

The Role of the House Motif in the Gospel of Mark

Submitted by

Br Brian (Victor J.) Beggs, (Dip. Ed; BA; BD; MA; MST)

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School of Theology

Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Australian Catholic University

Research Services

Locked Bag 4115

Fitzroy, Victoria 3065

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STATEMENT OF SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the role of the house motif in Mark's Gospel since in the tradition, Jesus healed, forgave sin, taught and shared meals as well as the Last Supper in the house. It is argued that Mark was composed for a Gentile, Hellenist Christian house group in Rome and written soon after Nero's persecution (64-65 CE) of the Christian house-church communities and prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Though other studies support alternate sites in Galilee, Southern Syria and the Transjordan as the source of the Gospel, the traditional arguments favouring Rome indicate that Mark is a Hellenist Gospel written for the majority Law-free Christian household groups in Rome as Paul's letter attests in 58 CE.

The Gospel offers hope in following the way of the secret of the kingdom. In Mark's terms, the secret is Jesus' servant dedication to his messianic ministry, climaxing in his crucifixion and resurrection. There is no description of Jesus' resurrection in the Gospel; in part unnecessary since, from its opening, the Gospel presumes the power and authority of the crucified, risen Son of Man, the Lord. As Lord, he calls disciples to follow him along the way of eschatological servant dedication in the spatial context of the typical, urban house-church. Consequently, within the house motif, Mark sets out the minor characters' response in faith and hope to the Lord's authoritative call, healing, forgiveness and Eucharistic unity in the house.

In contrast, the narrative synagogue groups first react only with astonishment to Mark's messianic Jesus. But, under the authorities' leadership, the Jewish response hardens into total rejection of Jesus as Mark's gradually enlarges Israel's negative response to Mark's symbolic visitation, judgment and rejection theme of the temple due to the opposition of the Jewish authorities and their abuse of the Law and the temple liturgy. Mark has no pastoral interest in a remote Jerusalem or its temple. From the Gospel's viewpoint, his real aim is the visitation of Rome's house-church groups

through the living Word of the risen Jesus of Nazareth. Israel's negative narrative response acts as a literary backdrop to the faith responses in the house. As a result, through its misused Law and temple traditions, Israel ensures its symbolic visitation and rejection. Concurrently, in house-churches sustained by faith, and the authoritative Word of the risen Son of Man, challenges Christians in Rome to a renewed fidelity in way, covenant service.

Therefore, under the mantle of the house motif, the Gospel offers 'the secret of kingdom of God' - Jesus' life as the selfless servant - as the basis for individual and communal hope. Christians live in the aftermath of severe persecution. These house groups are challenged to live the paradox of faith in life through death, gain through loss, in following a crucified/risen Lord in servant dedication. This appears to be particularly Mark's aim in his close linking of the two motifs, the house and the way, during the journey of Jesus and the disciples on the way to Jerusalem from Galilee. Throughout, he accents eschatological house-churches; their members live the secret of the kingdom in faith, hope and mutual selflessness.

Thus, as Lord of the House, Jesus goes before Rome's Christian groups in his ever-present living and dying in his glorified humanity. By following Jesus of Nazareth in servant discipleship in a house community, Christians blend their existential human becoming with that of the glorified Lord. Hence Mark clearly expects Christians to see the 'things of God' as their Spirit-inspired servant charity. In this way, they daily deepen their Christian unification with Jesus' own dedication as the Beloved Servant/Son in his obedience to his Father's will. This is the gift that Mark points to 'now in this time'.

Mark stresses this sense of the victorious, fruitful presence of the glorified Son of Man, the Lord, from the opening of the Gospel. The superscription and the fact that he addresses Christians, who already know Jesus as the triumphant Lord, allow him

to write from a post resurrection viewpoint. So, within the scope of the house motif, Mark encourages a deeper faith and hope in the efficacy of Christian self-identification with Jesus in his victorious way of the cross.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	<i>Acta apostolicae Sedis</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ACNT	Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
AJT	<i>Australian Journal of Theology</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Biblical Journal of Religious Literature</i>
<i>BJT</i>	<i>Biblical Journal of Theology</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
BSS	Biblical Scholars Series
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theological Bulletin</i>
<i>BTL</i>	<i>Bulletin of Theological Literature</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBNTS	Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ES</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical Studies</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>Exp</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GNS	Good News Studies
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTSS	Hervormde Theologiese Studies Series
<i>IBS</i>	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>JAF</i>	<i>Journal of American Folklore</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JBT</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Theology</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JR</i>	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PCS	Proclamation Commentary Series
PNTC	Pelican New Testament Commentary
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Review for Religious</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>Scripture Bulletin</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World

SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
SR	<i>Scripture Review</i>
TBT	<i>The Bible Today</i>
TD	<i>Theology Digest</i>
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TSBS	The Scholars' Bible Series
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark contains constant references to the urban house.¹ Within the first part of the Gospel (1:1-8:26), Mark no sooner situates Jesus in the synagogue at the narrative's opening (1:21-28) than he relocates him, not only in a particular house and domestic setting, but one with overtones of an extended family group. There he performs his first healing (1:29-31). Significantly, it is at the door of this house that Jesus extends his messianic mission as he heals and routs the demons among the crowds that throng about the dwelling (1:32-34). It is from there too that Jesus leaves to pray and then to preach the good news (1:35-39). An inclusive messianic dinner that follows the Son of Man's forgiveness of sins in an unroofed dwelling (2:5) is pointedly celebrated in Jesus' home (2:15-17). In the ensuing discussions (2:18-22), a domestic household is presumed with the mention of a wedding celebration, fasting, storing wine and mending garments.

The Markan Jesus' return to the synagogue (3:1-6) highlights this concentration on the house for immediately after he solemnly inaugurates the new Israel - not in the synagogue, but on the symbolic mountain (3:13-19). There he defines this new Israel as 'those who sat about him' in the house (3:34), a domestic scene that is suggestively present also at 4:11,21,34. The Son of Man's works of power are further described in Jesus' bestowal of life within the privacy of Jairus' dwelling (5:35-43). Likewise, if the Markan Jesus shares his messianic mission with the Twelve, he nominates the house as their sphere of operation (6:7-13). In contrast, the Pharisees are preoccupied with creating an exclusivist religious household by means of the temple's holiness tradition, shown in careful attention to ritual observances such as the washing of 'cups and pots and vessels of bronze' (7:1-13). Following his explanation of the Pharisees' customs in 7:1-13, Mark chooses a domestic setting in which to outline how

¹ M.F. Trainor, *The Quest for Home: the Household in Mark's Community*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 5-6.

the time has come for Gentile Christians to share in the Eucharistic meal in an inclusive house-church that characterises the new Israel (7:24-30).

Then, throughout the journey to Jerusalem (8:28-10:52) Mark intensifies this association still further. Jesus' servant discipleship teaching is either summarised in the house (9:28-29; 10:10-12) or expressed in extended sections of teaching on discipleship within a communal setting (9:33-50; 10:1-31). In such teaching, family motifs predominate: the issues of marriage (10:1-9), little children (9:35) and servants, together with charity to the poor (9:41) and the productive household culture (9:42). Even cooking materials such as salt serve as symbols of some aspect of the Gospel (9:50). Houses too are included in the eschatological blessings 'now in this time' (10:30) while at 11:17, the Lord comes to his temple and judges its authenticity as God's 'house of prayer'. It fails the test and, if rejected, its replacement, the house-church, is symbolically viewed as the new Israel, the 'house of prayer for all the nations' (11:17). Mark describes the characteristics of the new temple in which the crucified/risen Son of Man reigns as Lord (11:27-12:37) for it is as Lord that Jesus leaves his 'servants...each with his own work and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch' (13:35).

At Bethany, Jesus stays in the house of a leper who epitomises the inclusiveness of a Christian household (14:3-9). Yet nothing so intimately describes the bond between Jesus and his disciples as his choice of the dwelling for the Passover Meal - the 'upper room' (14:14). There Jesus celebrates his blood of the (new) covenant with his disciples (14:24) for, when he is 'raised up', he 'will go before you to Galilee' (14:28). This symbolic statement hints at 'way' discipleship and provides Mark with a peg on which to hang two vital themes. The first is Mark's replacement motif, which is the union of the human, historical expression of Jesus' messianic words and actions with their present reality 'now in this time' in the house-church (10:30). Then, in 11:22-12:37, he describes the heart of the new house of prayer (11:22-25). It is in the urban

house that the Christian inversion of the values of the Greco-Roman patriarchal culture takes place in the intertwining of the human becoming of Jesus and the disciple.

From a cursory reading of the Gospel, it is clear that the house motif is a key element in Mark's literary strategy. This has not gone unnoticed by scholars. We will now examine four studies of this Markan theme. Through different methodologies, they highlight Mark's engagement with the metaphorical 'house' motif - their approaches will be assessed and suggestions made that would extend their scope.

1. SURVEY OF RELATED SCHOLARLY STUDIES

C.D. Marshall, writing in 1989, concentrates on *faith* in the kingdom's way discipleship in 'Jesus Christ, Son of God' (1:1). Marshall's work² carries particular relevance for our study for he repeatedly notes how Mark locates professions of faith in Jesus' power and authority within a household group (2:5; 5:36; 7:25 - pp. 34-56). He also outlines the centrality of faith in Mark and contrasts its frequent use in the text compared with other important concepts such as 'gospel' and 'Galilee' (faith in pp.1-2 used 13 times).³ He insists that Mark's theme of faith must be analysed in its narrative context, a key aspect for our study since Mark both uses and associates the terms *pistis* and *pisteuein* with pericopes that link house-churches to servant/way discipleship (cf. 1:29-31; 9:28-29; 10:27; 11:23; 13:33-37; 14:3-9,17-29).

Marshall's narrative focuses solely (p. 4) on the object of faith, the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord and 'Son of God' (1:1). It is his 'way' or reign that is the source of Christian life in the urban house. Mark writes in the third person as an intrusive (yet truthful) narrator, detailing how faith in the living Word of the Gospel enables his addressees to share in the reign of the crucified/risen Lord (1:15) who brings hope and healing (1:29-31,32-34; 2:1-12,15-17; 5:19,21-43; 7:24-30; 14:3-9). Marshall

² C.D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, (SNTSMS 64; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

³ Marshall, *Faith*, 1-2. Marshall employs *pistis* and its cognates 17 times in the Gospel; Galilee - 13.

stresses that Mark evaluates all these situations from a constant point of view: a standard of judgment based on faith in the power and authority of Jesus (p. 23), who, in turn, defers to the ultimate authority of his Father (12:22; 13:32; 14:36). It is the gospel of God, assuming its point of departure in the first words of Jesus - 'repent and believe in the gospel' (1:14-15). Yet this kingdom

is not primarily a spatial or a temporal category in Mark but a dynamic event: God himself is approaching "with strength" (Isa 40:10 LXX; cf. Mk 1:7) to establish his dominion over sin, sickness and hostile powers (p. 34).

Such is this intimate oneness between Jesus and the kingdom that the depth of the disciples' relationship to Jesus determines their closeness to the kingdom (pp. 34-47). In addition, Jesus' miracles are of great significance. Nearly one third of the Gospel is devoted to them (p. 57). Marshall further insists that Mark is culturally correct in situating these proofs of the Lord's reign within a communal setting. From a literary viewpoint, he has been able to turn many of these domestic pericopes to rhetorical effect since miracles worked within the household represent an implicit summons to repentance and faith for Rome's Christian groups (p. 49). The paralytic pericope (2:1-12) is taken as a clear example of a group's response to the good news: they hear about Jesus and respond in faith to the power of God invested in them (2:5). It is a communal faith based on individual faith (cf. 2:12), since by faith the once powerless man enters the kingdom of eschatological power in the house (p. 90).

Within the direct *pistis* and *pisteuein* material itself, faith is related to discipleship (pp. 134-176). Marshall illustrates this personal link (11:22-25). He writes:

If faith is the *modus operandi* of the eschatological community, prayer is the vehicle and expression of this faith; the community of faith is therefore a 'house of prayer'. Significantly, vv. 24f do not enjoin prayer but presuppose it as the prevailing life-condition of the community (p. 170).

He also insists that the disciples are invited to trust in God, for with the Lord's rejection of the existing temple (11:3) the house-church replaces it. Through the risen Lord's power, it is the commencement of the new house of prayer for all people (p. 164).

The authority of Jesus as Lord forms the basis of Marshall's study. As Lord, Jesus comes to his temple. Judgment and the replacement of the temple ensue; this results in God's presence now dwells within the eschatological household of faith (10:30). From the evangelist's perspective, this new community would be a Greco-Roman Christian household. Marshall also concludes that Mark regards forgiveness as a vital aspect of faith, for genuine faith is repentant faith. Moreover, God's love, power and forgiveness form a unity; to share in the God's reign depends upon the petitioner's sharing in these three attributes: faith/prayer, love and forgiveness (11:25). Faith redirects one's life in its ethical and religious dimensions within the group (pp. 164-171).

Marshall recognises that Mark relates the discipleship failure motif to his paraenetic concerns on the one hand and to his narrative technique on the other (pp. 177-208). From their association with the disciples' failures in various household contexts, recurring terms such as 'anyone' (8:34) and 'everyone' (10:30) confront Mark's addressees with the full dimensions of Jesus' discipleship teaching (p. 210). If the contrast enhances the centrality of Jesus, the paradigmatic servant, it in turn encourages self-criticism in the addressees. They would recognise elements of the same infidelity in themselves (pp. 211-212), a response that the battery of rhetorical questions in 8:14-21 is designed to encourage.

In his conclusion, Marshall specifies that, for Mark, faith is not a broad confidence in God's power but 'a specific commitment of trust in him insofar as he is active and present in the person and ministry of Jesus within a household context' (p. 231). In this belief, the personal, human condition of faith is intimately involved. From his analysis of Mark's literary forms and redactional techniques, Marshall stresses the individual's response to the rhetorical faith-challenges that Jesus' words and actions constitute in the community (pp. 236-237).⁴

⁴ Cf. 1:29-31, 32-34; 2:1-17; 3:20-35; 6:10; 7:24-30; 9:28-29; 9:33-50; 10:10-31; 14:3-9, 17-25, 51-52.

Our study appreciates the extensive strengths of Marshall's work. He clearly outlines the interdependence of faith and the social reality that the Greco-Roman household constituted in the first century. It meant life and personal identity, realities that Mark subsumes within the house motif. A brief survey of his book's table of contents indicates the stress placed on the house as a metaphorical space where faith is exercised.⁵ The work continually returns to the personal aspect of faith via the Gospel's post-resurrection viewpoint and also to its rhetorical thrust by means of a narrative character's exemplary or defective response to the word (pp. 75-132).

Yet in designating these household groups as the new 'house of prayer' (11:17), Marshall fails to address the testing nature of persecution on these same house-churches. Although he places the Gospel in Rome (p. 6), he ignores the inevitable faith challenges thrown up by the Neronian persecution since Rome's Christians had suffered extreme brutality throughout its duration (64-65 CE). Its resumption was a distinct possibility, circa 65-69 CE. Christians are challenged to say 'yes' to this paradox in their own personal and communal lives (cf. 13:9-13). To the extent they do so, they become the building blocks of the replacement temple. Thus, if Marshall opts for a Roman source of the Gospel, he does not address the fact of Nero's persecution of Christians or its link with Mark's twin focus: persevering faith during severe personal and communal anguish that demanded faith-filled, supportive communities. The book fails to provide an historical setting for the Gospel and hence its social context. In Chapters 1, this study argues that Mark was written shortly after Nero's persecution, a position effecting any assessment of the house servant motif against the first century patriarchal culture.

Linked to this theme, is the lack of a comprehensive treatment of the vigour of Rome's replacement house-churches. Various pericopes depict suggested abuses in the house-churches (cf. 12:38-44) that are intertwined with examples of

⁵ Marshall, *Faith*, vii-viii.

fruitful, vigorous faith exemplified in servant discipleship (1:31) and evangelising zeal (1:45; 5:19-20; 7:35-36). There are examples of the Church's grappling with current problems during its transition from the infant Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem into the wider urban, Hellenistic Gentile world (2:1-3:5) in its dedication to the 'secret of the kingdom of God' (4:11; cf. 6:17-29; 9:35-36; 10:52; 14:9). This paradoxical fruit of the cross, inherent in first century servant discipleship, requires further analysis.

There are other profitable extensions of Marshall's work: firstly, a treatment of the risen Lord's powerful presence in the metaphorical house. It is the basis of the replacement theme, which Mark outlines in his repeated references to the household presence of the power of God in the Son of Man as Lord (12:35-37; cf. 8:38; 9:9; 14:62). This is the 'secret of the kingdom of God' (4:11), which is the basis of hope through faith for suffering Christian groups in Rome. Second, betrayal during Nero's persecution also raises the question of forgiveness, since Mark describes Judas' presence at the Last Supper. If Jesus suffered betrayal, it is unlikely that the Markan disciple would be exempted from it in some form (13:9-13). From this, faith is expected to direct the group's attempts at reconciliation with those, who, having abandoned the community or betrayed fellow Christians in the stress of persecution and human weakness (4:13-19), now seek forgiveness. Reconciliation is possible through faith in God's power.

In Mark, the ongoing healing of shattered human relationships within the urban house-church emerges as a major aspect of the unifying love, mercy and forgiveness of God (2:1, 15-17; cf. 12:28-34; 11:22-25). Approximately a third of a page is devoted to this aspect of faith (p. 163). Also Marshall does not specify how the communities of resurrection faith are to be clearly counter-cultural through servant discipleship in a patriarchal society (cf. 8:27-10:52). Because of the centrality of the household in daily life, Mark is required to locate the kingdom's power in the house. It is the web of inclusive relationships that constitutes the groups' evangelising sphere

(1:33; 2:2,11,15-17; 3:20; 5:19; 7:25; cf. 6:10), a theme deserving closer examination.

E.S. Malbon's 1991 work⁶ opens with the statement: 'Space, it has often been noted, is of special importance in the Gospel of Mark...space in the Gospel...must be surveyed not in isolated units but in its total - and *literary* - context' (p. 1). Malbon studies various types of spatial dimensions in the text, using a methodology adapted from that employed by the French structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss.⁷ He theorised that myth operates in order to mediate irreconcilable opposites by successively replacing them with opposites that do permit mediation (p. 3). On this basis, Malbon outlines three key types of opposites that form the Markan spatial order in relation to Jesus of Nazareth: geopolitical, topographical, and architectural (p. 8). All three are meant to mediate towards their resolution in the risen Christ, a theory that has key relevance for our study of the resolution of spatial opposites: the *oikos* / *oikia* motif contrasted with the synagogue / temple (pp. 107-168).

Malbon begins her architectural sequence of the synagogue versus the house at 1:21 with Mark's first reference to the synagogue. He then immediately situates Jesus in a house (1:29). It is in houses that Jesus normally preaches or teaches and heals. Those healed are sent back to their homes in order to continue their role in faith in the life of their households (2:11). There is an unresolved clash between these spatial concepts of the house and the synagogue in Mark's opening chapters (p. 113). As the narrative unfolds, however, there is the increasing emphasis on the house as the pivot of evangelisation. For example, the healed demoniac is translated from the tombs (5:3) to the household arena to proclaim the word (5:19-20).

The evangelist foreshadows Jesus' response to the tomb as the crucified/victorious Lord of the house (p. 115). Prior to the Gerasene healing, Mark situates Jesus only in his own home (2:1,15; 3:20). There, a controversy erupts (3:20)

⁶ E.S. Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*, (BSS 13; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

that concludes with Jesus' lordly pronouncement that his eschatological family are those who 'sat about him' in the house (3:34), those who do 'the will of God' (3:35). Thereafter, Jesus is found, not in his house but in dwellings belonging to those who listen to him (p. 115). From 6:1-6a, the first house/synagogue spatial pattern is resolved in a second architectural pattern: Jesus teaches solely in such houses (7:17; 9:28,33-50; 10:10-31 - p. 116). Houses spatially, just as disciples sociologically, distinguish the new eschatological community (pp. 106-131).

By using Levi-Strauss' theory of myth, Malbon concentrates attention on the risen Jesus as the resolution of the house versus synagogue/temple engagement. The Markan Jesus reigns as Lord through his authoritative healing and teaching in the kingdom of God (cf. 5:30; 1:28; 12:14). Servant discipleship is also set in the risen Lord (8:31,34-35; cf. 9:34-50; 10:33-34). Therefore, life in the crucified/risen Son of Man is the resolution of Malbon's methodology in the final inherent clash between the spatial expression dimensions of house and temple for the shattering of the tomb offers the revelation of a re-ordering of history in the crucified/risen Lord (p. 157). Servant/way discipleship in the risen Lord is finally the key mediator in Malbon's three spatial sequences: geographical, topographical, and particularly the architectural motif (pp. 131-166). As we shall illustrate in Chapter 2, Mark's Christian groups in Rome have known intense friction in their relationship with the synagogue groups. In the house, however, problems causing any such opposition is mediated by following the way of Jesus, who, as the Jerusalem power brokers note (12:14), 'truly teaches the way of God' (p. 166).

This analysis of narrative space has important relevance for this study since Malbon's work concentrates on the house motif - a symbol that resonates intimately with first-century Greco-Roman culture. By using a structuralist's mediation concepts, she focuses on the paradoxical secret (4:11) in God's power and authority in

⁷ C. Levi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth,' *JAF* 68 (1955), 428-444.

the house-church. The kingdom is now present there in the crucified/risen Son of Man (3:34-35) as he metaphorically goes ‘before them in Galilee’ and so God’s is no longer fixed in the spatial Holy of Holies (pp. 131-140). Thus, a Christian’s existential experiences need to be transposed into this paradoxical secret in the crucified/risen Christ in this time, through personal faith within the household (1:15). Malbon adds that the empty tomb plus the house for gathering are, from Mark’s viewpoint, witness to the breakdown of the opposition of the sacred and the profane and the breakthrough to a new reality in the house-church (p. 140). The Gospel’s post-resurrection narrative point presumes this approach (1:1) - a fruitful vein for further research. The Gospel is set in the present; house-churches members are urged to repent and believe now (1:15).

Because of her sustained focus on a structuralist methodology, Malbon does not analyse the challenge and effects of the resolution of opposites within the patriarchal household. This is warranted in the light of Mark’s actual reversal of patriarchal social norms (1:16-20; 8:34-35; 8:28-10:52) illustrated in the selfless servant image (10:45). Thus his narrative demands an appreciation of this moral reversal if the vital paradoxical power of the kingdom of God is to be seen as a reality within the urban community (4:11; cf. 10:45). The social contradiction inherent in this servant ideal in relation to patriarchal norms also calls for further study. In addition, there is the necessity for the group to be self-sustaining economically so as to be able to serve the poor requiring a close-knit, mutually selfless, hospitable group. This demand appears to condition Mark’s approach to wealth and its capacity to promote the group’s hospitality and evangelising drive (10:44-45; 12:38-44). This theme too requires further appraisal along with the inside/outside theme based on the spatial concept of the house.

S.C. Barton’s (1994) work⁸ surveys first century examples of communities in which normal family ties are subordinated to a spiritual ideal (pp. 1-22).

⁸ S.C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew*, (SNTSMS 80; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

He studies biblical precedents of such groups prior to Christian house communities (pp. 23-57). The subordination of family ties, shown in Mark's narrative, was not without precedent in the traditions and practices of both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world taken as a whole (p. 23), a way of life referred to in the writings of Philo (pp. 23-34) and Josephus (pp. 35-46). Other first-century authors analysed the principles on which the Cynics and Stoics based their community life (pp. 47-54) as like-minded Christian groups endeavoured 'to adopt such a demanding *modus vivendi* themselves (p. 56).

It is clear that Mark underlines the eschatological nature of first century Christian household discipleship since he situates the narrative (of house discipleship) at the very start of Jesus' public mission (p. 62). This redactional move situates the first call episode (1:16-20) within the scope of the superscription's presumption of the totality of the good news and Jesus' call to 'repent and believe the gospel of God' (1:1; 1:14-15). The eschatological passage at 10:28-31 climaxes Mark's gradual narrative outline of the post-resurrection life of the house-churches that he proleptically describes at 1:16-20. It is exemplified at 1:29-31, where the Christian lives by faith (pp. 62-63).

Barton sees no sign in Mark of antipathy towards familial and occupational ties *per se*, no rejection of ordinary household living. From the first household pericope (1:29-31), he notes that Mark's Gospel

represents the interests and self-understanding, not of an anti-social movement, but of an innovatory, prophetic one...the movement's sense of new priorities, while intimating, at the same time, what those new priorities might cost in personal and social terms' (p. 67).

Barton clarifies the effects of these new priorities at 3:7-35: here a sense of social displacement and relativisation of existing familial and social norms emerge in the creation of relationships based on faith. This norm revolutionises the basis for self-understanding previously formed in the context of the synagogue and patriarchal family, since a house-church constitutes a voluntary faith group whose crucial kinship ties are fictive only (3:35 - p. 82). Yet Barton fails to discuss the effect of this key

principle of faith in such areas as hospitality (1:32-34), care of the poor (2:15-17) or community evangelisation (2:11).

The author also examines Jesus' prophetic disregard for previously accepted social norms of 'shame' and 'honour' for personal identification (pp. 96-107). 'Now in this time' (10:30), the sole criterion for honour is obedience to the Father's will (3:35), a way of life that gives entry to this metaphorical house. Therein lies the demand for faith-based conduct that befits this alternate way of life, itself the precursor to eternal life as Jesus insists at 10:30 (p.104). Metaphorical households of faith amply recompense the disciple for the sacrifices involved in way discipleship (10:29-30,52). Barton appreciates the Christian advantages of a house-church's communal life before the parousia. There, familial relational ties are a basic aspect of his social philosophy (10:28-31 - p.107).

Yet, Barton's positive eschatological approach does not detail the actual power and authority of God's redeeming reign in the crucified/risen Lord in the house. Nor does he define the historical situation of Mark's groups (p. 58). The Gospel provides the solution in faith to the mystery and form of the cross, which is especially present in the challenge to Rome's faith groups by Nero's persecution in 64-65 CE and its possible renewal. As a result, the eschatological victory of the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord, 'the secret of the kingdom of God' (4:11) and its inherent dynamic of hope and evangelising zest are not adequately analysed.

Aspects of Barton's work require the balance of supplementary treatment. Initially it requires a closer analysis of servant discipleship norms so necessary for the peace and unity of a life of faith in a house-church (8:27-10:52). In a social oriented work, Markan concepts such as the 'child' and 'servant' motifs (9:33-10:45) merit an extended analysis. As well, though Mark stresses Peter's role as group leader and spokesman (1:16,36; 9:29,33; 10:28), there are frequent references to group discussions and initiatives, some reflecting criticism of the community (6:7,35; 8:16; 9:10; 9:28;

9:33; 10:13; 12:38-44). Despite this, in pioneering household-churches leaders were an imperative (cf. 13:5-6, 21-23), a reality that Mark recognises (8:33; 13:34; 14:30; 16:7; 12:38-44). But their Markan template is the crucified/risen servant, Jesus (10:45; cf. 10:35-40), a model that challenges the type of leadership and decision-making process in the house-church's functioning. This is a key aspect of the Gospel and in order to balance his thesis Barton's work requires further treatment of this theme.

In his work (2001),⁹ M.F. Trainor seeks to outline the social background of the house-churches depicted in Mark. He focuses on the human need for community observed in the 'social activities of people' (p. 2). Refugees, homelessness and turmoil were endemic in unstable first century urban centres. Then, as now, humanity longs for the reassurance of community, a need indicated by the 218 communal references to the terms *oikos* and *oikia* in the New Testament (pp. 6-8). Domestic language is widespread. Mark's 'use of domestic language reveals much about the story of Jesus and the meaning of discipleship for the writer's audience...this language provides clues for interpreting Jesus' ministry and the function which the "house" played in Mark's day' (p. 8).

Under the heading of 'Mark's Social and Architectural Setting', Trainor describes a typical Greco-Roman house set in an urban centre since the house-church was almost a totally urban phenomenon, circa 70 CE (pp. 9-35). He nominates Rome as the Gospel's source due to the direct and indirect influence of Latin on Mark's Greek (pp. 15-19). In this Greco-Roman centre, the urban house (pp. 20-35) is surveyed from various aspects of family life: marriage, stability, order and household structure (pp. 37-52) in the philosophical writings of Pythagorus, Plato and Aristotle (pp. 53-64). Yet Trainor warns against viewing Mark's house-churches completely from these writings. They are gender-biased towards the patriarchal male role so they were applicable only to the elite of Rome's tiny upper class (p. 37). They offer no details of the social conditions

⁹ Trainor, *The Quest for Home*.

of the great majority of Rome's people, the illiterate working class, refugees and poor.

Christians encounter internal and external pressure in living as a house-church community. Doubts, compromise, betrayal and abuse of power among their leaders are listed (pp. 89-90). As with the first century world, an inclusive community attitude is offered as the antidote for our contemporary social problems especially homelessness so Trainor focuses on what he perceives as the social implications of Mark's urban faith groups in Rome, circa 60-70 CE (pp. 90-174) for today's society.

The work's concentration on the house image is impressive. Trainor recognises the house as the sole context in the Greco-Roman world in which ordinary life was lived; he also saw the need for an inclusive attitude among the house-church members towards outsiders. The house is the setting for Jesus' discipleship teaching in addition to associated themes such as receptiveness, evangelising zest and the abolition of outmoded, demeaning social and religious taboos. However, the study inevitably returns to the theme of homelessness. The ideal household is open to the poor and refugees (cf. 5:19-20; 5:35-43; 7:26-30 - pp. 96-97; 104-105; 117-118; 130-135) so a first-century's house-church's authenticity is measured by its awareness of the social problems about it (9:37-10:12 - pp. 150-152). Scandal is analysed for it corrodes the group's unity and lessens its evangelising capacity (9:33-50; 12:38-40 - pp. 159-161).

Unfortunately, the work's methodology seems flawed. After a brief analysis of a house pericope, Trainor imposes his conclusion on the text rather than as the result of a close analysis. The Introduction states:

we desire a place where social equality and human respect is lived out in practice regardless of peoples' economic conditions or status. In other words, the growing sense of powerlessness and isolation that many feel from technology only serves to highlight our need for authentic community and our desire for a real home' (p. 4).

He acknowledges that his work is 'a reading of the Gospel from a certain perspective' (i.e. homelessness - p. 8); it is not a commentary in the classical sense of the term. He

admits too that while he does ‘work through the text, it is perhaps at times at a far too rapid a pace’ (p. 9).

This element of ‘too rapid a pace’ leads to superficial treatment of key pericopes. Trainor moves on from a general treatment of the servant pericope (1:29-31) to suggestions of Simon Peter’s mother-in law’s involvement in house-church Eucharist leadership and ministry of the word (p. 92). Such issues are relevant to the Church today but it is doubtful if they reflect the key concerns of a persecuted, traumatised community, circa 66-69 CE, grappling with injustice, betrayal and other causes of suffering.

The Gospel's crucial issue is the challenge to faith in the paradox of the cross. Rome’s Christians face the possibility of renewed persecution and its consequences. In this context, there is the issue of non-forgiveness to be resolved due to fraternal betrayal, disunity and household abuse of authority. Of Mk 1:32-34 Trainor writes:

The popularity of this house is emphasized. It is packed with people; those who congregate in it represent the whole city. This emphasizes the universal effect of Jesus’ deeds that bring ‘the whole city’ into the *domus* and reinforces the wider social implications of his mission. Simon’s house is a mirror of Mark’s Roman household community (p. 95).

This approach focuses on the communities’ social aspects rather than the reassurance brought by Jesus’ underlying authoritative power as the Lord of the house (13:32-37).

Before anything else, persecuted groups needed a source of hope. Mark offers it through faith in the power of the crucified/risen Lord in their midst. To believe this truth leads to a hope that will carry Rome’s persecuted Christian groups through present difficulties and whatever suffering lies ahead. Trainor makes no mention of this aspect of the Gospel. Also, in the inside/outside episode (3:31-35) he states:

True kinship in the community of disciples rests not on natural relationship or blood ties but on the practice of God’s will. In this one saying, Jesus refashions household relationships and traditional lines of kinship and obligation revered since the time of Abraham and Sarah (p. 104).

True, but here and later, Trainor does not substantiate his claim of the groups’ inversion of first century patriarchal ethics.

