

5-25-2014

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Vern Ratzlaff

Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon

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Recommended Citation

Ratzlaff, Vern (2014) "Mark As Story," *Consensus*: Vol. 35 : Iss. 1 , Article 10.

Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol35/iss1/10>

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Book Review

Mark As Story

David Rhoads, Joanne Dewey, and Donald Michie
Fortress Press, 2012 (3rd edition)

“Are these stories true?” someone asked, apocryphally, of an anthology. “Yes,” came the reply; “and some of them even happened.”



Mark As Story skillfully develops narrative analysis as the paradigm for the stories, some of which may even have happened; emphasis remains on the story as story (xii), rather than on history (5). So analysis of Mark's writing touches on the categories of narrative, setting, plot, character and rhetoric (6) that make up the genre of a 'book. ("Rhetoric" refers to the method of deriving a response; 'how the narrative may transform its audience.") (7.) The writers of *Mark As Story* then point out the contribution made by each category.

Chapter One is a translation of Mark; of interest is the consistent translation of Greek names into English, e.g 'Christ' is rendered 'the anointed one', "Peter" is "rock." (Would this approach not also support the use of "deceiver," "tempter," or "accuser" in place of "Satan" or "Devil" (cf 92)?) This is most helpful when "Judeans" (a geographical term) is used instead of "Jews" or "Jewish" (xiii).

Conflict is key to the plot; conflict is precipitated by the arrival of the rule of God (78); conflict is with cosmic forces (Satan, demons, illness, nature), authorities, the disciples. Most telling here is the writers' emphasis that conflict reveals both the nature of power and the consequences of exercising power (97). Good social analysis (c.f Malina, Rohrbaugh) look at Jesus' role and achievement, e.g "as a low status person, Jesus needs to evade the efforts of the authorities to silence him" (107).

A few comments on the genre of story. Mark's use of "house" as the key to interaction and teaching is mentioned (67); in the context, "house" is more central to Mark's story line than this brief mention suggests. Also, the story form gains interest and maintains momentum by the use of the present imperfect tense. The writers (180, footnote 8) acknowledge that they do not use this tense, but do not give reasons for their choice; it can be argued that the present imperfect (the historical present) is a significant characteristic of the story form, and if Mark used it, why drop it now?

Of special interest and use in *Mark As Story* are the Exercises (167-172) that guide the reader through analyses and understanding.

Mark As Story is a great read and help in focusing interpretation for us through the genre of "story."

Vern Ratzlaff
Lutheran Theological Seminary
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan