Overview of *WRITTEN TO BE HEARD: Recovering the Messages of the Gospels*¹

This scholarly study of the Gospels consists of a Foreword by Nicholas Wolterstorff, a Preface, Acknowledgements, an Introduction (ch. 1) followed by five major sections, each of which considers a single Gospel account (except for Luke-Acts, which is understandably divided into two), followed by endnotes, a brief bibliography and two indices (names and subjects, Scripture references). There are many things to appreciate and applaud in this NT narrative survey; however, a number of queries and concerns also arose for me as I read through the book’s opening portion, including the authors’ exposition of the Gospel of Mark (chs. 2-6). In this overview, I first consider the authors’ approach in general and then their consideration of Mark in particular. In each case, I will note some important insights offered about methodology and text analysis which this investigation reveals or underscores; this will be accompanied by my critique of selected issues that came to my attention along the way.

The central thesis that this book seeks to develop and illustrate is that “the gospels were written to be listened to by people who had the listening skills and habits of antiquity,” hence also the verbal cues that would enable them to aurally perceive “the structure of the gospel and hence its message” (ix-x). Two of the principal devices employed in the Gospel and by other composers of antiquity—namely, repetition and chiastic structural arrangements—tend to be relatively unfamiliar to, and thus not readily perceived or appreciated by modern audiences (x). Initially, then, “the gospels were spoken, performed, even sung to their mostly preliterate audiences,” but when read by literates today, their “profound messages…go unheard in texts crafted for the listener’s ear, not the reader’s eye” (xi). As far as the strategy of this book is concerned, the process of “engaging each gospel as an orally derived text enables the recovery of Jesus’s explosive messages and the meanings of his life, death, and resurrection—messages that disturbed and compelled their original listening audiences” (xii).

What the authors regard as “the lost message of the gospels” resides primarily in “their ‘missing middles’—precisely where we learn what the life and death of Jesus mean” (3, original italics). The fact of such “lostness” is often confirmed, according to them, by the “wrongheaded responses” that most Christians today give to these three basic questions: “What is the gospel, the ‘good news’? – What does it mean to be ‘saved’” – What is the role of Jesus in this salvation?” (3-4). Three central principles of reading the Gospels aright are then proposed: The first is: “Read to ‘hear’ the distinctive shape of each gospel crafted through repeated hearing cues” (5). More specifically, this means that “measured repetition and rhythm, musical terms that typically apply to poetry, are necessary for understanding biblical narratives as well” (6, original italics). Second, we must “listen to each gospel as a unified whole within its own textual and cultural context” in an effort to “uncover” the meaning that is embedded in its structure” (6-7). Third, we should “be aware of and set aside prior religious

beliefs and commitments that can distort the voice of each gospel” (7). Perhaps the most insightful observation of the authors' Introduction appears in the following musical analogy (8):

Unlike most contemporary narratives, the gospels proceed forward while circling backward, like a symphony. Successive patterns overlap and interconnect with each other to build their compelling messages. The stories spiral forward while harkening backward. Such orchestration echoes something prior while moving forward.

Such powerful structural, rhetorical, and theological literary movements are readily detectible in all of the Gospels, from the allegedly simplest (Mark) to the most complex (Luke).

The inviting promise of the opening pages of Written to be Heard is somewhat dampened, however, by a number of exaggerated claims, debatable assertions, and promises that are left unfulfilled in the pages to come. The following is a selection of these problematic statements (my comments follow in italics):

- In a chiastic structure, the main point of the passage is in the center (x). This is generally true, but this central teaching or exhortation may also be reiterated at the end, especially in a longer concentric arrangement.

- The gospels...we've come to learn were never intended to be read (xi). This contention may be understood rightly or wrongly—the former, if silent, individual reading to oneself is in mind. However, most scholarly evidence, even that of this book, would support the claim that the Gospels were actually written to be read and heard aloud.2

- For most readers [today], then, the hearing cues that make up those [oral] patterns are silenced. As a result, the meaning of the gospels has been lost (xi). I would view this as an obvious overstatement, which is unfortunately reiterated in the book, hence detracting from its credibility since the alternative hermeneutical strategies being offered here are not all that novel or unique in the world of biblical narrative studies.

- What does it mean to be saved? Entrance into God's earthly kingdom... (4). Even in Mark, probably the earliest Gospel, such an earthly emphasis is not preeminent (Mk. 14:25), a teaching made the clearest in John (3:5, 18:36).

