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Teaching Mark as Collective Memory

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In the course of the recent changes of paradigm in New Testament scholarship, there has been a remarkable shift of attention from atomistic to synthetic readings of the Bible—or, in other words, from pericopes to unabridged biblical books. After *Redaktionskritik* rightly rehabilitated the evangelists as theologians, the Gospel texts themselves—considered as narrative theology and interpreted experience—consequently gained more and more attention in the exegetical guild. Though this development might have been unexpected for some, it is not in the least surprising. As has often been the case in the history of research, the pendulum swings back in the opposite direction.

This latest paradigm shift in research is deeply connected with the *cultural turn* and has been especially welcomed by teachers and pastoral ministers. They frequently experienced great difficulties when faced with the task of developing and structuring lessons, catecheses, or sermons on the basis of the insights and outcomes of historical-critical research. The renewed scholarly interest in biblical books and their theologies, which replaces the concentration on particular texts, traditions, and possible origins, is most helpful in their working fields. Having myself been a secondary school teacher for a couple of years, and beyond that involved in a curriculum in confirmation catechesis, I am quite sensitive to the difficulties that a predominantly origin-focused approach to the Bible entails.

As the tide has turned, my German context currently experiences a larger emphasis on *Ganzschriftlektüre*, that is, the reading of unabridged biblical books. Already customary for Old Testament books when I attended secondary school twenty years ago, this approach has only lately been applied to New Testament books. Given that almost every new

method in New Testament studies is put to the test on Mark,[1] it is not surprising at the moment that the Gospel of Mark has gained the undivided attention of religious education teachers and pastoral ministers and is a recent topic of both advanced training in religious instruction and scholarly publications in this area.[2]

This renewed interest, of course, raises methodological questions. How can one fruitfully read the entire and unabridged Gospel of Mark? As strange as this question might sound to an unbiased reader, it actually poses difficulties for the exegetically trained one. A thorough look into the average New Testament scholar's methodological toolbox almost instantly reveals a hermeneutical gap: neither a *literarkritisch*-genetic approach alone, as widely dominant in historical-critical research, nor a pure narrative analysis, which ignores the text's history of origin, will be a satisfactory approach for this enterprise.[3] This explains not only the enthusiasm of the readers from nonacademic contexts, but also the rise of the *canonical approach*, the renewed interest in *biblical theology*, and, most recently, *theological interpretation* as attempts to close the gap.[4]

A fruitful and theologically sound reading of an entire and unabridged biblical book requires an approach that is able to combine both a hermeneutic that takes seriously the origin and history of the text, including its oral prehistory and the different tangible written forms, as well as its rootedness in a particular sociohistorical situation, *and* one that is able to unlock the experiences and theological reflections that are expressed in a narration. Of course, since this hermeneutic should be as unbiased

as possible by later theological and ecclesiastical developments, it also requires a self-critical or at least metareflective attitude on the part of the reader.

I have dealt with these questions in a recently completed research project, *Das Markusevangelium als kollektives Gedächtnis*. The project resulted in the development of a reading model for the New Testament on the basis of *social memory theory* that aims to do justice to the history of the text as well as to provide a set of fresh reading glasses.[5]

Once the scholarly work is done, the question arises about how it can be introduced to those who will apply it to their own practice fields and spheres of activity. In this contribution, I will thus address the question of how the new hermeneutical approach can be brought fruitfully to an average lecture room. Thus my remarks will focus more on didactical considerations and how this approach can be taught and less on the impact for Markan scholarship or exegesis in general. The contribution consists of three sections. The first section will provide a very brief summary of the intention and the outcomes of my research project. The second and more extended section will introduce the course "Mark as Collective Memory" in order to deal with the question of how the approach can be brought to the lecture room. Finally, concluding reflections will shed some light on the question of the wider methodological and didactic impact of the project, including the question of how the ideas can contribute to the teaching of the Bible on a more general level.

Reading Mark as Collective Memory

The initial point of my research on *Mark as Collective Memory* was the question of how social memory theory can bear fruit for the understanding and interpretation of New Testament texts. What made the project a challenging enterprise was not so much the application of the findings and insights of social memory theory to biblical exegesis but the implicit change of perspective when biblical texts are read as cultural texts.

1. Janice C. Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), ix.

2. Gudrun Guttenberger, "Das Markusevangelium in religionspädagogischer Perspektive," in *Religionspädagogischer Kommentar zur Bibel*, ed. Bernhard Dressler and Harald Schroeter-Wittke (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 433–51; Peter Müller, *Mit Markus erzählen: Das Markusevangelium im Religionsunterricht* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1999); and Ricarda Sohns, *Das Markusevangelium: Das biblische Buch als Ganzschrift*, Religion betrifft uns 2013.1 (Aachen: Bergmoser & Höller, 2013).

3. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), I.A.4.

4. Ibid., I.C.1; for theological interpretation, see Richard Hays, "Reading the Bible with Eyes of Faith: The Practice of Theological Exegesis," *JTI* 1 (2007): 5–21; Walter Moberly, "'Interpret the Bible Like Any Other Book'? Requiem for an Axiom," *JTI* 4 (2010): 91–110; and quite critically, Marcus Bockmuehl, "Bible versus Theology: Is 'Theological Interpretation' the Answer?" *NV* 9 (2011): 27–47.

5. Sandra Hübenthal, *Das Markusevangelium als kollektives Gedächtnis*, FRLANT 253 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014); Hübenthal, "Reading Mark as Collective Memory," in *Social Memory and Social Identity in the Study of Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Samuel Byrskog, Raimo Hakola, and Jutta Jokiranta, NTOA/SUNT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming).