It is also hardly likely that a house-church of 10-25 Christians that has suffered persecution, betrayal, division and infidelity would be preoccupied with a predominately social agenda - rather with unity, forgiveness and survival. Homelessness was endemic in the first century. Even the limited physical household space of a typical Roman house would preclude a community entertaining the concept that they were called to solve the homeless problem among Rome's teeming population of the poor and refugees. Presumably too on Trainor's terms, all those homeless would be expected to enter by faith in the cross. In view of the first century ingrained suspicion of Christian house-churches, this seems most unlikely. If the various communities lack faith in the paradox of the cross, the household would have no basis for service, unity and peace (9:33-50). Crucially, Trainor's failure to justify the Markan replacement temple, which for Mark is now the sphere of the reign of God's kingdom, negates his portrayal of the basis of house-church communal living. Faith is the core of a Christian community; the very slight alleviation of homelessness in first century crowded cities is its by-product.

Thus the source of hope in the Gospel is the reality of the secret of the kingdom, expressed in the intertwined themes in Jesus' present existential becoming with the human experiences of Rome's Christians. Being in this new temple in the 'age to come' will ensure 'eternal life' (10:30). In analyzing 9:28, Trainor sees the disciples'

lack of communication with God and openness to their ongoing conversion prevent them from really hearing and speaking about God, seeing God working in Jesus, recognizing the suffering in Jesus' mission, and appreciating the wide-reaching social and political implications of his ministry (pp. 148-149).

Given its setting, most exegetes hold that 9:14-27 describes the faith needed to follow the Servant Jesus along the way of the cross. Further, if Trainor accepts that this paradox of victory through defeat leads to an experience of the resurrection in the present, he devotes only five lines to the key discipleship/servant theme at the start of the way (8:34-9:1 - p. 146). He virtually ignores the intertwined themes of Jesus' existential becoming

and the disciple's sharing in the risen humanity of the Son of Man. He skims over this aspect of the Gospel in two lines (p. 148).

The author raises issues that broaden the ongoing study of the household as the key social context from which the Gospel of Mark emerged. Yet, criticism of Trainor's work is hinted at in a comment by Robert Karris (on the book's back cover). He writes, 'This book is chock full of new, challenging and exciting insights...it will be a boon to teachers and preachers', and this study adds, to anyone attempting a contemporary application of the Word to present social problems. Yet these new insights, though laudable and sensitive, are imposed upon the text rather than being a close analysis of its fruits. Trainor lacks an accepted, workable methodology that would convey an accurate picture of the type of household of faith that Mark presents. It appears that the most accurate way to achieve this lies in clarifying the impact of persecution on Rome's house-churches in conjunction with an analysis of the reversal involved in servant discipleship of first century patriarchal household norms.

Reviews of Trainor's book are few. One, by D. Bergant, begins with a description of Trainor's keen catechetical and pastoral skills in applying the motifs of 'house' or 'household' to contemporary social problems. Bergant comments: 'These settings and fundamental motifs are reflected in the many encounters Jesus has with households and with the Gospel's vision of relationships and values within the Christian community'.¹⁰ But as we noted above, there is no exegetical link between these pastoral applications and the text. In a closer review, Carolyn Osiek writes that 'Trainor works through the Gospel...highlighting themes of home and homelessness' but without textual justification.¹¹ This results in oddities of interpretation. Understandably, Osiek adds that Trainor's work be made available to 'general readership' and again, the book 'can be

¹⁰ D. Bergant, Review of M.F Trainor, *The Quest for Home*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001) in *TBT* 39 (2001), 322-323.

¹¹ C. Osiek, Review of M.F. Trainor, *The Quest for Home*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001) in *CBQ* 64 (2002), 780-781.

recommended to a general audience'.¹²

The above four studies indicate the key nature of the house motif in the Gospel. Yet this motif's clear link to the associated motif of servant discipleship and Mark's paraenetic motive in writing (cf. 1:15) requires further research, especially the type of faith-based, house-church relationships and servant norms that were counter-cultural in a world of Greco-Roman patriarchal social patterns. In all, it appears that these studies have not taken sufficient note of the social and historical background of the house-churches in post-persecution Rome, the context from which the Gospel emerged.

2. THE PLAN OF THIS STUDY

This study recognizes that any analysis of the Gospel should first be aware of the location and date of the Gospel. The text's combined evidence points to Christian household groups situated in a patriarchal culture in a densely settled, urban centre; we hold that this centre is Rome. This explains the evangelist's constant use of the house motif in order to convey his emphasis on faith, community, the inside/outside theme and his choice of the servant motif as the catalyst of the authority and power of the risen Lord in the community. These elements reflect Mark's recurring judgment, rejection, replacement theme, which is essential to the understanding of Mark in this study. Building upon the work of E.S. Malbon (noted above), it will be argued that Mark presents a clear and unambiguous replacement theology that sees the fundamental institutions of contemporary Judaism - Torah, synagogue and Temple - replaced by faith in the risen and authoritative Lord of the House, Jesus. Mark's harsh attitude on this subject is a direct result of his community's origin with Law-free and Temple-free Hellenists and, perhaps of more importance, its recent social setting of disputation with the local Jewish community and the affects of the Neronian persecution. His groups have known recent persecution, betrayal and rejection to a marked degree (13:9-13).

¹² Osiek, 'Review', 781.

Hence Mark portrays a risen, powerful and authoritative Christ the Lord, who offers reassurance and hope to Rome's Christians in their traumatic situation, a strategy that reflects a group struggling with a communal crisis. Presumably Mark has Nero's persecution in Rome in mind (64-65 CE). It was the only first century persecution that caused such a crucible of intense suffering for a considerable number of house-church based Gentile Christians.

From a combined historical analysis, there has resulted a clear scholarly consensus for dating the composition of Mark just prior to, or just after, 70 CE. Our study argues for a 67-69 CE date that precedes the destruction of the temple. This dating would justify the Gospel emphasis on suffering reflected in the brutality inflicted on Christians in the capital by Nero's persecution apart from vindicating the evangelist's dramatic emphasis on the paradox of a suffering/risen Messiah (cf. 10:45; 8:34-35).

If set in Rome, the Gospel speaks to small Christian household groups, of whom few were Roman citizens and so had no legal defence against the type of cruelty inflicted on them. This injustice is detailed in first and second century secular literature. It clarifies too why Mark chooses the house motif to portray the ideal of house-churches founded on faith and answering the need for exceptional communal charity and solidarity in the face of persecution (11:22-12:37). The motif serves as a springboard for a hypothesis of Christian life, based on a total inversion of the cultural norms of a typical patriarchal household. It explains why Mark depicts Jesus' servant teaching and exercise of authority almost solely within the family unit (8:27-10:52).

Therefore, in Chapter 1 we examine the various theses dealing with the source of Mark's Gospel whether Rome, Galilee or the Transjordan. This study reaffirms the probability that Mark wrote the Gospel in Rome, 67-69 CE, in answer to the severe challenge to the faith of the house-church communities by Nero's persecution. Christians were supposedly guilty of starting the great fires of Rome in 64 CE. Roman,

secular first century authors describe this persecution and the house-churches' situation throughout it. Proof from the tradition, latinisms, the need for the translation of Aramaic terms and Jewish customs likewise bolster the case for a Roman Mark. Contemporary literature does not mention any other social or religious group being targeted by Nero's persecution. Mark wrote for these straitened house-churches, emphasizing belief in the paradox of resurrection life through possible martyrdom during renewed persecution and the daily choice of living the selfless servant ideal in a household of faith.

In turn, Chapter 2 analyses the initial historical, religious and political influences, which determined the type of house-churches in Rome prior to Nero's onslaught in 64-65 CE. Clearly, the first factor is the upheaval caused in Rome's synagogue communities by the newly arrived Hellenist Christians with their law-free and temple-free gospel, circa 35-45 CE. Forced to flee by hostile Jews in Jerusalem, the primitive Hellenists scattered among surrounding urban centres (Acts 11:19-21) and Rome as well where, operating from their house groups, they attempted to evangelise conservative, Jewish synagogue groups. This strategy led to civil turmoil that became a threat to public order. Rome's authorities reacted with Claudius' 49 CE exile of the Hellenist and Jewish leaders, resulting in the creation of more Gentile Christian house-churches. Paul's letter to the Romans (58 CE) indicates that by 57 CE, Christian house-churches were Gentile (1:14,17) and Law-free (7:1-6) except for a minority of partially - Law-observant groups (14:1-15:7).

In key domestic material, Chapter 3 focuses on Mark's situating Jesus' power and authority in the household community as the risen Son of Man, the Lord in Mark 1-8. He invokes the living word to reinvigorate the faith and hope of Christians in Jesus' power and authority that bestows life and healing. Starting at 1:16-20, he describes how, in the faith of minor characters, Jesus' authority and power are active in a house setting (cf. 1:29-31; 2:1-12,15-16; 3:31-35; 5:19-20; 5:21-43; 7:24-8:10). Mark also clarifies

who is ‘inside’ and who is ‘outside’ the kingdom’s reign by using the house motif.

Chapter 4 illustrates how Mark combines household servant teaching (9:28-50; 10:1-52) with the cultural immediacy of the house symbolism during the journey narrative (8:27-10:52). This metaphorical association, though a logical literary structure, is an imperative since normal daily living occurred entirely within the context of the household. Such teaching demanded a radical reversal of patriarchal structures and attitudes towards slaves, children, the poor and freedmen. Patriarchal selfishness or self-aggrandisement and the destructive secular influence common in the life in the surrounding family structures could weaken Christian servant ideals.

Throughout Chapter 5, Mark maps the Gospel’s outline of the gradual enlargement of the narrative’s replacement motif. From 1:16-20, through the faith of minor characters he describes how Jesus’ authority and power are activated by his intensified hostile clash with the scribes and Pharisees’ owing to their protection of their power base, the traditions of the elders. (2:1-12,15-16,18-22,23-28; 3:1-6, 22-30; 6:1-6; 7: 1-13) Then, in the way section (8:27-10:52), the evangelist details the specifics of Christian communal fidelity in the paradox of a crucified/risen Jesus through faith and service (9:33-50; 10:1-31; 13:32-37). At intervals along the way, the linking of the scribes, Pharisees and high priests with Jesus’ passion and death maintains the sense of the looming hostile climax in Jesus’ crucifixion at the hands of the authorities. Entering Jerusalem as the Lord, Jesus seals his fate in declaring the temple liturgy and the Law obsolete (11:1-21). The house is now the new temple ‘not made with hands’ (14:57).

To outline this new reality, Chapter 6 examines the full scope of the servant ideal in the ramifications of the rending of the temple veil (15:38). It resolves the profane (house) versus sacred (temple) tension by presenting God’s presence in the reign of the risen Son of Man on the cross. He is the crucified/risen Lord, ‘the secret of the kingdom of God’ in the house (4:10-11; 9:35-37; 8:38; 14:62; cf. 3:31-35). The

controversies in 11:22-12:37 illustrate the servants' personal and communal faith and prayer, loving forgiveness and service that are described immediately upon the rejection of the temple. Hence, in the message of the *neaniskos* at the tomb (Jesus 'is going before you' - 16:7), Mark reminds the communities that they stand post-resurrection (cf. 1:2-3; 4:15; 8:3, 27; 9:33; 10:32, 52; 12:14; 14:28; 16:7). In faith Christians will see Jesus, the Lord, 'going before' them 'along the way' in their servant dedication. Crucially, and especially in persecution, they needed a fellow-suffering human figure with whom they could associate their sufferings, a need answered in Mark's Gospel of Jesus as their contemporary, yet crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord.

On the basis of Paul's letter to the Romans and the underlying emphases in Mark's Gospel, clearly most household-churches in Rome were Law-free. Mark attaches no significance to the Jewish concept of Yahweh's sacred presence in the Jerusalem temple or of cultic purity regulations about food and special days. Rather, Mark utilises the contemporary complex suggestiveness of the house motif to concretise the discipleship ramifications of faith for each Christian. It is Jesus who goes before the community on its journey of faith (14:28; 16:7). As the victorious Lord of the house, Jesus lives his servant/way for the 'other' in an intimate communion for 'whoever receives me receives not me but him who sent me' (9:37; cf. 11:22-12:34).

3. HISTORICAL AND LITERARY METHODS OF THIS STUDY

Historical criticism is a necessity for this study so as to determine the location and approximate date of the Gospel and to understand the type of community for which Mark wrote. To this end, historical criticism analyses the internal evidence of the Gospel and any relevant, external first century evidence since the text is a historical entity, composed in a particular social setting to fulfil a stated need; it was meant to convey a relevant message for a chosen group.¹³ Yet R. Bauckham recently argued that the Gospels,

¹³ N. Perrin, 'Historical Criticism, Literary Criticism, and Hermeneutics: The Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus and the Gospel of Mark Today', *JR* 72 (1972), 62.

including Mark, were written for all Christians and not for specific Christian groups.¹⁴ P.F. Esler replied, citing recent social-scientific critiques and Gospel studies of group-oriented activities of first century life paralleling the evangelist's community's life. He argues that Matthew and Luke make such changes to Mark in order to outline their own communities' concerns (pp. 241-242). Esler further maintains that details about Jesus in the Gospels is filtered down to us through the minds of the evangelists and certain (communal) experiences that shaped the disciples' perspective in a household-oriented, well established culture (p. 247).¹⁵

Marcus in turn explains how each Gospel functions so as to 'preserve precious memories in the face of the potential decease of their bearers through old age' (cf. Mk 9:1; p. 26). If each synoptic Gospel survived, this survival is best shown

by the hypothesis of local support for the individual Gospels and the distance of their target communities from each other - just as the existence of local manuscripts types...is testimony to the strength and relative independence of the churches in which those manuscripts were preserved.¹⁶

This study therefore seeks to clarify the historical situation of the groups for which Mark writes, a clarification that is the outcome of a redactional treatment of various pericopes apart from their order in the narrative. There must have been a desired overall effect in his choice of material from the oral tradition of the community. The result of such an analysis is verified by the outline of the first century's social setting in contemporary secular and religious writing. It prevents reading the Gospel in such a manner that a meaning is taken from the text that it could not have possessed for Mark's addressees.

Historians accept the basic historical boundaries and Greco-Roman culture of the first century Roman Empire in which Mark wrote.¹⁷ Within those boundaries,

¹⁴ R. Bauckham (ed.), *The Gospels For All Christians: Re-Thinking the Gospel Audiences*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). For a detailed critique of Bauckham's thesis, see D.C Sim, 'The Gospels For All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham', *JSNT* 84 (2001), 3-27.

¹⁵ P.F. Esler, 'Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to R. Bauckham's *Gospels For All Christians*', *SJT* 51 (1998), 238-239.

¹⁶ J. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 26.

¹⁷ E. Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 37-38; cf. S.J., Joubert, 'Managing the Household' in P.F. Esler, (ed.), *Modelling Early Christianity*, (London: Routledge

historical criticism begins with the text itself.¹⁸ Krentz comments that

the first task of the historian who wishes to meet this goal is simply to hear the texts with which he is working. He uses every linguistic tool at his disposal to determine the sense the text had for its writer and first audience...(T)he historical context often demands an interpretation that is not expected from the vantage point of the interpreter's own time and culture. We can thus expand our description to say that hearing texts on their own terms is not only the first, but even the 'fundamental act of all textual interpretation'.¹⁹

Mark used material from the community's oral tradition.²⁰ This study also accepts that both his intention in writing and the addressees' needs would have dovetailed.

In order to speak to his first century situation, Mark clearly builds on a passion narrative from the tradition. Exegetes also point to other pericopes that show signs of a prior independent existence. Marcus recognises pre-Markan material in the passion account, the two controversy sections, (2:1-3:6; 11:27-12:37) as well as the possible miracle collection (3:7-6:6a) and sections of the parables chapter (4:1-34) as further examples of a pre-Markan syntheses.²¹ Yet just as important is the probability that while there is continuity between Mark and the tradition in the household-churches, there is also discontinuity. Mark has moulded the raw material of a prior passion narrative, miracle accounts and controversy or teaching units into an original work directed to the current needs of his community. Whether the Gospel reflects a past experience of persecution or its possible recurrence, the historian forms a literary record that is different from an historical situation, for it has a continuing life in the present and serves the purpose of the community he writes for.²²

Presumably, Mark deals with the current problems in his community, some created specifically by persecution. In this respect, we should regard him as an artist who created an original contemporary story based firmly on the traditional material

Press, 1995), 9-40.

¹⁸ Krentz, *Historical Critical Method*, 39-40.

¹⁹ Krentz, *Historical Critical Method*, 39-41.

²⁰ J. Corely, 'Methods of Biblical Interpretation: A Guide', *SR* 30 (2000), 6.; cf. J. Barton, 'Historical-Critical Approaches', in J. Barton, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 11.

²¹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 57-59.

available.²³ Most scholars acknowledge the synchronic aspects of Mark - the present Gospel form created by the evangelist from disparate material. We must also recognise the previous diachronic influences: the growth of a text over time in order to meet the different needs of a community at particular stages of its development. In turn, Mark continues this diachronic approach by moulding traditional material to serve current needs in particular house-churches at a particular time.

Historical criticism, moreover, is concerned with the final result of the text's merged synchronic and diachronic influences. It is logical to assume that the combined effect of these two approaches, together with the creative skill of the evangelist, constitutes 'the natural sense' of the text. In this way, Mark conveys an emphasis on key themes of extreme importance to his community at a specific historical period.²⁴ He gives a certain form to the Gospel in order that it may function in one way and not in another.²⁵ Its form and language largely determine the manner in which it may be understood and interpreted.

Thus Mark selected and shaped the living traditional material in order to express relevant overarching themes. These concern the concrete life-situation of his addressees because, as in all sorts of contexts, people operate quite simply with the idea that words have definite meanings. The author combines words to convey a certain meaning to specific readers. Thus, Mark's intense emphasis on human suffering points to it being a vital question in the life of his households. P. Barry maintains that ideas are never clearly detailed merely by uncovering their philosophical links. They must be related accurately to the specific circumstances in which they were set so that a word's meaning is not definitively determined by prior or parallel or derived examples, but by its situation in its own

²² Krentz, *Historical Critical Method*, 71.

²³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 61.

²⁴ Barton, 'Historical-Critical Approaches', 17.

social/historical context.²⁶ In such a context, historical criticism ensures a reasonably accurate location of the historical and social context of a particular house-church.

From this brief survey of the fundamentals of historical criticism, it may be concluded that Mark's Gospel attempts to move Rome's Gentile Christians to faith and hope in a suffering, crucified/risen Lord in their own specific social context. Through the type of pericopes that Mark chooses to use and their order in the narrative, he depicts the social matrix from which emerged the predominant issues that he attempts to address. Above all, Mark presents the living word of God in narrative form so as to encourage the house-churches' response to the Gospel's paradox of life and human fulfilment through suffering and selflessness.

It should also be kept in mind that Mark composes a literary work, a story. Hence, literary criticism is an additional critical tool in appreciating Mark's purpose in constructing the Gospel. From this perspective, an analyst of the text ought to be aware that Mark weaves a theme of 'narrative clues' throughout the story. These clues repeatedly point to the key to the Gospel: resurrection-faith and its present fruit in Christian hope in Christ as Lord and the resultant confident evangelization of such good news. The first imperative that Mark places on the lips of Jesus is his call to 'repent and believe the gospel' (1:15). It challenges Christians to deeper faith in Jesus' acts of power in the house to forgive sin (2:1-12) and to restore humanity to life, including eternal life (cf. 5:35-43; 10:30). He stresses how Jesus sustains 'way' discipleship through the provision of 'food' lest 'they faint on the way' (8:3), together with his authoritative teaching and bestowal of 'peace' and the sense of personal resurrection identity within a cohesive, supportive group (9:52; cf. 3:31-35; 10:29-31).²⁷

²⁵ M.A. Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 307.

²⁶ P. Barry, 'Exegesis and Literary Criticism', *SB* 20 (1990), 28.

²⁷ Cf. 1: 31,40-45; 2:1-12; 4:19-20,21-32; 5:19-20; 7:28,36-37; 8:3,22-26,38; 9:1,38-41; 10:28-31; 11:22-25; 13:33-37; 14:17-31.

A persecuted house-church, under grave physical and social duress, would desperately need hope based on the certainty in the power of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord. His power effects what the living word proclaims, namely supportive households of faith encouraging discipleship and the assurance of eternal life for since

John is sent “ahead” of Jesus, and Jesus goes “ahead” of the disciples. Jesus comes “after” John and the disciples “follow after” Jesus. These words are not merely temporal and spatial descriptions; they reflect the pattern of life, which is “the way of God”.²⁸

Mark’s literary strategy thus seeks to blend the ongoing personal and daily, communal trauma of Christians with the historical experiences of the crucified, risen Jesus of Nazareth, ‘now in this time’ (10:30). The ongoing rejection/replacement theme is the fruit of this endeavour with its two-dimensional historical/now structure. Hence, Mark’s post-resurrection emphasis is the core of the Gospel. It stresses the truth that Rome’s Christians share now in the power of the secret of the kingdom of God (4:11).

To convey such a conviction, Mark is obliged to construct his literary work in order to endow it with absolute, authoritative status. Therefore,

the whole story is set in motion by the declaration that “the right time is fulfilled and the rule of God has come near”...Dramatic actions of salvation take place in this time with an urgency required by the imminent threat and promise of the final establishment of God’s rule in power.²⁹

So Mark presents the theme of the paradoxical, but victorious crucified/risen Christ as the expression of God’s will. The superscription (1:1), prophecies (1:2-3) and especially Jesus as the apocalyptic ‘beloved Son’ (1:11) establish God’s evaluative point of view. It is the norm for Christ and the household Christian. If it is God’s way (8:31), Mark takes pains to identify his own evaluative point of view with that of his protagonist, Jesus.³⁰ Therefore, Mark sets out an ideological (evaluative) point of view, a particular way of

²⁸ D. Rhoads and D. Michie, *Mark As Story*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 65.

²⁹ Rhoads and Michie, *Mark As Story*, 64.

³⁰ E. Van Eck, *Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark’s Story*, (HTS Supplement 7; Pretoria: University of Pretoria Press, 1995), 361.

viewing reality that flowers into specific challenges and beliefs³¹ by which he outlines God's way in Jesus as Lord who sits at 'his right hand' (12:37).³²

At the start of the way section (8:27), Peter's response to Jesus' passion prediction allows the contrast of two points of view that are at loggerheads, those of God and Satan (8:33b; 1:12-13). God's evaluative point of view predominates since the speech of every characters, and that of Jesus, is finally controlled by the external point of view of the narrator³³ is correct. Mark ensures that his viewpoint is identical with Jesus' so that his and Jesus' viewpoints are in accord with God's will. To ensure the narrative demonstrates this tri-faceted, harmonious viewpoint, Mark employs two techniques. First, in regard to Jesus and all other characters, he assumes the posture of an omniscient narrator,³⁴ an invisible observer, present in every scene of the story. Second, all characters, Jesus included, have no thoughts, motives or feelings to which Mark is not privy. But in God's case, Mark 'does not permit the reader to imagine that he has "unmediated access" either to heaven - God's abode (11:25) - or to his "mind"'.³⁵ No scenes are set in heaven or any freely fashioned concepts about God redemptive will.

God's evaluative point of view is reinforced by means of a dual method. The Gospel is coloured with references and quotes from the Old Testament and from this perspective, God's evaluative point of view is presented and given key status;³⁶ it is, however, muted since the entire Markan drama is centred on Jesus of Nazareth. And, even given that Jesus comes at God's initiative for 'I (God) send my messenger (John) before you (Jesus)...God's evaluative point of view is normative for the entire story',³⁷ though he only steps occasionally step into Mark's narrative.³⁸ If God does so, it

³¹ N.R. Peterson, 'Point of View in Mark's Narrative', *Semeia* 12 (1978), 107-108.

³² J.D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 47.

³³ Petersen, 'Point of View', 109.

³⁴ Petersen, 'Point of View', 105-118.

³⁵ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 48.

³⁶ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 48; cf. J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, (SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 3.

³⁷ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 48.

³⁸ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 48.

is as an actor in order to address other characters. When the Father orders the disciples to ‘Listen to him’ (9:7), Jesus alone is addressed (cf. 1:11). The overwhelming narrative stress is on Jesus as he follows the Father’s will and serves as a model for the disciples as God directs, allowing the Gospel to accent the human, existential becoming of Jesus into which the disciple’s servant dedication will be transformed.

At various points in the story, the ascending evaluative point of view emerges: first, the viewpoint of the trusted narrator, then that of Jesus, followed by the Father’s word. The Pharisees stress the traditions of the elders but Jesus states that the word of God is normative for all (7:9). Mark also repeats this pattern (8:31; 10:18,40; 13:32; 14:36) in ascending order. He relates how the suffering Son of Man lives out God’s will (8:31). Yet it is only in union with Jesus’ selfless messianic mission that Peter will authenticate his own dedication as a servant, a correction then confirmed by the Father’s voice on the mountain (9:7). For Rome’s Christians, their source of hope is faith in a fellow-human suffering figure, who guarantees a ‘hundredfold now in this time...and in the age to come eternal life’ (10:30).

Mark offers the affinity with Jesus to his addressees in his references to ‘whoever’ and ‘everyone’ (cf. 3:31-35). This presupposes a personal involvement achieved through the use of rhetoric and parenthetical statements (2:10a; 7:3,19; 13:14). In part, this explains why Mark employs selected literary techniques to re-present Jesus’ words and actions. At 1:45, in describing the healed lepers’ actions Mark uses *kerussein* and *logos*, language used in the early Church’s proclamation of the good news. This suggests that the reality of Jesus’ words and actions possess a contemporary immediacy through the Lord’s Spirit (cf. 12:36a; 13:11), an immediacy stressed in the Gospel’s historical present tense in 150 cases where other writers used the simple past tense.

Juxtapositioning of accounts sharpens the contrast in the personal and communal responses in successive pericopes as in the synagogue and household’s

response to Jesus (cf. 1:21-28; 1:29-31) and his subsequent creation of the new Israel (3:1-6; 3:7-19). This method is duplicated in the fruit of Jesus' word in his parallel missions - Jewish and Gentile - that are linked symbolically by the Sea of Galilee in 5:1-8:26. Also, Mark highlights the incomprehension of the disciples who stand 'outside' the knowledge that the reader already possesses, an effect reinforced by the superscription at 1:1. The superscription enables the community of faith to hear Mark's story in 'hindsight'; for example, the anointing of Jesus (14:7-9,28; 16:6).

Mark's selection of language reveals the reason for which he writes, namely, to focus on resurrection faith for his house-churches in an urban setting. Therefore, the messianic 'way' of obedience to the Father's will is expressed, of necessity, in a Greco-Roman, patriarchal household for whether it was poor or rich, it was the sole means of social existence in first century cities. Mark's house motif represents this type of urban, social structure. From 1:16 forward, Mark invariably depicts Jesus and the disciples as an alternate social group, whether associated in houses in Galilee (1:29-31; 2:15-17; 3:31-35; 4:10-11; 5:37) or following the way from house to metaphorical house when going up to Jerusalem (9:28-29,33-37; 10:10-12; cf. 10:28-31; 13:32-37). Jesus is also closely associated with his disciples in Simon's house in Bethany (14:3-9), an intimacy climaxed in his hospitality to the disciples in the 'upper room' at the celebration of the Passover (14:17-25).

The normal literary devices of any narrative: imagery, intercalations, rhetorical questions, irony and structural elements are present in the text.³⁹ There is also the whole vein of interplay between the ironic narrator who narrates the story at the cost to a character in the story.⁴⁰ This is especially evident on Calvary, where a dichotomy exists between what is seen by those opposed to Jesus against the profound implications

³⁹ Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 307-308.

⁴⁰ R.M. Fowler, 'Who is the "Reader" of Mark's Gospel?' in K.H. Richards (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 22, (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 47. Cf. W.C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 28.

of the centurion's unwitting witness to Jesus' identity for Rome's Christian groups. On Calvary, the mockers say things they do not mean (e.g. - 'Jesus is the 'King of Israel' - 15:32). But in this narrative world in which the second, deeper level of irony is set in the truth of who Jesus is, their mocking identifications are in fact accurate. The reader is challenged to appreciate the delicate irony.⁴¹

Irony is basic to Mark's replacement theme, which is aligned to the reversal of the inside/outside concept. The disciples' deepening blindness guarantees that, symbolically, they gradually move outside while minor characters and invited sinners move inside (2:15-17; 7:24-30). The greater the narrative intensity and implementation of the rejection motif through virulent opposition, the more surely such antagonism facilitates the reign of the Son of Man's resurrection as Lord and the developing replacement 'house of prayer'. Mark anticipated and confirmed this result in the passion predictions: it is also defined at the superscription (1:1). D.O. Via concludes that

unless the reader is somehow intended to throw away the first half of the Gospel, Jesus, the Son of God, is a figure of power who is the eschatological chosen one of God (1:11,24,34,; 3;11; 9:7). Therefore the meaning of the epiphany in the centurion's confession is not the unqualified assertion of God's absence but the paradoxical affirmation that God - Power - is victoriously though hiddenly present when she appears to be absent. To believe this one has to take the risk of believing what is behind the veil - or the reveiling.⁴²

The rent veil refers to the secret of the cross: the reign of God in the paradox of suffering and selflessness in the house-church. Mark thus constructs a new literary genre in order to re-confirm his community's faith in the reality of the Lord's presence; it is a way of victory in deeper mutual sharing through faith in the gospel of God (1:15). Theirs too was the opportunity to participate in covenant selflessness (12:28-34), typified, above all, by their sharing in the Passover Meal (14:12-16, 22-25; cf. 11:22-12:37).

In the following chapters, these methods and their utilisation will become

⁴¹ L.L. Thompson, *Introducing Biblical Literature: A More Fantastic Country*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall Press, 1978), 229.

apparent. Historical criticism will be of assistance particularly in chapters 1 and 2, identifying the location and date of the Gospel and reconstructing the origin and history of the house-hold churches in Rome. Historical criticism will be of importance in subsequent chapters as well in that it is a useful tool for understanding Mark as a first century text recounting a first century story. Because Mark writes a story, literary criticism is indispensable for identifying his authorial point of view and his rhetorical strategies to influence the reader of the text. It is important at this point to emphasise that the object of focus in this study is the Gospel of Mark and the Marcan Jesus, not the historical Jesus.

4. FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM

In the light of the strong replacement theology that Mark exhibits, it is useful to say something about first century Judaism. Some thirty years ago, E.P. Sanders defined ancient Judaism in terms of covenantal nomism.⁴³ This view can be summarised as follows. God had chosen the Jews to be his elect people, and this election was sealed by a holy covenant between them. As part of their responsibilities within this covenant, the Jews were expected to obey the laws given to Moses at Mt Sinai. Observance of these commandments ensured continued membership in the covenant community. The Mosaic Law (Torah) is given in detail in the Pentateuch, and incorporated a variety of moral, social and ritual requirements.

While all the laws were of importance and needed to be followed, emphasis was placed on strict monotheism, male circumcision as a sign of the covenant, observance of the sabbath, and laws pertaining to purity, including dietary requirements.⁴⁴ These laws in particular were important identity markers for Jews in the

⁴² D.O. Via, 'Irony As Hope in Mark's Gospel: A Reply to Werner Kelber', *Semeia* 43 (1988), 25.

⁴³ E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, (London: SCM, 1977), 75, 180, 236, 422-423, 426-428.

⁴⁴ See E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE*, (London: SCM, 1992), 190-240. Also E.P. Sanders, *Jewish Law From Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies*, (London: SCM, 1990).

ancient world.⁴⁵ Failure to observe aspects of the Torah put the individual at risk of forfeiting their place in the covenant community, but God had provided the means for atonement for breaches of the covenant obligations.

In second temple times, the time of Mark, the temple was the means by which atonement for sins could be achieved. The temple was a place of prayer and worship, and the location of the annual Jewish pilgrimage festivals, but it was also the place where atonement for individual sin was made possible through the sacrificial cult. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would perform an elaborate ritual for the atonment of sin for the whole Jewish nation.

It is generally agreed that second temple Judaism was not a monolithic religious phenomenon. The land of Israel itself witnessed the rise of different sectarian groups, such as the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes, while those Jewish communities of the Diaspora exhibited diversity as a result of their different regional or historical circumstances.⁴⁶ But within this diversity was the unifying perspective of covenantal nomism with its emphasis on election, covenant, Torah and temple.

