

## Book Reviews

cal theology at its sparkling best. It is one of those rare volumes whose scholarship (as indicated in the footnotes, though there is neither a concluding bibliography nor subject and author indices) will be apparent to fellow-academics while remaining generally accessible to other readers as well. Highly recommended.

Bob Robinson  
Laidlaw College  
Papanui, Christchurch  
New Zealand 8053

*Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret.* By David F. Watson. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010. Pp. x + 229. Paper, \$29.00.

Ever since the groundbreaking but tendentious study of William Wrede (*Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien*, 1901), scholars of the Second Gospel have been fascinated with the meaning and significance of Mark's secrecy motif. Disagreement over which texts constitute the "messianic secret" have complicated discussions, as have issues related to the methodology used by any given scholar working on the question. It is safe to say that there is no consensus on this subject among contemporary scholars, a point the author emphasizes from the outset of this volume.

Watson begins the study by situating his approach within the broader history of Markan scholarship. The introduction provides an overview of research on the secrecy motif, from Wrede and his assumptions, up through redaction-critical analysis, narrative studies, and different social-science approaches. Watson then explains that his approach is a combination of social-scientific methodology and reader-response criticism; he thus relies heavily upon the honor-shame model typi-

cally used by social-science critics.

Chapter 1 is devoted to an examination of secrecy in the context of ancient Mediterranean culture, with specific emphasis on how this differs from modern Western conceptions of secrecy. Specifically, in Mark's first-century context, secrecy was used as a way of preserving boundaries, and in the case of individuals, preserving reputations. For this reason, Watson chooses to avoid the term "secrecy" throughout the remainder of the book; instead he casts his argument primarily in terms of the honor/shame dichotomy.

In Chapter 2, he considers passages in Mark that represent three different categories of secrecy (see p. 38). Here he argues that ancient people would have understood these secrecy passages against the backdrop of honor and shame. Practically, this means that much of what has been previously interpreted as Markan theology is really more a reflection of Mark's socio-cultural concerns. Building on the insights established in the previous chapter, Watson suggests in Chapter 3 that the Markan Jesus continually resists common markers of honor in order to create new, countercultural ways to conceive of honor. Specifically, Jesus resists attempts of others to ascribe honor to him by commanding silence about healings, exorcisms, miracles, etc. Again, these concealment passages are less related to theological concerns, and are more about the "fears, pressures, and concerns of everyday living" faced by Christians in the first century (see p. 85).

Any theory of Mark's secrecy motif must reckon with the passages in which Jesus is open about his identity. Wrede used these passages to show that there was a contradiction in the tradition about what Jesus actually did and what his dis-

ciples later preached about him. Watson examines these passages in Chapter 4, dividing them into two groups: those that take place in the public sphere (1:21–28, 32–34; 2:1–12, 28; 3:1–6, 7–12; 5:1–20, 24b–34; 6:30–44, 53–56; 8:1–9; 9:14–28, 38–41; 10:46–52), and those that take place in private (1:29–31; 4:35–41; 6:45–52; 7:24–30). This is the most explicitly exegetical portion of the book and it is good to see Watson applying his theory to the text of Mark.

Chapter 5 constitutes Watson's attempt to reconcile the concealment passages with the passages in which Jesus is open about his identity. He concludes that Mark provides no rationale for dealing with this seeming contradiction in the Jesus material of the Second Gospel. In the end, the Markan audience is responsible for filling in the narrative gaps and making sense of the fact that concealment texts exist alongside texts where Jesus is open about his identity. While this conclusion may not be satisfying to some, it does show Watson's consistency in relying upon literary and reader-response methods, which begin with the assumption that the final form of the narrative is a unified whole.

Overall, it is good to see social-science criticism working alongside reader-response criticism. Watson's work combines historical, cultural, literary, and theological (ancient and contemporary) analyses which, in my opinion, need to be discussed together rather than in isolation from one another. Even if you disagree with some of the exegetical or hermeneutical decisions of this work, Watson's research will prove to be a valuable contribution to Markan scholarship in general, and the study of Mark's secrecy motif in particular.

Christopher W. Skinner  
Mount Olive College