

time is highly unlikely. We would rather expect an account like the one given by the Chronicler where all scandals and bloodshed are censored (183). But where were the circles who did not acknowledge the Davidic dynasty and when were they active? Kalimi is right in pointing out the non-Deuteronomistic moral visible in the death of the first child (109, 167), so the succession story could have been composed before 586, although hardly as early as Solomon's time, i.e., the tenth century BCE. The details of its context remain though.

We should thank the author for a well-researched and well-balanced study of a fascinating subject that will stimulate scholarly thinking about the whole complex of Israelite kingship, a theme that will never cease to fascinate.

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MATTHEW D.C. LARSEN

*Gospels Before the Book*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, hardback, xviii + 227 pages,  
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Matthew D. C. Larsen takes on the difficult task of posing a basically unanswerable question and getting his readers to question their basic assumptions. The idea Larsen wants us to question is that the Gospel of Mark is a book, that is, a finished writing released into the world with the intention that it shall be read in the form in which it was written. Instead, Larsen argues that the Gospel of Mark is an unfinished collection of notes, from which an early Christian preacher would construct his or her own narrative about Jesus Christ.

Larsen begins his argument by noting that both Cicero and Caesar use *commentarii* or *hypomnēmata* to refer to rough, unfinished drafts of their own memoirs, intended not to be read as is, but to be used as base material for someone else to author a biography. In both of these cases, no one took up the offer, and Cicero is quite certain that this is because both memoirs were too finished, too well-written to be improved upon further. Larsen then points to many other ancient examples: Pliny the

Elder famously left behind 160 *commentarii* of notes from his readings, that could potentially have been the basis for a number of authored books. Plato, Plutarch, and Galen all wrote *hypomnēmata* as first drafts of their literary works or short instructions to their students, and Lucian of Samosata criticizes the rough style of a competing historian by comparing his finished work to the bare *hypomnēmata* of an unschooled soldier, merchant, or manual laborer. In all of these cases, Larsen argues, *hypomnēmata* is associated with unfinished, unpolished, and unpublished writings intended for use by the writer himself or his close associates, as memory aids for what the reader already knows than to explain a subject to the uninitiated.

Next, Larsen sets out to disprove the common conception that if an ancient text has come down to us, it must once have been made public, intentionally and deliberately, by its author. Cicero, Larsen points out, regularly complains that manuscripts of some of his speeches are publicly available against his will, and Diodorus Siculus laments that some early volumes of his magnum opus *The Library of History* have escaped into the world in a premature, unedited form. In addition, pseudepigraphal literature such as 4 Ezra presume the existence of accidental publication by presenting themselves as secret teachings intended for a select group of the author's disciples, not for general consumption.

Larsen also argues that ancient literary works regularly existed in multiple versions of comparable authority. Josephus seems to have circulated rough drafts of his *Jewish War* among his friends before finalizing the work, and the complex last section of his *Jewish Antiquities* suggest multiple revisions and efforts to keep the account up-to-date with recent events. In Qumran, at least two versions of the Community Rule seem to have co-existed, and the text appears to have been updated with new regulations when the life of the community so demanded. In the several versions of Philodemus's *On Rhetoric* preserved in Herculaneum, sketchier and less refined versions seem even to be marked with the adjective *hypomnēmatikon*, to indicate that the scroll is far from a final version. Larsen concludes that an extant copy of an ancient work may have orig-

inated at any point in a writing-and-refining process, and that unfinished or unauthored texts were especially open for revision, even by their readers, into more formal and stable forms.

Having established his view that the Gospel of Mark, in all likelihood, appeared to its earliest readers as a fluid text, still open to revision, Larsen turns to studying how early readers such as Luke, Papias, and Irenaeus regard the Gospel of Mark. Luke, in his preface, describes earlier gospels as Galen describes *hypomnēmata*, Larsen finds, and sets out to produce a more careful (*akribēs*) version that closely follows (*parēkolouthēkoti*) the expected format of an ancient biography. Papias, as preserved by Eusebius in *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15, also describes Mark's working process as writing down what he could remember (*hosa emnēmoneusen*) without any particular arrangement (*ou mentoi taxei*), which Larsen takes to mean that the Gospel of Mark is a textualization of oral preaching rather than a finished book. And while Irenaeus uses words like "book" (*biblion*) and "published" (*exēnegken*) to describe the three other Gospels, he doesn't use these terms about Mark, but characterizes it as a written account of Peter's preaching.

Since the Gospel of Matthew incorporates, in one form or another, 107 of the 115 stories contained within the Gospel of Mark, and since at least several of the changes made in Matthew are aimed at removing ambiguities and clarifying what Mark leaves unsaid, the Gospel of Matthew should not be regarded as a new text, Larsen argues, but as a new and more refined version of the same gospel tradition as in Mark. Since most early manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark include not only one of the different available endings (no ending, short ending, long ending, and Freer Logion) but adds a note regarding this textual problem, we should accept that early readers regarded Mark not as a completed text, Larsen claims, but as an unfinished collection of notes that was open to further addition.

For Larsen, reading Mark as a first-century reader would entail doing away with all notions of Mark as a "book" written by an "author" and to view it as a collection of notes, organized on the basis of common

themes and keywords rather than with an eye to narrative continuity, and with no particular regard toward theological or Christological consistency. Modern scholars should not expect to find a unifying mind behind the multivalent Markan material, Larsen argues, but accept that whatever intricate and multilayered narrative structure they find within the Gospel of Mark is something that they have not discovered, but produced – a practice that is entirely in line with how early readers understood the character of the Markan gospel tradition.

Larsen severely overstates his case when he (repeatedly) calls for the rejection of the concepts of “books” and “authors” entirely, rather than viewing the organizing mind he clearly infers behind the note-collection as organizing his material with an eye toward the eventual production of a complete and edited narrative – a notion that would put the Gospel of Mark more or less at a fascinating junction between collecting one’s material and writing out the first draft of the final work. His interaction with previous scholarship that has stressed the rough, unfinished, and oral character of the Gospel of Mark is cursory at best, and the analysis he performs of the Markan text to specify why an early reader would take it to be *hypomnēmata* rather than *biblion* is brief and limited. Despite these drawbacks, Larsen presents a fresh, readable, and engaging perspective on the unfinishedness of the Markan version of the gospel, that is well worth considering within the larger scholarly discourses on the formation, genre interaction, and early reception of early Christian Gospels.

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TIMOTHY P. MACKIE

*Expanding Ezekiel: The Hermeneutics of Scribal Addition in the  
Ancient Text Witnesses of the Book of Ezekiel*

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hardcover, 316 pages, \$102.60, ISBN: 978-3-525-54033-6

This monograph, the published version of the author’s doctoral thesis, deals, as the title suggests, with the gradual composition of the Book of Ezekiel. The key-word of the study is “scribal expansion,” i.e., the no-