

Marie Noonan Sabine is excoriating in her criticism of this longer ending to Mark's gospel in the New Collegeville Biblical Commentary where I often go for support. It fails on several counts, not least because it

“ was not made part of the official biblical canon until the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. It is strange that it was canonised, even though it once formed part of an heretical work (the second century Diatessaron of Tatian), particularly since the ending itself is guilty of trying to blend together different gospel passages (the heresy for which Tatian was condemned). Even stranger is the fact that although modern scholarship agrees that it was not authored by Mark it is still being printed in most Christian bibles and used by the Catholic Church as the gospel on the Feast of St Mark!” (page 1106)

One can feel the indignation, and even more so as she goes on to expose it's role in undermining the final witness of the women at the true ending of the gospel where their ekstasis on seeing Jesus – that is their ecstatic bewilderment, is often also undermined or underplayed by the emphasis on the accompanying 'fear' which would be better translated as 'awe'. I couldn't help feeling something of the same indignation regarding our present translation or rendering of our current missal where other people's theologies and concerns are smuggled in under the guise of officialdom. Where does this leave us with St Mark? It leaves us with an otherwise lucid, concise and vivid retelling of Christ's ministry which has all the hallmarks of a faithful retelling of someone who was there to see it all – probably St Peter himself. And this is to be our witness too. Not one essentially learned from books but from a lived experience of the Christ who still walks among us and unifies us with his spirit. The bible of course is a great help in this but needs to be handled with care. And the test of its truth is the living care we have for one another – this is our primary witness.

“All wrap yourselves in humility to be servants of each other.

Be calm but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion looking for someone to eat”

There's another lion at work here as well as the lion of Mark – as ever, the devil is in the details.

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