock’s, do not write resurrection out of these passages, as Bock approaches doing. Bultmann, for instance, categorizes sayings as those “which speak of the Son of Man ... as suffering death and rising again.” See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1951–1955), 1:30. Tödt (*Son of Man*, esp. 144–49) and Nickelsburg (“Son of Man,” 143–44) are also more nuanced.

15. See Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus, Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels in the Light of Recent Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 74–76. Collins’s explanation of the verse’s origin as an elaboration “of a traditional saying preserved in Luke 17:1b–2 and Matt 18:6–7” is more convincing. See Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 652.

of inadvertent analytical error that occasionally besets us all. Others still point to legitimate though questionable interpretive judgment calls. However, underlying the entire endeavor lies a fundamental problem like the one troubling Marcus's and especially McKnight's comparative approaches to Jesus's death in Mark vis-à-vis the Pauline epistles. Bock's analysis begins with an impression about Mark's emphasis on Jesus's suffering and death over against his resurrection and reign, and then categorically describes the text in ways supporting that presupposed impression, even when the categorization stands in tension with the passages analyzed.

When I analyze the same sayings Bock treats employing analogous interpretive methods, though without reliance on a categorical scheme biased toward the Son's suffering and death, I arrive at a different tabulation of Mark's Son of Man sayings. Only slightly over half (seven) of Mark's thirteen discrete passages containing the phrase "Son of Man" (counting 14:21 once) mention the Son's betrayal, suffering, or death (8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33–34, 45; 14:21, 41). Of those seven, three culminate in prophecies of vindication through resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). Four additional verses mention the Son's resurrection and/or eschatological reign without reference to his suffering or death (8:38; 9:9; 13:26; 14:62). Two more emphasize the quasi-divine authority Jesus exercises in his ministry (2:10, 28). That leaves only four of Mark's thirteen discrete sayings about the Son of Man to mention the Son's betrayal, suffering, and/or death, as opposed to his eschatological glory or earthly authority, without immediately moving to predict his rapid resurrection: 9:12; 10:45; 14:21, 41. These four out of thirteen verses, then, would constitute the body of suffering sayings left to support the conclusion that Mark "highlights . . . the suffering and rejected Son of Man."

Perhaps it would be better to conclude that while the Second Evangelist acknowledges the Son's horrible death, Mark emphasizes his vindication through resurrection and eschatological reign. This emphasis, anticipated in the authority over demons, illness, and death itself that Jesus exercises throughout his ministry, may be so profound as to unmask the Son's suffering and death as inconsequential hindrances on a destined path of glory. Robert Gundry comes to such a conclusion in his commentary on Mark's Gospel, with the subtitle *Mark's Apology for the Cross*. According to Gundry, Mark pits Jesus's

successes [i.e., his attraction of crowds, exorcisms, miracles, authoritative teaching and debating prowess] against [his] suffering and death,

and then uses the passion predictions, writes up the passion narrative, and caps his gospel with a discovery of the empty tomb in ways that cohere with the success-stories ... [to] make the passion itself into a success-story.¹⁶

My interpretation of resurrection in Mark is more complex. Though it has implications for the much-studied problem of what Mark and other New Testament writings mean by referring to Jesus as the “Son of Man,” the focus of Bock’s article, that question lies beyond the scope of this work. The point I make here is more general: claims about Mark’s emphasis on the suffering and death of Jesus, the Son of Man, which surface throughout New Testament scholarship, tend toward arbitrariness, whether they involve thorough textual analysis employing standard interpretive categories (as Bock’s) or are elaborated as more impressionistic suggestions (as McKnight’s and to a lesser degree Marcus’s).

In claiming that Bock’s treatment of Mark’s Son of Man sayings, alongside the other assessments of Jesus’s death discussed above, aims at supporting an impression of the Second Gospel’s thematization of Jesus’s death and resurrection that Mark does not finally bear out, I do not suggest that the impression lacks any textual basis. In comparison with the other gospels, Mark’s treatment of Jesus’s resurrection is subdued, even anticlimactic: no angels, no earthquakes, no risen Christ’s commission of the disciples. The risen Christ does not even appear in Mark, a detail Marcus points to in support of his claim that Mark lays “*extraordinary stress*” on Jesus’s death.¹⁷ Mark treats Jesus’s vindication through resurrection tersely, devoting to it only a handful of verses in the final chapter (16:3–8), in contrast with Jesus’s betrayal, arrest, interrogations, trials, condemnations, execution, and interment, all recounted in detail (14:43–16:2). The same situation obtains in miniature in the Son of Man saying from 10:33–34 and, to a lesser degree, in the remaining Markan Son of Man passion and resurrection predictions as well.

Marcus’s treatment of the announcement of resurrection in Mark 10:33–34 makes explicit the equation of rhetorical brevity with insignificance that promotes the interpretive impression of Mark’s emphasis on Jesus’s death over his resurrection. After arguing that the pericope in which this saying is embedded assimilates the Son of Man to Deutero-

16. Gundry, *Mark*, 2–3.

17. Marcus, “Mark—Interpreter of Paul,” 479, emphasis original.

Isaiah's suffering servant, whose death God wills, Marcus elaborates the prophecy's final few words: "and after three days he will rise." He observes that resurrection's "significance seems to be dwarfed by the massiveness of the suffering that precedes it" but acknowledges that not death but resurrection has "the last word ... in all three passion predictions." Marcus admits that Mark presents resurrection as "the ultimate and determinative reality," so that the saying constitutes "an effective response to the terror that the disciples ... displayed in 10:32."¹⁸

While the admission stands in tension with his view of Mark's emphasis on Jesus's death over his resurrection, it does not affect the interpretive trajectory Marcus's initial impression of the passage's rhetoric establishes. Marcus forestalls its ability to check that approach by provocatively conflating suffering with victory, so that resurrection does not so much resolve the problem of the Messiah's humiliating death as reimagine it. "In the next passage, the Markan Jesus will call on his disciples to share in this victory by being 'baptized' into the messianic suffering that brings it to pass."¹⁹ I am not interpreting Marcus reductively here: it is the crucifixion that reveals Jesus's triumph and divine glory; resurrection represents a confirmatory afterthought.²⁰ This section of Marcus's commentary instantiates the broader hermeneutical approach to the theme he adopts in the article quoted above. In Mark, "the death of Jesus ... is understood as an apocalyptic event, the turning point of the ages.... Jesus's subsequent resurrection *confirms* this eschatological change, but does not supersede it."²¹

I would construe the Markan passage's rhetorical progression less paradoxically. In a brief prophecy such as Mark 10:33–34, which details the Son of Man's suffering and death but culminates in resurrection, the abrupt declaration "after three days he will rise again" is not "dwarfed" by the longer prediction of suffering and death that it follows. It rather recoils on that previous discourse, cutting it off, as it were, and threatening to render it insignificant as a description of genuine suffering and death. Something similar happens in Mark's brief narrative of Jesus's resurrection following the elaborate account of his death. When the women of chapter

18. Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 745–46.

19. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 746.

20. See esp. Joel Marcus, "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," *JBL* 125 (2006): 73–87.

21. Marcus, "Mark—Interpreter of Paul," 479, emphasis original.

16 coming to anoint Jesus's body learn his corpse is not in its tomb, they flee in amazement. The resurrection claim has rendered irrelevant their understanding of all they observed as they watched Jesus die, and of what they thought they knew about death. Since they mean to anoint Jesus's decaying corpse, their presence at his tomb is superfluous; they should leave and proclaim that Jesus lives, as the young man says (16:6–7). They fail to follow his directive (16:8), but Mark's Gospel itself still ends with an announcement of resurrection no less abrupt and destabilizing than does the passion prediction from 10:33–34, and no less oriented toward undermining the apparent significance of what Mark has just written about Jesus's death.

The limited attention Mark devotes to resurrection, as measured by rhetorical or narrative amplification, presents a genuine problem. It requires an interpretive solution more robust than the one I have preliminarily offered or the one Gundry's commentary provides. Yet it seems shortsighted to infer from that problem's existence that Mark's emphatic focus remains on Jesus's suffering and death rather than on the evangelical claim that he has exceeded death's bounds by rising. This study is concerned with explicating Mark's treatment of resurrection and with laying bare the literary, theological, and ideological significance of its claims about Jesus's vindication from death. The reading of Mark it presents shows that resurrection constitutes a more significant theme than much relevant scholarship leads one to expect. In that regard, it is contrarian, though I hope not polemical. Mark's neglect to provide elaborate and authoritative details about Jesus's resurrection, and other characters' restorations to life as well, points not to resurrection's lack of significance but rather to a critical feature of the Second Gospel's conceptualization of it. Reserve or even skepticism about resurrection lies at the heart of this theme and theologoumenon's meaning within Mark.

The Skeptical Impulse of Mark's Treatment of Resurrection

The two opening chapters of my study deal with the resurrections (figurative and literal) that Mark's Gospel seems to narrate, as well as with the dialogue about resurrection in which Jesus and the Sadducees engage. Equivocation characterizes Mark's treatment of resurrection. Mark never makes clear whether resurrection actually occurs—either Jesus's or anybody else's (ch. 1)—and Mark invites readers to question whether Jesus's scripturally interpretive argument in support of resurrection in 12:18–27

is as persuasive as the Sadducees' argument opposing it (ch. 2). The next two chapters connect this equivocating impulse to the Markan disciples' responses to Jesus's commands that they follow him to death in expectation of resurrection. The disciples find their master's directives untrustworthy and confusing (ch. 3). Not only do Jesus's students refuse to follow them, but the master himself may in the end fail to believe his prophecies that God will vindicate him through resurrection, and Mark countenances the readers responding with flight to the possibility of death in Jesus's name (chs. 3–4). My study's final chapter builds on these interpretive observations and arguments to construct a theological interpretation of the Second Gospel's literary treatment of Jesus's death and resurrection that contextualizes them within its comprehensive narrative development, as well as in intertextual dialogue with Greco-Roman mythical-literary traditions. Allusions to the latter also surface in later ancient Christian writings elaborating the same apocalyptic myth of redemption that underlies Mark's account of Jesus's ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection from the dead, and I briefly consider this literary and theological tradition that Mark helped to originate.

Chapter 5 shows that Mark's theologically resonant treatment of resurrection has the potential to resolve some of the ambivalence my study's earlier chapters disclose and to explain some of the troubling examples of faithlessness that surface throughout Mark, including Jesus's. But there is no getting around the fact that resurrection acquires its significance in the Second Gospel by being subjected to an inquiry featuring vigorous adversarial interrogation. The hope associated with resurrection in Mark that my final chapter explores thus does not so much obviate as redeem the doubt that Mark exposes, especially in its representation of the faithless disciples and Peter. I reflect on this interpretive dimension in my study's brief conclusion.

The urgent questions about resurrection to which Mark gives voice never find resolution within the Second Gospel's confines, though Mark points to solutions that later writers will develop. Other New Testament writings treat Jesus's resurrection differently. Paul insists that Christ has risen: hundreds of people have seen the risen Lord to spread word of his resurrection, including Paul himself (1 Cor 15:1–11). The other gospels all pair Jesus's empty tomb with disciples' direct encounters with the risen Christ (Matt 28; Luke 24; John 20), sometimes including details that stress the resurrected Jesus's materiality (Luke 24:30, 39–42; John 20:27), apparently lest observers take him to be an apparition instead of an embodied

person risen from the dead. Mark, in contrast, will not authorize unequivocal faith in Christ's resurrection. No one sees the risen Jesus within Mark's pages. Death in Mark—Jesus's above all—is inevitable and brutal, both physically and emotionally, and Mark does not shy away from that reality. Resurrection, and more broadly any form of personal survival after death, represents a provocative possibility that threatens to undermine death's significance, but it always remains just that—a possibility, rather than a necessarily persuasive solution to the problems death poses. If Jesus's empty tomb and the young man's claim that he has risen gesture toward Jesus's resurrection as undermining death's decisiveness in Mark, his female disciples' fearful flight and refusal to repeat the young man's unconfirmed announcement raise questions about that gesture's accuracy.

