

JEWS AND JUDAISM IN MARK'S GOSPEL:
AN EXAMINATION OF MARK 4:11-12
IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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RONALD HERBERT DAWE



JEWS AND JUDAISM IN MARK'S GOSPEL: AN EXAMINATION
OF MARK 4:11-12 IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

By

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ABSTRACT

Since the Holocaust there has been renewed interest in the question of Christianity's contribution to modern anti-Semitism. For many, the root of modern anti-semitism is found in the New Testament itself. Advocates of this position argue that the New Testament contains anti-Judaic sentiments and attitudes that are to be linked inextricably to the development of later Christian anti-semitism. Mark 4:11-12 is sometimes cited as an example of a New Testament text which is anti-Judaic. The present thesis seeks to examine this particular claim by a thorough examination of the meaning and context of Mark 4:11-12.

Traditionally, scholars have interpreted Mark 4:11-12 either in the immediate context of the parable chapter or have treated it as an isolated pericope. The literary connections between Mark 4:11-12 and the whole of Mark's Gospel, however, indicate that both these approaches are too narrow. Methodologically, this thesis demonstrates that Mark 4:11-12 is an integral part of the Marcan composition and should, therefore, be interpreted as part of a much larger whole. In addition, the literary connections between Mark's Gospel and the Old Testament are also deemed significant in assessing Mark's attitude toward the Jews and their religion. The use of Isaiah in Mark is especially important since the source of Mark 4:11-12 is Isaiah 6:9-10.

This thesis concludes that Mark 4:11-12 cannot be taken

to reflect a polemic against the Jews. In the first place, there is no indication that Mark's use of Isaiah (or any other Old Testament text) reflects an aversion toward the Jews or Judaism. An analysis of Mark's use of Isaiah 6:9-10 and his appropriation of other Old Testament themes and motifs indicates that his attitude toward his literary heritage is, in fact, quite constructive and positive.

Secondly, the seemingly negative portrayal of the Jews throughout the Marcan narrative, and especially in 4:11-12, must be seen as part of Mark's total theological agenda. In attempting to account for the failed mission to the Jews, Mark utilizes Isaiah 6:9-10 to argue that Jesus' identity was intentionally hidden from the Jews because this is part of God's sovereign plan. On the one hand, the blindness of the Jews allows for the preservation of the intended destiny of Jesus. On the other hand, the obduracy of the Jews serves a pedagogical purpose to bring about not only their own salvation, but also the salvation of the Gentiles. The function of characters within the Marcan composition as well as Mark's answer to the question of mission attests to these conclusions.

Finally, anti-Judaic statements in Mark must be viewed from the perspective that the teachings of Jesus represent one form of a multiform Judaism operative during the first century. Consequently, Marcan statements that appear to be against "Judaism" are in fact representative of a debate

which took place within a diverse and pluralistic Jewish faith.

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To my Mom,

Mary Jane Dawe,

and to the memory of my Dad,

Clarence Dawe.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CJR	<i>Christian Jewish Relations</i>
CT	<i>Code Theodosian</i>
EVQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
Expt	<i>Expository Times</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HeyJ	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JES	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
MS	<i>Milltown Studies</i>
MT	<i>Massoretic Text</i>
Neot	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NPNF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i>
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

An attentive reading of the Gospel of Mark reveals that Jews figure quite prominently in the narrative. Though Mark does not often refer to 'Jews' as a collective entity,¹ the numerous references to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and other Jewish groups, clearly indicate that Jews have an important function in Mark's Gospel. The primary contention of this thesis is that the function of Jews in the Marcan plot will shed light on discovering the attitude of one of the first Christian writers toward Jews and things Jewish. Though it is recognized that the attitude of Mark toward the Jews is "somewhat complicated and . . . [cannot] be adequately characterized in a simple, unqualified statement,"² it will be argued that an analysis of Mark 4:11-12, in its literary context, will provide insight in determining his attitude toward the Jews and their religion.

1.1 The State of the Question

For some, the literary evidence suggests that the perceptions and attitudes of the earliest Christian *literati* toward Jews were not in any sense positive. In fact, the authors of the non-canonical Christian literature of the

¹ Only in 7:3 does Mark use the expression "the Jews".

² T.A. Burkitt, "Anti-Semitism in St. Mark's Gospel," *NovT* 4 (1960): 34.

first and second centuries are often viewed as expressing sentiments that are clearly anti-Jewish.³ Similarly, it has also been proposed that the New Testament contains statements that reflect the anti-Judaic attitudes and sentiments of its authors.⁴ This assertion has led to the advancement of the theory that the New Testament itself is anti-Judaic⁵ and that it is the root cause (or a least a contributing factor) of the suffering that Jews have experienced at the hands of Christians for nearly two millennia. Moreover, certain scholars⁶ contend that the New Testament itself is the root source of modern [Christian]

³ See e.g., Jules Isaac, The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), 110-112.

⁴ It should, of course, be noted that the New Testament also contains pro-semitic statements. So Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, "Is Christianity Antisemitic?" CJR 18 (1985): 9, 17-18.

⁵ For a concise overview of the literature on anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism in the New Testament see William Klassen, "Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: The State of the Question," in Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, vol. 1, ed. Peter Richardson and David Granskou (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 15-19. See also John G. Gager, "Judaism as Seen by Outsiders," in Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters, ed. R.A. Kraft and G.W.E. Nickelsburg (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 100-104.

⁶ For example: James Parkes, Rosemary Ruether, and Roy Eckardt. See Alan T. Davies, ed. Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity (Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), x-xi.

anti-Semitism⁷ and that subsequently, the New Testament is, to some degree, the fundamental cause of the atrocities that the Jews suffered during the Holocaust.

A cursory historical survey of Jewish-Christian relations, from the earliest of Christian beginnings to modern times, reveals that Christian doctrine and practice more often than not resulted in the general degradation of Jewry. Today, scholars generally concede that even the New Testament contains passages that express "some measure [of] . . . hostility toward the Jewish antagonists of the apostolic church."⁸ Whether or not such expressions of

⁷ There is debate over the correct use of the term anti-Semitism as opposed to the term anti-Judaism. Generally, the term anti-Judaism is taken to refer to opposition to Jews that is essentially religious in nature while anti-Semitism refers to racial hostility and discrimination against the Jews which is much more severe than the former. In this thesis there will be an attempt to employ the terms anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism in keeping with these definitions. It cannot be conceded, however, that the context will always allow the terms to be used as mechanically as these definitions might imply. A review of attempts to define the correct usage of these terms is ample testimony of the havoc that they cause for scholars. See for example: S. Sandmel, Anti-Semitism in the New Testament? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), xix-xxi; J.N. Sevenster, The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 1-6; John G. Gager, The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 7-9; G.I. Langmuir, Toward a Definition of Antisemitism (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), esp. 4-8, 311-352.

⁸ Mircea Eliade, ed. Encyclopedia of Religion (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. "Anti-Semitism," by Alan Davies.

hostility can rightly be labelled anti-Judaic and, subsequently, be considered to be the root cause of later expressions of Christian anti-Semitism⁹ continues to be debated. But there is no question that the hostility between church and synagogue, as depicted in the New Testament and which intensifies during the first centuries of the Christian Church, results in a theological vendetta against the Jews and Judaism. The literary evidence indicates that the leaders of both the church and synagogue criticize the theological positions of the other in an attempt to validate their own particular claims.¹⁰

From the Jewish perspective, the Christian response to God was invalid because it "rejected the essential requirements of Judaism . . . [namely] the acceptance of the entire written and oral Torah, circumcision, purification immersions, and sacrifice."¹¹ From the Christian

⁹ For a fine overview of the development of Christian anti-Semitism see Marcel Simon, "Christian Anti-Semitism," in Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict: From Late Antiquity to the Reformation, ed. J. Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 131-173.

¹⁰ The debate between synagogue and church appears to have lasted well into the fifth century. So Edward H. Flannery, The Anguish of the Jews (London: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 39.

¹¹ Eugene Ferguson, ed. Encyclopedia of Early Christianity (New York/London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1990), s.v. "Judaism and Christianity," by Robbin Darling Young.

perspective, "the continued existence of Judaism after Jesus was the physical embodiment of doubt about the validity of Christianity."¹² Though literary evidence on the Jewish side of the debate is limited,¹³ the literature indicates that the rabbis, in defence of Judaism, slandered the Christians in their synagogues.¹⁴ On the Christian side of the debate, the Fathers of the church, in an attempt to validate the Christian position, wrote lengthy treatises against the beliefs and practices of Judaism. Many of these treatises have survived as a body of literature known

¹² Langmuir, 58.

¹³ The difficulty of finding evidence that speaks of the Jewish contribution to this debate is illustrated by Marcel Simon's comment that "Anyone who wishes to discover the remains of the [Jewish] struggle against Christianity is obliged to fish for them in 'the Talmudic sea.'" See Marcel Simon, Versus Israel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 136. Similarly, Gager, The Origins of Anti-Semitism, especially 7, 265-269, has argued that 'the voice of those Jewish Christians who saw no need to repudiate Judaism is scarcely heard at all.' According to Luke T. Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," JBL 108 (1989): 441, the Jewish "voices are silent." Nevertheless, some credence may be given to four salient forms of Jewish opposition to Christian doctrine and practice as outlined by S.T. Katz, namely: "(1) the circulation of official anti-Christian pronouncements; (2) the issuing of an official ban against Jewish Christians; (3) the issuing of a prohibition against the reading of heretical books; [and] (4) the proclamation of the Birkat ha-Minim ('blessing against heretics')." See S.T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 C.E.: A Reconsideration," JBL 103 (1984): 44.

¹⁴ See e.g., Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 16.4, 17.1, 47.4 (ANF I, 202-3, 218).

generally as the *adversus Judaeos* (against the Jews) tradition. The tradition advocates primarily two theological premises that are generally considered to be anti-Judaic, namely, "(a) the rejection of the Jews and the election of the Gentiles, and (b) the inferiority and spiritual fulfilment [in Christianity] of the Jewish law, cult, and scriptural interpretation."¹⁵ Though an extensive examination of these themes as found in the *adversus Judaeos* tradition is beyond the scope of this thesis,¹⁶ the following examples clearly illustrate the contemptuous position given to Jews and Judaism by those Christians who contributed to the debate between church and synagogue.

A most influential contribution to the development of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition is found in the writings of Tertullian (ca. 160 - ca. 225). In his An Answer to the Jews, Tertullian argues that, because of Jewish idolatry, Gentiles (Christians) have replaced the Jews in God's favour. He is worth quoting at length since his anti-Judaic theological position represents adequately and clearly the

¹⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), 123.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the relationship between the *adversus Judaeos* tradition and Christian anti-Judaism see Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The *Adversus Judaeos* Tradition in the Church Fathers: The Exegesis of Christian Anti-Judaism," in Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity, 174-189.

view advocated by other Patristic writers. Tertullian writes:

Accordingly, since the people or nation of the Jews is anterior in time, and "greater" through the grace of primary favour in the law, whereas ours [i.e. Christian] is understood to be "less" in the age of times, as having in the last era of the world attained the knowledge of divine mercy: beyond doubt, through the edict of the divine utterance, the *prior* and "greater" people--that is, the Jewish--must necessarily serve the "less;" and the "less" people--that is, the Christian--overcome the "greater." For, withal, according to the memorial records of the divine Scriptures, the people of the Jews--that is, the more ancient--quite forsook God, and did degrading service to idols, and, abandoning the Divinity, was surrendered to images; while "the people" said to Aaron, "Make us gods to go before us." And when the gold out of the necklaces of the women and the rings of the men had been wholly smelted by fire, and there had come forth a calf-like head, to this figment Israel with one consent (abandoning God) gave honour, saying, "These are the Gods who brought us from the land of Egypt." For thus, in the later times in which kings were governing them, did they again, in conjunction with Jeroboam, worship golden kine [*sic*], and groves, and enslave themselves to Baal. Whence is proved that they have ever been depicted, out of the volume of the divine Scriptures, as guilty of the crime of idolatry; whereas our "less"--that is, posterior--people, quitting the idols which formerly it used slavishly to serve, has been converted to the same God from whom Israel, as we have above related, had departed. For thus has the "less"--that is, posterior--people overcome the "greater people," while it attains the grace of divine favour, from which Israel has been divorced.¹⁷

The inferior position of Israel to the Church, as

¹⁷ Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, Chap. 1 (ANF III, 151-152).

articulated by Tertullian, is reiterated by many other patristic writers.¹⁸ Origen, for example, argues that the Jews will never be restored to their former position.¹⁹ Justin Martyr (ca. 100 - ca. 165), in his Dialogue with Trypho, asserts by implication that Christianity has in fact abrogated Judaism. He writes:

But we [Christians] do not trust through Moses or through the law . . . ; But now . . . there shall be a final law, and a covenant, the chiefest of all, which is now incumbent on all men to observe, as many as are seeking after the inheritance of God. For the law promulgated on Horeb is now old, and belongs to yourselves (Jews) alone; . . . *now law placed against law has abrogated that which is before it* [italics added], and a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one; and an eternal and final law--namely, Christ--has been given to us, He is the new law, and the new covenant.²⁰

¹⁸ Numerous other early church writers affirm the election of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews. Cf. e.g., Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Chap. CXXXV (ANF I, 267); id., The First Apology of Justin, Chap. XLIX (ANF I, 179); Recognitions of Clement, Chap. L (ANF VIII, 90); The Treatises of Cyprian, Treatise XII (ANF V, 507-515); The Epistle of Barnabas, Chap. XIII (ANF I, 145-146).

¹⁹ Origen, Against Celsus 4.22 (ANF IV, 506).

²⁰ Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Chap. XI (ANF I, 199-200). Justin Martyr's assertion that Jewish law has been abrogated is strikingly similar to the position held by proponents of modern supersessionism. Cf. L.H. Schiffman, "A Jewish Perspective on Supersessionism," BAR 18 (1992): 86. He summarizes that "supersessionism denies totally the notion that the Jews have a covenant with God and cuts them off from any relationship with the creator in this world, let alone from salvation in the next world." Schiffman goes on to state that supersessionism "has always been a necessary step in paving the way for violent outbreaks of Christian anti-Semitism, whether . . . [in early Christian

More detrimental to the Jews and Judaism was the assertion by patristic writers that the present state of Jewish suffering resulted from the failure of the Jews to believe in Christ. Origen argues that the Jews suffer presently and will suffer in the future because of "unbelief, and the other insults which they heaped upon Jesus."²¹ For many of the early Christian writers, the immediate suffering of the Jews, during the first centuries of the common era, was directly related to the many crimes of the Jews, especially the crime of deicide.²² The defeat of the Jews by the Romans in the war of 66-73, and in particular the destruction of the Temple, came to be viewed as just punishment of the Jews for their crimes against Jesus. Origen adequately represents the view presented in the Patristic literature. The city of Jerusalem, Origen argues,

not long afterwards was attacked, and, after a long siege, was utterly overthrown and laid waste;

history] or in modern times."

²¹ Origen, Celsus, 2.8 (ANF IV, 433); See also Hippolytus, Expository Treatise Against the Jews, 1-10 (ANF V, 219-221); The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus, trans. Christian Frederick Cruse (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 57.

²² For an account of the role of Jewish ignorance and intentionality in the killing of Jesus as represented by Western theologians see J. Cohen, "The Jews as the Killers of Christ in the Latin Tradition, From Augustine to the Friars," Traditio 39 (1983): 1-27.

. . . and all this befell them (i.e., the Jews), because the blood of Jesus was shed at their instigation and on their land; and the land was no longer able to bear those who were guilty of so fearful a crime against Jesus. . . . and if the Jews have not a plot of ground nor a habitation left to them, . . . the entire blame is to be laid upon their crimes, and especially upon their guilt in the treatment of Jesus.²³

And, as Flannery correctly observes, "the theme of a divine curse or punishment upon Jews for their role in the crucifixion of Christ," as expressed in the writings of the church Fathers, was without doubt the "most ominous development for the history of anti-Semitism in Christian antiquity."²⁴

The theological positions advocated by Origen, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and other church Fathers finds practical expression in the notorious sermons of the Archbishop of Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom (344-407). In an attempt to repel a revival of Christian judaizing in Antioch during the fourth century, Chrysostom affirms the invalidity of Jewish law and the state of reprobation in which the Jews find themselves. And more than advocating a particular theological position, Chrysostom's sermons clearly encourage his Christian listeners to hate the Jews and their synagogue. "The Jews," writes Chrysostom, "act so

²³ Origen, Celsus, 8.42, 8.69 (ANF IV, 655, 666).

²⁴ Flannery, 62.

offensively against these holy men (i.e. Moses and the prophets) that we must hate them and their synagogue all the more."²⁵ The synagogue, continues Chrysostom, "is not only a brothel and a theatre; it is a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts."²⁶ A most degrading characterization of the Jews is Chrysostom's comparison of the Jews to animals. He writes:

When animals have been fattened . . . they get stubborn and hard to manage. . . . When animals are unfit for work, they are marked for the slaughter, and this is the very thing that Jews have experienced. By making themselves unfit for work, they have become ready for slaughter.²⁷

Other Patristic writers employ similar derogatory language in characterizing the Jews and things Jewish. St. Ambrose of Milan, for example, calls the synagogue "a home of unbelief, a house of impiety, a receptacle of folly, which God himself has condemned."²⁸ The author of the Letter to Diognetus, after a discussion of Jewish worship practices, writes: "And so, I hope I have said enough to show you how right the Christians are in keeping away from the plain

²⁵ John Chrysostom, Eight Orations Against the Jews I, 5, quoted in Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, 176.

²⁶ The Fathers of the Church, vol. 68, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1979), 10-11.

²⁷ Chrysostom, Orations, I, 2, quoted in Ruther, Faith and Fratricide, 179.

²⁸ St. Ambrose, Letters, Ch. XL, 14 (NPNE X, 442).

silliness and error, the fussiness and vaunting of the Jews."²⁹

For Rosemary Ruether and others, the anti-Judaic theological positions and derogatory anti-Jewish statements propagated by the patristic writers³⁰ were to find practical expression in the legal sphere. Prior to and following the inauguration of Christianity as the state religion in the fourth century, both ecclesiastical and secular legislation attempted to "order society legally according to the implications of the doctrine [of the fathers and] . . . to reinforce arguments by physical sanctions."³¹ Essentially, the legislative objectives of Christian emperors and Church councils were to "seek the conversion of Jews"³² . . . [and] to prevent the influence of Judaism on Christianity."³³

²⁹ The Fathers of the Church, vol. 1, trans. Francis X. Glimm, Joseph M.F. Marique, and Gerald G. Walsh (New York: Cima Publishing Company Inc., 1947), 358.

³⁰ It must of course be noted that not all of the early Christian writers held an extreme negative attitude toward the Jews. As Flannery, 38, has correctly observed, the attitudes toward Jews are often moderate: "condemnations are usually tempered with a note of sadness and hope for reunion."

³¹ Langmuir, 58.

³² There is evidence that once Christianity became the official state religion large numbers of Jews were coerced to convert via forced baptism. See Cecil Roth, ed. Encyclopedia Judaica, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1971), s.v. "Baptism, Forced," by Cecil Roth.

³³ Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, 186.

The resulting legislation, while affirming the legality of Judaism as a religion in the Christian empire, contributed generally to the degradation of the Jews and their religion. Under such legislation, the Jews were to suffer socially, politically, and economically. For example, under the auspices of the church, the Synod of Elvira (306) prohibited Jews and Christians from eating together; the Synod of Clermont (535) forbade Jews from holding public office; the third Synod of Orleans (538) disallowed the Jews to employ Christians or to possess Christian slaves; the Trullan Synod (692) ordered Christians not to patronize Jewish doctors; under the Synod of Gerona (1179), Jews were required to support the church monetarily to the same extent as Christians; by 1279 the church had forbidden Christians to sell or trade real estate to Jews; and after the Council of Basel in 1434, the Jews were prohibited from obtaining academic degrees.³⁴

Secular legislation was equally detrimental to Jewish existence. In 315, the Christian emperor, Constantine I, decreed death at the stake for those Jews who persecuted Jewish converts to Christianity; the second part of that law

³⁴ Raul Hilberg, The Destruction of the European Jews, vol. 1 (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1985), 11-12. For an overview of church legislation aimed at the Jews see also B. Blumenkranz, "The Roman Church and the Jews," in Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity, 193-205.

made it a crime to become a Jew.³⁵ Under *Code Theodosian*³⁶, emperor Theodosius II (408-450), for example, made conversion to Judaism an offense punishable by confiscation of the convert's property, ordered that it was unlawful for Jews to purchase Christian slaves, and prohibited Jews from building new synagogues.³⁷ The laws decreed by Justinian I (527-565), simply reiterated many of the laws enacted under Theodosius II.³⁸ And it was Justinian's "*Corpus Juris Civilis*" that fixed the legal status of Jews in Byzantine realms for 700 years to come."³⁹

Thus the position of the Jew in medieval Christendom "was always one of worsening status . . . the restrictions decreed against them were constantly reaffirmed and extended."⁴⁰ But, as Langmuir argues,

the legal implications of Christian anti-Judaism

³⁵ P.R. Coleman-Norton, *Roman State & Christian Church*, vol. 1 (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), 66, citing *CT* 16.8.1.

³⁶ *Code Theodosian* is a compilation by Theodosius II of all the laws from Constantine's time to 429 c.e. So Ernest Abel, *The Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1975), 154.

³⁷ Coleman-Norton, vol. 1, 217, 233, citing *CT* 16.8.7 and 16.9.2; id. vol. 2, 622, citing *CT* 16.8.25.

³⁸ Andrew Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 19ff.

³⁹ Richard E. Gade, *A Historical Survey of Anti-Semitism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 20.

⁴⁰ Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 186.

could not be fully developed until the bulk of the population identified profoundly with Christianity and accepted its cosmology in such a way as to desire to attack Judaism and degrade Jews.⁴¹

This is precisely what occurred in the eleventh century.⁴²

In the first place, the conversion of virtually all the inhabitants of Europe (except the Jews),⁴³ led to the intensification of Christian consciousness.⁴⁴ Its corollary was that anything not Christian must be eliminated. Hence, with the development of popular anti-Judaism, came the Crusader's ultimatum to the Jews: Christianity or death.⁴⁵ History records that hundreds of thousands of Jews died at the hands of the Christian Crusaders who viewed the Jews as "a race more inimical to God than any other."⁴⁶ During the later Middle Ages, there developed out of this profound Christian consciousness other popular expressions of Christian anti-Judaism. By the twelfth century, three false accusations levelled against Jews, namely, ritual murder, the poisoning of Christians, and the desecration of the

⁴¹ Langmuir, 59.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, Why the Jews? (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983), 96.

⁴⁴ Langmuir, 59-60.

⁴⁵ Prager and Telushkin, 96.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Host, also resulted in the "suffering of all Jews and the random murder of many."⁴⁷

Neither were humanitarian actions toward Jews ultimately encouraged by the founder of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther. In fact, it has been said that Luther was one of history's most vehement Jew-haters.⁴⁸ In a pamphlet entitled Concerning the Jews and their Lies, Luther articulates eight actions to be taken against the Jews. These actions range from destroying or confiscating Jewish property and restricting the day-to-day activities of Jews to expelling them from Christian provinces.⁴⁹ It appears that the impetus for Luther's anti-Judaic tractate

⁴⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 106. The evidence indicates, however, that Luther was not always a Jew-hater. For a review of Luther's change of attitude toward the Jews see the following works: Roy Eckardt, Elder and Younger Brothers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 11, n. 23; Johannes Wallmann, "Luther on Jews and Islam," in Creative Biblical Exegesis eds. Benjamin Uffenheimer and Henning Graf Reventlow (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 156-157. John Edwards, The Jews in Christian Europe 1400-1700 (London: Routledge, 1988), 56-61; Emil L. Fackenheim, The Jewish Bible after the Holocaust (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 74-76. Mark U. Edwards, "Against the Jews," in Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity, 345-379; For a good overview of Luther's writings on the Jews see also Hans J. Hillerbrand, "Martin Luther and the Jews," in Jews and Christians: Exploring the Past, Present and Future, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1990), 127-150.

⁴⁹ Martin Luther, "On the Jews and Their Lies," in Luther's Works, vol. 47, trans. Martin H. Bertram (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 268ff.

was the failure of the Jews to convert to Christianity in any great numbers and the relative success of Jewish proselytising activities implemented to convert Christians to Judaism.⁵⁰ And it was the failure of the church to convert the Jews that gave way to the expulsion of thousands of Jews from England, France, Germany, Spain, Bohemia, and Italy between the 13th and 16th centuries. In light of the *adversus Judaeos* tradition, many medieval Christians viewed the expulsions of Jews during this period as "another case of 'the wandering Jew' paying for the perfidious crimes of deicide and obduracy."⁵¹

For Raul Hilberg, the failure of Christianity to convert Jews in vast numbers is of particular significance. He argues that conversion⁵² was the first of three anti-Jewish policies implemented by church and state to deal with the Jewish question. The second was expulsion. With the failure of the expulsion policy, a third anti-Jewish policy

⁵⁰ Wallmann, 156-157.

⁵¹ Clark M. Williamson, Has God Rejected His People? (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 117-118.

⁵² The Christian doctrine of conversion remains a point of contention between Jews and Christians. The debate continues about whether or not there is salvation for the Jews outside the Church. See for example, Hans Hermann Henrix, "Judaism--Outside the Church, So No Salvation?" CJR 17 (1984): 3-12; From a pragmatic point of view, the issue of converting Jews to Christianity continues to be the primary objective of such contemporary Christian groups as *Jews for Jesus*.

instigated by the Nazis sought to end the Jewish problem once and for all time. Hilberg writes:

Since the fourth century after Christ there have been three anti-Judaic policies: conversion, expulsion, and annihilation. The second appeared as an alternative to the first, and the third emerged as an alternative to the second. . . . The Nazi destruction process . . . was the culmination of a cyclical trend. We have observed the trend in the three successive goals of anti-Jewish administrators. The missionaries of Christianity had said in effect: You have no right to live among us as Jews. The secular leaders who followed had proclaimed: you have no right to live among us. The Germany Nazis at last decreed: You have no right to live.³³

As Hilberg implies, the atrocities committed against the Jews in Nazi Germany were not in isolation from past historic events. And more than that, the destruction of some six million Jews by the Nazis was possible only because it was the culmination of a lengthy historical process that was inextricably linked to a history of Christian doctrine and practice aimed at the Jews. On this point Hilberg is worth quoting at length.

The Nazi destruction process did not come out of a void. . . . The German Nazis . . . did not discard the past; they built upon it. They did not begin a development; they completed it. . . . The significance of the historical precedents will most easily be understood in the administrative sphere. . . . The destruction of the Jews was an administrative process, and the annihilation of Jewry required the implementation of systematic administrative measures in successive steps . . . in reviewing the documentary record of the

³³ Hilberg, vol. 1, 8-9.

destruction of the Jews, one is almost immediately impressed with the fact that the German administration knew what it was doing. With an unfailing sense of direction and with an uncanny pathfinding ability, the German bureaucracy found the shortest road to the final goal . . . [since they] could dip into a vast reservoir of administrative experience, a *reservoir that church and state had filled in fifteen hundred years of destructive activity* (*italics added*).⁵⁴

The influence of centuries of anti-Judaic Christian doctrine and practice on the German psyche, ideology, and praxis, is further illustrated by the Nazi interpretation of the Christian tradition.⁵⁵ This influence is clearly evident in the testimony given by the Nazi Julius Streicher at the Nuremberg trials. Of Streicher's defence, Roy Eckardt writes:

There was more than phantasmagory in Streicher's retort before the tribunal at Nuremberg that Martin Luther should have really been there as the accused in his place, since he, Streicher, was simply carrying out what Luther had summoned any honest and believing man to do.⁵⁶

Neither were the anti-Jewish legislative policies of Hitler far removed from the anti-Judaic theological positions of the early church Fathers and subsequent ecclesiastical laws. This is clearly evidenced by a comparison of canonical and

⁵⁴ Ibid., 8-10.

⁵⁵ Nazi ideology and practice in most contexts replaced the religious aspirations of the people. Cf. e.g., Joachim Remak, ed. The Nazi Years: A Documentary History (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 93-105.

⁵⁶ Eckardt, 11.

Nazi legislation.⁵⁷ But more telling than that, Hitler, in reply to two bishops who confronted him on racial policy, retorts that "he was only putting into effect what Christianity had preached and practised for 2000 years."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ For a comparison of Canonical and Nazi anti-Jewish legislation see Hilberg, vol. 1, 12-14.

⁵⁸ Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, 224. The question of Christianity's contribution to modern anti-Semitism is certainly still of contemporary concern. An article in the Jerusalem Post, April 10, 1992, pointed out that 'the Vatican has not formally recognized the State of Israel because the Catholic Church remains impregnated with implacable contempt for Judaism and the Jewish people, a contempt that has found expression in early Church history (i.e. in the writings of the Church Fathers) and down to modern times.' At the first international seminar on anti-Semitism in post-totalitarian Europe (held in Prague of this year) scholars "were unable to agree on what has kept hatred of Jews alive for 2000 years. But they all acknowledged that anti-Semitism did not die with the defeat of the Nazis and haunts the continent once again." In the words of one of the contributors at the seminar, former Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel, "Anti-Semitism has re-emerged with a stubbornness, stupidity, and aggressiveness all its own." As cited in Israel My Glory 2 (1992): 29.

It must be noted, however, that steps have been and are being taken within many of the mainline churches in an attempt to remove contempt and hostility toward Jews and Judaism. Vatican II's historic declaration on the Church and the Jewish people has certainly been a move in this direction. See Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, "Vatican II and the Jews: Twenty Years Later," CJR 18 (1985): 16-30. The consistent refusal of the Church to fall into the trap of Marcionism also speaks favourably of the Church's positive intent toward Jews. From the Protestant camp, the United Church of Christ, for example, has affirmed that "Judaism has not been superseded by Christianity; that Christianity is not to be understood as the successor religion to Judaism; [that] God's covenant with the Jewish people has not been abrogated" and that "God has not rejected the Jewish people." As cited in Ari L. Goldman, "Judaism Affirmed in Church Milestone," BR 8 (1992): 56. The book, Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation on

And it was the implication that Christianity had contributed to the atrocities committed against the Jews⁵⁹ by the Nazis that:

reintroduced with unprecedented urgency the question of Christianity's responsibility for anti-Semitism: not simply whether individual Christians had added fuel to modern European anti-Semitism, but whether Christianity itself was, in essence and from its beginnings, the primary source of anti-Semitism in Western culture (*italics added*).⁶⁰

1.2 Methodology and Scope

In seeking an answer to the question of Christianity's contribution to modern anti-Semitism, scholars, employing a variety of methodologies, have produced a vast amount of literature. Of particular concern for biblical scholars has been the assertion that the root of modern anti-Semitism is found in the New Testament. And, as Yamauchi asserts, the

Scripture, Theology, and History, eds. Marc H. Tanenbaum, Marvin R. Wilson, and A. James Rudin (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), illustrates the effort within the Evangelical Christian community to reevaluate attitudes toward Jews and Judaism.

⁵⁹ It must not be overlooked that although Christianity, i.e., the church, has often been characterized as responsible for Jewish suffering, there are numerous examples of individual Christians who rescued Jews from the Nazi annihilation machine, in most cases, at risk of being murdered themselves. See e.g., Henri de Lubac, Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism, trans. Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990); Corrie ten Boom, The Hiding Place (Washington Depot: Chosen Books, 1971); Remak, 97-101, 161-176.

⁶⁰ Gager, The Origins of Anti-Semitism, 13.

murder of some six million Jews⁶¹ by the Nazis has

forced biblical scholars to examine the possible role of anti-Jewish statements in the New Testament as a contributing factor in the development of the most virulent and vicious form of anti-Semitism ever known.⁶²

Following the publication of Jules Isaac's book Jesus et Israel in 1948, numerous studies have sought to determine whether or not the anti-Judaic sentiments as expressed in the New Testament are to be linked inextricably to the development of later Christian anti-Semitism. Subsequent analyses of the role of anti-Judaic passages in the New Testament have generally led to two distinct conclusions. For some scholars, there is no connection between the anti-Judaic sentiments that are expressed in the New Testament and modern anti-Semitism. These scholars generally argue that the Church's central message, namely the love of God and neighbour, would be able to overcome the prejudices and antipathies generated by the ancient polemics.⁶³ Such scholars argue, therefore, that Christian anti-Semitism did not derive from New Testament polemics, but that it was a

⁶¹ It should, of course, be noted that millions of non-Jews also died at the hands of the Nazis. So Eckardt, 12, n. 24.

⁶² Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Concord, Conflict, and Community: Jewish and Evangelical Views of Scripture," in Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation, 155.

⁶³ Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, 1.

product of later theological development.⁶⁴ For example, Gregory Baum in his book, Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?, argues that the characterization of Jews in the New Testament is not to be linked to later anti-Semitism. He cautions scholars to "guard against this kind of anachronistic interpretation."⁶⁵ And even more to the point, Baum claims that "there is no foundation for the accusation that a seed of contempt and hatred for Jews can be found in the New Testament . . . no degradation of the Jewish people, no unjust accusation, no malevolent prophecy is ever suggested or implied."⁶⁶ For Hannah Arendt, the development of anti-Semitism is a uniquely modern phenomenon that is linked, not to New Testament polemics, but to the development of a totalitarian Christian state.⁶⁷ Luke T. Johnson argues that, given the rhetorical function of slander in polemic debates of the first century, New Testament slander against the Jews is "remarkably mild."⁶⁸ Adele Reinhartz suggests that a connection between the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁵ Gregory Baum, Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic? (New York: Paulist Press, 1965), 35.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 16. Baum later changes his mind. See his introduction to Ruether's Faith and Fratricide, 3.

⁶⁷ As pointed out by Gager, The Origins of Anti-Semitism, 267.

⁶⁸ Johnson, 441.

Gospels and modern antisemitism is solely dependent upon how one reads the Gospel accounts.⁶⁹

Other scholars, however, argue that the New Testament is inherently anti-Judaic, and that it is inextricably linked to the later development of Christian anti-Semitism and to the Holocaust. For example, Roy Eckardt is of the opinion that:

The foundations of Christian anti-Semitism and the church's contribution to the Nazi Holocaust were laid 1900 years ago; the line from the New Testament through the centuries of Christian contempt for Jews to the gas ovens and crematoria is unbroken.⁷⁰

Moreover, Rosemary Ruether, Roy Eckardt, and others concur with James Parkes that "the basic root of modern [Christian] anti-Semitism lies squarely on the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament."⁷¹

The attempt by scholars to link "the source of and sanction for Christian hostility and contempt for the Jews"⁷² to the New Testament has resulted in the examination of numerous New Testament passages. One passage which has

⁶⁹ Adele Reinhartz, "The New Testament and Anti-Judaism: A Literary-Critical Approach," JES 25 (1988): 536-537.

⁷⁰ Roy Eckardt, Your People, My People: The Meeting of Jews and Christians (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1974), 13.

⁷¹ Davies, xi.

⁷² Sandmel, xv.

on occasion been interpreted as reflecting traces of anti-Judaism is Mark 4:11-12.⁷³ It reads:

καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ· ἐκείνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὰ πάντα γίνεται, ἵνα βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ μὴ ἴδωσιν, καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσιν καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν, μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς.⁷⁴

It has long been recognized that this passage contains theologically objectionable ideas.⁷⁵ Of primary importance for this study is the inference that "a few are elected to knowledge of the saving mystery, and the many are prevented from repenting by the opacity of parables"⁷⁶ (the 'hardening' or 'parable' theory). In other words, Jesus taught in parables in order to confound "those outside" and thus prevent them from repenting and being saved! If one agrees with the argument of J. Gnilka that "those outside"

⁷³ Gager, The Origins of Anti-Semitism, 144. Cf. also Douglas R.A. Hare, "The Rejection of the Jews in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," in Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity, 33.

⁷⁴ Kurt Aland, et al., eds. The Greek New Testament (New York: American Bible Society, 1975), 134.

⁷⁵ Mary Ann Beavis, Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4:11-12 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 69. For a brief overview of various attempts to solve the problems associated with this passage see Sean Goan, "To See or Not to See . . . Mark 4:10-12 Revisited," MS 25 (1990): 5-7; A.M. Ambrozic, "Mark's Concept of the Parable," CBQ 29 (1967): 220-223.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

specifically refer to the Jews, the "old Israel"⁷⁷, then it appears Mark is advocating that God has rejected the Jews. Hence, Mark's construction in 4:11-12 may be taken to reflect his own anti-Judaic sentiments. If, however, the reference to those outside is specifically to the Jews, does this necessarily imply that the passage is anti-Judaic? Concretely, the question of concern here is: Does Mark 4:11-12 reflect a Marcan anti-Judaic theological agenda?

Though there have been attempts to determine whether or not Mark 4:11-12 is by nature anti-Judaic, previous analyses of the passage have not been extensive. For example, S. Sandmel, in his book Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?, implies that a substantial treatment of Mark 4:11-12 is forthcoming when he states: "The parables (4:1-34) will not here concern us, but we will return to them presently."⁷⁸ While Sandmel does return to 'them', his only comment is that in this passage (i.e. 4:1-34) one finds a negative treatment of the Twelve.⁷⁹ In an essay entitled "The Rejection of the Jews", Douglas Hare contributes only one paragraph to an analysis of Mark 4:11f. He contends that "the explicit anti-Judaism [of this passage] has . . . been

⁷⁷ Beavis, 71, citing J. Gnilka, Die Verstockung Israels (Munich: Kösel, 1961), 85.

⁷⁸ Sandmel, 30.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 40.

removed by Mark or his source."⁸⁰ Rosemary Ruether makes reference to Mark 4:11f., but only as a parallel reference in support of her claim that the Jews are rejected by the New Testament writers.⁸¹ In the article "Anti-Semitism in St. Mark's Gospel," T.A. Burkill passes quickly over Mark 4:11-12 by commenting only that Mark 4:1-34 is an explanation of the non-acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah and that it shows Mark's "unfailing confidence in the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God over all the opposing forces of evil."⁸² One of the longest analysis of the anti-Judaic nature of Mark 4:11-12 is found in Gregory Baum's book, Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic? There, he contributes four and a half pages to Mark 4:11-12 and its immediate context.⁸³ He argues that 4:11-12 cannot correctly be interpreted as being anti-Judaic since such an interpretation would be contrary to the love of Jesus for Israel as depicted in numerous Gospel passages. Rather, Mark uses the Isaianic passage simply as an adequate characterization of the response of the unbelieving Jews to the message of Jesus. In other words, Mark's adaptation of

⁸⁰ Hare, 33.

⁸¹ Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, 74.

⁸² Burkill, 50.

⁸³ Baum, 52-56.

Isaiah 6:9-10 shows that "it happened as it was written."⁸⁴

The brevity with which Sandmel, Hare, Ruether, Burkill, and Baum attempt to deal with the possible anti-Judaic nature of Mark 4:11-12 illustrates an inherent weakness in such approaches, namely, that previous analyses of Mark 4:11-12 have been inadequate in that the methodologies employed have failed to take into account all of the pertinent data. Modern studies, for the most part, have sought an interpretation of Mark 4:11-12 either by focusing on what Jesus meant by individual parables and by the parable theory or on what Mark meant by his telic use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in the context of the parable chapter.⁸⁵ To put it another way, most exegetes and interpreters have not considered the theology of Mark 4:11-12 to be of significance outside the parable chapter.⁸⁶ Such studies have primarily been concerned with distinguishing between tradition and redaction. The contention here, however, is that any approach that deals primarily with distinguishing between redaction and tradition disallows the interpreter from assessing the significance of the literary context into which Mark has placed the logion of 4:11-12. It sets strict

⁸⁴ Ibid., 55-56.

⁸⁵ Joel Marcus, The Mystery of the Kingdom of God (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 1-5.

⁸⁶ One exception is Beavis in Mark's Audience.

confines on the exegete and prohibits the interpreter from relating the theology of Mark 4:11-12 adequately to that of the rest of the Gospel. In other words, an analysis of Mark 4:11-12 as an isolated piece of narrative or merely in terms of the parable chapter, does not allow for the significance of the many literary connections between Mark 4:11-12 and the remainder of Mark's Gospel. Neither does it allow sufficiently for the importance of the literary links between Mark and his religious literary heritage.

The recent trend in biblical scholarship has been toward assessing the validity of a literary approach to New Testament interpretation.⁸⁷ A primary impetus toward this development has been the difficulty of establishing the historical reliability of certain Gospel passages. Subsequently, certain scholars have called into question the validity of a purely historical critical approach to the New Testament. S. Sandmel, for example, questions the validity of an historical critical approach to the New Testament since it is impossible to determine conclusively what in the Gospels is historical and what is not.⁸⁸ The shift away from a purely historical approach and toward a literary

⁸⁷ This trend is clearly illustrated in a review article by J.B. Muddiman, "The End of Markan Redaction Criticism?" ET 101 (1990): 307-309.

⁸⁸ Sandmel, 23, n. 2.

approach to the New Testament is illustrated by M.A. Beavis's book Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4:11-12 (1985). Beavis opines that the best methodological approach to Mark 4:11-12 is to interpret the passage as a literary/theological creation of the evangelist since proponents of historical critical methods have not been able to reach a consensus as to the composition of the parable chapter.⁸⁹ R.M. Fowler also dispenses with a purely historical critical approach to Mark. In his book Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark, Fowler contends that a redactional/literary approach is most valid.⁹⁰ He argues that a redactional/literary approach differs from a purely redactional one in that signs of Marcan composition are not restricted to seams, insertions and summaries as redactional critics generally contend. Fowler also points out that traditional redactional methods allow the biblical scholar only to discover how the author has arranged his/her material. It does not provide any explanation as to why the

⁸⁹ Beavis, 131-133. This is not to suggest that Beavis does not employ historical questions in seeking an answer to what Mark intended in 4:11-12, but significantly, that she is not concerned with the exercise of trying to determine the historical reliability of given New Testament passages.

⁹⁰ For an overview of Fowler's methodology see R.M. Fowler, Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981), esp. 37, 40-41, 46, 68, 177, 181.

author arranges the material the way he/she does."⁹¹

A primary contribution of Fowler's study is that he reiterates the significance of the fact that Mark, the author of the Gospel, regardless of his sources, "bears the full responsibility for the shape and structure of the final product."⁹² This methodological stance posed by Fowler is certainly far removed from the position advocated by the early form critic, Rudolf Bultmann, who states that Mark was not "sufficiently master of his material to be able to venture on a systematic construction himself."⁹³ Bultmann and other form critics generally came to view the Gospels as mere "collections of material . . . [the evangelists being] only to the smallest extent authors. They are principally collectors, vehicles of tradition, editors."⁹⁴ Later scholars, however, were unwilling to concede that the evangelists were merely "scissors-and-paste"⁹⁵ compilers and thus it was in response to form criticism that redaction

⁹¹ Ibid., 37, 181.

⁹² Ibid., 40.

⁹³ Rudolf Bultmann, The History of The Synoptic Tradition, trans. John Marsh (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 350.

⁹⁴ Martin Dibelius, From Tradition to Gospel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), 3.

⁹⁵ W.R. Telford, "Introduction: The Gospel of Mark," in The Interpretation of Mark, ed. William Telford (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 5-6.

criticism emerged.⁹⁶ While some redaction critics continue to distinguish between sources, most have become interested primarily in how the ordering of source material affects the total design or theology of the author.⁹⁷

This tendency within redaction criticism that emphasizes the ordering of source material rather than distinguishing between tradition and redaction is known as composition criticism. According to Moore, composition criticism is

a holistic variation of redaction criticism in which the work itself, viewed rigorously and persistently in its entirety, becomes the primary context for interpreting any part of it.⁹⁸

And it is here that composition criticism must be clearly distinguished from literary criticism. The two are similar in that they are both holistic approaches and employ literary techniques to determine the meaning of a text. But composition criticism is distinct from literary criticism in that the primary purpose of the composition critic remains

⁹⁶ David J. Hawkin, "The Markan Horizon of Meaning," in Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity: A Study in Changing Horizons, eds. David J. Hawkin and Tom Robinson (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 4.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁹⁸ Stephen D. Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge (London: Yale University Press, 1989), 4. For a good discussion of the distinction between Composition criticism and Narrative Criticism see Moore, 4-7.

historical⁹⁹ and theological.¹⁰⁰

The use of composition criticism is illustrated by R.F. O'Toole's book The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts. In it, O'Toole states explicitly that because of the difficulty in determining and delineating the sources in the book of Acts, he has chosen composition criticism, "which like literary criticism analyses the whole of an author's work."¹⁰¹ Philip Sellew's article "Composition of Didactic Scenes in Mark's Gospel,"¹⁰² also illustrates the use of composition criticism. While Sellew does not focus on the selection and arrangement of larger blocks of material in Mark's compositional production, his analyses of "the compositional technique employed by the evangelist in constructing particular scenes,"¹⁰³ exemplifies the approach of composition critics.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Hawkin, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Moore, 7.

