

Preface

My interest in the academic study of the Gospel of Mark began in the summer of 1994 at Beeson Divinity School under the fine teaching of J. Norfleete Day. The course textbook for that summer was William L. Lane's commentary on Mark in the NICNT series. I remember reading Lane and becoming intrigued by Mark's literary strategy. I sensed that Mark was "up to something" with his opening line (1:1) and the carefully placed "confessions" of Peter (8:29) and the centurion (15:39). Though nearly eight years would elapse before returning to a serious study of Mark's Gospel, my curiosity with this Gospel did not diminish. Much of what is contained in these pages is my effort to come to grips with Mark's narrative and what he was up to.

During the 2002–2003 academic year, I returned to the formal study of Mark in consecutive doctoral seminars at The Catholic University of America. Those two seminars were memorable for many reasons and I am grateful to all my colleagues in those classes for I learned a great deal from each of them as we examined the text together. I especially want to acknowledge Sherri Brown, Daniel C. Claire, Kelly R. Iverson, and Christopher W. Skinner for their friendship, which was nurtured during those two semesters—friendships that continue despite our distances. Chapter 3 was essentially my seminar paper for the second of those seminars and Sherri, Dan, Kelly, and Chris have each, in their own way, encouraged me with this current work and their probing questions and interaction have made it a better book (though the flaws remain with me). The professor for those seminars was Francis J. Moloney, SDB. The debt of gratitude I owe Father Moloney is immeasurable. Much of what one might read in these pages can be traced back to him in one way or another even though we may differ on certain matters. He was a terrific *Doktorvater* and he continues to be a cherished and valued friend. I especially appreciate him writing the Foreword to this work. I wish also to thank my readers of the original dissertation (which was defended in late 2007), Frank J. Matera and the late

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Francis T. Gignac, SJ, for their time and energies on my behalf. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and thank all my former teachers, especially those New Testament scholars I was privileged to work with at some point: Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Luke Timothy Johnson, Steven J. Kraftchick, Robert Kysar, and Frank S. Thielman.

The bulk of the research for this work was accomplished at four libraries: The Catholic University of America's John K. Mullen of Denver Memorial Library and The Woodstock Theological Library, Georgetown University, both in Washington DC; the Davis Library at Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama; and the Start-Kilgour Memorial Library at Simpson University in Redding, California. I wish to thank the staff of each library, especially the invaluable personnel working in the Interlibrary Loan departments. In addition, I served on the faculty of the latter two and wish to thank my colleagues at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, and the Department of Theology and Ministry at Simpson University for their encouragement and support. I also would like to thank my students at those institutions for their engaging questions and interest in my work. I should extend my thanks as well to members of my Sunday School class at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, who on more than one occasion have heard me give my take on Mark's Gospel.

While this monograph was being researched, written, and (later) revised, I sat under three pastors: Danny Wood, John R. Hutchinson, and Bill Randall. I am grateful to each of them for their preaching ministry and for their friendship. However, I could never have undertaken this project were it not for my former pastor, mentor, and friend, Charles T. Carter. His interest in my work means a great deal to me and I appreciate the wise counsel he has supplied over the years. Suffice it to say, he is a pastor and friend *par excellence*.

Embarking on doctoral studies is not an endeavor one can do alone. Neither is returning to a manuscript for revision after being away from it (and the academic world) for several years. Without the support of friends and family, I doubt very seriously if I would have made it. I am grateful to friends Lev and Vicki Bragg and Steve and Kim Hancock for their prayers and encouragement. I also wish to thank several friends who helped (in large and small ways) along the way: Jonathan Bass, Dave and Sue Belcher, John Bell, Charles and Gladys Dunkin, Dick and Jayne Edge, Randel and Sheila Everett, James Earl Massey, Ken and Dea Mathews, William W. McDonald, Hal Parrish, Randy Pittman, David E. Potts, Jim Pounds, and

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In addition, I have been blessed by the support of my family. A man could hardly find better in-laws than Arthur and Carolyn Edge. I love and appreciate them very much. It is also nice to have a sister-in-law and two brothers-in-law as friends—Jennifer and Bill McMahon and Art Edge. I am also very blessed to have two extraordinary parents, Warren and Joyce Morrison. No one has encouraged me, prayed for my well-being, and sacrificed for my education more than the two of them. Mom and Dad, thank you. I love you.

When this work was first completed as a doctoral dissertation, the happiest two people were probably my children: Scott (then age eight) and Katherine (then age four). They are now age fourteen and ten, respectfully. They both have been very supportive of my work and I am grateful. Scott and Katherine, your mom and I love you very much and we are so proud of you both.

This work is dedicated to my wife, Laura. We were married while I was in graduate school. The first decade of our married life included some form of graduate work—either hers or (mostly) mine. I would say that is going above-and-beyond the call of duty. Laura has been a constant source of encouragement for me while I researched and wrote the original dissertation and, especially, lately as I have endeavored to revise it. She did many, many things that lightened my load and I am grateful. Her patience was steady throughout the process. Her love was never ending. She is my best friend. Laura, I love you.

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