The early Christian traditions, that arose in response to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, related to Judaism in different ways. Some Christians remained true to the Torah and the temple, while accepting Jesus as the promised messiah, but others believed that these definitive Jewish institutions were no longer valid in the light of the messiah's appearance.⁴⁷ We shall see in Chapter 2 how these Law-observant and Law-free versions of the Christian tradition emerged and developed.

⁴⁵ See L.H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 48-50. For a detailed discussion of Jewish identity in ancient times, see S.J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁴⁶ On Diaspora Judaism, see J.M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE - 117 CE)*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); L.V. Rutgers, *The Hidden Heritage of Diaspora Judaism*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2nd edn 1998).

⁴⁷ For full discussion, see D.C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community*, (SNTW; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 19-27.

CHAPTER 1

THE LOCATION AND DATE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK

1: INTRODUCTION:

Before 1956 there existed an uncommon agreement in New Testament studies: a near consensus on the setting and date of Mark's Gospel. With few exceptions, scholars placed the origin of the Gospel in Rome, following the period of persecution and duress under Nero from 64-65 CE and prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Various scholars also linked both the identity of the Gospel's author with 'John Mark' of Acts 12:12-13 and his association with Peter in Rome. However, the identity of the Gospel's author and his connection with Peter are not issues for this study.

W. Marxsen, whose 1956 study argued for a Galilean Mark, broke the scholarly consensus in favour of a Roman location for the Gospel.⁴⁸ His work led to a series of studies that variously suggested a Gospel written in northern Galilee, southern Syria or Transjordan.⁴⁹ In the ensuing post-1956 period, the debate has also dealt with a post-70 CE date for the writing of the Gospel since it was connected with the case for a Syrian or Galilean Mark. This changed perception of the dating of Mark emerged partly in response to an increased scholarly focus on the impact of the Jewish War of 66-74 CE and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Thus, at the start of the new millennium the precise location and date of the Gospel for many exegetes remain a matter of debate. The majority favours the traditional view that the Gospel came from a Christian community

⁴⁸ W. Marxsen, *Der Evangelist Markus: Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums*, (FRLANT 49; Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956). ET - *Mark the Evangelist: Studies in the Redaction of the Gospels*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

⁴⁹ Marcus, *Mark, 1-8*, 33-37; W. Kelber, *The Kingdom of God in Mark: A New Place and a New Time*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 14; H.C. Kee, *The Community of the New Age*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); W.J. Harrington, *Mark*, (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1984), xii. H.C. Waetjen, *Re-Ordering of Power*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989); G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); R.L. Rohrbaugh, 'The Social Location of the Markan Audience', *BTL* 23 (1993), 114-127; J. Painter,

in Rome.⁵⁰ A small minority argues that it derives from a Galilean, Transjordanian or Syrian community. Likewise, though a decisive majority of exegetes today also opt for a 67-69 CE Gospel,⁵¹ a limited minority asserts that Mark was written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.⁵²

2: A GOSPEL FROM ROME

This study supports the case for a Roman Mark based on a combination of external testimony to the Gospel and the results of an internal analysis of its text. The writings of Papias of Hierapolis form the first external, principal witness for this position. His comments (110-140 CE) on the Gospel are the earliest and most extensive on any Gospel.⁵³ Papias wrote that

I shall not hesitate to furnish you, along with the interpretations, with all that in days gone by I carefully learnt from the presbyters, for I can guarantee its truth (Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39,1).

Mark's Gospel, (London: Routledge Press, 1997), 7.

⁵⁰ Marshall, *Faith*, 1-5; D.E. Nineham, *Saint Mark*, (PNTC; Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1962), 42; R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, (2 Vols; HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder Press, 1977), 1, 3-11; J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, (2 Vols; EKKNT; Zurich: Benziger, 1978), I, 34; E. Best, *Mark as Story*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 21-26; M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, (London: SCM, 1985), 2-6, 29; B.M. van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader Response Commentary*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988), 22; R.A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word Book Press, 1989), xxx; T.J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology*, (JSNTSS 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 63; A. Stock, *The Method and Message of Mark*, (Wilmington: Glazier Press, 1989), 4; D.J. Harrington, 'The Gospel According to Mark' in R.E. Brown (ed.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (London: Chapman, 1990), 596; B. Orchard, 'Mark and the Fusing of Traditions: The Four Gospels', in F. Segbroeck (ed.), *The Four Gospels*, (BETL; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 788; R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1043-1045; C.C. Black, *Mark: Images of an Apostolic Interpreter*, (Columbia: University of Southern Carolina Press, 1994), 224; J.R. Donahue, 'Windows and Mirrors: The Setting of Mark's Gospel', *CBQ* 57 (1995), 1-26; J.F.D Kelly, *World of the Early Christians*, (Collegeville: Glazier Press, 1997), 44-46.

⁵¹ Gundry, *Mark*, 1043-1045; Harrington, 'Gospel', 596; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xxxi; Stock, *Method*, 6-7; Hengel, *Studies*, 29; Nineham, *Mark*, 42. C.E. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 8; V.J. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1966), 31; E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, (Richmond: Knox Press, 1970), 25; W. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1974), 17, 21; H. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1987), 26, and others.

⁵² Cf. Kee, *Community*, 105; Marxsen, *Studies*, 186-189; J. Schmidt, *The Gospel of Mark*, (TSBS 1; Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1990), 6; Harrington, *Mark*, xii; L.W. Williamson, *Mark: Interpretation*, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1983), 15-16; cf. D.H. Juel, *Mark*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1990), 18-19; J. Marcus, 'The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark', *JBL* 111 (1992), 441-62; Marcus repeats this position in his recent work, *Mark 1-8*, 35-36.

⁵³ J.R. Donahue, 'The Quest For the Community of Mark's Gospel', in Segbroeck, *The Four Gospels*, 819.

Eusebius stresses how Papias depended more on the oral tradition than written sources. He records Papias statement that, ‘for I did not imagine that things out of books would help me as much as the utterances of a living and abiding voice’ (*Church History*, 3.39,3-4). Papias describes Mark’s particular concern for Rome’s house-churches: ‘to leave them in writing a summary of the instruction they had received by word of mouth’ (Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.15). Papias recounts that Mark and Peter were in Rome together they requested Mark,

a follower of Peter to leave them in writing a summary of the instruction they had received by word of mouth, nor did they let him go till they had persuaded him, and thus became responsible for the writing of what is know as the Gospel according to Mark (Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.17,1).

Papias points to a Roman Gospel, which would have also been tested by the local communities’ pervasive oral tradition. Rome’s reliance on oral tradition is bolstered its first century social climate in which memories of old ways and customs were revered. Paul reflects the mind of the early Church regarding the primacy of the word over text: ‘When you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as a human word but as what it really is, God’s word, which is also at work in you believers’ (1Thess 2:13). It is almost certain that the earliest transmission of the various traditions about Jesus were orally transmitted.⁵⁴

Papias’ acceptance that the Markan Gospel was composed in Rome is the earliest reference to its source (cf. Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39,4).⁵⁵ The Fathers repeated this tradition. In the 170-190’s, Irenaeus states that ‘after their demise (of Peter and Paul in Rome), Mark himself, the disciple and recorder of Peter, has handed on to us in writing what had been proclaimed by Peter’ (*Against Heresies*, 3.1,1 in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39,7). Irenaeus further explains that ‘Mark the recorder of Peter (and) after the demise of the above Peter, he, himself, (Mark) published this Gospel in the land

⁵⁴ J.D.G.Dunn, ‘Altering the Default Setting: Re-envisioning the Early Transmission of the Jesus Tradition’, *NTS* 49 (2003), 148.

⁵⁵ H. Coward, *Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books,

of Italy' (*Against Heresies*, 3.1,1).⁵⁶ Origen too suggests a Roman Gospel. He records an Aramaic Matthew then came that of 'Mark who followed Peter's instructions in writing it' (Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.25,5).

In turn, in his 'Dialogue with Trypho', Justin Martyr specifically refers to 'the memoirs of Peter', seen as a basis for the Gospel, which he assumes Mark had shared among household-churches in Rome in the 60's (Eusebius, *Church History*, 106.9-10). Likewise Clement of Alexandria (circa CE 180-220) supports a Roman Gospel, claiming that Mark, Peter's companion, was requested by the people of Rome, to write down Peter's preaching during Peter's stay in Rome (Eusebius, *Church History*, 6.14,6-7). For the sake of Alexandria's house-churches, Clement would surely have wanted to situate the Gospel there, the area in which he insists that Mark first preached his Gospel rather than in Rome (Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.16). Clement, who also cites John Mark as Alexandria's first bishop, holds that John Mark died there, giving further encouragement to a local Gospel (Eusebius, *Church History*, 1.24; 2.16). Yet, if Clement sets the 'secret gospel of Mark' in Alexandria and so betraying his bias, 'it must have taken an early tradition of considerable weight to make Clement set the writing of Mark in Rome'.⁵⁷

No early Father supported a location for Mark's Gospel other than in Rome. Yet the patristic pairing of the Gospel with Rome loses some of its force, because we have only Eusebius' version of Papias' writings but no other contemporary documented verification or use of similar material in Rome's communities. So a single witness should not be expected to carry more influence than might be reasonably allotted to it. These two factors, however, do not negate Papias' coupling of Mark and Rome or

1988), 172.

⁵⁶ Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew, Prooemium*, 6; cf. Eusebius, *Church History*, 2.1; 2.25; cf. 1 Clement, 5. 7; Ignatius, *Romans*, 4. 3.

⁵⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 1043.

suggest that the tradition has any less credibility than an alternate source of the Gospel.⁵⁸ Significantly, no Eastern or Western Church wrote in favour of a different location for the Gospel. So, while aware that the sole record of this patristic material comes via Eusebius, Papias supports the tradition of a Gospel from Rome. His writings have considerable scholarly support.⁵⁹

Given that the patristic support for Rome depends upon a single source, there is the positive presumption that Papias witnessed to the oral tradition in the house-churches there. K.E. Bailey maintains that in first century families, the overwhelming majority could not read or write so the Gospel had to resonate with the existing oral tradition among the capital's Christians. In today's village communities comparable to that of Mark's period the ability to recall vast amounts of the community's tradition does not depend on education, rather it relates to native intelligence and greatness of spirit. Bailey also argues that in an oral culture until the upheaval of the Jewish-Roman War (66-70 CE), authorised witnesses such as Peter in Rome were looked to as sources of the oral tradition of Jesus. The

witness was required to have been an *eyewitness* of the historical Jesus to qualify as a *huperetes tou logou*. Thus, at least to the end of the first century, the authenticity of that tradition was assured to the community through specifically designated authoritative witnesses.⁶⁰

Understandably, a similar social norm played a vital role in the oral cultural life of Rome's house-churches.⁶¹ Thus, if the tradition on which the Gospel was based identified a certain community, the Gospel's relevance would be controlled by the oral tradition of the same complex of house-churches since the accurate right relating of these

⁵⁸ Gundry, *Mark*, 1041-43; cf. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xxx.

⁵⁹ G.G. Gamba, 'A Further Re-Examination of the Evidence from the Early Tradition' in W.R. Farmer (ed.), *New Synoptic Studies*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983), 18-19. Gamba supports this tradition as does Hengel, *Studies*, 2; cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 1041; Stock, *Method*, 4; Hooker, *Mark*, 6; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xxix; Anderson, *Mark*, 28. Contrary views: Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 21-28; Theissen, *Gospels*, 10-11; Kelber, *Kingdom*, 15-17; Juel, *Mark*, 17-18; Harrington, *Mark*, xi-xii.

⁶⁰ K.E. Bailey, 'Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels', *AJT* 5 (1991), 50.

⁶¹ Bailey, 'Oral Tradition', 50; cf. Dunn, 'Altering the Default Setting', 147-156.

accounts in the tradition is critical for their identity.⁶² So Papias' writing would have been 'proof read' by the constraints of the local oral tradition. Culturally, details about daily life for the great majority would have necessarily been preserved in well-trained memories.⁶³ It is difficult not to accept the norm that the pattern of the religious life of the household-church in liturgies, proclamation, catechetics and prayer was greatly dependent on memorization. In this respect, this need for memorisation was no different from other aspects of daily life. With the first century's extremely slow rate of social change and the vast majority's lack of education, people necessarily depended upon accurate memories for social and business life to function. Such personal and communal capacity for memorisation reinforces the tradition on which Papias relied in ascribing the Gospel's source to Rome.

Hengel points out that the witness of the oral tradition describing Rome as the Gospel's source must have originated in the last third of the first century and therefore represents an extremely early and, most likely, reliable tradition orally transmitted.⁶⁴ We must keep in mind that in an oral culture, oral tradition is communal memory.⁶⁵ As a result, this pronounced cultural reliance on memorization in first century house-churches would not have readily changed because written copies of Mark were available.⁶⁶ Hengel surmises that clearly Papias, by assimilating earlier tradition, had both oral and written sources that went back one or two generations, i.e. right to the origin of the Gospels.⁶⁷ Even if Papias wrote, circa 110-140 CE, the oral tradition would still be determinative in support of a Roman Mark.

Thus a Gospel's confirmation comes from its harmonisation with its source's oral tradition and apostolic authority, two requirements that are present in Papias'

⁶² Bailey, 'Oral Tradition', 50.

⁶³ Dunn, 'Altering the Default Setting', 157.

⁶⁴ Hengel, *Studies*, 64-84.

⁶⁵ Dunn, 'Altering the Default Setting', 171.

⁶⁶ Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 305.

⁶⁷ Hengel, *Studies*, 49; cf. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xli.

witness to a Gospel from Rome.⁶⁸ Yet, there are uncertain elements. It is not known if Papias examined only those written or oral patristic accounts that witnessed to a Roman Gospel. And we have only Eusebius' version of Papias' writings though conceding that Matthew and Luke's use of Mark point to its harmonization with the Church's first century's oral tradition, which in turn verified Papias' writings. However, that still leaves uncertainty about the basis of the accuracy of the patristic tradition for a Roman Mark due to its single source in Eusebius' writings.

D.C. Sim lists the special type of community needs for which each evangelist wrote, needs that dictated the type of the narrative including the need for the healing of divisions in the primitive Church, the issues of Christian identity (cf. Mk 13:5-6) and the criteria for membership in the house-churches.⁶⁹ Likewise Gundry insists that a Gospel's authority was vital

for the multiplicity of gospels, their circulation among widely scattered churches...and the proliferation of gospels beside those that came to be considered canonical...would have led to disagreements of ascription unless the ascriptions of the canonical gospels go back to the first century and reliable information.⁷⁰

The fact that Matthew and Luke accepted Mark as a basis for their works indicates that the Markan Gospel came from an authoritative Church.⁷¹ So, in adapting Mark to their own groups' needs, Matthew and Luke presumably accepted the apostolic status that Mark held in the tradition in the final third of the first century.⁷²

The question naturally arises: why should the Word become text and what was the text's role and how a written gospel shares the Word's redemptive role?⁷³ In the case of Mark's Gospel, W. Kelber sees Mark's innovative, written Gospel form as a radical alternative to oral tradition. It gave the evangelist a capacity for a Christology

⁶⁸ F. Walls, 'Papias and Oral Tradition', VC 21 (1967), 138-139; cf. Bailey, 'Middle Eastern Tradition', 367; H.M. Teeple 'The Oral Tradition That Never Existed', JBL (1970), 66-67.

⁶⁹ D.C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community*, (SNTW; Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1998), 3-27.

⁷⁰ Gundry, *Mark*, 1041.

⁷¹ F.J. Matera, *What are they saying about Mark?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 4.

⁷² R.E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, (New York: Doubleday Press, 1996), 203-204.

that was an alternative to oral Christology whereas in the oral tradition, Jesus was essentially located in the present with an awareness of the future but with minimum roots in the past. It is solely in writing that a comprehensive sense of the past is possible.⁷⁴ For Kelber, 'it is the circumstances under which they came into existence that determines the difference between oral and written transmission: the presence of a particular audience with whom the writer has to be immediately involved, affecting the way a narrative is conducted, details selected, etc., is a limiting factor not affecting a writer'.⁷⁵

Varying degrees of persecution and discrimination against Christians was endemic in the first century. It seems that they led to Mark's creation of his Gospel to which Kelber points. Given the early oral nature of the good news, it must have taken a graphic reason for Mark to select and situate particular pericopes in sequential form as we have it. R.C. Hill argues that the expediency to respond to persecution gave birth to the Gospel; it enables the expression of a suffering Christology that before was one aspect of an oral Christology.⁷⁶ Mark wrote his Gospel to provide a hope-filled good news that gives meaning to suffering for urban house-churches. The Gospel indicates that Christians face further possible persecution (13:9-11). Thus, Mark wrote, not to preserve the tradition, but to rework sections of it in order to meet the needs of his groups.⁷⁷ This would also safeguard revelation and control emerging heresies (13:5-8).

The patristic evidence and cultural support for a Roman Gospel is strongly supported by Mark's use of Latinisms. The most obvious Latin characteristic of the Greek text is the frequent use of *hina* in a non-telic sense (cf. 4:21,28; 5:9,15,33; 6:27,37; 7:4). This language phenomenon relates to those sentence structures where the Greek

hina is used in the non-final sense of the Latin *ut* after verbs of speaking, asking, commanding, and the like. Of the thirty-one occurrences of this Latinism in Mark only eight have been preserved in the parallels of Matthew

⁷³ R.C. Hill, 'From Good News to Holy Writ', *EQ* 51 (1993), 150.

⁷⁴ W.H Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 209.

⁷⁵ Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 14.

⁷⁶ Hill, 'From Good News to Holy Writ', 150-153.

⁷⁷ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xlii.

and only four in those of Luke...In passages that have no parallel in Mark, the *hina* construction occurs only twice in Matthew and four times in Luke.⁷⁸

A second grammatical Latinism is the verb's situation in the sentence and the place of the substantive in relation to the pronoun that belongs to it, characteristics which suggest an underlying Latin influence. Compared with 37 instances of this structure in Mark, there are twelve in Matthew of which two are different from Mark, and five cases in Luke of which two also differ from Mark.⁷⁹ Moreover, Mark's placement of the verb together with the *hina* forms increases the frequency of Latinisms, outnumbering Matthew two and a half times to one and Luke four times to one. This syntax can be explained

in terms of a more than an average influence on the language of Mark by a milieu in which the author was regularly exposed to Latin in the streets, in the market place, or wherever. The chance of such an influence was much greater in Rome than in an arbitrary part of Galilee or Syria.⁸⁰

While other first century papyri of diverse origin at the time of the Gospel used Latin phrasing, there is also the wide variety of Latinisms used in technical terminology in Mark that was confined to the West. Such types of Latin phrasing suggest a Latin-speaking area with diverse structures needing a certain vocabulary. For example: *hodon poiein* = *inter facere* (2:23); *herodianoï* = *Herodiani* (3:6; 12:13); *ho estin* = *hoc est* (3:17; 7:11 34; 12:42; 15:16,42); *eschatos echei* = *in extremis esse* (5:23); *dothenchenai aute phagein* = similar to *duci eum iussit* (5:43); *eichon...hoti* = *habere* (11:32); *rapismasin auton elabon* = *verberibus eum acceperunt* (14:65); *sumboulion poesantes* = *consilium capere* (15:1); *kanon poiesas* = *satisfacere* (15:15).⁸¹ This study also points to individual Latin words in Mark: *chortos* = *herba* (4:28), *aitia* = *causa* (5:33) and turns of phrase as *sumboulion edidoun* = *consilium dederunt* (3:6). There are

⁷⁸ Van Iersel, *Reader Response*, 34-35.

⁷⁹ Van Iersel, *Reader Response*, 35.

⁸⁰ Van Iersel, *Reader Response*, 34-35.

⁸¹ Gundry, *Mark*, 1044; cf. Van Iersel, *Reader Response*, 35.

also 34 examples in single words and phrases expressing a Roman flavour,⁸² a significant profusion of Latinisms.⁸³ Similar language is not found in such numbers or types in other first century documents.⁸⁴

Various aspects of the text's language structure reinforce our case for a Gospel from Rome. To R.P. Martin, the use of non-military Latinisms would be suitable for a Roman audience but they would be meaningless in non-Latin speaking areas in the eastern Mediterranean. A.E. Rawlinson points out that, even if allowing for other interpretations of the instances of Latinisms in Mark, their colloquial character adds weight to the Roman claim for the Gospel.⁸⁵ Hengel compares the prolific presence of Latinisms in Mark with their similar use in the 'Shepherd of Hermas', which he judges was also written in Rome.⁸⁶ These frequent Latinisms cannot be dismissed by pointing to the cultural influence of the Roman imperial administration throughout the Empire as proof of a possible alternate source. The examples quoted in the Gospel are far too specific for a general application, given the nature of the Latin technical terms connected with the army, courts and commerce.⁸⁷

There is also a Latinism that is worthy of note. In 6:27, Mark uses the term *spekoulatora* (the guard, charged with the execution of John the Baptist). It transliterates the Latin form *spectulator*. These *spectatores* were a well-known division of the imperial guard in Rome, who served as a police force and were prominent in times of military intrigue and involvement in the politics of the day (Tacitus, *History*, 1. 24-25). In all, though a restricted number of Mark's Latinisms occur elsewhere in official

⁸² Gundry, *Mark*, 1043-1044.

⁸³ Hengel, *Studies*, 29.

⁸⁴ Van Iersel, *Reader Response*, 34-35.

⁸⁵ R.P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1975), 202-3; cf. A.E. Rawlinson, *The Gospel According to Mark*, (London: Westminster Press, 1927), xxxiii.

⁸⁶ Hengel, *Studies*, 29.

⁸⁷ Lane, *Gospel*, 24.

documents relating to other areas in the Empire, the sheer number of Latinisms in Mark suggests a Gospel from the capital. Tradition too favours Rome.⁸⁸

Despite the Latinisms outlined above that were peculiar to a Roman source, exegetes opposed to a pro-Roman Gospel point to what they see as the general nature of these Latinisms. They attribute their inclusion in the tradition to a pre-Markan source,⁸⁹ citing individual Latin words: *modius* (4:21); *legio* (5:9); *census* (12:14); *flagellare* (15:15), which are military, judicial or economic in origin. This type of language was not unusual in Roman-ruled areas in the East. They appear in Aramaic and then later Hebrew literature and in descriptions of Jewish ritual procedures.⁹⁰ But this argument fails to explain why Greek expressions in the Gospel text have a Latin underpinning. As well, Mark's text also contains Greek transcriptions of current Latin words, such as *Caesar* (*kaisari* - 12:14). Lane refers to a Jewish ritual practice in citing Mark's *pugme* (Mk 7:3), which is a Latinism on the analogue of the Latin *pugnus*, *pugillus* - a fistful.⁹¹

There are other Latin transcriptions, together with Greek words, that are given a meaning known in Latin but not in Greek. There is '*lepta*' (12:42) used for the Roman *quadrans*, a change that appears to answer some kind of Roman hearer/reader need.⁹² As well, the bronze *kodrantes* coin (12:42) was not used in the eastern part of the Empire.⁹³ If Mark had been written in a Syrian or Transjordanian Greco-Roman city, at least the Greek expressions would be retained. These instances imply that the pre-Markan tradition on which the evangelist draws took shape in a Roman Christian context. In turn, this suggests that Mark wrote there. Luke, writing in the east, omits Mark's explanation of *ho estin kodrantes* (Lk 21:2) but the Romans' *quadrans* is explained for

⁸⁸ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 7.

⁸⁹ Hooker, *Gospel*, 7.

⁹⁰ Lane, *Gospel*, 21, 24.

⁹¹ Van Iersel, *Reader Response*, 33.

⁹² Hengel, *Studies*, 29.

⁹³ M. Mullens, *Called to be Saints*, (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1991), 137; cf. Lane, *Gospel*, 24.

the Greeks in Plutarch.⁹⁴ Similarly at 15:16, where the soldiers take Jesus ‘inside the court’, Mark adds, ‘that is the *praetorium*’, an explanation apparently unnecessary for Greek speaking Gentile Christians in the East of the Empire.⁹⁵

Kelber represents exegetes who insist that a Roman setting would have produced domestic, social and religious Latinisms rather than military and economic ones.⁹⁶ This objection ignores the wide variety of Latinisms that do not fit into these categories. For the subject matter of the text to be relevant, it would have to be set in Rome. While much of the tradition’s initial source was the culturally conservative Jewish rural strip in Galilee where Roman military and economic language was used, the sheer variety and number of Latinisms in the text points to its adaptation of the tradition to make it relevant for an urban centre where Latin predominated. It is generally accepted that the early Church was an urban phenomenon. Thus, if the subject matter originally set in a Palestine militarily, judicially and economically dominated by Rome, it would naturally contain common Roman bureaucratic, economic and military terms.

It is the Roman settings, however, in the writing of Mark that make the alternate Latinisms, some particularly coloured with a Roman relevance, especially suitable in a narrative set in a Palestine occupied by Romans.⁹⁷ The anti-Rome argument ignores those Latinisms that do not have a military derivation.⁹⁸ On this point, Guelich refers to the disproportionate number of non-bureaucratic, military and economic Latinisms that the proponents of a northern Galilee/Syrian Gospel have not explained away. Guelich contends that these exegetes cite the profusion of these terms throughout the Empire but their refusal to accept Rome as the likely source stems more from non-acceptance of the proof of the Papias’ tradition that link Mark with Peter rather than from

⁹⁴ Stock, *Method*, 4.

⁹⁵ Stock, *Method*, 4.

⁹⁶ Kelber, *Kingdom*, 129.

⁹⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 1044.

⁹⁸ Gundry, *Mark*, 1044; cf. Brown, *Introduction*, 161-162.

any hard evidence.⁹⁹ Latinisms indicate a Roman Gospel. This study concludes that Mark's widespread use of these Latinisms tips the scale in favour of that tradition.

In his pro-Rome thesis, Hengel cites Mk 7:26 - 'the woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth'.¹⁰⁰ In these two descriptions, 'Greek' describes the language while the ethnic 'Phoenician' points to the woman's birthplace in Syria.¹⁰¹ They are terms that would have been sufficient to identify her domestic location but they would seem nonsensical if the Gospel came from Southern Syria (or Syrophoenicia) since they are so geographically vague.¹⁰² Yet for a Gospel from a distant Gentile group in Rome, 'it was possible to make a clear distinction between the much more familiar Carthaginians as *Libuthoinikes* in Carthage, and the Phoenicians, who belonged to the province of Syria'¹⁰³ so distant from the capital. Gundry argues

that a Palestinian would not have had occasion to distinguish a Syrophoenician from a Libophoenician, as is done in 7:23...overlooks that writing in Rome, as early tradition says that Mark did, would have provided an occasion to make that distinction whatever his own geographical origin. For Libophoenicia, located on the coast of North Africa, lay closer to Rome than Syrophoenicia did; and the oldest evidence for the substantive "Syrophoenician" is to be found in Latin writers.¹⁰⁴

Most exegetes agree that the Gentile centurion's unwitting confession of Jesus on Calvary as the Son of God forms the Gospel's climax (15:39). The centurion plays a significant role that resonates with a Gospel from the capital. His witness would have been readily appropriated in faith by Rome's Gentile Christians since the common term, centurion, reflected their own culture. Though it is not a central point in arguing for a Gospel from Rome, it supports arguments that do nominate the capital.¹⁰⁵ Mark's writes of four nightly time periods rather than the three that were traditional in Jewish

⁹⁹ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xxx.

¹⁰⁰ Hengel, *Studies*, note 8, 137-38.

¹⁰¹ Hengel, *Studies*, 29.

¹⁰² Hengel, *Studies*, 29.

¹⁰³ Hengel, *Studies*, 29, writes from 'Roman Satire and Pliny the Elder's, *Natural History*, 7. 201, and in Latin inscriptions in Italy and in Africa'; cf. Hengel *Studies*, p. 164, n. 64.

¹⁰⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 1039.

¹⁰⁵ Gundry, *Mark*, 1044.

usage (cf. 6:48; 13:35), a redactional influence favouring a Roman Mark.¹⁰⁶ Geddert links these four terms (evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn) in Chapter 13 (13:32-37) with their fourfold reappearance in the passion narrative (14:17, 41, 72; 15:1), arguing that the Gospel's four three-hour watches with their colloquial titles indicates Mark's adaptation of his source for Rome's house-churches liturgies.¹⁰⁷ Overall, the four night periods do favour urban Rome.¹⁰⁸

Nero's brutal persecution of the house-churches in Rome (64-65 CE) adds substantial weight to the case for a Gospel from Rome. Even Marcus, who opposes a Roman Mark, acknowledges how well Mark reflects Tacitus' description of Nero's persecution of Christians in 64-65 CE (*Annals*, 15.44). Marcus adds that Tacitus' description of

Christians turning in their fellow Christians may also be seen as corresponding "to the Markan Jesus" prophecy that "brother will hand over brother to death" (13:12) since "brother" in early Christian writing often has the nuance of "fellow Christian".¹⁰⁹

Clearly the Gospel focuses on the paradox of a rejected Markan Jesus (cf. 1:2-3; 3:19b-21; 6:1-6a; 15:18). He is opposed (2:1-3:6; 3:22:30; 7:1,5; 8:11-13), betrayed (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:10-11; 15:1,13) and unjustly convicted and crucified (14:48-49, 55-60; 15:10,38). Yet, paradoxically, by this very suffering he becomes the victorious, risen Son of Man, the Lord who is the secret of the kingdom in the house (4:10-11; cf. 14:62). This is the basis for the Gospel's strong rhetorical drive that invites Rome's suffering Christians to follow Jesus 'along the way', even at the cost of one's life (8:34-35; cf. 8:27-10:52). Geddert and Lane stress the Gospel's theme of present suffering.¹¹⁰ 'Now in this time' (10:30), it is an invitation offered to 'everyone' or 'anyone' whatever a

¹⁰⁶ T.W. Martin, 'Watch During the Watches (Mark 13:35)', *JBL* 120 (2001), 685-701

¹⁰⁷ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 95; cf. Donahue, 'Windows and Mirrors', 25-26; Brown, *Introduction*, 161; Lane, *Gospel*, 24-25; Hooker, *Mark*, 324; R.H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St Mark*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 53.

¹⁰⁸ Gundry, *Mark*, 749.

¹⁰⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 31.

¹¹⁰ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 95; cf. Lane, *Gospel*, 24-25.

person's ethnic origin or social standing.¹¹¹ This language suits an inclusive, urban Christian group in a crowded cosmopolitan city.

Such an inclusive emphasis, while it may not prove a Roman Gospel, is highly consistent with it. This unconditional inclusiveness would hardly reflect a relocated, conservative Jewish Christian group in a northern, rural Jewish environment. In addition, severe communal stress seems behind the statement, recorded solely by Mark: 'Everyone will be salted by fire' (9:49). It seems that this enigmatic verse had come to fulfillment when Rome's Christians were persecuted by Nero.¹¹² In the first century, there were other urban centres where Christian house-churches knew spasmodic persecution, but Nero's onslaught of 64-65 CE would seem to be the extreme type of documented persecution that the Gospel reflects.¹¹³

J.R. Donahue examines the Gospel's key feature of the sense of persecution that presupposes a sustained oppression of Christians in an urban centre.¹¹⁴ He then analyses the Gospel's inter texture that outlines the interplay between the Gospel's allusions to persecution and references to it in Roman contemporary secular texts. Initially, Donahue examines the inner-texture of the Gospel's prologue since it offers insights into its theological drive directed to a particular situation. Indeed, Jesus' cross casts its shadow in 1:12-13 just as his passion is part of a cosmic struggle between good and evil that is waged by Jesus as God's suffering righteous one (cf. Wis 5:1-7).¹¹⁵ Other exegetes see this struggle's opening at 1:2-3. They hold that the condensed inner texture of the prologue, rich in prophetic references, foreshadows future events in the Gospel (Mal 3:1; Ex 23:20; Isa 40:3). Marcus links the references to Isaiah 40 in Mark 1:2-3; they set the tone of the Gospel; he adds:

¹¹¹ Mk 10:30; cf. 3:35; 6:11; 9:35, 40, 41, 42-47; 10:10-11, 15, 21, 28-31, 32-34, 41-45, 52; 13:9, 13.

¹¹² Lane, *Gospel*, 24; cf. E. La Verdere, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Introducing the Gospel According to Mark*, (2 Vols; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 1, 63.