¹⁰¹ Robert F. O'Toole, The Unity of Luke's Theology: An Analysis of Luke-Acts (Wilmington, Delaware, 1984), 11.

¹⁰² Philip Sellew, "Composition of Didactic Scenes in Mark's Gospel," JBL 108 (1989): 613-634.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 616.

¹⁰⁴ For other examples of compositional approaches to Mark's Gospel see Norman R. Petersen, "The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:26," HTR (1980): 185-217; Robert Butterworth, "The Composition of Mark 1-12," HeyJ 13 (1972): 5-26.

The contention here is that the most fruitful approach toward an analysis of Mark 4:11-12 is composition criticism. Following the methodological tendencies of Beavis, Fowler, Sellw, O'Toole, and others, it is held by this writer that the author of Mark is responsible for a compositional production. In other words, Mark inherited stories from either an oral or written tradition about the teachings and activities of Jesus, and took liberty to rework the material in support of a particular theological agenda. Contrary to the position of Bultmann and that generally held by form critics that Mark was a "simple and clumsy compiler," the argument presented in this thesis rests upon the assertion by more recent scholars that Mark is a creative author who has the ability to order his gospel in a sophisticated manner. As Beavis contends, Mark was a creative author

who thoroughly reworked and supplemented traditional materials to produce a specific effect on his audience, rather than a simple and rather clumsy compiler who redundantly incorporated duplicate traditions into his narrative . . . [He was] quite capable of composing highly symbolic narratives, and of structuring his material in a sophisticated way.¹⁰⁵

In short, Mark is responsible for a literary production, and only as the interpreter keeps this in mind is it possible to discover what Mark intended by his telic use of words in 4:11-12. This passage, then, must not be

¹⁰⁵ Beavis, 15-16, 133.

viewed in isolation or merely in terms of the parable chapter but must be considered in terms of the whole of Mark's Gospel. To view Mark 4:11-12 in terms of the whole of Mark is certainly more appealing since, as Beavis correctly points out, the terminology and theological ideas expressed in Mark 4:11-12 are not alien to Mark as a whole.¹⁰⁶ The validity of a holistic approach to Mark is illustrated most adequately by Fowler. He writes:

As a piece of literature, the gospel has an integrity, a certain wholeness to it which should be acknowledged by those who interpret it. It is a fatal error to move from the standard axiom that the gospel tradition originally circulated as individual sayings and stories to the conclusion that the gospels are simply collected pieces with no great coherence. The whole is more than the sum of its parts. The gospels do in fact display unity and coherence, but that can only be seen if one entertains the possibility of a holistic approach to them and avoids an overly fragmented, pericope-by-pericope reading of the texts. Only by approaching the gospels as literary works, i.e., as integral wholes, can we see how all the individual pieces fit together to make the whole.¹⁰⁷

The scope of this study certainly does not provide for nor require a detailed examination of "all" of the "parts" in Mark's Gospel. Rather, only an analysis of selected "parts" in Mark that shed most light on an interpretation of 4:11-12 are necessary. Thus each chapter of this thesis will seek

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., Chap. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Fowler, 40-41.

an answer to the subsidiary question(s) that is deemed most relevant to determining an answer to the primary question of this thesis as stated above.

Obviously, any study of Mark 4:11-12 requires an analysis of Mark's use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in the parable chapter. As has been noted, scholars have meticulously examined 4:11-12 and its immediate literary context (4:1-30) in order to ascertain the meaning intended by Mark. In addition to the importance of linguistical and grammatical questions regarding Mark's placement and use of 4:11-12, a comparison of themes and motifs as found in the contexts of Mark 4:11-12 and Isaiah 6:9-10 are also deemed useful.

Another 'part' of Mark which is deemed relevant to this study is the literary function of the characters in the Marcan narrative. In particular, it will be argued that the reactions of the Sadducees, Pharisees, Scribes, Herodians, demons, and the disciples to Jesus' message and ministry, play a significant role in the Marcan composition. It will be shown that the function of these groups provides useful insight into understanding what Mark intended in 4:11-12.

Of equal significance is the fact that the ideas, themes, and motifs of Mark 4:11-12, are found outside the parable chapter.¹⁰⁸ In particular, it will be shown that

¹⁰⁸ So Beavis, 88.

the ideas of Mark 4:11-12 are found repeatedly throughout Mark 4:1-8:30. It will be argued that the compositional structure of Mark 4:1-8:30 is the result of the conscious effort of the author to establish for the reader the soteriological significance of the mission of Jesus in Mark. And of primary soteriological significance for understanding what Mark meant in 4:11-12 is whether Mark's presentation suggests that the "good news" is passed exclusively to the Gentiles since the Jews, due to their obdurate nature, have abrogated their right to the Gospel by rejecting Jesus, the Messiah, or is Mark's proclamation of the Gospel universal in appeal.

In the first place, this study will attempt to account for the literary significance of Mark's use of Jewish scriptures. Throughout his Gospel Mark repeatedly quotes, paraphrases, and alludes to his religious literary heritage. References to Isaiah appear to be of special hermeneutical significance since Isaiah 6:9-10 is the source of Mark 4:11-12. Other Marcan citations from Jewish scriptures, however, are also of interpretative significance. The question here is: what does Mark's use of Jewish scriptures tell us about his perception and subsequent attitude toward his religious heritage? And further, what does Mark's use of Jewish scripture reveal regarding his perception of the relationship between the teachings and practices of Jesus

and those of Judaism? In other words, is Christianity, for Mark, continuous or discontinuous with first century Judaism? It is to these specific questions that we now turn.

2.0 CONTINUITY AND/OR DISCONTINUITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MARK'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT¹

Though the function of Mark's use of the Old Testament continues to be debated,² there is no debating the fact that the Gospel of Mark contains numerous quotations, allusions, and paraphrases of Old Testament texts.³ What does Mark

¹ It is recognized that the phrase 'Old Testament' used in conjunction with the phrase 'New Testament' may be taken to reflect Christian attitudes of arrogance and superiority toward Jews and their scriptures. Here, there is no such intent. Rather, the terms are used simply because of their conventional function in defining the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Following those scholars who continue to use these terms, it is hoped that "this nomenclature will not be deemed offensive by anyone." So R. Nicole, "The Attitude of Jesus Toward Scripture," in Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation, 204, n. 1. For a discussion of the impropriety of the continued use of these terms see John Sawyer, "Combating Prejudices about the Bible and Judaism," Theology 94 (1991): 269-278. For a refutation of Sawyer's argument see Walter Moberly, "'Old Testament' and 'New Testament': The Propriety of the Terms for Christian Theology," Theology 95 (1992): 26-32.

² See e.g., W.S. Vorster, "The Function and Use of the Old Testament in Mark," NeoT 14 (1981): 62-72; Craig A. Evans, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New," in Introducing New Testament Interpretation, ed. Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 177-179; Hugh Anderson, "The Old Testament in Mark's Gospel," in The Use of the Old Testament in the New and other Essays, ed. James M. Efird (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972), 280-306. For a survey of scholarly studies on the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament see Merrill P. Miller, "Targum, Midrash and the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods 2 (1971): 64-78; Howard Clark Kee, "The Function of Scriptural Quotations and Allusions in Mark 11-16," in Jesus und Paulus, eds. E. Earle Ellis and Erich Grässer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 165-188.

³ Mark makes reference to at least fourteen Old Testament books. So E.P. Sanders and M. Davies, Studying the Synoptic Gospels (London: SCM Press, 1988), 270-271. For a juxtaposition of Marcan references with possible Old Testament parallels see the following works: R.T. France, Jesus and the Old Testament (London: Tyndale Press, 1971),

intend by his use of these passages? In an attempt to answer this question various theories have been proposed. Primary consideration has often been given to the theory that Mark's use of the Old Testament subscribes to a schema of prophecy and fulfilment,⁴ i.e., Mark regards the events he relates about Jesus Christ as fulfilment of corresponding earlier events or of prophetic predictions witnessed to in the Old Testament.⁵

To examine Mark's schema of prophecy and fulfilment, i.e., of continuity between the Old and New Testaments, is really to consider the question of continuity between

259-263; Kee, 167-171. For a comparison of Marcan with other Synoptic usage of Old Testament passages see Albert C. Sundberg, "On Testimonies," NovT 3 (1959): 273.

⁴ There is contention regarding the degree to which Mark adheres to a schema of prophecy and fulfilment. Hugh Anderson, 304-306, for example, concludes that only with qualifications and reservations can all three synoptic writers be regarded as subscribing to the same degree and in the same way to a promise-fulfilment schema. He argues that the Jesus of Mark's Gospel appears as one who in his teaching supersedes and transcends scripture more than one who makes the scripture point to himself as its fulfilment. Alfred Suhl, on the other hand, holds that Mark is not interested in a prophecy fulfilment schema. For comments on Suhl's position see: D. Moody Smith, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in The Use of the Old Testament in the New and other Essays, 41-43; Sanders and Davies, 270-271; Joachim Rohde, Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), 140-141; Vorster, 65ff.; Robert H. Stein, "The Proper Methodology for Ascertaining a Marcan Redaction History," NovT 13 (1971): 195, n. 2.

⁵ Anderson, 280.

Judaism and early Christianity.⁶ An examination of references to the Old Testament in Mark's Gospel suggests that Mark views the teachings and actions of Jesus to stand in some sort of relationship to the teachings and practices of traditional Judaism.⁷ Past scholarship has attempted to

⁶ So Morna D. Hooker, Continuity and Discontinuity: Early Christianity in its Jewish Setting (London: Epworth Press, 1986), 42. For further discussion on the question of continuity between Judaism and Christianity see e.g., C. van der Waal, "The Continuity between the Old and New Testaments," Neot 14 (1981): 1-20, esp. 9f.; J. Barton, "Judaism and Christianity: Prophecy and Fulfilment," Theology 79 (1976): 260-266; Rex Mason, "Continuity and Newness," Expt 95 (1984): 103-106; Hyam Maccoby, "Judaism and Christianity: The Same and Different," Theology 79 (1976): 266-273; W.S. Campbell, "Christianity and Judaism: Continuity and Discontinuity," CJR 18 (1985): 3-14.

⁷ The phrase 'traditional Judaism' is understood to refer to the Judaism of the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods, and is to be distinguished from the religion of Israel prior to the fall of the kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C.E. Up until recent times, scholars have generally upheld the dictum of G.F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim, vol. 1 (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 3, that out of the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods there emerged "a normative type of Judaism." Moore concedes that the Judaism of this period was "not without conflicts of parties and sects," but nevertheless argues that a unified Judaism resulted. In fact, Moore sees little or no difference between Rabbinic Judaism and the Judaism that preceded it. Moore, vol. 1, 71, concludes: "Evidently much of what we otherwise know only in the rabbinic sources of the first and second centuries after our era was custom and law in the preceding centuries." Recent scholarship, however, has called in to question the notion that the Judaism of the Intertestamental or Second Commonwealth period was 'normative'. Whether or not opponents of Moore's thesis are correct, they are surely right in arguing that Second Commonwealth Judaism although "related both to the Old Testament faith and culture that preceded it and Rabbinic Judaism that followed, it was identical with neither." As J. Julius Scott, "Crisis and Reaction: Roots of Diversity in Intertestamental Judaism," EvQ 64 (1992): 197-212, and others suggest, though there are common threads that suggest uniformity (e.g., monotheism,

define the nature of this relationship by arguing that the writers of the New Testament use the Old Testament either to legitimate the claim that the teachings of Jesus are the tenable outgrowth or continuation of Judaism, or that Jesus' teachings supersedes and, in fact, abrogates Judaism.

The aim of this chapter is to determine how and why Mark utilized his religious literary heritage. Such an examination of Mark's use of the Old Testament is beneficial in defining his view of the relationship between Judaism and the teachings of Jesus more precisely and, in doing so, provides insight for assessing Mark's attitude toward his religious (Jewish) heritage. To put it more pointedly, if it is found that Mark views the teachings of Jesus as an abrogation of the fundamental precepts of traditional Judaism, Mark's attitude toward his religious heritage may be taken to be negative. On the other hand, if it is found that the teachings of Jesus are presented as being

covenant, Torah), the evidence of diversity within the Judaism of the Second Commonwealth period indicates that the teachings and practices of Jesus must be understood as one form of a 'multiform' Judaism. Johnson, 428, concurs when he states: "When the NT writings were composed, neither Christianity nor Judaism had reached the point of uniformity and separation that would characterize them in later centuries." Following Scott, Johnson, and others, a fundamental premise of this thesis is that Mark presents Jesus as operating within a diverse Judaism of the first century. Cf. also E.P. Sanders, "Patterns of Religion in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: A Holistic Method of Comparison," HTR 66 (1973): 455-458; James H. Charlesworth, Jesus Within Judaism: New Light from Archaeological Discoveries, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1988); Gary G. Porton, "Diversity in Postbiblical Judaism," in Early Judaism and its Modern Interpreters, 57-80.

continuous with the message of traditional Judaism, Mark's presentation of the Jews and Judaism may not be able to be characterized as negatively as some have claimed.

A thorough examination of each Marcan reference to the Old Testament is certainly beyond the scope of this chapter. The discussion is limited to a selection of references that are deemed to represent adequately what Mark intends by his use of Old Testament texts. The references selected correspond to three primary divisions, namely, the significance of the Old Testament in Mark's prologue, Torah citations in Mark, and a comparison of Marcan motifs with Old Testament prophetic themes. A necessary precursor to this discussion is a brief examination of Marcan exegetical practices.⁸

2.1 Marcan Exegesis and the Old Testament: A Preliminary Observation

Scholars generally concur that an examination of Mark's use of Old Testament passages inevitably presents the exegete and interpreter with certain difficulties. These difficulties are generally reflected in either the determining of sources and/or the Marcan redaction of a given Old Testament passage. The problem is probably not

⁸ This is especially justified given the fact that a study of contemporary Jewish exegetical practices is commonly accepted as a necessary background to early Christianity's use of the Old Testament. So James D.G. Dunn, Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), 82.

better illustrated than by the difficulties presented by Mark's first reference to the Old Testament found in 1:2b-3.⁹ In the first place, the problem with this passage is one of sources. Stated concisely, it has long been recognized that 1:2b-3, which Mark attributes to the prophet Isaiah, does not in its entirety come from the book of Isaiah.¹⁰ Rather the passage is a composite quotation from three Old Testament passages, namely, Isaiah 40:3, Exodus 23:20 and Mal. 3:1.¹¹ The discussion that follows will focus on the difficulties associated with 1:2b-3 in order to illustrate Mark's distinctive exegetical use of Old Testament passages. In turn, this will suggest Mark's predisposition or aversion to his Judaism and that of his fellow Jews.

Attempts to explain why Mark incorrectly attributes all three references found in 1:2b-3 to Isaiah have varied. Certain scholars concur that Mark attributes all three passages to Isaiah because he is relying on a Christian

⁹ Some hold that the first reference to the Old Testament is found in 1:1 (cf. Genesis 1:1). So Ched Myers, Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 122.

¹⁰ A.E.J. Rawlinson, St. Mark (London: Methuen & Company Ltd., 1927), 5.

¹¹ C.T. Ruddick, "Behold I Send My Messenger," JBL 88 (1969): 381-417, proposes that the origin of Mark 1:2b-3 is not found in the prophetic literature but in the Pentateuch. He claims that the language and thought of the first Marcan pericope parallels the events and language of Genesis 31-32.

tradition of Old Testament interpretation.¹² In other words, Mark's "fused text may have been selected from a testimony-collection in which the conflation had already taken place."¹³ While the discovery of collections of texts at Qumran has given support to the testimony-collection theory,¹⁴ a more plausible explanation for Mark's failure to identify correctly all the sources of his "Isaianic" citation relates to the popular approach of his Gospel. According to Sanders and Davies, and others, Mark's limited vocabulary, repetition of phraseology, use of the historic present, Aramaisms, Hebraisms, and Latinisms, indicate that Mark writes for the populace,¹⁵ not the literary elite. His use of colloquial language implies that he is not necessarily concerned with literary refinement and precision but rather to ensure that his audience will recognize the message implied by his Old Testament citations.¹⁶ This

¹² Smith, 40-41.

¹³ William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1974), 45-46. Sherman E. Johnson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1972), 33, suggests that the reference to Malachi 3:1 may have been added to the Marcan text after it left the evangelist's hand.

¹⁴ I. Howard Marshall, "An Assessment of Recent Developments," in It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5. For a contrary position see Sundberg, 268-281.

¹⁵ Sanders and Davies, 266.

¹⁶ This surely appears to be the intent of the author of Hebrews. Cf. Hebrews 2:6.

explanation is strengthened by the fact that he most often cites the LXX,¹⁷ a text written in the common Greek language of the day, rather than the Hebrew text. Apparently, given the Hellenistic milieu of the first century, Mark had no difficulty using the Greek LXX, a translation of the Hebrew text. Had Mark been concerned that by using the Greek text certain meanings and nuances of the Hebrew text would be lost,¹⁸ he would have chosen the latter. The fact that there is no translation, LXX included, that is not an interpretation,¹⁹ is further evidence that Mark's purpose in citing the Old Testament did not necessitate literary

¹⁷ Smith, 41. Marcan citations which diverge from the LXX are best explained not by "a lapse of memory" as some have supposed, but by "deliberate alteration, i.e., by *ad hoc* translation and elaboration or by use of a variant textual tradition, to serve the purpose of the New Testament writer." So E. Earle Ellis, Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 147-148.

¹⁸ In addition to linguistical and grammatical problems, the difficulty of transferring the 'exact' meaning of a Hebrew text to a Greek one "is compounded by the fact that the translator is dealing with two cultures that are in many respects alien to each other." So M. Black, "The Theological Appropriation of the Old Testament by the New Testament," SJT 39 (1986): 2.

¹⁹ Ibid. Luke T. Johnson The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 71, concurs with Black when he writes: "Translation of Torah into Greek meant a massive if subtle transformation of symbols. Every translation is an interpretation. Even when the LXX sought to be scrupulously literal in its rendering, something was both lost and gained in the transition from Hebrew forms to Greek ones, for the syntax of the two languages is sufficiently different to give a distinctive structuring even to narratives. Even at the level of individual words, the process of losing some resonances and gaining others is clear."

technical accuracy.

Of obvious importance for Mark is that his symbols secure a certain meaning for his audience. If Mark writes for a mixed audience (i.e., Jews and Gentiles), as Myers and others suggest, there is further reason to dismiss Mark's failure to account accurately for his sources as insignificant, since it is quite possible that both Jews and Gentiles would have a general but not necessarily a specific awareness of Jewish texts. That is, it is quite plausible to argue that Jews and Gentiles would recognize, if not the specific, the general prophetic origin of 1:2b-3. This conclusion is supported by the assertion of Myers that both Jews and Gentiles would have a general knowledge of Pharisaical practices during the first century. Myers writes:

It is quite plausible that Gentiles in or around [Mark's] . . . community, and even the uneducated Jewish peasantry, would have understood the broad social codes but have been unfamiliar with specific practices of sects such as the Pharisees.²⁰

This explanation is further supported by Beavis' assertion that though Mark was probably trained in both Greek and Jewish schools, there are indications within the Gospel that Mark "was not entirely at home with Jewish lore."²¹ In addition, that Mark did not pay meticulous attention to

²⁰ Myers, 96.

²¹ Beavis, 40.

identifying his source(s), is reflective of early Christian exegesis in which "composite citations or multiple passages [were often] credited to the more prominent prophet in the listing."²²

A second difficulty with Mark's first use of the Old Testament, and of greater significance to this study, is his failure to take "into account either the literary or the historical context from which the quotation comes."²³ That is, Mark's usage of Old Testament sources for his Isaianic citation does not account for the fact that the writings of the Old Testament prophets often reflect their own contemporary (i.e., historical) situation. For example, the meaning which Mark ascribes to Isaiah 40:3 does not acknowledge that Isaiah's proclamation of a voice crying, "make straight in the desert a way (highway) for our God" (40:3), had its own particular meaning in the literature of that day.²⁴ In short, Mark's utilization of Isaiah 40:3

²² R. Longenecker, Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), 138.

²³ Vorster, 69. For a discussion of the failure of the writers of the New Testament to represent adequately the original meaning of the Old Testament passages which they cite see e.g., Marshall, 7-9; Richard T. Mead, "A Dissenting Opinion about Respect for Context in Old Testament Quotations," NTS 10 (1964): 279-289; S.L. Edgar, "Respect for Context in Quotations from the Old Testament," NTS 9 (1962): 55-62; W.D. Davies, "Reflections about the Use of the Old Testament in the New in its Historical Context," JOR 74 (1983): 105-136.

²⁴ C. Westermann, Isaiah 40-66 (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1969), 37-38.

produces a meaning that is not faithful to the original meaning intended by the author of II Isaiah, a meaning dictated by the historical milieu in which Isaiah 40:3 was originally formulated.

This point is clearly illustrated by a brief examination of Isaiah 40:3 in its immediate literary and historical context. Isaiah 40:3 reads: "A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" According to Westermann, highways were, in the days of Isaiah the prophet, symbolic of the strength of a nation. Subsequently, Babylon's strength over Israel is symbolized by the condition of Babylonian highways - the imposing, superior Babylonian highways which have caused the downfall of Israel. In Isaiah 40:3, the highway of which the prophet thinks, in a literal sense, is one which will enable Israel to make her way homeward through the desert.²⁵ For Isaiah, however, a literal highway itself was not the means whereby Yahweh's glory would be revealed. Westermann writes:

a highway [is designated specifically] 'for Yahweh . . . ,' just as the magnificent highways of Babylon were strictly highways for her gods. Its designation as the highway for Yahweh is more precisely explained in v. 5, 'And the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed.' This, too, is to be read against the Babylonian background: there the primary function of the processional highways was to allow the great processions to display the power and majesty of the gods in visible form. But this very background highlights the difference

²⁵ Ibid., 38.

in the being of Yahweh: his 'glory' . . . cannot possibly be manifested in the same way as that of the gods of Babylonian processions. . . . What reveals Yahweh's glory is his action in history. Therefore, the highway which is to be made through the desert is the way on which Yahweh now gives proof of himself, in a new and quite unlooked-for historical act: the way for leading his people home.²⁶

In the historical-literal sense, then, highways were constructed for the triumphal entry of a particular god or king. In keeping with his literary and historical milieu, therefore, Isaiah's speaks of "a highway for Yahweh" in anticipation that Yahweh will rescue his people from their Babylonian captors. For Isaiah,

[Israel's] . . . restoration demands a divine intervention in history: the way through the desert presumes the release from Babylon. The language of 40:3ff. about making straight the way in the desert is figurative rather than literal. [It describes] . . . a picture of the divine intervention in history, in particular in the commission to Cyrus [an historical act] to carry out the work which makes it possible for Israel to go free.²⁷

The meaning, then, intended by Isaiah in 40:3 reflects specific historical circumstances. The meaning that Mark intends by his use of Isaiah 40:3, however, does not reflect the meaning implied by the original literary/historical context out of which Isaiah 40:3 emerged. In his own historical milieu, Mark identifies the voice in the wilderness as being John the Baptizer, the one who heralds

²⁶ Ibid., 38-39.

²⁷ Ibid., 39.

the coming of Jesus Messiah, Son of God (see section 2.2). In contrast, Isaiah makes no attempt to identify the voice of the one crying in the wilderness.²⁸ But the clear implication is that this individual will rescue Israel from Babylonian captivity.

In response to this dual meaning derived from the same passage, it could be argued that the Old Testament prophets wrote in light of their historical circumstances and that subsequently, the historical milieu of the New Testament writers, being quite different, would not enable the latter to draw out any exact correspondence between the events say of John the Baptist and the Messenger of Isaiah 40:3. But, as Westermann points out,

Although we must never therefore resign ourselves to the fact that 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness' as applied to John the Baptist does not exactly correspond to the Old Testament text which it cites, the quotation, with its differences from the original, has nevertheless, something to tell us. It shows that, as a general rule, in dealing with citations of the Old Testament in the New, we must never set the *New Testament version, its precise wording and meaning, over against the Old Testament original, but must take account of the whole road over which, through translation and other processes in tradition, the words of the Old Testament had travelled up to the point where they took on the meaning given them in the New* [Italics added].²⁹

Some forty years ago the British scholar, C.H. Dodd, arrived at a similar conclusion. He commented that it is

²⁸ Ibid., 36.

²⁹ Ibid., 37-38.

unlikely that the authors of the New Testament "would be systematically indifferent to the historical setting or to the original intention of the scriptures which they quote,"³⁰ and went on to argue that they would have no difficulty finding their own situation reflected or foreshadowed in Old Testament passages.³¹ In other words, Dodd argued that the writers of the New Testament, in using passages from the Old Testament, created "a certain shift, nearly always an expansion, of the original scope of the passage."³²

Here, following Dodd, Westermann, and others,³³ it appears quite plausible to argue that the authors of the New Testament, Mark included, adapted or appropriated Old Testament passages to suit their own individual intention(s). Recent scholars advance a similar opinion. C. Rowland and M. Corner, for example, refer to the adaptation of Old Testament texts by the writers of the New Testament. Accordingly, the writers of the New Testament are far more interested in adapting Old Testament passages to contemporary situations than in the historical intention

³⁰ C.H. Dodd, The Old Testament in the New (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 8.

³¹ Ibid., 24.

³² C.H. Dodd, According to the Scriptures (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1952), 130.

³³ Cf. C.F.D. Moule, The Birth of the New Testament (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966), 58, 67f.

of Old Testament authors whom they cite. They write:

Had, indeed, the historical intention been the primary one, then the New Testament writers would have been engaged purely in antiquarian research, and would not in consequence have a continuing significance in the present.³⁴

Old Testament texts, continue Rowland and Corner, are given continuing significance through a process of Jewish and Christian exegesis in which the creative ability of a given author allows him/her to adapt an old message to new situations.³⁵ Thus, Mark's use of Isaiah 40:3 in a somewhat different manner than its original context dictates, is neither inaccurate nor misleading since he is merely following the early Jewish and Christian practice of exegesis that applied Old Testament texts to contemporary events.

It is striking to note that the writers of the Old Testament also followed similar exegetical practice. Ignoring the literary/historical context of their sources, Old Testament writers also appropriated certain themes and ideas from earlier Old Testament passages to suit their own contemporary purposes. For example:

the author of II Isaiah takes the language and symbolism of the deliverance from slavery in Egypt and projects it onto quite a different situation, the return of exiled Israelites from Babylon

³⁴ C. Rowland and M. Corner, Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 60.

³⁵ Ibid., 61-62.

centuries later.³⁶

M. Black refers to this practice as a reinterpretation³⁷ of scripture, a process of growth in which the meaning of Old Testament passages were appropriated theologically by later writers.³⁸ He contends that the Chronicler of the Old Testament, for example, reinterprets the books of Kings; and that the link between the two Isaiahs may be explained along the lines that passages in second Isaiah are reinterpretations of passages found in first Isaiah.³⁹ This process of growth Black argues,

continued, not only into the intertestamental period in the apocalypses, but through the New Testament, into the patristic, the mediaeval and the modern period, i.e., within periods which have undergone massive cultural changes from the age of the original documents.⁴⁰

Thus, in accordance with traditional and contemporary

³⁶ Mason, 104.

³⁷ Or "resignification." So Evans, 164.

³⁸ Black, 2-3.

³⁹ So also J.J.M. Roberts, "Isaiah 2 and the Prophet's Message to the North," *JQR* 75 (1985): 291-292. He writes: "the prophet sometimes reused oracles from his early period to address a later, quite different, audience in an entirely new setting. Such reuse of old speeches in new situations almost inevitably results in internal anomalies unless the speaker does a thorough and flawless job of editing. . . . [Thus, many anomalies are the result of] . . . Isaiah's own imperfect adaptation of earlier oracles to new situations."

⁴⁰ Black, 3.

Jewish exegetical practices,⁴¹ Mark had no difficulty appropriating from Isaiah 40:3 "a life and relevancy beyond the occasion of its original utterance."⁴² This does not mean that the Old Testament scriptures were not highly regarded by Mark and other New Testament writers. On the contrary. They had a profound reverence for Old Testament texts.⁴³ But their reverence did not prohibit them from practising "a daring freedom of exegesis."⁴⁴

In the case of Mark's utilization of Isaiah 40:3 in 1:2b-3, and his use of the Old Testament texts generally, it is therefore concluded that Mark "was consumed neither by interest in detail nor sequential accuracy as in the modern historian, but rather [how] . . . the meaning of events, the

⁴¹ Max Wilcox, "On Investigating the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament," in Text and Interpretation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 231ff., holds that the exegetical methods used by New Testament writers followed contemporary Jewish exegetical practices. So also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament (Scholars' Press, 1974), 55. Davies, "Reflections about the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 135, asserts that New Testament exegesis "was not unique but probably typical: it was only its Christological dimension and approach that was peculiar." Cf. also Walter C. Kaiser, Toward an Exegetical Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 52-57.

⁴² Mason, 103.

⁴³ So Fitzmyer, 57.

⁴⁴ Davies, "Reflections about the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 135. Cf. also Fitzmyer, 58. Benno Przybyski, "The Spirit and the Appropriation of the Past," in Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity, 33-35, argues that the writers of the New Testament legitimize their 'daring freedom of exegesis' by appealing to the influence of the Spirit.

moral of episodes, and the challenge of speech and action"⁴⁵ could enhance his own particular authorial intentions. Moreover, there is no evidence that Mark misunderstood Old Testament passages which he cited, but that he adapted and interpreted such passages to suit a particular theological agenda.

2.2 A Hermeneutical Key to Mark's Use of the Old Testament: The Prologue

Scholars have long recognized that the opening of Mark's Gospel, i.e., the prologue (1:1-15),⁴⁶ provides essential information for interpreting the rest of the Gospel. V. Taylor, for example, states that Mark's prologue

⁴⁵ Earl Richard, Jesus: One and Many: The Christological Concept of New Testament Authors (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 102.

⁴⁶ The extent of Mark's prologue has come under considerable discussion. Some scholars argue that the prologue ends at 1:13, others at 1:15. For a brief overview of various positions see Frank J. Matera, "The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel," JSNT 34 (1988): 4-6, 16-17, nn. 9, 14. For the purpose of argumentation it is here held that the prologue consists of 1:1-15. As will be argued below (chap. five), however, Mark's text cannot be divided into 'sections' or 'units' with beginning and end. A more plausible approach is to view 1:14-15 as a transitional unit that "provides a thematic conclusion to the introduction in the same context in which it inaugurates a new stage in the spatio-temporal program of the Marcan narrative." So V.K. Robbins, "Mark 1:14-20: An Interpretation at the Intersection of Jewish and Graeco-Roman Traditions," NTS 28 (1982): 225. Joanna Dewey, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience," CBO 53 (1991): 225-226, argues correctly that 1:14-15 are transitional verses. While they point forward in the narrative, they also refer back.

"serves as an introduction to the whole."⁴⁷ According to W.L. Lane, Mark's prologue is the key to the entire Gospel because it introduces the central figure of the account.⁴⁸ But, as Matera points out, while most scholars recognize the importance of Mark's prologue, most have failed to relate it concretely to the rest of the Gospel.⁴⁹

The contention here is that Mark's prologue, and specifically, references to the Old Testament as found throughout the Marcan prologue, are of key hermeneutical significance for interpreting the rest the Gospel. The significance of the Old Testament in Mark's prologue is first suggested by the fact that Mark 1:1-15 contains many references to the Old Testament. As indicated above (section 2.1), Mark 1:2b-3 has its origins in three Old Testament passages. Below, it will be shown that 1:4-15 also contains numerous allusions to the Old Testament. But again, while scholars recognize the importance of such references,⁵⁰ few have indicated concretely the

⁴⁷ V. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1955), 151.

⁴⁸ Lane, 39.

⁴⁹ Matera, 3-4; Matera, Robinson and Keck are notable exceptions. Cf. Leander E. Keck, "The Introduction to Mark's Gospel," NTS 12 (1966): 358-368; James M. Robinson, The Problem of History in Mark and other Marcan Essays (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), esp. 69-80.

⁵⁰ See e.g., Eduard Schweizer, The Good News According to Mark, trans. Donald H. Madvig (London: SPCK, 1971), 29. Schweizer asserts that references to the Old Testament in Mark 1:2b-3 "function as a preface to the whole book and

interpretative significance of such references for understanding Mark's Gospel as a whole. Here it will be argued that once the significance of references to the Old Testament in Mark's prologue is determined, other references to the Old Testament found throughout the Gospel of Mark will fall into clearer perspective. In particular, Mark's use of the Old Testament in his prologue will suggest how he perceives the relationship between the events that he relates about Jesus, the central figure of his Gospel, and his religious literary heritage.

Mark's first reference to the Old Testament in 1:2b-3 has a certain hermeneutical significance for interpreting the rest of Mark's Gospel. What does Mark intend by this Old Testament citation? An examination of Mark 1:1-15 reveals that 1:2b-3 has a central function in the compositional arrangement of Mark's prologue. In short, it (i.e., 1:2b-3) functions in both an analeptic and proleptic sense to inform the reader/hearer⁵¹ concerning the identity of Mark's Jesus. In its analeptic function, 1:2b-3 refers

introduce everything that follows as the fulfilment of all of God's dealings with Israel."

⁵¹ Many modern scholars hold that Mark's Gospel was written to be heard rather than read. Ernest Best, Mark: The Gospel as Story, Studies of the New Testament and its World, ed. John Riches (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1983), 18, e.g., writes: "We should not then assume that Mark was written to be read; more probably it was written to be listened to." Cf. also Dewey, 224; David Rhoads and Donald Michie, Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 2, 143, n. 1.

back to 1:1. This connection is immediately apparent. Prior to 1:2b-3, Mark ascribes two titles to Jesus, namely, Χριστός and υἱὸς θεοῦ⁵² (1:1). These titles introduce immediately to the mind of the reader/hearer the question of Jesus' identity, a question that dominates not only Mark's prologue but the entire Gospel.⁵³ The phrase, Καθὼς γέγραπται ("As it is written") in 1:2a serves to connect these titles concretely to Mark's Isaianic citation in 1:2b-3. The introductory formula, Καθὼς γέγραπται, as Guelich says, "consists of forming a bridge between what has preceded and the quotation that follows."⁵⁴ This conclusion is particularly appealing since in New Testament usage, "formula and quotation always refer back and never forward

⁵² It is debatable whether the phrase 'Son of God' was part of the original form of Mark 1:1. Mark's literary style and thematic arrangement certainly can be used to support the longer reading. As Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament, 154-155, has argued, the phrase 'Son of God' fits well in the narrative as a whole. For an argument in favour of the shorter reading see P.M. Head, "A Text-Critical Study of Mark 1.1 'The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ,'" NTS 37 (1991): 621-629.

⁵³ E.g., in 8:27-29, a Jew recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. In 15:6 a Gentile recognizes Jesus as the Son of God. In 14:61-62b a Jewish high priest asks Jesus whether he is the Messiah and the Son of the Blessed One (analeptic allusions to Mark 1:1,11?). Other references to the question of Jesus' identity found in Mark's Gospel include: 1:21-25, 34, 40-43; 3:11-12; 6:14-16, 47-52; 10:46-48. For additional references and discussion regarding the identity of Jesus in Mark's Gospel see section 4.2 and chap. five of this thesis.

⁵⁴ Robert A. Guelich, "'The Beginning of the Gospel' -- Mark 1:1-15," BR 27 (1982): 6.

in the context."⁵⁵ Thus 1:1-3 reads:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Messiah, Son of God, as written by Isaiah the prophet, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the Way of the Lord, make His paths straight.'⁵⁶

The significance of this reading⁵⁷ is that it implies that the good news about Jesus began in the book of Isaiah rather than in Jesus' time.⁵⁸ That is, Mark's good news about Jesus' ἀρχή, originates not in the first century of the common era, but centuries earlier in Jewish scripture.⁵⁹ Accordingly, Mark's "first quotation must then be seen as the conscious linking of what follows to the Old

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ As translated by Guelich, 14, n. 26.

⁵⁷ Scholars have generally punctuated the opening words of Mark's Gospel by placing a period at the end of 1:1. As Guelich, 6f., and others have pointed out, however, grammatically and thematically 1:1-3 should be read as a single sentence. For an extensive discussion in favour of a single-sentence translation see Dale Miller and Patricia Miller, The Gospel of Mark as Midrash on Earlier Jewish and New Testament Literature (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 33-45.

⁵⁸ Miller and Miller, 34.

⁵⁹ This reading and subsequent interpretation of ἀρχή in 1:1 have found few proponents. Generally, two other positions are supported. Guelich, 7, argues that the ἀρχή of 1:1 "appears to pertain exclusively to the opening section of 1:1-8; . . . and [that the gospel] . . . begins with the coming and ministry of the Baptist." So also Lane, 42. C.D. Marshall, Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 37, on the other hand, argues that the Gospel finds its ἀρχή with Jesus' first proclamation in 1:14f. Cf. also Johnson, The Writings of the New Testament, 155.

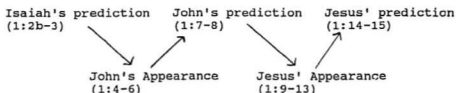
Testament."⁶⁰

The central function of Mark's Isaianic citation also becomes apparent when one recognizes that Mark links 1:2b-3 inextricability to that which follows (i.e., 1:4-15). This connection is clearly illustrated by specific literary details. For example, the repeating of the phrase, "in the wilderness" (cf. 1:3 & 1:4) makes it clear that the appearance of John the Baptist is to be seen in light of Mark's use of Isaiah 40:3.⁶¹ In other words, John's preaching "in the wilderness" is in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. The use of "wilderness" in 1:12-13 is another clear literary link between 1:2b-3 and 1:4-15 (cf. 1:3 & 1:12-13). Also, the voice "in the wilderness" (1:3) stands in sharp contrast to the voice "from heaven" in 1:11. Further, three primary predictions also function to link 1:2b-3 to 1:4-15. This connection can be illustrated schematically⁶² as follows:

⁶⁰ Ernest Best, The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 114.

⁶¹ Lane, 48.

⁶² This schematic is adapted from N.R. Petersen, Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 53.



Thus, in a proleptic sense, the compositional arrangement of the Marcan prologue also functions to connect for the reader the appearance and proclamation of Jesus in 1:9-15 with the Old Testament (1:2b-3), via John (1:4-8).

In addition to the compositional significance of Mark's placement of his Isaianic citation in 1:2b-3, other literary allusions to the Old Testament in 1:4-15 confirm for the reader that Mark understands the identities of John and Jesus only in light of the Old Testament. Regarding the identity of John, several Marcan allusions to the Old Testament in 1:4-8 are reminiscent of the idea prominent in Jewish literature that Elijah would return to "prepare the way" for the messianic age.⁶³ Mark's portrayal of John in 1:4-8 suggests to the reader that John is Elijah (or an Elijah prototype).⁶⁴ This conclusion is evidenced by an

⁶³ Cf. e.g., Mal. 3:23-24; Sirach 48:1-10; 1 Enoch 90:31. Whether the idea that Elijah would return to prepare the way for the Messiah was prominent or not during the first century of the common era is debatable. See e.g., Morris M. Faierstien, "Why do the Scribes say that Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 100 (1981): 75-86; Dale C. Allison, "Elijah Must Come First," *JBL* 103 (1984): 256-257; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "More About Elijah Coming First," *JBL* 104 (1985): 295-296.

⁶⁴ Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Mark* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 49.

analysis of certain allusions to the Old Testament used by Mark in describing John. For example, in 1:6, Mark's description of John is remarkably similar to a description of Elijah found in I and II Kings. Both John and Elijah are described as wearing leather belts and hair for clothing (cf. Mark 1:6 & 2 Kings 1:8). This is significant since clothing speaks of who a person is.⁶⁵ John's diet of locust and wild honey (1:6c) is characteristic of the food eaten by those who live in the wilderness,⁶⁶ a place not foreign to the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 19:4,15). And even more striking is the fact that Mark does not provide for John's origin other than to state that John 'appeared' in the wilderness (1:4). For Mark, John *appears* as suddenly in the wilderness during Jesus' time as Elijah had *disappeared* in the wilderness centuries earlier (2 Kings 2:1-14). The sudden appearance of Mark's John is certainly consistent with contemporary Jewish notions that Elijah "was to appear *personally*, and not merely in 'spirit and power.'"⁶⁷ Though Mark does not explicitly state in 1:4-14 that John is Elijah, his allusions to the Old Testament in describing him would certainly cause his readers to answer affirmatively the question, "Is this not Elijah?" By 9:9-13, the

⁶⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁶ Lane, 51.

⁶⁷ Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 142.

reader's/hearer's intuitive response to this question is proven correct.⁶⁸

The significance of identifying John as Elijah is twofold. First, it ties the identity of John concretely to the Old Testament, and secondly, it sets in the mind of the reader this question: "For whom is John/Elijah preparing?" Mark's compositional arrangement has already suggested an answer to this question in 1:1 (i.e., Jesus Messiah, Son of God). In 1:2-15, literary connections further secure for the reader that Jesus is the one for whom John is preparing. According to 1:2b-3, the mission of John/Elijah was to "prepare the way of the Lord." This preparatory role included two thrusts, namely, a message of repentance and baptism (1:4-5), and the prophecy of the arrival of "a stronger one" (1:7-8f.).

In the first instance, that Jesus accepts "baptism at the hands of John is a necessary link between them, and an acknowledgement by Jesus of John's preparatory role."⁶⁹ The place of baptism (i.e., the Jordan River) links Jesus' baptism with John's prior activity⁷⁰ (cf. 1:5 & 1:9). The similarity of Jesus' proclamation (i.e., "Repent, and believe") and John's message of repentance further indicates

⁶⁸ Though the characters of Mark's story remain bewildered (cf. 6:14-16; 15:36).

⁶⁹ Stock, 52.

⁷⁰ Lane, 53.

a continuity between John and Jesus (cf. 1:4 & 1:14). And as Robinson has shown, the role of the Spirit in Mark's prologue also links Jesus to John.⁷¹ Finally the connection is illustrated by the fact that once John's preaching comes to an abrupt end (John is arrested), Mark records the inauguration of Jesus' ministry in Galilee (1:14-15).

In the second instance, the Marcan narrative clearly indicates that Jesus is the superior one of whom John has prophesied. According to Robinson, the superior nature of Jesus is exemplified by Mark's emphasis on the works and actions of Jesus, especially on Jesus' ability to practice exorcisms.⁷² For Keck, however, the superior nature of Jesus is evidenced by Mark's emphasis on the power of Jesus' words. In Keck's opinion, "Mark sees the preaching of the Gospel as part of the surpassing strength of Jesus *vis-à-vis* John."⁷³ But whatever the emphasis (actions or words), the context readily suggests that John's role is subordinate to the superior role of Jesus.⁷⁴ Thus, the literary connections between John and Jesus affirm for the reader that Jesus' identity is to be understood only *via* John, the identity of whom Mark has already tied concretely to the Old Testament.

⁷¹ Robinson, 76f.

⁷² Ibid., 76-90.

⁷³ Keck, 360-361.

⁷⁴ Petersen, Literary Criticism, 53-54.

