Mark as a Source for Mark
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ABSTRACT

Mark contains material of different ages. It treats the Gentile Mission as both an irrelevance (The Syrophoenician Woman, Mk 7:24-31) and as a prerequisite for the Last Days (Mk 13:10). It treats Jesus as both a healer (The Leper, Mk 1:40-45) and as God (the forgiving of sins, Mk 2:5-10). Why? Either Mark was combined on one occasion from diverse material, or it was compiled over a period of time, and continually updated itself by adding material to reflect the latest ideas about Jesus (his increasing divinization) and the continually receding date of the Return. The latter can be shown to be the case, since the more advanced passages show the standard signs of interpolation into earlier text. Then Mark is not an integral, but an accretional text.

If so, then its earlier layers were available to its later layers as literary sources capable of further development. Of several instances of such seeming internal development, I here note three: (1) The Woman with a Flow of Blood (Mk 5:24-34, a development of Mk 6:56); (2) The Feeding of Four Thousand (Mk 8:1-9, a development of the Five Thousand in Mk 6:34-44), and (3) The Ambition of James and John (Mk 10:35-44, a development of the anonymous dispute over priority in Mk 9:33-34). It is easily shown that in each case, the more developed form is an interpolation. The third example has the further advantage that, as a prophecy ex eventu, its terminus a quo is the year 44. This gives us one firm date within the span over which Mark was composed, and that date correlates well with references to Paul in Mark, the fact (Koester Ancient Christian Gospels, 52f) that much of Paul’s knowledge of early Christian tradition seems to come from Mark, and with everything Acts tells us about the relation between Mark and Paul. Clarification of the nature of Mark thus helps us locate it within the chronology of Christian writings; a chronology in which Mark, or its earliest layers, seem to occupy the very first place.