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What Are They Saying about Mark

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students and pastors who want to listen again to the message of the Fourth Evangelist.

John G. Andreasen
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What Are They Saying About Mark?

Frank J. Matera
New York: Paulist Press, 1987.
115 pp. U.S. \$4.95

Since we know less about its sources than any other Synoptic Gospel, the Gospel according to Mark has been subjected to numerous investigations, which have resulted in a wide range of hypotheses. In this "brief survey" of Markan scholarship for the past twenty to twenty-five years the author performs the service of clarifying the main thrusts of this intense research and puts them in a proper perspective to each other and to past scholarship.

The chapter headings of the book highlight the main issues in Markan studies. On the setting of the Gospel, debate continues on whether the Gospel is from a Roman, Galilean, or Syrian community. As for Christology, the author marks the "apparent demise of the *theios aner* concept" (36) and agrees with those studies finding the key to Mark's view of Jesus in the designation of Son of God understood to be the royal Son, even in his crucifixion. The discipleship chapter focuses on two directions of research, seeing the disciples' treatment by Mark as polemical (against the Jerusalem Christian community) or pastoral (instruction to his community). Matera favors the latter approach. The fourth chapter on the composition of the Gospel shows the area of Markan scholarship with "fundamental disagreement" (74). While some scholars see Mark as a creative theologian with fewer sources than thought previously, Matera endorses those studies seeing Mark as a conservative redactor. The most promising area for research, discussed in the fifth chapter, employs new tools such as rhetorical criticism to study Mark as a whole narrative; efforts are made to understand how the evangelist tells the story. Matera believes that once the literary research is more or less complete, scholars will be in a better position to tackle the historical questions that "sooner or later" will need to be addressed (92).

The book provides well-chosen bibliographical references for digging deeper into particular questions; it succeeds admirably in surveying current scholarly opinion with a balanced fair presentation of differing views and is recommended as a good introduction for wrestling with the contemporary questions and challenges this fascinating Gospel presents.

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