In addition to the significant role of John in Mark's prologue, other allusions in Mark 1:10-13 also serve to connect the identity of Mark's Jesus concretely to the Old Testament. There are many possible allusions to the Old Testament in Mark 1:10-13.⁷⁵ What does Mark intend by such allusions to the Old Testament? The answer is compounded by certain difficulties, namely, the meaning of the dove imagery, ἀγανηρός, and the descent of the Spirit, as well as identifying the correct source of each scriptural allusion.⁷⁶ For example, just what Mark intends by his use of dove imagery is certainly debatable. The imagery of the dove may be a veiled allusion to Genesis 1:2 where it "is connected with the picture of the Spirit of God brooding or hovering creatively over the primaeval waters."⁷⁷ Or it may be that the image of the dove is symbolic of the community of Israel; the descent of the Spirit "as a dove" indicating that Jesus is the unique representative of the new Israel created through the Spirit.⁷⁸ It has also proven difficult to determine the correct source(s) of certain Marcan

⁷⁵ Cf. e.g.: Mark 1:10b & Isaiah 64:1, Ezekiel 1:1; Mark 1:10c & Isaiah 11:2, 63:11,14,19, Ezekiel 1:4; Mark 1:10d & Genesis 1:2; Mark 1:11a & Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 42:1; Mark 1:11b & Genesis 22:2,12; Mark 1:12 & 1 Kings 18:12, 2 Kings 2:16, Ezekiel 3:12, 14f., 8:3, 11:24; Mark 1:13b & Isaiah 11:16, Psalm 91:11-13, Job 5:22, Isaiah 35:9, Ezekiel 34:23-28; Mark 1:13c & 1 Kings 19:5-7, Exodus 14:19, 23:20.

⁷⁶ Matera, 8.

⁷⁷ Taylor, 161.

⁷⁸ Lane, 57.

allusions to the Old Testament. The role of the Spirit, for example, as an overpowering force that drives Jesus into the wilderness is strongly reminiscent of various Old Testament passages where the Spirit drives men to various places (cf. 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Ezek. 3:12; 14f., 8:3; 11:24). The role of angels in Mark 1:13 may recall for the reader Psalm 91:11-13 in which the psalmist purports that angelic beings protect the righteous one from all harm.⁷⁹ There is no consensus as to which Old Testament passage the phrase, "my beloved son" refers. Suggestions include: Genesis 22:2, Psalm, 2:7, Isaiah 42:1, Exodus 4:22-23. Given Mark's exegetical freedom, it is quite plausible, as Matera has suggested, that images are not intended to recall only one specific passage. Rather Mark intends that the reader/hearer see allusions to various texts. In considering the Old Testament origin of the phrase "my beloved son", Matera states:

The choice made here is crucial since it can result in understanding Jesus' sonship in terms of Isaac imagery (Gen.22.2), royal imagery (Ps.2.7), or servant imagery (Isa.42:1). I do not think it inconceivable that the narrator intends the reader to see an allusion to all of these texts. Thus, Jesus is the royal Son of God who comes as the Lord's servant to surrender his life.⁸⁰

But whatever the source and meaning of such Marcan allusions to the Old Testament, one thing remains constant, namely,

⁷⁹ Schweitzer, 42.

⁸⁰ Matera, 18, n. 31.

that Mark through the use of Old Testament language and symbol has tied the identity of Jesus inextricably to the Old Testament.

But why does Mark seek to connect Jesus to the Old Testament? In other words, why does he attempt to relate the identity of Jesus to his audience via the Old Testament? It can be argued that some Marcan allusions to the Old Testament are "nothing more than the rhetorical device of literary allusion [used to] . . . give liveliness to an argument which threatens to drag."⁸¹ While Mark may have employed such a device occasionally, it certainly does not account sufficiently for Mark's persistent appeal to Old Testament passages at such an early point in his Gospel. Perhaps Mark's appeal to the Hebrew scriptures is merely an attempt to support his gospel by consciously appealing to an authority, in accordance with the conventional practice followed by ancient writers.⁸² But numerous Marcan references to the Old Testament, and his attempt to use them to aid the reader identify Jesus, suggests that he has a more precise purpose in view. A more plausible explanation is that Mark appeals to the Old Testament because he wishes to persuade his readers/hearers that the 'Αρχή or origin of the good news resides not in the post-Easter faith or in the

⁸¹ Dodd, The Old Testament in the New, 4.

⁸² Davies, "Reflections about the Use of the Old Testament in the New," 119.

minds of the Apostles nor in the proclamation of Jesus, but that it is rooted in God's dealings with Israel centuries earlier as expressed in the language and symbols of the Old Testament. Thus, the Jesus event for Mark is linked intricately to the past. The pastness and primacy of the Jesus event Mark secures by connecting it in a profound way with the will of God expressed in the Old Covenant.⁸³

That Mark seeks to conform the events that he relates about Jesus with the sovereign will/plan of God is clearly evident in 1:14-15. It reads:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel (Mark 1:14-15).

In the first instance, that Mark orders his events in accordance with the sovereign plan of God is suggested by the phrase "Μετὰ δὲ τὸ παραδοθῆναι τὸν Ἰωάννην" (1:14a). Here, the word *παραδοθῆναι* is of particular significance. As a technical term it means to hand over or to turn over someone to the legal custody of the police and courts.⁸⁴ Theologically, *παραδοθῆναι*⁸⁵ implies a handing over that is

⁸³ Anderson, 286.

⁸⁴ W. Bauer, A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, trans. and revised by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 614.

⁸⁵ Following Keck, 360, *παραδοθῆναι* in 1:14 "points primarily to theological and only secondarily, if at all, to biographical interests."

God's will.⁸⁶ In other words, the language of 14a implies that the fate of John the Baptist is predetermined by God.⁸⁷ And as Lane has correctly asserted, "Mark's formulation suggests that Jesus is restrained by God from his ministry of proclamation until the Baptist is removed from the scene."⁸⁸

Mark 1:14 is of particular importance to the rest of the Gospel because it suggests to the reader that both John's ministry and subsequent arrest (and eventual death, 6:14-29) as well as Jesus' emergence on the scene, are part of God's sovereign plan. As Anderson has pointed out, the "theme of conformity with the divine will of Jesus' work (and John's), . . . appears in fact to be one of the chief preoccupations of Mark's introduction."⁸⁹ Keck concurs:

⁸⁶ So Anderson, 284.

⁸⁷ This conclusion is supported by other incidences where Mark uses the word *παράδοθῆναι* (cf. 9:31; 10:33; 13:9,11; 14:41; 15:1,10,15). In 9:31, the prediction is made by Jesus that 'the Son of Man will be 'handed over' into human hands to be killed. As Lane, 337, points out, the term *παράδοθῆναι* (i.e., handed over) "connotes the actual fulfillment of God's expressed will in scripture." Mark 13:9-11 reports that the disciples will be 'handed over' to rulers by members of their own families and that they will suffer persecution. Despite persecution, the clear implication is that nothing can impede the divine plan of salvation (cf. Lane, 462; Stock, 279). Again, in 14:41, as well as in 15:1ff., Mark's use of *παράδοθῆναι* clearly reflects the idea that the events described are in accordance with the purpose of God (cf. Schweizer, 314-315; Stock, 394-395).

⁸⁸ Lane, 63.

⁸⁹ Anderson, 284-285.

Mark primarily wants to say that John was 'delivered up' (to his fate, here presupposed) by God, and secondarily that this meant imprisonment and execution as reported in vi. 14-30. . . . Moreover, . . . what Mark has done is to set the preaching and the summons of Jesus into the divinely willed deathwork of John.⁹⁰

That Mark's events comply with sovereign directives is also implied by the phrase "the time is fulfilled" (1:15). A correct understanding of this phrase inevitably has involved determining the meaning of the Greek word *καιρός*. Traditionally, scholarship has argued that *καιρός* refers to "a fateful and decisive point"⁹¹ in time or to "an appointed time."⁹² This interpretation is especially plausible if, as Stock suggests, one considers the root of the verb *Πεπλήρωται*, namely, *πλήρωω*. The verb *πλήρωω* meaning to "fill up, complete," when used in conjunction with "time" indicates that a period of time has reached its end.⁹³ Taken in this light it is easy to see why many commentators agree that Mark here in 1:15 is referring to the culmination of an historical process, i.e., that Jesus is sent to

⁹⁰ Keck, 360.

⁹¹ G. Delling, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 459; Bauer, 396, argues states that *καιρός* refers to a "definite fixed time." Joel Marcus, "The time has been fulfilled!" (Mark 1.15)," in Apocalyptic and the New Testament, ed. Joel Marcus and Marion L. Soards (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 49-68, however, argue that the phrase refers to a 'span of time' rather than a 'definite fixed time'.

⁹² Stock, 61.

⁹³ Ibid.

humankind as part of the will and plan of God at a specific time in history. In other words, "in terms of the Marcan précis of his message, Jesus says that "the time is fulfilled", the time spoken of is the time "willed by God."⁹⁴

The Marcan theme of conformity with the will of God expressed in the prologue is consistently affirmed throughout Mark's Gospel. As S.E. Dowd has shown, various Marcan passages attest to the fact that Mark views the events he relates about Jesus as conforming to God's sovereign will.⁹⁵ Mark's use of introductory formulae and his use of the verb *δεῖ*, for example, also attests to the continued prevalence of this theme throughout the Marcan narrative. The significance of the verb *δεῖ* in Mark becomes apparent upon an examination of one of Mark's passion predictions, namely, 8:31 (cf. also 9:31; 10:33). In 8:31 Jesus begins to teach the disciples that "*δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν*." There seems to be little reason to doubt that Mark's use of *δεῖ* here refers to the Old Testament scriptures. Though there is no consensus among scholars that Mark 8:31 reflects a specific Old Testament

⁹⁴ Anderson, 285.

⁹⁵ Sharyn E. Dowd, Prayer, Power, and the Problem of Suffering: Mark 11:22-25 in the Context of Markan Theology (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 133-150.

passage(s),⁹⁶ it is recognized that in 8:31 (and in 9:31; 10:33), Mark places on the lips of Jesus a prophetic utterance, not unlike that of the Old Testament prophets. "Its intention [was] . . . to provide certainty that when these events [those of 8:31] took place they represented what God had planned and fulfilled."⁹⁷

The significance of Mark's use of the word *ἄνθρωπος* in Mark 8:31 is perhaps more fully understood when one considers the context into which it is placed. Prior to 8:31, there is a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples regarding the identity of Jesus (8:27-30). Peter, in response to Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" answers, "You are the Messiah" (8:27b-29). After warning them not to disclose his identity (. . .30) Jesus

began to teach them that the Son of Man must [*ἄνθρωπος*] suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again (Mark 8:31).

Mark 8:31 is really a turning point in Jesus' self-revelation. Prior to 8:31 Jesus commanded people not to make him known (1:23-25,34,43-45; 3:11-12; 5:6,43; 7:36; 8:26,30). Following 8:30, however, while Jesus on occasion attempts to conceal his identity (9:9,20), he generally speaks "openly" about his identity and mission. As Stock

⁹⁶ Mark 8:31 may reflect Hosea 6:2. So C.S. Mann, *Mark* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1986), 347.

⁹⁷ Lane, 296.

points out, "Mark's term for open speech (*παρηγοία*) denotes an outspokenness that conceals nothing (Jn 7:13,26; 10:24)."⁹⁸ And Peter's reaction to Jesus' outspokenness shows that it was impossible to miss what Jesus intended to say.⁹⁹ Yet, the disciples continue to misunderstand the true nature of Jesus' messiahship and mission (cf. 8:32-33; 9:5-6,19,32; 10:24; 14:37-41).¹⁰⁰ In particular, Peter's incomprehension (or apprehensiveness)¹⁰¹ is exemplified by the fact that he is unwilling to accede to Jesus' self-pronouncement that the Messiah is to suffer, be rejected and killed (8:31), and proceeds to rebuke Jesus (8:32b). Mark in turn has Jesus rebuke Peter (8:33). Of primary significance here is the fact that Peter's rebuking of Jesus illustrates an attitude that is contrary to the will of God. Stated concisely, "Jesus regards Peter's attitude as a temptation to draw him away from the path of obedience to

⁹⁸ Stock, 237.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Though these passages do not state as explicitly as those prior to 8:30 (i.e., 4:13,40-41; 6:52; 7:18; 8:16-21; 10:35-37) that the disciples misunderstand the message and identity of Jesus, the contexts certainly imply that the disciples still lack full comprehension.

¹⁰¹ It might be more appropriate to refer to Peter's incomprehension as apprehensiveness, i.e., apprehensiveness about the concept of a suffering messiah. After all, Peter's 'incomprehension' was obviously not total. He did identify Jesus as the Messiah in 8:29.

his Father's will."¹⁰²

Other biblical uses of the verb $\delta\epsilon\iota$ also attest to this conclusion. In addition to the use of the verb $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in Mark 8:31, it is also found in Mark 13:7,10; Daniel 2:28f., 45 LXX; and Revelation 1:1; 4:1.¹⁰³ On the significance of the use of $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in these verses Lane writes:

In these contexts there is the suggestion of a cosmic catastrophe and God's judicial intervention. In Ch. 8:31 it refers to a compulsion, behind which is the express will of God, and corresponds to $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\rho\alpha\pi\tau\alpha\iota$ ("It is written") in Chs. 9:12; 14:21,49. Behind historical occurrence there stands an unrecognized divine plan.¹⁰⁴

E.E. Lemcio concurs with Lane's assessment when he writes that $\delta\epsilon\iota$ "really amounts to the same as the $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\rho\alpha\pi\tau\alpha\iota$ of 9:12b where the necessity of the Son of Man's suffering is 'God's will as revealed in Scripture.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² C.E.B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark (Cambridge: University Press, 1959), 280-281, quoted in E. Lemcio, 44.

¹⁰³ Lane, 294, n. 72.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Eugene E. Lemcio, The Past of Jesus in the Gospels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44. Anderson, 298-299, presents a slightly different point of view. He states: "If . . . we accept that the $\delta\epsilon\iota$ is related to Scripture, we are at once confronted with the problem of what particular Old Testament text prescribes beforehand the necessity of Christ's or rather the Son of man's sufferings. . . . But more likely than not Mark for his part did not begin with a specific Old Testament text and think of it as having mapped out already the course that Christ must follow. . . . Rather, the $\delta\epsilon\iota$ of Mark 8:31 would have to do with a whole set of Old Testament ideas concerning the persecution of God's true servants and ambassadors by his impenitent people; it would have to do

The fundamental underlying assumption of Mark's use of $\delta\epsilon\iota$ in 8:31 is that Jesus' destiny is predetermined in the Old Testament. This idea is also implied by Mark's use of an introductory formula, which occurs sporadically but nevertheless consistently throughout the Marcan narrative. As has been pointed out above, the introductory formula " Καθὼς γέγραπται :" in 1:2a ties the events that Mark is about to relate concerning Jesus concretely to the Old Testament. And as such, these events are presented as being in accordance with the sovereign plan of God. In 14:21, " Καθὼς γέγραπται :" indicates that the way in which the Son of Man dies is in conformity with the purpose [i.e., will] of God.¹⁰⁶ Mark 14:49 (cf. Psalm 41:9) is another indication that Mark views the events surrounding Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as inseparable from the Old Testament scriptures.¹⁰⁷ The text reads:

And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? Day after day I was with you in the Temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled."

The phrase here ascribed to Jesus, "But let the scriptures be fulfilled," appears to have been for Mark the equivalent

not with proving anything from the Old Testament texts but with the paradoxical will of God expressed in Scripture."

¹⁰⁶ Anderson, 290.

¹⁰⁷ Other Marcan passages in which the introductory formula suggest that the events recorded are in accordance with the sovereign plan of God include: 7:6; 9:12-13; 11:17; 14:27.

of "let God's will be done: let there come upon me what God has in store for me."¹⁰⁸ In each case, Mark's use of introductory formula presents the destiny of Jesus as conforming to the will/plan of God and that such events are in fulfilment of Old Testament scriptures. Quesnell concurs:

This destiny, already determined by what is written, is referred to in a series of prophetic statements: 8,31.38; 9,1.9.12a.31; 10, 33-34.38.40; 12,6-8; 14,18.28. The same destiny is referred to in 10,45 "to serve and give his life a ransom for many". 12,9-11, presupposing his (the beloved Son's--1,11; 9,7) murder as described in 12:1-8, discusses the problem of the punishment which his murderers will receive, and present it as predetermined in scriptures. . . . [Jesus'] . . . suffering, death, [and] resurrection . . . [are] all predetermined by what is written, or what is to be fulfilled in the scriptures. . . . [Mark's thus presents] Jesus . . . as a man of destiny from the first.¹⁰⁹

Other details regarding the death of Jesus also appear to be viewed by Mark as conforming to the will/plan of God as expressed in the Old Testament. For example, Mark's reference to the "sheep that are scattered" in 14:27 (cf. Zech. 13:7) indicates that, for Mark, God is sovereign even in the matter of the disciples' defection.¹¹⁰ Dowd points out that the "striking of the shepherd" in 14:27 is also in accordance with the will of God. She writes:

¹⁰⁸ Anderson, 293.

¹⁰⁹ Quentin Quesnell, The Mind of Mark: Interpretation and Method through the Exegesis of Mark 6,52 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 130.

¹¹⁰ Schweizer, 207.

Here [in 14:27] the original imperative ("Strike the Shepherd) has been changed to the indicative ("I will strike the Shepherd") in order to emphasize the prophet's point that both the striking of the "shepherd" and the scattering of the "sheep" are God's doing."¹¹¹

Although not explicitly asserted, the use of the words of Psalm 22:18 in 15:24 implies that the dividing of Jesus' clothing is in fulfilment of Old Testament statements.¹¹² Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple in 13:1-2 is in direct agreement with his prophetic utterance in 11:17. As is the custom of Mark's Jesus, he explains to his disciples privately when "these things" (i.e., the destruction of the temple) will happen. In verse fourteen, the implication is that "these things" will occur immediately after the "desolating sacrilege is set up where it ought not to be" (cf. Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). As Lane points out, Mark views this prophecy as applicable to his own day.¹¹³ There would be an act of profanation so appalling that the temple would be rejected by God as the locus of his glory.¹¹⁴ The implication is that such events are in accordance with the sovereign plan of God.¹¹⁵

In summary, it has been argued that references to the

¹¹¹ Dowd, 134.

¹¹² Schweizer, 346.

¹¹³ Lane, 467.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 445, 454-455.

Old Testament in Mark's prologue are of key hermeneutical significance for a proper understanding of the rest of Mark. In particular, the function of Old Testament passages within the compositional arrangement of Mark's prologue indicates to the reader that the identity of Jesus is to be understood only *via* John, and then only *via* the Old Testament. In this way, Mark in verse 1 fastens the events about Jesus as strongly to the sacred present as 1:2b-3 fastens them to the sacred past.¹¹⁶ Of special hermeneutical significance is the fact that Mark views the 'Αρχὴ of the "good news" to be rooted in God's dealings with Israel centuries earlier as expressed in the language and symbolism of Old Testament passages which he cites. Thus, there is no reason to doubt that his readers, unlike the participants of the story, would easily understand and identify John as the Elijah figure who "prepares the way" for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah, at a decisive historical point in accordance with the sovereign will/plan of God. This is confirmed by the fact that the events which Mark introduces in 1:1-15 are presented as being in conformity with the sovereign will/plan of God as expressed in the Old Testament, a theme which appears sporadically and often implicitly, but nevertheless consistently throughout the rest of Mark.

¹¹⁶ John Drury, "Mark," in The Literary Guide to the Bible ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 407.

2.3 Torah Citations in Mark¹¹⁷

A thorough examination of references to the Old Testament found in the Marcan narrative reveals that while the prophetic writings are cited more often than the Torah, references to the Torah nonetheless appear throughout the Gospel. Specifically, there are at least 8 verbatim quotations from the Torah found in Mark.¹¹⁸ Allusions to the Torah, although much more difficult to identify, occur more prominently in the Gospel. The concern here, however, is not to provide a comparative tabulation of Torah versus prophetic citations, but to determine via an examination of Mark's use of the Torah his disposition regarding its continued validity. As M. Hooker has correctly pointed out, an examination of the use of the Pentateuch in Mark inevitably raises the question of Mark's attitude toward the Law.¹¹⁹ Specifically, the discussion here will seek an answer to this question: Does Mark believe that the Law has been abrogated by the Gospel?¹²⁰

With the exception of Mark's use of Exodus 23:20 in 1:2, all other quotations from the Torah found in Mark are

¹¹⁷ Much of the discussion in this section follows Morna D. Hooker, "Mark," in It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture, eds. D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 220-230.

¹¹⁸ France, 259-261.

¹¹⁹ Hooker, "Mark," 220.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

placed on the lips of Jesus. In 7:1-23, Mark has Jesus appeal to the Torah in response to an accusation by the Pharisees and some scribes that Jesus' disciples had failed to adhere to certain "traditions of the elders" (7:5). Apparently, the Pharisees and scribes, in compliance with these religious traditions, rigidly followed certain practices, i.e., the washing of one's hands and food before eating, and the washing of pots, pans, and bronze kettles (7:3-4). According to Mark's text, these Pharisees and scribes questioned Jesus because some of his disciples were not complying with contemporary religious traditions in that they failed to wash their hands before eating (7:2-5).

Before appealing to the Torah, Mark first has Jesus respond by citing the prophet Isaiah. The essence of this response is that the accusers, not the disciples, hold to human traditions (oral law) at the expense of breaking God's written law (7:6-8). In an additional statement, Mark in 7:9-13 has Jesus appeal to the Torah in an effort to further illustrate this point. According to the context, the Pharisees and scribes were in the practice of identifying support for their parents as *corban*, that is, as a gift or offering to God. Once designated, such gifts could not, according to the traditions of the elders, be used for parental support.¹²¹ In other words, "*corban* casuistry

¹²¹ This may have been based upon the premise that once a vow was made it was not to be broken (cf. Deut. 23:21-23 & Num. 30:2-16).

. . . made it possible for a son to avoid all obligations to his parents by fictitiously dedicating to the temple all the support he owed them."¹²² Thus, according to the oral Torah, those who set aside gifts as corban were relieved of their religious/legal responsibility to provide for their parents. This, however, according to Mark's Jesus, is in direct violation of the Mosaic commandment in Exodus 20:12 to honour one's parents. The problem, as Mark expresses it, is that the "clear commandment of God to honour Father and Mother is thus annulled by the tradition (oral) which allows a man to declare his goods 'corban'."¹²³ The importance of adherence to the Mosaic commandment to honour father and mother is suggested by the assertion of Mark's Jesus that those who fail to adhere to this command must surely die (see Exodus 21:17). The important point is this: both Torah citations that Mark places on the lips of Jesus suggest that the Torah takes precedence over oral traditions, especially when the "traditions of men" contradict the intention of the Mosaic Law. To put it another way, the appeal of Mark's Jesus to the written Torah stands "in antithesis to tradition, functioning as an abrogation or voiding of the tradition."¹²⁴ Thus, Mark has set Jesus' interpretation of

¹²² Dunn, 63.

¹²³ Hooker, "Mark," 221.

¹²⁴ Kenneth J. Thomas, "Torah Citations in the Synoptics," NTS 24 (1977): 90.

the Torah above that of these Pharisees and scribes and, in Hooker's words, has presented Jesus as the loyal son of Moses,¹²⁵ his teachings as continuous with the teachings of the (written) Torah. Implicit in Mark's presentation, is that Jesus has sided with the Sadducees who adhere only to the written law over against the Pharisees who hold to both written and oral Torah.¹²⁶

Following 7:9-13, Mark includes a discourse in which Jesus teaches on defilement (7:14-23). The general point of the discourse is that an individual is defiled, not by what enters the body, but by what comes out. In other words, things on the outside (i.e. various kinds of food) that enter the body do not defile a person, but those things on the inside, i.e., the evil intentions of the heart (7:21-23) that find expression outwardly (i.e., in slander, deceit, theft, murder, etc.). At first reading, Jesus' teaching appears to be compatible with the story thus far,¹²⁷ i.e., that failure to observe the traditions of the washing of one's hands, food, or utensils does not defile a person but evil intentions of the heart (i.e., failure to provide for one's parents) do. In this way, Jesus' teaching in 7:14-23

¹²⁵ Hooker, "Mark," 221.

¹²⁶ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 13.10.6. On a later point of interpretation, i.e., re: resurrection, Mark has Jesus side with the Pharisees over against the Sadducees (see below, p. 93).

¹²⁷ Hooker, "Mark," 221.

ties neatly into the conflict expressed in 7:6-13 between human tradition and divine command.¹²⁸ But Mark's assertion that Jesus "declared all foods clean" in 7:19c may be taken to jeopardize the continuity of thought in 7:1-23. In particular, 7:19c calls into question Mark's superior allegiance to the Torah as expressed by Jesus' teaching in 7:9-13. The problem is that in 7:9-13 Mark portrays Jesus as upholding the law, whereas Mark's statement in 7:19c implies that Jesus dismisses the law.¹²⁹ Pointedly, Mark's statement in 7:19c appears to annul the requirements of Mosaic purity regulations as outlined in the Torah (cf. Mark 7:19c & Lev. 11:1-47; Deut. 14:1-20).

Whether or not the intent was to suggest the abrogation of the food laws as found in the Torah is certainly debatable. Zeitlin, for example, has concluded that Jesus' teaching on defilement in Mark 7 is not an attack upon the law. Zeitlin writes:

Mark 7:18ff, . . . [is] certainly no attack upon the law. It was rather a reaffirmation of the love commandments and the prophetic teaching concerning the heart. Like the prophets before him, Jesus believed that real defilement is an inward matter.¹³⁰

Despite the possible appeal of Zeitlin's argument, Mark's

¹²⁸ The defilement motif evident by Mark's use of *κοιλ* and its cognates in 7:2,5,15,18,20,23, certainly suggests unity of thought in 7:1-23.

¹²⁹ Hooker, "Mark," 222.

¹³⁰ Irving M. Zeitlin, Jesus and the Judaism of His Time (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 80.

statement in 7:19c leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that the implication of Jesus' discourse for Mark meant the abrogation of the food laws as outlined in the Torah. To put it another way, the real supposition of 7:19c is that God no longer requires abstinence from certain things that are deemed unclean.¹³¹ This apparent abrogation of Mosaic food laws suggested by Mark's generalizing in 7:19c cannot be solved by asserting that the expression is a Marcan editorial comment and, therefore, not necessary for the understanding of the true intent of Jesus' message in 7:14-23. Even if we dismiss 7:19c as a Marcan editorial conclusion intended to alleviate Gentile believers of Jewish dietary regulations, the implication of Mark's presentation of Jesus' discourse on defilement remains, i.e., there is no direct correlation between the kinds of food one eats and purity of heart.¹³² The fact is that what Mark attributes to Jesus in 7:15 "taken literally, contradicts the Mosaic law."¹³³

Mark, then, in 7:1-23, presents the interpreter with an apparent inconsistency. On the one hand, he presents Jesus

¹³¹ Quesnell, 98.

¹³² It is well to note, as Jules Issac, Jesus and Israel (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 62, observes, that the primary idea presented in Jesus' discourse in 7:14-23 is that the "fundamental source of all impurities resides inside man, not outside," and that this idea is "in direct line with the prophetic tradition."

¹³³ Quesnell, 93.

in 7:9-13 as the upholder of Mosaic law; but on the other hand, as dismissing the continued necessity of adhering to food regulations in 7:14-23. Mark's apparent inconsistency becomes revelatory, however, when the reader recalls the implication of the words of Mark's Jesus in 7:9-13. There, the interpretation of Mark's Jesus is set above the teachings of the Pharisees and scribes. Here, in 7:14-23, the implication of Mark's discourse on defilement, is that Jesus' teachings are set above that of Moses. M. Hooker, in commenting on 7:14-23, concurs:

[The problem] . . . is no longer between the tradition of men and the commandments of God, but between the teachings of Moses and that of Jesus. On the one hand, [Mark] . . . sees Jesus as obedient to the commandments of God given through Moses and attacking the traditions of men; on the other, as setting his own authority above that of Moses.¹³⁴

Thus Mark presents the teachings of Jesus as being superior to the dictates of the levitical law.

In Mark 10:2-12, Mark has Jesus appeal to the Torah in response to some¹³⁵ Pharisees who question Jesus about

¹³⁴ Hooker, "Mark," 222.

¹³⁵ It is important here to note that Mark refers to some Pharisees (cf. 7:1). He does not talk here of the Pharisees in 10:2 in a collective sense. This is important since it suggests that Mark has Jesus debate with a 'group' of Pharisees, who were not necessarily representatives of Pharisaic opinion. E.P. Sanders, in his book Jesus and Judaism, 270-293, argues that in the Gospels there are no substantial points of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees as a whole. Points of conflict involve only some Pharisees. Sanders, 277, proposes that "although Pharisaism was a decent enough movement, and Judaism a decent enough religion, Jesus accused some Pharisees of hypocrisy and

whether or not it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife. In this instance, Mark has Jesus respond by asking the Pharisees to state the requirements of the Mosaic law regarding divorce (10:3). Their response is that the law of Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife (10:4). Jesus responds by pointing out that Moses permitted divorce (Deut 24:1) only because of 'hardness of heart' (10:5). In other words, the Mosaic provision made allowance for those who insisted on their own rights (i.e., wills) rather than complying with the will of God regarding marriage. Lane concurs when he states:

Jesus' forceful retort is a denunciation of human sinfulness which serves to clarify the intention of the Mosaic provision. In Deut. 24:1 divorce is tolerated, but not authorized or sanctioned. When Jesus affirmed that Moses framed the provision concerning the letter of dismissal out of regard to the people's hardness of heart, he was using an established legal category of actions allowed out

offended some by offering grace to sinners." He goes on to argue that these points of conflict with selected groups of Pharisees should not be taken to support the theory that Jesus in the Gospels is presented as being in serious conflict with Pharisees as a collective body. After all, "In every religion, . . . there are legalistic, externalistic bigots." To generalize, therefore, is wrong for, as Sanders, 291, points out, "The Pharisees did not dominate Judaism. If Jesus disagreed with them over laws of purity which were peculiar to them, he would have been only one more 'am haarets among many. He seems not to have committed any substantial breach of the law. But, if he did, there is no reason to think that only the Pharisees would have been offended." Jules Isaac, Jesus and Israel, 89ff., makes a similar point when he argues that a distinction must be made between those Jews in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus and the Jewish nation as a whole. In other words, the evidence does not suggest that Mark categorically dismisses all Pharisees. Cf. also Hare, 33-34.

of consideration for wickedness or weakness. What is involved is the lesser of two evils, and, in this instance, a merciful concession for the sake of the woman. Jesus' purpose was to make clear that the intention of Deut. 24:1 was not to make divorce acceptable but to limit sinfulness and to control its consequences. . . . The situation that provides the occasion for the permission of divorce was one of moral perversity which consisted in a deliberate determination not to abide by the will of God. Such stubborn rebellion against a divine ordinance is the essence of hard-heartedness.¹³⁶

But, according to Mark's Jesus, the so called permission clause of Deut. 24:1 proved to be inadequate because it was adapted to human weakness¹³⁷ and, as such, failed to adhere to the original intention of the will of God. By quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, Jesus appeals to that part of the Torah where the ideal for marriage is set out. In short, from the beginning of creation, God's ideal did not permit divorce (10:6-9). The Pharisees, then, have appealed to what is "permissible" under the Mosaic law while Jesus rejects the provision for divorce "by pointing to the chronological and ontological priority of permanent union of man and woman (Gen. 1:17; 2:24; 5:27)."¹³⁸ In other words, Mark has "Jesus insist that the teachings of Gen. 1:27; 5:2; 2:24 must supersede Deut.24.1-4."¹³⁹ By the authoritative pronouncement of Jesus, Mark thus sets one point of law

¹³⁶ Lane, 355. Cf. also Mann, 391.

¹³⁷ Hooker, "Mark," 222.

¹³⁸ Kee, 178-179.

¹³⁹ Beavis, 101.

(Deut. 24:1) over another (Genesis 1:27; 2:24), and the teachings of Jesus over that of Moses.

The preference of one law over another is made explicit in the private remarks that Jesus makes to his disciples in 10:10-12. In essence, Mark has Jesus proclaim that those who take advantage of the Mosaic provision are guilty of adultery (10:11-12). In this instance, Mark has Jesus apparently challenging the law itself (i.e., Deut. 24:1).¹⁴⁰ That is, the unconditional form of Jesus' statement in 10:11-12 serves to reinforce the abrogation of Mosaic permission in Deut 24:1.¹⁴¹ In the first place, the use of the word "adultery" directs the disciples back to the absolute command of God in Exodus 20:14.¹⁴² Secondly, Jesus' private retort to his disciples serves to reinforce the ideal of marriage as set out in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, in that neither husband nor wife are to file for divorce, and both partners are placed under an obligation of fidelity, which in Mosaic law was required only of the wife.¹⁴³ The point is that Mark's Jesus confirms the sanctity of marriage as outlined in God's original plan (i.e., in Genesis) and, by doing so, eradicates the Mosaic tolerance law (Deut. 24:1).

¹⁴⁰ Hooker, "Mark," 222.

¹⁴¹ Lane, 359.

¹⁴² Ibid., 357.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

This is not to be necessarily interpreted, however, as evidence of Mark's general abrogation of the Mosaic law. For as C. Rowland and others have correctly observed, "the whole of the Pentateuch was the product of Moses' pen."¹⁴⁴ To reject one point of law therefore was not to reject it in whole. Moreover, it was common practice during the first century to debate points of law. For example, the school of Shammai held that divorce was permissible in cases of the woman's sexual misconduct; the school of Hillel allowed divorce for anything shameful.¹⁴⁵ Thus, while Mark has set one point of law over another, and Jesus' interpretation over that of this group of Pharisees, this does not imply the invalidation of the Torah. Rather it reflects the conventional mode of debate and subsequent conclusions that resulted.

In 10:17-22, Mark has Jesus appeal to Exodus 20:12-16 and/or Deut. 5:16-20 in response to a question posed by a man concerning what one must do to attain eternal life. At first reading, Mark's dialogue between Jesus and the man appears to uphold the validity of the Mosaic law. Jesus' answer is that eternal life is assured by keeping the commandments (10:19ff.). In response, the "impulsive reply

¹⁴⁴ Christopher Rowland, Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Character of the most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism (London: SPCK, 1989), 158.

¹⁴⁵ Barbara Green, "Jesus' Teaching on Divorce in the Gospel of Mark," JSNT 38 (1990): 73.

of the man indicates that he had made the Law the norm of his life and that he was confident that he had fulfilled its demands perfectly."¹⁴⁶ Adherence to the Torah, however, is called into question by the assertion of Mark's Jesus that the man must comply with further requirements, namely, that the man go, sell all his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and come follow him (10:21). The implication of Jesus' statement in 10:21, as Hooker points out, is that loyalty to the law thus proves to be insufficient.¹⁴⁷ But insufficiency may not in itself suggest the abrogation of the Mosaic law. Rather, Jesus, by intentionally moving beyond the letter of the law, "challenges the man to consider the implications of the commandments in relation to his present life."¹⁴⁸ In this way,

There is no abrogating nor superseding of the commandments, but an opening up of their extent and application as they are placed alongside the motives and actions of a man's life.¹⁴⁹

Thus, as in previous Marcan citations from the Torah, Jesus is presented as first upholding Mosaic law, but then as exercising an authority that is greater than that of the law.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Lane, 366.

¹⁴⁷ Hooker, "Mark," 223.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, 89.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Hooker, "Mark," 223.

In 12:24-27, Mark has Jesus appeal to the Torah in answer to a doctrinal question posed by the Sadducees. The question is posed within a hypothetical scenario articulated by the Sadducees. It reads:

There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no children; and the second took her, and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; and the seven left no children. Last of all the woman died. In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife (Mark 12:20-23).

This scenario is founded upon the Mosaic provision for levirate marriage (cf. Gen. 38:8-9 & Deut. 25:5). Scholars generally agree that the real intention of the Sadducees here is to call into question the whole notion of the resurrection.¹⁵¹ Jesus' initial response is that the Sadducees are mistaken concerning the resurrection because they do not "know the scriptures nor the power of God" (12:24). Mark then has Jesus reiterate some points of teaching concerning resurrection that were probably similar to that of his contemporaries, namely, that there will be no marriage in heaven and that the dead after being resurrected will become like angels (12:25).¹⁵² In 12:26-27, Mark has Jesus address the primary question of interest for the Sadducees, i.e., whether or not there will be a resurrection? In order to "rectify the error of the Sadducees, which has its source in an inability to

¹⁵¹ So Mann, 474.

¹⁵² Schweizer, 246.

understand their Scriptures,"¹⁵³ Jesus, by placing Exodus 3:6 over against Deut. 25:5, vindicates his interpretation of the Torah as opposed to the Sadducees who wrongly interpret the Scriptures. The point of Jesus' citation of Exodus 3:6 is that though the patriarchs are dead, God in fidelity to his covenant, will resurrect them from the dead.¹⁵⁴

Thus Jesus is again presented as upholding the Torah. And once again Mark's presentation of Jesus implies an authority of scriptural interpretation that surpasses that of the Sadducees. Jesus' authority over the Sadducees ability to interpret scripture is attested for the Marcan reader by the fact that Mark introduces and concludes Jesus' response with the declaration that the Sadducees are in error¹⁵⁵ (cf. 12:24 & 27). And implicit in Mark's presentation in 12:18-27 is the fact that Jesus' interpretation is contrary to that of the Sadducees, but in agreement with that of the Pharisees on the question of resurrection.¹⁵⁶

The final pericope in which Mark quotes the Torah is in the account of a dialogue between Jesus and a scribe (12:28-

¹⁵³ Lane, 428-429.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid., 428-430.

¹⁵⁵ Hooker, "Mark," 223.

¹⁵⁶ The Pharisees, unlike the Sadducees, held to a belief in resurrection. See Josephus, Jewish Wars, 2.8.14.

34). The discussion revolves around the importance of the commandments. The scribe questions Jesus as to which one of the commandments he considers most important (12:28).¹⁵⁷

Jesus answers:

The first is, Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these' (Mark 12:29-31).¹⁵⁸

The scribe agrees with Jesus' answer and adds that they (the two commandments cited) are much more than 'all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.'¹⁵⁹ Thus he makes no judgement as to what is essential and certainly no repudiation of the contemporary sacrificial system but rather asserts the primacy of the love of God and of other human beings. Schweizer comments:

In agreement with many prophetic utterances (1 Samuel 15:22; Hos. 6:6; Isa. 1:11; Prov. 21:3; and the rabbis) the teacher of the Law has in mind primarily the disparaging of ritual requirements. Nevertheless, he does not merely want to set an ethic of inwardness against external ritual--this would not have transcended the ethics of the Pharisees, because they also relegated ritual to a subordinate position. As a matter of fact he was comparing love which comes from the whole heart and can no longer be measured quantitatively with the legalism which allows one to ascertain how many commandments he has kept and how many he has

¹⁵⁷ The questioning by the scribe is consistent with the fact that the rabbis distinguished between commandments of greater and lesser importance. See Schweizer, 250.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Lev. 19:18 & Deut. 6:4-5.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. I Sam. 15:22 & Hos. 6:6.

violated.¹⁶⁰

Schweizer's comments here suggest why the words that Mark places on the lips of Jesus in this dialogue have been used to argue that the Judaism of Jesus' day was one of hidebound legalism.¹⁶¹ Jesus' response, however, suggests that, in agreement with the scribe, morality cannot be legislated but rather is a result of love; love of God and of humankind. Some argue, therefore, that the words of Jesus in 12:29-31 radically revise the concept of Jewish morality. Stock, for example, writes:

But the complete equalization of the two commandments and the evaluation of the united commandment into an absolute for the total religious behaviour *is without precedent. Thereby Jesus radically revises the Jewish concept of morality erected on statutes. The commandment of love is no longer one commandment among many others in the Law and something alongside sacrificial cult; it becomes the norm by which every pious word is to be judged [italics added].*¹⁶²

Jesus' apparent revision of Jewish morality, however, is certainly not as radical nor as "new" as these comments by Stock imply. There is evidence that the Jews had a similar understanding of the law prior to the time of Jesus. For example, when questioned by a Gentile concerning the law, a Jewish Elder (ca. 40 B.C.E.-C.E. 10) replied: "What you yourself hate, do not do to your neighbour: this is the

¹⁶⁰ Schweizer, 253.

¹⁶¹ Mann, 481; Stock, 314.

¹⁶² Stock, 312-313.

whole Law, the rest is commentary. Go and learn it."¹⁶³ Also, the opening words of the *Shema* (Deut.6:4) imply the importance of love over ritualistic observances in the relationship of the Jews to their God.¹⁶⁴ In his book, Jesus and Judaism, E.P. Sanders supports this view. Unlike the opinion of the majority of scholars today, Sanders argues that the evidence does not suggest that first century Judaism was intrinsically legalistic.¹⁶⁵ That certain groups of Jews (i.e., some Pharisees) are portrayed in the Gospels as being legalistic is certain.¹⁶⁶ But this does not allow for the categorization of all Jews as hidebound legalists. The fact of the matter is, according to Sanders, that Jesus objects to the practices of some of the Pharisees, for example, "because they are not righteous

¹⁶³ Lane, 432.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ E.P. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 274-281. According to Sanders, and more recent scholars, decades of scholarship have misrepresented the evidence in purporting that the Judaism of Jesus' time was categorically 'legalistic'. The problem with this portrait is that it fails to represent adequately a Jewish theology of grace. Christopher Rowland, Christian Origins, 25, following Sanders, argues that grace was as much a part of Judaism as minute adherence to ritualistic observances. It is a great mistake, writes Rowland, "to suppose that concern with the correct observance of the festivals and other [legal] aspects of Jewish life implies that the theology [of grace] which undergirds the observance has been lost sight of." To view New Testament Judaism as essentially 'legalistic', therefore, is to incorrectly assert "the bankruptcy of Judaism over against the validity of nascent Christianity."

¹⁶⁶ Cf. n. 135 above.

enough, and he favours a higher righteousness according to the law, while not denying the law, even its minutiae."¹⁵⁷

As indicated above (p. 80), in addition to Torah quotations in Mark, allusions to the Torah appear quite prominently in Mark's Gospel. Though it is nigh impossible to determine conclusively what is and what is not an allusion to a text found in the Torah, scholars generally concur that certain passages contain verses and phrases that, to a high degree of probability, echo the Torah.¹⁶⁸ One such probable allusion to the Torah is found in Mark's pericope of Jesus cleansing a leper (1:40-45).¹⁶⁹ After the cleansing, Jesus orders the leper to go show himself to the priest and make an offering in compliance with Mosaic law (1:44). At first reading, Jesus' instruction here demonstrates an allegiance to Mosaic law which sets down specific requirements for the leper who wished to be pronounced ceremonially clean (cf. Lev. 13:2-14:57). Traditionally, interpretations of 1:44 have upheld Taylor's dictum¹⁷⁰ that the instruction in 1:44 "illustrates the recognition by Jesus of the validity of the Mosaic law (Lev.

¹⁶⁷ Sanders, Jesus and Judaism, 277.

¹⁶⁸ France, 259.

¹⁶⁹ The text makes it explicitly clear that it is Jesus who makes the leper clean. This point is to be connected to other Marcan passages as well. For example, in 7:1-23, the implication is that ritualistic washing does not make one clean, but the acceptance of Jesus' message does.

¹⁷⁰ One exception is Myers, 152-154.

xiii. 49) in cases where moral issues are not at stake."¹⁷¹ But the narrative can be taken to express the idea that once again Jesus exercises a greater authority than that of the Mosaic law. For example, in 1:41 Mark has Jesus touch a leper, an action that according to Mosaic law made that individual unclean (cf. Lev. 5:3 & 7:21 with Lev. 13:45-46). Yet, Mark does not record that Jesus contracted the contagion. Rather, Mark reports that the leper becomes clean (1:41). Another point that illustrates Jesus' greater authority is the fact that under levitical law, priests were able only to declare a leper clean (Lev. 14:2ff.); they were not able to cleanse a leper. In contrast, according to Mark, Jesus actually cleanses the leper (1:41)! To put it another way, Mark's Jesus is the one who heals the man of leprosy, the law could make provision only for what should be done once the disease had been cured.¹⁷² Jesus' authority may also be implied by the fact that he assumes the priestly prerogative to declare a leper clean (cf. Mark 1:41 & Lev. 13:2ff.).