Historical-critical scholarship has provided the exegetical guild with the paradigm of the Gospels as writings drafted by authors who depended heavily on tradition and wrote for a particular audience ("community") in a particular sociohistorical context and thus with particular aims and pragmatics. This model not only sees the evangelists or redactors as carriers of (memory) traditions, but usually also focuses on Jesus as the *object* of memory. It is this Jesus—not only his life and death, but also his impact—that the texts give information about. A certain type of *Gattungsdiskussion*, using terms such as *vita, bios,* or *biography* bears witness to this model. The question of referentiality, that is, how a text relates to the extratextual and extralinguistic reality, plays an important role in this discussion. Since, on the one hand, narrative texts are generally suspected to be more fictional than historiographical and, on the other hand, historical research and especially (historical) Jesus research asks for factual texts, it is obvious that the Gospels, read as literary compositions, are not fully satisfactory. The Gospels, which have been composed out of small and discernible units, are much better read as tradition literature, especially if the units can be separated and questioned independently about their peculiarity and their historical usability.

Even though many members of the exegetical guild claim to have largely left behind historical-critical methodology, the depicted historical-critical model of the origin and growth of the texts is quite vivid and frequently still forms the basis of their research. On the other end of the spectrum, some scholars have thrown out the baby with the bath water and analyze the biblical text exclusively as a literary composition, disregarding its value as a historical source.

Thus applying social memory theory to the study of the Gospels first of all means developing a model for the text and its genesis that takes seriously both its literary and its historical character. Reading the Gospel of Mark as collective memory, or, to be more precise, as the *excarnation* of a collective memory,[6] thus entails the necessity of distinguishing and defending this approach over against two other concepts: on the one hand, against a misconceived objectification and historiography of eyewitness testimonies, a view that does not take seriously the constructional character of recollection and memory; and, on the other hand, against the view

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6. Aleida Assmann, "Exkarnation: Gedanken zur Grenze zwischen Körper und Schrift," in *Raum und Verfahren*, ed. Jörg Huber and Alois Martin Müller (Basel: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1993), 133–55.

that sees the author, redactor, or evangelist as the authority who can evaluate the accuracy, significance, and (theological) adequacy of traditions and their future tradition.[7] Having said this, I should also mention that the keyword *tradition* invokes particular concepts of community, church, and organizational structure that very often—and mostly implicitly—structure the exegetical discourse. Indeed, one's own perception of church is crucial when it comes to picturing the processes of tradition, as can be gathered, for example, from the recent discussion of orality.

Often, the reality might be quite different from what common sense and ecclesiastical tradition teaches us. The broad interdisciplinary research in the field of recollection and memory reveals, for example, that individual and social memory are not only processes whose structures are largely analogous and follow similar patterns, but also that their forms of expression, that is, socially accepted memory stories, originate as individual episodes and are developed only later into larger narratives. Taking this character of memory seriously, one can understand and read New Testament texts as texts of collective recollection. The research of Maurice Halbwachs[8] and its continuation both by Jan Assmann[9] and Aleida Assmann[10] can be applied fruitfully to exegetical discourses. Connecting their insights with recent research on intergenerational recollection and identity construction,[11] sociology,[12] and historical psychology[13]

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7. Hübenthal, *Markusevangelium*, 52–60.

8. Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, 2nd ed., BEH 8 (Paris: Michel, 1994); Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, 2nd ed., BEH 28 (Paris: Michel, 1997).

9. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck, 1992); Assmann, *Religion und kulturelles Gedächtnis: Zehn Studien* (Munich: Beck, 2000).

10. Aleida Assmann, "Wie wahr sind Erinnerungen?" in *Das soziale Gedächtnis: Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung*, ed. Harald Welzer (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 103–22.

11. Harald Welzer, "Das gemeinsame Verfertigen von Vergangenheit im Gespräch," in Welzer, *Soziale Gedächtnis*, 160–78; Welzer, *Das kommunikative Gedächtnis: Eine Theorie der Erinnerung* (Munich: Beck, 2002); Welzer, *Grandpa Wasn't a Nazi: National Socialism and the Holocaust in German Memory Culture* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2005).

12. Bernhard Giesen, *Kollektive Identität*, Die Intellektuellen und die Nation 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1999).

13. Jürgen Straub, "Geschichten erzählen, Geschichte bilden: Grundzüge einer narrativen Psychologie historischer Sinnbildung," in *Erzählung, Identität, und historisches Bewusstsein: Die psychologische Konstruktion von Zeit und Geschichte*, ed.

allows the development of a matrix that classifies processes of collective recollection or social memory as *social memory, collective memory,* and *cultural memory.* This taxonomy is a powerful tool not only to describe and analyze processes of recollection and memory more precisely, but also to connect them to the interdisciplinary scholarly discourse on memory.[14] Memory might be a highly theologized category, but it is not a genuinely theological concept, and there is thus no reason to seal off the exegetical and theological reflections on recollection and memory from the lively transdisciplinary scholarly discourses.

This approach offers new possibilities: one major advantage is that memory texts can (again) be accessed as historical sources; another is that they can also be placed beyond their historical contexts—according to the categories of social memory theory. The latter means, first of all, that the specifics and character of collective memory texts can be illustrated. For this illustration, the distinction between social memory and collective memory is crucial. Following Halbwachs's distinction, *social memory* can be understood as the development of memories (and, as a result, identities) within given social frames, while *collective memory* describes the fabrication of novel social frames for future memory and identity construction processes. Applied to the Gospel of Mark, this means that Mark, read as collective memory, is such a frame. It invites readers to locate themselves within this mnemonic framework and thus allows identity construction on the basis of Jesus memories.