¹¹³ Donahue, 'Windows and Mirrors', 4.

¹¹⁴ Donahue bases his research on V.K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1992).

It would be no exaggeration then to say that “the way of Jesus/the way of the Lord” is not only the double theme of Mark’s Gospel but also the controlling paradigm for his interpretation for the life of the community.¹¹⁶

The evangelist situates the risen Lord’s power and authority (1:1,11) in Jesus’ way as the Son of Man (1:2-3),¹¹⁷ that is, his ‘way’ to resurrection victory in Jerusalem as the crucified/risen Son Man, the Lord.¹¹⁸ This structure echoes the gamut of the suffering ‘just man’ from his cry for deliverance in the lamentation Psalms¹¹⁹ to the suffering ‘servant’ of Isaiah (Cf. Isa 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12.). Likewise, it reflects the repeated portrayal of the beleaguered ‘just man’ in Wisdom (Wis 2:12-3:6; 5:1-7) and his parallel in the suffering Son of Man (cf. Wis 2:12/Mk 14:1; Wis 2:16/Mk 14:36; Wis 2:19/Mk 14:65; 15:16-20 and so on). Moreover, in order to be relevant for a suffering community, Mark stressed the gift to Christians of sharing in the victory of Jesus as the risen Lord by configuring their own suffering with a fellow human suffering-figure in his paradoxical way to the cross (16:7b; 8:38-9:1; cf. 4:11).

Concretely, this emphasis is caught in the ‘handing over’ (1:14) of John, a technical term that anticipates the passion of Jesus. Exegetes see *paradidomi* (Rom 4:25 8:32; Mk 10:45) indicating the influence of Isaiah 52:12-53:13 in its description of the suffering servant.¹²⁰ When set in an apologetic context in concert with texts such as Psalms 22 and 118, Mark’s opening prepares for the passion predictions detailing the divine necessity for the ‘handing over’ of Jesus (8:31; 9:31; 10:33; cf. Mk 1:14; 3:19; 13:9-12; 14:10,11,18,41,42,44; 15:1,10,15; 1 Cor 11:23). Overall, Mark’s text clearly serves as a community apologetic in the primitive Church for God’s ‘way’ or divine necessity for a suffering, ‘handed over’ Christ. Mark stresses this repeatedly.¹²¹ Such an

¹¹⁵ Donahue, ‘Windows and Mirrors’, 9-12.

¹¹⁶ Marcus, *Way*, 47; cf. Kingsbury, *Christology*, 56-57.

¹¹⁷ Cf. 1:2-3; 4:15; 6:8; 8:3,27; 9:33,34; 10:17,32,46,52; 12:14; in 16:7 the way is presumed.

¹¹⁸ Marcus, *Way*, 48-49.

¹¹⁹ L Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning*, (New York: Alba House Press, 1974), 295-297.

¹²⁰ C. Stuhlmueeller, ‘Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah’, in Brown, *New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary*, 341.

¹²¹ Donahue, ‘Windows and Mirrors’, 11-12.

early reminder intensifies the narrative's inner unity by linking the betrayals of John (1:14), Jesus (15:1) and the disciple (13:11-13).

This Isaian concept is further reinforced by the Gospel's oblique warnings of the coming passion of the Son of Man. By 2:7, the charge of blasphemy circulates against Jesus, an accusation repeated at Jesus' trial (14:64). This hint is followed by other controversies, climaxing with the Pharisees' desire to kill Jesus (3:6). The handing over of Christians (64-65 CE) during Nero's persecution intensifies the re-presentation of the betrayal of the Son of Man in the Christians' experiences of persecution. It also discloses the Christians' lower, poor economic and non-legal status, since Roman law forbade Nero's methods of execution of Christians for citizens of the state. Clearly, the poor suffered especially both in daily life and persecution for they were without legal status and depended on the household groups for the daily necessities of life.¹²² This constant suffering theme reflects Nero's persecution of Christians.

Nevertheless, some commentators see Mark 13 as the key to the Gospel's setting.¹²³ They argue that it reflects Tacitus' description of the cruel nature of the persecutions of Christians in Rome (*Annals*, 15. 44). Clearly Chapter 13 is imbued with a sense of severe communal persecution (13:9-13,14-20).¹²⁴ Both Jewish and Roman historians attest, 'nation (did) rise against nation' during the sixties (cf. 13:8). Mark's addressees, understandably shaken by injustice and turmoil had dire need of reassurance (13:6-7:14-23). To be 'hated by all' because of Jesus' name (13:13) was not mere rhetoric or religious paranoia for Rome's house-churches.¹²⁵ Pliny too reminds us of the indiscriminate contempt heaped by many pagans upon Christians in urban centres.¹²⁶

¹²² C. Osiek and D. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1997), 30-32, 96-97, 100-102; cf. Black, 'Was Mark?' 36-40.

¹²³ Donahue, 'Quest', 830; cf. Hengel, *Studies*, 9-28; Stock, *Method*, 4-12; Hooker, *Mark*, 8; Juel, *Mark*, 174; Nineham, *Mark*, 351-357; Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 7; Barton, *Discipleship*, 113.

¹²⁴ Harrington, *Mark*, 201-204; cf. Nineham, *Mark*, 339-342; Juel, *Mark*, 74; Harrington, *Mark*, 201-204; Nineham, *Mark*, 339-342; L.W. Hurtado, *Mark*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 211.

¹²⁵ C.C. Black, 'Was Mark a Roman Gospel?' *Exp Tm* 105 (1993-4), 36-40.

¹²⁶ Pliny the Younger, *Letters to Trajan*, 10. 96.

Fraternal betrayal also doubtless occurred. Apart from Mark's rhetorical purpose, if this claim is more than biblically allusive (Micah 7:6; cf. 2 Ezra 6:24), it explains the narrative's portrayal of Jesus' disciples in such negative terms of incomprehension and betrayal. It would resonate with those Christians in the household groups in the capital who acted similarly. For individual Christians, when trouble or persecution did arise on account of the word, some immediately fell away (13:12-13; 14:17-21, 66-72).¹²⁷ As well, the social climate created by the uncertainty and rebellions described in 13:7-12, combined with the community's persecution experience and the turbulent post-Nero period in Rome 66-69 CE, would have created a situation conducive for betrayal and infidelity.

Moving from an inner-texture viewpoint, Donahue next examines the inter-textual literature. He notes how Tacitus records the rumours of Nero's complicity in the fires in Rome in 64 CE. To divert the blame, Nero redirected it towards the Christians, who on account of their supposed misdeeds were hated and regarded as social pariahs even prior to this accusation (Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.44).¹²⁸ Throughout 64-65 CE, numerous Christians were arrested and subjected to torture, their guilt being taken for granted. Nero made unscrupulous use of the current social, suspicious attitude towards them to allay public concern about his own role in these fires.¹²⁹ In such an atmosphere, Tacitus' reference to the persecution of Christians forms a key element in the majority choice of a Roman Mark. J.N.D. Kelly argues that Nero's persecution was unique among the periods of victimization and persecution of the early Church until that by Decius in 250 CE. Kelly insists that: the majority of provinces were unaffected by persecution; other areas knew only haphazard, local persecution. In sum, many

¹²⁷ Black, 'Was Mark?' 39.

¹²⁸ K.S. Latourette, *The First Five Centuries*, (New York: Longmore Press, 1937), 126-133.

¹²⁹ K. Baus, 'From the Apostolic Community to Constantine', in H. Jedin and J. Dolan, (eds.), *Handbook of Church History*, (Vol. 1; Freiburg: Herder Press, 1965), 1, 113-14; cf. P. Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), 6, 12, 71; P. Hughes, *A History of the World in Which the Church Was Formed*, (2 Vols; London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), 1, 158-159.

Christians lived and died in peace in an era widely believed to be one of constant persecution.¹³⁰

Hengel is aware that in other areas of the Empire individual Christians faced arrest and imprisonment, even martyrdom in 40-70 CE (cf. 13:13). Despite this fact, he argues that Pliny's letter to Trajan, circa 110 CE, makes it very clear that Pliny describes only isolated and intermittent cases of the arrest, imprisonment and possible death for local, individual Christians. The scope and severity of these instances of persecution do not even remotely approach the scale of Nero's onslaught upon Christians in Rome, circa 64-65 CE.¹³¹ Hengel writes:

We know of no comparable persecution in the forty years before and the hundred after. The emphatic theology of suffering and the cross in the Gospel has its very specific *Sitz im Leben* here.¹³²

Along with A.N. Sherwin-White and G.W. Lampe who describe the format of Roman trials of Christians in Bithynia, Hengel interprets this letter in the light of the current anti-Christian discrimination in Greco-Roman cities including Bithynia and Rome.¹³³ If Peter was martyred in Rome as Clement implies (1 *Clement* 5:2), his denial and subsequent rehabilitation models the archetypal disciple who repents of a grave fall under severe duress.¹³⁴ It would be a strong motive to accept similarly repentant Christians back into the life of the community¹³⁵ since, under extreme torture, some leaders and other members of house-churches had betrayed fellow Christians.¹³⁶ Tacitus describes the Christians' treatment as a two-stage process during 64-65 CE. Betrayed or

¹³⁰ J.F.D. Kelly, *The World of the Early Christians*, (Collegeville: Glazier Press, 1997), 44-46.

¹³¹ Hengel, *Studies*, 25.

¹³² Hengel, *Studies*, 23.

¹³³ Hengel, *Studies*, 25; cf. A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 25; G.W.H. Lampe, *St Peter's Denial and the Treatment of the Lapsi*, (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1973), 113-133.

¹³⁴ R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, (2 Vols; AB 29 and 29A; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 2, 624-626; cf. Baus, *Apostolic Community*, 115; Hengel, *Studies*, 47-53; Gundry, *Mark*, 1026-1045; Stock, *Method*, 3,7; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xxx. For a contrary view, cf. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 21-24;

¹³⁵ Donahue, 'Windows and Mirrors', 19.

¹³⁶ Donahue, 'Windows and Mirrors', 24.

confessed Christians were arrested. Of these, some were tortured; they betrayed many other which lead to their condemnation (*Annals*, 15.44.4; cf. Mk 13. 9-13).¹³⁷

This documented plight of Rome's Christians also suggests that their persecution was unique in the first century (*Annals*, 5. 14-44). Yet Mark's depiction of Jesus' ultimate victory through vulnerability, suffering and death offers his young Church a means of defining itself against an ideology of power: of 'Gentiles' power in patriarchal, cultural combativeness (10:42) or the Jewish establishment's 'swords and clubs' (14:43).¹³⁸ Nero's sustained persecution, linked with the Gospel's Gentile, law-free character, constitutes a firm case for a Roman Gospel, which, if it does not prove conclusively that this Gentile Gospel originated in Rome, offers solid support in favour of those arguments in its favour.

As well, Nero's persecution of the Christian communities provided role models for Rome's house-churches; they numbered some six hundred to a thousand Christians in Rome by the middle 60's CE.¹³⁹ Within this relatively small group, the martyred Christian leaders, Paul and Peter (64-65CE) proved heroic witnesses for persecuted Christians, of life through death in union with a crucified/risen Christ.¹⁴⁰ Black comments that, overall, between the religious, social and political pressures insinuated by Mark's Gospel and the conditions threatening first-century Roman Christians during the 60's CE there are, in fact, various fascinating similarities.¹⁴¹

Thus, if the parallels between the social, political, and religious conditions implied by an analysis of the Gospel's inner and inter texture and the Christian groups in Rome in 64-70 CE are so evident, why not cut the Gordian knot and assert a Roman Mark? This study does so, aware though, that the combined weight of the patristic

¹³⁷ Baus, 'Apostolic Community', 129.

¹³⁸ D. Senior, 'With Swords and Clubs', *BTB* 17 (1987), 10-20.

¹³⁹ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 97-104; R. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 185, agrees with this estimate.

¹⁴⁰ Stark, *Rise*, 186; cf. Donahue, 'Windows and Mirrors', 24; Hooker, *Mark*, 365; D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, (Wilmington: Glazier Press, 1984), 105.

tradition, based on local and wider church oral traditions,¹⁴² together with the Latinisms and textual features of the Gospel's Law-free and temple-free, urban character do not give certainty, they offer a more probable thesis for a Roman Gospel than theories for alternate situations.

3. A GALILEAN OR SYRIAN MARK

Since the publication of W. Marxsen's work that sets out the case for a Galilean Gospel, the former consensus regarding the Roman location of Mark has been challenged. Prominent studies by W. Kelber and G. Theissen among others and lately by Marcus opt for a northern Galilean, southern Syrian or a Transjordanian community from which the Gospel emerged.

Marxsen (1956) argues for a northern Galilean Gospel. He holds that Mark addresses the present needs of the original Hebrew Christian group from Jerusalem, now resettled in Galilee prior to 70 CE. He describes Mark's attitude to the role of key terms 'Galilee' or 'wilderness'¹⁴³ so that the Galilean words and actions of Jesus 'are proclaimed in the present because they answer the immediate needs of this Christian community in Galilee' (p. 65). Marxsen also maintains that 'the past is viewed and shaped from the standpoint of the present' (p. 65). Moreover, the historical and geographical features in the Gospel are not to be understood factually but symbolically. They serve Mark's theological purpose in addressing this relocated community (p. 65) for the Gospel is not biographical but, in Marxsen's view, it echoes the needs of Mark's group in Galilee prior to 70 CE (13:5-13 - p. 171). It is open to Christian traditions for the Gospel assumes a community that is already in existence (p. 107). There it awaits the parousia (pp. 15-29) for 'there you will see him' (16:7).

¹⁴¹ Black, 'Was Mark?' 39.

¹⁴² J.R. Donahue and D.J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, (SP 2; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 46.

¹⁴³ Q. Quesnell, 'Review of W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969)', in *RR* 28 (1969), 661.

Marxsen, however, weakens his case initially by investing the term ‘Galilee’ with unsubstantiated importance.¹⁴⁴ R.H. Stein rejects Marxsen’s case that Mark’s group awaits the parousia there.¹⁴⁵ Stein points to this position’s weakness: Peter was already dead when Mark wrote his Gospel so 16:7 - ‘there you will see him’ - refers to a resurrection appearance in Galilee, rather than to the parousia.¹⁴⁶ Also, most scholars see 13:5-13 referring to the current trials that the house-churches were suffering throughout the Empire. Such trials had occurred in the past and they will recur in the future, as this study argues below. Gundry agrees. He sees 13:5-13 signaling not the parousia but current disasters, martyrdom and disunity. These problems, that have already tested the church in the past, are occurring now and will do so again in the future.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, should ‘Galilee’ be so prominent physically, what of all those hearers of the Gospel located in Greco-Roman urban centres (cf. 13:10-13; Acts 8:4; 11:19) that Jesus names in ‘all nations’ at 13:10? Will they ‘see’ the risen Lord only if they are physically present in Galilee? Clearly, this over-emphasis on a physical rural Galilee is misleading at best, especially in light of the accepted view that, during the second half of the first century, the Church was predominately an urban phenomenon.

Similarly, we argue that Mark’s content and literary structure do not describe a relocated Aramaic-speaking Jewish-Christian community in Galilee. References to Galilee occur naturally in the text since it was the area in which Jesus exercised his ministry. But these references offer no proof that the geographical Galilee was the key focus in a Gospel addressing the needs of a Greco-Roman urban group. In Mark, place names are not juxtaposed in order to burden them with a particular meaning or artificial pleading. P.J. Botha adds that the argument that the evangelist stresses Galilee is based

¹⁴⁴ S.L. Mitton, ‘Review of W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel*’, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), *Exp Tm* 81, (1970), 194.

¹⁴⁵ R.H. Stein, ‘Review of W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel*’, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), *JBL* 88 (1969), 360; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 306-307, Stock, *Method*, 328-329; Gundry, *Mark*, 737-738.

¹⁴⁶ Stein, ‘Review’, 360.

on the references in 14:28 and 16:7 which are considered problematic if accepted at face value in the story line since they do not fit our theological expectations of the text. In addition, Mark does not use Isaiah's '*Galilaia ton ethnon* (Isa 9:1) to bolster a Galilean Mark (cf. Mt 4:15).¹⁴⁸ No details are given of the leaders of this Christian group nor does Marxsen document the location of his Christian church in Galilee yet he dismisses Pella which is documented, as an alternate site (Eusebius *Church History*, 4. 6, 3). He undermines his own case by admitting that, due to the lack of either inner or inter-textual material, 'we know nothing of a primitive community in Galilee' circa 70 CE. (p. 93).

Three basic aspects of the Gospel text further question this thesis. Mark is compelled to explain Jewish customs (7:3-4, 12-13; 15:42) and the Law (cf. 1:32; 2:18,24; 6:11; 3:2; 12:38-39). This would be unnecessary for a conservative, Galilean Jewish Christian group. Marshall queries Marxsen's choice based on dubious interpretations of Markan eschatology. Also, why would Aramaic terms need to be translated (3:17; 7:34; 10:46; 14:36; 15:22,34).¹⁴⁹ Gundry points to another negative factor for a Galilee site:

To a Gentile, ignorant of Jewish language concerning cultic purity *koinais* would mean "common" as opposed to "private"....His usual introduction, to such an explanation "which is" (3:7; 7:11,34; 12:42; 15:16,42) gives way to "this is" in order that the demonstrative pronoun may highlight Jewish practice as different from that of the Gentiles for whom he writes.¹⁵⁰

J.D.G. Dunn points to a growing consensus that, pre-70 CE, the population of rural Galilee was conservatively Jewish and purity laws were still observed.¹⁵¹ It is hardly likely that a Law and temple free gospel would originate from there within a short time of this conservative community's arrival from Jerusalem. Such defects in Marxsen's thesis point to a Gentile Christian church similar to Rome, which is Law-free and temple-free and needed the translation of Aramaic phrases preserved in the tradition.

¹⁴⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 738, 740.

¹⁴⁸ P.J. Botha, 'The Historical Setting of Mark's Gospel: Problems and Possibilities', *JSNT* 51 (1993), 37.

¹⁴⁹ Marshall, *Faith*, 5-6.

¹⁵⁰ Gundry, *Mark*, 358.

Also, Lane points to transliterations, including *Abba* (5:41; 7:11; 10:46; 14:36), which Paul had used when writing to the church in Rome (Rom 8:15; cf. Gal 4:6; Mk 14:36).¹⁵² This pro-Galilee thesis offers no analysis of the issue of Latinisms, let alone any adequate treatment of the narrative's key rhetorical emphasis on suffering and persecution. Nor does Marxsen cite any first century inter-textual evidence to support his case. The patristic tradition is only briefly discussed while the reflected Gentile mission is ignored (5:1-20; 7:24-30, 31-37; 13:9-10). His work too disregards the Gospel's pronounced urban, Gentile character, which resonates with its key servant theme (8:27-10:52), a motif culturally unsuitable in a Jewish Christian community in rural Galilee.

Overall, Marxsen's claim that the Gospel of Mark was written to urge the Jerusalem Christian to escape to Galilee during the 66-70 CE war has received little support among scholars'.¹⁵³ If it is a Galilean Mark, it is odd that there is no indication from tradition or the Eastern Fathers to support this thesis. We find Marxsen's case for Galilean Gospel unconvincing.

In 1974, W. Kelber¹⁵⁴ also argued for a Galilean Gospel, the fruit of the witness of a reforming group in Jerusalem that had moved to a northern rural location. Repeated references to rural life indicate the community's social background (p. 90). The Gospel answers a crisis in this reform group that grew out of the dissension in the Christian community (p. 11), due to the destruction of Jerusalem (13:5-23; pp. 100-101) and Peter and the Twelve's leadership failure (p. 59). They are ineffective shepherds (cf. 6:34; pp. 56-59). Further, the Twelve block the Gentile mission (p. 59) and 'stand in the way of the fulfillment of the kingdom' (p. 64) through rigid 'southern orthodoxy and exclusiveness' (p. 64). He links the Twelve to the false Jerusalem prophets (13:5-6; pp. 82-105), pointing to 13:5-6, 21-23 (the warnings against parousia deceivers) as the basis

¹⁵¹ J.D.G. Dunn, 'Jesus and Purity: an Ongoing Debate', *NTS* 48 (2002), 453.

¹⁵² Lane, *Gospel*, v-vi.

¹⁵³ Quesnell, 'Review', 661

¹⁵⁴ W.H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time*.

for his claim that false Jerusalem prophets from Jerusalem had predicted a Galilean parousia during the latter days of the Jewish War. This proved false (p. 59). Mark then rewrites Christian history for a post 70 CE Galilean group, citing the contrast of the barren temple (11:1-21) and Jerusalem's hostility to Jesus versus his messianic fruit in Galilee (pp. 61-65; 136-37). With the temple destroyed (pp. 130, 138-47), Kelber regards 1:15 - 'repent and believe the gospel' - as a call to reject the discredited Jerusalem Christian Church (pp. 64,82) and start afresh in Galilee (pp. 113-16).

Kelber opts for a rural village location due to the constant references to 'images, drawn from agricultural and pastoral life' (p. 90). But we maintain that this is a seriously flawed position since it is not known at what stage the pericopes containing these references entered the tradition. Also, we do not know to what degree of redaction these pericopes had reached before Mark selected and adapted them further for the purposes of his narrative. It is understandable too that if Jesus taught and healed there, we should expect to find references to Galilee and pastoral life.

No details are given of Kelber's discredited reform group's leaders. The Gospel's strong focus on the Twelve appears to question this aspect of Kelber's work. Exegetes hold that Mark portrayed the disciples' misunderstanding to emphasise the positive response to Jesus words and miracles by the minor characters. Mark too uses the Twelve's flawed response to Jesus' discipleship teaching as a catalyst for his outline of correct discipleship living. The text too does not substantiate Kelber's claim of defective leadership, that 'the unperceptiveness of the disciples...include the resurrection of Jesus' (p. 82) - yet there is no textual proof for this assertion. It is the Markan Jesus himself, however, who links Peter, the Twelve and 'whoever' (3:35) with his promise of their living faithful discipleship in his post-resurrection 'way' (14:27-28; 16:7; cf. 8:27-10:52). At the tomb, the *neaniskos* offered them the reassurance that 'there you will see him as he told you' in Galilee (16:6), an appearance previously anticipated at 14:28. Mark

illustrates Jesus' own choice of the Twelve; it, and the creation of the new Israel, further nullifies Kelber's claim (cf. 3:6-19) since Jesus 'appointed the twelve to be with him' (3:14). Kelber's position demands that Mark attributes failure to Jesus' predictions.

In addition, Kelber insists on an historical division between Galilee and Jerusalem to justify the Markan Jesus' rejection of the barren temple (p. 106). Yet, as we argue in Chapter 5 below, Mark's primary focus is on a symbolic temple. He uses its rejection to stress the Christian's capacity to follow in the way of the suffering/risen Son of Man - he is now the metaphorical new 'temple' 'not made with hands' (14:57; 11:22-12:34). This aspect of the Gospel offered hope to Rome's Christians (8:34-35) through Mark's outline of servant discipleship in a crucified/risen Lord.¹⁵⁵ As well, Kelber turns rhetoric into history at 1:15 ('Repent and believe the gospel'). Post resurrection, these imperatives form part of Mark's rhetorical strategy to involve his community as it struggles with the trauma of severe persecution.

No first century texts document Kelber's reform group's leaders or its location. On the available written evidence, the re-located Jerusalem Christian community fled to Pella (circa 67-70 CE) early in the Jewish uprising against Rome (Eusebius, *Church History*, 3. 5. 3). From this same written proof, G. Luedemann concludes that the Pella tradition had its origin in the Jewish-Christian community and established its claim to be its successor in Pella of the Jerusalem Church.¹⁵⁶ As refugees, the Jerusalem community had been forced to relocate in a Greco-Roman city during the initial phases of the Jewish war in 66 CE.¹⁵⁷ In a similar fashion, the persecuted Hellenists had earlier fled Jerusalem and scattered among urban centres such as Antioch, circa 35-40 CE (cf. Acts 6:1-8:3; 11:19-26). Koester insists that Eusebius traced the

¹⁵⁵ H.C. Kee, 'Review of W.H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and A New Time*', (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), *JR* 56 (1976), 122-123.

¹⁵⁶ G. Luedemann, *Opposition to Paul in Jewish Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 203; cf. C. Koester, 'The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition', *CBQ* 51 (1989), 91.

¹⁵⁷ M. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: The Hellenists, the Seven and Stephen*, (London: SCM, 1985), 24-26.

movements of only the apostles and apostolic churches; he shows no interest in single, isolated congregations. Not all Christians left Jerusalem; some stayed, others returned post-70 CE. Also Pella's church apparently practiced a hybrid law/Christian faith that led to its relative isolation in the tradition (*Church History*, 4. 6, 3).¹⁵⁸

Like Marxsen, Kelber ignores the Gospel's emphasis on the Gentile mission and the reason for Mark's rhetorical stress on suffering and its specific cause, together with the important issue of Latinisms. Furthermore, how could a law-free, Gentile Gospel emerge within 2-3 years after the fall of Jerusalem if its source is a relocated Jewish Christian group from Jerusalem, at home with the temple liturgy and the Law (Acts 2:46-47; 26:11)? And, if settled in a rural area, it is more likely to be in a religiously conservative area.¹⁵⁹ As with Marxsen, there is also the contradiction of Mark's translation of Aramaic phrases and explanation of Jewish customs for a relocated, rural conservative Jewish Christian community. No inter-textual secular or traditional proofs are offered in Kelber's attempt to substantiate his thesis for a Galilean Mark. As with Marxsen's position, this thesis has received little support in scholarly circles.

Writing in 1991, G. Theissen sets Mark in a village location in southern Syria near the Sea of Galilee.¹⁶⁰ He bases his sociological thesis on the 'local colouring' of a village; it indicates a group's culture and locality (p. 238). He opts for a farming/fishing group since the Gospel uses apothegms, miracles and parables in terms of 'sowing and reaping, harvests...a deeply rural milieu' (p. 238). Similarly with *thalassa* (pp. 107-108); it is set in the context of Semitic linguistic usage that indicates a community's culture. It is connected with the Sea 'where Semitic languages directly or indirectly contributed to the shaping of the vocabulary' (p. 239). This discloses a 'limited horizon of life as among these small farmers and fisher-folk' close to the Sea of Galilee (5:1-20; 21-43; 7:31-37 - pp. 239-40). The Gerasene account (5:1-20) too reflects a traditional

¹⁵⁸ Koester, 'Origin', 91-106.

¹⁵⁹ Rohrbach, 'Social Location', 114.

Jewish life style. It ‘corresponds to that “boundary-spanning character” formed by their internal structure’. They ‘crossed the bounds of locality’ (pp. 106; cf. 122) and so indicate villagers in a Jewish rural area.

Theissen takes up the issue of the text’s geographical markers: Gerasa, Decapolis, Tyre and Sidon (5:22; 7:24,31). He singles out Gerasa (37 miles from the Sea of Galilee). The text intimates that it is on the seashore (5:1) so Theissen, citing the inexactitude of ancient geographers, argues that Mark’s selection of these references reflects his ‘desire to mention those Syrian regions of the Gospel where this (Jewish) community found its home’ (p. 245). The term *Syrophoenician* (7:26) is also scrutinized. Theissen maintains that it indicates a location in southern Syria rather than Rome (pp. 245-47). In addition, he insists that Mark 13 portrays a Gospel written at some stage in 71-74 CE. It mirrors the early Jerusalem Church’s reaction to Caligula’s attempts to erect his statue in the temple in 40 CE, an incident that played a part in the now destroyed temple (p. 259). So, from Mark’s depiction of a destroyed temple in 70 CE (13:1-2) and its redactional additions (13:9-13,21-24), Theissen sees Mark superimposing the Caligula desecration upon the crisis caused by the temple’s destruction (p. 259-60).

R.S. Kraemer rejects Theissen’s sociological thesis for a Syrian gospel. He contends that Theissen encourages the erroneous impression that he has formed his theoretical models from ancient Christian sources but this is incorrect for Theissen has applied recent social science theory to fragmentary social data¹⁶¹ apart from using a sociological method that had been pre-empted by H. Kee’s 1977’s work, now generally rejected due to its flawed, sociological methodology.¹⁶² Theissen himself admits that, if

¹⁶⁰ Theissen, *Gospels*, 238.

¹⁶¹ R.S. Kraemer, ‘Review of G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*’, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), *JBL* 111 (1992), 437.

¹⁶² Kee, *Community*, 189. For a critique of Kee, cf. Koester, ‘Origin’, 91-106; cf. K.W. Whitlam, ‘The Social World of the Bible’, in Barton, *Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, 45-46; D.H. Juell, Review of H.C. Kee, *The Community of the New Age*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), *TS*

a viable, first century sociological model was available with which to compare the relatively few social descriptions in Mark, often the problem is (as with Kelber) that we cannot locate the Gospel's source in a definite 'there and then' (p. 10). Whitelam argues that that we must be aware of the dangers of favouring circular reasoning in attempting to reconstruct the social world of the Bible completely from the texts themselves.¹⁶³ He adds that sufficient cross-cultural examples are required but Theissen presents a social survey in which vague sociological models are unconvincing.¹⁶⁴

Hengel represents the majority position when he rejects Theissen's second crux, his support for a post 74 CE date for the Gospel based on Chapter 13. He insists that 13:5-24 applies to the pre-70 CE period that outlines past, recurring and future difficulties faced by the early Church (see further below). He counters the question of vague geographical markers such as the Gerasenes (5:1), arguing that it would be equally difficult for a non-Syrian gospel writer to grasp the geographical details of the Syrian area to which Mark refers.¹⁶⁵ The argument for a Syrian gospel based on *thalassa*, could as readily apply to an author in distant Rome who, knowing little of Palestine geography yet knew that, historically, Jesus ministered by the Sea of Galilee.

The 'Sea of Galilee' appears to be a symbolic term. Its repeated crossing stresses the later development of the Hellenistic outreach to the Gentiles.¹⁶⁶ No doubt the primitive tradition carried early accounts of Jesus' messianic work there. No doubt also that *thalassa* comes from the tradition but its location in some hinge passages points to Mark's hand in these pericopes (3:7; 5:1), where, if the construction uses the genitive

35, (1978), 105; V.K. Robbins, Review of H.C. Kee, *The Community of the New Age*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), *JBL* 98 (1979), 148; P.J. Achtemeier, Review of H.C. Kee, *The Community of the New Age*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), *Int* 32 (1978), 324-325; S.L. Mitton, Review: H.C. Kee, *The Community of the New Age*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), *Exp Tm* 88 (1977), 321-323; W.A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 10-11.

¹⁶³ Whitelam, 'Social World' in Barton, *Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation*, 44.

¹⁶⁴ B.J. Malina, Review of G. Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991), *CBQ* 41 (1991), 176.

¹⁶⁵ Hengel, *Studies*, 16; cf. Stock, *Method*, 326; Gundry, *Mark*, 1027; Juel, *Mark*, 180; Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 175; Hurtado, *Mark*, 175; Hooker, *Mark*, 300, 314.

(1:16; 7:31), it deviates from Latin and Greek usage. And, if we accept Mark's addressees' familiarity with the Septuagint, we know that the 'sea' was not an unsuitable name for an inland lake. Van Iersel adds,

neither can the high frequency of terms referring to regions around cities or villages be accepted as evidence for the Syrian countryside. In the Septuagint the term for a "sea" - *thalassa* refers not only "to the great sea" or "the sea", 'but also to areas of water with the features of an inland lake (Num 34:6; Ex 46-48; Ex 10:19).¹⁶⁷

These terms may simply come from the sources of the tradition, but not from the situation that formed the foundation for the compilation of the Gospel. Should the tradition be reworked to suit house-churches in Hellenist centres, it does not reflect its first setting but the situation and place from which the Gospel finally emerged.¹⁶⁸

The case for 'local colouring' is also suspect. The early Church was an urban phenomenon so these Gentile stories (5:1-20; 21-43; 7:31-37) are most likely part of the pre-existing urban house-church oral traditions (e.g. 2:1-3:6). They do not come directly from Mark's pen.¹⁶⁹ Post-resurrection, they are seen to reflect Jesus' historical outreach to the Gentiles so that there is the probability that these stories came late into the tradition. Guelich regards the three geographical markers (5:1-20; 7:24-30, 31-37) as part of the development of the tradition into Gentile missionary stories.¹⁷⁰ Still later, Mark creatively adapted them for urban households in Rome. And, obviously, the local colour of a tradition requires no specific explanation if it harmonises with the area in which it was originally set - in rural Galilee. It is not known, for example, when the three healing accounts entered the tradition (5:1-20; 7:24-30; 7: 31-37), but Mark would have appreciated their Gentile relevance for household-groups like those in Rome. We shall argue this position in Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁶⁶ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 133.

¹⁶⁷ Van Iersel, *Reader Response*, 37-38.

¹⁶⁸ Hengel, *Studies*, 31-40.

¹⁶⁹ Achtemeier, *Mark*, 14-23. Most exegetes (save Gnllka, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 210) concur with Bultmann's judgment, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1963), 98, that Mark takes over this traditional material essentially intact.

¹⁷⁰ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, xxxiii-xxxv, 273.

There is a general acceptance of the view that Mark's emphasis in these 'Gentile' pericopes reflects the primitive Church's belief that Jesus healed in Gentile areas. Post-resurrection, they were used as justification for the Hellenist and Pauline focus on their Gentile missions. This appears to be the majority view. In this case, they verified the Church's outreach to Gentiles in Rome.¹⁷¹ Structurally, Mark symbolically links the Jewish and Gentile missions by means of the symbolic 'Sea' of Galilee. The pattern of Jesus' criss-crossing the lake offers a contrast in the differing receptions of Jesus on either side of the lake of Galilee.¹⁷²

Regarding the term 'Syrophoenician', Hengel insists that it is not used perjoratively as Theissen claimed. Rather, the term was used to distinguish different parts of the Empire.¹⁷³ Taken on its own, the single reference to 'Syrophoenician' may be of doubtful assistance in finding the location of the Gospel.¹⁷⁴ It seems too by situating 7:24-30 after 7:1-23, Mark portrays an existing Law-free and temple-free Gospel for the Gentile mission (7:24-8:9). La Verdiere is explicit: 7:14-23 is a Hellenist viewpoint since Jewish laws and traditions constitute a barrier to Gentile evangelisation.¹⁷⁵

Theissen does not document the Jerusalem's group's relocation in a village in upper Galilee and ignores the fact of primitive, urban Christianity. Judge holds that primitive Christianity was changed from a mainly farming and rustic group whose founders were Galilean country folk into an inclusive urban religion. A cultural chasm existed between urban and rural communities in antiquity.¹⁷⁶ Theissen fails to offer any traditional material or first century secular writings, which describe a community exhibiting the culture and thought patterns of a conservative Jewish-Christian

¹⁷¹ Hooker, *Mark*, 146; cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 248; Stock, *Method*, 165; Hurtado, *Mark*, 82; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 276; Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 89.

¹⁷² E.S. Malbon, 'The Jesus of Mark and the Sea of Galilee', *JBL* 103 (1984), 363-377.

¹⁷³ Hengel, *Studies*, 29.

¹⁷⁴ Donahue, 'Quest', 835.

¹⁷⁵ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 198.

community, set in the narrow belt of the Jewish farming/fishing environment in north-east Galilee. As noted above, it is also difficult to envisage a case where a law-free and temple-free Gentile Gospel emerged from a relatively rural, Jewish context, a milieu definitely not given to change, within 2-4 years of the temple's destruction. In light of Luke and Matthew's dependence on Mark, how could this unknown source bestow apostolic status on Mark's narrative? The first century pattern of Hellenist and Pauline pioneering evangelisation in urban centres, a position most scholars accept, suggests that an important urban Church like Rome was the logical source of the Gospel. This would account for its early and widespread acceptance among first century Churches.¹⁷⁷

There is only a cursory treatment for the patristic evidence for a Roman Mark. Awkward questions thrown up by the text are ignored (as is the case with Marxsen and Kelber) of the Law-free and temple-free nature of the Gospel and the need for the translation of Aramaic phrases and the explanation of Jewish customs. Theissen ignores the fact that these translations would hardly be necessary for the Aramaic speaking, relocated Jerusalem group in southern Syria. Key Markan themes that reflect a Gentile setting are ignored. There is the symbolic rhetorical use of the topology of Palestine in the theme of the 'way' discipleship teaching and its interweaving with the 'servant' and 'house' motifs in the journey section (8:27-10:52). These adaptations appear most suitable for Mark's inversion of patriarchal urban house values, a counter witness that describes the growth and unity of Gentile Christian urban communities.

Theissen's proposed Jewish, conservative rural milieu is at odds with the Gospel's urban emphasis. His thesis is further undermined by the lack of a definitive where, when and why a particular pericope was included in the tradition from which Mark drew his material. This work also lacks a sound method for determining the social context in which the final form of the Gospel took shape. Scholars generally recognise

¹⁷⁶ Judge, *Social Patterns*, 11-13; cf. Hengel, *Between Jesus*, 25-26.

¹⁷⁷ Judge, *Social Patterns*, 12-13.

the role of the social context in defining Mark's use of a particular pericope and hence its Gospel's location. Overall, we find Theissen's thesis unconvincing.

4. A TRANSJORDANIAN LOCATION FOR MARK

Joel Marcus situates the Gospel's source in a Hellenist city in the Transjordan.¹⁷⁸ He bases his thesis partly on his perceived inadequacy of the traditional proofs for Rome: Papias' writings, Latinisms, specialized terms and documented proof from the tradition and first century secular writings that detail a particularly severe, sustained persecution in Rome, circa 64-65 CE. Initially, Marcus insists that Mark 13 justifies a defiled temple; it is now the Zealots' headquarters, 'a den of thieves' (11:17). The Zealot leaders are the anti-type to Mark's Davidic Christ while the interracial strife in Transjordanian, Hellenist cities (crucial to his thesis - pp. 446-456) justifies Mark's emphasis on suffering in his Gospel.

Marcus criticizes Papias' witness to the Rome/Mark/Peter link on the grounds of form criticism and the time lapse between the Gospel's composition and Papias' writings. He claims that Papias' witness is based on a tradition about Peter that has undergone extensive development. It is unreliable as part of the proof for a Roman Gospel. Other patristic figures simply repeat Papias' testimony. Moreover, latinisms and ambiguous terms (cf. *Syrophoenician*) constitute dubious pro-Rome support (pp. 442-446). For Marcus, Chapter 13 points to a Transjordanian Gospel, its *ex eventu* 'prophecies' reflect features of the Jewish War (66-70 CE) that had a profound effect on Mark's community' (p. 446). As well, the suffering depicted in Mark 13 owed its central emphasis to the inter-racial Jewish/Gentile strife in the Transjordan's Hellenist cities where mutual massacres had taken place (p. 452 - cf. Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.18.1 - p. 457; 2.18.1 - p. 457-461). Marcus claims that this strife partly explains the suffering in this 'mostly Gentile Christian community' (pp. 451, 453).

¹⁷⁸ Marcus, 'Jewish War', 441-462. From here on, the page numbers will be in brackets.

Hence there is the need for unity¹⁷⁹ but false messiahs, war and betrayal (13:6-13) 'are part of the present experience of Mark's Community' (p. 447). The 'desolating sacrilege' (13:14), due to the Zealots' defilement of the temple (pp. 447-448), is set within Daniel's prophecies (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Marcus insists that the variation of evidence from Chapter 13 was caused at least from the challenge to Mark's group in response to the Jewish War' (p. 448). During this conflict, the Zealots occupied the temple, preventing it from being the 'house of prayer for all the nations' (11:17). Zealots too are labelled as 'bandits' and 'thieves' (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 4.3.7-8 - pp. 151-157) whose actions arose from 'an anti-Gentile attitude' that reversed the temple's prophetic role as a welcoming house for the nations (Isa 56:1-8). Marcus also regards 11:17 'as the superimposition upon the tradition about Jesus' cleansing of the temple...through events that occurred during the Jewish War' (p. 451). The Zealots' attempt to cleanse 'the holy land from Gentile influence' constitutes the 'desolating sacrilege. It was an actual defilement' (p. 455) that will precipitate divine judgment.

This situation necessitated the prophecy to flee Jerusalem to an adjacent Gentile city (13:14), a move that reflected Mark's 'emphasis on Jesus' openness to Gentiles' (p. 453 - 5:1-20; 7:24-37: 13:10) and sharpens his negative verdict on the Jewish leaders (p. 453). In Marcus' thesis, Israel's heritage is supplanted, 'turned over to a new people that includes Gentiles in its ranks' (12:9-10 - p. 451). The Jewish Zealot leaders are seen as self-deluded, Davidic messiahs, who, after taking control of the temple in 67-69 CE, persecuted Jerusalem's Christian community (pp. 455-458).

So Marcus depicts Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as an anti-type to such Davidic messiahs as the Zealots, Simon and Menachem, circa 67-69 CE (pp. 456-460). Seeing he is a Jewish Christian from Jerusalem, 'Mark's contact with the revolutionary movement...helps to explain...not only his development of the Jew-Gentile theme but

¹⁷⁹ Marcus, 'Jewish War', 447.

also his curiously ambivalent attitude towards Davidic messianism' (p. 456 - cf. 11:9-11, 10:46-52; 12:35-37). The first two instances are positive in their reliance on the Son of David's authority, since 'in early Christian sources, Jesus' Davidic descent is scarcely contested' (p. 457).¹⁸⁰ The third, 12:35-37, is obviously inadequate.

Consequently, Mark's addressees would understand his description of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the anti-type to the Zealot Simon bar Giora's entry into the city and the temple (Josephus, *J.W.*2.17.8, 433-434 - p. 458). Jesus now exercises authority as the Lord through his humble service, symbolically portrayed by his arrival in Jerusalem on an ass (11:3 12:35-37). Marcus holds that the Davidic issue and the factors listed above determine that the Gospel emerged from a temporal and physical proximity to the events of the Jewish War (p. 460). He closes his pro-Transjordanian thesis by stating: 'if there is some historicity in the tradition related by Eusebius (*Church History*, 3.5.3) and Epiphanius (*Panarion*, 29.7,7-8)...Judean Christians...fled to Pella before the siege of Jerusalem...we might even think...of Pella' as the Gospel's source' (p. 461).

Marcus' thesis demands that he dismisses the patristic case for a Roman Gospel. Yet Papias' witness would surely have been disciplined by the pervasive oral tradition in the late first century Church. And, even allowing for some Christian conditioning and the time lapse between Papias' writing describing a Roman Gospel, it is at least a tangible, transmitted witness to Rome that is unanimously attested by the patristic writings. In turn, there is the question of the value of seeking proof for the source of the Gospel from Josephus' writings on which Marcus depends so heavily. Josephus focuses on the Jews' vicissitudes at this time. From his writings, it appears that Josephus has no interest in the fate of a tiny Christian group in Jerusalem. Latinisms as a pro-Roman support are sketchily examined. Of the many examples in the text only four

¹⁸⁰ Marcus, 'Jewish War', 457; cf. Gnilka, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 171.

are analysed; Latinisms, relating solely in a Latin-speaking context, are not considered nor is the Latin structure underlying much of the Greek text of the Gospel examined.

Marcus sets great store on the prophetic material in Mark 13. For him, it points to the destroyed temple due to the Jewish War post - 70 CE. But as our study illustrates below, the pattern of Mark 13's biblical prophecies reflect past, present and future trials and events for God's People. Mark adds his warnings to the repeated warnings in the past, directing his addressees to watch and take heed in their present trials (13:5,9,23,33,35,37).¹⁸¹ We see no evidence of a destroyed temple. Patently, Marcus connects Chapter 13 with Jerusalem, yet in the context of Chapter 13 Rome qualifies more readily as the source of rumours about ongoing wars. It was the centre of the Imperial Government with extensive administrative and trade links with the entire Empire. Marcus' persecuted group, moreover, would hardly countenance a swarm of false Christs (13:6). It would need to be a tightly knit house-group for whom unity would have been paramount in this ethnically and bitterly divided Transjordanian city. In a confined area, if ethnic strife occurred (pp. 452-53), this undocumented, presumably small Gentile group would have good reason to fear Jews who lived close by, a situation hardly conducive for mutual understanding between the two groups in a Jewish/Gentile Christian community (p. 451). Marcus himself admits to the undocumented basis of his thesis. In a later work, while still supporting a Transjordanian Gospel, he admits there is no documented evidence for the persecution of Christians in the Jewish War. He accepts that most Christians had left the city well before the Zealots had seized control.¹⁸²

Marcus grounds his case for the defiled 'house of prayer' (11:17) in the events of the War (pp. 449-456). Yet whatever was the historical nature of Jesus' prophetic witness in the temple, the text provides no historical proof for Marcus' claim because its treatment of the temple is highly symbolic (11:1-12:37). We justify our claim

¹⁸¹ Marcus, 'Jewish War', 447.

¹⁸² Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 36.

in Chapter 5 below. Mark has no interest in detailing the circumstances of Jesus' historical actions in the temple. Even Marcus hints at the 'theologically elaborated Markan version' of the temple (p. 449). It appears Mark concentrates on the key rejection/replacement house motif. Following the Lord's inspection of the temple (11:11), its fate is fixed: the metaphorical temple is judged (11:11) then rejected (11:12-21). Further, Jesus ignores questions about the temple's historical fate at 13:3-5.

The treatment of the Davidic theme seems problematic. It would have been difficult for conservative Jewish Christian members of this Gentile Christian community to accept a Gospel that reflected a muted messianic emphasis since it describes how Jesus' entered into Jerusalem riding on an ass - hardly the royal entry into the city expected of the Jewish Messiah. Also, if this Jewish group's flight was a compulsory decision, presumably it would be compelled to reinforce its Jewish Christian beliefs and practices in an ethically divided city, a point that Marcus accepts (p. 451). It is unrealistic to suppose that these Jewish Christians saw their faith reflected in a Davidic-muted, Law-free and temple-free Gospel, which, for unity's sake, they must accept.

Josephus maintains that there were atrocities by Jews and Gentiles alike in this Hellenist city. Again, assuming its existence, is it correct then in such a climate to visualise Law-free Gentile Christians welcoming, let alone integrating with culturally different, conservative, Law and temple-aware Jewish Christian refugees in close-knit house groups? Not likely, as earlier too the Hebrew Christians had remained unscathed during the Hellenists' persecution in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46-47; cf. 7:55-8:8) though Marcus claims that they had chosen refuge in a 'predominately Gentile group' whose Gospel reflected Hellenist Christianity that had proved anathema in Jerusalem (p. 461). And, unity would be paramount for an ethnically mixed group in Transjordan. Unlike Marcus' community, (pp. 455-56), Mark's house-churches are disjoined; they had no single founder in Paul or supervising mother church as at Antioch (Acts 11:21-23).

Thus, during persecution in the capital, chances for divisive leadership from questionable, self-styled leaders of individual house-churches would be readily available, as 13:5-6 demonstrate, in the politically unstable period, before and immediately after Nero's onslaught. It intensified this possibility.

The Petrine issue is overlooked. When Peter 'departed and went to another place' (Acts 12:1,17), James moved into the leadership vacuum in Jerusalem.¹⁸³ If Mark, a Christian Jew (p. 461) from the James-led group, wrote a Gospel even partially suitable for these 'Jewish Christians from Judea' (p. 461), would not James have been highlighted before Peter? Jewish Christians from Jerusalem would be more likely to promote James in the Gospel. Acts (15:13-29) and Galatians (2:9) give proof of this development in the Jerusalem church in its leadership transition from Peter to James. Mark's negative treatment of James and the family of Jesus (cf. 3:21, 31-35; 6:1-4) is best interpreted as a Markan strategy to isolate those leading figures in the Jerusalem Church who opposed the law-free Pauline mission. It is a position, which does not suggest that the Gospel comes from a conservative, Jewish Christian background with Jerusalem connections.¹⁸⁴ Even allowing for the accent on Peter in the tradition, Mark's intense redactional concentration on him suggests a Roman Mark, where Peter's known activity and martyrdom had occurred. This association makes Mark's use of the symbolic Peter more relevant for his Gospel's rhetorical strategy and so points to the narrative's source.

Surely the eastern Fathers would also have claimed Mark if the Gospel had come from their region yet they make no mention of it. Luke and Matthew accepted Mark as a basis in their own works for urban house-churches. This suggests a gospel from an influential, Christian urban centre, apostolically connected. In this matter, the witness of Papias and Irenaeus in following the oral tradition in the early Church is significant in a negative way. They do not situate Mark in a Pauline context and exclude

¹⁸³ Sim, *Gospel of Matthew*, 81-82.

¹⁸⁴ Sim, *Gospel of Matthew*, 45, 188-190.

major centres like Antioch, Jerusalem or Alexandria. Citing the Gospel in Rome is a logical alternative if the major urban centres in the Eastern Church were excluded. Overall, it is difficult to give assent to Marcus' thesis for a Transjordanian Mark.

5. THE DATE OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

While the exact date for Mark is a peripheral issue to our study, we recognise that the date is tied to the location. Scholars who place Mark in Rome normally date it pre-70. Those, who argue for a Gospel written at an eastern location, set it post-70. W. Marxsen's 1956 work anointed Chapter 13 as the testing ground for hypotheses that date Mark either soon after the Neronian persecution in 64-65 CE or later and in response to the 70 CE destruction of the temple.¹⁸⁵ Pesch insists on a destroyed temple and a post 70 CE date. He argues that in Ch 13 Mark edited an apocalyptic broadsheet showing how Jerusalem's destruction signalled the arrival of the end time. Thus he dates the Gospel after 70 CE.¹⁸⁶ Yet the issue of the Gospel's date is not essential to our study of the house motif since both of the two options are consistent with our view that Mark wrote in response to Nero's persecution in Rome. Nevertheless, we suggest that the evidence points to a date before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple around 67-69 CE.

The case for a pre-70 CE date for the Gospel first concentrates on Mark's rhetorical purpose in Chapter 13. In this eschatological chapter, Jesus prophesies the temple's destruction (13:1-2) but immediately after this, he ignores the disciples' following question, 'When will this be?' (13:4). Jesus proceeds instead to set forth a threefold pattern of events concerning past, present and future false prophets (13:5-8): persecution (13:9-13) and Jerusalem's tribulations (13:14-20). They are all encompassed by the watchman's parable (13:33-37). Such trials have occurred. They have been

¹⁸⁵ Donahue, 'Quest', 821.

¹⁸⁶ R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mark 13*, (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1968), 231-232; cf. B. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

relived in the primitive Church and duplicated in the persecution in 64-65 CE. Logically, they will reoccur before the Son of Man returns (13:24-27).

Post-persecution, Mark's immediate purpose is to confirm Rome's Christians in a faith-based hope through the present power of the living word of the Lord (1:15; cf. 12:35-37; 8:38-9:1; 14:28,62; 16:7). Of Chapter 13's predictions, redolent with Old Testament citations and allusions, Mark cautions, 'let the (present) reader understand' (13:14). Historically, for Jesus and his disciples the events described at the Mount of Olives were in the future but for Mark and his community, much of what Jesus referred to was in the past, some of it was happening, and some of it was imminent and threatening.¹⁸⁷ The Gospel warns Rome's groups of coming dangers and difficulties rather than predicting the exact time of the end. If persecution threatens, Mark dares Rome's groups to continue evangelising, ignoring the time of the temple's destruction (13:5) and of the parousia (13:32).

For Marcus, 'these things' (13:4) are the various facets of the house-churches' life during 67-69 CE. He sees a concerned Mark, warning his addressees of coming dangers and difficulties rather than predicting the exact time of the end.¹⁸⁸ It does not appear that they are associated with a destroyed temple. Rather, the question is irrelevant to the discourse that follows (13:5-37). Post-persecution, Rome's groups needed reassurance that it was the Father (1:11) who sent Jesus (1:9), their risen Lord (12:35-37) and Son of God (15:39). He was continually going before them as their Lord (16:7). It was also imperative that God knew of and controlled salvation history since the Father determined Jesus' coming as the Messiah (cf. 1:1-2,16-20) and the form of the 'way' (1:2-3; 8:34-35; cf. 8:27-10:52). So, as the victorious Son of Man, he goes before them in Galilee in his power and authority as Lord (14:28; 16:7; 12:35-37). After this

¹⁸⁷ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 2, 199; cf. Marcus, *Way*, 2; Hooker, *Mark*, 299.

¹⁸⁸ Marcus, 'Jewish War', 447; cf. S. Freyne, 'The Disciples in Mark and the Maskilim in Daniel. A Comparison', *JSNT* 16 (1982), 18.

will come the parousia, the final phase of the Father's redemptive plan (13:28-32; 14:61-62). In 13:1-2, Jesus graphically expresses what was insinuated in the fig tree episode.¹⁸⁹

Mark's story seems to urge inaction rather than action, a warning against mistaking what is now happening. Although the disciples ask one question, Jesus answers another; 'all these things' (13:4) have nothing to do with the temple's destruction but are tied to the various prophecies of disasters and sufferings that have to be undergone before the last disaster occurs.¹⁹⁰ False prophets were active, seen against a backdrop of past false prophets (13:5-6).¹⁹¹ Mark also targets wars (13:7-8), further persecution (13:9-13) and imposters again (13:21-23a) but only the Father knows 'that day' (13:32). Recurring, crucial issues are described and overheated eschatological expectations that feed on the apocalyptic traditions are downplayed.¹⁹² Mark closes with the reiterated advice, 'watch' (13:37).

At the time Mark was writing, martyrdom had robbed the church of its great formative leaders. James was martyred, presumably in Jerusalem (62 CE), then Paul and Peter in Rome, 64-65 CE. In the immediate aftermath, Hengel claims that this was a time when apocalyptic expectation was greatly heightened; concurrently, there was a danger that the community would be leaderless.¹⁹³ During the ensuing leaderless vacuum, various conflicting Christian teachers and healers presumably claimed to have special authority from the risen Jesus. If so, Rome's Christians had to survive the current political and religious tensions at a time of increased social turmoil, the result of Nero's erratic and cruel behaviour apart from contending with the possibility of a bloody civil war. This did eventuate; it was triggered by Nero's suicide, costing three Emperors their lives in one year (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius by December 69 CE). Vespasian restored civic calm only by the autumn of 70 CE. Moreover, Israel had known false prophets and

¹⁸⁹ Hooker, *Mark*, 305; cf. Stock, *Method*, 325; Gundry, *Mark*, 734; Juel, *Mark*, 174-78.

¹⁹⁰ Hooker, *Mark*, 305.

¹⁹¹ Gundry, *Mark*, 738.

¹⁹² Stock, *Method*, 328; cf. Harrington, 'Mark', 623.

the resulting social disintegration before (cf. Isa 3:12; 56:11; Zech 10:3; Jer 23:1-2; 16-22). Chapter 13 depicted wars and earthquakes as part of God's plan. In addition,

Mark's interest lies in Jesus' ability to predict them despite the Pax Romana. Jesus wants to assure his disciples that these disasters belong to God's plan (*dei*, "are necessary") and that they will *signal* the end...no more than appearances of false christs will *constitute* the end.¹⁹⁴

House-churches are next warned to 'take heed to yourselves' (13:9) since Christians will endure persecution again. If 'handed over' they must 'not be anxious beforehand' (13:11b) for the Holy Spirit will sustain them (13:11d). There is no signal of the end of the present age but to each disciple's own end, even martyrdom for 'brother will deliver up brother to death' (13:12). The concept of family divisions, as a feature of the last days, had become a commonplace of apocalyptic writing (cf. 2 Esdras 5:9; Jub 23:19; 2 Baruch 70:3; cf. Isa 19:2; Zech 13:3; 4 Esdras 6:24). Facing treachery, Rome's Christians would be reassured in a future trial by knowing that their *Kurios* had foreseen it (cf. 13:37). They 'will be hated by all for my name's sake' (13:13), not just family betrayal but communal rejection by outsiders. If Christians are counter cultural, social suspicion, opposition and even physical hostility will follow inevitably from their inversion of Greco-Roman social values (cf. 10:29-31). The past handing over of John (1:14) and Jesus (15:1) echoes Wisdom's portrayal of the just man (Wis 2:12-3:4); even a repeated 'handing over' of Rome's Christians will occur (13:9-11).

The narrative reflects the pattern of past situations, experienced in the present and prophesied for the future as in the case of the 'desolating sacrilege' (13:14). Harrington also describes a cyclic pattern of events by referring to a person being sacrilegiously present in the temple three times: first, Antiochus Epiphanes; second, Caligula in 40 CE and third in Jesus' prediction of a future desolating sacrilege at 13:14. For his part, Hengel situates the potential 'desolating sacrilege' in the community's fearful expectation of a *Nero-redivivus* - who would appear in the temple - a fear

¹⁹³ Hengel, *Studies*, 21; cf. Harrington, 'Mark', 623.

influenced by the description of Nicanor (1 Mac 3:38-44; 2 Mac 8:9-34).¹⁹⁵ It indicates a future time of distress, but it must not surprise and overcome Christians.¹⁹⁶ If written in 67-69 CE, this coming distress is associated with a future sacrilege in the temple. The term *estekota* is a masculine perfect participle, whereas the gender of the antecedent demands a neuter because the 'desolating sacrilege' (13:14) is a person.

The Semitic term used in Daniel (9:27; 11:31) points to an abomination by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C (1 Macc 1:54-59). Stock argues that the outcome is not the destruction of the temple but the prevention of sincere sacrifice being offered.¹⁹⁷ 1 Macc 1:54 describes how Antiochus Epiphanes, to whom Daniel's prophecy first applied, desecrated the temple not that he destroyed it. Here, Jesus predicts a future destroyed temple: 'not a stone will be left on a stone that will not be torn down' (13:2).

Then, before the coming of the Son of Man (13:26-27) an intensification of eschatological distress will occur including a Neronian Antichrist enthroned in the temple. Suetonius records that after Nero's suicide in 68 CE, his supporters spread rumours of a figure that represented a revitalized Nero about to return; this proved a great embarrassment to his opponents (*Nero* 57. 2). Tacitus concurs: the east will be 'seized by a false terror, as if Nero were about to arrive' (*Histories*, 2. 8, 1). In light of Nero's persecution and social unrest and later civil war, it is understandable that Christians in the capital were apprehensive about a similar threat in the period after Nero's onslaught in 67-69 CE. Its past horrors could revisit them despite Nero's suicide. The Markan Jesus urges his groups: to 'take heed (for) I have told you all things before hand' (13:23).

From 13:24 forward, Mark reassures Rome's Christians that the Kingdom of God is at hand (13:24-32). His outline of the events of the end-time (13:24-32) is tantamount to an exhortation to the church. Mark's answer to the queries about these

¹⁹⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 738; cf. La Verdere, *Beginning*, 2, 200.

¹⁹⁵ Harrington, 'Mark', 624; cf. Hengel, *Studies*, 26-27.

¹⁹⁶ Donahue, 'Quest', 831; cf. La Verdere, *Beginning*, 2, 202.

¹⁹⁷ Stock, *Method*, 336; Gundry, *Mark*, 741.

happenings is a summons to be ready - ready in Rome during the violent political time after the murders of Nero and Galba and prior to the renewal of the Jewish war under Titus which resumed between the winter of 68/69 CE and the winter of 69/70 CE.¹⁹⁸ It is a personal summons, for Mark uses the singular form of *oidate*.

The concept of a destroyed temple would not have preoccupied Christians in Rome for the question of a future date of the temple's destruction was simply irrelevant to them. They had no affinity with a distant Jewish temple. Its future destruction harmonises with Mark's pattern of past, present and future events, that this study claims reflects the main thrust of Chapter 13. This Chapter offers Rome's house-churches a rationale for the horrors they experienced in the capital and exhorts them to mission in the face of the unknown end of history.¹⁹⁹ Guelich concurs. He fits 13:14 into a more appropriate setting preceding the destruction of the temple in 67-69 CE, when Mark anticipated the doom of Jerusalem and the temple.²⁰⁰

For Theissen (1991), Chapter 13 reflects the concerns of Mark's house-church. Rome's Christians look back on a lately demolished temple.²⁰¹ He argues that by various redactional additions (13:9-13, 21-24), Mark transposed the older apocalypse from the time of Caligula in 40-42 CE to this new situation, circa 70 CE, an eschatological catastrophe which is to be the final cultic desecration of the earthly temple. Theissen attributes the acute suffering and martyrdom in the community to the ongoing Jewish war, which ended in 74 CE. Further, the Zealots' eschatological expectations, which played a large role in the ideology of the Jewish revolt, influenced Mark's groups (pp. 259-260). He instances the type of prophecy then current among the Jews that outlined how men, beginning from Judea, who would control the world' (Tacitus, *Histories*, 5. 13. 2). When linked to the expectation of a '*Nero redivivus*', this

¹⁹⁸ Hengel, *Studies*, 28; cf. Schweizer, *Good News*, 327; Harrington, 'Mark', 624.

¹⁹⁹ Hengel, *Studies*, 28; cf. Senior, 'Swords and Clubs', 13; Anderson, *Mark*, 44.

²⁰⁰ Guelich, *Mark*, xxv-xxvii.

²⁰¹ Theissen, *Gospels*, 259; cf. Kee, *Community*, 10; Waetjen, *Reordering*, 197-201; N. Perrin, *The New*

caused Mark's warnings against false prophets and messiahs (13:22). A post-70 CE Mark is specified but before the War's end in 74 CE. In the intervening years, suffering and martyrdom were always possibilities (13:9-13).²⁰²

A thesis for a post-70 CE Gospel turns on a destroyed temple. Our study favours the majority view that Mark 13 accurately describes the late 60's in Rome. It represents a traditional pattern of apocalyptic motifs. After all, the threat of the destruction of the temple had a long history (Ps 74; Jer 7:12; 26:6,9,18; 51:11; Dan 9:26ff; 11: 31ff) so it is perfectly plausible for Mark or his traditions have envisaged a future destruction of the temple in the same way.²⁰³ Against his earlier opinion,²⁰⁴ Marcus later conceded that the desecration of the temple is some future type of occurrence in the Temple because of the 'Danielic' context of the 'abomination of desolation'.²⁰⁵ He blames this on the Zealots. Painter differs on this issue: he depicts Jesus standing in the prophetic tradition in regard to the temple - its destruction is a coming event.²⁰⁶

As early as 68 CE, Vespasian had secured Judea and isolated Jerusalem. Thus a literal response to the prophecy 'to flee to the mountains' (13:14) of the wilderness of Judea must be viewed as nonsensical.²⁰⁷ An earlier flight of Christians in 67 CE agrees with Titus' strategy for, like Vespasian before him, he sought to settle the refugees in secure places such as Lydda and Jamnia.²⁰⁸ The desolating sacrilege is left to its appointed time, though the apocalyptic language in 13:15-20 draws a curtain over that 'day'.²⁰⁹ The temple is still intact as Mark fixes his attention squarely on the current situation that Christian groups knew in Rome in the events leading up to, and in the

Testament: An Introduction, (Chicago: Harcourt Press, 1974), 163.

²⁰² Theissen, *Gospels*, 267-271.

²⁰³ Hengel, *Studies*, 14-16; cf. Stock, *Method*, 326, 348; Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 173; Nineham, *Mark*, 342; Gundry, *Mark*, 734-735; Harrington, 'Mark', 623.

²⁰⁴ Marcus, 'Jewish War', 446-448.

²⁰⁵ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 37-39.

²⁰⁶ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 172.

²⁰⁷ Hengel, *Studies*, 16. Cf. n. 122.

²⁰⁸ Hengel, *Studies*, 129.

immediate aftermath of Nero's suicide in 68 CE. Our study insists that Mark 13 answers Rome's house-churches' dire need for reassurance through faith and hope in the living word of the Gospel. They are faced with the effects of Nero's past onslaught and their own uncertain future during the concluding 2-3 years of his reign.

6. CONCLUSION

On the basis of probability, this study sets the Gospel's source in Rome in 67-69 CE, soon after Nero's persecution of the capital's Christian house-churches (64-65 CE). In support of our position, we point out that the traditional patristic position testifying to a Gospel from Rome still musters impressive support. Numerous localized Latinisms plus Latin's influence on the grammatical Greek structure also indicates a Roman Gospel. This is a claim supported by Mark's pervasive rhetorical focus on selfless, servant discipleship, which reflects an urban household culture. Rome, moreover, was the only first century city in which Christian groups knew severe and constant persecution over an extended period, an historical situation documented by first century secular writers. The Gospel challenges Rome's Christians not only to intensify way discipleship immediately following Nero's persecution but also to deepen faith and hope inherent in the power of the word of the Gospel. They are further encouraged to respond to the Gospel's ideal of community based confident evangelisation, the fruit of servant discipleship lived in the 'secret of the kingdom' (4:10-11b; 1:14-15; 13:10; cf. 1:40-45; 5:19-20; 7:36-37).