The authority of Jesus over the Mosaic dispensation is also implied in Mark's transfiguration account (9:2-8). The vocabulary of the transfiguration narrative reflects the language used to describe God's encounters with Elijah and

¹⁷¹ Taylor, 190; Other commentators arrive at a similar conclusion. Cf. e.g., Mann, 220; Schweizer, 59; Stock, 89.

¹⁷² Hooker, "Mark," 226.

Moses in various Torah passages. For example, the reference to six days and the description of Jesus' transfiguration in 9:2 may recall Exodus 24:15ff., and 34:29. According to Lane, "high mountain" in 9:2 "recalls the theophanies on the mountain of God (Sinai, Ex.24; Horeb, I Kings 19) where Moses and Elijah received a vision of the glory of God."¹⁷³ The cloud imagery in 9:7 is reflective of the imagery common to a number of Torah passages (cf. Exod. 13:21; 16:10; 19:9; 24:15-18; 33:9-10; 40:34; Lev. 16:2; Num. 11:25). The importance of this language is that it allows Mark once again to clarify and legitimate the identity and mission of Jesus in light of the events outlined in the Old Testament.

Of particular significance here is that the imagery functions to tie Jesus' role concretely to the great personages of Jewish history. This is clearly evident in Peter's request to provide a shelter for Jesus along with Moses and Elijah which effectively places Jesus alongside two Old Testament prophets. Mark's primary intention is to show that Jesus is the one of whom Moses had prophesied (Cf. Deut. 18:15). Stock concurs:

In the Transfiguration Moses and Elijah, the great representatives of the Law and the Prophets, bear witness to Jesus . . . the prophet of the last days whom Moses had foretold as superseding himself.¹⁷⁴

But while the summit conference signifies agreement between

¹⁷³ Lane, 318.

¹⁷⁴ Stock, 244.

the parties, it does not signify equality.¹⁷⁵ The superior status of Jesus is clearly implied in the Marcan narrative. The divine injunction, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" (9:2), "attests to God's resolve that in the present . . . his Son Jesus has superseded Moses as the one through whom he makes his will known."¹⁷⁶ Moreover, that "Jesus is singled out as God's beloved Son - [is] a clear indication of his superiority to both Moses and Elijah."¹⁷⁷ The command, "listen to him!" recalls Deut. 18:12 where Moses tells the people that they must listen to the prophet that will follow him.¹⁷⁸ In other words, the injunction, "listen to him!" is "another designation of Jesus as the one who fulfils the ministry of Moses (Deut. 18:15).¹⁷⁹ Jesus' status as the successor of Moses is also implied by Mark's assertion that after the divine injunction, the disciples (Peter, James, and John) remain alone with Jesus. Moses and Elijah have departed from the scene as quickly as they appeared (9:8). The implication of this sudden disappearance is that in the eyes of the disciples, "Jesus

¹⁷⁵ Hooker, "Mark," 227.

¹⁷⁶ Stock, 246.

¹⁷⁷ Hooker, "Mark," 226-227.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Schweizer, 182.

alone remained as the sole bearer of God's revelation."¹⁸⁰ Moses and Elijah, though witnesses to Jesus' character and mission, can help him no more.¹⁸¹

There are many other possible allusions to the Torah found throughout the Gospel of Mark. In each case, Mark appears to uphold the validity of the Torah. The rebuke by Mark's Jesus of certain scribes in 12:40ff. appears consistent with Exodus 22:22. Similarly, Jesus' affirmation of the ministry of those "outsiders" who minister in his name (9:38-40), is remarkably congruent with Numbers 11:26-29. The trial procedure in Mark 14:55-59 appears to adhere to pentateuchal law that the accused must not be condemned to death on the testimony of only one witness (Deut. 17:6; Numbers 35:30). Finally, the Marcan details of the burial of Jesus outlined in 15:42ff. are consistent with Deut. 21:23. Of other possible Marcan allusions to the Torah there are none that present a blatant abrogation of the passage cited.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Lane, 321. This point is strengthened by the fact that in 9:7 Mark uses the third person rather than the second person as he does in the similar pronouncement of 1:11. The significant point is that in 1:11 the divine injunction is made to Jesus himself; in 9:7 the injunction is revealed to the disciples. Cf. Schweizer, 182. But there is no indication the disciples understand the significance of this declaration (cf. 9:9-13), at least not up to this point in Mark's narrative.

¹⁸¹ Lane, 321.

¹⁸² Cf. e.g., 11:2 & Gen. 49:11; 12:7 & Gen 37:20; 13:11 & Num. 22:35; 13:19 & Deut. 4:32; 13:22 & Deut. 13:1-3; 13:27 & Deut. 30:4; 14:7 & Deut. 15:11; 14:24 & Ex. 24:8.

In summary, Mark's use of passages from the Torah reflects an attitude that is generally supportive of Jewish law. In many incidents, the accusation brought against the disciples by the religious leaders is transposed by Jesus back onto the religious leaders themselves. This Jesus does by appealing to the Torah over against oral law and by appealing to the original intention of Yahweh's law as opposed to concessions made due to the weaknesses of the human will to uphold that law. In some cases Mark has Jesus side with one Jewish sect over against another. At other times, however, Mark presents Jesus as providing an interpretation of the law that appears to attack the law itself and as such represents an authority of interpretation that clearly surpasses that of those Pharisees and Sadducees whom he encounters.

2.4 Marcan Motifs and Old Testament Prophetic Themes

The question of continuity or discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments inevitably involves a discussion of theology.¹⁸³ From the time of the first Christian exegetes down to modern times the distinctive theologies of the two

¹⁸³ Theology and how one understands the relationship between the Old and New Testaments is intricately connected. "In fact, one's understanding of relations between the testaments . . . determines in large measure what kind of Christian theology one espouses." So Richard N. Longenecker, "Three Ways of Understanding Relations between the Testaments: Historically and Today," in Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 22-29.

Testaments have caused difficulty for those scholars who have sought to define the nature of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments more precisely. An analysis of the two Testaments has led some to completely reject the significance of the Old Testament for New Testament theology. Marcion, Bultmann, and Adolf von Harnack are notable proponents of this position. Harnack, for example, calls for the complete dismissal of the Old Testament. He writes:

To cast aside the Old Testament in the second century was an error which the Church rightly rejected; to have retained it in the sixteenth century was the fact which the Reformation was not yet able to avoid; but still to keep it after the nineteenth century as a canonical document within Protestantism results from a religious and ecclesiastical paralysis.¹⁸⁴

Scholars like H.H. Rowley, W. Eichrodt, G. von Rad, and H.W. Wolff, however, argue that the theology of the Old Testament is certainly important for understanding the theology of the New.¹⁸⁵ While it cannot be conceded that these scholars hold a unified view of the role of the Old Testament in the New, they nevertheless are unified in the belief that there is a certain reciprocal relationship between the Testaments. H.H. Rowley, for example, asserts that

¹⁸⁴ Adolf von Harnack, Marcion, Das Evangelium von fremdem Gott (2nd ed.; Leipzig, 1924), 221, as quoted in Gerhard F. Hasel, New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 173.

¹⁸⁵ Hasel, 184-185.

there is a fundamental unity so that with all their diversity [the Testaments] belong so intimately together that *the New Testament cannot be understood without the Old and neither can the Old Testament be fully understood without the New* [italics added].¹⁸⁶

Proponents of both camps have employed various methodological approaches in their examination of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.¹⁸⁷ One approach has been to compare the theological themes found in the Old Testament with those of the New.¹⁸⁸ Regarding the Gospel of Mark, "interpreters have long recognized the value of studying constituent themes of the gospel as a way of determining [Mark's] . . . distinctive theology."¹⁸⁹ Similarly, an examination of themes is also useful in determining the theologies of various Old Testament books. A thematic comparison, then, will prove valuable in attempting to assess the relationship between Mark's theology and the theologies of his sources. Such a comparison will suggest the degree to which the theology of Mark either adheres to or rejects the theologies of his Jewish predecessors.

¹⁸⁶ H.H. Rowley, The Unity of the Bible (London, 1953), 94, quoted in Hasel, 185.

¹⁸⁷ For a survey of a variety of useful approaches for comparing the relationship between the two testaments see Hasel, 72-139.

¹⁸⁸ E.g., F.F. Bruce, This is That: The New Testament Development of Some Old Testament Themes (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1968).

¹⁸⁹ Marshall, Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative, 1.

A survey of Marcan citations from the prophets (*Nebi'im*) and the writings (*Kethubim*) reveals that Mark, in utilizing these Old Testament passages, uses motifs that are reminiscent of Old Testament prophetic themes. The scope of this study, however, does not allow for an examination of each Marcan citation that reflects an Old Testament prophetic theme. Rather, the discussion here will focus on Isaianic salvific themes that are utilized by Mark. Mark's use of Isaianic themes is deemed important on two accounts. First, a review of Old Testament passages cited in Mark reveals that the greatest percentage are Isaianic; thus the implicit assertion that the theology of Isaiah is of particular importance to Mark. Secondly, the key focus of this study is Mark 4:11-12, a passage quoted from Isaiah 6:9-10. Soteriological motifs are of special interest since the key theologically objectionable idea commonly held to be advanced by Mark in 4:11-12 is that "those outside" are prevented from being recipients of salvation.

Much of the discussion of Isaianic soteriology presupposes that Israel's covenantal relationship has been altered by unfaithfulness that results in alienation and pending judgement. Specifically, Isaiah often utilizes a motif of 'insincere worship' as one expression of Israel's unfaithfulness. This is especially the case in Isaiah 29:13, a passage which Mark quotes in 7:6-7. The passages respectively read:

And the Lord said: "Because this people draw near with their mouth and honour me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote" (Isaiah 29:13).

And He said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men'" (Mark 7:6-7).

The fundamental message of Isaiah in 29:13, according to the MT, is that Israel's religion has deteriorated from being a religion of the heart to a religion of "do's" and "don't's."¹⁹⁰ The root of the problem is that Israel has an incorrect attitude toward worship.¹⁹¹ Watts contends:

Their religion is found to be only verbal. It lacks heart, mind, and will. This affects the character of their worship. *Their fear* means their attitude in worship. It should be founded on a divinely inspired awe, deep respect of the Holy One. But it has become . . . "a human commandment" which can be taught and recited without involving the will.¹⁹²

Thus Israel's religious activities, as described by Isaiah, do not constitute genuine worship but worship stimulated by traditions of men, traditions which are an end in themselves. Israel's

worship has now become formal and hypocritical; religion for them does not mean a living experience but a code of conventional practice which is part of the tradition into which they

¹⁹⁰ J.N. Oswalt, The Book Of Isaiah: 1-39 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 532.

¹⁹¹ John D.W. Watts, Isaiah 1-33, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 24 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 386.

¹⁹² Ibid.

have been born. This traditional inheritance, which might have prepared the people to enter the realities of the religious faith, has been accepted as something to be formally honoured as efficacious in itself.¹⁹³

But why has religious tradition become efficacious for the Israelites of Isaiah's time? Why do they adhere so rigidly to the "traditions of men"?

The context of Isaiah 29:13 suggests that the Israelites are practising insincere worship because they cannot 'see' or 'hear' (29:10-12).¹⁹⁴ In fact, the prophet likens them to men in a drunken stupor (29:9) who's obtuseness will result in increased bewilderment and blindness. Neither is the obtuseness limited to selected recipients. Prophets, seers, and the people generally are affected alike (29:9-10). The cause of their spiritual misperceptions here reflects the same cause formulated in 6:9-10, namely, that Yahweh has elected to 'blind their eyes and stop their ears'.¹⁹⁵

Implicit in the context of 29:13 is that the blindness of the Israelites has resulted in their placing trust in their own wisdom in deciding the "right" religious forms and practices to follow. In this way, the Israelites have

¹⁹³ J. Mauchline, Isaiah 1-39 (London: SCM Press, 1962), 204.

¹⁹⁴ The blindness motif (i.e., lack of sight, hearing, speaking, or reading ability) is prevalent throughout the book of Isaiah. Cf. e.g.: 6:9-10; 29:11-12, 18; 30:9-10; 32:3-4; 42:16; 43:8; 55:3; 60:2-5.

¹⁹⁵ So Watts, vol. 24, 385.

permitted their wisdom, and not the wisdom of God to determine the nature of "true" worship. In the context of Isaiah 29:13, the implication is that human wisdom, however, will not always permit the Israelites to determine what true worship is. In fact, Isaiah makes it explicitly clear that human wisdom shall perish (29:14). Apparently, during Isaiah's time, it was the norm for wise men to advise the king concerning foreign policy. Isaiah is particularly against decisions which are devised without consulting Yahweh (cf. 30:1; 31:1). Yahweh will bring such wisdom to ruin¹⁹⁶ "because it is self-sufficient and failing in an awareness of the only ruler of history."¹⁹⁷

But Isaiah's message here is not simply one sided. That is, Israel will not be blind forever as to the nature of true worship. There will come a point in history when Israel¹⁹⁸ will 'see' and 'hear', i.e. understand the plan of Yahweh (29:18) and the nature of true worship. How will this come about? Isaiah's answer is that Yahweh "will again do marvellous things with this people, wonderful and marvellous" (29:14a). The word מְבֹרָא (translated here marvellous or wonderful) is of special significance since it

¹⁹⁶ Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 13-39 (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1974), 274.

¹⁹⁷ A.S. Herbert, Isaiah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 169.

¹⁹⁸ A remnant only. Cf. Isaiah 29:14b. See also section 3.1.2. below.

recalls for the Israelites divine acts of an extraordinary nature which clearly point their minds to Yahweh.¹⁹⁹ In particular, נָשָׂא recalls for the Hebrews of Isaiah's time Yahweh's saving work in their release from Egypt (cf. Exod. 3:20; 15:11). The poetic implication of the Isaianic text is that Yahweh is about to perform 'new' wonders on behalf of the Israelites. But they are not essentially different from the 'old' wonders.²⁰⁰ Just as deliverance from Egypt was a wonderful and marvellous act, so also will be the deliverance of the Israelites from Babylonia.²⁰¹

There is remarkable thematic agreement between Mark 7:6-7 and Isaiah 29:13. In the first place, it is important to note that Mark in 7:6-7 follows the Hebrew text rather than the LXX.²⁰² This is of particular significance since it suggests that Mark 7:6-7 reflects more closely, not the meaning of the LXX, i.e., that human tradition makes Israelite worship vain, but the meaning of the MT, namely, that Israelite worship is [or has become] mere human commandment.²⁰³ In the case of Mark 7:6-7, therefore, Mark has adapted the words of Isaiah to describe "the shallowness and hypocrisy of the worship . . . [of] the Pharisees and

¹⁹⁹ Herbert, 169.

²⁰⁰ Oswalt, 533.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² France, 250.

²⁰³ Ibid., 250.

scribes."²⁰⁴ Thus, "the words quoted [in Mark 7:6-7] bear a . . . purely contemporary application."²⁰⁵

The immediate context of Mark 7:6-7 also contains themes and motifs comparable to those found in the context of Isaiah 29:13. In Mark 7:14b, Mark places on the lips of Jesus the words, "Hear me, all of you, and understand." In verse 18 Jesus states, "Then are you without understanding? Do you not see?" This language used by Mark to describe the blindness of the Pharisees is remarkably similar to that used by Isaiah. The blindness of the Pharisees, like that of the Israelites, appears to be a result of their own actions and based on a law of their own devising in accordance with their own wisdom.

In Mark 13:24-25 there is evidence that Mark draws on two Isaianic passages, namely, Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4. The passages read:

But in those days after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in heaven will be shaken (Mark 13:24-25).

For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising and the moon will not shed its light (Isaiah 13:10).

All the host of heaven shall rot away and the skies roll up like a scroll. And their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree (Isaiah 34:4).

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 68-69.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 69.

In their original contexts, Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4 aid in describing Yahweh's judgement. According to these Isaianic texts judgement is to be universal in scope. It will not only include the destruction of the earth (13:9,11), but also bring cosmic disorder (13:10,13).²⁰⁶ In particular, the darkness associated with this destruction and disorder will have a profound effect on humankind. Kaiser states:

the absolute darkness is itself part of the judgement. If we look behind the ancient imagery, the verse states that when the hidden God carries out his manifest judgement, mankind is forced back into pure passivity, from which there is no refuge back into this world. Mankind is deprived of the world as an open field for the exercise of man's own potentialities.²⁰⁷

Another theme of verse ten is that Yahweh's plan remains concealed from men. This concealment is reflected in the darkness motif. Neither the stars, sun, nor moon will give light during Yahweh's execution of judgement (13:10). As Kaiser suggests, "darkness" has concealed Yahweh's explicit purposes from Israel throughout the Old Testament. Here, in Isaiah 13:10, darkness serves a similar purpose.

[Yahweh's judgement] . . . will be announced by the darkening of the stars of the night and of the sun, which is a consequence of God's approach in the darkness of the clouds; for he remains concealed, and his purposes remain concealed, from the eyes of men.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Herbert, 99.

²⁰⁷ Kaiser, Isaiah 13-39, 17.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Isaiah 34:4, like 13:10²⁰⁹, also describes Yahweh's universal judgement.²¹⁰ Of particular significance are verses sixteen and seventeen of chapter 34. They imply that universal judgement is part of Yahweh's sovereign plan.²¹¹ Here, however, as in the rest of Isaiah, judgement does not exist alone. Israel will experience restoration (35:1-10). In fact, the imagery of a desert being transformed into a productive garden in chapter 35 depicts Israel's restoration.²¹² Yahweh will be her saviour (35:4), the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped (v.5), a "Holy Way" will allow the exiles to return to Jerusalem (vv.8-10).

Once again, the themes of Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4 are also evident in the context of Mark 13:24-25, i.e., in 13:1-37. The time in which the events described in 13:7-8 are to take place,²¹³ for instance, is concealed from the disciples (13:4). While 13:23b may be taken to imply that the disciples should be aware of the events of the end time (13:7b,33), there is no indication that they are. Similar

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 357, suggests that 34:4 reflects 13:9f. This is interesting in that Mark in 13:24-25 connects the two.

²¹⁰ Though verse five specifically identifies Edom as a recipient of Yahweh's judgement it appears that Edom is an example or representation of all nations and their fates. Cf. Oswalt, 610; Herberth, 193; Kaiser, 355-356.

²¹¹ Oswalt, 617-618.

²¹² Ibid., 606.

²¹³ Lane, 458-459.

to the Isaianic proclamation, the events that Mark describes include judgement (13:7-8; 24-25²¹⁴). In Mark 13:26-27, restoration is implied. In 13:26 it is the Son of Man who will be instrumental in this restoration. Not only is the language an obvious allusion to Daniel 7:13, but a reflection of the recurrent Old Testament theme that just as Yahweh "scattered" the Israelites to the four winds as a consequence of their infidelity, so he will "regather" them, a salvific action in keeping with his promises.²¹⁵

A comparison of Mark 11:17 and its context with its Old Testament sources, namely, Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11, reveals that Mark, following Isaiah, speaks against worship that is exclusive in nature. The texts read:

And he taught, and said to them, "'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers'" (Mark 11:17).

These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in the house of prayer; their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples (Isaiah 56:7).

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold I myself have seen it says the Lord (Jeremiah 7:11).

An examination of Isaiah 56:7 in its context reveals that it

²¹⁴ Certain scholars argue that judgement here is universal in nature. France, 234, e.g., argues that 'Mark 13:24-25 is a description in symbolic terms of the prophecy of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of Israel as a nation.' Cf. also Schweizer, 275.

²¹⁵ Lane, 476.

must be viewed in relation to Deut. 23:1-8. Under the requirements of the Jewish Law, certain individuals are excluded from the worship of Yahweh (Deut. 23:1-8). Isaiah, in 56:1-8, is undoubtedly following the exhortation of the Deuteronomist that, according to Jewish Law, two groups of people, namely, foreigners and eunuchs, are to be excluded from worshipping Yahweh. Isaiah, however, in essence, cancels the regulations of Deuteronomy 23 and places only two requirements on those whom Yahweh will accept as worshippers, namely, that they keep the sabbath and refrain from evil (56:4-6). As Westermann points out, "The foreigners' lament of v. 3 presupposes a wish on their part to continue as members of the community which worships Yahweh, and the intention on the part of others to debar them."²¹⁶ Thus, for Isaiah, the worshippers of Yahweh are not to be an exclusive group but an inclusive one. The extent of this inclusiveness is demonstrated by the prophetic words of verse seven, "for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

In the historical context, the temple in Isaiah 56:7 is called a "house of prayer" because, since sacrifice had not been possible during the Babylonian exile, the spoken element in worship had become the dominant one.²¹⁷ But this will not always be the case. The implication of 56:7 is

²¹⁶ Westermann, 312.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 315.

that the Israelites will one day return to Israel, and foreigners with them. The Isaianic text assures foreigners that their sacrifices will be wholly acceptable. In essence, the acceptance of the sacrifice of foreigners meant that, properly speaking, they ceased to be foreigners.²¹⁸ Consequently, according to the Isaianic text, no one is excluded from the worship of Yahweh.

It is also significant to note that Isaiah in 56:7 is speaking of a future reality, i.e. that the temple would one day, when the messianic age arrived, become a house of prayer not only for Jews but for Gentiles as well.²¹⁹ Could it be that Mark saw in the actions of Jesus the fulfilment of Old Testament messianic prophecies which included a new form of worship? It is certainly plausible that Jesus' actions in 11:12-23 are symbolic for Mark and a clear indication of a new form of divine worship.²²⁰ This explanation is especially plausible given the fact that in Jesus' day the Gentiles had access to an area of the temple known as the Court of the Gentiles.²²¹ Apparently, Jesus in 11:15-16 drove out the merchants from the Court of the Gentiles in order to safeguard rights and privileges

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid., 298.

²²¹ Lane, 406.

sanctioned by God.²²² In this light, it is not surprising that Mark in quoting Isaiah 56:7 reaffirms that the temple is to be called a house of prayer for all nations. As Stock has rightly suggested, "Jesus confines himself entirely to the removal, from the court of the Gentiles, of all that made prayer and worship difficult for Gentiles."²²³ The cleansing of the temple, therefore, can certainly be taken to mean the abolition in principle of an institution that was restricted entirely to Jews.

The evidence, then, suggests that Mark in citing passages from Isaiah retains certain Isaianic theological motifs. In particular, Mark places on the lips of Jesus Isaianic citations in an attempt to combat and repudiate the pseudo worship of 'pharisaical' Jews, a problem with which Isaiah certainly had to contend. Like the Jews of Isaiah's day, the Jews of Mark's storyline were obdurate and subsequently failed to 'see' the original intention of Yahweh's Law. But the Jews will not always be obdurate to the nature of true worship. Both Mark and Isaiah attest to the fact that the Jews will eventually 'see' that laws and exclusivity do not constitute true worship. Rather, true worship is worship of the heart, a worship which excludes neither Jew nor Gentile.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Stock, 297.

2.5 Summation

Mark's consistent appeal to Old Testament texts indicate that they serve a particular function in his Gospel. Although Mark does not necessarily pay meticulous attention to the meaning dictated by the historical milieu in which such texts were originally formulated, his liberal freedom of exegesis is in keeping with that of his contemporaries. And like his contemporary Jewish exegetes, Mark appropriates the language and symbols of numerous Old Testament passages to support his own particular authorial intentions.

It has been argued that Mark's prologue is of utmost importance for understanding Mark's use of Old Testament passages. In the first place, the compositional function of 1:2b-3 indicates that, for Mark, the events that he relates about Jesus Messiah, Son of God, have their origin in Jewish Scriptures. Other Old Testament language and symbols found in Mark's prologue also attest to this fact. Thus, there is a certain degree of continuity between the teachings and actions of Mark's Jesus and the Old Testament. This is also evidenced by Mark's attempt to show that the events he relates about Jesus are in conformity with the sovereign will of God as expressed in the Old Testament. The vocabulary found in Mark's prologue (e.g., ἀρχή, καιρός), and the use of δεῖ and introductory formulae (e.g., καθὼς γέγραπται) throughout Mark's Gospel certainly do not suggest

otherwise. In fact, the chief preoccupation of Mark's prologue is to show that the Jesus events (and John's) are in conformity with the will of God.²²⁴ For Mark, these events fit most naturally into the *Heilsgeschichtlich* tradition of the Old Testament.

That Mark views the Jesus events as being in conformity with the Old Testament is also suggested by his use of the Torah. It has been argued that Mark generally affirms the validity of the Torah. This is evidenced by Mark's portrayal of Jesus as supporting the written law over against the oral law (e.g., 1:44; 7:1-13). But it has also been shown that Mark's Jesus on occasion disregards the Torah (e.g., 1:41; 7:14-23). At other times Mark has Jesus reject the Mosaic law (e.g., 10:3-4; Deut. 24:1) and uphold the original intention of God's law²²⁵ (e.g., Gen. 1:17; 2:24; 5:2). In this way, Mark has Jesus set one point of law over another, a commonly accepted exegetical practice given the diversity of Judaism during the first century of the common era.²²⁶ This is clearly evident in that Mark has Jesus at times in agreement with the Pharisees, and at other times with the Sadducees. While it cannot be argued

²²⁴ Anderson, 284-285.

²²⁵ Cf. Hare, 34.

²²⁶ As Hare, 31, points out, "The Jewish community has always shown itself able to tolerate a wide variety of haggadic and halakic nonconformity within its midst, albeit with vigorous protest and healthy disagreement."

conclusively that Mark's Jesus was in agreement with one branch or tendency of Judaism more than another, one thing is clear, namely, that in every instance, Mark's Jesus is presented as having an authority that surpasses that of every other form and personage of Judaism. This is particularly evident in Mark's transfiguration account.

Regarding Jewish prophetic literature, there is remarkable thematic consistency. Mark adapts many Old Testament prophetic themes to fit his own storyline (e.g., worship, judgement, salvation). In each case, it has been shown that Mark consistently appropriates Isaianic soteriological themes to fit his contemporary situation. Of primary importance to this thesis is to see whether or not Mark is consistent in reapplying the prophetic themes of Isaiah 6:9-10 to his use of this passage in 4:11-12. It is that question to which chapter three seeks an answer.

3.0 THE SALVATION OF THE JEWS IN ISAIAH 6:9-10 AND MARK 4:11-12

It has been proposed that Mark in 4:11-12 utilizes a common "spiritual obduracy" motif, not unlike Paul,¹ as an explanation for the Jewish rejection of Jesus' message of salvation.² The use of a spiritual obduracy motif in 4:11-12 is also reminiscent of the usage of this motif in certain Old Testament passages. Examples often cited include: Exodus 4:21; 7:13; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8.³ There Yahweh hardens Pharaoh's heart so that he refuses to act justly. In other Old Testament passages, Yahweh hardens the hearts of his own people.⁴ For many scholars, this is the case in Isaiah 6:9-10. There, the implication is that Yahweh's imposition of spiritual obduracy upon the Israelites prevents them from becoming recipients of salvation.

Since Mark 4:11-12 has its origin in Isaiah 6:9-10, it appears quite plausible that Mark utilizes the spiritual obduracy motif in a similar manner. This conclusion, however, must not be made without ample consideration of the evidence. To gain insight into how Mark utilized Isaiah

¹ Cf. e.g., Rom. 9-11; 2 Cor. 3:14, 4:4; Eph. 4:18.

² See e.g., Frank E. Eakin, "Spiritual Obduracy and Parable Purpose," in The Use of the Old Testament in the New and other Essays, 102-105.

³ Cf. also e.g., Ex. 14:17; Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:16-20.

⁴ Eakin, 88. Cf. also e.g., Judg. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14, 18:10, 19:9. In other Old Testament passages, however, it appears that the Israelites themselves harden their own hearts. Cf. e.g., Neh. 9:16-17,29; Ezek. 3:4-9.

6:9-10, careful attention must be paid not only to Mark 4:11-12 and its immediate context,⁵ but also to the text and context of the original.⁶

In particular, this chapter will attempt to ascertain the function of the hardening theory in Isaiah 6:9-10 by paying attention to the compositional arrangement in which this pericope is found.⁷ It will be argued that the hardening of hearts motif evident in Isaiah 6:9-10 fits naturally in the context of Isaiah as a whole, especially as it connects with Isaiah chapters 1 through 6. In fact, if

⁵ This chapter will consider Mark 4:11-12 within the confines of the parable chapter. The significance of the broader Marcan context for interpreting 4:11-12 will be considered in chapter four and especially chapter five of this thesis.

⁶ Fitzmyer, Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament, 57. Others have also recognized the importance of an examination of Jewish scriptures for interpreting Mark's use of Isaiah 6:9-10. Cf. e.g., C.H. Cave, "The Parables and the Scriptures," NTS 11 (1965): 374-387; Craig A. Evans, "On the Isaianic Background of the Sower Parable," CBQ 47 (1985): 465-468.

⁷ Recent scholarship has generally recognized the validity of an holistic approach to Old Testament texts. J.D.W. Watts, xlii, e.g., commenting on his approach to the book of Isaiah, writes: "[This] . . . commentary will attempt to understand and interpret the finished product. It will assume that the authors/editors/composers had full creative freedom to pick and choose from the traditional material at their disposal, that they were responsible for its arrangement and the total artistic (and theological) effect. It will be alert to find the threads of meaning, the motifs, etc., that run through the entire work and that reveal their concerns and interpretations." Kirsten Nielsen, There is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 15-23, also argues for the importance of the context of a given passage for interpretation. Cf. also n. 90 of this chapter.

the hermeneutical significance of Isaiah 6:9-10 is to become clear, the progression of Isaiah's argumentation from chapter 1 through to chapter 6 must be considered. The events described in those chapters that follow Isaiah 6 are also considered relevant to the argument presented. In addition, it will be argued that the obduracy motif evident in Isaiah 6:9-10 is to be intricately linked to other Isaianic motifs, namely, judgement and universalism.

By examining the function of the obduracy motif in Isaiah, the soteriological question of Mark 4:11-12 will fall into clearer perspective. Of primary concern here is to determine whether a common spiritual obduracy motif functions in Mark as it does in Isaiah. Of equal importance is to discover whether or not themes intricately connected to Isaiah 6:9-10 are also of importance in the Marcan composition. And again, this discussion will suggest Mark's predisposition or aversion to those literary/theological themes and motifs common to his Jewish literary heritage.

3.1 Isaiah 6:9-10 in the Context of Isaiah

The words of Isaiah 6:9-10 are found interwoven in a description of what is generally considered by scholars to represent Isaiah's "inaugural call to the prophetic vocation."⁸ According to the text, Isaiah is instructed by

⁸ Craig A. Evans, To See and Not Perceive: Isaiah 6:9-10 in Early Jewish and Christian Interpretation, eds. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 21.

Yahweh to proclaim the following message:

Go and say to this people: 'hear and hear but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed (6:9-10).

Taken at face value, Isaiah 6:9-10 implies that it is Yahweh who renders the people obdurate. The immediate result of the impending obduracy is that the people fail to repent. Paradoxically, the people fail to repent because they have been rendered obdurate by Yahweh. According to the context, the inevitable result of failing to repent is judgement (6:11-12).

Read in this way, it is obvious why most scholars are perplexed by Isaiah 6:9-10. As Evans opines:

To be sure, . . . [most find] the hardening of Pharaoh's heart a trifle unfair, but there is something about deliberately rendering the people of [Yahweh] . . . obdurate that is particularly disturbing.⁹

Not all scholars agree, however, that it is Yahweh who imposes spiritual obduracy upon his people. Attempts to rid Yahweh of responsibility in imposing obduracy have generally fallen into one of two camps. From a historical-critical perspective, certain scholars argue that the author of Isaiah¹⁰ 6:9-10 "first formulated it retrospectively, on the

⁹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁰ Hereafter, Isaiah.

basis of his apparent failure."¹¹ In other words, Isaiah 6:9-10 must "be understood as [Isaiah's] . . . summing-up of a profound disappointment over the people listening to him."¹² From a purely theological perspective, other scholars propose that the passage as it stands in its context presents no great difficulty. They argue that "when the word of God is continually rejected, the capacity to hear and understand it dies away."¹³ Walther Eichrodt articulates succinctly the foundational premise upon which this position rests when he writes:

Deliberate disregard of divine truth, habitual failure to listen to God's warning, inevitably lead to that deadness in regard to God's operations which at the decisive moment notices nothing, but in a stupor, asleep, or drunk, lurches irremediably toward the approaching disaster.¹⁴

¹¹ Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), 82. A similar position from the historical-critical camp is that Isaiah 6:1-13 "was not written by Isaiah, but by a later tradent who was trying to explain the disaster of defeat and exile." See Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 21. Bruce Hollenbach, "Lest they should Turn and be Forgiven: Irony," The Bible Translator: Technical Papers 34 (1983): 313, argues that 6:9-10 is meant to instruct Isaiah "to be persistent and not surprised at a poor response."

¹² Klaus Koch, The Prophets: The Assyrian Period, vol. 1. trans. Margaret Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 113.

¹³ Gerhard von Rad, The Message of the Prophets, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), 122.

¹⁴ Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 2, trans. J.A. Baker (London: SCM Press, 1961), 432, as quoted in Eakin, 94.

To put it another way, "Israel had refused for so long to be attuned to the word of Yahweh that ultimately her 'will not' became her 'cannot'."¹⁵ Proponents of this position thus explain Israel's obdurate state in terms of a psychological process, that is, as a result of the human condition and not as an act of Yahweh.¹⁶ Such solutions have obviously placed sole responsibility for obduracy upon Israel.¹⁷

But the culpability of Yahweh in Isaiah 6:9-10 should not be dismissed so quickly either on the basis of human psychology or historical critical grounds. As A.F. Key, G. von Rad, and others have rightly argued, "the passage is more than the bitter disillusionment of an old man looking back on his career,"¹⁸ or the inevitable result of the human condition.¹⁹ Rather, Isaiah 6:9-10 must be taken at face value, i.e., that it is Yahweh's intention to render Israel obdurate. And the inevitable result of this obduracy is judgement (6:11-12).

¹⁵ Eakin, 94.

¹⁶ See discussion in Von Rad, 122-123.

¹⁷ The term 'Israel' is here used in an inclusive sense to refer to both Judah (southern kingdom) and Israel (northern kingdom) unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁸ Andrew F. Key, "The Magical Background of Isaiah 6:9-13," JBL 86 (1967): 204.

¹⁹ Von Rad, 123. For a list of those scholars who are in general support of the positions proposed by Von Rad and Key see Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 173-174, n. 31.

3.1.1 Jewish Obduracy and Inevitable Judgement

The conclusion that it is Yahweh's intention to render his people obdurate so as to ensure certain judgement becomes most plausible when Isaiah 6:9-10 is considered within its larger context. To begin, Isaiah chapter 1²⁰ introduces immediately to the reader two themes which appear repeatedly throughout Isaiah, namely: (1) that Israel has forsaken (divorced) Yahweh and is presently in an apostate condition, and (2) that judgement is the inevitable result of Israel's apostasy. These themes are encapsulated in 1:2b-5a. It reads:

"Sons [Israel] I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand." Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. Why will you be smitten, that you continue to rebel?

In the first place, commentators agree that this passage reflects the idea that it is Israel who has rejected Yahweh. Figuratively, the language of 1:2b-3 indicates that although Yahweh has tended and trained Israel as a son, Israel has refused to accept the father's (i.e., Yahweh's) authority

²⁰ If Sawyer's suggestion that Isaiah chapter 1 functions as an introduction to the whole book is valid, the argument presented below is most plausible. See J.F.A. Sawyer, Prophecy and the Prophets of the Old Testament (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 76.

and disobeyed his commands²¹ (cf. Hosea 11:1). The vocabulary of Isaiah 1:2b-5a suggests that this defiance of authority and disobedience is deliberate. The use of the Hebrew word VWD (rebelled), for example,

shows the deliberately willed nature of the issue: the unwillingness to recognize the nature of their relationship to God as parent . . . and to draw consequences of that relation and the dependence that it implies.²²

The combining of the suffix pronoun ל (they/these) with VWD , makes the accusation even more pointed, i.e., "precisely these [children] have rebelled against me."²³ In 1:4 it is they who have נָטַח (forsaken) the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel (1:4). In fact, they treat Yahweh with קָטַף (contempt).²⁴ Again, in לָנֶפֶשׁ (1:4), "there is contained the idea of deliberateness in . . . [Israel's] estrangement from God."²⁵ According to Delitzsch, the use of לָנֶפֶשׁ makes it emphatic, i.e., they have turned their back to Yahweh and entered a path chosen by themselves.²⁶ From a

²¹ George Buchanan Gray, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah: I-XXXIX, vol. 1, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), 9.

²² Watts, vol. 24, 17.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Frank Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), 62.

²⁵ Ibid., 62-63.

²⁶ Ibid., 63.

grammatical and linguistical standpoint, therefore, it is Israel who has rejected Yahweh. Up to this point in the Isaianic composition, there is no indication that it is Yahweh who has rejected Israel.

According to Isaiah 1:2b-5a, Israel's rejection of Yahweh has had a profound effect on the condition of the nation. The prophet describes Israel's present state by the use of an analogy. Unlike domesticated animals who are credited with certain recognition and discernment abilities (e.g., animals know their owners and stables),²⁷ Israel no longer knows its master (1:3). Thus, Israel does not know what Yahweh wills, nor how to act accordingly.²⁸ In fact, Israel has become a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity" (1:4a). The Hebrew words שׁוּן (to go astray) and לָו (crooked) imply that Israel continually fails to do what is morally right.²⁹ And even more pointedly, the people of Israel are רְשָׁעִים (evildoers).³⁰ (The degenerated state of Israel is also reiterated in no uncertain terms in 1:21-23).

In 1:2b-5a, the description of the apostate condition of the nation of Israel is in stark contrast to the nature of "the Holy One of Israel" (1:4). Implicit in the text, is the assertion that Israel's immoral activities have become a

²⁷ Cf. e.g., Numbers 22:21-30.

²⁸ Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 8.

²⁹ Watts, vol. 24, 18.

³⁰ Ibid.

particular affront to the holiness of Yahweh.³¹ And because holiness and immorality cannot exist side by side "Israel calls down God's judgement by its own behaviour."³² In other words,

the political and social catastrophes [that Israel was] . . . experiencing were the natural results of living in ways contrary to those . . . [that Yahweh had] designed for them.³³

The devastating results of this judgement are described in 1:5b-9. Cities, towns, and fortified places were made desolate by Sennacherib's armies; the border fields of the city of Jerusalem were given over to the Philistines.³⁴ "Only Jerusalem remained as a pitiful remnant of the former flourishing empire of David"³⁵ (1:8). In fact, judgement was so severe that the nation was spared total devastation only because Yahweh elected to "leave a few survivors" (1:9).

Though judgement has come, there is no indication that it has altered Israel's immoral activities. And the implication of 1:5a, is that unless Israel recants of her

³¹ Oswalt, 88.

³² Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 9. That judgement is the consequence of immoral/unethical behaviour is reiterated repeatedly throughout the whole of Isaiah. Cf. e.g., 2:6-22; 5:24-25; 8:5-8; 10:1-6; 30:12-14; 42:23-25; 43:27-28; 50:1-3; 59:2; 65:1-7,11-12.

³³ Oswalt, 89.

³⁴ Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 9.

³⁵ Ibid., 9-10.

apostate ways judgement will again result.³⁶ This point is made explicitly clear in 1:19-20. Israel's repentance will result in Yahweh's blessing (1:19); continued rebellion will result in destruction by the sword (1:20). Yet, although Israel is made aware of the required cultic ceremonies (1:10-15) and correct ethical behaviour (1:16-17), and receives an explicit call to repent in 1:18-19,³⁷ there is every indication that the nation continues to forsake the ways of Yahweh (1:20ff.). The point is that "there could have been relief if Israel had repented, but they would not" (1:21-23).³⁸

An underlying assumption throughout 1:1-20 is that Israel has had every opportunity to repent. This is especially the case in 1:16-19. In fact, prior to 1:24, there appears to be a certain reluctance on Yahweh's part to judge Israel, a certain hopefulness that Israel will repent.³⁹ In 1:24, however, there is a definite shift in

³⁶ Delitzsch, 63-65.

³⁷ John T. Willis, "On the Interpretation of Isaiah 1:18," *JSOT* 25 (1983): 43-46, argues convincingly that 1:18 contains an offer of the possibility of divine forgiveness.

³⁸ Mauchline, 51.

³⁹ Even after 1:24 it is implied that Yahweh provided Israel with opportunities to repent. In 5:2, for example, the owner of the vineyard waits for the vines to produce their grapes, but they do not. The parabolic implication is that Yahweh has waited for Israel to produce (e.g., moral and ethical behaviour) but without success. The further implication is that Yahweh will judge Israel because of her continued infidelity (5:3-7).

Yahweh's reaction to Israel's persistent state of apostasy. From 1:24 on, Yahweh actively pursues judgement against this apostate nation. It begins in 1:24 with an irrevocable decree of certain judgement against Israel.⁴⁰ The decree of Yahweh in 1:24 begins with אָה (Ah), "an expression of threatening. . . . used when an affront is offered, and when the purpose is revenge."⁴¹ In the language of Isaiah 1:25, "turn my hand means change from supporting to chastising."⁴² The term יְהוָה (the Lord) may also be taken to imply the certainty of judgement since when it is applied to Yahweh in Isaiah it occurs exclusively in threats (3:1; 10:16; 33; 19:4).⁴³ According to Watts, Yahweh will take "unilateral action. He will act directly against his enemies in the city and outside."⁴⁴ The enemy of 1:24 is Yahweh's own.⁴⁵ In 2:6ff., the implication is that judgement is certain.⁴⁶ The decision to judge apostate Israel, therefore, intimated in 1:5 and stated explicitly in 1:24, is reaffirmed in

⁴⁰ Delitzsch, 87.

⁴¹ Albert Barnes, Notes on the book of the Prophet Isaiah, vol. 1, ed. Ingram Cobbin (Edinburgh: Gall & Inglis, n.d.), 83.

⁴² Watts, vol. 24, 25. Cf. also Oswalt, 107; Barnes, vol. 1, 84; Delitzsch, 88.

⁴³ Oswalt, 106.

⁴⁴ Watts, vol. 24, 25.

⁴⁵ Oswalt, 106. So also Barnes, vol. 1, 83; Grey, 34; Herbert, 31-32.

⁴⁶ Cf. Delitzsch, 104-105; Oswalt, 124-125.

Isaiah 2:6ff. And following 1:24 through 5:30 the predicted effects of this judgement are described (1:24-31; 2:6-22; 3:1-4:1; 5:1-30). The only passages between 1:24 and 5:30 that do not deal specifically with judgement are 2:1-4; 4:2-6, and possibly 1:25b-26. Thus the overriding theme of Isaiah 1-5 is certain judgement.

It is against this development of plot in Isaiah 1-5 (i.e., Israel rejects Yahweh; presently in an apostate condition; refuses to repent; unholiness results in judgement), that Isaiah 6 must be viewed. In Isaiah 6:1-13 one finds the cumulative summary of this progression. Again, apostasy is presented as that which results in judgement.⁴⁷ In the first place, there is in 6:1-5 a stark contrast between the holiness of Yahweh and the unholiness of Isaiah (and Israel).⁴⁸ This is surely reminiscent of chapter 1, especially 1:2a-6,16-18. And again, it is this coming together of the holy (Yahweh) and the unholy (Israel) that results in judgement (6:11-12), for where Yahweh's "glory is manifested, there is judgement for sin, for the two cannot exist side by side."⁴⁹

That Yahweh has decided to bring judgement against Israel is suggested by Isaiah's question regarding the

⁴⁷ The judgement described in Isaiah 6 is certainly reflective of the judgement described in Isaiah 1-5 (cf. esp. 1:7,30-31 & 6:11-13).