Other New Testament writings also evince skepticism about resurrection, though scholars often interpret the relevant passages as proto-orthodox caricatures of heterodox belief—critiques of faith in something other than a particular view of bodily resurrection that Mark and certain other Jesus-believing authors hold. Take 1 Cor 15 as an example. Paul begins by castigating the Corinthian congregation for denying resurrection (15:12–13), but his argument includes a technical discussion of what sort of body resurrection entails (15:35–54). This suggests to scholars that at least some Corinthians' "denials" of resurrection were narrow. They responded not to the possibility of personalized life after death that resurrection synecdochically represents but rather to Paul's conceptualization of an "enspirited body ... designed for and thus enable[ing] body-spirit coherence in heaven" or to related theological positions Paul holds.²²

Yet not all of Paul's extended discourse about resurrection should be viewed as subtle theological dispute of this sort. The chapter contains another strand of argumentation open to a more expansive interpretation, suggesting at least some Corinthians might not have been offended by possibly misunderstood details about the nature of the risen body. Instead they were skeptical about this teaching's broader corollary—namely, that death is not final but temporary, as Paul affirms by employing for it the euphemism of sleep, but in such a way as to encompass the possibility

22. Frederick S. Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul: Cognition, Metaphor, and Transformation*, ECL 19 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 119. James Ware surveys the scholarship and proposes an innovative solution to relevant interpretive problems. See Ware, "Paul's Understanding of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:36–54," *JBL* 133 (2014): 809–35.

of awaking. “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain.... Then even those having fallen asleep [κοιμηθέντες] in Christ have perished [ἀπώλοντο]. If in this life [ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ταύτῃ] alone we hope in Christ, then we are to be more pitied than all people” (1 Cor 15:17–19).

Paul brings his discourse about resurrection to a close by reflecting on the fundamental idea that Christ’s resurrection implies death’s defeat and guarantees immortality to all (15:54–55), or at least all who trust in Christ. Although Frederick Tappenden’s cognitive-linguistic approach to the problem has superseded Dale Martin’s understanding of how Paul conceptualizes the risen body in 1 Cor 15,²³ Martin remains convincing on this point: some Corinthians would have found not only Paul’s notion of an afterlife involving enspirited bodies odd and off-putting but any notion at all of a personalized life after death incredible.²⁴ The world-weary cynicism characterizing some Roman imperial sepulchral inscriptions confirms that acceptance of life’s impermanence was common in Paul’s world: n. f. n. s. n. c. (*non fui non sum non curo*; “I was not, I am not, I don’t care”) or, somewhat more gently, s. t. t. l.: *sit tibi terra levis* (“may the earth lie on you lightly”).²⁵ It is this sort of generic skepticism about claims of personal life after death that Mark often reflects.

With respect to the Fourth Gospel, Gregory Riley has taken the figure of “doubting Thomas” to represent not skepticism about Jesus’s restoration to life, let alone about the possibility of personalized eternal life for all. Thomas rather represents belief in a particular mode of eternal life that differs from the evangelist’s view of bodily resurrection. This would be something akin to the survival of an immortal mind or soul, roughly corresponding to the view found in Thomasine Christian literature that, according to Riley, inscribes the teachings and traditions John’s representation of the disciple Thomas polemically caricatures.²⁶ Riley’s interpretation of John remains provocative, especially its treatment of 20:24–29, where Thomas says he will only believe Jesus has risen if he can handle his res-

23. Compare Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul*, 97–121, and Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 117–36.

24. Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 107–8.

25. For relevant discussion and citation of inscriptions, see Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 108–9, and Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 56–57.

26. Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

urrected body and probe the wounds that must have somehow healed over.²⁷ Riley's reading of even that passage may require adjustment in light of April DeConick's argument that the Fourth Evangelist critiques not a particular understanding of Jesus's resurrection but an understanding of salvation privileging visionary encounters with Christ the mystagogue over faith in the risen Lord.²⁸ However, in certain Johannine passages, the disciple Thomas seems to serve a thematic function altogether different from the one either DeConick or Riley assigns him.

In John 11:1–16, Thomas evinces cynical skepticism aimed not at bodily resurrection but at any kind of life after death whatsoever. Lazarus has fallen ill and died, and Jesus invites his disciples to “have faith” (πιστεύσητε, 11:15) that he will “awaken” his friend from death (ἐξυπνίσω, 11:11), using the same euphemism Paul employs in 1 Cor 15:18. Since Lazarus lived in Bethany, just east of Jerusalem (John 11:1), Jesus's resolution of the man's death entails a journey with his disciples to the region of Judea, whose inhabitants had recently been planning to stone him (see 10:31). The disciples all hesitate to return with the master on so unlikely and dangerous an errand (11:8, 12), but Thomas goes a step further. As soon as he understands that Jesus's plan involves an improbable challenge to death's power over Lazarus, which could itself threaten the lives of Jesus and his disciples, he speaks to his fellow students with sarcastic cynicism: “Let's go, too, so that we may die with him” (11:16).

The view Thomas expresses in this section of John has nothing to do with questioning teaching about resurrection per se, nor would it seem polemically to cast an alternative Thomasine soteriology as a lack of faith. It is not until much later in John that Thomas's imprudent demand to probe and prod Jesus's body may suggest that he is moti-

27. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 100–126.

28. April D. DeConick, “‘Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen’ (Jn 20:29): Johannine Dramatization of an Early Christian Discourse,” in *The Nag Hammadi Library after Fifty Years: Proceedings of the 1995 Society of Biblical Literature Commemoration*, ed. John D. Turner and Anne McGuire, NHMS 44 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 381–98; DeConick, *Voices of the Mystics: Early Christian Discourse in the Gospels of John and Thomas and Other Ancient Christian Literature*, JSNTSup 157 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 77–85. DeConick interprets Thomas's desire to probe Jesus's wounds with reference to the Greco-Roman *topos* of the hero, including the hero's shade (see Virgil, *Aen.* 2.270–279), identified by his wounds. Thomas's need to see and probe them (John 20:25) signals his desire for a direct, prolonged encounter with Christ, akin to a mystical vision. This is what the Fourth Evangelist critiques.

vated by a misunderstanding of what embodied resurrection entails, or else by an urge to apprehend the heavenly through direct visionary encounter as opposed to faith. In this earlier episode, on the contrary, urgent questions regarding God's capability of resolving the problem of death through any kind of eternal life at all come to the fore. In fact, in this episode it is only when Martha, not Thomas, confronts Jesus that subtle distinctions arise. Jesus insists, against her confession of belief in the eschatological resurrection of the dead, that the resurrection he promises is not reserved for the future but can be apprehended in the present by everyone who puts faith in him (πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ, 11:24–27). That understanding of resurrection, and all it implies for John's soteriology, finds immediate affirmation in Jesus's raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:38–44).