- Even the most earnest and thorough reading of each gospel misses the medium, the literary construction of each text as oral performance. And, missing the medium, we miss the message (5). This is another exaggeration, as was (is) McLuhan's original

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2 “The Gospel of Mark is not kerygma; it is bios in rhetorical form…the textbook that gathered up the memoirs and recollections of Peter and presented them in persuasive form” (Ben Witherington III, New Testament Rhetoric: An Introductory Guide to the Art of Persuasion in and of the New Testament (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 26; cf. Richard Bauckham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), ch. 7; Ernst Wendland, Orality and Scripture: Composition, Translation, and Transmission (Dallas, TX: SIL International 2013), 94-102. As in the case of most NT writings, one could query the nature and extent of “rhetoric” in Mark: Was it actually Greco-Roman or more Septuagintal-Semitic in character—maybe even sui generis, a creative mixture of the two literary influences?
dictum, and by overstating the case, one distorts the potential benefit of the lesser point that is true: The medium, or means of communicating a message, certainly does affect or influence its reception and interpretation; however, it does not determine it.

- In this book we provide “hearing aids” that highlight the oral cues running through each gospel text. ... In these pages we recapture some of this experience by focusing on the “measured repetition” and “inner rhythm of the text.” (6). This proposed method of analysis appears to promise careful analytical attention to the actual Greek text of the Gospels. Unfortunately, that is not the case; instead of the suggested (my hoped-for) micro-analysis, we find in subsequent pages a macro-study of the Gospels that is seemingly based on any English (or other) translation of the original.

- As Robert Alter notes, “What we find in biblical narrative is an elaborately integrated system of repetitions, some dependent on the actual recurrence of individual phonemes, words, or short phrases, others linked instead to...actions, images, and ideas” (7). As suggested above, the authors’ treatment of “these overall patterns of hearing cues” focus on the repetition of key ideas and topics found on the higher levels of narrative discourse organization, with little or no reference to the Greek text at all.

- “[W]e can never completely divest ourselves of our biases... What unfolds in this guide, then, is an attempt at as bias-free a literary exploration as possible...” (7). The degree to which this goal is successfully achieved—or not—must be determined by scholarly readers then with reference to the authors’ interpretation of textual evidence and, indeed, their selection and arrangement of compositional data. As will be noted below, a few questions may be raised also in this respect.

- We offer a recovery of what’s been lost—the unique message of each gospel—through a careful analysis of what each text says, heard in its own ancient voice and on its own ancient literary terms (8). The lack of virtually any mention of the original Greek text has already been noted. The authors do present an enlightening “close-reading” of each Gospel (in translation)—how much “lostness” or “uniqueness” is there will depend on the theological expertise and literary experience of this book’s readers—perhaps in comparison with what they have learned from other analyses employing different exegetical and hermeneutical approaches.

- For both readers of great literature and followers of Jesus, we offer the keys to the recovery of the radical and relevant messages of the forgotten gospels. We offer, in short, the keys to the kingdom (11). No comment needs to be made on this clear instance of authorial overreach in terms of the potential benefits being offered to this book’s readers.

In this second portion of my overview, I will summarize (mainly through direct quotation) a number of the valuable insights to be found in Written to be Heard with reference to the five chapters that are devoted in the book to Mark’s Gospel.3 In chapter 2 of Written to be Heard, the first major section of Mark (1:1-4:34) is given the heading, “The Kingdom of God has

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3 I now relegate most of my concerns and queries to footnotes.
come near; repent” (15), which sounds quite appropriate.⁴ According to the authors, “Mark’s central message is one of both warning and promise. Mark’s repeated warnings (8:15; 12:38; 13:5, 9, 33) come with the promise that ‘the one who endures will be saved’ (13:13)” (16). A prominent thread in this gospel is the bad news that Jesus’ closest disciples continually fail this test of faithful endurance, and Mark concludes in narrative “gloom” due to its “sudden and apparently inexplicable ending,”⁵ which seems to suggest that “although death is defeated, no one remains to carry on the good news” (16). Even the female followers of Jesus let us down due to their “fearful disobedience” (16). A sequence of major sections and prominent thematic complexes comprise the first portion of Mark’s Gospel:

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⁴ There is a clear overlap, however, in the following pericope (4:35-41), where we hear about Jesus calming a storm on Lake Galilee—after which he had to call his disciples to repentance for their lack of faith (v. 40). But this text is placed into a different topical series (and a new chapter), hence indicating the flexibility (and “fuzzy boundaries”) required in any notional thematic scheme for the Gospels.