The theoretical and hermeneutical foundation might be evident; nevertheless, it proves to be quite difficult to provide a reading model that allows the unveiling of these characteristics for particular biblical texts. I have carved out the following definition with the aim of bridging the gap between the theoretical foundation and the study of a particular text—a bridge that does justice to both of the needs mentioned above. It runs as

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Jürgen Straub, Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), 81–169; Straub, "Psychology, Narrative, and Cultural Memory: Past and Present," in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook,* ed. Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 215–28; Kenneth Gergen, "Erzählung, moralische Identität und historisches Bewusstsein," in Straub, *Erzählung, Identität, und historisches Bewusstsein,* 170–202; Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Narrative Psychologie und Geschichtsbewußtsein: Beziehungen und Perspektiven," in Straub, *Erzählung, Identität, und historisches Bewusstsein,* 12–45.

14. Hübenthal, *Markusevangelium,* 142–50.

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follows: *The Gospel of Mark is an episodically structured, perspectival narration, which is oriented to forms and patterns available in its context(s). Due to its guiding perspective and its narrative gaps, the narration is transparent for its narrating community and invites the recipients to familiarize themselves with the Gospel.*

One of the crucial points when it comes to reading Mark as collective memory is to avoid the category mistake of blending the textual and the extratextual worlds or, in other words, of extending the text into reality. The challenge is to read and understand the biblical text as a historical source without taking it as a meticulous report of what actually happened while still taking seriously the experience verbalized in the text. This can be achieved only by working with a clear model of the text as a narrative and with a distinct conception of the different levels of communication in the text.

For the Gospel of Mark, the results of such a reading are indeed stunning. It becomes evident, for example, that the narrator and the character Jesus do not speak with the same voice: the narrator aims to proclaim Jesus, while Jesus himself wants to proclaim God and his βασιλεία, which is at hand.[15] Jesus invites the other characters and the readers to actualize the βασιλεία and thus become part of this possible world. Taking a thorough look at the whole Gospel, it is quickly apparent that, despite their differences, in the end the narrator follows Jesus's perspective and makes him the norm of his/her/their own world. Apparently this does not go without additional interpretation: "classical" themes of Markan theology, like the *messianic secret* and the *disciples' lack of comprehension,* are not dimensions of the narrated world (i.e., the world of the characters) but become visible only on a higher level of textual communication. The same holds true for the discussion of different Jesus images. In addition, the answer to the question of what an adequate perception of Jesus looks like provides an insight into the configuration and organization of the remembering community (*Erinnerungsgemeinschaft*) that stands behind the text, and it invites Jews and Gentiles alike to familiarize with the text and thus join the group.

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15. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 191.

Teaching Mark as Collective Memory

The experience we all share when it comes to teaching is that doing research is quite a different kettle of fish from bringing its outcomes to the lecture room—or at least putting some of the ideas to the test. It is, of course, always possible to present outcomes of current research in a lecture and teach them as knowledge that students have to be able to present in an exam. That much is easy. But bringing students to understand a particular hermeneutical or methodological approach and enabling them to work with it independently is more of a challenge. In this case, it is no longer sufficient just to lecture students about what an appropriate application would look like and then present some examples. If I expect them to demonstrate the approach in the exam—and thus prove that they have understood the principle—I need to go beyond theoretical introduction and colorful examples and allow them time to work with this approach themselves. If the goal is that the students are able to compare different approaches (including the one that springs from my latest research), criticize them, and evaluate them, then the course design must again be different, for the critical examination of a hermeneutic or a methodology entails more than just a user's competence. Fulfilling that task requires a whole theoretical framework, field knowledge, and criteria.

Two different points can be gathered from this: (1) a course on the same subjects can have different goals or outcomes, and (2) these goals determine the structure of the course. When we take these insights seriously, it becomes clear that a course is best planned backward instead of forward, and that the starting point of the course planning should be the intended goal, or the *learning outcome*. The learning outcome describes *what the students are expected to know, understand, and/or be able to demonstrate after the completion of a process of learning.*[16] This definition is rather open and, as demonstrated above, allows for different kinds and

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16. Declan Kennedy, Áine Hyland, and Norma Ryan, "Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: A Practical Guide," in *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, ed. Brigitte Berendt et al. (Berlin: Raabe, 2009), Griffmarke C 3.4–1; Margret Schermutzky, "Learning Outcomes— Lernergebnisse: Begriffe, Zusammenhänge, Umsetzung und Erfolgsermittlung Lernergebnisse und Kompetenzvermittlung als elementare Orientierungen des Bologna-Prozesses," in Berendt et al., *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, Griffmarke E 3.3.

types of learning goals.[17] Writing learning outcomes has almost become a skill itself in the last decade, and a very helpful one, for the learning outcome is the core of the course, and everything else builds on it.[18]

Defining this core is the first step when planning a course according to the principles of *constructive alignment*. Constructive alignment is best understood as synchronizing what the teacher wants the students to learn with what the students themselves plan to do by designing an assessment that connects both goals. Both parties, however, plan the course backward: when the teacher models the assessment along the lines of the intended learning outcome, the ordinary student, who organizes his or her learning process according to the exam questions, will follow the intended learning steps exactly because only these will prepare him or her to pass the exam.[19] The fringe benefit of designing a course according to these principles is that it is very hard for the students to get away with *surface learning*—if the course is modeled correctly, a *deep-level approach* is almost inevitable, and learning will be much more sustainable.[20]

The learning outcome sets the goal for the course. The second step is to model a matching assessment, that is, a setting in which the teacher can measure whether the students have reached the learning goal. This again allows for a variety of forms and methods. The crucial question is what exactly the students should know or be able to demonstrate in the assessment, for this expectation will be the key to the course design. Generally speaking, one has to make sure that the course leads to the ability to pass

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17. Benjamin S. Bloom, ed., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook 1: Cognitive Domain*, 2nd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1984); and David R. Krathwohl, Benjamin S. Bloom, and Bertram B. Masia, eds., *Taxonomy of Eductional Objectives, Handbook 2: Affective Domain*, 2nd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1999).

