

Leonard Doohan, *Mark, Visionary of Early Christianity* (Sante Fe: Bear & Company, 1986) pp. 173. \$9.95 (U.S.).

This study tries to integrate two different aims: to supply an introduction for readers unacquainted with Mark or NT scholarship, as well as to present the author's own original interpretations and conclusions. The former purpose is discernible in the conventional bibliographical overviews of such questions as Mark's authorship and existing commentaries, as well as summaries of the Gospel's structure, Palestinian geography (with five pages of maps), Roman history, etc. This task appears to have been competently achieved, and does not require comment.

Of greater interest, of course, is the author's own perspective. D. generally chooses to evaluate the gospel as an autonomous literary entity, not as a historical document. For instance, he argues that Mark's ascriptions of various episodes to the wilderness, the Sea of Galilee, or the mountains, come to underline the respective themes of refuge, transition or revelation, etc. (pp. 30 ff.). This approach seems to be employed on occasion without adequate regard for common-sense historical considerations; as when he proposes a symbolic explanation for the centrality of the Galilee in the Gospel narrative (pp. 39, 64), without seriously allowing for the possibility that this was simply the historical truth.

The author's tendency to seek out literary motifs leads him to some farfetched observations; e.g., the analogies he draws between Jesus' leading his disciples to Jerusalem and Joshua's entry to the Promised land (p. 28); or between the "Here begins" opening formula and the idea of a new Creation (p. 48).

The most original thesis proposed by D. is that Mark's principles of arrangement and selection were governed by the perceived needs of his own Christian community. He makes use of this idea to explain such perennial exegetical difficulties as the negative portrayals of Jesus' disciples and family (pp. 97-100, etc.), which he claims reflect the evangelist's dissatisfaction with the leadership of his own community (as do also, according to D., Jesus' conflicts with the Jewish leadership [pp. 61 ff.]).

Doohan tries to utilize his approach to explain the riddle of the "secrecy" motif, according to which Jesus tries to hide his teachings from the masses. This would reflect Mark's opposition to the simplistic faith of his contemporaries in a miraculous Messiah who would perform manifest wonders, but make no spiritual demands upon his followers (pp. 56, 67, etc.; cf. p. 80).

This approach, too, is sometimes taken to extremes, without adequate allowances for the fact that Mark was not inventing his story, but relating a set of historical facts and received traditions. Thus, he describes the emphasis on Jesus' suffering as directed towards the Neronian persecutions, virtually ignoring the historicity of Jesus' actual trial and crucifixion.

A particularly weak area in D.'s argument relates to the universalism of Jesus' message according to Mark. D. presumes throughout that one of Mark's chief purposes was to further an international mission independent of

Judaism. Of the dozens of references cited on pp. 131-32, barely a single one is relevant to the issue; some (e.g., Mark 7:31-37) prove the opposite, and some misinterpret Jesus' opposition to Pharisaic tradition as a total rejection of the Law.

As can be seen from the above observations, D.'s study is a provocative one, which succeeds in presenting some novel and controversial insights in a manner that is accessible to the non-specialist.

Eliezer L. Segal
University of Calgary

Edward James Wynne, Jr. and Henry O. Thompson, eds., *Prayer for Today's People: Sermons on Prayer by Carl Michalson (1915-1965)* (Washington, D.C.: University of America, 1982) pp. xvi + 71.

This book, sponsored by the Carl Michalson Society of Drew University, contains six sermons preached in 1964, plus biographical material and a lecture on prayer. The sermons are lively and sound, responding to some intellectual problems that were experienced in that period. For example, the third sermon, "Why Prayers are Neither True nor False," deals with the religious language problem in prayer by comparing the functions and accomplishments of poetry and prayer. In a favourite theme, which appears in several sermons, Michalson depicts prayer as our response to God's prevenient but still unmanifested response to our prayer. He says, "prayer is the answer to prayer," thus portraying God's active presence in a mysterious, iterated reflexive consciousness. He quotes Tillich: "We can only pray to a God who prays to himself through us." This pleasing treatise contains discussions of important issues, and often communicates a vivid sense of events and intellectual issues which engaged thinking people in 1964.

James R. Horne
University of Waterloo



Copyright and Use:

As an ATLAS user, you may print, download, or send articles for individual use according to fair use as defined by U.S. and international copyright law and as otherwise authorized under your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement.

No content may be copied or emailed to multiple sites or publicly posted without the copyright holder(s)' express written permission. Any use, decompiling, reproduction, or distribution of this journal in excess of fair use provisions may be a violation of copyright law.

This journal is made available to you through the ATLAS collection with permission from the copyright holder(s). The copyright holder for an entire issue of a journal typically is the journal owner, who also may own the copyright in each article. However, for certain articles, the author of the article may maintain the copyright in the article. Please contact the copyright holder(s) to request permission to use an article or specific work for any use not covered by the fair use provisions of the copyright laws or covered by your respective ATLAS subscriber agreement. For information regarding the copyright holder(s), please refer to the copyright information in the journal, if available, or contact ATLA to request contact information for the copyright holder(s).

About ATLAS:

The ATLA Serials (ATLAS®) collection contains electronic versions of previously published religion and theology journals reproduced with permission. The ATLAS collection is owned and managed by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) and received initial funding from Lilly Endowment Inc.

The design and final form of this electronic document is the property of the American Theological Library Association.