The main issue in Thomas's cynical response to Jesus's plan that his disciples follow him to danger so that he might restore Lazarus is not nascent doctrinal controversy about resurrection (embodied or not; solely eschatological or somehow realized in the present) or about the risen, heavenly Lord (apprehended through faith or through visionary encounter). At issue is sweeping skepticism about God's willingness or ability to save any after they have died. According to Thomas's point of view, one can evade death for a time—that is what Jesus did when he fled those who tried to kill him in Judea (John 10:31, 39–40)—but of course one cannot defeat it. Death must be respected, even feared. That is one point of Thomas's fixation on Jesus's damaged body in chapter 20, for bodily ruin and decay are the most obvious signs of death's power, as Lazarus's decomposition likewise affirms (see 11:39–40).²⁹ Jesus's refusal in chapter 11 to accept this obvious state of affairs is

29. According to DeConick, Thomasites believed that salvation was attained through premortem visionary ascents to heaven guided by Jesus the mystagogue, while the Fourth Gospel instead ties salvation closely to faith in the crucified and risen Jesus ("Blessed Are Those"). These visions seem to have anticipated a postmortem spiritual ascent to heaven, but the Thomasites may not have had clear beliefs about life after death, and seem not to have emphasized salvation from it. See April D. DeConick, "John Rivals Thomas: From Community Conflict to Gospel Narrative," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 305; DeConick, "Blessed Are Those," 396. Partly for this reason, the Fourth Gospel, in critiquing Thomasine Christianity's fixation on premortem visionary experiences, represents Thomas as skeptical and confused about life after death in general and about Jesus's resurrection specifically.

nothing short of ridiculous. He aims to return to Judea, where he will put his own and his disciples' lives at risk to help a man who, by virtue of already being dead and decomposing, lies beyond assistance. Thus, Jesus's plan is subject not merely to Thomas's skepticism but even to his scorn.

Chapter 2 of this study will point to another textual complex that scholars have interpreted in such a way as to elide from the early Christian literary record skepticism about God's ability or willingness to guarantee personal eternal life (2 Tim 2:17–18). I will also argue that Mark's Sadducees in 12:18–27 give voice to the same objection the pastoral epistle attributes to Paul's opponents, with Mark's Jesus failing to defeat the Sadducees' scripturally sensitive skepticism. Even at this point, though, it should be clear that some early Jesus-believers, like others in the Roman Empire, found incredible the idea of death's defeat by means of any personalized life after death—perhaps especially but not exclusively resurrection. Certain members of Paul's congregations and those believers whom the Fourth Gospel's Thomas represents were not receptive to it and would have responded with skeptical interrogation or dismissive scorn.

Of course, Mark's Jesus does privilege embodied resurrection, and Mark depicts subtle debate between Jesus and those holding alternative points of view, as I will show. Moreover, Mark situates resurrection in an eschatological context and is willing to brave the shoals of obscure controversies relevant to it. But the Second Gospel does not primarily conceptualize resurrection as a coherent concept involving detailed specifics about how to understand the risen body, as does 1 Cor 15 and perhaps John 20:24–29 or even Luke 24:28–43. Statements about resurrection in Mark primarily signify God's willingness and ability to defeat death by offering persons eternal life; they are only secondarily invested in the form that eternal life takes. In fact, one passage crucial to Mark's development of the resurrection theme uses terminology assimilable to belief in an immortal soul (8:35–37). When viewed against the backdrop of skepticism about personally individualized life after death that many in the Greco-Roman world possessed, resurrection in Mark may be interpreted as a synecdoche for a person's divinely granted eternal life, rather than opposed to alternative conceptualizations of personal life after death. If Mark's readers feared—justifiably or not—violence and death in connection to their identification with Christ, as many scholars now believe, the evangelist's examination of

this general theme and conviction might have been urgent indeed, and its results consequential.³⁰

Mark as Dialogue and *Commentarii*

Mark's interrogation of teaching about resurrection presses this gospel toward a stylistic and ideological position close to the novelistic discourse Mikhail Bakhtin identifies as polyphonic and unfinalized. Such discourse consists of different voices, in the form of characters speaking from specific ideological positions or socialized personal experiences, or as the narrative voice focalized through such characters. These voices participate in a sustained dialogue, as it were, but without any one emerging to dominate the others, and without even the author's voice exercising hegemonic control.³¹ According to one of Bakhtin's more expressive descriptions of polyphonic or dialogic narrative,

this dialogue—the “great dialogue” of the novel as a whole—takes place not in the past, but right now, that is, in the *real present* of the creative process. This is no stenographer's report of a *finished* dialogue, from which the author has already withdrawn and *over* which he is now located as if in some higher decision-making position: that would have turned an authentic and unfinished dialogue into an objectivized and finalized *image of a dialogue*, of the sort usual for every monologic novel. The great dialogue ... is organized as an *unclosed whole* of life itself, life poised *on the threshold*.³²

30. Some interpreters view persecution as an (anticipated?) experience of the Markan readers. See Bas M. F. Van Iersel, “The Gospel according to St. Mark—Written for a Persecuted Community?,” *NedTT* 34 (1980): 15–36; Paul S. Pudussery, “Discipleship: A Call to Suffering and Glory; An Exegetico-Theological Study of Mk 8,27–9,1; 13,9–13 and 13,24–27” (PhD diss., Pontificia Università Urbaniana, 1987); Hendrika Noline Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in Its Historical and Social Context*, NovTSup 114 (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Adam Winn, *The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda*, WUNT 245 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); and Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel*, BibInt 65 (Leiden: Brill, 2003). See also Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 27 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 28–29; Collins, *Mark*, 96–102 (esp. 102).