⁵ Flowing against the tide of current scholarship, including that of Borgman and Clark, I would suggest that the so-called “longer ending” of Mark (16:9-20) deserves more attention than it is normally given. This option is curtly dismissed in a footnote as “a clear addition by a later and possible nervous scribe” (329). But before readers do so, it may be worth their while to check out a recent, detailed argument for the longer text, in David W. Hester, Does Mark 16:9-20 Belong in the New Testament? (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015). In a recent review of this scholarly book, E. Allen Sorum summarizes some of the external and internal evidence that Hester provides, including his preferred theory of why this ending went missing: “[T]he longer ending comprised notes that Mark ‘was going to use’ in his final draft of his Gospel [indeed, these verses do read like mere notes, perhaps several pages of a temporary codex copy—not those of a ‘nervous scribe’ and include prominent references to one of the prior text’s main themes, namely, the unbelief of Jesus’ closest disciples, 16:11-14].” Mark was not able to complete his work because he was ‘permanently interrupted’ by death or persecution…” (Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly 116:4, Fall, 2019: 307-310 [309]).

In my opinion, the original composition was clearly broken off after v. 8, and the “death” referred to was obviously not that of Mark but rather that of his primary source, the Apostle Peter, in Rome (1 Pet. 5:13). Some time after this sad “interruption” then, and after initial, hasty manuscript “publication” of his unfinished work (to 16:8), Mark (or his amanuensis) was able to complete the Gospel either from memory or using his original “notes”—the delay naturally occasioning several textual editions. Thus, Mark’s Gospel does not end in a “strange non-concluding conclusion” (56) like a modern reader-response critic would have it—that is, densely and implicitly, with each reader-hearer left to come to their own decision as to how to respond, e.g., “Beware! Wake up!... a warning to hear and to heed and to repent and to follow” (57, original italics). Instead, the closing message, roughcast though it may be, echoes its beginning (1:1-15) and is arguably much more positive in its perspective: “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ... Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere... (16:15, 20). See also Daniel Witte, “Select Text Linguistics of Mark 16:9–20 — Lexeme Frequency, Orality, and Peak” (unpublished paper), and the substantial, carefully researched study of Nicholas P. Lund, The Original Ending of Mark: A New Case for the Authenticity of Mark 16: 9–20 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014). In a recent study, Dr. Elijah Hixon, an expert in the field, concludes: “Because Mark 16:9-20 is undeniably early, is present in 99 percent of manuscripts, and has traditionally been considered canonical, I recommend keeping it in the text. ... Some have suggested that the verses might be apostolic, but not from Mark himself. The best solution in my judgment is that of Ephraim: include the verses, but with a word of caution explaining they may not be original. That keeps us honest about ancient Christians whose Bibles ended Mark at 16:8” (https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/was-mark-16-9-20-originally-mark-gospel/; 02/13/2020).

⁶ The impressive role of women in Mark’s Gospel is strangely downplayed, even disparaged in Written to be Heard. On the contrary, they are among the many and varied personages—from an evil spirit (1:24) to a Roman centurion (15:39)—who appear periodically throughout the text, either boldly acting or confessing in sharp contrast to the recurring failures of the Twelve disciples. These women feature most prominently after
• The Good News and Jesus, its authoritative Proclaimer (1:1-15): “Mark’s story moves ahead in overlapping circles of authority and response, a narrative dynamic that increasingly generates an implied question for the listener: How do you respond to the good news of Jesus? (17, original italics).

• Beginning the authority—response sequence; twelve episodes (1:16-3:6): These “two main hearing cues, authority and response, emphasize the authoritative teaching an action of Jesus while preparing Mark’s audiences...to assess their own responses” (20).

• An interwoven pattern of family, house, and home: “The idea of family was implicit in Jesus’s call of his original four followers, who left family and vocation to follow him. ... The ‘family’ of God, we hear takes utter precedence over normal family allegiance and honor” (21). “By extending family to those who do the will of God, Jesus explodes the genetic and cultural boundaries of the family, opening up his ‘family’ to every human being” (25).