18. Dagmar Schulte, "Veranstaltungsplanung: Probleme und Methoden," in Berendt et al., *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, Griffmarke B 1; Johannes Wildt and Beatrix Wildt, "Lernprozessorientiertes Prüfen im 'Constructive Alignment,'" in Berendt et al., *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, Griffmarke H 6.1.

19. Wildt and Wildt, "Lernprozessorientiertes Prüfen," 2011.

20. Claus Brabrand and Jacob Andersen, "Teaching Teaching and Understanding Understanding" (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2006), *Daimi.au.dk*, http://www.daimi.au.dk/~brabrand/short-film/ (a 19-minute film about constructive alignment). For the terms see John Biggs, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University* (Buckingham: SHRE and Open University Press, 1999); Noel J. Entwistle, *Styles of Learning and Teaching* (London: David Fulton, 1988); Paul Ramsden, *Learning to Teach in Higher Education* (London: Routledge, 1992).

the exam: one can only expect students to be familiar with the models, forms, and approaches one has introduced in class. This excludes settings in which the lecturer presents facts in class and expects the undergraduate students to come up with a critical discussion and evaluation.[21]

When the learning outcome and the assessment are clear, the third step is to reflect upon the learning steps that the students must take in order to be well prepared for the exam. This involves a change in perspective, a *shift from teaching to learning.*[22] The focus clearly lies on the students' learning process. The crucial questions are, *Which steps do they have to take to reach the goal set for the course?* and *What impulses and/or didactic interventions are necessary to get them on their way?*

Application, or Designing a Course

Thus, when it comes to planning my course on "Mark as Collective Memory," the first concrete step is to formulate a clear and manageable learning outcome: what should the students know, understand, and/or be able to demonstrate after the completion of the course? For this course, the learning outcome will be: *Students will be able to explain what it means to read the Gospel of Mark as collective memory and to demonstrate this hermeneutical approach with exemplary readings.*

Step two is to come up with an assessment that matches the learning outcome. The assessment for the course on Mark as Collective Memory can be either a written or an oral exam or an essay. The form of the assessment is, however, flexible according to the needs of the program in which it will be implemented. The task I am asking my students to deal with remains the same in each case: *Describe what it means to read the Gospel of*

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21. Rolf Dubs, "Besser schriftlich prüfen: Prüfungen valide und zuverlässig durchführen," in Berendt et al., *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, Griffmarke H 5.1; Oliver Reis and Sylvia Ruschin, "Kompetenzorientiert Prüfen: Bausteine eines gelungenen Paradigmenwechsels," in *Prüfungen auf die Agenda! Hochschuldidaktische Perspektiven auf Reformen im Prüfungswesen*, ed. Sigrid Dany, Birgit Szczybra, and Johannes Wildt, Blickpunkt Hochschuldidaktik 118 (Bielefeld: Bertelsmann, 2008), 45–57.

22. Johannes Wildt, "Vom Lehren zum Lernen," in Berendt et al., *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, Griffmarke A 3.1; Oliver Reis, "Kompetenzorientierung als hochschuldidaktische Chance für die Theologie," in *Vom Lehren zum Lernen: Didaktische Wende in der Theologie?*, ed. Monika Scheidler and Oliver Reis, Theologie und Hochschuldidaktik 3 (Münster: LIT, 2011), 19–38.

Mark as collective memory and pick two or three examples to illustrate this hermeneutical approach.

If the assessment is a written or an oral exam, I let the students know the exam question at least two weeks in advance. The first part of the assessment might seem to be more of a knowledge question, but as the hermeneutics is quite complicated, it can be helpful to have some time to think about how this is best addressed and presented. The second part of the assessment requires a more thorough reflection. The students have to come up with their own examples and think them through before they are able to present them in a conclusive way. I also encourage the students to form working groups in order to discuss their ideas while preparing for the exam and to consider this phase an important part of their learning process.

After having formulated the learning outcome and developed a matching assessment, I can finally take step three and start to plan the learning process. Just like the ordinary student, I plan the learning steps backward from the exam. The leadings questions for this third step are: *Which learning steps do the students have to take to reach the learning goal?* and *What impulses will I have to give to stimulate their learning process?*

This third step involves another change in perspective. Modeling the learning process is not about how I reached my conclusions and obtained the knowledge but about how the students can reach that goal. The course is not about explaining to the students how I have obtained the tools necessary to answer the exam question (i.e., how I read Mark as collective memory) and then expecting them to pursue the same path, but about enabling them to find and pursue their own ways. This entails a lot more reflection than just giving a lecture on how I got there or on what they need to know. The benefit of this way of going about it is that it prevents the omnipresent problem of the lecturer planning the course from him- or herself, as we usually tend to. Forcing ourselves to take the perspective of our students proves to be an excellent tool to avert that danger and keep focused on the students and their learning process.

This third step tends to be the trickiest part, for, on the one hand, putting theory into practice is always a challenge, and, on the other, this is the moment in the process of designing a course when one is most likely to realize that what one has planned so far will not work. This might be due to a lack of time, resources, overly optimistic expectations, or sometimes even external factors. Although frustrating, this insight is helpful and spares the students a lot of trouble. For the lecturer, however, it might even mean going back to square one and reviewing the learning outcome.

In the case of my course, planning the learning steps proved to be an echo of the questions I was already struggling with in my research project. Though the overall hermeneutic is quite comprehensible, the methodological steps, that is, actually applying the hermeneutic to a specific text, are a bit more complicated. Reading Mark as collective memory means reading and analyzing a mnemonic narrative with a certain perspective and a certain pragmatics. For this task, the historical-critical toolkit is not particularly helpful, as historical-critical methods are aimed at revealing the history and constitution of a biblical text rather than its perspective or pragmatics. To get a better grasp of what a text aims to achieve, a more synchronic approach, using the tools of narrative analysis, proves helpful, as long as one keeps in mind that it is not a piece of literature one is dealing with but a text that springs from a particular experience and a particular sociohistorical context.