31. See, e.g., Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist, UTPSS 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 262–63.

32. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 63, emphasis original.

I have written elsewhere about Mark as dialogic in a Bakhtinian sense,³³ and I apply a related hermeneutic in chapter 2 of the present study. This view of Mark supports a modified version of the argument about the Second Gospel's genre that Matthew D. C. Larsen recently proposed in *Gospels before the Book*, in which Bakhtin's ideas also play a role.³⁴ Larsen suggests Mark was written in such a way as to prime readers' expectations for what I argue that it offers them: an open-ended exploration of resurrection faith that is polyphonic or dialogic in a broad though still recognizably Bakhtinian sense, as opposed to a dogmatic treatment of the resurrection theme.

Larsen argues that Mark constitutes a *ὑπόμνημα* or *ὑπομνήματα*, or, in Latin, *commentarii* (the plurals are more often used in antiquity)—unordered, unfinished, unpolished (stylistically plain), and even unauthored collections of notes (not unwritten, of course, but not attributed to an authorizing writer). These were meant not to be read as finalized books but instead to be expanded, supplemented, and explained by writers employing them in their own literary endeavors, and by authoritative teachers with specialized knowledge on which they could draw to clarify ambiguities, resolve contradictions, and elaborate in ways helpful to auditors. Larsen offers several examples of works of this sort, some of which will be familiar to students of classical literature.³⁵ A key example is Cicero's no longer extant *commentarius* or *ὑπόμνημα* about his consulship (Cicero uses both the Latin and Greek terms), which he wrote up and circulated to see whether anyone would develop it into a formal history (see *Att.* 1.19; 2.1). Others are less well-known: for instance, the original version of Galen's *On Anatomical Procedures*, which is no longer extant, though Galen refers to it in the opening sentences of a surviving (version of the) work he wrote later and gave the same name.³⁶ In this case, the same author developed his own *commentarii* into a more formalized literary work.

33. Austin Busch, "Questioning and Conviction: Double-Voiced Discourse in Mark 3:22–30," *JBL* 125 (2006): 477–505.

34. Matthew D. C. Larsen, *Gospels before the Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 121–22, 135–36.

35. Larsen, *Gospels before the Book*, 11–36. See Lucian, *Quom. hist.* 48, for discussion of the relationship between *ὑπομνήματα* and formal historiography.

36. Charles Singer, ed. and trans., *Galen on Anatomical Procedures: De anatomicis administrattonibus*, PWHMM, NS 7 (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 1, discussed in Larsen, *Gospels before the Book*, 29–34.

Larsen's generic identification finds confirmation in a view of the Second Gospel that surfaces among early Christian writers and explains much of what Mark's Gospel itself offers. Some ancient Christians label Mark as *ὑπομνήματα* (see, e.g., Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15),³⁷ and Mark certainly appears unfinished and unpolished. Later writers elaborated, explained, and finalized Mark, as the manuscript tradition surrounding its conclusion reveals. Moreover, biblical scholars agree that the gospels of Matthew and Luke (if not John) amount to larger-scale expansions and emendations. Discrete rhetorical features of the Second Gospel complement Larsen's generic identification of it as *ὑπομνήματα*. For instance, Mark's literary style is lively and straightforward to the point of abruptness, and Mark includes a liberal use of non-Greek "barbarian" language. The latter constitutes a generic feature Cicero expresses anxiety about in his discussion of his own *commentarius* at *Att.* 1.19.³⁸

Larsen, though, groups what may amount to a somewhat different mode of writing in the generic category he discovers/constructs to explain Mark. Also called *ὑπομνήματα* or *commentarii* in antiquity, this type of writing might be distinguished from the texts discussed above as secondary *commentarii* rather than primary, on the model of the distinction between two types of epic C. S. Lewis draws in *Preface to Paradise Lost*.³⁹ According to Lewis's schema, primary epic's poetic form emerges from and reflects its original performative context. As a written record of oral poetry, or even a transcript of an oral performance, a primary epic's notable formal and stylistic features represent characteristics of improvised oral narrative poetry. It instantiates complex poetic traditions whose mastery was passed on from one balladist to another. These include heroic epithets and similarly stylized diction and rhetoric (e.g., extended similes), regular narrative sequencing with consistent employment of stock themes, and related formal patternings. A secondary epic, on the other hand, constitutes an originally written work that adopts and elaborates (even exaggerates) these and other formal features of primary

37. On ancient Christian descriptions of Mark that support Larsen's view, see *Gospels before the Book*, 79–98.

38. Discussed at Larsen, *Gospels before the Book*, 13.

39. C. S. Lewis, *A Preface to Paradise Lost, Being the Ballard Matthews Lectures, Delivered at University College, North Wales, 1941* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942).

epic to evoke in the reader an aesthetic and emotional experience akin to the one primary epic generates, while at the same time compensating for the absence of an authentic oral context. Though the relationship between primary epic's performative function and secondary epic's literary form is distant and derivative, this does not imply the inferiority of the latter (examples of which include Virgil's *Aeneid* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*) to the former (e.g., Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* or *Beowulf*). It merely acknowledges that secondary epic develops in self-consciously literary ways generic expectations that originally emerged in oral traditions and performance settings not directly relevant to secondary epic's own compositional context.

Analogously, some ancient ὑπομνήματα or *commentarii* seem to have been primary, with formal features reflecting a functional compositional context similar to those Larsen identifies in chapters 1–4 of his study. Such works, often written by interested parties well-connected to the events they describe, constitute archival notes, transcripts, informal memoirs, and the like. They were produced with the expectation that they would later be explained, elaborated, and finalized by authoritative authors and teachers, including historians, philosophers, and physicians. But other works labeled *commentarii* seem not to fit this functional description, even though they adopt some of the formal features primary ὑπομνήματα or *commentarii* display and may even go by the same name. A key example is Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*, whose preface repeatedly uses the label *commentarii* (see *praef.* 3, 13, and *passim*) for the work it introduces (a kind of commonplace book, or collection of anecdotes about philosophers and other learned men drawn from Gellius's reading). A careful reading of this work's preface supports the bifurcated generic categorization I propose.