Scholars, who advocate an alternate source to Rome as the Gospel's origin, fail to produce any written, secular or traditional proof for a Christian group in their chosen location. In addition, proponents for a relocated Jewish Christian group from Jerusalem fail to explaining an anomaly: how is it that an up-rooted, conservative and James-inspired, Law-observant and temple friendly group - relocated in a nearby Jewish Galilean, Syrian or Transjordanian area - could see their Christian faith expressed in a

²⁰⁹ Hengel, *Studies*, 19-20.

Gentile Gospel that is vigorously anti-Law and temple-free within three years before or after Jerusalem's destruction. Not to mention that this text is written for urban groups that needed Jewish customs explained and Aramaic phrases translated. We find their theses unsustained.

Therefore, in Chapter 2 this study will maintain that the presence of a substantial Jewish community in the midst of Rome's large urban Gentile population had attracted Hellenist-Christian evangelists to the capital, circa 35-45 CE. A question naturally follows. What was the nature and form of Christianity that these first Hellenists brought to Rome? To fully answer this query involves a second question: what was the type and composition of the resulting house-churches that were the fruit of this Hellenist's evangelization from 35 CE to the Neronian persecution, circa 64-65 CE? Chapter 2 sets out to answer these two questions.

CHAPTER 2

HOUSEHOLD-CHURCHES IN ROME

1. INTRODUCTION:

In Chapter 1, this study addressed the merits of the theses that Mark's Gospel originated in Rome in 67-69 CE or in an eastern Mediterranean location. Seeing this study argues for a Roman Gospel, Chapter 2 will initially explore the historical and social situation of the Jews in Rome in 35-40 CE and the nature of the Hellenists' gospel proclaimed there. As well, did their Law-free and temple-free gospel directly effect Rome's synagogue groups and the subsequent growth of Christian house-churches in the capital?

By the 30's CE, there was a considerable Jewish community in Rome. Despite some notable reverses, Jewish political initiatives in both Rome and Jerusalem and Judaism's inherent attractiveness to the Roman nobility neutralized, in part, Rome's traditional distrust of Jews - they were seen as contributing to the flow of foreign religions and cults from the East to the capital. Yet in the first century CE, the Jews improved their social standing and, despite Claudius' exile decree in 49 CE and discriminatory measures against them by previous Emperors, they had survived relatively unscathed by the early 60's. Even post-exile, apart from the loss of their right to synagogue assemblies, the Jews retained the special privileges and exemptions that had been granted by Augustus.

No Roman secular or other written sources in the tradition detailed how Christianity came to Rome. This study argues that Hellenist Christians, the fruit of the original, evangelising Hellenist Christian group in Jerusalem, brought a radical faith to Rome, circa 40-45 CE. They developed Christian house-churches and in the Jewish complex of synagogues they proclaimed a gospel of the risen Christ free of the Law and the temple. This gospel constituted a disturbing message for conservative Jews, and, not unexpectedly, the resultant Jewish/Christian synagogue dissension eventually spilled

over into open, public disorder to the concern of the civic authorities. Their major response was the exiling of Jewish and Hellenist Christian leaders (49 CE) and outlawing synagogue gatherings. These actions resulted in the increased growth of Hellenist/Gentile Christian house-churches based on a Law-free Gospel. Yet the immediate task here is to trace the Jews' situation in first century Rome where, organised in a loose complex of synagogue groups, they maintained firm links with Judaism's heartland, Jerusalem.

2. THE SITUATION OF THE JEWS IN FIRST CENTURY ROME

The Jewish historian Josephus claimed that no community exists in the whole world that is without a large or small community of Jews. (Josephus, *Jewish War*, 2.16,4). A scholarly consensus estimates the Jewish population in Rome at 40,000-50,000 by the end of the first century.²¹⁰ Concrete evidence for the presence of the Jews in the capital first appears in 139 BCE. Valerius Maximus describes the expulsion of Jews by the praetor Hispanus since Judaism was perceived as one of a number of corrosive cults from the East which undermined traditional Roman cultural attitudes and religious beliefs.²¹¹

By the time of Cicero (106 BCE-46 BCE), the Jews comprised a significant proportion of Rome's population, a percentage increased when Pompey intervened in the civil strife between Aristobolus and Hyrcanus in Palestine²¹² and brought numerous captive Jews back to Rome.²¹³ Of these, a large group were later freed and settled on the Tiber's left bank, adding force to J.J. Jeffers' view that much more than foreign residents, the Jews lived together in Rome. The largest and oldest settlement of the Jews was found across the Tiber River, near to the centre of Rome (cf. Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*,

²¹⁰ J.J. Jeffers, 'Jewish and Christian Families in First Century Rome', in K.P. Donfried and P. Richardson, (eds.), *Judaism and Christianity in First Century Rome*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1998), 129; cf. Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 95; Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 295; H.J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), 135.

²¹¹ W. Wiefel, 'The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome', in K.P. Donfried, (ed.), *The Romans Debate*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 86.

²¹² M. Carey and H.H. Scullard, *A History of Rome*, (3rd edn; London: Macmillan, 1975), 312.

²¹³ Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 87.

23).²¹⁴ Their economic condition was typical of most of first century Jews, ranging from poor to subsistence level to moderately well off. Inscriptions in the Jewish catacombs support the claim that most Jews were at the lower end of the economic scale.²¹⁵

Observers had long noted the movement of a multiplicity of religions - including Judaism - from the East to the capital. Supposedly, Juvenal wrote that ‘the Syrian Orontes has long since poured into the Tiber, bringing with it its language and customs’ (Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44,3). As part of this influx, Rome’s governing elite viewed the close-knit Jewish communities with distrust. As early as 139 BCE, suspicion of the Jews’ negative effect on traditional Roman values led to campaigns to expel them from Rome,²¹⁶ a move initiated by the wealthy elite who had most to lose from any disruption of the status quo. So the common perception of the Jews in Rome was surrounded by misconceptions from the start of their arrival.²¹⁷ This was true of official Rome that saw the Jewish religion as a ‘cult’ - one of a myriad of cults in the capital.

If the Jews’ chequered history of clashes with the civil authorities over religious and political issues had pressed upon them the need for religious and social unity, the alien Roman world of multiple sects, polytheism, and pagan public festivals also forced them into close-knit synagogue groups, reinforcing their religious identity and social cohesion. The patriarchal form of the Jewish family supported this development, resulting in intensely conservative, Law-oriented synagogue groups that later came to regard the Hellenist gospel as anathema. Perkins adds:

The Jews were known for refusing to engage in pagan religious practices. Since these festivals were civic celebrations, the Jews had the reputation of being “haters of humanity” when they would not participate.²¹⁸

In addition, the Jews stood out because of their monotheism, foreign customs and cohesiveness. Their distinctiveness enabled them to wield influence in the internal

²¹⁴ Jeffers, ‘Jewish and Christian Families’, 131; cf. Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 290.

²¹⁵ Jeffers, ‘Jewish and Christian Families’, 130.

²¹⁶ Carey and Scullard, *History*, 312.

²¹⁷ Wiefel, ‘Jewish Community’, 86.

Roman politics though it was also a risky involvement that exacerbated the suspicion and dislike in which they, as foreigners, were held. Cicero's manipulation of popular anti-Jewish resentment among the educated Roman citizens underlines the typical attitude of generations of civic-minded Romans. In the trial of Flaccus, Cicero drew on this latent anti-Semitism by making negative references to a large number of Jews in Rome in 59 BCE, partly because of political considerations but the existing public prejudice was there to exploit.²¹⁹ And, knowing that the Jews supported the Populist Party in government because of their own inferior legal and social situation, Cicero used that association to stigmatise the Populist Party.²²⁰

Despite this adverse social response, however, the Jews later flourished through their rapport with Julius Caesar, an alliance benefiting both parties (Philo, *Legatio*, 155-157).²²¹ Caesar's support, and the good fortune of the Herodian family in Judea in ultimately opting for the winning side in the wars that followed Caesar's assassination, brought the Jews special privileges. In the civil war between Hycarnus and Aristobulus, 'the Idumean, Antipater, cultivated the favour of Pompey and Caesar. The Jewish people were rewarded by various favourable decrees that were reaffirmed by Augustus and later emperors.'²²² These advantages included the softening of rules governing Jewish *collegia* or private associations; consequently, Jews could freely assemble for religious or cultic celebrations (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.10,1-8). Other advantages included permission to raise money for the support of the Jerusalem temple, exemption from military service and the administration of their own courts.²²³

By the time of the restoration under Augustus (31 BCE-14 CE), the Jewish community had increased in numbers and social standing. Josephus estimates that 8,000

²¹⁸ P. Perkins, *Reading the New Testament*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 117.

²¹⁹ J. Ferguson, 'Studies in Cicero', Vol. 3, in P.W. Groetz (ed.), *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Micropaedia*, (15th edn; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1989), 196.

²²⁰ Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 87; cf. Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28-66.

²²¹ Barclay, *Mediterranean Disapora*, 291; cf. Leon, *Jews*, 16.

²²² L.H. Silberman, 'Judaism', in Vol. 22, P.W. Groetz (ed.); *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, (15th edn;

Roman Jews escorted the Jewish legation to Rome following the death of Herod (*Antiquities*, 17.9,4).²²⁴ Their privileges were extended through Augustus' benevolent attitude: he granted special Sabbath and tax exemptions and promised protection of Jewish sacred places (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.6,2).²²⁵ But most Romans regarded the Jewish religion as based on superstition,²²⁶ an ingrained social antagonism that resurfaced in 19 CE, when Tiberius expelled prominent Jews because their moral idealism attracted members of the nobility (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.3,5). Yet, after the fall of Sejanus (31 CE), who had pursued a severe anti-Jewish policy, Tiberius became more favourable to the Jews, reaffirming their special rights (Philo, *Legatio*, 159-161). Thus, the limited expulsion of the Jews under Tiberius in 19 CE (Tacitus, *Annals*, 2.85) must be viewed against this favourable background even though Tiberius, strict on public order, conscripted 4,000 Jewish freedmen and sent them on military service to the unhealthy area of Sardinia.²²⁷ But, despite the vacillating policy towards them under Tiberius and Claudius (Philo, *Embassy*, 24), the Jews were not seriously affected by Claudius' expulsion edict in 51 CE²²⁸ and their number and affluence increased without significant interference (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 19.5,3). Dio Cassius notes that by 41 CE the Roman Jews had prospered (*Historica Romana*, 60.6,6).

During the first century, individual, highly placed Romans who admired the clear moral sense of the Jewish faith assisted the Jews in becoming a flourishing community; it gained supporters and converts in the higher echelons of society.²²⁹ Nero's second wife, Poppaea, championed the cause of Jewish priests sent to Rome for trial over sedition charges, exemplifying her constant patronage towards the Jews so

Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1989), 416.

²²³ Leon, *Jews*, 16.

²²⁴ Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 293-295.

²²⁵ N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, *Roman Civilization: Documents*, (London: Harper & Row Press, 1966), 395-396.

²²⁶ Philo, *Embassy*, 22.

²²⁷ Carey and Scullard, *History*, 363.

²²⁸ Leon, *Jews*, 17-20; cf. Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 303,305.

²²⁹ Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 307.

much so that Josephus calls her a *god-worshipper* or *Judaizer* (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 7.6,7). Nero himself maintained cordial relations with the Jews (55-68 CE) and significantly, no Jew was included in his onslaught of Christians in 64-65 CE.²³⁰ As well, during the Jewish revolt in Palestine (66-70 CE), no record exists of any anti-Jewish action in the capital.

Moreover, despite the civil strife involving Jews and Hellenist Christians, circa 40-48 CE, and Claudius' exile of Jewish leaders in 49 CE, the Jews' relatively secure status in the capital was progressively strengthened (from 49-81 CE). Though Vespasian redistributed the temple's *fiscus judaicus* to Rome's *Jupiter Capitolinus* after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE²³¹ yet, by the century's end, Domitian never revoked the Jews' other ancient privileges²³² even if he was more rigorous than his predecessors in enforcing the *fiscus judaicus*.

To help explain the fidelity of Rome's synagogues to the Law and temple during the first half of the first century, Leon maintains that one aspect of Roman Judaism merits special attention: its close political and social affiliation with Jerusalem and Palestine.²³³ In this respect, Acts describes an interesting Christian reference to this link between Rome's synagogue groups and Jerusalem. Upon Paul's arrival in Rome, the Jewish leaders greeted him with 'we have received no letters from Judea about you' (Acts 28:21). It was an implicit indication from Luke that Roman Jews looked to Jerusalem for guidance,²³⁴ and Leon confirms this intellectual interchange between Palestinian and Roman Judaism in the second half of the first century.²³⁵ As with Antioch and Alexandria, businessmen too created natural contacts between the capital

²³⁰ Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 298-299; cf. Leon, *Jews*, 27-28.

²³¹ Lewis and Reinhold, *Roman Civilization*, 395; cf. Josephus, *Jewish War*, 7, 212-218; A. Carlebach, 'Rabbinic References to Fiscus Judaicus', *JQR* 66 (1975), 57-61.

²³² Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 95; cf. Leon, *Jews*, 15.

²³³ Leon, *Jews*, 240.

²³⁴ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 96-97.

²³⁵ Leon, *Jews*, 35-36.

and Jerusalem while Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:3) represented the mobility of a stream of the well-to-do, including merchants and craftsmen, who made this journey.²³⁶

Likewise, commerce acted as a bridge, as did regular Jewish missions to Rome over issues like Vespasian's temple tax,²³⁷ and the yearly pilgrimages from Rome to Jerusalem for the Jewish festivals. In this context, Luke's remark about those 'who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen' (Acts 6:9) is illuminating. He refers to synagogues in Jerusalem set up in the first century by Pompey's released prisoners-of-war from Palestine in Rome²³⁸ and their descendants, and tolerated by the state (Philo, *Legatio*, 155-157).²³⁹ The Freedmen undertook pilgrimages to Jerusalem, at times for lengthy visits and setting up their own synagogues there (Josephus, *Antiquities*, 14.5,5).

These factors (commerce, religion, Roman administration and political issues) contributed to close Rome/Jerusalem links. Such influences strengthened the ties between the Roman Jews and their religious brethren in Jerusalem with their concentration on the two bulwarks of Judaism: the Law and temple spirituality. It is no wonder that the Hellenists' gospel with its rejection of the Law and temple spirituality and promotion of a risen *Christos* proved a volatile ingredient in Roman Jewish synagogues. This issue is dealt with in the following section.

3. CHRISTIANITY IN ROME: ITS ORIGIN AND TYPE

To understand the nature of Christianity in Rome in the 40's CE, a number of questions need to be addressed. What was the type of Christianity first proclaimed in Rome, the location of its proclamation, and the ensuing social consequences? Then, what were the effects of Claudius' edict in 49 CE in consolidating the nature of the gospel prevalent among Christian house-churches in the capital? Answers to these questions explain the

²³⁶ Dunn, *Romans*, 891.

²³⁷ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 95.

²³⁸ Cary and Scullard, *History*, 363.

²³⁹ L.T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (SP 5; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 108.

type and divided nature of Rome's house-churches prior to Nero's persecution, a social reality that Paul acknowledges in his letter to the Rome's Christians, circa 58 CE.

Acts 2:10 mentions Jewish pilgrims from Rome at Pentecost but this may be a Lukan construct to foreshadow Christianity's progress from Jerusalem to Rome. It would be an uncertain basis on which to argue that the Hebrew Christians had any part in the spread of Christianity in Rome.²⁴⁰ To appreciate the type of Christianity brought to Rome, one needs to consider the nature of the primitive Christian groups in Jerusalem. Acts describes two distinct groups: one, Aramaic speaking (the Hebrews), the other, Greek speaking (the Hellenists). They formed separate communities, a situation necessitated by the differences in language and liturgy. The original Hebrew Christian group from religiously conservative Galilee was traditionally tied to the temple and Law. Luke notes: 'they went as a body to the temple every day' (Acts 2:42-47). This group,

the original Aramaic speaking church, led by the disciples of Jesus, belonged to the category of Christian Judaism...in addition to their belief in the messiahship of Jesus they upheld the traditional practices of Judaism, particularly the observance of the Torah and participation in the temple cult....(The) earliest Christian community...formulated its distinctive beliefs about Jesus...Jesus as the prophesied Messiah did not in any way entail the rejection of the fundamental elements of Judaism.²⁴¹

D.C. Sim argues for a logical, historical appreciation of the two groups' differing approach to the Law and the temple, circa 30-33 CE. He maintains that 'the disciples, who had lived with Jesus and knew his teaching best, accepted and continued his teaching on the law and temple...(but) it was the Christian Hellenists who introduced a radically new element into the fledging Christian movement'.²⁴²

In contrast to the Hebrew group, the Hellenist Christians insisted that the consequences of the reality of the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord (cf. Acts 7:59) reduced, and even abolished the significance of the key role of the traditional Law and

²⁴⁰ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 103-104.

²⁴¹ Sim, *Gospel of Matthew*, 67.

²⁴² Sim, *Gospel of Matthew*, 69-70.

the temple for Christian house-churches.²⁴³ These Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews from the diaspora who had settled in Jerusalem. Their Greek names suggest their cultural background in contrast with the predominately Semitic names of the Twelve.²⁴⁴ They would have been initially catered for in the various Greek-speaking synagogues in Jerusalem founded by Jews from different areas of the diaspora. It appears they had come to know the risen Christ through contact with bilingual members of the original Hebrew group in Jerusalem.

For the Hellenists, a growing disregard for the relevance of the Law and temple in Christian life, together with their different language, scriptures, and association with separate synagogues, inevitably gave rise to difficulties between the Hellenist and Hebrew Christians.²⁴⁵ The Hebrews accepted and interpreted the Law and temple differently, an attitude they illustrated in their continued observance of the Law and participation in the temple liturgy. But the Hellenists' rejected the Law and the temple because of their different understanding of the Christ event, particularly the death and resurrection of Jesus. Stephen clearly personified this position: 'the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands' (Acts 7:38). Brown sees Stephen as a model Jewish Christian Hellenist, marked out by miracles (Acts 6:2,8,10; 7:55), an authoritative voice who predicted the destruction of the temple (Acts 7:44-54) and the parallel superseding of the Law (Acts 7:48-50,59).²⁴⁶

Inevitably, the Hellenists separated from the parent group into their own community through cultural and linguistic requirements. As noted above, the Hellenists' differing interpretation of the Old Testament owing to the resurrection of Christ would have encouraged the start of their own exegetical traditions. There is also the likelihood that the Hebrew Christians participated in the different Hebrew-language synagogue

²⁴³ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 6-9.

²⁴⁴ E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, translated B. Noble et al; (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 264; cf. Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 14.

²⁴⁵ Sim, *Gospel of Matthew*, 65-66.

associations in Jerusalem. There, they could have been seen simply as a Jewish sect, a likely situation that may have strengthened the Hebrews' sense of being at home with the traditions of the Law and the temple. Such factors would have further weakened their earlier ties with the Hellenists. Speculating on the result of these dissimilarities, Hengel suggests that Luke's description of the appointment of the Seven and their ordination by the disciples (Acts 6:6) indicated that the impetus for the division of the two groups came from the Hellenists.²⁴⁷ Stephen's initiative in his mission to the Jews in the Greek-speaking synagogues would have hastened this separation. Most likely, other members of the Seven shared in this work, though doubtless it was the nature of the Hellenists' message that caused their rupture with the Hebrew Christians.

The Hellenists' mother tongue was Greek. They obviously did not come from the nationalistic and temple-oriented rural Galilee, an area less Hellenised than Jerusalem,²⁴⁸ as did the Hebrew Christians. Though their initial theological differences from the Hebrews are difficult to specify, the spiritual tendencies of Greek religious thought were presumably critical in the Hellenists' understanding of the ramifications of Jesus as the risen Lord (Acts 7:48-49; 11:20).²⁴⁹ The two groups separated. The Jerusalem church remained exclusively Hebrew - sensitive to the Law and still aware of the role of the temple in Jewish life.²⁵⁰ The Hellenists gradually spiritualised the Law and rejected any insistence on its outward ritual requirements for Christian faith.²⁵¹

Understandably the Hellenists' sense of the Spirit's role in their faith²⁵² harmonised with their Greek philosophical background and thought patterns.²⁵³ Though some exegetes downplay the degree of separation between the Jewish and Hellenist

²⁴⁶ Brown, *Introduction*, 295.

²⁴⁷ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 15-16.

²⁴⁸ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 6-7.

²⁴⁹ R.J. Dillon, 'Acts of the Apostles', in Brown, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 739.

²⁵⁰ Bruce, *New Testament History*, 210-214.

²⁵¹ H. Raisanen, *Jesus, Paul and Torah: Collected Essays* (JSNTSS 43; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 190-198.

²⁵² Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 25-26.

²⁵³ R.M. Price, "'Hellenisation" and Logos Doctrine in Justin Martyr', *VC* 42 (1988), 18-19; cf. L.H.

cultures, the Hellenists' practices were a direct contrast to the Hebrew community's fidelity to the more tangible, cultural practices of the Law and the temple.²⁵⁴ Further, because of their religious and philosophical background, the Christian Hellenists' gospel would have rendered the emerging Christian faith far more congenial to Hellenised Gentiles than any expression of Jewish dedication to the Law and its ritual purity and cultic demands.²⁵⁵ The Hellenists proclaimed an independent, Law-free and inclusive gospel; it characterised their missionary strategy in Antioch and other Greco-Roman Gentile cities. These features were also apparent in Paul's mission to the Gentiles.

Therefore, in a relatively short period the Hebrew and Hellenist groups first clashed out of a difference in language and culture. But the sharp theological separation caused an historic, deeper rift. Hengel and Brown agree on this point.²⁵⁶ To the Hebrews, who were culturally aligned with the synagogue communities in Jerusalem, the Hellenists' position was most disturbing: they misrepresented both Jesus' message and the Hebrews' version of the good news, a serious theological dispute which must have pushed relations between the two parties beyond repair.²⁵⁷

Yet these cultural and theological differences in Jerusalem did not develop in a vacuum. Traditionally, observant Jews from the diaspora, who held fast to the Law and temple, regularly celebrated the key Jewish feasts in Jerusalem. In part, they did so because, despite their Hellenism, Jews felt anti-Jewish polemics in the diaspora which resulted from the sense of social separation created by the Law's demands: dietary laws, refusal to inter-marry, and no countenance of the worship the same gods as the non-Jews.²⁵⁸ Such Jews, perhaps 'members of the synagogue of the Freedmen (and) of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians and of those from Cilicia and Asia' (Acts 6:9) moved

Feldman, 'Hengel's Judaism and Hellenism in Retrospect', *JBL* 96 (1977), 371-382.

²⁵⁴ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 22-24.

²⁵⁵ H. Raisanen, *Paul and the Law*, (WUNT 29; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr; (Paul Siebeck), 2nd edn; 1987), 190-192, quoted in Sim, *Gospel of Matthew*, 70.

²⁵⁶ Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul*, 7-8; Brown, *Introduction*, 296-297.

²⁵⁷ Sim, *Gospel of Matthew*, 70.

vigorously against Stephen. His speech in Acts 6:8-8:1a seems to have symbolised the Hellenist position:

The first-ranking among the Hellenists, Stephen, stirs up opposition at a Jerusalem synagogue attended largely by foreign Jews. They drag him before the Sanhedrin and level a (false) charge about the message he is preaching - in general his words against Moses and the Law, and specifically that Jesus would destroy the Temple sanctuary. In his long speech (Acts 7:2-53) in response to the Temple charge Stephen will phrase these radical implications in the climactic statement: "The Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands" (7:48).²⁵⁹

From this intra-Hellenist conflict, persecution ensued in which the sole targets were the 'renegade' Christian Hellenists²⁶⁰ since their anti-Law/temple evangelising antagonised the Jewish synagogue groups. In the volatile religious atmosphere in Jerusalem, strife ensued.²⁶¹ Acts describes Stephen as filled with faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:8-10) - his martyrdom led to the flight of the Hellenists to nearby urban centres (Acts 8:1; 11:19) while this vindictive culling may have had only a very minor impact on the Aramaic-speaking Christian majority.²⁶²

Therefore, after facing persecution, the Hellenists no doubt fled to the urban locations from which they came. In these predominately Gentile cities, it was the sense of their Jewish origins that first guided their missionary strategy. They went to 'Cyprus and Antioch' and spoke 'the word to none except Jews...(but) there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus' (Acts 11:19-20). Given their familiarity with Greek thought, it is not surprising that, having fled to Antioch and within a much more favourable Greco-Roman religious atmosphere, the Hellenists felt freer to invite Gentiles to hear a largely Law-free and temple-free gospel. It is also logical to argue that, in time, a completely Law-free proclamation to the Gentiles developed in Gentile urban centres like Antioch, a

²⁵⁸ J.J. Collins, 'Natural Theology and Biblical Tradition: The Case for Hellenistic Judaism', *CBQ* 60 (1998), 12-13.

²⁵⁹ Brown, *Introduction*, 295.

²⁶⁰ J.D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977), 274-275.

²⁶¹ J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, (AB 28; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 343.

point confirmed by Acts (11:20). The Hellenists' message formed the basis of a gospel for an urban, Law-free apostolate in the Gentile cities of the diaspora. Not unexpectedly, this initial difference between the Hellenist gospel and that of the Hebrews resulted finally in a completely independent Hellenist Gentile mission.

The Hellenists' initial, successful evangelisation led inevitably to the controversy between Hebrew Christian authorities in Jerusalem and the Hellenists in Antioch (Acts 15). The immediate cause of the clash occurred when 'some members who belonged to the party of the Pharisees', who had become believers', insisted that it was 'necessary to circumcise them (Gentile Christians) and to charge them to keep the Law of Moses' (Acts 15:5). Clearly, Antioch's Gentiles had previously been baptized without this stipulation but their initiative strengthens our argument that the Hellenists had already been successfully preaching a Law-free gospel, a move testified to by Acts' portrayal of James. He takes for granted that a Law-free gospel had been proclaimed to the Gentiles at Antioch, and so James, at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35) and being the Jerusalem Church's representative, resolved this crisis by decreeing that,

it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from unchastity (Acts 15:28-29).

This decree represents an acknowledgement of the reality and success of the Gentile, Hellenist mission by the Jerusalem Church and the validity of the Hellenist gospel.

No doubt the observance of these three demands quickly became redundant. Their continuation would have been most problematic, given the pervasive Greek religious thought and cultural atmosphere among Gentile converts in Antioch. It is also understandable how the Law-free missionary drive of the Hellenists in Antioch (Acts 13:1-15:35) would have included Rome. Besides other urban areas, it would have loomed large in the Hellenist's evangelising strategy owing to the potential converts

²⁶² C.H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 74; cf. Crowe, *Acts*, 43; Johnson, *Acts*, 112-113.

among the numerous Jews and the large Gentile population in the capital. Starting from Antioch, Paul too targeted numerous Greco-Roman cities in the eastern Mediterranean. As well, Antioch proved an effective staging point since, due to its population and relative nearness to Jerusalem, it initially formed a natural, major focus for missionary activity, as did all major urban centres in the region. But Antioch's location - twenty-eight miles inland from its port, Seleucia - facilitated the city's contacts with every Mediterranean harbour (Acts 11:20-22). Luke describes the Hellenists success in Antioch, how "a large company was added to the Lord" in Antioch (Acts 11:24).²⁶³

Most likely, the drive for the widespread Gentile mission came overwhelmingly, even completely from the Hellenists in Antioch. Acts describe how the community 'laid their hands on' Paul and Barnabas 'and sent them off on mission' (13:3).²⁶⁴ It is most probable too that some Christian Hellenists travelled to Rome either directly from Jerusalem immediately following the outbreak of persecution there or, in light of the Antioch Church's missionary drive, the community there early commissioned missionaries for Rome as in the case of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3; 15:1-4). As described above, Antioch must have been a natural point of both arrival and departure for a cross section of the traffic between Rome and the East. It was the centre of Roman rule in the Eastern Empire, requiring sustained communications with Rome, links maintained by a regular flow of officials and soldiers. In a mobile society, visiting merchants, pilgrims and travellers would have added to this regular flow. Moreover, for the first two decades of the Church, Antioch served as the dissemination point for the Gospel to the Gentile world (cf. Acts 8:1,4,39-40; 9:10,20,32,39; 10:24; 11:19; 13:1-4,6,13).

Against Antioch's missionary vigour and its Law-free gospel - a second great Christian centre vibrantly involved in mission to the Gentiles²⁶⁵ - it is unlikely that the Hebrew Christian group in Jerusalem had any involvement in the evangelisation of

²⁶³ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 239.

²⁶⁴ Crowe, *Acts*, 10; cf. Johnson, *Acts*, 44.

Rome. The Hebrew Christians, set in their traditional Judaism, would not have caused dissension among the synagogue congregations of Roman Jews through a Law-observant gospel. In their separate house-churches and being at home with the Law and temple, they had survived unscathed during the persecution of the Hellenists in Jerusalem. Most probably, the community focused on Jerusalem, where, in the minds of their fellow-Jews, they formed but one more facet of first century Judaism. In contrast, the Hellenist Christian missionary drive in 40-45 CE had gained such momentum in the eastern Mediterranean cities, especially in Antioch, that their Law-free gospel spread from there to other urban centres - Rome as well. Paul had no part in the Roman mission; he had not visited Rome by 58 CE (Rom 1:11-15). Christian Hellenists founded the Church in Antioch (Acts 11:19-24; 13:1-5,13-14).²⁶⁶ It seems they also did in Rome.

Therefore, it was a Law-free and temple-free Christian faith that brought to Rome by the Hellenists (40-45 CE). Expressed in culture-friendly terms, their proclamation of the risen 'Lord Jesus' (cf. Acts 11:24; 13:47; 14:3; 15:11,17,26,35) was tailor-made for the cosmopolitan, Gentile world. And, set in the light of the spiritual tendencies in Greek religious thought,²⁶⁷ it presented a stark challenge to Jewish believers in Rome's synagogues who were tied to the heart of Judaism by strong Law and temple attachments. So the Hellenist proclamation of the *Christos* must have been anathema to Rome's Jews, especially by its insistence on the irrelevance of these two bulwarks of Judaism.

Most scholars hold that Christianity first took root among Jewish synagogues in urban centres. In Rome, the Hellenists would have traced the same pattern since the synagogues offered an immediate focus for their evangelising zest. It appears that cultural and practical reasons would also have led the Hellenists to attempt to evangelise

²⁶⁵ Brown, *Introduction*, 301.

²⁶⁶ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 39; cf. Brown, *Introduction*, 306.

²⁶⁷ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 279.

first in synagogue communities.²⁶⁸ There were no other venues for public gatherings, except for the relatively minute, upper class elite who met in official, select civic areas. For the Jews, it was the synagogue, but for the vast majority of the Gentile population the house formed the natural meeting point.

With regard to the Hellenists' impact on Rome's Jewry, attention should be first paid to the legal and organisational position of the synagogue groups. During 35-51 CE, these structures facilitated the rapid spread of Christianity in the capital.²⁶⁹ With a large concentration of Jews, numerous synagogues had sprung up since ten men capable of worship were sufficient to constitute a synagogue congregation. Such synagogue groups bore individual names as testified by inscriptional tombstone evidence 'from catacombs in Rome with their many thousands of tombs. Between ten and thirteen of these tombs carry the names of synagogues which would have existed in the first century.'²⁷⁰ These inscriptions were a firm pointer to the existence of these disparate groups.²⁷¹ Nevertheless, this extensive complex of independent synagogue units generated its particular problems when confronted with a Hellenist Christian gospel.

Factionalism, produced by the custom of electing officers in these groups, was one. Thus, the likelihood of the diversification and multiplication of synagogues was high. But previous synagogue clashes with the civil authorities in the capital, owing to the Jews' religious and political initiatives, pressed upon them the need for overall religious and social unity, a difficult goal due to two crucial aspects of these Jewish synagogues in the capital in the 40's CE. They were interdependent factors. First, the independent nature of these small, numerous groups with their inbuilt democratic election of office-bearers, would have inevitably encouraged local divisions and tensions. In turn, synagogue independence had created a capacity for sharp differences especially

²⁶⁸ M.D. Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 72.