• Sower, seed, and soils—A parable about response (4:1-34): “The parable isn’t primarily about the sower (Jesus) or seeds (the word of God taught by Jesus); it’s about soils—response” (22).

Chapter 3 covers Mark 4:35-8:21 with the title: “Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” (26). In this section, three boat scenes, which highlight the disciples’
failure in contrast with three “good responses” by ordinary believers, interact narratively with a pair of “feeding miracles” to “work like a musical score with interwoven repeating themes” (26). The “three boat rides” manifest the disciples’ “fear” (4:35-41), their “hard heart” (6:45-53), and their “shut eyes, hard hearts” (8:13-21). 13 While awe, astonishment, and amazement are typically positive terms, Mark’s text shows them to be superficial, subject to disappointment and even a subsequent hardening of the heart” (28). The two “miraculous feedings” (6:35-45; 8:1-21) further exemplify “the disciples’ dismal responses to the authoritative teaching of Jesus and his show of kingdom power” (30). 14 In contrast, intertwined within the various accounts of the disciples’ unimpressive, even stony responses are those of a succession of other characters who interrupt the narrative to request assistance from Jesus in humility and faith—Jairus, a synagogue elder (5:21-24, 35-43), a woman who was ritually unclean due to persistent hemorrhages (5:25-34), and even a Gentile mother pleading for her deathly ill daughter (7:24-30). These three “parallel scenarios of life-bringing faith offer paradigms of faith in the authoritative power of Jesus” (34). 15 “The disciples’ fears and hard hearts likewise preclude their understanding of and trust in God’s compassionate kingdom” (35).

“Who is the Greatest?” (Mark 8:22-10:52) is the theme of Chapter 4, which further foregrounds the “anatomy of failure” on the part of Jesus’ disciples, as “Mark explores what lies at the heart of this blindness—unwillingness to see” (36). 16 Two stories about blindness being cured are viewed as “framing this middle section”: “This blindness-healed framing accentuates the metaphoric blindness (sight-but-can’t-see) of the disciples; both blind men...
are healed (can see/understand), but the sighted disciples cannot see/understand” (36). This portion of Mark is first discussed with reference to “three intensifying movements” involving “Jesus’s way” in contrast to “the disciples’ way”: (1) “Jesus suffering loss”; “Disciples seeking gain”; and (3) Jesus’ call to “Repentance” (37). There follows what is, in essence, a basic content summary of three internal pericopes following the preceding threefold outline: 8:27-38; 9:30-37; and 10:32-45 (37-41). Occasional evaluative observations are included, for example: “God’s kingdom righteousness, characterized by humility, generosity, and compassion, runs clean contrary to most normal social values—glory, wealth, and power—and so is a threat to religious, social, and political leaders who both thrive on and control expressions of power” (41). “Woven between [these three] movements” is another trio of “show-and-tell” episodes: “The light of transfiguration, the shadow of response” (9:2-29); “Little ones, continued” (9:38-10:16); and “The poor as little ones” (10:17-31) (42-44). In conclusion, “The stupidity of the disciples, we learn in this section, is not due to ignorance. … [T]hey cannot ‘see’ because their hearts are captive to cares of this world… [including]…their desire for self-glorification...” (45, original italics).

Special attention is devoted to Jesus’ title “the Son of Man” in chapter 5, the tragic narrative irony being that “those closest to the authoritative power of the Son of Man end up the most confused about—or resistant to—who Jesus, the Son of Man truly is” (46). This theme is developed in terms of several sub-topics: “Authoritative Son of Man,” which “is confirmed by his power over the alleged physical consequences of sin” (2:10, 28) (46-47); “Shamed Son of Man,” in which “the Son of Man willingly suffers on behalf of the kingdom, while the disciples refuse” (8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45) (47); “Glorious Son of Man” (13:26; 14:21, 22, 36, 40).

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17 This description provides the apparent reason why this section of Mark was segmented by the authors the way it was, ignoring both discourse disjunctive as well as conjunctive devices, as explained above (ftn. 16). In consequence, a contrived contemporary conceptual frame becomes more important (rhetorically neat, memorable, etc.) than that of the original Greek text itself.

18 This long and complex pericope includes two distinct episodes (a—9:2-13; b—9:14-29) and several different “responses,” but only one in specific reaction to Christ’s transfiguration, as erroneously implied by the topical heading given for this section: a—Peter, James, and John responding to the transfiguration event; b—the crowd, Jesus responds to the crowd; an evil spirit, Jesus responds to the evil spirit; the disciples, Jesus responds to his disciples.