Gellius distinguishes *hi commentarii*, the work he is publishing, from *illis annotationibus* (*praef.* 3), which he identifies as notes he took in order to aid his memory when studying and on whose basis he composed the *commentarii* proper. As a partial result of this compositional origin, his (secondary) *commentarii* retain some of the apparently haphazard order, episodic variety, and rhetorical urgency of the (primary) *annotationes*. However, unlike the genre of *commentarii* that Larsen discusses, Gellius's are most definitely not unpolished notes (that would be what Gellius calls his *annotationes*), and they are not unauthored. On the contrary, the work's preface, as Wytse Hette Keulen argues, constitutes a rhetorically complex attempt to position Gellius's authorial voice as didactically authorita-

tive and philosophically exemplary.⁴⁰ The strong authorial voice in *Attic Nights*—hardly what one would expect from *commentarii*, in Larsen’s conceptualization—turns out to bear a close relationship to a feature of this literary work that one would expect from the generic designation for which Larsen argues: namely, it remains unfinished. Though twenty books long at the time of the publication its preface imagines, Gellius insists he will keep adding to his *commentarii* for as long as he lives: “Therefore the number of books will increase, provided the gods graciously help, in accordance with the progressing steps of life itself, however few they may be. Nor do I wish to be given me a longer duration of living than so long as I will be sufficient to this faculty of writing and of composing *commentarii* [*scribendi commentandique*]” (*praef.* 24; see also 23).⁴¹ This suggestion that Gellius’s *commentarii* are coterminous with Gellius’s life seems not to have been meant merely as a straightforward declaration of the author’s long-range compositional plans. In any case, twenty books are all that has survived of the *Attic Nights*. The statement amounts to hermeneutically significant insistence on Gellius’s intent that his work remain open-ended in a different sense.

The openness of *Attic Nights* entails a responsibility not only for the author but for readers as well. The difficult labor Gellius has already put into his composition, and will continue to put into it even after releasing it to the world (laboring late into the long winter nights in his few hours of leisure to discover, rework, and add philosophical anecdotes; see *praef.* 5, 10), should inspire his readers to undertake their own intellectual activity in engaging with his *commentarii*. Ideally, the result will be that his work “might lead ... to the desire of noble learning and the contemplation of useful knowledge” (*praef.* 12).

Gellius explicitly calls on his readers to make sense of the difficult and sometimes contradictory statements his *commentarii* incorporate. They must wrestle with obscure, unexplained, and otherwise confusing aspects of his work, which involves understanding it as a dialogue of authorities articulating distinct points of view on the subject matters it treats. Readers

40. Wytse Hette Keulen, *Gellius the Satirist: Roman Cultural Authority in Attic Nights*, MnemSup 297 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 17–35.

41. Translating Peter K. Marshall, ed., *Aulus Gellius noctes atticae*, 2 vols., OCT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968). Translations of ancient texts are my own, unless otherwise noted. (With respect to the Bible, I make no effort to deviate from widely used translations [esp. RSV, NRSV], whose language I surely echo.)

ought not to dismiss anything they read in *Attic Nights* because it appears to privilege ideas they do not comprehend or viewpoints they tend to resist; instead, they should pursue those ideas and attempt to make sense of the controversial opinions and judgments Gellius incorporates.

But let [the readers] judge that those things left ... less than fully explicated, I ask, were written not for the sake of teaching but rather for bringing to mind [*non docendi magis quam admonendi*] and, as if content to be shown a path, let [the readers] trace them afterwards, if they like, by means of either procured books or teachers. But those things which they will have thought worthy of reproach, let them, if they dare, burn with anger at those from which we have received them. However, to those things which they might have read written elsewhere differently, let them not right away thoughtlessly object, but let them consider the reasons for these matters [*ne iam statim temere obstrepant, sed et rationes rerum ... pensitent*] and the authoritative judgments of the men whom those writers and whom we have followed. (*praef.* 17–18; see also 13–16)

The dialogically open quality of Gellius's book—its unfinalizability, in multiple senses of the word—is a function not only of the author's relationship to his own writing but also of the response to it he expects his readers to adopt.

Attic Nights clearly displays some formal features of the *commentarii* genre, but it deploys them independently of the functional context of primary *commentarii*. Gellius is not writing up *commentarii* as notes for himself or other authors to incorporate into formal philosophical writings, or for authoritative teachers to adapt into lectures, or for anything of the sort. He has already done that in the *annotationes* lying behind what he calls his *commentarii*. He seems rather to have approached the *commentarii* genre in much the way Apollonius of Rhodes or Virgil approached the epic genre associated in antiquity with Homer. These later poets deployed and elaborated some of (primary) epic's formal features for purposes at one remove (at least) from the functional performative context underlying the generic models Homer's epics offered. In his secondary *commentarii* Gellius adopts some of the generic conventions of primary *commentarii* in order to produce a work that is not so much unfinished as unfinalized in an aesthetic and ideological sense, especially in its requirement of readers' interpretive mediation and independent research to "complete."

Something similar would seem to obtain for other texts labeled *commentarii* in antiquity—for instance, Julius Caesar's famous *commentarii* on

the Roman civil war. Cicero evaluates these writings in a way analogous to Gellius's discussion of his own, though Cicero focuses more on literary style than on content. He notes that Caesar's *commentarii* are plain and unfinished, but not in the sense of needing rhetorical adornment or literary refinement. They are rather stark in the way a nude body may be beautiful: "bare, upright, and graceful [*nudi ... , recti et venusti*], with all rhetorical ornament—just like a garment [*tamque veste*—removed" (*Brut.* 262).⁴² Like such a nude, Caesar's work is not incomplete but rather elegant in its (rhetorical) austerity. In fact, Cicero compares fools (*inepti*) who would attempt to ornament or otherwise "finish" Caesar's writings to those who, when faced with a nude model for artistic representation (context makes it clear that is the kind of nude Cicero has in mind), fail to admire its beauty. Instead, they dangerously fumble about with a hot iron in a stupid attempt to curl the model's hair (*qui volent illa calamistris inurere*, *Brut.* 262).⁴³ Cicero's point may be reformulated using the generic categories I have been considering. Caesar's writings about the civil war are in a sense *commentarii*—that is, unfinished annotations for later writers to elaborate and complete—but they manage to transcend that function to become aesthetically powerful in their own right. Thus they make historians attempting to finish them look like fools in their misguided attempts at embellishment and elaboration. They constitute secondary rather than primary *commentarii*.