²⁶⁹ Dunn, *Romans*, xlv.

²⁷⁰ Dunn, *Romans*, xlv.

²⁷¹ Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 89.

if the basis for division was religious. And, apart from the small size of these congregations, their religious character would have reflected the fragmented nature of first century Judaism.

Second, lack of doctrinal unity among the Roman synagogue communities weakened the separated synagogues' capacity to respond to the Hellenists' active evangelization. In regard to the Hellenist' risen *Christos*, this drawback was particularly the case. These two factors were exacerbated if, in the social unrest caused by different reactions to the Hellenists' proselytism, there was no Jewish leader or group with whom the civil authorities could confer, whereas in Alexandria the authorities could consult with the Jewish governing body, representing the entire Jewish community in the city²⁷² and so defuse potentially explosive situations. These two factors intensified the disruptive impact of the Hellenist gospel in Rome's synagogues, circa 40-45 CE.

The make-up of Rome's synagogues, however, forms a decisive factor in appreciating the scope of the volatile effect caused by the Hellenists' Law-free proclamation. As mentioned above, the synagogue communities' loose structure, together with the democratic nature of the individual synagogue group, allowed the first Hellenists a relatively easy, effective penetration of its communities. Being numerous and independent, the disparate synagogue-congregations with inbuilt democratic constitutions - but without a central Jewish governing board - provided a convenient path for the Hellenists to move from their house-churches and mingle readily within the individual synagogue congregations.²⁷³ Refusal for the Hellenists to remain in these autonomous groups could be effective only if the group's governing body favoured exclusion that was enforceable overall in a large complex of small groups - they would have been further divided by their social make-up, wealth and location in the capital.

²⁷² Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 91.

²⁷³ Dunn, *Romans*, xlvii-xlviii; cf. W.L. Lane, 'Social Perspectives in Roman Christianity During the Formative Years From Nero to Nerva: Romans, Hebrews, I Clement', in Donfried and Richardson, *Judaism and Christianity*, 196-202.

Given the numerous synagogues in Rome in the early 40's, if the Hellenists proved divisive and were rejected by one synagogue, another was close at hand. Just as surely the disparate, independent nature of the groups proved an obstacle to a concerted Jewish response to these destabilising Hellenist newcomers. The Claudian ban on Jewish synagogue meetings suggests a prior, gradual quickening of Hellenist/Jewish religious strife at these synagogue gatherings before 49 CE. D. Stockton argues that the lengthy period of public strife between the synagogues and the Hellenists before the exile decree was due to Claudius' hesitation and ineffectual leadership.²⁷⁴ Also, it would require time for a sufficient degree of social disorder centred on the synagogue to intensify to a point that forced the Emperor and city authorities to issue the exile decree in 49 CE.²⁷⁵

Clearly, the Hellenists proclaimed a gospel that carried two unpalatable aspects for Rome's Jews. First, the whole array of Jewish food and ritual customs were superseded by the ethical demands of this radical, new dimension of God's covenant with his people in the risen *Christos*. Further, the Hellenists urged that the house replaced the temple since the risen Son of Man, the *Christos*, now constituted God's presence among his people in urban Christian households. Inclusive, culture-friendly communities of faith were the contemporary spatial area of God's powerful reign.

Understandably, the house-churches attracted those Gentiles who were previously drawn to Judaism since potential converts always existed on the perimeters of Jewish communities. Some Gentiles though were reluctant to embrace Judaism fully as the demands of the Law restricted their social and cultural activities. In contrast, Paul, together with the Hellenists, encouraged a convert's social and civic life while their house-churches guaranteed a personal monotheism and communal support. These advantages led God-fearers to join existing Hellenist house groups with the result that,

²⁷⁴ D. Stockton, 'The Founding of the Empire', in J. Boardman (ed.), *The Roman World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 145.

²⁷⁵ Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 308-309.

post-exile, house-churches led by Gentile Christians would have been even more appealing for well-disposed Gentiles in the capital.

In desperation at the type of the Hellenists' message and their successes in winning converts, especially among former God-fearers, the Jewish groups threw caution to the winds, intensifying the tension and strife in the Jewish synagogue groups to the point where it spilled over into the public domain. Even the names of the central figures involved in the ensuing friction and social disturbances became public knowledge. Tacitus knew that the term for the members of this cult came from the word *Christus* or *Christos* (*Annals*, 15.44,4). So the likely crux of the disturbances was the provocative Hellenists' presentation of the *Christos* gospel, centred on Jesus as Lord who comes at the behest of the one God, an important Christian truth in the midst of a plethora of gods.²⁷⁶ This authoritative Lord now guarantees Christian life free of any demands of the Law and temple. The hostile response of Rome's Law-observant Jews to such a proclamation ultimately engulfed their characteristic, wary approach to the issue of public order.²⁷⁷

Such was their frustration and anger at the Hellenists that the Jews ignored the warning of four previous adverse moves against them by Roman authorities. As noted above, up to 10 CE the Jews enjoyed liberal treatment from the authorities owing to Augustus' and Caesar's patronage. But then, the Jews had to contend with a fluctuating cultural impetus in the capital to revive traditional Roman beliefs. To Rome's civic fathers, Jewish monotheism and proselytizing were prime threats to these sacred traditions.²⁷⁸ In the reigns of Tiberius (14-37 CE) and Gaius (37-41 CE), the Jews experienced a political backlash due to their growing religious and political influence.

²⁷⁶ J.R. Donahue, 'A Neglected Factor in the Theology of Mark', *JBL* 101 (1982), 580; cf. J.L. Daniel, 'Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic Roman Period', *JBL* 98 (1979), 45-65.

²⁷⁷ Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 91-92.

²⁷⁸ Barclay, *Mediterranean Diaspora*, 292-298.

The malevolent hostility of Gaius' administrator in Rome, Sejanus (Philo, *Legatio*, 159-161) and the Emperor's threat to set up his image in the temple further illustrate the fickle nature of the Roman elite's extension of favour to the Jews (Philo, *Legatio*, 184f; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18.289-309). There was also the Roman authorities' ongoing nervous supervision of public order; it should have alerted the Jews to this aspect of their relationship to the wider Roman community.

To their detriment the Jews ignored these factors. Dio Cassius discloses the crucial penalty for Rome's synagogue communities: post-49 CE, the Jews lost their traditional right to assemble in their synagogues (*Historica Romana*, 60.6,6). Dio does not speak of the expulsion of the Jews under Claudius though Suetonius does report it.²⁷⁹ The leaders of these disturbances, both Jewish and Hellenist were exiled.²⁸⁰ Now denied the synagogues, the Hellenists, concentrated solely on their house-church communities, using social connections as the sole focus for evangelization while the Jews, forbidden their traditional gatherings in the synagogue, were likewise restricted to house groups.

4. CLAUDIUS' DECREE: ITS EFFECT ON THE HOUSE-CHURCHES

Now the question arises of determining the degree of influence that the exile decree exerted in shaping the character of Rome's house-churches post-49 CE. Logically, Gentiles assumed leadership roles to replace the exiled Christian Hellenists. Self-reliance and initiative, shown previously in Jerusalem and Antioch, must have characterised the pioneering wave of Hellenist missionaries in Rome. With such example, Gentile house-church leaders would most likely have evolved, a development encouraged by the patriarchal culture. Gentile Christian leaders, perhaps resourceful freedmen who developed leadership qualities in their business activities, would have emerged both before and after the edict in this newly structured, house-oriented faith. This seems a natural outcome especially if their extended household had previously been

²⁷⁹ Leon, *Jews*, 26.

a community gathering point where poorer Christians would have depended on their relative affluence and leadership. The evolution of this complex of house-churches composed of Gentile converts explains why Paul, circa 58 CE, knew that the great majority of his readers were Gentile members of Law-free house-churches (cf. Rom 2:12-3:20; 16:3-16).²⁸¹

Post-exile, self-interest encouraged Gentile house-churches and Jewish groups to keep their distance. For the missionary-minded Hellenists to whom the synagogue was out of bounds, the extensive Gentile population in Rome presented an attractive field for mission via the Christian's social links through the household. It replaced the synagogue and, since the house-community was the pivot of daily life, the natural evangelising strategy was through its members' personal contacts. There is no reference to public evangelisation in Mark. On the contrary, the text's single directive points to the house-church as the sole focus for mission: 'Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place' (6:10). Thus, the first change returning Hellenist and Jewish leaders encountered, save the standing post-49 CE order against synagogue assemblies, was the reality that the house constituted the meeting place for Christians and Jews alike. Synagogues were banned, seen now as seedbeds of dispute.

Prior to the Claudian edict, the Hellenists and their Gentile converts, their numbers small but growing, required suitable houses in which to meet separately apart from their previous forays into the synagogues. Logically, they broke 'bread in their own houses' as they had done in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46) and Antioch (11:21,26). Culturally, the house was the dominant centre for social contact so now evangelisation, prayer groups, and catechising took place there. With Jews and Christians gathered in separate houses, the potential for strife between them would be greatly diminished.

²⁸⁰ Leon, *Jews*, 27.

²⁸¹ Brown, *Introduction*, 560, sets Romans at 56/57 or 57/58 CE; Dunn, *Romans*, xlvii, circa 58-60 CE.

Wiefel argues similarly, insisting that, even for returning Hellenists, in the face of the ban on the Jewish *collegia*, their contact with Jewish groups was minimal. Christians now met separately in the obvious and only place they could meet, in house groups of 15-25 members, depending on the size of the house available.²⁸² Post-51 CE, exiled Hellenists from Rome did not immediately return nor did the exiled Jews. Most exiled Jews returned to Rome during Nero's reign and shortly before Paul wrote his epistle in 58 CE.²⁸³ Not every Hellenist who was expelled from Rome in 49 CE would have suffered confiscation of their property; their houses may have been maintained by friends.²⁸⁴ And, given distance and slow travel, the relatively few exiled Hellenist leaders would have only slowly returned to an evolving house-church leadership structure with its inherent division of weak and strong groups.²⁸⁵ This is the historical situation of Gentile Christian house-churches in Rome to which Paul's letter witnesses (cf. Rom 16:3-16).

J.C. Walters argues that isolated Jewish Christian house-church leaders, though not among the original Hellenists, were more conciliatory after their return from exile. Influenced perhaps by members of the Hebrew Christians in some eastern urban centre during their exile, they also founded new house-churches in Rome. There, they strove to follow a middle course similar to the Hebrew Christian group in observing some dietary laws and the Sabbath.²⁸⁶ This situation would offer an explanation for the existence of the 'weak' groups that Paul addresses (Rom 14:1-15:12). They may too have catered for varying degrees of attachments to the Law among those Jewish Christians who, converts from Rome's synagogue groups, were cut off from the cultural atmosphere of the synagogue and their families. Yet Law-free and temple-free groups

²⁸² Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 94-95.

²⁸³ Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 94.

²⁸⁴ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 108.

²⁸⁵ Brown, *Introduction*, 572.

²⁸⁶ J.C. Walters, 'Romans, Jews, and Christians: The Impact of the Romans on Jewish/Christian Relations in First Century Rome', in Donfried and Richardson, *Judaism and Christianity*, 178.

comprised the great majority of house-churches in Rome by 58 CE. These independent structures had a precedent in the separate synagogue/Hellenist house groups prior to the exile decree.

Rome's complex of house-churches would have developed piecemeal. They did not have the unifying element of Paul's personal role and teaching. Deprived of their missionary field in the synagogue communities, post-49 CE Gentile, inclusive house-churches (cf. Acts 11:20) utilised the traditional, cultural openness of the typical Roman house for business and social life in their evangelising strategies. In Acts 6:1-8 Luke describes the Hellenists as socially aware even in the combative religious atmosphere of Jerusalem. Presumably, their aim in Rome was to attract Gentile businessmen and freedmen but the poor too were made welcome.²⁸⁷ As seen above, the application of this strategy for mission would be effective in the crowded Transtiberium area of Rome (Philo, *Legatio*, 23.155).

Returning Jewish leaders regrouped in house centres from 51 CE. With synagogue assemblies forbidden, their fingers burnt over religious controversy, they eschewed any overt proselytising. Thus, with the Jewish withdrawal from public view in Rome, the Gentile Christian groups were clearly seen as distinct from the Jews, especially with the Gentile house-churches' evangelising outreach through the open house strategy. Such Gentile Christian distinctiveness enabled Nero to readily target Christians as sacrificial lambs for the fires of Rome in 64-5 CE. As well, rapprochement between the Jews and Christians must have been unlikely from the outset, given the Hellenists' vigorous stance in Jerusalem and Antioch for their Law-free and temple-free belief. Thus by 64 CE, it was possible to distinguish between the Christians and Jews in Rome and, if Jews kept their low profile, some of the previous anti-Jewish sentiment in Rome may have been redirected to Christians and their perceived, negative influence in

²⁸⁷ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 31-35.

the capital.²⁸⁸ Walters suggests that a Jewish/Gentile Christian conciliatory attitude may have developed in Rome from 49 CE on.²⁸⁹ Our study disagrees firmly with his assumption.

Due to the lack of a unifying source in Rome's complex of Gentile Christian groups, scholars insist on the possibility of internal friction, even to fragmentation and prolonged disputes. Urban Christianity in its early stages proved somewhat unstable. R. Brandle and E. Stegemann instance Paul's Galatian communities, which, though Law-free, had returned or were intending to return to observe some aspects of the Law (Gal 5:1-12).²⁹⁰ But in Rome's post-exile Hellenist house-churches, cut off from the Judaism of the synagogue, exactly the opposite tendency seemed evident. There occurred a growing disassociation from anything Jewish, particularly any aspect of the Law and temple.

It is highly unlikely, however, that the revoking of the exile edict in 51 CE lessened all tensions between Gentile Christians and non-Christian Jews. The Jews would have blamed the Hellenist and Gentile Christians for the exile edict and the subsequent crucial loss of their privileged synagogue assemblies. Presumably, it drove a permanent wedge between the two groups. For both, the exile decree dramatically emphasized to the Jews, that it was essential to avoid further strife in order to preserve their remaining privileges and counter the Christians' active evangelising strategy.²⁹¹

J. Elliott counters this position for he sees areas of social interaction between the two, insisting that if Christians and Jews had shared the same locale and religious customs, the groups would leave no trace of this whether it occurred in the 50's or the

²⁸⁸ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 92-97; cf. Tacitus *Annals*, 15.44.

²⁸⁹ Walters, 'Romans, Jews, and Christians', 180.

²⁹⁰ R. Brandle and E. W. Stegemann, 'The Formation of the First Christian Communities in Rome in the Context of the Jewish Congregations', in Donfried and Richardson, *Judaism and Christianity*, 117-126.

²⁹¹ Walters, 'Romans, Jews, and Christians', 181.

150's.²⁹² Also, given their close physical proximity, Christian groups may have attracted scattered Jewish converts. In the restricted Transtiberium district, social structures such as various centralized trade groups, social stratification, burial customs and civic organizations,²⁹³ together with the crowded nature of Rome's housing may have produced a scattering of Jewish converts. For an individual convert, their decision would be a severely divisive decision for the convert's Jewish family, fuelling existing tensions. This may explain the dire warning in Mark that, in truth, as well as symbolically, 'brother will deliver brother up to death and the father his child' (13:12).

Walters further argues that Jews did not overtly seek proselytes after their return to Rome since the 'Jews did not operate with the same mandate for mission as assumed by the Gentile Christians'.²⁹⁴ The Jews saw the nations coming to them rather than the reverse (cf. Isa 2:1-5; 56:1-8). If so, this situation reflects a hardening of the post-exile separation of Jews and Christians, circa 55 CE, a divisiveness closely monitored by the authorities due to their continued intolerance of public disorder. L.V. Rutgers, however, insists that Roman authorities were neither tolerant nor intolerant. Responsible for law and order, no doubt the authorities' vigilance was intensified in the case of the Jews by Rome's traditional latent anti-Semitism.²⁹⁵ Apparently the Jews realized this fact of life post-49 CE for, wary of being the cause of further social unrest, there is no record of any Jews being tied to social strife in the capital after the exile.

Post-exile, the Jews no doubt carefully observed the civic order. During the Jewish War in Palestine from 66 CE, the loss of Roman soldiers in the campaigns against the Jewish insurgents presumably also encouraged a reserved profile by Rome's Jews. In addition, in the unsettled political atmosphere under Nero in 63-64 CE, if Christians were

²⁹² J. Elliott, 'The Social Standing of Roman Christians', *CBQ* 51 (1989), 560-562; cf. Walters, 'Romans, Jews, and Christians', 179.

²⁹³ Walters, 'Romans, Jews, and Christians', 181.

²⁹⁴ Walters, 'Romans, Jews, and Christians', 182.

²⁹⁵ L.V. Rutgers, 'Roman Policy Towards the Jews', in Donfried and Richardson, *Judaism and Christianity*, 111-113.

seen as clearly separate from the Jews, a perception increased by their growing numbers through proselytising, they could have made ready scapegoats. Unlike some Jews, few Christians possessed legal rights that would protect them from Nero's barbaric treatment (64-65 CE) whereas Augustus' edict decreed that during a periodic famine (only citizens qualified) the poor Jews who were citizens were to be given their allotted grain.²⁹⁶ It is difficult to imagine the Roman authorities treating poor Christians - slaves, servants or beggars - in a similar manner especially if the State was pressed in times of need.

Such partiality towards the Jews could well have exacerbated the Jewish/Christian hostility between 51 and 63 CE, following the exile decree by Claudius. Their mutual antipathy may also have intensified Mark's stress on the Law-free nature of his Gospel, a natural outcome of the turbulent, Hellenist Christian's Law-free evangelization within the synagogue complexes, circa 40-45 CE. If a Hellenist gospel proved anathema to the Jewish groups, the obvious Hellenist reaction was an intensified emphasis on their gospel's Law-free character. But in the aftermath of persecution (64-65 CE), Rome's Christians would have vividly remembered Jewish betrayal of fellow Christians whereas the Jews were untouched by such turmoil. Also, an anti-Law attitude could have imperceptibly reinforced the type of gospel proclaimed in their house groups so it is unlikely the Gentile house-churches had any truck at all with Jewish groups.

In the early 60's, the capital experienced disturbed times. There was a high degree of social tension due to Nero's erratic, often cruel behaviour that engendered a climate of fear and civil and political unrest in the capital. Extravagance and vanity, coupled with a sense of imperial power, led to his irresponsible neglect of administration and a series of judicial murders that alienated the Roman nobility, the army and the people. It was within this social context that he initiated the persecutions of the Christians in 64 CE. So, if physical separation reinforced the spiritual gulf between

²⁹⁶ Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 94-95.

Christians and Jews, the Jews would undoubtedly have readily distanced themselves from potential civic disturbances since the Jews, and not the Gentile Christians, had repeated painful experiences of Roman exile decrees.

Understandably then, from Tacitus' description of Christians that Nero arrested (*Annals*, 15.44), the authorities could readily distinguish between Jews and Christians in Rome by 64 CE. The consensus exists that the repercussions of the rumours of his role in the fires of Rome induced Nero to target the newly-spreading Christian community of Rome - no longer seen as a dissident sect within Judaism - as the innocent scapegoats.²⁹⁷ The reverse is also true. Aware of their separate identity, an antagonistic Jewish attitude would have sharpened a Gentile Christian group's awareness of its Christian identity, intensifying its rejection of anything Jewish including their rejection of the 'weak' groups' adherence to some aspects of the Law.

5: THE EVIDENCE OF THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS

In forbidding synagogue assemblies, the expulsion edict of 49 CE guaranteed the household form of the Church in Rome by the time of Paul's letter, circa 58 CE (cf. Rom 16:1-16). His letter preached a Hellenist gospel because of his Damascus experience (Acts 9:1-19; Gal 1:11-24) and the influence on him by the Hellenist Church in Antioch. Therefore, in writing to Rome's Hellenist house-churches, Paul expresses a shared heritage. He clarifies the features of Rome's house-churches as he inadvertently outlines their characteristics. First, most members are Gentiles; second, faith in the risen Lord Jesus is the very basis of their Christian faith; third, by 58 CE the majority are clearly Law-free and temple-free; fourth these groups are disunited and fifth, the majority of Christians live in house-churches.

First, as in Jerusalem and Antioch, the Hellenists no doubt gathered in private houses for prayer, teaching and the Eucharist. The negative reactions from the

²⁹⁷ Stockton, 'Founding of the Empire', 145.

conservative Jewish synagogue groups to the Hellenists' gospel intensified the Hellenists' need for a supportive base for their evangelising efforts among the synagogue groups. Besides, as in Antioch, where, along their Jewish thrust (Acts 11:19a), the Hellenists also focused on the Gentiles (Acts 11:19b,20); the unresponsive Jewish reaction may have rendered the Gentile emphasis even more appealing. Becker supports this position; he judges that, from the start, the Gentiles' positive response to the Hellenist gospel and the effects of the Claudian edict, resulted in the overwhelming proportion of Christians in Rome's house-churches being Gentile.²⁹⁸

By 58 CE, Paul appears to be aware of this situation; he stresses that he is the apostle to the Gentiles (15:7-12), referring to 'Gentiles' six times in four verses.²⁹⁹ Moreover, he hopes 'to reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles' (1:13-14). This emphasis on Gentiles hints at their numerical strength. Unity then was essential since a divided Gentile Church would reduce the capacity of Rome's complex of house-church complex to support Paul's planned Spanish mission (15:22-24) so he challenged the communities to 'live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty' (12:16).

Paul rejects any Gentile house-church's assumption of superiority in numbers or Hellenist pioneering status. He cautions them: 'if some of the branches were broken off, and you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the riches of the olive tree, do not boast over the branches' (11:17-18). 'God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all' (11:32). R.A. Gagnon takes issue with M.D. Nanos who argues that the 'weak' in Rome are to be identified with non-Christian Jews. Gagnon insists that the 'weak' are Gentile Christians - and isolated Christian Jews among them - who may have been proselytes familiar with the Law and temple before

²⁹⁸ Becker, *Paul*, 61; in agreement, Wiefel, 'Jewish Community', 111; Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 109.

²⁹⁹ Dunn, *Romans*, 18-19.

the Hellenists' arrival. Both groups accept that Jesus was the Messiah. Gagnon interprets the letter (14:1-12) as

a gentle nudge urging the weak to continue on the path of firm faith that they had already entered (not wavering in the conviction that Christ was the fulfillment of the promise) by realizing that "all things are clean".³⁰⁰

The epistle's second key theme is faith - set in a risen Lord Jesus. Paul begins with the hope 'that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith' on his arrival in Rome (1:11-12; 15:29). The Roman Christian's faith is buoyant and fruitful, 'proclaimed in all the world' (1:8) - for Paul it should be the great unifier. He wished

to emphasise the common ground that existed between the Jewish and Gentile Christians and to encourage a greater willingness on the part of Gentile Christians to make room for the "Jewishness" of their observant counterparts.³⁰¹

Faith, not the Law, would ensure unity among house-churches (cf. 14:1-15:13). Paul cites God's plan through Abraham for Jews and Gentiles alike in 1:16-5:11: 'the promise to Abraham and his descendents that they should inherit the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith' (Rom 4:13-16; cf. 5:1; 9:30; 10:17) for 'he...through faith is righteous' (1:17).³⁰² Faith guarantees perseverance (11:20b). In Chapters 1-11, each facet of the mystery of Christ is linked to faith, for 'redemption is to be received by faith' (3:25) just as the Hellenist Christians and Paul are linked through faith. Both too experienced persecution by the Jews, apart from their zest for Gentile evangelisation and shared Law and temple-free gospels.³⁰³

In fact, faith in Jesus the Lord is the key to the epistle (10:10). This is the 'gospel of God...the gospel concerning his Son (who was) designated Son of God in power...by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord' (1:3-4). 'We were buried...with him by baptism unto death so that as Christ was raised from the dead...we

³⁰⁰ Nanos, *Mystery of Romans*, 73-77; R.A. Gagnon, 'Why the Weak at Rome Cannot be Non-Christian Jews', *CBQ* 62 (2000), 81.

³⁰¹ Walters, 'Romans, Jews, and Christians', 178.

³⁰² Dunn, *Romans*, 17.

³⁰³ J.A. Fitzmyer, 'Paul', in Brown, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 1334-1335.

too might walk in newness of life' (6:3). Furthermore, seeing God's redemptive purpose is fulfilled in the crucified/risen Jesus, temple spirituality is irrelevant for Christian justification: being righteous 'will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord' (4:23).

Third, for the Jewish authorities in the mutual antagonism of the post-exile period, the Gentile house-churches non-observance of the Law ensured their continued anti-Christian position. But Paul dismisses the concept that membership of the Chosen People was based on the twin supports of a purely physical descent and the observance of the Law.³⁰⁴ In Rom 2:27, he insists that those who keep the Law in their hearts will condemn those who qualify as Jews simply by physical descent and outward observance of the Law. 'Real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal' (Rom 2:29). So faith overthrows the validity of the Law as a way of life pursued by God's people in the quest for righteousness. Circumcision is subordinated to circumcision of the heart since

faith "hears" in the "*nomos*", understood predominantly as "scripture", a different message - one that points to the failure of the "works" way and the offer of a new righteousness created by God in Jesus Christ...Paul will eventually show (esp. Rom 8:1-4; cf. 13:8-10; Gal 5:14) those who through faith are "in Christ Jesus" can attain in the Spirit the fulfillment of the righteousness required by the law, the righteousness God promised to supply in the last days (Jer 31:33; Ez 36:26-27). In both these senses Paul can claim to be "upholding" the law through faith.³⁰⁵

While J.D.G. Dunn argues that it is clear that the majority of the epistle's addressees in Rome are Gentile and Law-free³⁰⁶ yet the letter urges the Law-free majority to practise sensitive charity towards those Christians intent on dietary laws and 'special days'. They were 'never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother' (15:13) while the strong are to welcome the weak (14:1) and both are to 'pursue

³⁰⁴ J. Marcus, 'Mark - Interpreter of Paul', *NTS* 46 (2000), 286.

³⁰⁵ B. Byrne, *Romans*, (SP 6; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 138.

³⁰⁶ J.D.G. Dunn, 'Mark 2:1-3:6 - A Bridge Between Jesus and Paul on the Question of the Law', *NTS* 30 (1984), 395-415.

what makes for peace and mutual up-building' (14:19).³⁰⁷ Paul acknowledges that the Law has no intrinsic value and that it is now irrelevant for Christian life. Though he does not declare that 'the Law is sin' (7:7) - he states that the Law 'is good' (7:13) - he argues that the potential for condemnation through the Law has now gone. He adds, 'thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord' (for) 'you have died to the law through the body of Christ that you may belong to...another who has been raised from the dead' (7:5-6; 8:1).

Through this reality, Christians are 'discharged from the Law, dead to that which held us captive' (7:5) - the same message that Paul proclaimed in Antioch and adjacent urban centres (Acts 13:1-15:35). The Law is terminated since faith in the risen Jesus as Lord supersedes the Law so in the secret of the kingdom, one is now 'justified by faith apart from works of Law' (3:28).³⁰⁸ Since Paul is also preoccupied with his mission to the 'nations...who are called to belong to Jesus Christ' (1:6), his ideal is an inclusive house-church: 'there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all' (10:12) - a possible influence in his attitude to Rome's weak house-churches.

The epistle offers no brief for a temple oriented spirituality - the house is the focus for Christian life. There is no mention of either of the Greek terms for temple, (*naos* and *hieros*), and, despite Brown's pointing out liturgical terms at 3:25, 12:1 and 15:16,³⁰⁹ Paul is not urging his recipients' respect for the Jerusalem temple liturgy. This occasional liturgical language refers to a spiritual concept of in servant-discipleship (11:13; 12:7; 13:4; 15:3,8; 16:1): 'I appeal to you...to present your bodies as a living sacrifice...to God which is your spiritual worship' (12:1). It is in the house-church where the servant theme is bonded with the 'one body' motif for 'we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another' (12:5).³¹⁰ The

³⁰⁷ Brown, *Introduction*, 560, 572-573.

³⁰⁸ J.P. Heil, 'Christ the Termination of the Law (Rom 9:30-10:8)', *CBQ* 63 (2001), 485.

³⁰⁹ Brown, *Introduction*, 563.

³¹⁰ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 646.

communities are to 'love one another with brotherly affection...live in harmony with one another' (12:16-18). To this end, Paul challenges Christians to offer themselves as a living sacrifice as did Jesus the servant (Mk 10:45), expressing it in selfless service to those about them in the hum-drum of daily life in the community of faith. Such an attitude is spiritual, familiar from Hellenistic Stoic usage of moving from that which is distinct of human beings, that sense of homage they bring to their Creator.³¹¹ Equal responsibility too exists 'to 'build up' unity within the two groups since to belong to God's building demands the daily living of one's life as in the spirit of the secret in the house, each one active in the interlocking relationships by which the building exists and grows'.³¹² The ideal is an inclusive house-church, open to the poor; there, faith deepens in mutual charity for 'love is the fulfilling of the Law' (13:10).³¹³

House-church disunity is the epistle's fourth characteristic. It is a reality in the Church in Rome and poses a problem for Paul. He challenges any past reason that may have worsened Christian disunity in Rome by the relationship of Jew to Gentile in faith in God's redemptive plan - 'to Jew first and also to Greek' (1:16) - a characteristic that pervades the letter through the question of identity. Who is a 'Jew' (2:25-29) and who are the 'elect of God' (cf. 1:7; 9:6-13; 11:5-7,28-32). The apostle repeatedly insists that the gift of salvation is not limited to Jews but given on persons of faith (cf. Rom 2-5); both will 'stand before the judgment seat of God' (14:10-12).

The epistle also presumes a hardening separation between the weak and strong groups though Law-free Gentile house-churches numerically dominate Rome's Christian scene. Lack of mutual acceptance must have existed because Paul appeals for tolerance and unity, urging the 'weak' and 'strong' groups to exercise mutual hospitality (cf. 14:1-15:13). Yet Paul seemed unaware of a deepened intolerance of anything Jewish among the majority of the house-churches, an attitude that included their complete

³¹¹ Byrne, *Romans*, 362-363.

³¹² Dunn, *Romans*, 833.

separation from the Jews, even any Jewish element among Rome's 'weak' Christian groups (Rom 14:1-15:13).

Furthermore, disunity in a Greco-Roman society could only be expressed between groups in divergent patriarchal households or in the crowded *insula*.³¹⁴ And, despite the fact that Paul knows of the *Christos* controversy from Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:1-2), to him the Christian scene in Rome seems settled overall, circa 58 CE. House unity is the sticking point, a communion possible only through mutual, generous acceptance. Overall, Paul favours a tolerant approach, which, over-time will ensure unity (Rom 12:1-15:13): 'Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual up-building'. He pleads, 'Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God' (14:19-20).

Moreover, 'Jew' and 'Gentile' racial differences are irrelevant for if 'one man's trespass led to condemnation for all...so one man's act of righteousness leads to...life for all men' (Rom 5:18). The Lord is also beyond all divisive factors like 'food' and 'special days' for, 'whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's' (Rom 14:1-9). Paul continues, 'as for the man who is weak in faith welcome him' (14:1). Ziesler insists that as Paul repeatedly illustrates in his letter, the question is corporate: how a Christian lives lives?³¹⁵ This posed a difficult issue for the strong groups in the climate of intense anti-Jewish and, especially, anti-Law sentiment in the Christian households.

The epistle's final characteristic is the house motif. Constant references to house groups are summarized in the term 'house' at 16:6, a term that presupposes that disunity among the various communities could only be expressed in house groups that do not mingle together. Paul exhorts the 'strong' households to be reconciled with the 'weak' house groups. 'Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you' (Rom 15:7), an expression of hospitality that was only possible in an urban house context. Paul's

³¹³ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 637; cf. J. Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, (London: SCM, 1989), 290-291.

³¹⁴ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 34-35.

³¹⁵ Ziesler, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 265; cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 887.

exhortation underlines the divided nature of the house-church complex in Rome,³¹⁶ a lack of unity that leads him to recommend: ‘As for the man who is weak in faith welcome him (into your house) but not for disputes over the law’ (Rom 14:1).