⁴⁸ Oswalt, 181.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

duration of time that he is to proclaim the message (6:11a). His question is surely not a simple request for information, nor is it a hint that he wishes to withdraw his offer to proclaim the message.⁵⁰ Rather, "it is a cry of dismay. It is not the sort of message the prophet wishes to bear, nor does he wish to see his people destroyed."⁵¹ The point is that if there was no certainty of judgement, why Isaiah's cry of dismay? Moreover, the answer to Isaiah's question implies that judgement is certain. According to 6:11-12 Isaiah is to proclaim the message *until* the nation is destroyed, i.e., *until* all the inhabitants are removed and the land is "utterly desolate." Even the tenth that remain in it will be destroyed (6:12a). In the chapters that follow 6:1-13, the reader is made strongly aware of the extent of this predicted devastation. The catastrophic events described in Isaiah 7-66 certainly appear to be the inevitable result of a decision to destroy which had already been made in Isaiah 1-5.

That the cumulative decision by Yahweh to destroy Israel is found in 6:1-13 is also implied by certain grammatical and linguistical choices. The use of the expression "this people" in 6:9, for example, is in agreement with the tenor of Yahweh's decision to destroy Israel. In contrast to the phrase "my people" the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 190.

⁵¹ Ibid.

expression "this people" connotes a sense of contempt.⁵² Although it can be argued that not all uses of the phrase "this people" in Isaiah necessarily express contempt,⁵³ the phrase certainly lacks any element of warmth that "my people" might suggest.⁵⁴ And as Bultema has pointed out, in Isaiah 6:9 Yahweh "does not say, Go to *My* people, but to *this* people. Already, the Lord considers His people as *Lo-Ammi - Not-My-People*."⁵⁵ Also, in 6:5 the ambivalent phrase "a people" is used rather than the more congenial designation "my people". Moreover, the writer of Isaiah could have used the more solemn sacral names of "Israel" or "the house of Jacob".⁵⁶

To take Isaiah 6:9-10, then, at face value, i.e., that Yahweh's intent is to render Israel obdurate, appears to account most adequately for all the literary evidence. In the first place, Isaiah 6:1-13 reiterates the inevitable outcome of Israel's failure to adhere to the moral and ethical principles required by Yahweh. Israel will be judged. The use of imperative verbs (don't understand;

⁵² Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 18.

⁵³ Gray, 109, holds that "this people" elsewhere in Isaiah (e.g., 8:6,12; 9:15; 28:11,14; 29:13,14), denotes contempt. Cf. also 1:3; 3:12; 5:13; 10:24; 22:4; 26:20; 32:18; 43:20; 51:4; 52:4-6; 65:19,22.

⁵⁴ Oswalt, 188.

⁵⁵ Harry Bultema, Commentary on Isaiah, trans. Cornelius Lambregtse (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981), 97.

⁵⁶ Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 82.

don't perceive; make fat; make heavy; smear over)⁵⁷ certainly reinforce the tenor of the passage now that the decision to destroy has been made (1:24; 2:6ff.). By 6:9-10, the "doom of the people is inevitability fixed."⁵⁸ That is, the continued disobedience of Israel to Yahweh's commandments has resulted in a Yahweh-induced blindness to Isaiah's message.

Consequently, there is now nothing that Israel can do to avert the inevitable doom. In fact, the "prophet's preaching is to render them blinder, deafer, and more insensitive."⁵⁹ Evans concurs

that it is God's intention to render his people obdurate through the proclamation of the prophet. The purpose of this obduracy . . . is either to render judgement certain . . . or perhaps make it more fully deserved. [Isaiah's] . . . call was a commission to deliver the message of impending judgement. This judgement began with the message itself, for the message was to act as a catalyst in promoting obduracy, and so guarantee the certainty of judgement.⁶⁰

Similarly, Otto Kaiser and Andrew F. Key argue that Isaiah's commission in 6:9-10 has to do with Yahweh's judgement. Kaiser says that the intent of Yahweh's commissioning of

⁵⁷ Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 18-19. Cf. also Delitzsch, 189.

⁵⁸ Gray, 109.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Watts, vol. 24, 75, also maintains that Isaiah is to play "an active part in hardening and dulling so that repentance will not take place, now that the decision to destroy has been taken." Cf. also Eakin, 98.

⁶⁰ Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 19-24.

Isaiah in 6:9-10 is to speed up coming judgement.⁶¹ Key argues that the Isaianic oracle is not a call to repentance, but a signal for the beginning of God's judgement against an obdurate people. Key writes:

If our reasoning holds true, the only explanation which will account for all the data is that the oracle itself is the means through which God's plan is to be carried out. Stated positively (and boldly), the deliverance of the oracle causes the events to happen; stated negatively, were the oracle not delivered, the destruction would not ensue. The words . . . are to be delivered in such a manner that the people cannot repent; for then God would have to change the course of events which he has planned; indeed, they are to be delivered in such a manner that the people cannot even understand them!⁶²

Isaiah's proclamation, then, in 6:9-10, indicates that Yahweh imposes obduracy on an already obdurate people (1:3). But, as Watts has pointed out, "that Israel's heart is 'hard' and that Yahweh has made it so must be spoken of in dialectical balance."⁶³ On the one hand, Israel has forsaken Yahweh while on the other hand Yahweh in 6:9-10 expresses in terms of obduracy his cumulative decision to punish Israel. In other words, the effect of Israel's refusal to repent is Yahweh's resolve to destroy his people. And now that Yahweh has made the decision to destroy, the imposing of obduracy in Isaiah 6:9-10 contributes to that

⁶¹ Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 83.

⁶² Key, 204.

⁶³ Watts, vol. 24, 75.

end.⁶⁴

3.1.2 Isaiah 6:1-13 and Remnant Theology

Of primary significance to this discussion is whether or not inevitable judgement means that Israel will be totally obliterated. Most commentators agree that, despite the severity of the message in 6:11b-13ab,⁶⁵ implicit in Isaiah 6:1-13b, is the hope that judgement is not to be equated with the complete annihilation of Israel. For as G.H.A. von Ewald points out, "neither Isaiah nor any other prophet would have envisioned final or ultimate devastation,"⁶⁶ 'otherwise the prophets would despair of their own mission.'⁶⁷ Eakin agrees when he states:

Viewing the history of Yahweh's relationship with men would not permit so negative a conclusion for the prophet's role; Isaiah's commission must have conveyed the possibility of rectifying the relationship, else the prophet would have had nothing to proclaim.⁶⁸

And further, to argue that Isaiah 6:9-13b predicts the total annihilation of Israel would violate text and tradition to

⁶⁴ Eakin, 89.

⁶⁵ The significance of Isaiah 6:13c is discussed below.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 90.

⁶⁷ G.H.A. von Ewald, Prophets of the Old Testament, vol. 2, trans. J.F. Smith (London: Williams and Norgate, 1876), 69, as quoted in Eakin, 90.

⁶⁸ Eakin, 106.

make Isaiah a "monomaniacal doom-foreteller."⁶⁹

Besides, as Evans has rightly pointed out, "Isaiah's total message simply does not reduce [only] to obduracy and doom, for elsewhere the prophet preaches repentance."⁷⁰ Implicit in Isaiah's message of repentance is that all Israel will not be destroyed by Yahweh's judgement. A remnant will survive!⁷¹ A theme of restoration also appears prominently throughout Isaiah.⁷² This persistent hope outside chapter 6 calls into question any interpretation which accepts either implicitly or explicitly the radical devastation supposedly indicated by 6:11-13ab, i.e., that Israel will be totally obliterated.⁷³

Does, then, the logion of 6:11-13ab contradict the restoration/remnant motif so prevalent in the rest of Isaiah? A cursory reading of 6:11-13ab indicates that there remains not the slightest glimmer of hope for the salvation of Israel. An examination of the final phrase of verse 13

⁶⁹ Ivan Engnell, The Call of Isaiah, Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift 1949:4 (Uppsala: A.-B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1949), 53, as quoted in Eakin, 96.

⁷⁰ Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 23.

⁷¹ There are numerous (possible) references to remnant theology in Isaiah. Cf. e.g., 1:9,26; 4:2-6; 7:3; 8:18; 10:19-22; 11:11-16; 28:5-6; 35:10; 37:4,31-32; 46:3; 49:19-25; 51:11; 52:3-6; 60:4,9,21-22; 65:8-9; 66:20.

⁷² Cf. e.g., 1:25-26; 4:2-3; 9:1-17; 11:1-9; 14:24-26; 17:14; 28:16-17,29; 29:18; 32:3-4; 35:5; 42:7,16; 49:9; 54:13; 61:1.

⁷³ Eakin, 91.

(i.e., v.13c), "the holy seed is its stump", however, has led certain scholars to conclude that despite the devastation predicted by Isaiah, Israel⁷⁴ will not be totally obliterated. That is, implicit in 13c is the idea that a remnant of Israel will be saved.⁷⁵ The main weakness of this theory is that it hinges on the inclusion of 13c, a phrase that is absent from the MT, the LXX, and from the Hebrew manuscript of the book of Isaiah found at Qumran.⁷⁶ The phrase, therefore, according to Eakin, "should be reckoned a marginal comment added by a post-septuagintal individual who wrestled with this problem even as we have."⁷⁷

It may be argued that by omitting 6:13c because its authenticity is in doubt leaves 6:13ab open to the possible interpretation that Israel will be totally obliterated.

⁷⁴ There is uncertainty as to whether Isaiah predicts the destruction of both Israel (northern kingdom) and Judah (southern kingdom), or whether his proclamation of devastation is directed only against the North. Cf. e.g., J.A. Emerton, "The Translation And Interpretation of Isaiah vi.13," in Interpreting the Hebrew Bible, eds. J.A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1982), 86; Eakin, 95-96; Nielsen, 148.

⁷⁵ Most scholars argue that 13c implies that a remnant will be saved. Cf. e.g., Delitzsch, 191; Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 85; Nielsen, 149-150; Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 20-21; Emerton, 115.

⁷⁶ Eakin, 91-92.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 92. Emerton, 115, also views the last phrase of verse 13 as "a later addition intended to modify the preceding prophecy of destruction by allowing for the survival of the holy seed."

Verse 11 may be taken to attest to this theory. In verse 6:11, Isaiah the prophet is concerned with the duration of the time in which he must preach the message given him by Yahweh. The answer is found in 11b: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate." As Nielsen,⁷⁸ Emerton,⁷⁹ and others point out, the picture here is one of total devastation. Both Israel and Judah will be destroyed. Without the addition of 13c to the MT there exists, so it seems, no possible glimmer of hope that even a repentant Israel would alter the total destructiveness of Yahweh's action now that the decision to destroy has been made.

But even if we omit the phrase "the holy seed is its stump" (6:13c), Isaiah 6:13ab retains tree imagery. This has led certain scholars to suggest that Isaiah's comparison of Israel to a tree leaves open the possibility of hope.⁸⁰ It is the contention here, following Nielsen, that the tree imagery in verse 13, excluding the problematic phrase (6:13c), suggests that Israel will not be totally

⁷⁸ Nielsen, 148.

⁷⁹ Emerton, 86.

⁸⁰ As Emerton, 87, points out, the tree imagery has been used by scholars to indicate both disaster and hope, i.e., on the one hand that Israel will be totally destroyed or, on the other hand, that Israel, at least in part, is assured of salvation.

obliterated.⁸¹ The coming calamity expressed by Isaiah in 6:11-13 is to be seen as part of a transitional phase.⁸² That is, Israel will be punished. Destruction will come. The destruction, however, will not be the complete and final annihilation of the nation. Salvation, though delayed, will eventually come to Israel. This salvation, argues Nielsen, is organically linked by the use of the tree imagery to impending judgement. He states:

Although the tree [Israel] indeed falls [6:13b], its vital force does not disappear. It can still sprout, for it is holy seed that remains in it. . . . The tree is felled, but it still has the power to sprout; despite all, *this is not complete obliteration* [italics added]. . . . The image describes how the felled trees have in themselves power to sprout, despite all; indeed, even *holy power*. . . . Only with v.13b is the possibility of new sprouting introduced. It must happen as in nature, where the acorn falls out of the acorn cup and sprouts again.⁸³

Even if the phrase, "the holy seed is its stump" (6:13c) is omitted, the fact remains that the image of the felled tree and its stump is retained by Isaiah in 6:13b. And as Nielsen has correctly argued, the tree (i.e., Israel) may blossom again.

Thus, though judgement is certain, the survival of a

⁸¹ The fact that Isaiah proclaims that not all of the people will die but some will be placed in exile (6:12) also leaves open the possibility of restoration. As Watts, vol. 24, 76, points out, שׁוּבוֹ may be taken to mean "return," i.e., the return of the exiles to Palestine.

⁸² Nielsen, 149.

⁸³ Ibid., 149-152.

remnant is not totally foreign to 13ab. Isaiah 6:12-13, therefore, is in keeping with repeated Isaianic passages which both implicitly and explicitly refer to a persistent hope that Yahweh will not totally destroy his people because of their sin but will spare a remnant for his sovereign purposes. And as Evans points out, there is nothing in 6:13c that is out of step with the theology of 6:12-13.⁸⁴

Thus, the problematic phrase of verse 13

is not . . . as blatant a contradiction of the earlier part of the verse as is often believed. The comparison with the trees was originally concerned with the destruction of the branches and trunks, and not what happened to stumps. The later writer saw that the mention of stumps left open the possibility of survival and hope for the future.⁸⁵

That Isaiah used the tree imagery in 6:13 as an expression of hope in the midst of a message of judgement is in keeping with the dual motif of judgement and salvation that one finds throughout the book of Isaiah. On the one hand, Isaiah preaches certain judgement. On the other hand, the idea that Yahweh will preserve his people permeates the whole of Isaiah's message. That is, while Isaiah's message is certainly one of judgement, it is also undeniably one of salvation.

This duality motif is definitely evident in Isaiah 7:1-

⁸⁴ Or the theology of Isaiah as a whole for that matter. So Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 21.

⁸⁵ Emerson, 115.

17 and 9:2-7.⁸⁶ It is also characteristic of Deutero-Isaiah. Though the author of Deutero-Isaiah is definitely aware of and propagates judgement, he is primarily concerned with the deliverance of God's people from suffering at the hands of their Babylonian oppressors. Isaiah 40:2bc, for example, indicates succinctly the message of Deutero-Isaiah to God's people.⁸⁷ Westermann, in commenting on this passage, argues that

there is to be a turning point in Israel's fortune. Her time of service has ended, her iniquity is pardoned. This change in Israel's fortunes is based upon divine forgiveness. God will act in history, not only to punish Israel for her sins, but also to forgive and restore.⁸⁸

Since a duality motif of judgement and salvation is found consistently throughout I, II and III⁸⁹ Isaiah,⁹⁰ Isaiah

⁸⁶ Eakin, 97.

⁸⁷ Westermann, 35.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ A cursory reading of Trito-Isaiah suggests that its author is primarily concerned with salvation. Nevertheless, there are references which indicate an awareness of Yahweh's judgement (cf. e.g., 57:17; 59:18; 65:12-15; 66:14-16).

⁹⁰ Despite evidence which has led certain scholars to conclude that more than one author is responsible for the writing of the book of Isaiah, there exists a remarkable theological agreement. So R.K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1969), 795. Oswalt, 31, n. 1, agrees when he writes: "whatever may be the conclusions to which one comes on the issues of authorship and composition, failure to interpret the book as a whole is to fracture a theological unity which depends upon every part of the whole for its full validity." Cf. also R.E. Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," in Interpreting the Prophets eds. James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier (Philadelphia:

6:9-13 must not therefore be interpreted as an isolated logion, but as a part of the whole of the Isaianic proclamation. For as Eakin significantly contends, Isaiah 6:9-13 expresses the same motif of duality as does the whole of Isaiah's message. This passage, writes Eakin,

implies a time limitation upon the obduracy, with the recognition that Yahweh will utilize impending destruction as the divine revelatory instrument. Isaiah would proclaim a message much like Amos (see Amos 3:9-12; 5:3; 6:9-10). Like Amos, Isaiah recognized imminent but only partially defined danger for the nation. . . . How long will Judah's stubbornness prevail? Until her cities lie waste! There is both the recognition of Judgement and hope of restoration. The logion stands within the *Heilsgeschichte* tradition. Thus we would see the most probable solution to the hermeneutical problems raised by Isaiah's commissioning experience to be derived as one relates that commission to both Isaiah's and Israel's total experience. The word of Yahweh must be recognized as a two-edged sword, cutting both to preserve and to judge. That sword even in judgement, however, inevitably hopes for preservation. All of the long history of Yahweh's dealing with man supports this *Heilsgeschichte* conclusion.⁹¹

Eakin has here intimated that judgement in Yahweh's salvific plan has an important function. According to Eakin, judgement is to be a revelatory instrument that will bring salvation to Israel. Many scholars agree with this basic premise. J. Jensen, for example, has argued this

Fortress Press, 1987), 50-61; Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 40-41. See also n. 7 in this chapter.

⁹¹ Eakin, 98-99.

point convincingly.⁹² He concludes that "judgement does not simply precede [salvation] . . . but is the very condition for it."⁹³ In fact, judgement has a pedagogical or medicinal purpose in bringing about the salvation of Israel.⁹⁴ The point is that Yahweh's purpose is to "save" Israel and in some way Israel's punishment contributes to that end.

3.1.3 Isaiah and Universal Salvation

The purpose of judgement in Isaiah is not, however, confined to the pedagogical or medicinal purpose of ensuring salvation for Israel only. It is also to be instrumental in ensuring salvation for the Gentiles.⁹⁵ In the first place,

⁹² Joseph Jensen, "Weal and Woe in Isaiah: Consistency and Continuity," CBO 43 (1981): 167-187; id., "Yahweh's Plan in Isaiah and in the Rest of the Old Testament," CBO 48 (1986): 443-455.

⁹³ Ibid., "Weal and Woe in Isaiah: Consistency and Continuity," 173. Similarly, Evans, "On the Isaianic Background of the Sower Parable," 467, maintains that "out of judgement comes salvation." Cf. also Eakin, 97-99.

⁹⁴ Jensen, "Weal and Woe in Isaiah: Consistency and Continuity," 173.

⁹⁵ There is no consensus among scholars regarding the question of whether or not Isaiah's proclamation of salvation includes the Gentiles. Answers to this question generally tend to follow one of two positions, namely, that Isaiah, especially Deutero-Isaiah, envisages salvation for Israel only (particularism), or that Isaiah envisages salvation for Israel as well as for other nations (universalism). This thesis follows those who hold to a universalistic approach. Cf. e.g., A. Gelston, "The Missionary Message of Second Isaiah," SJT 18 (1965): 308-318. For a brief survey of other attempts to deal with this question see e.g., D.E. Hollenberg, "Nationalism and 'the Nations' in Isaiah XL-LV," VT 19 (1969): 23-25; Robert Davidson, "Universalism in Second Isaiah," 16 (1963): 166-168; D.W. Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations to

judgement (or impending judgement) of Israel reveals to the nations of the world that Yahweh is the only true God. This is either implicit or explicit throughout the book of Isaiah. In 37:20, for example, King Hezekiah's prayer is that if Yahweh will rescue Israel from the Assyrians, "all the kingdoms of the earth will know that [Yahweh] . . . is God alone" (37:20). According to the context, gods of wood and stone had not protected other nations from the military advances of Assyria (37:19). The implication is that if Yahweh protects Israel against the impending Assyrian threat, other nations will then recognize that "Yahweh is with Israel only, and there is no other, no god besides him" (45:14).⁹⁶ According to Westermann, when King Hezekiah prays for deliverance, "he expects as a result of this [deliverance] the acknowledgement of the exclusive deity of Yahweh by all the kingdoms of the earth."⁹⁷ In this way Israel functions as a "light to the nations" (42:6), i.e., as a witness of the sovereign superiority of Yahweh over "other gods".⁹⁸

Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah XL-LV," VT 35 (1985): 446-447.

⁹⁶ Bruce, 60, makes a similar point when commenting on Isaiah 45:14. He writes: "The people whom God brings back from exile are witnesses to all nations of God's delivering grace: Gentiles will acknowledge as they see what He has done for them: 'God is with you only, and there is none other beside him.'"

⁹⁷ Westermann, 394.

⁹⁸ Gelston, 311-313.

This affirmation of monotheism is to be intricately linked to an offer of salvation found especially in Second and Third Isaiah. In Second Isaiah, according to Blenkinsopp, there is an underlying premise that Gentiles can be recipients of Yahweh's salvation by the acknowledgement (not unlike that of Jethro, Rahab, and Naaman the Syrian) of a confessional statement, namely, "There is no other God besides . . . [Yahweh]" (Isaiah 45:14).⁹⁹ This leads Blenkinsopp to conclude that membership into the community of Israel, therefore, was not determined "on ethnic or national considerations but on a profession of faith and a level of moral performance compatible with it."¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, Blenkinsopp argues that throughout Second Isaiah one finds "the emergence of a confessional community open on principle to outsiders."¹⁰¹ It is in Third Isaiah that this idea is further developed, a clear presentation of this development being found in Isaiah 56:1-8. There Isaiah in essence cancels the regulations of Deuteronomy 23 and asserts that the only requirements for proselytes are sabbath observance and the avoidance of evil.¹⁰² Consequently, explicit in the Isaianic text is the

⁹⁹ J. Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah - Prophet of Universalism," *JSOT* 41 (1988): 83-103, esp. 85-92.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰² For further discussion of this passage see section 2.4 above. See also Blenkinsopp, 93-95.

possibility of individual Gentiles joining themselves to the community of Yahweh's people.¹⁰³

There are numerous Isaianic passages that imply that Israel has a role in ensuring the salvation of the Gentiles (cf. e.g., 2:3; 11:10; 19:16-25; 42:6; 43:10,12; 44:3-5,8; 45:14,20-25; 45:22f.; 49:1,6,22-23; 52:10; 56:1-8; 60:3; 62:1-2,18-21). To take one other example, Isaiah 19:25 represents an offer of salvation to those nations that oppress Israel. In this case, the nations concerned are Assyria and (especially) Egypt. The context indicates that other nations had every right to fear Israel because of her victory over Assyria.¹⁰⁴ The obvious implication is that Israel could turn her supernatural powers on Egypt as she had done on Assyria. Admittedly, some destruction did come to Egypt (19:1-10). But the story has a remarkable twist. As Sawyer has correctly argued, out of destruction (19:1-10) and confusion (19:11-15) there is a movement toward salvation (19:20), healing (19:22), and blessing (19:24-25) for Egypt. That is, in 19:25 Isaiah directs a message of forgiveness and hope to two of Israel's worst enemies, Egypt and Assyria, a message remarkably similar to that proclaimed by the prophet Jonah to the Gentile city of Nineveh (Jonah

¹⁰³ Blenkinsopp, 91-92. Cf. Gelston, 315; Hollenberg, 29-30.

¹⁰⁴ Mauchline, 161.

1-4).¹⁰⁵

In summary, there exists in Isaiah clear indications that Yahweh has a plan of salvation which includes both judgement and promise. It has been argued that Isaiah 6:1-13 represents the cumulative effect of a long process of Yahweh's dealings with Israel. A deliberate rejection of Yahweh has resulted in Yahweh's resolve to punish Israel. In Isaiah 6:9-10, therefore, this resolve is dictated in no uncertain terms. The message of Isaiah will in effect increase Israel's blindness so as to ensure certain judgement. But such judgement is not without revelatory effect. On the one hand it was to act in a pedagogical or medicinal sense to ensure salvation for Israel; a remnant would be saved. On the other hand, judgement of Israel was to reveal the universality of Yahweh's offer of salvation.

3.2 Mark 4:11-12 in the Context of the Parable Chapter

The validity of approaching Mark 4:11-12 as an intricate part of the parable chapter has been argued convincingly by Beavis. From a literary perspective, for example, Beavis has shown that all of the parables of the parable chapter pick up on the themes of 4:11-12: i.e.,

¹⁰⁵ J.F.A. Sawyer, "'Blessed be My People Israel' (Isaiah 19.25) The Context and Meaning of a Remarkable Passage," in A Word in Season, eds. James D. Martin and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 68. Sawyer, 57, suggests that in Isaiah 19:16-25 that "we are not far from Paul's 'to the Jew first and also to the Greek' (Rom. 1.16)."

hearing (4:3, 9, 15, 16, 18, 20, 23, 34); secrecy (4:21-22, 26-29); being receptive to what is given (4:24-25); and the kingdom of God (4:26-29, 30-32).¹⁰⁶ An holistic approach to the parable chapter is also supported by the fact that the chapter is consistently eschatological in focus.¹⁰⁷ Thus, while a discussion of certain linguistical and grammatical questions that relate specifically to the saying of 4:11-12 are deemed necessary, of equal importance to this analysis is that the parables of Mark 4 have a certain thematic significance for interpreting 4:11-12.

3.2.1 The Apparent Severity of Mark 4:11-12

There is evidence that Mark, in citing Isaiah 6:9-10 in 4:11-12, intends the 'hardening theory'. While Mark in 4:11-12 does not quote Isaiah 6:9-10 verbatim, he follows the thought of the original Hebrew and not the LXX,¹⁰⁸ and

¹⁰⁶ Beavis, 153-154.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 153.

¹⁰⁸ Many scholars argue that Mark follows the Targum. See Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 92, 200-201, n. 4. For a contrary opinion see M.D. Goulder, "Those Outside (MK. 4:10-12)," NT 4 (1991): 296-297. Goulder argues that the Targum is not the primary source of Mark 4:11-12. But, whether the Targum, the MT, or the LXX, the contention here, following Evans, is that Mark in 4:11-12 intends the hardening theory. In addition to linguistical and grammatical arguments, Evans, 96-99, proposes five other reasons for interpreting Mark 4:11-12 as advocating the hardening theory, namely: "(1) The obduracy idea in the Old Testament establishes more than enough precedent for such an idea. . . . (2) The Saying in Mk 4.24-25 comports well with a final interpretation of vv.11-12. . . . (3) There are sayings in Q which reflect this same idea of God's sovereignty in the matter of revealing or withholding

in doing so retains the idea that God's purpose is to harden the hearts of the people so that they will not repent and find forgiveness.¹⁰⁹ On this point E.P. Gould is worth quoting at length. "The difference," writes Gould,

between the form of the quotation in Mk. and Lk. on the one hand, and Mt. on the other, corresponds to a like difference between the original Hebrew and the LXX. In the Hebrew, God says to his prophet, "Go, . . . make the heart of this people fat and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn again and be healed." That is, God is represented as sending his prophet to harden the heart of the people by his prophetic message. . . . In the LXX., on the contrary, the hardening is the cause, not the purpose. The people will not hear the prophet's message because their heart is hardened, and they have shut their eyes. So in Mt., following the LXX., Jesus speaks to them in parables because their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing. And especially the obnoxious [lest they turn and be forgiven] is included in the result of their own conduct, and not in divine purpose. Mk. and Lk., however, follow the original in making the failure to hear and see to be the purpose of the parable.¹¹⁰

Thus, many scholars, following Gould, are led to conclude that Mark 4:11-12 indicates that only the "insiders" (i.e.,

spiritual insight. . . . (4) The final interpretation applied by the fourth evangelist to Isa. 6:9-10 attests this understanding of Isaiah and the obduracy idea in non-Synoptic circles (John 12:38-40). . . . (5) Although Isa. 6:9-10 is not quoted in Paul, texts like it are (i.e., Isa. 29:10 and Deut. 29.3[4]), indicating, as can clearly be seen from the arguments of Rom. 9.6-29 and 11:1-10, that Paul also shared the view that God hardened the heart of his people to the Christian gospel."

¹⁰⁹ So E.P. Gould, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961), 72-73.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

the disciples) are given the secret of the kingdom of God.¹¹¹ They receive this knowledge through private explanations.¹¹² Those on the "outside" do not receive such explanations, and thus they will not understand, repent, nor be forgiven.¹¹³ The result is a "stark doctrine of determinism: God's plan is that some people be excluded from salvation, and Jesus used parables as an instrument to that end."¹¹⁴ It is precisely this theologically objectionable idea which has been the impetus toward a re-examination of 4:11-12 by scholars in the hope that its elimination is possible.

In an attempt to lessen the severity of the 'Hardening' or 'Parable' theory scholars have formulated linguistical and grammatical arguments. For the most part, the grammatical and linguistical debate focuses on the meaning of two conjunctives, *ἵνα* and *μήποτε*.¹¹⁵ T.W. Manson's explanation is that *ἵνα* is mistranslated. The *ἵνα* should be rendered 'who', not 'in order that' (both translations are

¹¹¹ See e.g., Francis Watson, "The Social Function of Mark's Secrecy Theme," *JSNT* 24 (1985): 58-59.

¹¹² Cf. e.g., Mark 4:33-34; 7:17-23; 9:11-13, 28-29; 10:1-12; 13:3-37. See also Beavis, 72-75.

¹¹³ Cf. Watson, 59-60.

¹¹⁴ M. Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1977). 44.

¹¹⁵ For an overview of the attempts to determine the meaning of *ἵνα* and *μήποτε* see Evans, *To See and Not Perceive*, 92-96.

grammatically possible). Thus Manson's translation: "all things come in parables to those outside who see indeed but do not know."¹¹⁶ Others translate ἵνα 'in such a manner as', or 'let them'.¹¹⁷ For others, Matthew's adaptation of Mark 4:11-12 is especially revealing. They propose that Matthew recognized the severity of ἵνα in Mark¹¹⁸ and subsequently changed it to ὅτι (i.e., 'because' they see indeed and do not perceive).¹¹⁹ E.F. Siegman and K.H. Schelke argue that the ὅτι is an ellipsis for 'in order that the prophecy of Isaiah might be fulfilled' and that μήποτε means 'unless', i.e., unless the people repent, the prophecy will come to pass.¹²⁰ J. Jeremias also argues that while μήποτε can be translated 'in order that not' and 'lest perhaps', it is best translated 'unless' (i.e., 'unless they turn again and be forgiven').¹²¹

In all of the above cases, the translations may be taken to lessen the theological problems associated with the passage and in doing so the implication that 4:11-12 is

¹¹⁶ T.W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus (Cambridge: University Press, 1935), 76-78.

¹¹⁷ Taylor, 257.

¹¹⁸ Assuming the priority of Mark.

¹¹⁹ Beavis, 80.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ A.M. Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom: A Redaction-Critical Study of the References to the Kingdom of God in Mark's Gospel (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1972), 68.

anti-Judaic. Such translations, however, are not without weaknesses. As Beavis, Evans, and others have pointed out, despite such linguistical arguments, it is still widely admitted that Mark took the prophecy in its strongest sense, i.e., "that Jesus taught in parables in order to veil his message."¹²² In other words, Jesus speaks in parables, according to Mark, to keep "those outside" in ignorance and impenitence¹²³ so that they will not repent and find forgiveness! Thus Taylor's dictum still stands: Mark intended with telic force the words $\text{ἵνα} \dots \mu\eta\pi\omega\tau\epsilon$.¹²⁴

If the words ἵνα and $\mu\eta\pi\omega\tau\epsilon$ are taken in this telic sense, as many scholars propose, that is, to prevent understanding, repentance, and forgiveness, the meaning of Mark 4:11-12 is remarkably similar to that of Isaiah 6:9-10 as discussed above.¹²⁵ The significant implication is that the "adoption of the Isaiah passage in the Gospel of Mark shows that Isaiah and the New Testament community held a common perception of how God works."¹²⁶ And like Isaiah

¹²² Beavis, 80.

¹²³ Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom, 68.

¹²⁴ Taylor, 257. So also Schweizer, 91-92; M. Black, An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 213-214; Marcus, The Mystery of the Kingdom of God, 119-120; Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 95-96; Beavis, 78-81.

¹²⁵ Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 98, 203.

¹²⁶ W.L. Holladay, Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing House, 1978), 36, as quoted in Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 204.

6:9-10, Mark's message can be reduced to determinism, i.e., those on the inside are privy to saving knowledge while "those outside" are prevented by the opacity of parables.

3.2.2 "Those Outside"

One of the most difficult tasks in an analysis of 4:11-12, and yet in all probability the most essential, is to determine the identity of "those outside". Attempts to identify "those outside" have produced a variety of theories as the following examples illustrate. J. Behm classifies "those outside" to mean 'the broad mass of people not amongst the disciples'; R.P. Meze argues that "those outside" 'refers not merely to non-disciples, but to anyone not numbered among the twelve'; C.E.B. Cranfield, B. Gerhardsson, C.F.D. Moule, and J.R. Kirkland hold that "those outside" are 'simply those who are too dull-witted or lazy to wrestle with the significance of Jesus' teaching'; H.-J. Klauck states that the 'outsiders' are the Jewish authorities so negatively portrayed by the evangelist.¹²⁷ In the opinion of C. Coutts "those outside" (4:11) correspond to the brothers and mother of Jesus who in 3:31 are

B. Gerhardsson, "The Parable of the Sower and its Interpretation," *NTS* 14 (1968): 165-193, also sees a close relationship between the Old Testament and parable interpretation.

¹²⁷ Beavis, 70.

'standing outside'.¹²⁸ That is, "Mark is contrasting the scribes and the family of Jesus (outside) to those who are with Jesus in the house, i.e., the disciples and the crowd 'sitting about him' (3:34)." ¹²⁹ A.M. Ambrozic proposes that "those outside" are those individuals "who have heard the Christian message but have refused to believe."¹³⁰ For M.D. Goulder, "those outside" include James, Jude, Simeon, and Jesus' own family.¹³¹

Who, then, are "those outside"? The variety of proposals surveyed suggests that the data obviously does not lend itself to direct or conclusive proof. The conclusions suggested have certainly required a complex arranging of the Marcan data as well as some unqualified assumptions. Here, a much simpler assessment of the data is proposed. Following Gnilya, "those outside" are the Jews, the "old Israel" who have rejected the messiah.¹³² Generally, "those outside" are designated in the Marcan narrative as the Jewish religious leaders and the crowds.¹³³

¹²⁸ J. Coutts, "Those Outside: Mark 4:11-12," Studia Evangelica 2 (1964): 156.

¹²⁹ Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom, 54.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹³¹ Goulder, 302.

¹³² Gnilya, as cited in Beavis, 71.

¹³³ Essentially, Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom, 53-72, reaches a similar conclusion. He writes: "The most obvious candidates [to designate as 'those outside'] are the enemies of Jesus . . . [and] the crowds." Later Ambrozic claims

The conclusion that the Jews of Mark's storyline are "those outside" is founded on several grounds. First, Mark 4:11 is the only place in the synoptics in which the term οἱ ἑξῶς occurs. It occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in the Pauline letters (cf. 1 Cor. 5:12-13; Col. 4:5; 1 Thess. 4:12). There, in contrasting two groups (Christians and non-Christians), it refers to those outside the Christian community, i.e., non-Christians. Similarly, throughout Mark's Gospel there is a comparison of 'insiders', i.e., the disciples who receive private instruction, and the 'outsiders', i.e., those who receive teaching only in parables. The 'outsiders', then, are to be identified as the 'crowds' for it is they who receive parabolic teaching.¹³⁴ For example, in 7:17-18, it is after Jesus has left the crowd that the disciples ask him about the parable. The context clearly indicates that the crowd consisted of Jews (7:1-16). Similarly, after receiving private instruction in 9:9-13 the disciples and Jesus once again encounter a Jewish(?)¹³⁵ crowd (9:14-27).¹³⁶

that 'those outside' also include those in Mark's community that do not believe the Christian message. Nevertheless, it is the non-believers of the Christian message contemporaneous with Mark and not those historical personages of the Gospel account that Ambrozic is more ready to designate as "those outside."

¹³⁴ Cf. S.H. Smith, "'Inside' and 'Outside' in Mark's Gospel: A Response," ET 102 (1991): 365-366.

¹³⁵ The fact that the scribes are debating with the crowd suggests that the crowd is Jewish since it is unlikely that the scribes would seek to debate with Gentiles (cf.

Secondly, geographical place names and references to where Mark has Jesus minister and teach indicate that it was predominately in Jewish territory.¹³⁷ In all likelihood, the people of 1:32-34 must be Jews since Jesus had just finished teaching in the Synagogue (1:21-22). Mark often has Jesus travel through Galilee preaching in the synagogues (e.g., 1:21-29,39; 3:1). In 6:2 Jesus teaches in the synagogue at Nazareth. Repeatedly Mark has Jesus confronted by the crowds in Jewish territory (e.g., 1:14; 3:7; 6:21; 2:1-4; 4:36-5:1; 5:21-43; 8:10; 9:30; 10:1,46; 11:15-19; 14:28). In 14:49 it is explicitly stated that Jesus often taught in the temple at Jerusalem. Specific references to Gentile territory remain few and ambiguous.

Thirdly, the Jewish leaders who are in constant confrontation with Jesus, appear to be the most obvious candidates to designate as "those outside".¹³⁸ As Williamson points out, "All fifty-two mentions of official [Jewish] leadership groups involve them in strife with

Matt. 10:5; Luke 9:51-56; John 4:9). The fact of the matter is that in Mark's account Jewish sectarian groups were not usually very congenial towards each other, let alone towards Gentiles, except for the express purpose of harming Jesus (2:18; 3:6; 7:1; 12:13; 14:53; 15:25-32).

¹³⁶ Cf. also Mark 4:33-34; 9:28-29; 10:1-12; 13:3-37.

¹³⁷ Though certainly not exclusively. As will be argued below, Mark also has Jesus minister in Gentile territory (cf. chap. five, section 5.2).

¹³⁸ Cf. Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom, 66.

Jesus."¹³⁹ The Jewish leaders appear fearful that Jesus' objective is to replace *their* Judaism. This is alluded to in 2:18-22 (old/new wineskins) and made quite explicit in 12:1-12 (parable of the tenants) and 11:12-26 (cursing of the fig tree).¹⁴⁰ Subsequently the leaders repeatedly watch for an opportune time to destroy Jesus (3:6; 11:18; 12:12; 13:10-11; 14:1,43,55; 15:1) since they are unwilling to acknowledge his messianic claims.¹⁴¹ It is they who reject Jesus as *the* Messiah. Their rejection is exemplified in Mark 15:29-32. The text reads:

And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" So also the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe."

Jesus' explicit condemnation of the Jewish leaders in 7:5-10 and 12:38-40 certainly can be taken to imply that they were "those outside".¹⁴² There is no other conclusion since it is the religious authorities who are instrumental in procuring his death (9:31-32; 10:33-34; 12:7-12). Since Mark most often presents Jesus teaching and working miracles

¹³⁹ Williamson, 72.

¹⁴⁰ For further discussion on this point see chap. 4, section 4.1.2.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom, 62.

¹⁴² Cf. Smith, "'Inside' and 'Outside' in Mark's Gospel: A Response," 364-365.

in Jewish territory, and in continual confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders, it follows that Jesus' audience is predominantly Jewish. It is the Jews, therefore, who receive parabolic teaching.¹⁴³ They are not privy to information to which the disciples are.

Why do the Jews as a whole not receive esoteric teaching which will enable them, as appears to be the case with the disciples, to begin to 'see' and eventually comprehend the mystery? D.J. Hawkin asserts that Mark distinguishes between the disciples and "those outside" to explain "why Israel as a whole did not enter its messianic heritage."¹⁴⁴ On the one hand, the disciples are made to be figures representative of the church, and on the other hand, "those outside", i.e., the Jews, to be figures representative of Israel.¹⁴⁵ Mark, in retaining the essence of Isaiah's message, maintains that God has hardened (or concealed) the identity of Jesus from the Jews so that they will not accept and be saved. In other words, the Jews as a

¹⁴³ This does not, however, mean that Mark holds that all Jews are excluded from the mystery, i.e., that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God (1:1). There are many individual Jews found throughout Mark's Gospel that appear to have some insight as to who Jesus is. Cf. for example 5:41-24, 35-43; 5:25-34; 7:24-30; 12:28-34; 15:42-46. Yet the fact remains: the acceptance of individuals 'into' the 'kingdom of God' in Mark stands in contrast to the acceptance of Israel as a corporate entity.

¹⁴⁴ D.J. Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction," JBL 91 (1972): 497.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

whole "are not entrusted with the inner sense of Jesus' words because God does not will this."¹⁴⁶ But this is not to exclude the fact that a few *Jews* (i.e., the disciples) are given this privy information (4:11).¹⁴⁷

Why is Israel as a whole kept in the 'dark'? There is no immediately apparent reason given in Mark.¹⁴⁸ Certain narratives suggest, however, that it is because of God's plan. First, the unveiling of the secret of Jesus' identity to the disciples introduces the unveiling of the mystery of his destiny.¹⁴⁹ That is, Jesus' destiny is that he must die! Jesus Himself reveals the necessity of his death (8:31; 9:31-32; 10:33-34). In 8:31-33 Peter resists the idea that Jesus, the Messiah, should need to suffer and die. Jesus sharply rebukes Peter, however, insisting that it is the plan of God. Jesus' answer to the disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?", implies that God has a plan (10:26-27). Also, the disciples do not fully comprehend the nature of Jesus' messiahship. They think of it in terms of an earthly kingdom. Hence, the request of James and John, and Jesus' subsequent teaching that he will not 'immediately' reign but must die for πολλοί because that is

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 498.

¹⁴⁷ This is strongly reminiscent of Isaiah's remnant theology.

¹⁴⁸ Hawkin, 498.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 500.

God's plan (10:45).¹⁵⁰

In summary, it is maintained that Mark intended to retain the essence of the original Hebrew text, i.e., that God's purpose was that "those outside" would not understand 'the mystery of the kingdom'. Mark's continual display of conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities indicates that the 'outsiders' can be none other than those which the authorities represent i.e., the Jews. It is precisely the Jews who have rejected their messiah because God has hardened their hearts and blinded their eyes. This is part of God's plan. But the question remains: Why does God will this?¹⁵¹

3.3 Mark's Appropriation of Isaiah 6:9-10 in 4:3-34

While it has been argued that Mark in 4:11-12 retains the essential meaning of the MT, Mark, in keeping with his exegetical freedom, appropriates the Isaianic text to suit his own individual contemporary purpose. A comparative reading of Mark 4:11-12 with its Isaianic source material reveals Mark has altered it considerably. Some of the changes appear somewhat insignificant, i.e., unlike the LXX of Isaiah, Mark places 'seeing' before 'hearing' and omits

¹⁵⁰ For further discussion on the plan of God as outlined by Mark see chap. two, section 2.2. The emphasis of a plan of God in Mark is certainly reminiscent of a plan of God as outlined in Isaiah (cf. this chap., section 3.1).

¹⁵¹ This is exactly the question that Paul addresses in Romans 9-11.

portions describing blindness, deafness, and the undiscernment of the heart. An important difference is that the last clause differs in the Greek (i.e., 'forgiven' replaces 'healed').¹⁵² There are other important differences as well. The verbs of the Targum and Mark 4:11-12 are indicative, unlike those of the MT which are imperative.¹⁵³ Mark's version of Isaiah 6:9-10 also follows the Targum (but differs from the LXX) in that it uses the third rather than the second person plural.¹⁵⁴ The contention here is that these differences, especially grammatical alterations, are significant for understanding the function of Mark 4:11-12 in the compositional framework of the parable chapter.

3.3.1 Disbelief or Hardened Hearts

One of the crucial grammatical differences is that Mark chooses to use indicative verb forms rather than imperative forms in 4:11-12. This is particularly striking since Mark could have chosen to follow the LXX, as he does most often in quoting the Old Testament, but here, according to most scholars, he chooses to follow the Targum of Isaiah, and consequently, uses the indicative verbs for 'hear' and 'see'

¹⁵² Evans, To See and Not to Perceive, 92.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 18, 92.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 71, 92.

in verse nine and not the imperative forms.¹⁵⁵ This is significant in that Mark's version of Isaiah 6:9-10 reads, not as a command, but as a statement of fact! In other words, for Mark, Isaiah's prophecy that the Jews were obdurate to the intentions of Yahweh, is an adequate characterization of the Jews of Mark's storyline. Even though Yahweh's plan is in evidence before their very eyes, and though the message as it were came from Yahweh Himself (for Mark Jesus is the Messiah whom Yahweh had sent),¹⁵⁶ the Jews of Mark's Gospel were still obdurate to Jesus' role in God's sovereign plan of salvation.