19 There are only two rather brief references to “little ones” in this designated topical unit, namely, 9:42 and 10:13-16. The section thus includes several other topics that are selectively omitted from consideration—issues pertaining to belonging to Christ’s kingdom (9:39-41, 43-50); marriage and divorce (10:1-12).

20 This pericope really has nothing at all to do with either “the poor” or “little ones,” as the authors’ subsequent discussion itself attests; the heading is therefore quite misrepresentative. The disciples are addressed by Christ as “children” only in passing and again in reference to their lack of adequate understanding of his spiritual kingdom (24). Thus, this section, which begins with Jesus’ interaction with a wealthy, wannabe disciple (10:17) again focuses on the difficulties of genuine discipleship (10:29-31).

21 The topics and passages considered under this section are only partial and selective. For example, the divine “authority” of Jesus is demonstrated much earlier in the Markan narrative with the calling of his first disciples (1:16-18) and further manifested many times after chapter 2, for example, when asserting his right to heal on the Sabbath (3:1-6), defeating the demonic forces of Satan (3:22-30), and when calming a storm on the sea (4:35-41).
In conclusion, “Mark’s pattern of clustered explanations of “Son of Man’ has been carefully calibrated to reinforce his understanding of Jesus” (49).

The final chapter of Written to be Heard dealing with Mark’s Gospel (6) considers the theme: “The one who endures to the end will be saved” (11:1-16a), which is now “the conclusion of the rhythmic beat throughout the story of authority—response, authority—response” (50). But now we are at the end of the story with its allegedly “unconcluding conclusion” and discover that “none have endured” (51). So in this chapter we first have a description of the

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22 The “glorious Son of Man” is also revealed earlier in Mark, within the authors’ designated “central section” (47), for example, 8:38 – “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation [note also this demonstration of “authority”!], the Son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels” (cf. also 9:1).

23 However, it should be noted that the actual pattern being referred to is not as “carefully calibrated” as the authors’ neat topical sections and selection of passages would suggest. In fact, one could argue that the varied expressions of “authority” in Jesus’ words and deeds as manifested throughout Mark’s Gospel are at least also partial reflections of his divine “glory,” which progressively build up to a climax in the account (15:39; 16:6), even as this prominent concept is composed to contrast thematically with the disciples’ repeated failures and, on the other hand, by the religious authorities’ constant opposition and rejection of who Jesus really is. Furthermore, it might also be pointed out again that the reference to “Mark’s overlapping patterns of repeated hearing cues” (49) does not have reference to the original Greek text, but rather, only in general to recurring key terms and narrative topics and motifs that a close reading (perhaps also a hearing) of the entire Gospel text in translation would probably raise awareness of.

24 As already mentioned, other prominent, contrastive “rhythmic beats” in this Gospel could be listed, for example: Messianic testimony (Jesus) versus opposition (religious leaders), and attestative failure (disciples) versus success (other personages).

25 Are we simply to ignore Joseph of Arimathea, “who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God” and who risked everything important in his social and religious life to “boldly” ask for the body of Jesus (15:43)? Surely his mini-story would have soundly shocked every listener at this dramatic point in the narrative (and just before the Sabbath). Also, what about those women—Jesus’ most faithful disciples—to whom most of the concluding verses of the Gospel are devoted: should their courageous testimony in action be discounted and ignored? Indeed, this is a major reason why I do not believe that Mark deliberately chose to curtail his narrative account at 16:8 (in fulfillment of Jesus prediction in 14:27 [53]). No ancient writer—certainly not the one who took upon himself the task of providing “the beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1) would leave “the ending” completely blank in this disappointing, unfinished manner. Rather, there must have been some sudden catastrophic break in transmission, and the only, though unsatisfactory, textual “repair” available is what has been passed down in secondary manuscripts as 16:9-20. In fact, there are some notable elements in this latter text that have already been anticipated or foreshadowed earlier in the undisputed text of Mark, most importantly: “...wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world...” (14:9) – “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (16:15). So reader-respond, indeed—take that, or leave it!