To be sensitive to both needs and to introduce the students to the methodological and hermeneutical questions in a practical and hands-on way without burdening them with my own preparatory reflections, I have decided to work with the sandwich technique. The course begins with a phase of practical work with both biblical and nonbiblical texts, turns to a phase of theoretical input and reflection, and then returns to working with the biblical text:

Learning Steps

- Grasping different kinds of hermeneutical lenses: *What is written, and how do you read?* There is no such thing as objectivity—we always read a text with certain reading glasses (classes 1–3).

- Getting to know a lens: *How do the memory theory-informed reading glasses work?* Introduction of social memory theory and social memory-informed reading model for the Gospel of Mark (classes 4–5).

- Using the reading glasses: *How does wearing them alter my readings of Mark?* Exemplary readings of Mark as collective memory (classes 6–14).

Transition to the Classroom

What does the course look like for the students? In order to get them directly involved, I do without lengthy theoretical introductions but bring examples from daily life that the learning group can relate to. My experience proves that this kind of introduction is a much better starting point for hermeneutical questions, since the students can take their own experience as a basis for more advanced reflections. Usually the students already have an intuitive idea of what is at stake, and it does not take much of an effort to make that prior knowledge visible. Working with an example from daily life in class also has the benefit of allowing the learning group to start with a joint experience we can come back to at any stage in the learning process.

In the first class, I would thus simply bring two recent texts that treat the same event, for example, an eyewitness account and a press release. The topic is not too important, as long as the two texts treat the same topic. It could be about an event that happened recently in town or something that moved people around the globe, like an accident, a natural disaster, or, less thrilling, a conference of politicians or a get-together of nobilities or celebrities—whatever seems appropriate. In order to preserve the down-to-earth and everyday character, I would not use an example from the area of religion or churches (and, of course, not a biblical text), and I would stick to something that could be understood as an event, not a larger topic like climate change or the financial crisis. In class, the students and I would explore together what both texts reveal about the event itself and about those who describe it.

During the discussion, it usually becomes obvious quite soon that we will need certain tools or criteria to get beyond gut reactions and contributions along the lines of "well, I think that ..." or "for me it feels like...." Very often, students do not know how to objectify their impressions and make them accessible for discussion. This is the moment when I introduce a set of questions from the narratology toolkit to enable students to phrase their observations in a way that we can discuss them. Although developed for and usually applied to narrative texts, these questions can also be used for other factual and fictional texts. Press releases, newspaper articles, speeches, homilies, letters, and even song texts or poems can also be understood as telling a particular story and thus can be examined with these questions.

Question Sets

Set 1: Questions for narrative texts (both factual and fictional):

- What is being told? (story, plot)

- What is not being told? (gaps)

- How is the narration organized? (elements, connections, *Gattungen*)

- What type of a narration is it? (progressive, regressive, stabilizing)

- Which pragmatics or message does the text have?

With the help of these tools we soon are engaged in analyzing and comparing the two texts; even freshmen who have no training in the theory of literature or have never studied the Bible get an idea of how texts can be analyzed and of how two texts—even from different genres—can be compared by working with these questions. For students, this preparatory step is important for two reasons. First, they learn to ask questions about texts and their structure on the basis of objective and disputable criteria instead of using personal feelings or ideas as the point of origin. Second, this experience helps them drop reservations and anxieties about biblical texts. They come to realize that the Bible is a collection of texts and that, in order to read and understand these texts, common sense and confidence in one's ability to understand them are required in the first place.

For many students, the important step is to realize that understanding a biblical text does not require a special "spiritual" or "religious" hermeneutic but common sense and clear thinking. It continues to amaze me to see how relieved most students are when they realize that, when they read Bible in a lecture room, I will ask them neither for a confessional statement nor for insight into how it deepens their faith, but only for general curiosity. The quality of discussions about biblical texts improves almost instantly when students have learned that lesson and begin to put all sorts of ideas and questions to biblical texts without having to fear that the answers might not be orthodox or may differ from what the lecturer wants to hear.

The homework after the first class is rather simple. The students are asked to apply the questions we have used to discuss the first two texts to the accounts of the beheading of John the Baptist, narrated by Mark (6:17–29) and Josephus (*Ant.* 18.116–119). It is usually not difficult to apply the questions to narrative texts from the first century. When we then share impressions and observations in the second class, the students are already able to talk about the texts in a much more reflective and objective way.

After the second class, it will have become obvious that there is no such thing as objectivity and that everything is told from a certain point of view. At this point, the students have taken the first learning step: they have realized that *there are different kinds of hermeneutical reading glasses.* By comparing the narrations of Mark and Josephus, the students will have also realized that the way an event is remembered and passed on might tell a lot more about those who remember it and about their needs than about what actually happened.

The homework for the third class will bring us to the actual subject of the course: the Gospel of Mark. The students are asked to read the entire Gospel of Mark in preparation for the discussion in class. In order to generate more and different kinds of reading impressions, and thus more data to work with, I add a second set of questions:

Question Sets

Set 2: Additional Questions for the Gospel of Mark:

- Which images of Jesus are introduced in the text, and how are they evaluated?

- How does the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ that Jesus proclaims to be at hand take shape, and what is proper conduct in this context?

- Which crises are narrated, and which strategies are introduced to deal with them?

- Which experiences and events narrated in the text match with your own experiences?