The second significant grammatical difference is that Mark in 4:11-12 uses the third rather than the second person plural. To use the second person plural, as does the MT and the LXX, denotes that Isaiah is the one doing the action, i.e., the one who is to proclaim Yahweh's message of obduracy to the people. To use the third person plural, however, indicates that the person spoken about is doing the action. In other words, Mark's citation of Isaiah suggests that the people are blind, not because they do not have ears to 'hear' or eyes to 'see', or because the message renders them blinder, but, because they refuse to 'believe the

¹⁵⁵ Evans, To See and Not to See, 92.

¹⁵⁶ See chap. two, section 2.2.

Gospel'¹⁵⁷ (1:15). Subsequently, their refusal to 'believe the Gospel' exemplifies their obdurate nature.¹⁵⁸ The contextual implication is that the Jews are not considered by Mark to be a corporate entity. Unlike the corporate action to be taken against Israel in Isaiah 6:9-10, Mark's linguistical alterations imply an emphasis on individualism.¹⁵⁹ That Mark is concerned with individuals as opposed to corporate Israel is suggested by his use of the Parable of the Sower (4:1-20). It confirms the validity of a diversity of responses to the proclaimed word. The "word" in view is Jesus' word of proclamation containing the secret of the kingdom of God.¹⁶⁰ In Jesus' explanation of the parable (4:14-20), he calls attention to both the negative and positive responses to the word. That is, some

¹⁵⁷ The challenge to believe the Gospel is given as the pivotal statement in the Gospel, at a strategic place - at the summation of the prologue in 1:15. Thus right from the first of Mark's account the reader/hearer is informed that the centre of Jesus' message according to Mark is to "Repent and believe the Gospel!" The characters of the story, in the eyes of the reader/hearer then, are without excuse. Similarly, Goan, 10, places responsibility on the hearer of the message.

¹⁵⁸ Evans, To See and not Perceive, 62, draws a similar conclusion after an analysis of the Septuagintal version of Isaiah 6:9-10. He argues that the use of future verbs, i.e., 'you will hear' and 'you will see' rather than present imperatives suggests that "The prophet is no longer enjoining the people to become obdurate, but is predicting that they will remain obdurate."

¹⁵⁹ This is certainly reminiscent of Isaiah. Cf. above, section 3.1.3.

¹⁶⁰ Lane, 161.

respond to the Gospel by believing, others by disbelief.

Evans states:

The evangelist wishes to show that at the heart of Jesus' parables is the 'word' (4:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20), that is, the Christian proclamation which some embrace and others reject. Those who reject the Christian proclamation, according to Mark's presentation, do so because they are obdurate to the divine truth (4.11-12).¹⁶¹

Despite, however, the implication in the Parable of the Sower that there are those who will believe, there is no indication that any Marcan character truly understood Jesus' message, let alone believed it!¹⁶² It is a well attested fact that throughout Mark the disciples as a whole are portrayed as misunderstanding Jesus' identity and mission. This is especially evident in 6:52 and 8:18. These passages are especially significant if they are, like 4:12, allusions to Isaiah 6:9-10 as is proposed by Evans.¹⁶³ The implication is that the hearts of the disciples are hardened because it is God's will.¹⁶⁴

To take an individual example, Peter, one of Jesus' closest followers (5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33), makes a profound

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 101.

¹⁶² With the exception of the demoniacs.

¹⁶³ Evans, To See and Not to See, 106, also proposes that 3:5 may be an allusion to Isaiah 6:9-10. The context suggests that it is the hearts of the Pharisees and other Jews who are hardened to the words and actions of Jesus.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. F.J. Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession," Biblica 70 (1989): 158-159, 162.

statement in 8:29 that "Jesus is the Messiah". The rest of Mark's account, however, makes it doubtful whether Peter truly understood the identity and message of Jesus since he later misunderstands Jesus' teachings and disowns Him (8:29-33; 9:5-6; 14:29-30, 66-72). Similarly, all the disciples, though on the 'inside', have only a limited understanding and fail to place their whole faith in Jesus' message.¹⁶⁵

It would seem that not only are the 'outsiders' obdurate, but the disciples themselves suffer from the same affliction. There is a difference, of course, in that whereas the Pharisees openly oppose Jesus . . . the disciples do not, at least not intentionally (see 8:31-33). . . . [Mark] has applied the obduracy idea to the disciples. . . . to show that prior to Easter all, Jesus' friends and enemies alike, misunderstood the nature of Jesus' messiahship.¹⁶⁶

The disciples (i.e. insiders), therefore, as well as the 'outsiders' fail to understand because their hearts have been hardened (6:52; 8:18). That is, the disciples "can be described interrogatively with the same hardening terminology that was applied to those on the outside in 4:11-12."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ In fact, the disciples all eventually abandon Jesus (Cf. 14:43,50).

¹⁶⁶ Evans, To See and Not to Perceive, 102.

¹⁶⁷ G. Fay, "Introduction to Incomprehension: The Literary Structure of Mark 4:1-34," CBO 51 (1989): 79. It is important to emphasize that the disciples are not, however, to be categorically placed into the camp with the 'outsiders.' As F.J. Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession," 157, rightly points out, the disciples' hardness of heart should not, "be equated with the hardness of heart of the Pharisees and Herodians who have plotted to destroy Jesus (3:6)." While there is

3.3.2 Mystery and Open Manifestation

But the hardened heart (or disbelief) is not without redeeming features. If the disciples and "those outside" had not hardened hearts, "Jesus would not have been rejected and put to death; and had he not been put to death, there could have been no resurrection and no Christian gospel."¹⁶⁸ Joel Marcus reflects this idea in his book The Mystery of the Kingdom of God. He argues that things are hidden in order that they may be revealed.¹⁶⁹ Marcus writes:

Mark 4:22, however, goes beyond the notion that blindness will yield to openness; it implies that hiddenness serves the purpose of openness. . . . God intends the outsiders to be blinded by Jesus' parables and his parabolic actions (4:11-12), so that they oppose him and eventually bring about his death; in his death, however, the new age of revelation will dawn. Thus the hiddenness of Jesus' identity (cf. the *hina* clause in 4:12) leads to his death, which in turn results in the open manifestation of his identity (cf. the *hina* clause in 4:22). The *hina* clauses in vv 21-22, like the one in 4:12, refer to God's intention, and all of these *hina* clauses intersect at the cross.¹⁷⁰

There are no characters in Mark's Gospel that have spiritual insight which permits them to understand and 'believe the Gospel' (1:15). It can only be concluded,

no indication that the hardness of hearts of "those outside" will be removed, there is every indication that the hearts of the disciples will not always be hardened. Cf. Matera, 171; Watson, 58. For further discussion on this point see chapter four, section 4.2.4.

¹⁶⁸ Evans, To See and Not to Perceive, 102-103.

¹⁶⁹ Marcus, The Mystery of the Kingdom of God, 147.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

therefore, that the characters in Mark's Gospel, like Isaiah's audience, are obdurate because it is 'willed by God'. This idea is certainly implied by the context. For example, verses 24b-25 imply that it is God who gives and takes away the divine insight¹⁷¹ necessary to 'believe the Gospel'. The phrase, "If any man has ears to ear, let him hear" (4:9,23) implies that those who do not 'hear', do not because God has not given them 'ears'.¹⁷² It has also been suggested that verse 22a implies that God purposely conceals

¹⁷¹ Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 97. So also Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession," 171; Watson, esp. 65.

¹⁷² So Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 97; Stock, 142, 151. But this does not negate the responsibility of the hearers (esp. the disciples) to 'take heed' to what they hear (4:24a). (The same admonition is given to the disciples in 13:5,23). In a similar way Marcus, The Mystery of the Kingdom of God, 151-153, argues that Mark 4:9 continues the theme of opposition found in the Parable of the Sower and links this opposition with the differing "responses" of Jesus' hearers to his message. The readers are to 'take heed' to what they listen to (4:24a). They are warned against the deceitful Satanic word. It is the word of the Gospel which should be listened to. "To listen to this word is to hear the reality of the new age which is coming, and which is already the hidden reality of this age. Only those who take heed what they listen to, turning their attention to where God is acting in a hidden way through Jesus Christ, will hear truly, and bear fruit a hundredfold (4:20)." Goan, 9-10, reaches a similar conclusion. He argues that the parable reflects the working out of a divine plan, of which the human response is an inevitable part. The word spoken about in 4:21-22 is a revelatory word, meant to enlighten. But the result depends on the hearer. That is, the extent to which the hearers commit themselves to the word will effect the benefits obtained. To those that 'hear' more will be given. Those that refuse to 'hear' "will be deprived of what they think they have" (4:24).

the mystery of the kingdom from his people,¹⁷³ an idea remarkably reminiscent of Yahweh's concealing from Israel his divine plan.

While parables are meant to conceal, they are also meant to reveal.¹⁷⁴ As Taylor correctly asserts, "If the kingdom is a mystery, it will not always be so, and it is not meant to be so."¹⁷⁵ Verse 22, and its immediate context suggests that the Jews are not to be blind indefinitely. What is hidden will eventually come to light, "For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light" (4:22).¹⁷⁶ The Parable of the Lamp (4:21-25) may be interpreted to express precisely this idea. The essence of the parable reads:

And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand?

¹⁷³ Taylor, 264. Similarly, Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession," 158-159, 171, argues that the hardening of the disciples' hearts is due to divine causation, just as is the removal of such hardness.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. J.R. Kirkland, "The Earliest Understanding of Jesus' Use of Parables: Mark IV 10-12 in Context," NT 19 (1977): 12-13.

¹⁷⁵ Taylor, 264.

¹⁷⁶ This verse certainly reflects the meaning of certain Isaianic passages. Cf. e.g., Mark 4:22 and Isaiah 29:18; 35:4-10; 42:6. It could be argued that the proclaiming of the word has the same pedagogical or medicinal purpose as does judgement in Isaiah. The obvious parallel, however, is that suffering Messiahship and suffering discipleship for Mark serve a similar pedagogical purpose that judgement does for Isaiah. Cf. section 3.1.2 above.

W.L. Lane argues that it is possible that Jesus here is speaking of himself as the lamp.¹⁷⁷ If Lane is correct, this parable certainly reflects the idea that the Jews will not be obdurate forever. Lane writes:

Mark's placement of this parable after Ch. 4:11-20 suggests further that he has in view the secret of the kingdom of God which is present in the person of Jesus, whose mission remains for many a veiled enigma. The reference throughout is to the mission of Jesus. The contrast that is drawn in verse 21 is between hiddenness-"under the bushel" or "under the couch"-and open manifestation-"upon the stand." Verse 22, with its "secrecy" language, sustains this contrast and implies that there is something hidden which shall later be unveiled; there is a secret which shall become known.¹⁷⁸

In the present (i.e., during Jesus' ministry) though, the kingdom of God retains a certain mysterious character. This is exemplified in the Parable of the Growing Seed (4:26-29). According to 4:27, the seed sprouts and grows but the sower does not know how. The inference of verse 4:28 is that the earth itself¹⁷⁹ somehow causes the seed to grow without human intervention.¹⁸⁰ The picture here is that the sower cannot explain the mystery of life and growth.¹⁸¹ The implication is that neither is it yet

¹⁷⁷ Lane, 165; Cf. also Stock, 150.

¹⁷⁸ Lane, 166.

¹⁷⁹ Verse 28: "The earth produces of itself." The phrase, "of itself", according to Stock, 154, suggests that something happens without visible cause.

¹⁸⁰ Lane, 169.

¹⁸¹ Taylor, 267.

possible to understand the mystery of the kingdom. It (the 'mystery of the kingdom'), will remain partly hidden until the end.¹⁸² Most commentators agree that the Parable of the Growing Seed reflects the sovereign purposes of God. Lane, for example, states that the parable exhibits:

aspects of the mysterious manifestation of the kingdom of God in history. It comes mysteriously, by God's initiative and appointment, without human intervention. . . . The stress in the parable thus falls upon the sowing of the seed as a messianic work which unleashes mysterious forces which operate of themselves in the achievement of the sovereign purposes of God.¹⁸³

In summary, Mark's appropriation of Isaiah 6:9-10 in 4:11-12 indicates that the Jews of Mark's storyline are obdurate because of their refusal to believe the Gospel. They are not obdurate solely of their own volition, however. The context of the parable chapter suggests that God is culpable as well and that the imposition of obduracy has a particular function in Mark's narrative. That is, the imposition of obduracy is not without revelatory effect. Those individuals who "take heed" of the word will eventually 'see'. Somehow obduracy will lead to an open manifestation of the mystery of the kingdom of God. That is,

the light will dawn suddenly and dramatically at [some future point]. . . . God's purpose in promoting obduracy will [eventually] become

¹⁸² Marcus, The Mystery of the Kingdom of God, 199-200.

¹⁸³ Lane, 169-170. See also Taylor, 265-267; Stock, 154-155; Eakin, 105.

apparent. . . the disciples, who had misunderstood, resisted, forsaken, and denied Jesus, will once again 'see' Jesus as the young man promises the frightened woman at the empty tomb (16.5-8).¹⁸⁴

3.4 Summation

A comparative analysis of Isaiah 6:9-10 and Mark 4:11-12 and their respective contexts has suggested a remarkable degree of thematic continuity between Marcan and Isaianic soteriology. It has been argued that the compositional arrangement of Isaiah suggests that 6:9-10 be taken at face value, namely, that Yahweh renders his people obdurate so as to ensure certain judgement. Yahweh's imposition of obduracy, however, must be spoken of in dialectical balance. Israel's behaviour has contributed to Yahweh's resolve to impose obduracy. Like Isaiah 6:9-10, Mark 4:11-12 must be taken in its most telic sense, i.e., that "those outside" are prevented from being recipients of salvation by the opacity of parables.

The imposition of obduracy (in both Isaiah and Mark), however, is not without redeeming features. In Isaiah, obduracy leads to inevitable judgement. But judgement serves a pedagogical or medicinal purpose; a remnant will be saved. And of equal significance is that Israel's

¹⁸⁴ Evans, 103.

judgement'¹⁸⁵ serves in some way in the offering of salvation to the Gentiles. Neither is obduracy in Mark 4:11-12 without pedagogical or medicinal purpose. Somehow the imposition of obduracy will result in an open manifestation of the Gospel. The diversity of responses to the sown seed suggests its universalistic appeal.

There is at least one fundamental difference between Mark's and Isaiah's use of the spiritual obduracy motif. In Isaiah the imposition of obduracy appears to affect all (except Isaiah). That is, all are made obdurate and subsequently all are judged. In contrast, Mark does not place all Jews categorically within the obdurate camp. There are a few (Jewish) disciples (a remnant?) that are privy to the saving knowledge (4:11). Their 'sightfulness', however, certainly lacks the clarity that is usually associated with 'seeing'. In fact, the disciples appear to be as obdurate as other Marcan characters. But the obduracy of the disciples is different than that of "those outside". It has a special function in Mark's composition, the significance of which becomes clear when one compares the function of the disciples with the function of other characters in the Marcan narrative. And it is to that discussion that we now turn.

¹⁸⁵ In contrast to Isaiah where 'unbelieving' Israel experiences judgement, the implication in the broader Marcan context is that those (disciples) who 'believe' the Gospel will have to suffer, a theme reminiscent of the suffering servant motif of Isaiah.

4.0 THE FUNCTION OF CHARACTERS IN THE MARCAN COMPOSITION

Within the last two decades, and especially with increased interest in the literary critical method, scholars have begun to assess the hermeneutical significance of the function of characters within the Marcan composition. T.J. Weeden, for example, in his book Mark - Traditions in Conflict, suggests that the key to discovering the intention of Mark "lies in his characterization."¹ For Weeden, "character portrayal and the events in which the major characters are involved are the points of focus from which one understands the message of [Mark's] . . . Gospel."² D. Rhoads and D. Michie in Mark as Story also attest to the significance of the function of Marcan characters for assessing the meaning of Mark.³

Following Weeden, Rhoads, Michie, and others,⁴ the contention here is that the characters in Mark's Gospel have an important function. The importance of Mark's characters is suggested by the fact that throughout the Gospel it is the characters around which Mark weaves his narrative.⁵ In

¹ T.J. Weeden, Mark - Traditions in Conflict (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 20.

² Ibid., 17.

³ Rhoads and Michie, esp. 101-136.

⁴ Cf. also e.g., E.S. Malbon, "The Jewish Leaders in the Gospel of Mark: A Literary Study of Marcan Characterization," JBL 102 (1989): 259-281; Michael J. Cook, Mark's Treatment of the Jewish Leaders (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

⁵ Rhoads and Michie, 101, contend that "Marcan characters are integrally related to the plot."

particular, this chapter will argue that the reaction of the characters of Mark's Gospel toward the message, ministry, and identity of Jesus, will provide insight for assessing what Mark intends in 4:11-12. The discussion will focus primarily on the major characters or groups of characters (i.e., the ubiquitous crowd; the religious leaders; the demoniacs; and the disciples;)⁶ within the Marcan composition. The significance of certain minor characters will also be suggested.⁷

4.1 The Message and Ministry of Mark's Jesus: Acceptance and/or Rejection

Throughout the Marcan narrative, the message and ministry of Jesus is presented as that which confronts both individual characters and character groups. Since Mark most often presents the crowd and the religious leaders as being confronted with Jesus' message and ministry, the discussion that follows will seek to discover how the reaction of these Marcan characters function in Mark's compositional arrangement. It will be argued that the response of certain individuals (from the larger composite groups) to Jesus'

⁶ Cf. Weeden, 20.

⁷ Rhoads and Michie, 129-136, also suggest that the minor Marcan characters (i.e., "The Little People") have a significant function in the Marcan plot. Cf. also e.g., J.D. Kingsbury, "The Religious Authorities in the Gospel of Mark," *NTS* 36 (1990): 49-50. He argues that the minor characters function as foils for the disciples, i.e., the "minor characters serve Jesus the way the disciples should have served him but, because of their apostasy, do not do so."

message and ministry is also of significance. The responses of the demoniacs and the disciples to the words and actions of Jesus, however, are excluded from the immediate discussion because both these groups fulfil a different function in the Marcan plot. The respective functions of the disciples and the demoniacs will be considered in section 4.2.

4.1.1 The Ambiguous Role of "the crowd"

Throughout Mark's narrative there is ample evidence that Jesus is accepted by the *common* people, i.e., the crowd (ὁ ὄχλος),⁸ and that they continually sought after Jesus in order to secure exorcisms and healings of all kinds. In 2:3-12, for example, a few people devise an unconventional plan in order to secure healing for their paralytic friend since the crowd was so great that it prevented them from reaching Jesus by conventional means. In 5:25-34, Jesus heals a woman suffering from hemorrhaging after she finds her way through a crowd in order to reach him. And in 9:14-27 Jesus heals a boy possessed with an evil spirit while a crowd looks on.

The crowd not only sought Jesus for healings, but also

⁸ According to E. Best, "The Role of the Disciples in Mark," *NTS* 23 (1977): 390, Mark always uses the singular, ὁ ὄχλος, indicating that he thinks of the crowd as a unified sociological entity. Other more general Greek words also imply that Mark often refers to the people as a unified sociological entity (cf. e.g., Mark's use of αὐτοί, πολλοί, ἄνθρωποι, and ὁ λαός).

to receive teaching (cf. e.g., 2:13; 6:2,6,34; 10:1; 11:18; 12:37). In 3:7-10 Jesus requests that his disciples ready a boat in case a quick escape is necessary since the crowd "may crush him". In 4:1-2 the boat is used for this expressed purpose. Subsequently, Mark has Jesus teach from the boat while the crowd remains on the shore (4:1).

The persistent attempts of the crowd to be with Jesus is illustrated by the consistency with which ὁ ὄχλος (or its cognates) appears throughout the Marcan narrative. Each of the following uses of ὁ ὄχλος in Mark's Gospel implies that the crowd is receptive to the message and ministry of Jesus.⁹

- 2:4 . . . because of the *crowd* they could not bring him near.
- 3:20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a *crowd* gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat.
- 3:32 A *crowd* was sitting around him . . .
- 4:1b The *crowd* that gathered around him . . .
- 4:36 Leaving the *crowd* behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him . . .
- 5:21 . . . a large *crowd* gathered around him . . .
- 5:24b A large *crowd* followed and pressed around him.
- 5:31 "You see the people *crowding* against you,"
- 6:33 When Jesus landed and saw a large *crowd* . . .
- 6:45b . . . while he dismissed the *crowd*.
- 7:14 Again Jesus called the *crowd* to him . . .
- 7:17 After he left the *crowd* . . .
- 7:33 After he took him aside, away from the *crowd*
- 8:1a During those days another large *crowd* gathered.
- 8:6a He told the *crowd* to sit down on the ground.
- 8:34a Then he called the *crowd* to him along with His disciples and said . . .
- 9:14-15 . . . they saw a large *crowd* around them . . .

⁹ On the function of the crowd in Mark see Best, "The Role of the Disciples in Mark," 390-393.

- as soon as all the people saw Jesus they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.
 9:17 A man in the crowd answered . . .
 9:25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene . . .
 10:1b Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.
 10:46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city . . .
 11:18b . . . the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.
 12:12 They (chief priests) were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.
 12:37b The large crowd listened to him with delight.

According to Mark, the desire by the common people to see Jesus was so great that they came from every quarter and searched for him so that he could no longer openly enter a town (1:45).

But not all references to the crowd in Mark's narrative suggest such a positive response to Jesus' message and ministry. There are references which can be taken to indicate that the attitude of the crowd toward Jesus changes from one of acceptance to rejection. In 14:43, for example, Judas comes with a crowd from the chief priests, scribes, and elders to arrest Jesus. It is the crowd who ask Pilate for the release of Barabbas in place of Jesus (15:11). And it is the crowd who cries, "Crucify him" (15:13). "So Pilate wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified" (15:15).

For certain scholars, therefore, there is no reason to doubt that the crowd which desires to be in Jesus' presence

throughout the majority of Mark's account, and to be recipients of Jesus' teaching and miraculous works, is the same crowd that is influential in ensuring his death! But the evidence does not allow for such a conclusive stance.¹⁰ The fact is that with the exception of 14:43 and 15:8-15,¹¹ all other references to the crowd in Mark's Gospel present them as being very affable toward Jesus. To argue that 14:43 and 15:8-15 represents a shift in the attitude of the crowd toward Jesus is weak since the contexts of these passages suggest that the crowd in question is a mob recruited for the occasion by the chief priests, scribes, and elders.¹² To hold that the crowd who repeatedly sought after Jesus for teaching and healing is the same crowd that now seeks his destruction is perplexing. Not only is it inconsistent with Mark's portrayal of the crowd thus far in his Gospel, but it is equally confusing given the fact that prior to the development of these events (i.e., the arrest of Jesus, 14:43ff.) the crowd is described as being captivated by Jesus' teaching (11:18b). In fact, the crowd is so affable toward Jesus that the religious leaders foil

¹⁰ There are those that argue that the attitude of the crowd toward Jesus does not change. See e.g., Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom, 55.

¹¹ And possibly, 15:29.

¹² Cf. Mann, 595. Added credence is given to this position by the fact that only in 14:43 is the crowd armed with swords and clubs. There are no other indications in Mark's account (except in the passion narrative) that the crowd opposes Jesus.

an attempt to kill Jesus because they fear that the crowd would object (11:18).¹³ Besides, for Mark, it is the religious leaders who seek to destroy Jesus, not the crowd (cf. e.g., 3:6; 8:31; 11:18; 14:1; 12:13).¹⁴

4.1.2 The Religious Leaders and a Marcan Replacement Motif

Despite the ambiguous role played by the crowd in the Gospel of Mark, there is no question as to the attitude of the Jewish religious leaders (or authorities) toward Jesus.¹⁵ Scholars generally agree that their attitude is that of "constantly growing hatred."¹⁶ The source of this hatred is evident in the many confrontations between Jesus and the Jewish authorities. Essentially, such confrontations are based on either of two accusations, namely: (1) the scribes question the authority of Jesus to teach and act as he does, and (2) the scribes and Pharisees

¹³ Cf. also 12:12.

¹⁴ There is much debate over who is responsible for the death of Jesus, i.e., the Jews or the Romans. Sanders in his book, Jesus and Judaism is particularly concerned with assessing the evidence surrounding this debate. He concludes, 293, that it is the Romans who are primarily responsible, and concedes that if any Jews had anything to do with it, the leaders of the priesthood would have to be selected as partially responsible.

¹⁵ Following Malbon, 270, the categorization "Jewish religious leaders" signifies a composite group of characters that are united by their active opposition to Mark's Jesus. They include Pharisees, Herodians, chief priest, scribes, elders, and Sadducees. Cf. also Kingsbury, 42, n. 8.

¹⁶ Baum, 41. For a good discussion of this development see James Parkes, The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue (New York: Meridian Books, 1961), 38-42.

continually seek to identify the times which Jesus (supposedly) acts contrary to Jewish law.¹⁷

In the first place, that Jesus teaches and acts with an authority different from that of the scribes is recognized by the crowd (1:21-27). This the scribes are not willing to accept since Jesus defends his actions independently, and not as they would have done by appealing to their own authoritative traditions (i.e., oral and written law). In short, the scribes are unwilling to accept Jesus' words as authoritative. As Parkes points out:

He [Jesus] was neither a scribe nor did he quote the authority of accepted scribes for His utterances. To accept them as authoritative expressions of Torah was, in the minds of its official interpreters, to undermine the whole structure.¹⁸

Secondly, Mark portrays the Jewish leaders as attempting continually to catch Jesus in violation of the Torah (cf. section 2.3). The following passages are representative of the times that the Pharisees (and sometimes the scribes)

¹⁷ Similarly, Kingsbury, 46, 56, maintains that the debates between Jesus and the Pharisees concerned "questions of practice" while debates with the scribes concerned "questions of authority," the later being the fundamental point of contention. Baum, 50, n. 12, concurs. He writes: "The ultimate reason for friction between Jesus and the authorities is not to be sought in a divergence of views on matters of doctrine. The background of the struggle is the claim of the unique authority underlying the words and actions of Jesus." In addition, Malbon, 266, rightly points out that what bothers the elders, chief priests, and scribes is not only the theoretical, but the practical outcome, i.e., that Jesus appears to be attracting a large following.

¹⁸ Parkes, 38.

propose that Jesus violates the commandments of Jewish law: Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners (2:16); the disciples pluck and eat ears of corn on the Sabbath (2:24); Jesus heals on the Sabbath (3:1-5); the disciples eat with unwashed hands (7:1).

In particular, the religious leaders attempt to isolate a clear case of violation of the law by Jesus in order to bring some charge against him.¹⁹ In 3:2, for example, the Pharisees watch Jesus to see if he would heal on the Sabbath so they could accuse him.²⁰ After witnessing the subsequent healing of the man with the withered hand, they held council with the Herodians as to how they might destroy him (3:6). Jesus' healing of the man with the withered hand was particularly disturbing for the scribes and Pharisees because the healing could have taken place on a day other than the Sabbath, and therefore, no law would have been broken. Parkes explains:

The scribes admitted that in cases of life and death it was lawful to set aside the laws of the sabbath. But in the . . . case . . . of healing the man with the withered hand, no such urgency could be alleged. The question 'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?' seemed to the Pharisees beside the point. The man could just as well be healed on the next day. He was in no danger, and therefore, there was no legitimate ground for

¹⁹ There are numerous other references which indicate that the intent of the religious leaders is to find a cause whereby they can accuse Jesus of an infringement of the law and thus bring charges against him so that they can destroy him. Cf. e.g., 10:2; 11:18; 11:27; 14:1; 14:53-56; 15:3.

²⁰ Cf. Exodus 31:14-17.

breaking the Sabbath. To postpone the cure by a day was neither 'to do harm' nor 'to kill.' From the point of view of the Pharisees, Jesus was undermining the whole structure of the Torah by such action. The divergence between them in practice was slight. But so long as Jesus defended His action just on its own basis and did not interest himself to explain it as a legitimate interpretation of the written law, so long was He to their minds really doing harm and not good by His conduct.²¹

Thus, it is obvious why the scribes and Pharisees felt that they had no choice but to confront Jesus on the apparent violation of Jewish law. Though such violations may seem insignificant to the Gentile mind,²² the importance of the Torah to the Pharisees demanded that they dispose of those who taught or practised otherwise.²³ In fact, there are indications that the strict observance of the Torah was so important to the Jews that they would rather sacrifice their lives than break God's commandments.²⁴ For many Jews even the paying of Roman taxes was an infringement of the first commandment.²⁵ Thus, the question by the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (12:14), is yet another attempt to see if Jesus' answer would violate the commandments of God and thus provide opportunity whereby

²¹ Parkes, 40.

²² Ibid.

²³ See e.g., John 8:2-11.

²⁴ 2 Maccabees 7: 1-42.

²⁵ Werner Foerster, Palestinian Judaism in New Testament Times (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), 99.

they could "trap him" (12:13).

There can be no doubt, then, as to the attitude of the religious authorities toward Jesus. Jesus' claim to authority and his repeated (apparent) violations of the Torah left the upholders of the traditions with no alternative but to seek his destruction (3:6; 12:13). In 11:18 it is the scribes and chief priests who look for a way to destroy Jesus and attempt to arrest him in secret so the crowd would not object (cf. also 12:12; 14:1-2). In Mark 14 and 15 it is the religious leaders (though a crowd/mob is present) who instigate the arrest, trial, and execution of Jesus (14:10,43,53; 15:1,3,10,11,31). In fact, all the religious groups plot against Jesus and seek his downfall. Jesus' relation to each group is one of total and mutual rejection.²⁶

The rejection of Jesus by the religious leaders is directly related to a subversive motif that is found throughout the Gospel of Mark. Continually Mark has Jesus confront the religious leaders with the dissident claim that the old order, i.e., their *Judaisms*,²⁷ will be replaced by a new order. The first allusion to such a motif is found in

²⁶ Williamson, 71.

²⁷ As indicated above (section 4.2), Mark has Jesus side with various groups within Judaism. Although these groups share certain fundamental Judaistic precepts, they also advocate a doctrine and praxis unique to their branch or tendency within Judaism. Here, however, Mark places Jesus' Judaism over against those *Judaisms* propagated by various religious leaders.

2:18-22. The narrative consists of a discussion between the Pharisees and Jesus concerning fasting. The Pharisees ask Jesus why his disciples are not fasting. Jesus responds with an analogy in which he makes reference to old wineskins and new wineskins. The generally accepted interpretation is that Mark desires to show that Jesus' new teachings and the old religious forms are incompatible.²⁸ Accordingly, Jesus did not approve of the *Judaisms* operative during the first century and sought their replacement. Baum states:

The new wine in this figure is obviously the Gospel. But what are the old wineskins? Since the argument concerns the fast days introduced by the Pharisees, the answer is clear: the old system to be abandoned is the traditions of the ancients to which Jesus objected on many occasions. The meaning of Jesus' remark is that the spirit of the Gospel cannot be brought into harmony with the spirit of pharisaic observances.²⁹

But this distinction between old and new does not mean the rejection of the entire Jewish religion.³⁰ Such an assessment would be contrary to the tenor of the whole of Mark's Gospel.³¹

²⁸ Gould, 46. It is difficult to determine whether John's disciples or the Pharisees are here in view. But, whatever the case, it is generally conceded that another form of Judaism is being contrasted with the teachings of Jesus. Cf. e.g., Myers, 159; Mann, 235; Lane, 112-113; Stock, 113; Taylor, 213.

²⁹ Baum, 58.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid. Such passages as 2:18-22 cannot, however, be taken to imply supersessionism since the prophetic statements of Jesus are aimed at particular injustices of the religious leaders of the first century. And, as such,

What is in view here is the replacement of a corrupt religious system and its leaders (cf. 12:38-44). That the Jewish leaders are to be replaced is intimated in a number of Marcan passages that reiterate the theme of the end of the old and the commencement of the new. Jesus' cursing of the fig tree and its subsequent death (11:12-14, 20-21) and the cleansing of the temple (11:15-19), for example, are symbolic of the fact that the temple will be destroyed.³² Although there are many difficulties associated with Jesus' cursing of the fig tree,³³ a most plausible interpretation may be to view the incident in terms of prophetic realism on Jesus' part similar to the symbolic actions of the Old Testament prophets.³⁴ In the Old Testament there are numerous references where prophets spoke of the fig tree as a symbol for Israel's status before God and the destruction

according to Sandmel, xvii, these accusations are similar to those of Isaiah, Amos, and Jeremiah who out of loyalty to and identification with spoke sharp criticisms to their own people. Sandmel, xvii, proposes: "is it not also possible that words which Jesus spoke as a loyal insider came to be put into a context in which they appeared to be those of an outsider, no longer identifiable with his people?"

³² This seems most probable if we take the word 'mountain' of 11:23 in a symbolic sense to refer to the temple. Then again, this is not so symbolic, for the temple stood literally on top of a 'small mountain'! So Myers, 305.

³³ The cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple have long been considered problematic for scholars. For an overview of the history of the interpretation of these passages see William R. Telford, The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree (Sheffield: JSNT, 1980), 1-38.

³⁴ Lane, 400.

of the fig tree as symbolic of Israel's judgement.³⁵ Could it be that Jesus cursed the fig tree as a symbolic representation of what was about to happen to Jerusalem and the Jewish cults that it supported?

J.R. Edwards, by examining the function of 11:15-19 as part of a Marcan technique of interpolation, argues convincingly that the cursing of the fig tree (11:12-14) is symbolic of judgement.³⁶ For Edwards, the word "season" (i.e., *καίρος*) is of special significance. In recalling for the reader Mark 1:14, *καίρος* in 11:13 refers to a "special, critical moment."³⁷ That is,

There is no fruit on the tree because its time has passed. The leafy fig tree, with all its promise of fruit, is as deceptive as the temple, which, with all its bustling activity, is really an outlaw's hideout (v 17).³⁸

The symbolic implication of the cursing of the fig tree, then, is that the temple is fruitless and that destruction

³⁵ Cf. e.g., Isa. 20:1-6; 34:4; Jer. 8:13; 13:1-11; 19:1-13; 29:17; Ezek. 4:1-15; Hos. 2:12; 9:10,16; Joel 1:7; Micah 7:1-6.

³⁶ James R. Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives," *NT* 31 (1989): 193-216.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Whether or not part of the temple housed a group of nationalist rebels is debatable. Cf. e.g., C. Roth, "The Cleansing of the Temple and Zachariah XIV 21," *NT* 4 (1960): 174-181; George W. Buchanan, "Mark 11.15-19: Brigands in the Temple," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 30 (1959): 169-177. Regardless of the position maintained, the point of the Marcan narrative nevertheless remains: the temple is fruitless and it will be destroyed.

is inevitable.³⁹ Even the symbolic implication of the cleansing of the temple is that Mark's Jesus does not wish to restore the temple, but to pronounce its doom.⁴⁰

Myers concurs. He argues that the "mountain" in 11:23 refers to the temple.⁴¹ Supposedly, the temple was known to the Jewish people as the "mountain of the house" or "this mountain".⁴² Subsequently, Mark's symbolic language in 11:12-14, 20-24 strongly suggests that "this mountain," i.e., the temple, is not to be elevated as expected, but cast down.⁴³ While many scholars concede that Jesus' intent in

³⁹ So Lane, 400. Cf. also Craig A. Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction," CBQ 51 (1989): 237-270, esp. 239-243, 269-270.

⁴⁰ Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches," 207-208. So also Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 240.

⁴¹ Myers, 305.

⁴² Telford, The Barren Temple and the Withered Fig Tree, 118f., as cited in Myers, 305. According to W.E. Moore, "'Outside' and 'Inside': A Markan Motif," ET 98 (1986): 42, the destruction of the temple is also significant in that it involves a revision of what constitutes 'insideness' and 'outsideness'. That is, temple ritual and sacrifice is no longer a prerequisite for acceptance into the community. This observation is obviously reminiscent of Blenkinsop's conclusion that membership into the community of Israel as outlined by Isaiah is not determined by ethnic nor national considerations but by a profession of faith (cf. section 3.1.3).

⁴³ Mark 11:12-14, 20-24 is not to be taken as an isolated indication that the temple will be destroyed. Mark also has Jesus predict its destruction in 13:1-2. Moreover, the tearing of the veil in the temple may also be taken to symbolize the end of the old order and the inauguration of something new (15:38). For other possible references to an anti-temple motif see Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple," 240-241.

Mark 11 is to protest against the injustices and the abuse of such a system,⁴⁴ Myers' assertion that Jesus advocates the end of an entire cultic system - symbolized by the "overturning" (from καταστρέφω, which can also mean to destroy) of the tables (11:15), appears most plausible.⁴⁵

That the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple symbolize the destruction of the temple is also advocated by W. Telford. He writes:

By sandwiching his story [of the fig tree] on either side of the cleansing account, Mark indicates that he wishes the fate of the unfruitful tree to be seen as a proleptic sign prefiguring the destruction of the temple cultus.⁴⁶

Implicit in Telford's formulation is the fact that not only was the temple building to be destroyed but also its corrupt clericalism and vested interests along with it.⁴⁷ It is not surprising, then, that the religious leaders immediately upon realizing the serious career implications of Jesus' action in the temple (11:15-17), seek to find a way to kill him (11:18; 14:1). The replacement of the Jewish leaders is

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g., Taylor, 463; Gould, 213; Mann, 446-447.

⁴⁵ Myers, 301. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism, 70, opines that the "turning over of even one table points towards destruction."

⁴⁶ Telford, The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree, 238.

⁴⁷ Baum, 60, argues that 11:12-14, 20-21 is not symbolic of the condemnation of the Jewish people as a whole. Rather "it is Jerusalem that is doomed, the seat of the people's leaders, and with it the whole order of the temple."

made explicit in the Parable of the Tenants found in 12:1-

12. The parable may be summarized as follows:

A landowner rents his vineyard to tenants and travels to another country. Periodically he sends one of his servants back to collect some of the fruit but each time the tenants seize the servant and either beat him sending him away empty handed or they kill him. The landowner then decides to send his son. However, they kill him at the disbelief of the landowner. What will he do? He will destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others.

This parable is understood immediately by the tenants (i.e. the Herodians, priestly aristocracy, and scribes).⁴⁸ They perceive that Jesus has spoken this parable against them (12:12) and proceed to devise a plan to "trap him" (12:13).

It is significant to note, however, that judgement of all Israel is not implied, rather only the judgement of the religious leaders.⁴⁹ Baum concurs:

The deputation of the Sanhedrin understood that God's vineyard was Israel, and that the wicked [tenants] . . . were the leaders to whom the community of salvation had been entrusted. They were to be removed and done away with, and the leadership was to pass into the hands of more faithful shepherds.⁵⁰

The culpability of the religious leaders as opposed to the Jews as a whole is suggested by Mark's clear demarcation between the religious leaders and the crowd. The text is explicit regarding the intent of the religious leaders.

⁴⁸ Myers, 423-426.

⁴⁹ So Evans, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New," 173-174.

⁵⁰ Baum, 59.

They wish to arrest Jesus because they realize that Jesus told the parable against them (12:12a). They fail to take immediate action against Jesus, however, because they fear that the crowd will object (12:12b).

Despite the largely negative portrayal of the Jewish religious leaders in the Marcan account, it must be pointed out, however, that not all of the religious elite are presented as being so vehemently opposed to Jesus, nor that all will meet the same fate. As Malbon correctly points out,

although members of the Jewish religious establishment are generally characterized as foes of the Marcan Jesus, they may not be automatically so categorized. The Marcan Gospel does indeed schematize the Jewish religious leaders as foes of Jesus, but it refuses to absolutize that schema. Being a foe of the Marcan Jesus is a matter of how one chooses to relate to him, not a matter of one's social or religious status and role. And the same is true of being a friend of Jesus.⁵¹

Malbon's assertion is validated by the fact that there are those Jewish leaders who appear more like followers of Jesus than foes. Although scribes are always described by Mark as in opposition to Jesus,⁵² there is here one notable exception. In Mark 12:34 there is one scribe who is portrayed as being "not far from the kingdom". As Malbon points out, this exception is significant in that it indicates that "Scribes are free *not* to be enemies of

⁵¹ Malbon, 276.

⁵² Cf. e.g., Harry Fleddermann, "A Warning about the Scribes (Mark 12:37b-40)," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 52-67.

Jesus."⁵³

Neither is Joseph of Arimathea "far from the Kingdom of God" (15:43).⁵⁴ Since Joseph is a member of the council⁵⁵ one might expect him to be characterized as were other religious leaders. But again, Joseph is not presented as an enemy of Jesus. Rather, the reader is impressed with his request to secure the body of Jesus from the Roman authorities in order to give it proper a Jewish burial (cf. Deut. 21:23).⁵⁶ As Malbon points out, this is the service that John's disciples perform for him (6:29) but it is here performed for Jesus by one who might well have been expected to be his enemy.⁵⁷

The phrase "Kingdom of God" used in both the story of the exceptional scribe and that of Joseph of Arimathea may recall for the reader the language of 4:3-20, and in particular 4:11-12. In 4:11, the disciples are given the secret of the Kingdom of God while "those outside" are not privy to such information (4:12). But, as has been argued above (section 3.3.2), this will not always to be the case.

⁵³ Ibid., 275.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 276.

⁵⁵ According to Kingsbury, 49, it is unclear whether Joseph is a member of the Sanhedrin or a member of a local, or provincial, council. But whatever the case, Joseph's leadership position places him firmly in the camp with the religious leaders.

⁵⁶ Cf. also Josephus, Jewish Wars, 4.5.2.

⁵⁷ Malbon, 276. Cf. also Rhoads and Michie, 133.

Mark 4:21-32 speaks of an open manifestation of the kingdom of God. What is hidden will eventually come to light (4:22). The parable of the seed also illustrates this point (4:26-29). Accordingly, the seed is planted and grows but the sower does not know how. Thus, the statements that the scribe is "not far from the kingdom" (12:34) and that Joseph of Arimathea is "expectantly waiting for the kingdom" (15:43) may be taken to imply that the words spoken by Jesus have been heard by these Jewish leaders. The words (i.e., seed) have fallen on good soil and are "beginning to grow". That is, what has been concealed (4:12) is now becoming revealed (4:21-32), to at least two Jewish leaders.⁵⁸

In summary, the Jewish crowd throughout the Marcan narrative is presented as being generally receptive to Jesus' message and ministry and must be distinguished from that crowd/mob that collaborates with the religious leaders to ensure the death of Jesus. In contrast to Mark's positive portrayal of the crowd generally, the religious leaders are often presented as being at odds with the message and ministry of Jesus. According to Mark, they oppose Jesus because he does not appeal nor adhere to their traditional authorities and laws. The greatest point of conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders is Jesus'

⁵⁸ This may also be the case with one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus. Apparently, he follows the command of Jesus: "Do not fear, only believe" (5:36). Cf. Malbon, 276.

resolve to destroy the temple and its cultic system and to replace it with something new. In particular, the cursing of the fig tree and the cleansing of the temple symbolize the end of "their" *Judaisms*, an inconceivable thought to the clerical and Pharisaical mind, and the kernel of Jesus' message which is unacceptable to Jews generally. But the Jewish religious authorities cannot be automatically categorized as opponents of the Marcan Jesus. There are individual exceptions. The scribe of 12:34 and Joseph of Arimathea are two such exceptions.

4.2 The Identification of Jesus in Mark

In Mark's prologue (1:1-15) there are a number of titles applied to Jesus. He is identified as "messiah" and the "son of God" (1:1), "my messenger" (1:2), the "Lord" (1:3), as "one who is mightier than I" by John the Baptist (1:7), and as "my Son" (1:11). Many commentators concur that these titles are used in a messianic sense.⁵⁹ And, as has been argued above (section 2.2), the function of 1:2b-3 within Mark's compositional arrangement, indicates that for Mark Jesus is the Messiah whom the prophets foretold would come. In citing the Old Testament prophets, Mark retains the idea that the messiah (who has now arrived) will do away with the unrighteousness and injustices that permeates the

⁵⁹ Cf. e.g., Taylor, 151-162; Mann, 194-201.

world of the first century.⁶⁰ And for Mark, it is Jesus, the Messiah, who will revitalize Judaism.