Moving from rhetoric to subject matter, the obvious lack of finish Caesar's *commentarii* display—the literal incompleteness of their historical narrative—communicates the same sense of austere power that Cicero observes in their unadorned style. Caesar apparently abandoned his writing coincident with a strategic decision to privilege decisive military defeat of his domestic opponents over the attempts to win them over by means of the persuasion that his *commentarii* constitute and occasionally thematize. His decision to

42. Quoting Enrica Malcovati, ed., *M. Tulli Ciceronis, scripta quae manserunt omnia: Fasc. 4. Brutus*, BSGRT (Leipzig: Teubner, 1968). The translation is from Christina Shuttleworth Kraus, "Hair, Hegemony, and Historiography: Caesar's Style and Its Earliest Critics," in *Aspects of the Language of Latin Prose*, ed. Tobias Reinhardt, Michael Lapidge, and J. N. Adams (Oxford: British Academy, 2005), 98.

43. See Kraus for suggestions regarding how Cicero aligns Caesar's style with masculine stereotypes, and for how ancient readers might have connected the *commentarii*'s style and incompleteness to Caesar's authorial persona ("Hair, Hegemony, and Historiography," 109–12 and *passim*).

stop shaping a self-promoting narrative for public consumption complements the relinquishment of his expectation to rule the republic within an established (if not entirely intact) constitutional framework.⁴⁴ Even the literal incompleteness of Caesar's *commentarii*, then, points not to a genuine lack of finish,⁴⁵ though Cicero thinks that Caesar may have originally meant for them to be incorporated into more elaborate historiographies (*sed dum voluit alios habere parata, unde sumerent qui vellent scribere historiam, Brut.* 262). It rather signifies that their writer has abandoned the political impulse to which his writings gave voice, choosing instead to achieve his strategic goals by means of military conquest alone. In other words, the formal incompleteness of the work now known as Caesar's *Civil War* is not incidental to—let alone does it detract from—its ultimate ideological import; on the contrary, it is essential to, even constitutive of it.

Caesar's *commentarii* were finally completed by later authors and integrated into histories such as Plutarch's, though some historiographers expressed the same reservations about taking them up that Cicero noted.⁴⁶ Others, though, interpreted the distinctive stylistic and ideological features of Caesar's *commentarii* as evidence not of their literary success but of their necessary and anticipated emendation.⁴⁷ These developments, though somewhat baffling to connoisseurs of Latin literature, illuminate Mark's peculiar thematic and stylistic features, as well as its early history of interpretation.

Mark occupies a generic position closer to the *commentarii* of Gellius or Caesar than to those of Cicero or Galen. This gospel's well-known rhetorical ruggedness, its episodic nature and frequent lack of discernable order, and its abrupt conclusion were taken by ancient scribes as an invitation to complete and emend, much as some understood analogous

44. William Wendell Batstone and Cynthia Damon, *Caesar's Civil War*, OACL (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32, 170–71.

45. Batstone and Damon argue that most of the *commentarii*'s narrative in fact displays a "high state of polish," in the sense of a coherent structure (*Caesar's Civil War*, 31).

46. See, e.g., Hirtius's *Letter to Balbus*, preserved as the preface to book 8 of Caesar's *Gallic Wars*.

47. E.g., Assinius Polio (whose comments are summarized at Suetonius, *Jul.* 56.4) notes that Caesar's accounts are inaccurate and exaggerated, whether deliberately (*consulto*) or through lapse of memory, and posits that *rescripturum et correcturum fuisse*. See Robert A. Kaster, ed., *C. Suetoni Tranquilli: De vita Caesarum libros VIII et De grammaticis et rhetoribus librum*, OCT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

features of Caesar's *Civil War*. Both the Markan manuscript tradition and the standard solution to the Synoptic problem make that clear. But not all ancient readers understood Mark as primary *commentarii* or what Gellius would call *annotationes*. The gospel continued to be copied, studied, preached, and commented on independently of its elaboration by Matthew and Luke, and even without the more modest scribal emendations following Mark 16:8—albeit not as frequently as the other New Testament accounts of Jesus.

While Larsen's study is largely persuasive, its conclusion raises a lingering question. Why would ancient Christian scribes and those who employed them go through the trouble of preserving Mark intact if it not only was written as notes for later authors, but so happily fulfilled that purpose in being taken up, emended, and completed by at least two other authors who produced more popular gospels? This question becomes more urgent since many scholars posit that the hypothetical sayings source Q dropped out of existence as an independent textual tradition because Matthew and Luke's subsumption of it rendered Q superfluous. Copying Q may even have been perceived as dangerous, if its lack of narrative contextualization opened Jesus's sayings to unconventional interpretations, or if Q's theology were in some way problematic.⁴⁸ Why, then, would scribes continue to copy superfluous Mark, especially since several of the Markan passages not taken up by Matthew and Luke are prone to misunderstanding and controversy?⁴⁹

One answer is that Mark's *commentarii* were supposed to have been based on Peter's preaching, so that they held apostolic authority that made them worth preserving despite their lack of finish and potential for misunderstanding.⁵⁰ An alternative—or perhaps complementary—explanation is that Mark was not always perceived as primary *commentarii* akin to Cicero's writings on his consulship or to Galen's on anatomy or perhaps to the sayings collection known as Q, none of which survive. Instead Mark

48. John S. Kloppenborg rejects these and related explanations of Q's disappearance on several bases, including that they would make Mark's survival difficult to account for. See Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 98–101.

49. E.g., the miracles involving Jesus's saliva (7:31–37 and 8:22–26) were probably viewed as sanctioning magic (Collins, *Mark*, 369, 392).