To this point I will quote one of my reviewers: “I did for a while speculate that Mark deliberately ended his gospel in such a way. . . . But it just doesn’t pass the sniff test in the end. It bespeaks an audience expectation that is alien to their culture and without prior signaling i.e., that they are somehow familiar (as we are with our dystopian visions) with the device of open ended, ambiguous, and even dark endings that seemingly subvert the entire prior story line. Virgil’s Aeneid is the only ancient example I can think of which may do this, ending with Aeneus killing Turnus begging for mercy in an act of savage violence. But even here, one must say that our modern sensibilities may be intruding on the ancient text. Who knows if Vergil was more influenced by the casual violence that was baked into to Roman culture, and their belief in the justice of destroying to the max those who opposed (debellare superbos), more so, say, than to his intellect and desire to write delicate lines of beauty? The parable of the prodigal son (i.e. the older son) is the other example I can think of an open ending.
respective responses of “(1) the religious leaders, (2) the crowd, and (3) the disciples... to the authoritative power of Jesus” (51). Borgman and Clark call attention to Jesus' “final speech to his followers (13:3-37)... [and] In such exhortations to persist in faith we find not only Jesus's last thoughts for the disciples, but Mark's clear message for the audience of his narrative” (53). In the second major part of this chapter, the authors reflect on “The death of Jesus: Blood of the covenant poured out for many” (14:22-24) (55). Thus, “Jesus’s death, in Mark, signifies the fulfillment of the covenant, which God made with Abraham and Moses: the reign of God's presence and blessing on earth” (55, original italics). In the end, we have a helpful summary of the nature and purpose of this Gospel: “Mark’s literary artistry has created a powerful cautionary story, a compelling account of what it means to follow the Son of Man through suffering—and accompanied by glory, but on the Lord’s terms, not theirs” (57).

Conclusion

Pros:

Written to be Heard presents an excellent overview of each of the four Gospels, with an especially helpful emphasis on literary structure and highlighting intratextual relationships, including many insightful exegetical observations on the biblical text. For these reasons, this book would admirably serve as an introduction to the Gospels and New Testament narrative in courses on the Bible college, university, or Seminary educational level. It should also be noted that my overview does not cover Matthew, Luke-Acts, and John in this book (61-352). Readers will need to explore this latter, and by far the largest, portion of Written to be Read for themselves in order to come to their own conclusions on both the favorable as well as the critical aspects of the present appraisal.

Cons:

But that one is clearly signaled by the arc of the narrative, unlike Mark's 'ending” (Paul Wendland, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary). After a thorough review of the evidence on both sides of the issue, R.T. France concludes: “And my own inclination is to side with the increasingly unfashionable minority, who find an intentional ending at 16:8 an unacceptably ‘modern’ option” (The Gospel of Mark [NIGTC], Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002, 670-688 [673]).

26 The response of Pilate (15:2) is strangely included in this category (52).

27 There are of course several different “crowds” involved—in particular, the people who joyously welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem as their king, and those who called for his crucifixion on the cross (52-53).

28 One wonders why 14:25 was omitted from consideration—could it be that Jesus reference to “the [future] kingdom of God” does not happen to fit the authors' topical outline at this point?

29 Again, we see what appears to be an overemphasis on God’s earthly rule: “In Mark's Gospel this covenant is fulfilled in the earthly reign of God, which some will see before they die” (55). However, there are a number of important texts in Mark's Gospel, especially towards the end of Christ's ministry on earth, that would correct this impression—pointing ahead to the Lord's heavenly coming and rule, for example:” 12:25-27; 13:24-27; 14:25, 62; and even 16:6.

30 Two modifications of this concluding statement would be necessary, in my opinion—that is, to clarify the nature of Mark's human and divine “sources,” namely, the Apostle Peter and the Holy Spirit.
Written to be Heard is not really a performance oriented or orality-based study (as initially claimed, xi), certainly not with reference to the original text. Thus, it offers, not an inductive, detailed, sequential approach to a study of the Gospels, but instead, we have a deductive topical and thematic presentation—one firmly grounded in the text’s varied lexical patterns of repetition (5), but these being seemingly derived from the surface of the text in translation rather than from the actual Greek composition itself.31 Furthermore, the book is not unique in dramatically recovering “what’s been lost” heretofore in biblical scholarship.32 On the other hand, it does represent a significant addition to the corpus of literary-rhetorical “close readings” of the New Testament that serve to greatly enrich our understanding of these ancient theological works and at the same time expand our vision as to how they may be “contextualized” for a contemporary age and a diversity of new social and cultural settings.

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