



Gray, Timothy C.

The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study of Its Narrative Role

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

Timothy C. Gray is president and professor of Sacred Scripture at the Augustine Institute and professor of Sacred Scripture at St. John Vianney Theological Seminary in Denver, Colorado. *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in Its Narrative Role* (hereafter *TGM*) is the published version of his doctoral dissertation written under the direction of Fr. Frank Maloney. Originally published in 2008 by Mohr Siebeck in their *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* (second) series, the book under review is Baker Academic's 2010 reprint. Before getting into the review I just want to commend Baker Academic and other American publishers for making monographs published by foreign presses that are generally geared toward theological libraries, and therefore expensive, affordable for wider audiences.

TGM presents a narrative analysis of Mark 11-15 with special reference to Mark's temple motif. Narrative criticism, as opposed to the various branches of historical criticism, has the final form of the text and its message in view rather than anything that lies behind the text (e.g., the historical situation of the author; the redactor's reason for arranging the material a certain way, etc.). For this reason Gray doesn't get bogged down in establishing the historicity of certain events or the authenticity of Jesus' sayings—which isn't to say that he ignores these matters altogether (at times he mentions them when pertinent)—but the temple's narrative function trumps this data. Throughout *TGM* Gray is careful to highlight Mark's intertextual use of the OT (particularly the prophets) by taking key words or themes and the intratextual manner in which he “weaves [them] into his narrative tapestry.” (108 n. 43)

In chapter 1 we're introduced to the Markan motif of "the way" (ἡ ὁδός) taken up from Isaiah and Malachi to establish a connection between Jesus' entry into the temple and YHWH's return to Zion. In both instances judgment looms on the horizon which is evident in Jesus' temple demonstration, a "watershed event in Mark's narrative" (46) according to Gray, which signified the impending end of the temple.

In chapter 2 Jesus' teaching in the temple is taken up by an examination of the parable of the wicked tenants and its connection to the "rejected stone" of Psalm 118, a connection not generally appreciated, but one made by the temple's narrative role nonetheless. The two accounts are mutually interpretive with the parable of the wicked tenants telling the story of the temple's Jewish leaders, and the "extended metaphor that functions as a parable" (71; Gray's preference over reading it as a mere symbol to be identified with Jesus) of the rejected stone telling the story of Jesus and his role as the foundation of a new temple.

Chapter 3 takes up the eschatological discourse of Mark 13 and Gray persuasively shows a cohesive narrative here where scholars have tended to see disjunction. He establishes his case by reference to Mark's intertextual use of OT prophetic eschatology, particularly texts that signal the judgment of Jerusalem and the temple, as well as texts that speak of Israel's restoration and the ingathering of the Gentiles.

Chapter 4 then focuses on the eschatological role of Jesus' passion. His prayer in Gethsemane and his trial serve to establish a connection to the coming tribulation; his crucifixion and death depict the end of the temple; the tearing of the veil and the Centurion's confession point to the eschatological restoration of the cosmos (of which the temple serves as a microcosm—a point where Gray is at his least confident—opting rather to note the possibility of this explanation rather than setting it forth as probable) and the gathering of the Gentiles to a new temple (of which Jesus is the cornerstone) since in all of this Mark's readers will have the resurrection in view.

The final chapter is simply a summary of the four that came before it and it's followed by a bibliography, ancient source, modern author, and subject indices. *TGM* is a wonderful look at Mark 11-15 and the temple's narrative function. In Mark 11-12 we read of the end of the temple and in 14-15 we read of the end of Jesus while Mark 13 serves to connect the two events via prophetic eschatology. Gray's exegesis is generally persuasive, although I'd quibble with his understanding of "this mountain" (τῷ ὄρει τοῦτῳ) in Mark 11:23 as referring to the temple mount as opposed to the Mount of Olives, but this small disagreement aside I found myself persuaded by the vast majority of Gray's work. It was also nice that a book that employs narrative criticism and focused on Mark's narrative had such a good narrative of its own. Gray writes well and those preparing to write a dissertation would benefit themselves greatly by paying

attention to Gray's work and imitating his style. I highly recommend this work to students of the NT in general and students of Mark in particular.