A thorough reading with these questions in mind provides more than enough material to describe and analyze what it means to read the Gospel of Mark with regard to *memory*. The third class will be dedicated to gathering the students' impressions and observations and to structuring and establishing them for future work with the text. The last question of each set will require special attention, since this is an area not usually considered in academic settings. This process might require more than one class, which is fine. The teacher will only make sure that the discussion does not get out of hand, that all questions are discussed, and that the insights and outcomes are recorded and made accessible to every student.

After the three (or four) introductory classes, we will turn to social memory theory. In the following two classes, the teacher unfolds a reading model that understands the Gospel of Mark as an *artifact* or an *excarnation* of collective memory. This involves both a basic grasp of social memory theory and insights into how the findings of cultural studies can be made fruitful for the reading of biblical texts. We will read and discuss secondary literature to aid the second learning step, *getting to know the reading glasses*.

The third step, *reading with the spectacles*, will keep the learning group occupied for the rest of the course. If time allows, we will dedicate one class for each of the questions from the questionnaires and reexamine our findings in the light of the new reading glasses.

It is amazing how switching to memory-theory-informed reading glasses can alter the perception and evaluation of certain parts of the text. When they have successfully taken the third learning step, students will, for example, no longer analyze individual pericopes in order to find out *what actually happened* but look at parts in perspective. Stepping back from a microscopically close reading helps students recognize structures and patterns in the overall narration and make sense of them. Read this way, the Gospel of Mark reveals less about Jesus than about the impact he had on those who remember him. *The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,* tells this story with an open end—indeed, one that opens right into the lives of the recipients.

Exemplary Readings with Memory-Theory-Informed Reading Glasses

The range of possible observations and exemplary readings is huge, and it is impossible to present all or even most of them in the remainder of this contribution. The lecturer should thus be prepared for students to come up with readings and insights he or she has not been dreaming of. If the lecturer is armed for that, reading together can be a very rewarding and fruitful process, and the whole learning group can be once more surprised by Scripture. In order to give a brief insight into the large variety of observations students could make when they train to *read with these spectacles*—and, of course, to raise the reader's curiosity about trying the new spectacles him- or herself—I will briefly present some examples from my own readings.[23]

In the Gospel of Mark, the theme εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ is closely linked to the character Jesus and to its message that βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ is at hand. From the very beginning (1:15), μετάνοια and πίστις are introduced as adequate conduct in this situation. This programmatic summary is narratively unfolded along two questions: *How does the βασιλεία at hand take shape?* and *What is the proper attitude to this situation?* The handling of these questions is also closely connected to the character Jesus. Contrary to the other characters, his life shows that he has an answer to both questions. In the course of the narration, it becomes clear that the βασιλεία at hand is realized paradigmatically in Jesus's words and deeds and that he thus introduces a pattern that the other characters can relate to.

Two different strands navigate these ideas through the narration. On the one hand, Mark is about the (accurate) understanding of the character Jesus. On the other hand, the text is about the constitution and organization of an adequate community of followers. Thereby the weight of the first part of the Gospel (1:16–8:26) lies more strongly on the question of how the community of followers is *constituted*, while the weight of the second part (8:27–11:10) lies on the question of how they are *organized*. The third part (11:11–15:37) deepens both topics. It seems logical that the first part, dealing with the *constitution* of the community, also addresses the issues of *who* belongs and *how* admission can be achieved.

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23. Hübenthal, *Markusevangelium*; Hübenthal, "Reading Mark as Collective Memory."

A closer look shows that in the narrative introduction (1:1–15) Jesus is at first announced to be a special character— Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ— and then introduced as your average contemporary Galilean (1:9) who joins his fellows from Judea and Jerusalem (1:5) lining up at the banks of Jordan for the baptism of repentance. The turning point is narrated in connection with the baptism itself: the character experiences something very special that only the readers are invited to witness. The change of perspective from the author's to the inside view of the character Jesus might point out the preferred perspective for familiarization. This fits very well with the narrative gap in 1:8, "he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit," which in the following verses is fulfilled for the character Jesus. The offer to familiarize can hardly be overlooked, for baptism is a crucial turning point for everyone on the ὁδός of following Jesus.

After the baptism, the character Jesus is thrown into an ἔρημος, a desert or solitude. Recipients might also be able to identify with this experience, even without directly psychologizing the scene as showing the social isolation of the newly baptized. The narrative structure baptism/experience of vocation—desert/latency—onset of proclamation/onset of the ὁδός of following is much more interesting to note and relate to. The character Jesus, unlike many of those whom he has healed, does not take his personal turning point as the starting point for his "mission" but begins to pass on his experience only after latency.

To me, this is crucial. Before the actual story begins, the frame (1:1–15) narrates Jesus's baptism and his "vocation" by the voice from heaven. This part is antecedent to the narration in the same way as what is actually narrated is antecedent to membership in the community of followers. Confrontation with the εὐαγγελίον takes place prior to the *constitution of the community of followers*. That this confrontation is also narrated for the main character Jesus and that it is even narrated as an experience connected with baptism is hardly a coincidence. Similar things happen again within the story. The confrontation with the εὐαγγελίον marks the beginning of the community of followers. It is exemplified first with Peter, Andrew, James, and John (1:16–18, 19–20) and then repeated later with Levi (2:14) and the calling of the Twelve (3:13–19). Other than Jesus and the recipients, they are not baptized—a tiny detail that might well strengthen the emotional bond between Jesus and the recipient.

The emotional bond is made even stronger when one realizes that in the whole Gospel of Mark it is only Jesus himself who proclaims the βασιλεία and that the decision of how to respond to Jesus is completely

left to the reader. This also means that the character Jesus is allowed to proclaim God and the *possible world* of the coming βασιλεία without the narrator forcing the reader to adopt a certain perspective. That also leaves a gap for the recipients to bridge. Because it is Jesus who addresses them through the Gospel, it is easier for them to recognize themselves and their experiences in the experiences narrated in the Gospel, which experiences also rest upon direct encounter with Jesus.