50. See Papias, frag. 3.17, in *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, ed. Michael W. Holmes, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 738, 740.

constitutes secondary *commentarii*, like the extant writings of Gellius and Caesar. As more carefully composed literary works, rather than hastily written annotations, secondary *commentarii* had a better claim for study and preservation, even though they deploy for aesthetic, ideological, or didactic purposes some of the same formal and stylistic features that primary *commentarii* display, including an ostensible lack of finish. Incidentally, this state of affairs would seem to obtain regardless of whether the secondary *commentarii* in question contain direct testimony (like Caesar's or, perhaps, Mark) or whether they are entirely derivative of other literary sources (like Gellius's). The Second Evangelist employs features of the generic form of *commentarii* or *ὑπομνήματα* not because he writes rough archival notes for others to incorporate or complete. Mark rather harnesses the generic form's potential for stylistic immediacy (as Caesar more happily managed) and for open-endedness requiring readers to wrestle with polyphonic complexity (as does Gellius's *Attic Nights*, though with less subtlety and success).

Some ancient readers responded to the unfinalizability of Mark's Gospel, its unresolved debates and dialogical provocations regarding resurrection above all, precisely by finishing it. Matthew and Luke emend its equivocal conclusion with guarantees that Jesus really did rise from the dead to restore his faithless disciples. Both offer various redactional solutions to the problems about resurrection that Mark presents elsewhere as well. While this study focuses on Mark itself, rather than constituting a work of reception history, the Second Gospel occupies an originary position in ancient Christian literature, and some early writers in fact viewed Mark as *commentarii* or *ὑπομνήματα* in the sense of unfinished notes inviting elaboration, emendation, and completion. Critical study of Mark therefore necessitates occasional ventures into the narrative worlds of Matthew, Luke, and other ancient Jesus-believing writers. On this, Larsen is thoroughly persuasive: to the extent that the other evangelists recognized and treated Mark as (primary) *ὑπομνήματα*, the line demarcating Mark's manuscript tradition from the First and Third Gospels should be seen as far less clear than normally imagined and is perhaps only arbitrarily drawn at all.⁵¹

In their responses to Mark, Matthew and Luke's (and perhaps John's) elaborate scribal emendations call attention to the provocative questions

51. See Larsen, *Gospels before the Book*, 105–7.

the Second Gospel poses about resurrection. Sometimes they introduce material that answers them in illuminating ways; at other times they omit them, with the result that the problems stand in starker relief in the portion of the manuscript tradition normally labeled “the Gospel according to Mark.” I occasionally trace such textual developments in the chapters that follow. To the degree that they may be interpreted as shutting down Mark’s open-ended incitements, or as sanding away its theological and ideological rough edges, they retrospectively help us to understand the shape, scope, and implications of the provocative questions about resurrection Mark’s *commentarii* raise.

I press further forward into the Christian literary tradition Mark helped originate as well. I argue that some of the questions and provisional answers about Jesus’s death and resurrection that Mark’s apocalyptic narrative presents played a larger role than normally recognized in generating a mythical-theological theme that surfaces in many early Christian writings about Jesus’s death and resurrection. I also suggest that Mark’s treatment of the disciples’ refusal to put faith in resurrection and of their resulting flight from the scene of Jesus’s arrest, death, and empty tomb stands near the beginning of a tradition of early debate about acceptable responses to persecution in Jesus’s name. Throughout, though, I remain principally interested in the Second Gospel’s unfinalized dialogue about faith in and doubt regarding resurrection. I approach later Christian writings as exemplary responses to Mark’s *commentarii* (at however many removes) that shed light on its dialogic implications and provocations.

The Paradox of Resurrection in Mark

Mark’s treatment of resurrection turns on an intriguing paradox, features of which scholars have misinterpreted, and from which some have mistakenly inferred that the theme of resurrection is not important to this evangelist. Jesus’s defeat of death through resurrection is anticipated prophetically and figuratively in several episodes earlier in this gospel, yet Mark cultivates profound ambiguity about Jesus’s resurrection within its pages. The risen Christ never appears in Mark. More than that, in every place where resurrection seems to be depicted—others’ no less than Jesus’s—the Second Gospel introduces uncertainty as to whether or not resurrection took place (ch. 1). Mark goes so far as to include a dialogue between Jesus and the Sadducees featuring the latter party’s compelling questions about whether resurrection constitutes a scripturally viable doctrine (ch. 2). On

the one hand, Mark's Jesus boldly declares that shameful death in faithful anticipation of God's vindication through resurrection ought to be the destiny not only of himself but of his students as well (ch. 3). On the other, Mark's disciples, and perhaps Jesus, cannot in the end bring themselves to place their trust in God's resurrection power. This lack of faith is integral to Mark's account of Jesus's abandonment to die alone and to Mark's hesitation to demand from readers a trust that Jesus's own disciples are unable to muster (chs. 3–4). These narrative developments inform and complicate resurrection's emergence as the decisive feature of the Markan Son of Man's destiny, with Mark's Christology hinging on an apocalyptic myth the evangelist presents in history-like form. It recounts God's (possible) salvation of Jesus and others from Death's demonic power after Jesus gives himself to it to redeem many (ch. 5). Resurrection, in Mark, turns out to be more an open question than a definitive answer, representing the prospect of hope rather than the certainty of salvation.

This study examines the work—narrative, theological, and ideological—that resurrection performs and falls short of accomplishing in Mark's Gospel. It considers how Jesus's resurrection invites faith but does not guarantee it; how it makes redemption possible but not certain; and how it disrupts expectations of divine condemnation, even if it does not totally overturn them. Mark in its entirety orchestrates an elaborate dialogue between faith and doubt in the face of death, trust and skepticism, conviction and questioning, assurance and fear. I do not claim satisfactorily to resolve Mark's polyphonic and unfinalized thematization of resurrection. In the pages that follow I instead trace its contours, ponder its theological and ideological implications, and situate it within relevant literary-historical and mythological contexts. I also consider how early readers of Mark and participants in the textual and theological traditions Mark's dialogical provocations helped originate responded to the questions regarding resurrection whose centrality to the Second Gospel my reading establishes.