An attentive reading of the Gospel of Mark, however, reveals that the crowds, the religious leaders, and the disciples⁶¹ do not comprehend that Jesus is the messiah.⁶² This incomprehension has generally been regarded as part the complex of material known as the "messianic secret" motif.⁶³ The secrecy motif is founded upon textual evidence that Jesus commanded the demons (1:23-25, 34; 3:11-12; 5:6; 9:20), those healed (1:43-45; 5:43; 7:36, 8:26), and his disciples (8:30; 9:9), to keep silent about his identity. The failure of the disciples to comprehend the nature of Jesus' messiahship (4:40-41; 6:52; 8:16-21; 9:5f.; 9:19; 10:24; 14:37-41) is also considered to be part of the secrecy motif.⁶⁴

Certain scholars have come to view the messianic secret motif as a Marcan redactional device that allows for a

⁶⁰ This messianic expectation is in agreement with the fact that many Jews expected the Messiah around the second quarter of the first century C.E. See Abba Hillel Silver, A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 7.

⁶¹ That is, initially.

⁶² Unlike the reader of Mark who is privy to this information (1:1).

⁶³ Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction," 492.

⁶⁴ William Wrede, The Messianic Secret, trans. J.C.G. Greig (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1971), 24-25; 35-36; 56ff.

particular theological understanding of the Gospel. William Wrede is often regarded as the originator of this approach. In his book The Messianic Secret, published in 1901, Wrede argues that:

the motif of the messianic secret in Mark was the evangelist's explanation of the fact that Jesus was not accepted as Messiah during his life time but was proclaimed as Messiah after the death and resurrection.⁶⁵

While more recent scholars do not support Wrede's theological conclusions,⁶⁶ his emphasis on the Marcan secrecy motif has been the impetus toward rediscovering the redactor as representative of a particular theological point of view.⁶⁷ The contention here is that the failure of the crowds, the religious leaders, and the disciples, to recognize Jesus' true identity (in contrast to the demons who recognize Jesus), serves a particular function in the Marcan composition. Once this significance is determined, Jesus' private teaching to a few Jewish disciples falls into clearer perspective.

4.2.1 A Popular Response: Sheep Without a Shepherd

Even though the crowds enthusiastically sought Jesus throughout the Gospel (at least until 14:43), there is no

⁶⁵ Joseph B. Tyson, "The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark," JBL 80 (1961): 261.

⁶⁶ For a survey of other theological conclusions see Wrede, ix-xxi.

⁶⁷ Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction," 492.

indication that they ever understood the nature of Jesus' messiahship. Although the crowds in all probability knew of the predictions of the Old Testament prophets regarding the coming of the messiah, and the messianic expectations prevalent during the first century, there is no indication that the crowd as a collective entity recognized the true identity of Jesus (cf. e.g., 6:14-16).

If they were anticipating the coming of the Messiah, their allegiance to the established order of Judaism as propagated by their religious leaders and the Torah, would not permit an allegiance to a messianic proclaimer who taught otherwise. Such may indeed be the case. Taylor, for example, states that in Mark 1:32 it is made explicit that the crowd assembled only when the sabbath had ended.⁶⁸ Only then could they accept Jesus' healing activities since the Law was not being violated. There is no indication that the crowd ever took the initiative to seek Jesus to heal them on the sabbath. It may follow, therefore, that their allegiance to the Torah was in keeping with that proposed by their religious leaders.

Their allegiance to the dictates of their religious leaders may also be reflected in 6:34. There, Jesus describes a crowd that had gathered to listen to him as being like "sheep without a shepherd". Traditionally, this phrase has been taken to refer to certain Old Testament

⁶⁸ Taylor, 180.

passages such as Numbers 27:17 (cf. Ezekiel 34:5) where Moses prays that the lord will provide a leader for his people so that they will not be as "sheep without a shepherd"⁶⁹ (cf. also section 5.2 below). The phrase can also be taken as a criticism of the religious establishment for corrupt leadership (Ezekiel 32:20; Zechariah 10:2-3).⁷⁰ In any case, 6:45 exemplifies the condition of the crowd throughout the Marcan narrative. They are without proper leadership. And the implication is that they do not know what to believe or how to act.

That the crowd do not know how to act or what to believe is reflected in the fact that they are obdurate (4:11-12). They receive teaching in parables while the disciples receive esoteric teaching. To make matters worse, Jesus often attempts to evade the crowds (1:35; 6:32,35; 8:4). Although they often followed Jesus to receive teaching, it may be that their following Jesus is superficial in that they merely desire to ensure some physical cure for themselves or a friend. In any case, there is no indication in the Marcan narrative that they recognized the true identity of Jesus.

4.2.2 Religious Leaders: Opportunist Mentality

There is also no indication that the religious leaders

⁶⁹ Lane, 226. So also Stock 192.

⁷⁰ Miller and Miller, 184. So also Myers, 208.

as a corporate group comprehend Jesus' true identity. Their incomprehension is illustrated by the fact that their conceptions of the coming messianic age are incompatible with the teachings of Jesus. According to Foerster, the Pharisaical description of the messianic age comprised of three things:

first . . . the ungodly will disappear and perish and, thus, for a start, God's will shall rule in Israel in justice and purity. The rabbis held that Elijah's task on his return would be to purge the nation of the ungodly and to remove obscurities regarding the proper exegesis of the law and also regarding the purity of the national character. Secondly, the messianic age would mean that the dispersion of Israel amongst the Gentiles would come to an end, that the twelve tribes would be assembled in Palestine around Jerusalem and, finally, that the people of the Law would no longer be enslaved by the nations who despise God's will, but that they would pay homage to Israel and its God.⁷¹

According to the conceptions of the religious leaders as espoused in the Marcan narrative, the teachings of Jesus are incompatible with such a description. The religious leaders, for example, argued that the strict observance of the Torah and the purifying of the national character could not be maintained when coins with the inscription of Caesar imprinted upon them were handled (Deut. 5:7-8).⁷² Submitting to Rome, a Gentile power, was in itself a

⁷¹ Foerster, 193.

⁷² H.H. Ben Sasson, A History of the Jewish People (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 251-259.

sacrilegious act.⁷³ Such actions could not be permitted if the Jews were to practice pure Judaism. Only political independence could secure such an end. Unfortunately, for the religious leaders, Jesus' answer that they should pay to Caesar the things that are Caesar's did not suggest any such intention (12:13-17).

Furthermore, Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners is a clear indication to the religious leaders that Jesus did not exhibit, in their estimation, the characteristics indicative of the Messiah.⁷⁴ The account of the actions of a Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 is ample testimony to the fact that pious Jews were, according to the law, not to have any dealings with the Samaritans, less so tax collectors and sinners.⁷⁵ The point is that Jesus' association with non-pious Jews, i.e., tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:15), makes him an unlikely candidate for Messiah.

Another obvious point of contention is that Jesus' description of the coming Kingdom of God did not allow for

⁷³ Though not all Jews opposed Roman rule (e.g., the Sadducees).

⁷⁴ There were many individuals who proclaimed themselves to be the messiah during the first century. So Silver, 13ff. Cf. also Mark 13:6,21-23.

⁷⁵ Cf. e.g., M.D. Hooker, The Gospel According to St Mark (London: A & C Black, 1991), 96; Lane, 103-104; Myers, 158.

prestige, status, title, and the like.⁷⁶ According to Mark, Jesus advocated that to be a member of the kingdom one must become as insignificant as children (10:13-14) and become servants of others (9:35-37; 10:35-45). Such requirements, of course, are diametrically opposed to the practices of Herod who gives banquets for special individuals (6:21) and the scribes who like

to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets (11:38-40)!

The obvious incompatibility of the teachings of Jesus with traditional conceptions regarding the coming of the Messiah becomes of utmost significance when the corporate religious leadership realizes that Jesus is advocating their destruction (12:1-12). To the religious leaders, their predicted demise as upholders of the tradition is ludicrous. How is Judaism to function without their leadership - a leadership inaugurated by Yahweh? Jesus cannot, therefore, be the Messiah since he does not fit the prescribed messianic descriptions and since he advocates the destruction, or at least the complete revitalization of their Judaism(s), an act that will remove the religious leaders from their prestigious offices.⁷⁷ And although the

⁷⁶ Cf. A. Nolan, Jesus before Christianity: the Gospel of Liberation (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977), 54-58.

⁷⁷ This is surely the fear behind Mark 11:18a.

religious leaders, unlike the crowd, are told who Jesus is (14:53-62), they refuse to accept him and condemn him to death (14:63-65).

4.2.3 The Perceptive Demoniacs

The demoniacs, in contrast to the imperceptivity of the crowds, religious leaders, and even the disciples, are portrayed throughout Mark's narrative as recognizing the true identity of Jesus.⁷⁸ In 1:24 a demon makes the proclamation that Jesus is the 'Holy One of God', a phrase of Messianic significance.⁷⁹ In 1:34 and 3:11-12 it is obvious that the demons knew something which humans were not privy to.⁸⁰ This special knowledge is that Jesus is the Messiah,⁸¹ the Son of God (something that the Marcan reader already knows, 1:1). In 5:6-7 a demoniac proclaims that Jesus is the "Son of the most high God," and falls and worships him. Also, in 3:11 demons declare that Jesus is the 'Son of God'. In 3:12, however, Mark's Jesus "sternly orders them not to make him known." This injunction is also found in 1:25,34 (and possibly implied in 5:7ff). Of 3:12 Taylor writes: "Jesus did not welcome the testimonies of the possessed and maintained and enjoined silence in public

⁷⁸ J. Marcus, "Mark 4:11-12 and Marcan Epistemology," JBL 103 (1984): 558-559.

⁷⁹ Taylor, 174.

⁸⁰ So Ambrozic, The Hidden Kingdom, 56.

⁸¹ Schweizer, 54-56.

regarding His Messiahship."⁸²

Why is the injunction of silence placed upon the demons? Various answers have been proposed. Lane, for example, argues that the injunction of silence was necessary since to allow the demons "to go unrebuked would have been to compromise the purpose for which Jesus came into the world, to confront Satan and strip him of his power."⁸³ Others have

suggested that the command of silence grew out of a desire not to compromise messiahship by permitting public confession to be confused by militarist ambitions.⁸⁴

The imposition of secrecy on the demons, however, is not to be confused with the objectives of a militarist nor as representative of Jesus' power over Satan. Rather, the imposition of secrecy on the demons functions to preserve the sense of Jesus' vocation intact.⁸⁵ That is, Jesus prohibits the demons from revealing his identity to ensure the preservation of his intended destiny. Jesus' destiny, according to Mark, is that he must die (8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34). Given the prevalence of messianic expectations

⁸² Taylor, 228. This injunction is also placed upon other Marcan characters, namely, those recipient of Jesus' miracles (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26?), and the disciples (8:30; 9:9).

⁸³ Lane, 75. Hooker, The Gospel According to St Mark, 110, advances a similar position.

⁸⁴ Mann, 216.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

during the first century, and of misconceptions regarding the nature of the coming kingdom (cf. e.g., 10:35-45), to reveal publicly the true identity of Jesus would have, in all probability, resulted in attempts to foil Jesus' true destiny.⁸⁶ In order, therefore, not to avert God's plan, the imposition of secrecy upon the demons is necessary.

This conclusion is supported by Mark's distinction between the understanding of the crowd and that of the disciples. To reiterate, Mark 4:11-12 makes it clear that the disciples are privy to information to which the crowd is not.⁸⁷ The crowd receives Jesus' teaching in parables while Jesus explains everything to his disciples in private. That Jesus wished to conceal something from the crowd is also suggested by the fact that Jesus on occasion purposively attempts to elude the crowd (e.g., 1:35; 6:32,35; 8:4). It is in this light that the imposition of secrecy upon the demons must be viewed. Concisely, the imposition of secrecy upon the demoniacs functions to ensure that the crowd is kept in the dark (cf. 4:11-12) regarding Jesus' identity so as not to impede the plan of God which includes the necessity of the death of Jesus.

⁸⁶ Cf. John 6:15.

⁸⁷ This distinction is thrown into sharper focus given the fact that Jesus never claims to be the Messiah before the crowd whereas it is certainly implied to the disciples that he is (cf. e.g., 6:47-52; 13:6,21-23). In 8:29 Peter proclaims him as the Messiah and in 14:53-62 Peter appears to be privy to Jesus' self-proclamation of messiahship.

4.2.4 The Disciples: Obedience Despite Imperceptivity

Unlike the demoniacs, but like the crowd and the religious leaders, the disciples are often presented in the Marcan narrative as not comprehending the real significance of Jesus' teaching (cf. e.g., 4:35-41; 6:45-52; 8:13-21,31-33; 9:31-37; 10:35-45). Since the disciples are privy to Jesus' private explanations (cf. e.g., 4:33-34; 7:17-23; 9:9-13,28-31; 10:10-12; 13:1-37) one would expect them to understand, but they do not. In fact, the disciples often appear to be as blind as those outside (cf. e.g., 4:10-13; 6:37,52; 7:18; 8:4).

There have been a number of scholarly attempts to ascertain the function of the incomprehension of the disciples in the Marcan narrative.⁸⁸ J.B. Tyson, for example, argues that the incomprehension of the disciples functions as a polemic against a faulty theological position as espoused by the historical disciples and their followers. He argues that Mark's

view of Messiahship [is] quite different from that of the original disciples and family of Jesus, and [that Mark] is aware that his own viewpoint is in some conflict with that of these original witnesses.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ For a brief overview of how scholars have generally approached this question see Weeden, 23-26. Cf. also Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction," 491-500; Tyson, 261-268; Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession," 153-172.

⁸⁹ Tyson, 267.

Accordingly, Mark explains this conflict to his readers by showing that the disciples never understood Jesus' Messiahship although Jesus explained it to them on many occasions.⁹⁰ T.J. Weeden postulates a similar portrait of the disciples. For Weeden, Mark presents the relationship of the disciples to Jesus as evolving through three stages, namely, from imperceptivity (1:16-8:26), to misconception (8:27-14:9), to rejection (14:10-72). Weeden argues that this evolution is a "carefully formulated polemical device created by the evangelist to disgrace and debunk the disciples" because they advocate a christology contrary to the teachings of Jesus.⁹¹ According to Tyson and Weeden, therefore, Mark wishes his readership to identify themselves "not with the disciples but against them."⁹²

Other scholars, in contrast, argue that the motif of the incomprehension of the disciples has a paraenetic or pastoral function in Mark's Gospel.⁹³ Generally, these scholars view the incomprehension motif as a literary device used by Mark to show his community what discipleship is not.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ T.J. Weeden, "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel," in The Interpretation of Mark, ed. William Telford (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 66.

⁹² Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Markan Redaction," 493.

⁹³ For a brief overview of both the pastoral and polemical positions see Matera, What are they saying about Mark? (Toronto: Paulist Press, 1987), 1987, 42-51; Telford, "Introduction: The Gospel of Mark," 23-25.

In other words, Mark uses the failure of the historical disciples to instruct his own community.⁹⁴ Although advocates of this position concede that the historical disciples failed, they argue that Mark's pastoral intent in utilizing the blindness of the disciples is to instruct the Church rather than to polemicize against the disciples.⁹⁵

It must be conceded, however, that while the polemic approach presents a more negative portrait of the disciples than does the pastoral approach, both nevertheless portray the disciples as failures. To be sure, there is ample evidence within the Marcan account to support such a conclusion. But the negative evidence must be spoken of in dialectical balance. That is, the evidence used to indicate that Mark portrays the disciples negatively must not be used to the exclusion of the evidence in Mark that portrays the disciples in a positive light. In fact, only as the two portraits are juxtaposed can one elicit an accurate characterization of the disciples in Mark. The contention here is that when an equal assessment of the Marcan data⁹⁶ is considered, a favourable picture of the disciples

⁹⁴ Cf. e.g., E. Best, Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 12.

⁹⁵ Matera, What are they saying about Mark?, 46-51.

⁹⁶ Best, "The Role of the Disciples in Mark," 384-387, provides a useful overview of how the disciples are depicted in Mark. He classifies the various ways in which the disciples interact with Jesus and provides the necessary references linking his classifications to specific Marcan texts.

emerges.

A survey of the Marcan narrative reveals that the disciples are generally presented in a positive light up until at least 4:11⁹⁷ or even 6:30.⁹⁸ This conclusion is founded upon textual evidence that indicates that the disciples are initially quite responsive and obedient to Jesus' every command. In 1:16-20 and 2:13-14, for example, Simon, Andrew, and Levi respond immediately to Jesus' call to be his disciples (cf. 3:13-19). In 2:18,23-24, Mark has the disciples follow Jesus willingly in spite of opposition from other Jewish sectarian groups (2:18,23-24). They are even obedient in carrying out subservient tasks (cf. 3:9 & 4:1). The implication of 3:31-35 is that the disciples, and not Jesus' biological family, make up the true family of Jesus. And again, in 4:11-12, it is the disciples who are privy to the secret of the kingdom of God while those outside receive everything in parables.

Following 4:11, although the disciples are portrayed as misunderstanding (4:13,35-41; 5:31; 6:37-38; 6:45-52; 8:13-21,31-33; 9:18b; 9:32; 10:13-16,23-26, 33-41; 14:10-11,43-46), and sometimes with quite negative connotations (9:14-

⁹⁷ Fay, 73-74, n. 35.

⁹⁸ So R.C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The function of a Narrative Role," *JR* 57 (1977): 398.

29, 38-40; 10:13-16),⁹⁹ Mark continues to present the disciples in a positive light. The fact is that the disciples continue to follow Jesus obediently (4:35-41; 8:1; 9:2; 10:28; 11:19) and to obey his commands (6:6b-13, 30, 37-44; 8:1-6; 11:1-7; 14:12-16, 32-42). They also remain receptive to Jesus' private teaching (9:9-13, 28-29, 38f.; 10:10-12, 32-34; 13:3-37;). In 6:7-13, the disciples are described as fulfilling a role similar to that of Jesus.¹⁰⁰ In 8:27-29 at least one of the disciples is perceptive regarding Jesus' identity. Though Jesus informs the disciples that one of them will betray him (14:17-21), they express a confident resolve that such a thing was not to be (14:29-31). In fact, they vow to die with Jesus rather than desert him (14:31), a zealous commitment that results in

⁹⁹ According to C. Focant, the incomprehension of the disciples should not be taken to reflect only a negative portrayal of the disciples since their incomprehension often appears justified. For Focant, there is little wonder, for example, that the disciples misunderstand "the grandeur of [Jesus'] miracle[s] (4:40-41; 5:31; 6:37; 8:4), the harshness of his teaching (8:32-33; 9:32; 10:24, 32), [and] . . . the grandeur of Jesus himself at the moment of an epiphany (9:5-6)." While Focant admits that there are texts which describe the incomprehension of the disciples in a negative light (4:13; 6:50-52; 7:18; 8:16-21), his point that not all such texts should be taken to represent a negative portrayal of the disciples has some validity. For an overview of Focant's position see Matera, What are they saying about Mark?, 48.

¹⁰⁰ According to Tannehill, 397, in 6:7-13 "there is a special emphasis on the close relation of the disciples with Jesus and the similarity of their role to his." Specifically, the disciples are commissioned to heal and practice exorcisms even as Jesus has. (cf. chap. five, section 5.2).

only little real resistance (cf. 14:47), but nevertheless functions to present the disciples positively.

For those scholars who advocate that Mark presents a very negative portrayal of the disciples, 14:50 is surely the *crux pericope*. It records that all of the disciples desert Jesus and flee. In addition, there are other passages that are taken to represent a negative portrait of the disciples. Mark's description of the betrayal of Jesus by one of the disciples (14:10-11, 42-45),¹⁰¹ for example, certainly does not present the disciples in a positive light. The unequivocal debasement of Peter in 8:33 (i.e., Peter is called Satan) can also be taken to illustrate Mark's negative portrayal of the disciples. Obviously, the denial-sequence is utilized to this end (14:26-31, 66-72).¹⁰² That the disciples fail to appear in Mark's

¹⁰¹ It is important to note that the betrayal narrative should not be taken categorically to imply a negative portrayal of the disciples. In the first place, such events are presented as being in accordance with the plan of God (as expressed throughout the Marcan narrative) and secondly, in the case of Judas, he is but one disciple who responds negatively to the proclamation of the word (4:14-20). Cf. chap. three, section 3.3.1.

¹⁰² Mark's negative presentation of Peter, however, must be spoken of in dialectical balance for elsewhere Peter is presented as one of Jesus' most stalwart followers. According to Mark, Peter was the first (along with Andrew) to follow Jesus (1:16-18; 3:13-16). In 5:37 Peter is presented as being part of the inner circle (cf. also 9:2-5; 13:3; 14:33). In 8:29 it is Peter who recognizes Jesus as the Messiah. Peter is also presented in a positive light in 10:28, 11:21, and 14:29. Even though he deserts Jesus (14:50) and vehemently denies knowing him (14:66-72), he is the one who continues to follow, though discriminately, the trial proceedings (14:53-66). According to Stock, 387,

narrative after the denial-sequence is also taken to suggest the complete rejection of Jesus by the disciples.¹⁰³ Such Marcan passages have led Kelber and others to conclude that there "is no way that the disciples can become the leaders in the kingdom of God."¹⁰⁴ In fact, according to Weeden, "Mark closes his Gospel without rehabilitating the disciples."¹⁰⁵ His conclusion is based upon the finality suggested by a literal rendering of 16:8,¹⁰⁶ i.e., the women apparently do not do as they are instructed (16:7) and fail to tell the disciples that Jesus is risen and that he goes ahead of them into Galilee (16:8). Weeden concludes:

Mark intentionally affixed 16:8b to 16:8a as his final editorial comment in his work. The effect, of course, is startling, and to many an offensive, suggestion that the disciples never received the angel's message, thus never met the resurrected Lord, and, consequently never were commissioned with apostolic rank after their apostasy.¹⁰⁷

Peter's action in 14:72 is an act of repentance. It proves that Peter is a true disciple (So Schweizer, 332). In 16:7 the disciples, and Peter (though he denied Jesus), are called again as at the beginning of Mark to follow Jesus (So Stock, 387). Viewed from this perspective, the relationship of Peter and the disciples to Jesus as presented in Mark's narrative, may justify adding a fourth stage to Weeden's triad, namely, restoration.

¹⁰³ So Weeden, Mark - Traditions in Conflict, 44-51.

¹⁰⁴ W.H. Kelber, Mark's Story of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 87.

¹⁰⁵ Weeden, Mark - Traditions in Conflict, 51.

¹⁰⁶ Here, 16:8 is considered to be the end of Mark's Gospel, not 16:20.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 50.

According to Weeden, therefore, Mark is intent on totally discrediting the disciples.¹⁰⁸

Not all scholars, however, are willing to agree with Weeden and Kelber that 16:8 effectively seals the doom of the disciples. Although most scholars are willing to concede that the disciples have rejected Jesus, they nevertheless are convinced that the Marcan narrative indicates that the disciples' relationship with Jesus will be mended. In the first place, the predicted defection of the disciples in 14:27¹⁰⁹ is of particular significance in arguing that the disciples will be restored. It is important to note that the defection is not spoken of as a final separation. Mark has Jesus inform the disciples that, although they will desert him (14:27), after he is raised from the dead he will go before them into Galilee (14:28). The implication is that the disciples will meet him there.¹¹⁰ The important point is that if the disciples are not restored, Mark is inconsistent in that he breaks an

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Some scholars argue that 'the scattering of the sheep' in 14:27 is a metaphor for reconciliation. That is, although the disciples desert Jesus, the relationship will eventually be restored. So J.D. Kingsbury, Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 114.

¹¹⁰ So Lane, 511-522; Schweizer, 307.

established pattern of prophecy and fulfilment¹¹¹ evident within his compositional arrangement. That is, Mark often has Jesus make a prediction early in the narrative that finds fulfilment at some later point in the narrative.¹¹² Consider the following examples: In 14:27 Mark has Jesus predict the desertion of the disciples. In 14:50 that prediction comes true. In 8:31, 9:30-31; 10:32-34 Mark has Jesus predict his death and resurrection (cf. 9:9; 14:28). In 14:42-65, 15:1-39, 16:6, these predictions are fulfilled.¹¹³ In 14:16 the disciples find things in the city of Jerusalem just as Jesus had foretold them (14:13-15). In 14:42-45 one finds the fulfilment of Jesus' prediction that one of the disciples would betray him (14:17-21). In each case, as Petersen rightly points out, Mark "through predictions . . . generates expectations and through fulfilments he satisfies them."¹¹⁴ In accordance with Mark's internal schema of prophecy and fulfilment, therefore, one would expect to find the fulfilment of 14:28

¹¹¹ This pattern of prophecy and fulfilment is not to be confused with prophecy and fulfilment as it relates to Mark's use of Old Testament passages. See chap. 2, esp. sections 2.1 and 2.2.

¹¹² Cf. e.g., N.R. Petersen, "When the End is not the End? Literary Reflections on the Ending of Mark's Narrative," *Int* 34 (1980): 155-156.

¹¹³ T.E. Boomershine, "Mark 16:8 and the Apostolic Commission," *JBL* 100 (1981): 234-237, argues convincingly that the predictions made by Jesus in 10:33-34 are all fulfilled in Mark's passion-resurrection narrative.

¹¹⁴ Petersen, "When the End is not the End," 155.

before the close of the Gospel. Indeed the prophecy is again reiterated in 16:7 by a young man at the empty tomb who instructs the women to go and tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going ahead of them into Galilee. But, according to a literal rendering of 16:8b, the women tell no one.

Petersen rightly points out that the apparent failure of the women to inform the disciples leaves the interpreter with two possibilities, namely, that "16:8 is either an intentional reversal of expectations or an ironic substitute for the obvious continuation of events implied by the narrator."¹¹⁵ Petersen opts for the second possibility, namely, that an ironic reading of 16:8b leaves open the possibility that the end is not yet. In other words, "the acknowledgement of irony [in 16:8b] entails a deliteralizing of the women's behaviour which cancels its terminal finality."¹¹⁶ An ironic reading of 16:8 thus allows for the obvious implication that the disciples will again see Jesus in Galilee. Petersen argues:

because the text . . . ends at this point [i.e., 16:8] the reader's work begins now in earnest. The ironic equivocation of the meaning of 16:8 redirects the reader's attention back to the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 156.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 160. This conclusion is particularly appealing since the longer ending of Mark indicates that a later glossator did not view the words of the woman in a literal sense, but rather that the women eventually do go and tell the disciples. The shorter ending of Mark also attests to this interpretation.

immediately preceding words of the young man--he has risen; he is going before the eleven to Galilee; they will see him as he told them. These words restore the continuity interpreted by 16:8 and begin the reader's experience of the second effect of the irony. They tell the reader that even while the women are muddling about, as the disciples and the establishment had previously muddled about (Mark 14-15), Jesus, having risen, is on his way to Galilee where the disciples will soon see him.¹¹⁷

Petersen's conclusion is also supported by the fact that a literal rendering of 16:8b is inconsistent with Mark's previous generation of an internal schema of prediction and fulfilment.¹¹⁸

To reiterate, "in the same breath in which Jesus predicts the apostasy of the disciples he also makes them a promise," i.e., that after the resurrection, he will go before them into Galilee (14:28). The word *προάγειν* (14:28; 16:7) taken here to mean 'go somewhere earlier than someone',¹¹⁹ implies that the disciples will follow Jesus into Galilee. Also, the prediction that Jesus will go before (*προάξω*) the disciples into Galilee (14:28) and its subsequent fulfilment in 16:7 recalls for the reader the fact that in 10:32 Jesus goes before (*προάγων*) the disciples

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 162-163.

¹¹⁸ According to Petersen, 162, "the reader recognizes irony in 16:8 because a literal reading of it makes nonsense of the narrator's previous generation of expectations and satisfactions, with the last satisfaction being enjoyed as recently as 16:6, where the young man announces, 'he is risen.'"

¹¹⁹ Wilfred Tooley, "The Shepherd and Sheep Image in the Teaching of Jesus," *NT* 7 (1964): 18.

into Jerusalem. The implication is that just as the disciples obediently followed Jesus into Jerusalem, they will also follow him back to Galilee. There is no reason to suggest that this pattern will be broken.

That the relationship of the disciples to Jesus will be restored is also suggested by the fact that throughout Mark's account "what Jesus intends and predicts comes to pass despite the intent and actions of other characters in the story."¹²⁰ The reliability of the words and actions of Jesus are certainly in sharp contrast to the unreliability of the words and actions of other Marcan characters.¹²¹ The words of 14:28 are no different. Surely they will prove to be as reliable as Jesus' other predictions. Matera concurs: "Inasmuch as Jesus' predictions are fulfilled throughout the Gospel, the reader can be confident that this prediction [i.e., 14:28] will also be fulfilled."¹²² Thus, the reader is obligated to project the fulfilment of Jesus' promise, and in effect project the resolution of Jesus' conflict with the disciples.¹²³

It has also been proposed that the Marcan apocalypse anticipates the continuing role of the disciples beyond the

¹²⁰ Petersen, "When the End is not the End," 155.

¹²¹ Ibid., 156. Cf. e.g., the intentions of Peter and the disciples in 14:29-30 and their subsequent defection in 14:50.

¹²² Matera, What are they saying about Mark?, 51.

¹²³ Kingsbury, Conflict in Mark, 113.

events of 16:8.¹²⁴ In the first place, Mark 13 indicates that at some future point the disciples will experience persecution. The use of *παράδωσιν* in 13:9 suggests to the reader that the disciples, like John (1:14) and Jesus (9:31; 10:33; 14:41; 15:1,10,15), will be persecuted by the religious leaders and governmental officials (13:9-13). But amidst persecution, the disciples are given the role of witnesses.¹²⁵ They are to testify to their persecutors concerning the gospel (13:9). That the disciples are to have a distinguished role in the coming eschatological kingdom is affirmed in 13:20-23. There Mark, in a fashion reminiscent of 4:11-12,¹²⁶ distinguishes the disciples from the "many". As Petersen points out,

the "elect" (13:20, 22, 27), . . . are apparently both the "many" being led astray by the false messiahs (13:5) and the people referred to in 13:14-17. The four disciples, too, are presumably among the elect, but according to Jesus their active role is differentiated from the passive role of the "many."¹²⁷

Again, like 4:11, the disciples in Mark 13 are privy to information that others do not know. With the exception of knowing the time when the predicted catastrophic events are

¹²⁴ See e.g., Petersen, "When the End is not the End," 164-165; Tannehill, 402; Lane, 446-447, 462; and esp. Timothy J. Gedder, Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 158-176.

¹²⁵ Lane, 462.

¹²⁶ Stock, 335, also suggests a possible linkage between Mark 4 and 13.

¹²⁷ Petersen, "When the End is not the End," 164.

to occur (13:32-35), the disciples, unlike the many, now have been told all things (13:23). Being privy to private information, however, is not without responsibility. Implicit in the text is that the "disciples have a leadership role in relation to the rest of the elect."¹²⁸ Specifically, the disciples are to be

eschatological "doorkeepers" or watchmen for the elect (13:33-36; cf. 13:28-29). Jesus had prepared the four in advance by telling them what to watch for (13:24-27), but also what to watch out for (13:6,21-23); and it is at least implied that they have the task of exhorting the elect to watch out for the false messiahs and prophets and to watch for heavenly signs of the parousia of the Son of man.¹²⁹

Thus, Mark's apocalypse anticipates a continuing role for the disciples beyond the diaster of chapter 14."¹³⁰ In other words, "Mark 13 predicts events beyond 16:8 and indicates that the evangelist envisaged a role for the disciples in the post-Easter situation."¹³¹

In summary, there is no indication within the Marcan narrative that the crowd or the religious leaders recognize the identity of Jesus. The incomprehension of the crowd is suggested by the Marcan characterization: "they are like sheep without a shepherd". The religious leaders, although confronted with Jesus' self-revelatory proclamation (14:62),

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Tannehill, 402.

¹³¹ Telford, "Introduction: The Gospel of Mark," 26.

refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah because he does not exhibit characteristics compatible with their preconceived messianic conceptions. The demons, however, recognize who Jesus is. Yet, they are prohibited from making Jesus known so as to ensure the preservation of his destiny. Although the disciples acknowledge that Jesus is the Messiah (8:29), there is no indication that they fully understand the nature of Jesus' messiahship. Consequently, they desert Jesus (14:50). By removing the disciples from the scene, Mark informs the reader that there are now no characters that will act positively to avert the destiny of Jesus. This is surely not, however, the end of the disciples. They will again see Jesus in Galilee (14:28; 16:7).

4.3 Summation

It has been argued that the reactions of both individual characters and character groups to the message, ministry, and identity of Jesus, fulfils a particular function within the Marcan composition. In the first place, the crowd is presented as being receptive to the message and ministry of Jesus and must be distinguished from that crowd (i.e., mob) that collaborates with the religious leaders to ensure the death of Jesus. Despite the general receptivity of the crowd toward Jesus there is no indication that they recognizes who Jesus is. Consequently, they do nothing to prevent his death.

By contrast, the religious leaders are presented as

being at odds with the message and ministry of Jesus. They oppose Jesus because he does not appeal nor adhere to their authoritative traditions and laws. Jesus' claim to destroy the temple along with its corrupt leadership is also an obvious affront to the religious leaders. Neither are they willing to concede that Jesus is the Messiah since Jesus' teachings are incompatible with their conceptions of the coming messianic age. Subsequently, the religious leaders are largely influential in ensuring Jesus' death.

Mark's characterization of the crowd and the religious leaders as found throughout his Gospel is consistent therefore with his description of "those outside" in 4:11-12. Accordingly, the crowd and the religious leaders are kept in the dark regarding Jesus' identity by the opacity of parables.¹³² The imposition of secrecy on the demons also functions to this end. But despite the blindness of the crowd and the religious leaders, they are not to be automatically so categorized. According to Mark, there are individuals who have *heard* the words of Jesus and have responded positively.

The disciples, unlike the crowd and the religious leaders who receive everything in parables, are privy to esoteric information (4:11-12). Consequently, they recognize that Jesus is the Messiah (8:29). Yet, because

¹³² The religious leaders also have hardened hearts. Cf. chap. three, section 3.3.1.

they do not fully comprehend the nature of Jesus' messiahship, they eventually desert Jesus and flee. The disciples defection in 14:50 and the implication of a literal rendering of 16:8b suggests that there is no rehabilitation of the disciples and, subsequently, they never continue with their mission as outlined in 1:16-20, 3:13-19, 6:6b-13, and 13:9-13; 21-23. Nonetheless, as has been argued, 16:8b

cannot be interpreted in isolation from powerful positive elements of the Gospel which obviously presume that the disciples do, in fact, receive the message of reconciliation and do take up their ministry.¹³³

What is the nature of the mission of the disciples in the post-Easter period? The answer to this question is related to the fact that the disciples misunderstand the nature of Jesus' missionary activities. And it is to that discussion that we now turn.

¹³³ D. Senior, "The Struggle to be Universal: Mission as Vantage Point for New Testament Investigation," CBQ 46 (1984): 77-78.

5.0 THE MISSION OF JESUS: AN EXAMINATION OF MARK 8:13-21

Contemporary Marcan studies have neglected, for the most part, the role of "mission" in Mark's Gospel.¹ As D. Senior has pointed out, "the question of the universal mission of the church [in Mark's Gospel] has taken a decidedly second place to an emphasis on inner-community theological polemic."² While inner-community struggles are certainly of interpretive significance, the mission question, identifiable by determining Jesus' own sense of mission as portrayed by Mark, is surely of paramount importance in interpreting the Gospel. Of particular significance is the fact that the mission question in Mark is directly linked to the major motif of the incomprehension of the disciples. The contention here is that this connection is best exemplified in Mark 8:13-21.³ It reads:

And he left them, and getting into the boat again, he departed to the other side. Now they had forgotten to bring bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." And they discussed it with one another, saying, "We have no bread." And being aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken

¹ Senior, 66.

² Ibid.

³ Here, following Petersen, "The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:26," 199, 8:13-21 is considered as a minimal unit.

pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "seven." And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

If it can be shown that what the disciples fail to understand in 8:13-21 concerns the nature of the mission of Jesus, it can function as an aid towards the interpretation of the whole of Mark's Gospel. In particular, an analysis of 8:13-21 will suggest an answer to the question: Is the 'good news' a commodity that is offered to an exclusive or inclusive community? That is, is the gospel available to only one group, i.e., Jews or Gentiles, or to both Jews and Gentiles? To put it another way: Does Mark's presentation suggest that the 'good news' is passed exclusively to the Gentiles since the Jews, due to their obdurate nature, have abrogated their right to the gospel by rejecting Jesus, the Messiah, or is Mark's proclamation of the gospel universal in appeal?⁴

To answer this question an analysis of 8:13-21 is necessary. The proposal here, however, is that 8:13-21 must not be interpreted as an isolated pericope that recalls only the two feeding narratives (6:30-44; 12:1-9).⁵ A more plausible interpretation is possible by viewing 8:13-21 as

⁴ This is certainly a question for Paul in Romans 9-11. If it can be shown that Mark's answer to this question is similar to Paul's, then it may suggest that indeed Mark has followed Paul as certain scholars have suggested.

⁵ This has been the approach of most scholars.

part of a compositional sub-unit, namely, 6:6b-8:21, within a larger unit, namely, 4:1-8:30. It will be argued that this compositional arrangement is of significance in interpreting 8:13-21. Subsequently, an analysis of the proposed sub-unit will shed light on the question of mission in Mark.

5.1 Mark 8:13-21 in its Literary Context

Traditionally, scholars have not considered the question of mission to be of primary significance when interpreting 8:13-21. Rather, scholars have held that the misunderstanding of the disciples in 8:13-21 is directly linked to their worrying about a lack of provisions.⁶ That is, the disciples do not recall the fact that Jesus had miraculously fed the two multitudes,⁷ and fail, therefore, to have faith in the ability of Jesus to meet their needs.⁸

There are, however, certain reasons which cause one to question the traditional interpretation of this passage.⁹ A primary objection to the traditional approach by scholars who interpret 8:13-21 only in light of the two feeding

⁶ J.B. Gibson, "The Rebuke of the Disciples in Mark 8:14-21," *JSNT* 27 (1986): 31.

⁷ This interpretation rests on the fact that 8:13-21 recalls only the two feeding narratives (6:30-44; 8:1-12).

⁸ Gibson, 31.

⁹ For a list of proposed problems associated with the traditional interpretation of this passage see Gibson, 31-32.

narratives (6:30-44; 8:1-9), is that it does not account for all the literary connections. There is no question among scholars that the language of 8:13-21 recalls for the reader the two feeding narratives. But a recognition of specific themes and motifs evident in 8:13-21 will certainly recall for the attentive reader other Marcan passages as well. The following references exemplify these additional literary connections.

The disciples in the boat ¹⁰ with Jesus	4:35-36; 5:1-2a; 6:45-51	↔ 8:13-15
Crossing in boat to the other side	4:35; 5:1,21; 6:45,53; 8:10	↔ 8:13
A portrayal of Herod	6:14-29	↔ 8:15
A portrayal of the Pharisees	2:15-3:6; 7:1-12; 8:11-12	↔ 8:15
The disciples misunderstand	4:13; 7:17-18	↔ 8:17ab,21
The disciples have hardened hearts	6:52	↔ 8:17c
Eyes, ears and understanding	4:9,23; 7:16,31-37	↔ 8:18
Two Feeding Narratives	6:30-44; 8:1-9	↔ 8:19-20

¹⁰ While it is generally agreed that a distinctive feature of 3:9-8:26 is the "boat motif," 3:9 is here dismissed as being part of the compositional unit since it only introduces a boat ". . . in anticipation of a contingency-the crush of the crowd-which becomes only a reality in 4:1, and that from 4:1 through 8:26 the boat is in service of the distinctive topography of sea transit." See Petersen, "The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:26," 194.

The contention here is that these literary connections are of paramount importance in interpreting Mark 8:13-21. The crucial point is this: specific themes, motifs, and individuals/groups in 8:13-21 are also found in earlier Marcan passages.¹¹ These obvious literary connections between 8:13-21 and earlier Marcan passages suggest that the traditional methodology of interpreting the passage as an isolated pericope that recalls only 6:30-44 and 8:1-9 is too narrow. The literary connections require the interpreter to view the passage as part of a compositional unit within Mark as a whole. In particular, it is here held that 8:13-21 is

¹¹ With certain exceptions, the themes and motifs of 8:13-21 are found only in Mark 4:1-8:30. One exception is Mark 2:15-3:6. The reference to the 'leaven' of the Pharisees in Mark 8:15 may recall for the reader 2:15-3:6 since each controversy story has to do with eating. (The exception is the story of the healing of the man with the withered hand. But in that case, the story is connected with the breaking of the sabbath, the same emphasis in the previous story where the disciples are accused of breaking the sabbath due to their need of food). In any case (and as will be argued below), the 'leaven' of the Pharisees certainly recalls 7:1-12. Following 8:15, the mention of the Pharisees is limited. In 10:2, 'some Pharisees' question Jesus concerning divorce; in 12:13 some Pharisees and some Herodians attempt to trap Jesus (compare 3:6). A second exception has to do with the misunderstanding of the disciples. There are no doubt passages following 8:30 which exhibit the misunderstanding of the disciples. In each case, however, the misunderstanding is of a different nature. For the most part, the misunderstanding of the disciples following 8:30 has to do with the necessity of Jesus' suffering or, as Weeden, Mark - Traditions in Conflict, 33-34, has argued, suffering discipleship. The misunderstanding is not directly concerned with Jesus' identity (i.e., that he is the Messiah), or his mission, as is the misunderstanding of the disciples in 4:1-8:30.

part of a compositional unit, namely, 4:1-8:30.¹²

It should be pointed out, however, that the appropriation of literary evidence cannot determine conclusively the range of a particular unit. A survey of scholarly attempts to define Mark's compositional units testifies to the fact that unit definitions vary.¹³ Thus, while it is here held that Mark 4:1-8:30 is a compositional unit, the complex structure of Mark's Gospel as a whole does not allow for its dissection into rigidly defined units or sections with beginning, middle and end.¹⁴ Rather, the transition from one unit to the next is much more artistic than scientific. As Quesnell implies, it is impossible to

¹² In addition to the literary connections cited, there are other examples that validate the selection of 4:1-8:30 as a compositional unit. First, there can be no question that 8:27b-28 recalls for the reader 6:14-16. Secondly, Peter's response in 8:29 that "Jesus is the Messiah," can certainly be viewed as an answer to the question asked by the disciples in 4:41, "Who, then, is this?" Thirdly, the motif of the misunderstanding of the disciples also functions to define 4:1-8:30. As Petersen, "The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:26," 206, n. 47, has correctly asserted, "the disciples' misunderstanding becomes an explicit issue for the first time only in 4:1-34." Their misunderstanding is exemplified throughout the section (4:9,23,41; 5:31; 6:37,52; 7:16,31-37; 8:4,13-21). Following 8:30 there are passages that exhibit the disciples' misunderstanding. In each case, however, their misunderstanding is of a different nature. See n. 11 of this chapter. Cf. Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction," 496; Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession," 168, n. 34.

¹³ Cf. e.g., the proposed compositional units of Petersen, "The Composition of Mark 4:1-8:26," 185-217, with those of Butterworth, 5-26.

¹⁴ Dewey, 221-236, makes this point most convincingly.

clearly identity discrete units in Mark.¹⁵ Furthermore, certain themes and motifs evident in Mark 4:1-8:30 are also found elsewhere in the Gospel. Nevertheless, for the convenience of argument, the contention here is that the unit begins in 4:1 and ends in 8:30.¹⁶

An examination of 4:1-8:30 suggests that there exists within the larger compositional unit (4:1-8:30), a sub-unit, namely, 6:6b-8:21. With the exception of 6:6b-29, scholars have generally recognized that running throughout this entire sub-unit is a bread motif.¹⁷ The evidence for such a sub-unit has primarily been the recurrence of the catchword *ἄρτος*.¹⁸ It occurs seventeen times in all the major pericopes (6:30-44; 6:45-52; 7:1-23; 7:24-30; 8:1-9; 8:14-21)¹⁹ of the "bread section". (The bread section has generally been considered to be 6:30-8:21). But the catchword also appears in 6:6b-13. In 6:8 the disciples are ordered by Jesus to take no *ἄρτον* for their journey. Following Quesnell's suggestion, there is no reason to omit 6:6b-13 from the bread section since it contains the

¹⁵ Quesnell, 68.