If one reads the narrative this way, it is not surprising that the narrative presents Jesus as the role model, although one may have expected the disciples to be the role model for the *founding story* of a remembering community of followers. Nevertheless, those who achieve πίστις, the adequate perception of Jesus, and become members of the community experience the beginning of their way with Jesus in much the same way that Jesus himself got started. Like him, they are baptized and experience not only closeness to God or even being God's child and community, but also incomprehension, hostility, and the necessity for withdrawal. The coming βασιλεία as the *possible world* Jesus has proclaimed is the new reality they seek to realize in their lives. In this process, they take over Jesus's perspective, not the perspective of the disciples.

The community of commemoration might well recognize itself in the fears, miseries, and doubts of the disciples. Nevertheless, they are invited to outgrow them and follow Jesus more consistently. Chronologically, they are standing in the succession of the disciples and are invited to accept their inheritance. Thereby the members of the community are called to set off with the disciples but not to repeat their mistakes. The disciples serve as a model from which they can learn both how to do it and how not to do it, while the real role model is Jesus himself.

A particular way of life that indicates how the remembering community is constituted as a community of followers is also part of this new reality. The model character cannot be easily overlooked. The community as narrated in the Gospel is structured both according to family ties and beyond family. Among the disciples there are two pairs of brothers, but, besides these relationships, new family ties form quickly when people who do God's will and follow God's ways become brothers and sisters (3:35; 10:30). The immediate family is not excluded from this tendency. Toward the end of the Gospel, Mary is depicted not as a family member of Jesus but as one of the women already following him in Galilee. This does not necessarily mean that the "old" family ties are overcome but that they are regarded in the context of the new reality of the βασιλεία at hand.

The community thus constructs itself beyond the usual and familiar frame without disrupting it. Boundaries such as clean/unclean, Jewish/gentile, rich/poor, sick/healthy, or inside/outside are overcome in and by Jesus or are no longer relevant. This can be seen nicely as Jewish and gentile characters have the same experiences with Jesus but do not constitute one single community. Over and over again, Jesus turns toward people who, for a variety of reasons, find themselves excluded. He exercises commensality with sinners and tax collectors, touches the sick and the unclean, actively addresses gentiles, and even eats with them. Resistances, distinctions, purity requirements, and socioreligious boundaries of all sorts are overcome in and by Jesus. They are obviously not a part of the *possible world* of the βασιλεία.

The remembering community constitutes finally, if not first and foremost, a commensality or communion that has the potential to transcend socioreligious ties and include those who are actually outsiders. The "others" are not "the Jews" or "the gentiles," but those who do not follow on the way. The symbol for this is the βασιλεία understood as an eschatological and messianic concept expressing itself especially in commensality—the multiplication of the loaves becoming the counter image of Herod's banquet—and healings. The remembering community or the "Mark people" are directed toward Jesus and share his vision of the βασιλεία. Their agreement is to live in the βασιλεία and thus to realize the *possible world* Jesus has proclaimed. The remembering community thus understands itself to be following Jesus's path. Their memory of Jesus, his proclamation, and his deeds is the binding factor. It proves again that *collective memory* is less about the events themselves than about their significance for the remembering community.

Conclusions

For the students, the learning process of the course closes here. If I have done my job properly, they have not only understood how the *memory-theory-informed reading glasses* work but have also had some significant insights into the Gospel of Mark. They might want to put these new reading glasses to the test with other texts of Mark. In the final class when we share our learning experiences, they might even ask whether they have become "Mark people" themselves in the course of the learning process and whether the academic approach to the biblical text actually contributed something to their own faith. This is an additional fruit of the learn-

ing process, not a learning outcome that can be planned and assessed. Nevertheless, it is not completely unlikely to happen and is a very satisfying fringe benefit of the course.

On a more theoretical level, this reveals two things. On the one hand, the learning process can be controlled only to a certain point and depends rather on the student him- or herself, what he or she actually takes home from class. The learning process remains largely inaccessible.[24] This knowledge emphasizes the importance of learning outcomes and of designing a course according to the principles of *constructive alignment* in order to guarantee a certain measurable outcome of the course. But it makes a case for the theory that only *cognitive* and *metacognitive learning goals* can be directly accessed, while *affective learning goals*, as desirable as they might be, are a surplus.[25]

It almost goes without saying that *constructive alignment* is not bound to a particular discipline or lesson format. In other words, any course can be planned according to these principles. In this process the crucial point usually is a consistent *shift from teaching to learning* and thus a student-centred outlook on teaching. Initially this change of perspective seems to be quite difficult, but it is nevertheless necessary. If the course design is to be successful, the focus must lie on the learning steps that the individual student has to take in order to reach the learning goals set for the course.[26] Planning the course thus involves a clear conception of the different actions the student will take. The teacher is less important; or, to make a bold statement, the key to successful and satisfactory learning is not what the teacher does in class, but what the student does. In many cases this implies that the teacher is less active and in charge than usual or than would feel normal. The challenge for most lecturers is to have faith in their students and trust that they will learn even without constant surveillance. My experience in this particular area is that students are generally

24. Elke Wild and Klaus-Peter Wild, "Jeder lernt auf seine Weise.... Individuelle Lernstrategien und Hochschullehre," in Berendt et al., *Neues Handbuch Hochschullehre*, Griffmarke A 2.1.

25. Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*; Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*.

