

ON CHRISTINA ROSSETTI'S CORRECTION
TO THE APRIL 25 ENTRY OF *TIME FLIES*

Todd O. Williams

Christina Rossetti's *Time Flies: A Reading Diary* (1885) is the penultimate of the devotional prose books that Rossetti wrote towards the end of her life. As the subtitle suggests, *Time Flies* is set up as a diary with entries for each calendar day as well as an appendix with entries for the moveable holy days of the Anglican church calendar. While the entries in *Time Flies* contain many themes that are common in Rossetti's writing in general, the book does not present a unified work. Upon its release in 1885, Rossetti described it as "a miscellaneous set of short readings in prose and verse" (*Letters* 267).¹ She used the diary structure of *Time Flies* as an opportunity to write about many different topics in varying styles. Some entries are poems; some are hagiographical; others tell personal anecdotes; still others present exegesis or reflections on religious matters.

Throughout the multiple editions of *Time Flies*, the text remained largely unchanged. The one correction that Rossetti made in later editions comes in the April 25 entry, which is also the entry for the feast of the evangelist Saint Mark.² The entry begins with the contested story of Mark as a martyr figure who was killed by a mob in Egypt where, according to persistent legend, he had served as Bishop of Alexandria.³ In the second paragraph, Rossetti mentions and quotes several biblical passages that refer to Mark. She questions whether Mark the evangelist is the same as Marcus the nephew of Barnabas who Paul mentions in his epistle to the Colossians (4.10).⁴ She accepts that he is the same "Marcus my son" mentioned by Peter in 1 Peter 5.13, and she repeats the common speculation that it was Peter who "supplied material for St. Mark's Gospel."

In the third paragraph, Rossetti turns to the theme of doubt. "But thus," she writes, "St. Mark's personality remains in doubt." It remains in doubt in terms of the accuracy of his story and in terms of his own personal doubts as a disciple. Perhaps, Rossetti writes, Mark proceeded "in one unbroken course