¹⁶ According to Lane, 292, the prophecy found in 8:31 introduces distinctively new elements of the second half of the Gospel, and characteristically commentators speak of it (i.e., 8:31) when discussing the new section.

¹⁷ Quesnell, 68-71.

¹⁸ Ibid., 68.

¹⁹ Ibid., 69.

catchword, ἀπρος, in 6:8.²⁰

As for 6:14-29, there is evidence for including it in the bread section. Herod's 'hearing' and 'misunderstanding' in 6:14,16,20 is strikingly similar to that of the disciples as displayed throughout the larger unit, and especially their grappling with the question of Jesus' identity in 27b-28. The fact that 6:14-29 does not contain the catchword is not necessarily problematic, since other pericopes in the sub-unit also omit the catchword (6:53-56; 7:31-37; 8:10-13).²¹ Furthermore, 6:14-29 is characteristic of Mark's interpolation technique of narration,²² and therefore, does not take away from the progression of the argument.

In summary, the reoccurrence of literary themes and motifs suggests that Mark 8:13-21 is part of a compositional sub-unit, namely, 6:6b-8:21, within a larger unit, namely, 4:1-8:30. Of primary significance in the sub-unit is the bread motif. The importance of the bread motif, however, can only be determined by interpreting it in light of other motifs which are prevalent throughout the larger unit (4:1-8:30). Subsequently, an analysis of the major pericopes within the sub-unit (6:6b-13) will prove useful toward interpreting what it is that the disciples fail to

²⁰ Ibid., n. 5.

²¹ Ibid., 69.

²² Ibid., 69, n. 5. Cf. Edwards, "Markan Sandwiches," 193-197, 205-206.

comprehend concerning the mission of Jesus.

5.2 The Hermeneutical Significance of the Composition of 6:6b-8:21 in Interpreting 8:13-21

The sub-unit begins with the commissioning of the Twelve to practice exorcisms and healings,²³ practices which are to be independent of the physical presence of Jesus (6:6b-13). Of particular significance is the fact that the commissioning allows for the means of travel (staff and sandals) but not sustenance (bread, money bag and money, extra clothes).²⁴ The command not to take bread implies that the sustenance needs of the disciples will be met in some other way. Scholars generally concur that the disciples are ordered not to take items of sustenance since, while on their 'missionary' journey, they were to "entrust themselves to the hospitality of others."²⁵

The assertion that the disciples were dependent on the hospitality of local communities for sustenance is certainly not convincing. It is based primarily on textual evidence that wherever the disciples entered a house they were to stay there until they left that place (6:10). The text (6:10-11), however, does not state explicitly that this 'welcome' included the means of sustenance (i.e., bread) for

²³ Their commissioning also included preaching. (Cf. 1:17 and 3:13-15 with 6:7,13). Cf. also Lane, 206, n. 24.

²⁴ Myers, 213.

²⁵ Taylor, 305.

the disciples. In verse 11, the 'non-welcome' has to do specifically with the rejection of the disciples message. In fact, in cases where the disciples were refused a hearing, they were instructed by Jesus to "shake off the dust on their feet", a symbolic act²⁶ having to do with the rejection of their message rather than their person. The 'welcome', therefore, has to do with the "hearing" and acceptance of a message,²⁷ not with the receiving of bread necessarily.

Whether or not the disciples were at times recipients of hospitality, however, cannot be determined conclusively.²⁸ Whatever the case may be, there can be no

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The "hearing" has to do with the people being receptive to the proclamation by the disciples to repent (6:12). For Mark, the receptivity of the "hearing" of the disciples' message is a fulfilment of the words of Jesus in 4:3-20; some accept, others reject (Cf. 4:3-20 and 6:6b-13).

²⁸ This assertion is based primarily upon two pieces of literary evidence. Josephus claims that "in every Jewish city a social welfare worker provided food and clothing for wanderers" (Wars II.125), and a reference in the Didache suggests that it was the norm for local families to provide for itinerant messengers of the gospel (Didache XI). The reference to Josephus, as an explanation for the order of Jesus to the disciples not to carry items of sustenance, is not convincing. A reading of the passage in its context (Wars II.117-127) indicates that the 'practice of hospitality' was established for the benefit of specific groups, namely, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. There is nothing to indicate that Jesus' disciples would have been privy to such acts of hospitality, unless they were members of one of these sects. As for the Didache reference, it should not be assumed that local communities would be as hospitable to 'Christian' missionaries during Jesus' time (about 30 C.E.), as they would by the time of the writing of the Didache (early-middle 2nd century?).

doubt that here Mark's positive(?) portrayal of the disciples, who obediently travel without provisions, suggests their ultimate dependence on the words of Jesus for sustenance. This explanation is appealing for several reasons. In the first place, the dependence of the disciples on the hospitality²⁹ of local communities may not always be sufficient to meet their needs since, according to the traditional interpretation of Mark 6:11, "there would be villages where no hospitality would be offered."³⁰ What would the disciples do for sustenance in these cases? Furthermore, the disciples lack of resources require that they place their faith in a source other than their own abilities to provide sustenance. As Schweizer points out, the travelling conditions of the disciples place them in a similar position of life not unlike that of the "birds" and "flowers" (cf. Matt 6:25-34), "in which there is no reliance upon [their] . . . own means . . . [but] on the One whom they proclaim."³¹

This interpretation is certainly consistent with Mark's use of Old Testament images of a staff and sandals (6:8). Such images recall for Jewish readers specific Old Testament passages which bring to mind Israel's dependence on God.

²⁹ Assuming, for the sake of argument, the validity of hospitality as the source of sustenance.

³⁰ Lane, 208.

³¹ Schweizer, 130.

For example, Mark's use of a staff may recall that the only means of travel that Jacob had on his journey across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land was a *staff* (Genesis 32:10). The reference in 6:8 may also recall a time just prior to the Exodus when the Israelites are commanded to eat the Passover quickly: their loins girded, their sandals on their feet, and their staff in their hand (Exodus 12:11). In any case, the staff and sandals are symbols that remind Jewish readers of times when God provided sustenance for Israel. Subsequently, "As Israel in the wilderness was nourished by God so the disciples are to be sustained by God,"³² *via* Jesus.³³

The ultimate dependence of the disciples on Jesus is also suggested by the fact that Jesus authorizes/empowers the disciples to do mighty works (6:7,13). The nature of this authorization is of particular significance. Lane states:

Jesus authorized the disciples to be his delegates with respect to word and power. Their message and deeds were to be an extension of his own. The commissioning of the Twelve has a rich background in the juridical practice of Judaism, which recognized the official character of actions performed by authorized individuals. Reduced to its simplest form, the law acknowledged that "the

³² Lane, 208, n. 31.

³³ This interpretation is particularly appealing since, for Mark, Jesus is the Son of God (1:1,11; 15:39). That Jesus has power equal to God is strongly implied in 2:7-10 and also by the fact that Jesus performs numerous miracles and exorcisms. Thus, Jesus' status in Mark leads the reader to conclude that Jesus has the ability to provide.

sent one is as the man who commissioned him"
(italics added).³⁴

In light of Lane's assertion, there is no reason why the disciples cannot provide food for themselves by the power invested in them (6:7,13,14³⁵), when, due to rejection in various villages, they have nothing to eat. This interpretation is supported by the fact that in 6:37 Jesus assumes the ability of the disciples to provide and orders them to 'feed' the crowds! The emphasis on the ability of the disciples to 'feed' the crowds is heightened by the fact that the situation described in 6:30-38 does not even necessitate a miracle since the crowd can go away to buy something to eat.³⁶ "Rather, the point of the dialogue seems to be the desire of Jesus to feed the people through his disciples."³⁷ By implication, the source of their providing for the crowds (6:37) and for themselves (6:8) is, not the wavering hospitable practices of local communities, but Jesus, the one who has commissioned and invested them with power! Though not stated explicitly in 6:6b-13, Jesus is the root source of sustenance for the disciples and not bread, money, or receptive individuals.

³⁴ Lane, 206-207.

³⁵ It appears that Herod became curious about the identity of Jesus when he heard that miracles were performed at the hands of Jesus' disciples (6:14).

³⁶ S. Masuda, "The Miracle of the Bread," NTS 28 (1982): 199.

³⁷ Ibid.

The ability of Jesus is made clear in Mark's presentation of the feeding of the five thousand (6:30-44).³⁸ An examination of 6:30-44 alerts the reader, however, not only of the ability of Jesus, but to an underlying premise, namely, that Jesus is recognized by the crowd as *the* Messiah.³⁹ For example, the imagery of green grass in 6:39 alerts the Jewish reader to the fact that the time of the year is Passover, the time of the year when the grass is green and the time of the year when the Messiah was expected to manifest himself.⁴⁰ Furthermore, a reading of 6:30-44 recalls for the reader specific Old Testament passages and images that are "signs" of the Messiah.⁴¹ In 6:34 Mark describes the crowd as being "like sheep without a shepherd," a phrase that would recall for Jewish readers Numbers 27:17 and Exodus 34:5. In both Old Testament contexts, God will appoint a leader to be a shepherd for Israel in the wilderness. This is particularly significant since the word translated 'lonely place' in Mark 6:31 is the

³⁸ The passage that has been passed over, namely, 6:14-29, will be considered below in conjunction with 8:15.

³⁹ As indicated above (this chap., nn. 11,12), the misunderstanding of the disciples throughout 4:1-8:30 has to do not only with the mission of Jesus, but with the question of Jesus' identity; a question that presupposes a mission question. Thus, in order to answer the mission question, the identity of Jesus must be determined.

⁴⁰ H.W. Montefiore, "Revolt in the Desert?," *NTS* 8 (1962): 136.

⁴¹ A. Richardson, The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1966), 95.

same word which is translated as wilderness in Isaiah 40:3 and Mark 1:3,⁴² which is suggestive of the fact that Mark desired to portray Jesus, in the feeding narrative, as the expected shepherd/Messiah.

The imagery of the feeding narrative also evokes in the mind of Jewish readers a remembrance of the struggles of their forefathers for food in the wilderness and the provision by Yahweh through servants like Moses and Elisha. Moses had certainly dispensed bread in the wilderness (Deut. 8:9). Elisha also fed one hundred men with barley loaves (2 Kings 4:42-44). The crowd that pursues Jesus to a lonely place is symbolic of a 'new' Israel. In Mark 6:34-44 it is Jesus, the 'new' Moses, who is the source of their provisions.⁴³ Symbolically, Jesus, the Messiah, does not want to do as the disciples wish and send the people away to buy food; he desires to give them something to eat (6:37-38). This he proceeds to ensure. after which the disciple collect twelve baskets⁴⁴ of fragments.

The second sea story (6:45-56), further illuminates for the reader the incomprehension of the disciples concerning Jesus' ability/identity. It recalls for the reader the

⁴² Miller and Miller, 182.

⁴³ A. Richardson, "The Feeding of the Five Thousand," Int 9 (1955): 145.

⁴⁴ The symbolic significance of the 'twelve baskets' will be considered below in connection with an analysis of 8:14-21.

earlier boat trip (4:35-41), and, in doing so, "the central question addressed in Mark's gospel: "Who then is this?"⁴⁵ This question is answered again by Mark's allusions to the Old Testament in 6:45-52. The sea imagery recalls for the Jewish reader such passages as Psalm 77:20-21, Isaiah 43:16-17, and Job 9:8-11.⁴⁶ In each passage God's power over the sea is demonstrated. As Richardson asserts, the main point of 6:45-52 is to teach that "Jesus shares the power of God."⁴⁷ This idea is supported by the fact that Jesus identifies himself with the phrase, "I am," a Septuagint expression attributed to God (Exodus 3:14). Thus, in 6:50, Jesus in addressing the disciples takes the divine name and makes it his own.⁴⁸

But despite Jesus' self-revelatory proclamation, there is no indication that the disciples comprehend who Jesus is. Even though Jesus has stilled the storm (4:35-41), fed the five thousand (6:30-44), and walked on the sea (6:45-52), the disciples are still obtuse. They still do not comprehend the true identity of Jesus. Their failure to really 'hear' the significance of Jesus' most self-revealing statement (*I am*) is expressed by Mark's assertion that the

⁴⁵ Fowler, 102.

⁴⁶ E. LaVerdiere, "Resisting the Mission to the Nations," Emmanuel 96 (1990): 26.

⁴⁷ Richardson, The Miracle-Stories of the Gospels, 90.

⁴⁸ LaVerdiere, 27.

disciples were utterly astounded because they had not understood about the loaves (6:52).⁴⁹ Freyne writes:

The fact that [Jesus] . . . had been able to feed the multitudes in the wilderness should have told them who and what he was, and so their reaction before other manifestations of his power was wholly irrational. They did not understand the feeding miracle, however . . . and consequently they failed to see its clear messianic implications concerning Jesus.⁵⁰

The misunderstanding of the significance of the loaves by the disciples, however, is not limited to the question of Jesus' identity. The disciples also do not understand that Jesus desires for them to proclaim the 'good news' to the Gentiles.⁵¹ This is particularly evident in 6:45⁵² when Jesus has to *compel* (from ἀναγκάζω), the disciples to get into a boat and proceed without⁵³ him to the other side of

⁴⁹ Following Matera, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples and Peter's Confession," 156-159, the disciples require divine assistance if they are to comprehend the significance of the loaves and Jesus' revelatory statement (Cf. chap. three, 167, n. 167).

⁵⁰ S. Freyne, The Twelve: Disciples and Apostles (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 125.

⁵¹ There is every indication that the previous mission of the disciples was to the Jews (Cf. 6:6b-13). This is implied by the fact that up to this point in the Marcan narrative (i.e., 6:45), Jesus and his disciples are found predominantly in Jewish territory (except 5:1-20).

⁵² This is not the first indication of an impending mission to the Gentiles. Consider Mark 3:8 and 5:1-20.

⁵³ This recalls for the reader the fact that the disciples were commissioned by Jesus to go on an independent mission in 6:6b-13. Though they return to Jesus in 6:30-32, there is no evidence to suggest that their mission has ended. Thus, Jesus' compelling them to leave him is consistent with his earlier commissioning of the disciples

the Lake to Bethsaida. The use of the word *compel* is significant since Mark does not elsewhere place it on Jesus' lips to force the disciples to go to a particular place. The contention here is that Mark's use of the word *compel* "implies unwillingness on the part of the disciples"⁵⁴ to commence with a Gentile mission on the other side of the Lake.⁵⁵ This is certainly plausible in light of the fact that "the projected but detoured journey in 6:45 negatively anticipates Jesus' later journey to Bethsaida in 8:22,"⁵⁶ a town in Gentile territory.⁵⁷ The resistance of the disciples to a Gentile mission is also implied by the fact that after Jesus stills the wind, they did not continue on to Bethsaida (Gentile territory), but landed at Gennesaret

to preach, heal, and cast out demons in his absence.

⁵⁴ E.S. Malbon, "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee," *JBL* 103 (1984): 370, n. 16.

⁵⁵ The resistance of the disciples to a Gentile mission may also be implied by their minimal presence in Jesus' first trek into Gentile territory (5:1-20). Assuming that the third person pronoun in 5:1 includes the disciples, they are not mentioned elsewhere in the narrative. 5:21 accounts only for Jesus' return sea crossing to Jewish territory where again the disciples figure quite prominently (5:31,37). But where have the disciples been in the meantime?

⁵⁶ Malbon, "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee," 368.

⁵⁷ There is debate as to the actual location of Bethsaida. See Malbon, "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee," 366-372. For useful insight on the geographical problems found in Mark see M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 46.

(Jewish territory),⁵⁸ where, in contrast to the imperceptivity of the disciples, the people *recognize* Jesus (6:53-54).

Between Jesus' initial command to the disciples to go to Gentile Bethsaida (6:45) and their actual arrival (8:22), the cumulative actions of Jesus are of a revelatory nature designed by Mark to open the eyes of the reader to the fact that resistance on the part of the disciples to proclaiming the 'good news' to the Gentiles does not coincide with Jesus' own sense of mission. The controversy between Jesus and the Pharisees in 7:1-23 is particularly significant in quelling the disciples' reluctance to embark on the Gentile mission. In 7:14-22, Jesus contends that, unlike the pharisaical practice of segregated table fellowship, the Jews (i.e., disciples) should not be so concerned about eating impure food as with what enters their hearts. Thus he sanctions the breaking of the Mosaic Law in order that the disciples (i.e., and all Jews), may eat bread with Gentiles! As Myers contends, the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees "serves . . . to legitimize the community's practice of integration with gentiles, who would have otherwise been excluded by the rules of ritual purity."⁵⁹ The symbolic implication is that the 'good news' is to be

⁵⁸ Malbon, "The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee," 369.

⁵⁹ Myers, 223.

proclaimed to both Jews and Gentiles. But again, the disciples' incomprehension is exemplified by Jesus' statement, "Then are you also without understanding?" (7:18a). In 7:18b-22, Jesus' private explanation to the disciples dismisses adherence to Jewish food laws as necessary for purity and thus makes it possible for Jews (Jesus and the disciples) to participate in an extended stay in Gentile territory⁶⁰ that commences with their journey into the region of Tyre and Sidon (7:24-30).

In the region of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus' encounter with the Syrophoenician woman illustrates emancipation from Mosaic regulations and thus anticipates for the reader the mission to the Gentiles.⁶¹ The pericope is of primary significance since this is the only time that Mark identifies a character specifically as being Gentile (a Greek Syrophoenician woman)! It is also significant to note the role of the theme of bread in Jesus' dialogue with the woman.⁶² The dialogue reads:

And he [Jesus] said to her, "Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But

⁶⁰ This is not to suggest that Pharisees did not travel into Gentile territory. As T.A. Burkill, New Light on the Earliest Gospel (London: Cornell University Press, 1972), 80, n. 13, suggests, Mark in 7:18b-22 wishes to stress the relative ease with which apostles moved in Gentile territory.

⁶¹ Ibid., 80.

⁶² Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in the Marcan Redaction," 495.

she answered him, "Yes Lord: yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."⁶³

Here the words 'children' and 'dogs' are symbolic of Jews and Gentiles respectively. The symbolic implication is that the proclamation of the 'good news' is not an exclusive commodity for Jews only; Gentiles also are to be recipients! Furthermore, Mark's portrayal of Jesus as the one who dispenses 'bread' on behalf of the woman (Jesus casts the demon out of her daughter) articulates "feeding-symbolics that are carefully correlated to Jesus' feedings of the masses in the wilderness."⁶⁴ Myers states:

Jesus instructs his disciples in the first feeding to "give the crowd something to eat" (6:37,. . .). Similarly, Jesus tells the Gentile woman that the children must first be satisfied" (7:27 . . .)--which satisfaction has indeed already been reported in 6:42 ("they all ate and were satisfied," . . .)! This is how Mark prepares the way for the fulfilment of the Syrophoenician woman's request--the feeding and satisfaction of the Gentiles--which will indeed shortly take place.⁶⁵

The story of the healing of a Gentile⁶⁶ deaf mute (7:31-37) continues Mark's progressive attempt to validate

⁶³ Mark 7:27-28

⁶⁴ Myers, 204.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ The deaf mute is a Gentile. Though the text does not state explicitly that the man is a Gentile it is implied by the setting (i.e., in the region of the Decapolis; 7:31). Furthermore, the context also suggests Gentile territory; the story of the Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30) precedes the healing of the deaf mute, a Gentile feeding follows it (8:1-9).

Jesus' mission to Gentiles. In 7:33, after they had brought to Jesus a man with hearing and speech impediments, he spat and touched his tongue⁶⁷ (6:33). Of particular significance is Jesus' use of saliva. The point is that saliva was considered as pollutive as was bodily excrement (Lev. 15:8).⁶⁸ Jesus' use of saliva in the curing of the deaf mute is in direct violation of Jewish purity laws.⁶⁹ Thus, his use of spittle further symbolizes the abrogation of purity laws (cf. 7:1-23).

Mark 7:31-37 also recalls specific Old Testament passages, namely, Isaiah 29:18, 32:3, 35:5, 42:7, and Ezekiel 24:27.⁷⁰ In particular, Mark 7:32 alludes to Isaiah 35:5f.⁷¹ This is significant since Isaiah's prophecy in 35:5f. was expected to be fulfilled in the Days of the Messiah.⁷² Thus, Mark's allusion to Isaiah in 7:32 "provides his readers with a sign that the promised intervention of God took place in the ministry of Jesus."⁷³

⁶⁷ The touching of the tongue symbolizes the proclamation of the 'good news' to all peoples. Compare Isaiah 6:7f.; 32:3-4; 35:5-6; 45:23.

⁶⁸ Myers, 205.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Richardson, The Miracle Stories of the Gospels, 82-83.

⁷¹ Lane, 206.

⁷² Ibid., 266.

⁷³ Ibid.

The "signs" are that the deaf will hear and the mute speak (Isaiah 35:5-6). Jesus' actions, then, are significant in that the opening of the deaf man's ears enables him to truly 'hear'⁷⁴ (see e.g., 4:3,5,23,24; 7:14), and the unsealing of his lips enables him to proclaim in the Decapolis (recall 5:20) what he has heard.⁷⁵ In anticipation of the second feeding (8:1-9), Mark's placement of Jesus' healing of the Gentile deaf mute symbolizes the receptivity of Gentiles in the region of the Decapolis.

The feeding of the four thousand (8:1-9), in contrast to the feeding of the five thousand (6:30-44), represents a Gentile⁷⁶ feeding. Again, Jesus is the one who dispenses bread! After gathering up seven baskets of fragments, the disciples find themselves in a boat on the lake but they have only 'one loaf' with them (8:14). The importance of the 'one loaf' here is heightened by the distinction between the plural "loaves" (*ἄρτοι*) and the singular "loaf"

⁷⁴ This is in sharp contrast to the inability of the disciples to 'hear'!

⁷⁵ E. LaVerdiere, "Jesus among the Gentiles," Emmanuel 96 (1990): 345.

⁷⁶ In the first place, the context implies that the feeding takes place in Gentile territory (7:24,31; 8:1). Only after the feeding does Jesus return to Jewish territory (8:10). Also, there is no reference to 'green grass', 'companies of fifties and hundreds', or 'sheep without a shepherd', details with Jewish connotations. Furthermore, according to F.W. Danker, "Mark 8:3," JBL 82 (1963): 215-216, 'Mark 8:3 carries a strong Gentile accent.'

(ἀπροσ).⁷⁷ Hence, "They had forgotten to bring loaves, and had none except for one loaf with them in the boat." (8:14) Following in 8:15, Jesus warns the disciples to beware of the 'leaven' of the Pharisees and that of Herod. The term 'leaven' is used in conjunction with the motif of the 'one loaf'.⁷⁸ Here, Myers is worth quoting at length.

The term "leaven" . . . appears in relation to the metaphor of the "loaves," a symbolic discourse Mark is setting up here. Mark is reminding the disciple/reader of the two main political forces in Galilee hostile to the Kingdom project of reconciliation between Jew and Gentile. On the one hand the Pharisaic party opposes integration on bounds of social boundary and purity. . . . On the other hand, the Herodian-sponsored program of hellenization offers a style of integration based upon cultural imperialism and collaboration with Rome. Those who resist such a program are disposed of, as in the case of John the Baptist (6:14ff.). Either "leaven" will destroy the delicate social experiment of the "one loaf".⁷⁹

Specifically, the 'leaven' of the Pharisees and the 'leaven' of Herod (8:15) is in sharp contrast to Jesus' practice of dispensing bread. On the one hand, 8:15 in recalling 7:1-23, warns the disciples against the Pharisaical practice of segregated table fellowship. On the other hand, 8:15 in recalling 6:14-29, points out that Herod's practice of segregated table fellowship is equally as damaging as that of the Pharisaical practice. In 6:21, Herod's 'feeding' banquet is designated specifically for his courtiers and

⁷⁷ Myers, 225.

⁷⁸ The disciples equate 'leaven' with bread (8:16).

⁷⁹ Myers, 224.

officers and for the leaders of Galilee. The Pharisees and Herod are also similar in that they fail to 'hear' the proclamation of the 'good news'. In 8:10-11 the Pharisees still seek a sign! In 6:20, Herod, who had repeatedly 'heard' John speak and liked to 'listen' to him, remains perplexed by the message!

Following the warnings about 'leaven', Jesus addresses again the disciple's incomprehension about the leaven/loaves (8:17-21). He reiterates the significance of the two feedings and "makes . . . [the disciples] repeat the symbolic numbers which should have tipped them off: twelve and seven."⁸⁰ In addition, the words used for basket are also of significance.

The number 5 (5 loaves and 5,000 men), the number 12 (12 baskets) and the Hebrew name for basket (kophinos) belong to the Jewish circle; the number 7 (7 loaves and 7 baskets), the number 4 (4,000 men or people), and the Greek name for basket (sphyris) belong more specifically to the Greek. One loaf in the boat is all that is needed! Separate bread (eucharistic?) is not needed for Jewish . . . and non-Jewish followers of Jesus.⁸¹

Though the disciples remember in detail the two feeding narratives they miss the point. In 8:21b, there is a hint of amazement in Jesus' words, "Do you not yet understand?", since Jesus' rhetorical questioning implies that by the second feeding the disciples should have understood. A comparison of the disciples' responses to the needs of the

⁸⁰ Myers, 225.

⁸¹ Ibid., 225-226.

crowds in both feeding narratives implies that they had begun to understand. Their question in 8:4 is to be sharply contrasted with 6:37. In 6:37 the disciples suggest that the crowd be fed by monetary means. In 8:4 they make no such suggestion. In fact, "the disciples' question in verse 4 stresses their inadequacy to the situation and indicates that Jesus alone can act on behalf of the people."⁸² This idea is strengthened by the use of the Greek word *τις* (a certain one, anyone, someone) in the disciples question, How can one feed these people with bread? As Lane points out, the disciples response in 8:4 "serves to refer the question of procuring bread back to Jesus and is tantamount to asking, What do you intend to do?"⁸³ Despite the apparent dullness of the disciples in 8:14-21, there is in 8:1-9 an underlying tone of gradual progression toward enlightenment that is symbolized by the gradual 'seeing' of the blind man from Bethsaida (8:22-26).⁸⁴ Finally, in 8:29, while the disciples travel deeper into Gentile territory, a greater perceptivity is exemplified by Peter's confession, "You are the Messiah!"

5.3 Summation

It has been argued that 8:13-21 serves as the crux

⁸² Lane, 273.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Cf. Goan, 14.

pericope in suggesting an answer to the question of mission in Mark. The traditional approach to interpreting 8:13-21 in connection with only the two feeding narratives is too narrow. Rather, the literary connections between 8:13-21 and the compositional unit 4:1-8:30, are of interpretive significance. In particular, an analysis of the bread sub-unit (6:6b-8:21) has suggested an answer to the question of mission in the Gospel of Mark.

An analysis of the major pericopae within the proposed sub-unit has recognized the significance of the bread motif. It has been argued that Mark has kept implicit what the Gospel of John has made explicit, namely, that Jesus is the bread of life.⁸⁵ Mark's use of symbolic language and his allusions to the Old Testament has shown that Jesus is the one who dispenses bread. But the disciples do not comprehend the significance of the *feedings*,⁸⁶ and consequently they do not know the answer to the question, "Who then is this?" (4:41). Unlike the deaf mute (and like Herod and the Pharisees), the disciples fail to truly 'hear' the significance of the words and actions of Jesus and therefore are resistant to proceed with the Gentile mission. There is nevertheless an underlying tone of gradual

⁸⁵ Richardson, "The Feeding of the Five Thousand," 145.

⁸⁶ Of course, here *feedings* refer not only to the two feeding narratives (6:30-44; 8:1-9), but to all of Jesus' "feedings". Recall, for example, Jesus' dispensing of 'bread' on behalf of the Syrophenician woman.

progression toward enlightenment that suggests the disciples will eventually 'hear' and understand Jesus' resolve to enter Gentile territory. And when the response of the disciples is viewed within Mark as a whole, there is every indication that they will proclaim the message of the good news to both Jew and Gentile, even as Jesus has.

6.0 CONCLUSION

To discover the perceptions and attitudes of first century New Testament writers toward Jews and their religion is not an easy task. For some, this task may not even be a realistic objective. Nevertheless, the history of Jewish suffering, and in particular the Holocaust, calls for the continuous reexamination of the theory that the New Testament itself is the root cause of the extermination of millions of Jews from the earliest of Christian beginnings to most recent times.¹ Thus certain New Testament statements require careful scrutiny. Of primary significance to this study has been what Mark intended by his telic use of Isaiah 6:9-10 in 4:11-12.

Methodologically, it has been argued that Mark 4:11-12 should not be interpreted as an isolated piece of narrative or merely in terms of the parable chapter. Rather, 4:11-12 must be viewed as a piece of narrative that is integrally connected to the whole of Mark's Gospel. Of primary hermeneutical importance are the literary connections between 4:11-12 and 4:1-8:30. Such literary links are a clear rebuttal to attempts by certain proponents of historical critical methods to reduce Mark to an hodge-podge

¹ That the New Testament should continually be reexamined is especially true given recent attempts to redefine first century Judaism due in part to the emerging availability of the Dead Sea Scrolls to scholars at large. There would certainly be implications for interpreting Mark if, for example, it was discovered that the scrolls indicate an earlier or later date than 69-70 C.E. for the writing of Mark.

of narrative fragments strung together by an artless compiler. As has been argued, Mark is not a list of unconnected stories and sayings or a "single structure made up of discrete sequential units but rather an interwoven tapestry or fugue made of multiple overlapping structures and sequences."² Concretely, Mark's literary form is sophisticated.

Neither should any interpretation of Mark forego the importance of the literary connections between Mark and the Old Testament. Although one can speak of Mark's use of the Old Testament as subscribing to a schema of prophecy and fulfilment,³ Mark appears more concerned with adapting or appropriating Old Testament texts to suit a particular theological agenda. The compositional arrangement of Mark's prologue as well as the appropriation of numerous Old Testament themes and motifs, indicate Mark's resolve to intricately link the events that he describes about Jesus with his Jewish literary heritage. For Mark, the Jesus events are coherent with the sovereign actions of God and as such fit most naturally in the *heilsgeschichtlich* tradition.

Mark's preoccupation with intricately connecting the events that he relates about Jesus with Jewish scriptures suggests that he views the teachings and actions of Jesus to stand in some type of relationship to the teachings and

² Dewey, 224.

³ Only with qualifications. So Anderson, 304-306.

practices of traditional Judaism. As has been pointed out, past scholarship has argued that Mark, and other New Testament authors, view this relationship in terms of either continuity or discontinuity.⁴ The discontinuity (or supersessionist) theory simply stated is:

Jesus Christ puts an absolute end to the "old covenant." Israel is replaced by the church. The Jewish way of approaching God is totally superseded by the Christian way. The Chosen People are supplanted by the Bride of Christ. The Easter break is absolute.⁵

This position is obviously reminiscent of that introduced by the early church fathers and supported by later scholars like Bultmann and Harnack. In contrast, those scholars who advocate a theory of continuity "hold that Jesus can be understood properly only in continuity with the faith of Israel and in light of the Hebrew Scriptures."⁶ Advocates of this model argue, therefore, that Christianity has not superseded Judaism. In fact, according to certain proponents of this position, "Christianity needs to reincorporate dimensions from its original Jewish context,

⁴ There are varying degrees to which scholars hold to both of these positions. For a survey of the literature see M.B. McGarry, Christology after Auschwitz (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 56-98. Cf. also John T. Pawlikowski, Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1982), esp. 8-35.

⁵ H. Cox, The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity (Oak Park: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988), 153.

⁶ Ibid., 154.

in particular the sense of rootedness in history."⁷

This thesis has shown that the Marcan narrative can be taken to reflect either of these positions. For instance, proponents from the continuity camp can argue that the compositional arrangement of the Marcan prologue indicates that there is a certain continuity between the Old Testament and Mark's Gospel. Specifically, Mark's placement of 1:2b-3 intricately links the events that Mark wishes to record about Jesus with his Jewish literary heritage. In addition, Mark continually places on the lips of Jesus answers to questions by the religious leaders that reiterate and confirm the continuing validity of Jewish laws. Mark, for example, often has Jesus affirm the written law over against the oral law (e.g., 1:44, 7:1-13; 10:2-9, 17-22; 12:24-34). Such attacks on oral tradition, however, cannot be rightly viewed as Gentile (Christian) anti-Judaism, for even the prophets of Israel lambasted their own people, the Jews.⁸ At other times, Mark has Jesus reject the Mosaic law (e.g., 10:3-4; Deut. 24:1) and uphold the original intention of God's law (e.g., Gen. 1:17; 2:24; 5:2). Thus Mark has Jesus set one point of law over against another. And again, this is not to be taken as exemplifying discontinuity or to imply that Mark has an anti-Judaic theological agenda since to set one point of law above another was a common practice among a

⁷ Pawlikowski, 34.

⁸ Hare, 29-30.

very diverse first century Jewish community. It has also been shown that there is a certain thematic continuity between Marcan and Isaianic soteriology.

According to advocates of discontinuity, to recognize that the foundational stones of a new Jewish sect are similar to those of Judaism should not, however, lead one to conclude that the building is the same.⁹ From an analysis of the Marcan narrative the supersessionist can argue that Mark's aim is to show that Jesus sought the replacement of traditional Judaism. In the first place, Jesus' innate authority and his refusal to adhere to the authoritative traditions prescribed by the Jewish religious leaders, implies a proclamation that is by nature discontinuous. Consequently, Jesus' interpretations of the Torah and the prophets did not often subscribe to those of the official interpreters of Judaism. Jesus' personal vendetta against the temple can also be utilized by advocates of supersessionism to support their case. The clear implication of the stories Mark relates about Jesus and the temple is that of its destruction. And just as telling is the prediction that with the destruction of the temple comes the demise of the religious establishment, a theme prominent in Mark (11:12-21; 12:1-12; 13:1-2).

To be sure, there is evidence within the Marcan

⁹ E.P. Sanders, "Patterns of Religion in Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: A Holistic Method of Comparison," HTR 66 (1973): 455-478.

composition that can be used to support either continuity or discontinuity. But given the diversity of first century Judaism this does not appear to be the most relevant question to pose. A more pertinent question that emerges from any comparison of Jesus' teachings and practices with the diverse forms of Judaism that existed during the first century is: "With what sort or branch or tendency of Judaism was Jesus continuous?"¹⁰ The diversity of first century Judaism is evidenced within Mark's Gospel. Sometimes Mark has Jesus side with the Sadducees over against the Pharisees, and vice versa.¹¹ At another time Mark has Jesus side with a scribe (12:28-34). The identification of other Jewish sectarian groups within Mark's Gospel also attest to the diversity of first century Judaism.¹² The most probable conclusion, then, is that one cannot "decide a priori that [Jesus] . . . must have been in agreement with Judaism in all things . . . [nor can one] decide that . . . [he] must have been discontinuous with the Judaism of his day in this or that matter."¹³ Moreover, the Jewish community was tolerant of "a wide variety of haggadic and halakic nonconformity within its midst, albeit with vigorous protest

¹⁰ John P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 173.

¹¹ Cf. chap. two, section 2.3.

¹² E.g., John's disciples, Herodians, and chief priests. Cf. also 9:38-41.

¹³ Ibid.

and healthy disagreement."¹⁴ To argue, therefore, that Mark has a particular anti-Judaic theological agenda is not to account for the diverse historical Judaistic milieu out of which his Gospel emerges. Consequently, it is inaccurate to talk of the relationship between Judaism and the emergence of a new Jewish sect as being either continuous or discontinuous.¹⁵

Since neither continuity nor discontinuity *alone* can account for the relationship between the *Judaisms* of the first century and the emergence of a new Jewish sect, Mark has to account for it in some other way. The answer for Mark lies in the advent of Jesus. According to Mark, the advent of Jesus in history is the beginning of something 'new' that Yahweh had promised Israel. The idea that God is about to do something new is explicitly stated in 2:21-22. Repeatedly, the Marcan characters are amazed at the teachings and actions of Jesus for they had never seen anything (new) like this before (1:27; 2:12; 4:41; 5:20; 6:51b; 9:15; 10:32; 12:11,17). The motif of fear also implies that there is something new on the horizon (5:15,36;

¹⁴ Hare, 31.

¹⁵ As Charlesworth, 75, points out: "Christianity did not evolve out of one 'sect' on the fringes of normative Judaism. Christianity developed out of many Jewish currents; there was no one source or trajectory."

6:50; 9:6,32; 10:32; 16:8).¹⁶ What is this new teaching (1:27)? For Mark, the essence of the new teaching is directly reflected in the soteriological significance of the mission of Jesus. Implicit in Mark's soteriology is an attempt to answer a question that plagued the writers of both the Old and New Testaments, namely, will God recant on his covenantal promises to Israel?

Mark answers this question primarily in light of Israel's relationship to Yahweh as depicted in Jewish scriptures, and particularly by Isaiah 6:9-10, and in conjunction with the distinctive responses of the Jews and Gentiles during Jesus' earthly ministry. In the first instance, while the Jewish crowds of Mark's storyline are receptive to Jesus' ministry there is every indication that their blindness results in their failure to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah. The religious leaders similarly are blind and obdurate to the teachings of Jesus. Once they realize that their kingdom (i.e., the temple) is at stake, they condemn Jesus to death. The disciples also, though provided

¹⁶ This in no way suggests the complete annulment of the old. For Mark, the term "old" is not used as that which is diametrically opposed to that which is "new". Rather, the terms "old - new" reflect a theme resurgent in Jewish scripture. It carries the connotation that God is still 'dealing' with his people. In short, it implies the progressive nature of Judaism. That is, the relationship of Yahweh with his people is 'developing.' And this does not reject "old" encounters of Yahweh with his people; only that Yahweh continues to act in history in "new" and marvellous ways in the *heilsgeschichte* tradition (cf. Mark 12:10-11 and Psalm 118:22-23; Isaiah 29:18).

with esoteric teaching, fail to act decisively to prevent the death of Jesus.

These developments, however, are not as fatalistic as they first appear. According to Mark, the blindness is a result of the sovereign plan of God and is in fulfilment of Isaiah's proclamation in 6:9-10 that the Jews will fail to hear the message. In other words, it is maintained that Mark intends the essence of the original Hebrew of Isaiah 6:9-10, i.e., that God's purpose was that "those outside" (the Jews) would not understand and thus remain unperceptive to the "mystery of the kingdom". This is as true for those Jews on the inside (i.e., the disciples) as for those Jews on the outside (i.e., the Pharisees, scribes, sadducees, the crowd, etc). The Jewish characters do not have esoteric knowledge according to Mark¹⁷ as to Jesus' identity or mission, and therefore, function to ensure the preservation of the intended destiny of Jesus.¹⁸ There is every indication, however, that the blindness of the disciples is of a different nature than that of most other Marcan characters. That is, the blindness of the disciples is not

¹⁷ Of course, the demons do but according to Mark they are prohibited from making the identity of Jesus known.

¹⁸ The initial blindness of the Jews to Jesus' message coincides with the fact that in the Marcan present, Jesus' immediate purpose was not to proselytize but merely to proclaim the message (1:38-39; 5:18-19). Mark's Jesus is obviously more interested in sowing the word (4:3,14) than in winning followers since he often evades the crowd or else he teaches them in parables so they will not understand.

to be permanent (9:9).¹⁹ After the resurrection, in accordance with God's sovereign plan, the disciples will fully 'see' and proclaim the message of the good news as Jesus has commissioned them to do (6:6b-13; 13:9-13).

Who are to be recipients of this message? In the first place, there is every indication in the Marcan narrative that Jews will be recipients of the message. The salvation of Israel for Mark, however, is not to be viewed in a corporate sense, but in terms of individualism. Mark's presentation indicates that individual Jews will become recipients of the good news. The receptiveness of individuals as opposed to corporate entities is strongly implied in several Marcan passages, namely, 3:35, 4:3-9, 13-20. Individual response is also indicated by Jesus' call to particular individuals to follow him (1:17; 2:14). Besides, throughout the Gospel of Mark, Jesus encounters individual Jews, in contrast to the Jews as a whole, who are receptive to his ministry and message (5:21-24, 35-43; 12:28-34; 15:40-46).²⁰

Despite the anticipated possibility of receptive individual Jews to the proclamation of the good news, Mark still has to deal with the general Jewish rejection of Jesus

¹⁹ So Hawkin, "The Incomprehension of the Disciples in Mark," 492.

²⁰ There are those individuals, however, who respond negatively to the message. For example, the Rich Young Ruler (10:17-22). Cf. also 4:14-19; 14:10-11, 17-21, 43-45).

that is so evident in the Marcan account. Mark finds an answer to his theological dilemma by appealing to the theology of Isaiah. For Isaiah, Israel will be judged for failure to follow the decrees of Yahweh. Their punishment, however, is not total obliteration. At some future point a remnant will be saved (1:9; 7:3; 10:21; 11:11,16; 16:14, etc.). For Mark, the Jews of his storyline exemplify the fulfilment of the Isaianic prophecy (6:9-10). They are thus initially excluded from being recipients of the good news. In Mark, as in Isaiah, their exclusion is not total nor eternal. Rather, it is best characterised as partial and temporary. That is, the obdurate state of the Jews will not last indefinitely. There will come a time (i.e., after the resurrection) when individual Jews will become recipients of salvation. In this connection, the choosing of the twelve is certainly significant. Accordingly, the number twelve implies that the disciples represent the faithful remnant of the old Israel who would be the foundation of the new.²¹

Why are the Jews temporarily excluded? They are excluded temporarily because it is part of God's plan. Paradoxically, their exclusion leads to their inclusion. And according to Mark, the Jewish rejection of Jesus is not only instrumental in securing their own salvation, but also in the salvation of the Gentiles. Like Isaiah, therefore, Israel's blindness serves a pedagogical or medicinal purpose

²¹ Bruce, 62.

in bringing salvation to the Gentiles, a theme implicit in the Marcan bread cycle.

What then can be made of the claim that Mark 4:11-12 represents a Marcan anti-Judaic theological agenda? First, when the teachings and practices of Jesus are viewed as representing one form within an already diverse Judaism of the first century, no such claim is legitimated. Secondly, Mark's deliberate and consistent use of Jewish scripture in a way compatible with contemporary Jewish exegetical practice, depicts Mark as being very congenial toward his literary heritage. Thirdly, whatever methodology one employs to analyze the Marcan data, there is an obvious underlying theological agenda that Mark is grappling with, namely, what of the apparent rejection of Jesus by the Jews? And more pointedly, what of their salvation? Mark's answer does not suggest a blatant rejection of the Jews, rather that their reaction to Jesus is part of God's plan, a salvific plan that excludes neither Jew nor Gentile.

The questions that Mark grapples with are certainly reflective of those that Paul addresses in Romans 9-11. Paul's method, however, is obviously more systematic than Mark's. As Sandmel and others have noted, Mark is "presenting in narrative form facets of what are in Paul doctrines expressed in abstract or theological form."²² A

²² Sandmel, 22. Cf. also Christopher Burdon, Stumbling on God: Faith and Vision in Mark's Gospel (London: S.P.C.K., 1990), 17.

narrative, of course, is obviously more open to the possibility of being misinterpreted than a systematic Pauline treatise. Consequently, as Adele Reinhartz rightly points out, the Gospel narratives can be read to reflect anti-Jewish attitudes or be used appropriately as a critique of anti-Jewish attitudes.²³ Baum's "change of heart" as reflected in Ruether's book exemplifies two such distinctive readings by the same scholar.²⁴ Consequently, it is understandable how certain scholars have come to argue that the root of modern antisemitism is intricately connected to the Gospels. But when one considers the fact that Mark 4:11-12 must be read as part of a literary/theological whole,²⁵ no such conclusion is tenable in the case of Mark. When viewed in light of the rest of the Gospel, therefore, Mark 4:11-12 cannot be taken to reflect a vendetta against the Jews or their religion.

²³ Reinhartz, 537.

²⁴ Ruether, Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism, 3.

²⁵ So Beavis, 132.

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