26. Birgit Szczyrba and Matthias Wiemer, "Lehrinnovation durch doppelten Perspektivenwechsel: Fachkulturell tradierte Lehrpraktiken und Hochschuldidaktik im Kontakt," in *Fachbezogene und fächerübergreifende Hochschuldidaktik*, ed. Isa Jahnke and Johannes Wildt (Bielefeld: Bertelsmann, 2011), 101–10; Schulte, "Veranstaltungsplanung," Griffmarke B 1.

eager to learn once their intrinsic motivation has been roused. Thus I usually spend more time crafting an introduction to a course that will activate the students' intrinsic motivation than on putting together the facts they should take home from the first class.

Apart from the didactical insight, what else can be learned from this course for the study of the New Testament? A first insight refers to the hermeneutic I have developed during my research and have only briefly introduced here. According to the hermeneutical insights and the first attempts to bring them to the classroom, I would make the case that the whole New Testament can be read as *artifacts of collective memory* or as *snapshots of early Christian identity construction*.[27] This approach implies, however, another change of perspective: it means to ask different questions, to apply different methods, and to read synthetically instead of atomically, that is, to focus on whole books instead of individual pericopes. This last suggestion to read unabridged books instead of unconnected components seems to be only a minor alteration, but it can have a huge impact nevertheless. Reading only particular pericopes bereaves the text of important layers of meaning that become visible only when the book is read as a whole. Recognizing the βασιλεία as the *possible world* of Jesus or recognizing the messianic secret and the disciples' lack of comprehension as parts of the narrator's world are two examples of such an approach.

Moreover, reading New Testament texts as testimonies of particular moments of early Christian identity construction is not necessarily limited to the body of narrative texts. It is worth a try examining the epistolary literature—the authentic Pauline letters as well as the disputed and the Catholic Epistles—under the aspect of identity construction. One does not have to start with Romans; the letters to Philemon and Titus or the letters of James and Jude can be real eye-openers once one gets beyond questions of ecclesiastical structures, the quests for opponents, or the question of authenticity.

Reading New Testament letters as *artifacts of collective memory* and thus as telling the story of identity construction at a particular point in history, of course, needs slightly modified sets of questions. The first question set works well for narrative texts but does not capture all the aspects of a letter. It is nevertheless possible to ask which *story* a letter tells and

how this story changes when the person claiming to be the sender is actually someone else, the alleged addressees are no longer existent, and the situation referred to is equally constructed. Or as I sometimes ask my students concerning the letter to the Colossians: why would someone who is no longer alive send a letter to a community that no longer exists in order to deal with problems that apply to different addressees? Approaching disputed letters from this perspective provides unexpected and intriguing insights. Read this way, by using the (real or alleged) Colossian correspondence, the unknown author exemplarily depicts one of the issues of new converts who have not yet fully made themselves at home in their novel Christian identity and run the risk of reverting to their old habits since the gospel has not yet sustainably taken root in their life and daily practice.[28]

It is finally evident that a narrative approach by itself will not be sufficient to understand a biblical book—just as a purely historical-critical approach will not grasp a text's full meaning. A model that takes seriously the history and growth requires both synchronic and diachronic observations. To phrase it differently: narratology without a model of textual origin (*Textentstehung*) will soon end up in a similar cul-de-sac as a purely diachronic approach. Social memory theory can provide this missing link and introduce a general model of textual origin without forcing the individual text into a particular social context, pattern, or literary genre. The theory is broad enough to cover many different textual expressions yet still precise enough to handle the interpretation of a particular text. Reading *Mark as Collective Memory* proved to be a good test case for this approach and will—both in scholarly debates and in lecture rooms—prepare the way for further exegetical, theological, and personal insights.

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27. Sandra Hübenthal, "Social and Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis," in *Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis*, ed. Pernille Carstens et al. (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2012), 175–99.

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28. Sandra Hübenthal, "Erfahrung, die sich lesbar macht. Kol und 2 Thess als fiktionale Texte," in *Wie Geschichten Geschichte schreiben: Frühchristliche Literatur zwischen Faktualität und Fiktionalität*, ed. Susanne Luther et al., WUNT 2/395 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 295–336; Hübenthal, "Pseudepigraphie als Strategie in frühchristlichen Identitätsdiskursen? Überlegungen am Beispiel des Kolosserbriefs," SNTSU.A 36 (2011): 63–94.

Course Design for Mark as Collective Memory

A. Learning Outcome

What should students know, understand, and/or be able to demonstrate after completing the learning process?

- Students will be able to explain what it means to read the Gospel of Mark as collective memory and demonstrate this hermeneutical approach by exemplary readings.

B. Assessment

What will students do to demonstrate that they have reached the learning goal of the course?

- Students will describe what it means to read the Gospel of Mark as collective memory and pick two or three examples to illustrate this hermeneutical approach.

C. Learning Steps

What learning steps do the students have to take to reach the learning goal?

- Grasping different kinds of hermeneutical lenses: *What is written, and how do you read?* There is no such thing as objectivity—we always read a text with certain reading glasses (classes 1–3).

- Getting to know a lens: *How do the memory-theory-informed reading glasses work?* Introduction of social memory theory and social memory–informed reading model for the Gospel of Mark (classes 4–5).

- Using the reading glasses: *How does wearing them alter my readings of Mark?* Exemplary readings of Mark as Collective Memory (classes 6–14).

D. Question Sets

Set 1: Questions for narrative texts (both factual and fictional)

- What is being told?

- What is not being told?

- How is the narration organized?

- What type of a narration is it?

- Which pragmatics or message does the text have?

Set 2: Additional Questions for the Gospel of Mark

- Which images of Jesus are introduced in the text, and how are they evaluated?

- How does the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ that Jesus proclaims to be at hand take shape, and what sort of conduct is proper in this context?

- Which crises are narrated, and which strategies are introduced to deal with them?

- Which experiences and events narrated in the text match with your own experiences?