Paul bases the concept of unity on the household motif. He interchanges the terms ‘house’ and ‘church’ (16:4-5). In Chapter 16, he addresses household groups and associates particular Christians with specific house gatherings that form the Church. He also directs: ‘greet Prisca and Aquila (and) also the church in their house’ (16:3,5), apart from the household Christians with whom he is well acquainted and presumably who are also part of a separate community. Clearly, they live a Law-free faith like Priscilla and Aquila, who, now returned to Rome, lead a household-church (Acts 18:1-2; 1 Cor 16:19). Nanos notes that 80% of the names given by Paul are Gentile. The five or six who are Christian Jews, however, exercise leadership roles in house communities. They may have either followed their masters to Rome or were there already as freedmen.³¹⁷ It is possible they may have members of the original evangelising Hellenists who came to Rome from Antioch or members of Rome’s original Christian Hellenist house-church groups led by Hellenists such as Priscilla and Aquila.³¹⁸ The nature of Paul’s relationship of those named is unknown but by identifying them he describes his links with house-church communities. Wiefel explains that the Gentile names in Chapter 16 are typical of slaves and freedmen.³¹⁹

Evidently, Paul wrote to buoyant, if divided, house-churches. Yet, from afar he was unaware of the widening gulf between the Law-free Christian and the Jewish groups after Claudius revoked the exile decree in 51 CE. Above all, Paul wrote before the persecution inflicted on Rome’s house-churches. For Rome’s Christian communities,

³¹⁶ Byrne, *Romans*, 452.

³¹⁷ Wiefel, ‘Jewish Communities’, 95.

³¹⁸ Nanos, *Romans*, 77-78; cf. Dunn, *Romans*, 899-900.

³¹⁹ Wiefel, ‘Jewish Communities’, 95.

Nero's persecution constituted a traumatic ordeal that Mark was forced to confront and endow with meaning in the paradoxical, parallel human becoming of Jesus, the Lord.

6: THE PARALLELS BETWEEN ROMANS AND MARK

This study argued above that Jewish Christians from Antioch proclaimed a Hellenist gospel in Rome, circa 40-45 CE. It also argued that Paul's gospel stood in or close to the Hellenist tradition. Having been founded by the Hellenists, we should expect, therefore, that Mark's Gospel would have close affinity with Paul's epistle. It does so; the Gospel contains five Pauline themes. First, most Christians in Rome's house-churches are Gentiles; second, faith in the risen Christ, the Lord, is the key requisite for Christian discipleship. Third, because Jesus is now the risen Son of Man, the Lord, the Law has no bearing on Christian living. Yet, fourth, disunity among the Christian house communities exists since some Christian house groups still observe aspects of the Law. Finally, most of Rome's Christians live in house-church communities.

First, by 67-69 CE Mark is writing for Gentile, house-church communities³²⁰ and, apart from language parallels (see below), this Roman Gospel outlines the Gentile mission that Paul also pursued (cf. Acts 18:6; Gal 2:7-8).³²¹ Initially, with the pioneering Jewish Hellenist leaders exiled, Claudius' decree led to an increase of Gentile house-church leaders, who naturally focused on the Gentiles in the Transtiberium especially given the Christian/Jewish hostility there. Mk 3:20-35 may reflect this change of direction as no family member of Jesus on natural grounds is a member of 'those about' (3:35) Jesus. At 3:7-8, the crowds 'by the lakeside' (3:7) include Gentiles from pagan areas among the crowd about Jesus (3:7-8). Further, from a literary perspective, there is a pervasive presence of Gentiles in Mark, a theme linked to the necessity for 'anyone' to be inside the house through faith:

³²⁰ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 213.

the narrative reading...highlighted the omnipresence of Gentiles in Mk. We suggested that Markan spatial settings, characterisation and plotting all underscored that the Gospel is dependent upon Gentile *dramatis persona*. Indeed, we argued that *the Markan protagonist is never more himself than in relation to the Gentiles*. Now it is not difficult to see that someone with such a theological position has much in common with him who describes himself as “the apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom 11:13).³²²

In this regard, the key figure at the climax of the Gospel is a Gentile, the centurion.

Further, a flourishing, second Gentile mission is presumed at 7:24-30 (the first at 5:1-20), which reflects a house-church in which the group celebrates an inclusive Eucharist. There, in Jesus’ dialogue with the Syrophoenician woman, the Gentiles’ right to enter the Church and share in the Eucharist is established. In the continued Gentile mission (7:31-8:10), the eschatological, opened ears and unshackled tongue that ‘sings for joy’ (cf. 7:35-37; Isa 35:5-6) and the *autoi...ekerusson* (7:36b) may reflect the flourishing Gentile mission in Rome: they who hear the word and proclaim it via the household’s contacts in evangelising fellow Gentiles. For, if unnamed Gentile figures are healed (7:35-37), they are sent back to their ‘houses’ to evangelise (cf. 2:12; 5:19-20; cf. Isa 40:6-11).³²³ The repetition of unrelated pronouns indicates Gentile inclusive house-churches, ready to receive the poor, strangers, and ‘sinners’, all welcomed without pre-conditions: *hos an* (3:35; 8:35x2,38; 9:37x2,41,42; 10:11,15,43 and so on) and the rhetorical address ‘you’ (36 times) *tis* (4:9; 8:54; 9:35), *oudeis* (9:39) and *pas* (9:49). These repeated, inclusive terms presume that the good news is offered to everyone.

Then, ‘in those days’ (8:1) - an eschatological term - a ‘great crowd’ gathered who need food for the ‘way’ (8:1-9). The sequence is Markan. Those sharing are Gentiles, for there is no change of location from the deaf man’s healing in the Gentile Decapolis region to this second feeding. (7:31; cf. 7:24-30). The terminology in 8:1-9 points to a Gentile Eucharist in an eschatological ‘in those days’ (9:1). For, in the first miracle of the loaves in a Jewish area (6:34-44) the term *kophinos* is Jewish but *spuris*

³²¹ Marcus, ‘Mark - Interpreter of Paul’, 475-76; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 178-180.

³²² Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 345.

(8:8) is used in a Gentile area with no Jewish connotations. It echoes the Gospel's inclusivity: 'all the nations' (13:10) are welcome at the Eucharist (7:24-30). Mark notes too that a 'great crowd' (8:1) had gathered from this Gentile area.

Second, the key shared element in Mark and Paul is faith. For both, the paradox of the cross cannot be grasped solely by the concrete data of Jesus' earthly life. Only faith unveils the secret of the kingdom in servant discipleship in the risen Lord³²⁴ that replaced the Law/temple spirituality. Faith is the key that opens the door to discipleship for all (5:21-43). The first words placed on Jesus' lips are 'repent and believe in the gospel' (1:15). Moreover, faith is a precondition for the house miracles and exorcisms in the first section of the Gospel (1:16-8:26)³²⁵ apart from being strongly emphasised in the only exorcism at the start of the way narrative (8:27-10:52; cf. 9:14-29). When the Gospel metaphorically describes the Lord Jesus' dismissal (11:3) of the temple (11:10-11), seen now as irrelevant for Christian faith (11:21), Jesus immediately insists, 'Have faith in God' (11:22). So faith is the first requirement for being in the new house of prayer for all the nations (11:22-12:37; cf. below, Chapter 6).

The Jews' non-belief indirectly re-emphasises the vital importance of faith, a point summed up in their refusal to accept Jesus at Nazareth. Even when faced with the proof of Jesus' mighty works (6:2b) they refused to believe. In turn, Jesus 'marvelled at their lack of faith' (6:6a). In Capernaum, the Pharisees' hostile rejection of Jesus' claims to an exceptional authority expresses itself in their plotting to destroy him (3:6), a disbelief echoed later in Jesus' rejection by his family; they stood 'outside' the house of faith (3:21). For Jesus' non-believing family, 'their position as "outside" prepares for the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" in 4:10-12'³²⁶ enabling Mark to downplay any sign of ethnic or family ties among the "insiders".

³²³ Cf. 2:12; 5:19-20; 6:7; 7:36-37; 8:26; 9:38-41; 10:13; 14:9; cf. 1:45.

³²⁴ Brandle and Stegemann, 'First Christian Communities', 122; cf. Mullens, *Called*, 95.

³²⁵ Cf. 1:31; 32-34,40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-5,13-19,21-43; 7:31-37; 9:14-29; 10:46-52.

³²⁶ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 132.

Third, Mark, as with Paul in Romans, completely rejects the Law. Indeed, Mark and Paul were only

consolidating and extending the earlier breach achieved by the unknown Hellenists who first took the gospel to the Gentiles at Antioch without requiring circumcision or the yoke of the Law (Acts 11:19-26).³²⁷

These post-resurrection 'Jesus' traditions' indicate how the original version of the good news were derived from a Hellenist or Pauline setting; this would allow a clear, radical departure from traditional Judaism in Jesus' name.³²⁸ In Chapter 7, from the defilement parable that nothing is impure in itself (7:14-17), Mark had drawn the conclusion that Jesus had declared all foods clean (7:19b), tracing the logic of the parable to a conclusion Jesus did not draw. In the tradition, no doubt the historical Jesus was recalled as stressing that purity of heart was more important than ritual purity, not that the concept of ritual purity was totally irrelevant (cf. 7:5-6, 14-16).³²⁹

Mark also offers hints that he addresses a current problem in Chapter 7. At 7:1, his concern is not with all scribes as a type but only those representative of a certain attitude: those 'who had come down from Jerusalem' (7:1). 'Some' may represent the mind-set in the small minority of 'weak' house-churches in Rome that reverted to tangible ritual purity observances of the Law. Yet the Gospel confronts the Law over a range of issues (2:1-3:6); the Law's dismissal and replacement by the risen *Christos* caused the initial synagogue/Hellenist Christian clash. In addition, the Gospel often negatively refers to the Law's upholders, the scribes and Pharisees, by linking them to the corrupt use of the tradition of the elders (7:3-4).³³⁰ At 3:4b, the Pharisees corrupt the Law; they oppose the good of man, facilitate evil and protect their power base - control of the elders' tradition (Mk 7:1-13; cf. Rom 10:3; 4:13-17). They seek to establish their

³²⁷ Dunn, 'Mark 2:1-3:6', 413.

³²⁸ Dunn, 'Mark 2:1-3:6', 413.

³²⁹ J.D.G. Dunn, 'Jesus and Purity: An Ongoing Debate', *NTS* (2002), 464.

³³⁰ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 1, 186

own righteousness (Mk 12:38-40; cf. Rom 4:13-17) ³³¹ regarding Jesus' claim to declare sins forgiven as blasphemy (2:6-7). As Jesus makes his way towards Jerusalem, he describes the authorities as God's unwitting instruments in the passion predictions and then in Jesus' handing over for crucifixion (8:31; 9:33; 10:33; 15:1).

Accepting that 'the things that are outside a man' (7:15) is authentic it would represent Jesus' radical attitude towards Jewish practices and his abrogation of them for his disciples. Yet if Jesus had such a radical attitude,

why is it that precisely this issue caused such major disputes throughout the early church (Acts 10:9-16; 15:1-21; 1 Cor 8:10; Rom 14:1-15:13), most notably among those who were closest to the historical Jesus....The argument against authenticity asks whether such a radical saying of Jesus would not have been known and invoked in disputes that threatened to split the early communities. ³³²

Mark clearly tackles a current house-church issue. Thus, in a post-resurrection context, Paul and Mark express a similar approach to the Law. Svartvik notes how Paul has argued that Gentiles should remain Gentiles and not be forced to adhere to Jewish *halakhah* (cf. 1 Cor 7:17-24). Owing to the resurrection, in dialogue between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, clearly the Jewish Christians had to give way to Gentile Christians. Following the earlier lead of J. Marcus, Svartvik makes the point that while not everyone agreed with Paul that the Law was no longer relevant for Christians, Mark certainly did. ³³³

Donahue points to another aspect of 7:19b ('he declared all foods to be clean') whereby the Markan Jesus rejected the Jewish dietary laws, adding:

Neither does he contrast moral integrity with ritual observance. In the Torah itself (Lev 1-18), after the long list of laws governing things that cause impurity, Leviticus 19 (especially vv.11-18) mandates justice and charity in social dealings and rejects the kinds of destructive social actions mentioned in Mark 7:21-23. ³³⁴

Moreover, the statement that 'there is nothing outside a man that can make him unclean

³³¹ Dunn, 'Mark 2:1-3:6', 412.

³³² Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 227.

³³³ Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 345; cf. Marcus, 'Mark - Interpreter of Paul', 300.

(7:15a) moves beyond the views of most first-century Jews; it may have seemed extreme to a very early Christian group similar to the Hebrew Christian community in Jerusalem. But Mark is very clear; the Law is surpassed.³³⁵

Other aspects of the Gospel are linked with the Law's rejection. The Gospel's replacement theme presumes Jesus' authoritative power to replace the Law and redefine God's new presence in the secret of the kingdom in the Lord's 'house of prayer for all the nations' (11:17). The Son of Man's power is expressed in forgiving sins (2:1-12), developing inclusive households besides stating that the pristine purpose of the Law is the good of man (2:15-17; 2:23-28; 3:1-6). This power is present in Jesus' creation of the new Israel, then situating it in the house rather than the temple/synagogue; earlier, he promised a new spirituality - servant discipleship - for new wine-skins (2:18-22).

Paul tolerated aspects of the 'weak' groups' adherence to the Law, judging that, over time, such practices would die so Mark may be seen as a Pauline Gospel, for

chronologically, Pauline insights from missionary experiences undoubtedly precede with one or two decades the writing down of the final redaction of Mk. (Also) there is a *theological* affinity between Pauline and Markan texts, which favours our conclusion that, with the qualifications stated above, Mk may be understood as a Pauline Gospel.³³⁶

Yet Mark on occasion diverges from Paul's position (cf. Rom 4:24-25; 5:1-2). In Paul's eyes, even though the 'weak' house-churches in Rome observe some food laws (14:2,21), the strong should accept these fellow-Christians. Paul looked at the bottom line in this dispute and claims that there are more important things than food laws: 'I know and I am persuaded in the Lord that nothing is unclean in itself (Rom 14:14) and 'everything is clean' (Rom 14:20). He never mandates that the 'weak' give up their observance of food laws, arguing that 'he is a Jew who is one inwardly and real circumcision is matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal' (Rom 2:29). The Jews bitterly opposed the pioneering Hellenist gospel in the east (Acts 9:1-2,28; 13:50-52).

³³⁴ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 228.

³³⁵ Dunn, 'Mark 2:1-3:6', 413.

Also, it was the in Rome, in the ongoing hostile Christian/Jewish differences. Therefore, Paul's claim that he is 'persuaded in the Lord that nothing is unclean in itself' (14:14a),

refers to a saying similar to 7:15; this would be virtually the only evidence that such a saying was known by or influenced early Christian behaviour. More likely both this saying and 7:19b are evidence that the final edition of Mark's Gospel took place in a Greek-speaking environment that had begun to move more radically away from Jewish practice than the historical Jesus or many of the traditions incorporated into the gospel had anticipated.³³⁷

The community solidarity of the Law-free in an atmosphere of possible persecution would be a more pressing issue for Mark than concessions to 'weak' groups especially if they had sheltered under the Jewish umbrella during Nero's persecution.

Fourth, from Paul's epistle it is clear that disunity exists among Rome's house-churches owing to differences among them towards the Law. While Paul and Mark describe parallel aspects - the Gentile majority, the necessity of faith in the risen Lord, the dismissal of the Law - this study attributes this house-church disunity to the weak households renewed adherence to some aspects of the Law. In the current Jewish/Gentile Christian hostility, the result of the early Hellenist Christians Law-free evangelising in the synagogues as outlined above, this disunity is intensified by the horrors of Nero's persecution of house-church members, a persecution in which the Jews were not involved (64-65 CE). This helped to justify the strong house-churches' rejection of anything Jewish, including elements of the Law.

As seen above, in contrast to the synagogue groups, the Hellenist Christian house-churches' were established pre-exile. Not so the Jews, who were disadvantaged by Claudius' ban on synagogue gatherings (49 CE) and forced to meet in agreed houses that replaced the traditional synagogues. Doubtless the Jews blamed the Hellenists for their predicament, their animosity exacerbated by Christian house-churches attraction for Jewish proselytes. Above all, the Jews regarded the Hellenist Christian as a threat to their heritage, a danger centred on the rejection of the Law.

³³⁶ Svartvik, *Mark and Mission*, 346.

Paul seems unaware of this tension, being more concerned with the ‘strong’ house-churches’ dismissive attitude towards the ‘weak’ groups, proof that disunity existed prior to Nero’s persecution. Indeed, Paul counsels the ‘strong’ communities, ‘do not be haughty’ (12:16), adding that debates over ‘food’ and ‘special days’ should not divide Christian groups. He pointedly greets ‘all God’s beloved in Rome’ (1:7), exhorting them ‘to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you’ (15:7). A division exists, intensified by the strong groups’ rejection of anything Jewish, notably the Law.

No evidence exists that non-Christian Jews, living in close proximity to Christian communities in the crowded Transtiberium district, were caught up in Nero’s onslaught. This exemption, contrary to previous discriminatory measure towards Jews, would have strained relations further. Obviously, Gentile Christians asked why, further alienating them from the Jews. For their part, it is difficult to imagine that every non-Christian Jew would forgive and forget their grievances against Christians. As a result, various Jews may have identified Jewish and Gentile Christians to the authorities. At this time evidence exists that ultraconservative Jewish Christians - to the right of James - insisted on circumcision for Gentile converts. They propagandised against Paul in the 40’s and 50’s, especially in Jerusalem.³³⁷ May not similar members have come to Rome from Jerusalem, given the close links between Jerusalem and the capital, hoping to establish pockets of Law-observant groups to oppose the spread of the Law-free Gospel in Rome, circa 51-63 CE? In isolated cases, they may have even betrayed Hellenist Christians during Nero’s persecution.

Whatever were the exact details of the reasons for his silence, ten years after Romans, Mark never refers to the ‘weak’ groups; he rejects the Law. In Chapter 5, this study outlines how anything Jewish is treated negatively: Mark’s crucial replacement theme is gradually developed through the authorities’ increasing hostility to the Markan

³³⁷ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 229.

³³⁸ Brown and Meier, *Antioch*, 112-113.

Jesus. Temple worship is corrupt; its guardians, the high priests, serve as reference points for murderous opposition to Jesus (3:6,22; 6:14-16; 7:1-6; 8:14-15,31; 9:31; 10:33-34). Scribes, too, are symbols for double-dealing and hypocrisy (12:38-44). The Christian/Jewish alienation in Rome appears complete.

Fifth, the house motif, although present in Paul in an indirect way, is a dominant theme in Mark. In Mark, the spatial house (1:29-31) acts as the key contrast to the synagogue (1:21-28) and is the site of the initial expressions of the authoritative power of the Markan Jesus (2:1-12; 2:15-17). In the house, faith is stressed for the first time (1:30) but only amazement in the synagogue (1:21-31). The house also forms the focus for the replacement motif; there, faith inspired prayer is active (1:30b), servant discipleship in the households is introduced (1:31), and, at the door messianic healing occurs (1:32-34). 'Inside', sin is forgiven (2:1-12) and inclusive households formed (2:15-17). And, as a result of the Pharisees' murderous intentions (3:1-6), Jesus creates, then situates the new Israel - Mark's replacement house of prayer - in the domestic house (3:31-35). There, too, the 'secret of the kingdom of God' is a gift to all who do God's will, those grouped about Jesus in the private family section of the house (4:10-12).

There are also indirect references to the house motif: the outside/inside motif is based on the house motif (3:31,34) while the roof symbolism at 2:1-12 presumes it as does the lamp image (4:21) and domestic references (2:18-22; 10:29-31). Those who are healed by the Markan Jesus are directed back to evangelise in their household groups (5:19-20) or, if healed in the house (5:40-43; 7:30), it is anticipated that they will be part of a new house-church, the chosen sphere for evangelization (6:10). In the journey story (8:27-10:52), the house motif is prominent. At 9:28-29 it is linked to the young boy's exorcism (9:14-27) in which deepening faith is the necessity in way discipleship (9:14-27). Thereafter, Mark intertwines the house motif with the passion predictions and his crucial servant/way teaching as Jesus and the disciples make their way to Jerusalem.

Also, the house is an important element in the public teaching/private teaching theme as privacy was only possible in the inner area of a house in a crowded urban setting. The house/temple theme (11:17), the return of the Lord of the house at the parousia (13:35-37) and the intimacy shown in the Passover Meal in ‘my guest room where I am to eat the passover with my disciples’ (14:14) highlight the house motif.

Apart from these five major themes, parallel language also binds the epistle and Gospel. Both employ the term, ‘the gospel of God’ (Mk 1:14; Rom 1:1; 15:16) and ‘cultic’ language in ministry (Mk 10:45; Rom 1:9; 15:16). Both use similar current cultural catalogues of vices (Mk 7:21; Rom 1:29), apart from the common stress on ‘hardness of heart’ (Mk 10:5; Rom 2:5). There is the shared focus too on the difference between the hidden and revealed (Mk 4:21-25; Rom 2:28) while each work names Rufus (Mk 15:21; Rom 16:13) and outlines a similar soteriology (Mk 10:45; Rom 3:24).

Jesus’ teaching about clean and unclean in Mk 7:14-23 (‘he declared all foods clean’ - 7:19) could continue to address the kind of dispute about ritual purity, mirrored in Rom 14:1-23. In addition, ‘the view of the state in Rom 13:1-7 is close to Mk 12:13-17 and both passages are closely related to the love command’ (Rom 13:8-10; Mk 12:28-34).³³⁹ Other language similarities exist. Mark uses *proton* (‘let the children first be fed’ 7:27). In Paul, Jesus came ‘to the Jew first and also to the Greek’ (Rom 1:16; 11:1-24). In the call passages both employ *kalein*: Mark at 1:20 and 2:17 and Paul too when intimating Old Testament texts that describe his prophetic commissioning as an apostle (Rom 1:1; 4:17; 8:30). The verb *paradidomi* outlines a servant theme in each work (Rom 4:25; 8:32; Mk 1:14; 13:13:9; 15:1).

Overall, faced with the challenge of setting the extreme trauma of Nero’s persecution within faith in the paradoxical victory of the risen Lord, Mark refused to tolerate anything Jewish - a contrast to Paul’s earlier, more tolerant approach. In the

³³⁹ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 40.

context of persecution, Mark ignores the position of the weak groups but challenges his house groups to deeper faith in the victory of the cross. It is prefigured in the Gospel's opening (1:2-3; 15) especially in Satan's testing of Jesus (1:12-13), a cosmic struggle between good and evil waged by Jesus as God's righteous one (Ps 16:10; Isa 53:11; Ws 2:12-20); his servant mission (10:45) bears fruit in household evangelization.

It seems that Nero's discriminatory persecution of Christian house groups (64-65 CE), when added to the previous Christian/Jewish abrasive interaction in the capital over the risen *Christos* explains the key, drastic dissimilarities between the form, tone and tempo of Mark's story and Paul's letter. The issue of unity with the minority, fragmented Law-observant house-churches (urged by Paul - 14:1-15:13), when seen in the light of Rome's Gentile Christians' necessary coping with graphic betrayal, persecution and infidelity, was ignored, perhaps even found extremely unpalatable in the current Christian-Jewish standoff. In an understandable reaction, the Gospel reflects an intensified rejection by the Hellenist Christians of the Law and temple. If Paul exemplifies the long-term, fruitful view of God's redemption will through Abraham, the Law and the temple, climaxing in the secret of God in a crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord, Mark is solely preoccupied with encouraging Christian faith and hope in their paradoxical, crucified/risen Lord for his Gentile, traumatised households. Nero's brutality had radically altered the Roman scene.

7. THE ROMAN HOUSEHOLD

Chapter 3 will examine Mark's association of the 'house' motif with key concepts of the Gospel. First though, it is necessary to describe the vital role that the physical house played in daily life in first century Rome. In the Greco-Roman culture, the household was central to the productive economy necessary for everyday living in family groups so it was a clear choice as the symbolic spatial location for the 'secret of the kingdom of God'. Study of the house motif is integral to a study of the Gospel for

we must know who they were and what they thought if we are to understand

completely what was being said to them. The teaching of Jesus is therefore not the starting point.....(If) it is to be understood properly, it must be understood from their point of view.³⁴⁰

To this end, E.M. Lassen described the household family as the basis of Greco-Roman society.³⁴¹

F.V. Filson traced the sheer number of references to the house motif in Mark in addition to the extensive amount of text set within its symbolic scope. There, narrative characters interact in rhetorical dialogue, teaching is given and Jesus expresses power and authority. Filson analyses Mark's 39 uses of *oikos/oikia* and its cognates; he lists the large sections of 1:29-10:45 are situated within the scope of the house image (1:29-34; 2:1-17; 3:20-35; 5:35-43; 9:33-50; 10:10-31).³⁴² The fact that the house formed the sphere for Gentile's Christian life in Rome intensified their mental separation from Judaism and the synagogue, a move unwittingly begun in Jerusalem and Antioch by the Hellenists. This development was hastened by Claudius' exile decree in 49 CE and further consolidated by the ban on synagogue meetings (p. 112). So if people lived life completely in the Greco-Roman household in first century urban centres, (p. 109-110), it is only when the crucial role of the family/household in Greco-Roman life is understood that we can hope to appreciate Christian family metaphors that repeatedly dot the Gospel.

The Markan Jesus refers to his 'brother, sister, mother' in the house (3:31-35; cf. 10:29:30 - p.110). The inclusive and hospitable nature of these house groups facilitated Christian worship while common meals and Christian solidarity sustained fellowship in the community (p. 109). Also, Jesus 'calls' and carries out messianic initiatives in the house (p. 112) and, not unexpectedly, he is shown entertaining 'tax collectors and sinners in his house' (2:15-17). A.J. Malherbe details the scholarly consensus that Christianity first developed concentrically - from the urban house to other households and then to

³⁴⁰ Judge, *Social Patterns*, 9-10.

³⁴¹ E.M. Lassen, 'The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor', in H. Moxnes, (ed.), *Early Christian Families*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 103-115.

³⁴² F.V. Filson, 'The Significance of the Early House Churches', *JBL* 58 (1939), 105-112.

rural areas.³⁴³ Understandably, if the synagogue/temple was the heart of the Law and Jewish identity, the house-church symbolised the sphere of Christian life (p. 106).

Osiek and Balch support Filson's observations,³⁴⁴ describing the house not only as the centre of Rome's social and religious life, but also of business contacts with clients in the patronage system.³⁴⁵ 'The Romans lacked our distinction of our place of work from that of leisure...business was regularly conducted at home'. So,

mosaics and marble or bronze sculptures, functioned to enhance the presence of the owner and to draw people into the house and therefore into his or her circle of influence....allusions of art on the walls mean that householders were not closing their front doors and withdrawing into their private space, as in modern houses...The opposite was the case: Romans were imagining and projecting themselves as well as the social, economic, and political activity inside their homes out into the "public" realm. They wanted the relationships and activity in their houses to be a microcosm of the city, with influence running from inside the house out...³⁴⁶

C. Bryan insists that it is far more likely the Gospel was spread through household contacts than among wandering charismatics on the street corner or the open road.³⁴⁷ Poorer Christian groups in the harbour district in Rome³⁴⁸ and Christian groups of this period adopted a low political profile,³⁴⁹ and, as the house was the hub of social interaction, it offered a natural evangelising vantage point. But there is a proviso for 'the basis for successful conversionist movements is growth through social networks and through a structure of direct and intimate interpersonal attachments. Failure comes if the insiders' fail to keep forming relationships with outsiders and so lose the capacity to grow'.³⁵⁰ This personal and communal influence proved a bridge to other groups particularly the poor, in which slaves and menial labourers were included.³⁵¹ Lassen writes, 'whereas the Roman family signalled, first and foremost, hierarchical power

³⁴³ A.J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 63-71.

³⁴⁴ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 1-2.

³⁴⁵ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 5-12.

³⁴⁶ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 26.

³⁴⁷ C. Bryan, *A Preface to Mark*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 159.

³⁴⁸ Black, *Mark: Images*, 229.

³⁴⁹ Black, *Mark: Images*, 230.

³⁵⁰ Stark, *Rise*, 20.

³⁵¹ Black, *Mark: Images*, 231.

relationships, (Christian) family metaphors were used to describe inter-human relationships...their function was to create equality and a new sense of belonging'.³⁵²

Scholars differ on the makeup of the house-churches. Stark sees them drawn from a broad constituency; others regard them as urban circles of well-off artisans, merchants and members of the liberal professions though if there were Christians from among the well-to-do - who inevitably were house-church leaders - there would have been more Christians from among the poor simply because most people belonged to Rome's poorer groups.³⁵³ No scholarly consensus exists on this point, though Jeffers, basing his case on current archaeological and linguistic research of first-century Rome, describes the social status of Roman Jews and Christians: they are generally from poorer socio-economic classes, ranging from a subsistence level to poor and to modestly successful.³⁵⁴

In his survey of the patriarchal household community, Judge identifies the deep influence of the basic household unity in Hellenistic society for the growth of the house-churches. The household was so central that 'economics, or the principles of household management were studied among the Greeks from the point of view of moral philosophy' ³⁵⁵ prior to New Testament times. Lords and masters, servants and stewards are familiar figures in Jesus' parables (10:41-43; 12:9,13-14). Judge concludes that

the Roman republic...recognized not only the sweeping powers the "*pater familias*" enjoyed over his personal family, bond and free alike, but also the rights and duties of "*clientela*"...The intimacy of this grouping offered the kind of security an over-extended republic was no longer felt to afford (p. 31).

This privileged, patriarchal entity formed the key to the success of the imperial system. Octavian: 'the feeling of personal indebtedness to the Caesar was sedulously cultivated' (p. 32). There was the feeling too of personal indebtedness to the Caesar, a pervasive

³⁵² Lassen, 'Roman Family', 8.

³⁵³ Stark, *Rise*, 30-31; cf. Jeffers, 'Jewish and Christian Families', 128.

³⁵⁴ Jeffers, 'Jewish and Christian Families', 129-130.

³⁵⁵ Judge, *Social Patterns*, 30. From here on, the page numbers in Judge will follow the quote.

paternalism so familiar that ‘authoritarian leadership was understood and accepted’ (p. 33), imperially and in households. This political aspect of the republic paralleled a shared religion that encouraged a paternal, familial solidarity. Judge noted a feature of the primitive church: the conversion of the *pater familias* naturally included the whole household, a social dynamic that largely influenced the strategy of early Christian household evangelisation detailed by Acts 16:15,33; 18:8 - pp. 35-36).

Prior to 3:13-19a, Mark not only sets Jesus’ authoritative teaching and healing initially within the house (1:29-31) but situates the commencement of the controversy sequence (2:1-3:6) in a house (2:1,15), with an unspoken rejection of the Law that is presupposed in the house settings in the parables that follow (4:21-25,33-34). Moreover, the concept of house and family was so prevalent in Rome that household terminology was regularly used to express Christian theological ideas such as the anti-cultural, key Markan concept of the ‘servant’ (1:31; 9:35; 10:43,45; 15:41). Mark also defines faith relationships in familial terms.

At the beginning of the Christian era, the Roman family had a remarkably central role in society as an ideal and as a metaphor. Lassen notes that when metaphors are covered, their metaphorical focus is largely forgotten, until finally lifeless.³⁵⁶ Yet in 2:18-22, all images are domestic/relational: ‘fasting’, ‘weddings’, ‘bride and bridegroom’, ‘sewing’ and ‘wineskins’. The single Son of Man reference in 1:16-8:26 is linked to a Christian domestic setting since houses were such pivotal centres of communal activity (2:9).³⁵⁷ But, if the former secular family focused on the patriarchal father, the new eschatological house has God as its ‘Father’ (cf. 1:11; 9:7; 11:22; 10:30; cf. 3:35). For Lassen, when compared to the Roman classic image of the family, ‘Christian metaphorical language must have often been startling, or even shocking, to the

³⁵⁶ Lassen, ‘Roman Family’, 110; cf. Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 54.

³⁵⁷ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 54.

Roman ear'.³⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, in house-church life as with faith-based fictive relationships, Mark relativises the patriarchal model and situates the eschatological family in the 'house' with gender shared functions as brother, sister, mother (3:35; 10:29-31).³⁵⁹ Visualised in the power of a covenanted God, Christians offered union with Jesus in an inclusive, communal group (cf. 2:17; 3:34-35; 10:29-31).

First century urban centres saw a new prominence accorded to 'chosen relationships' in various associations whether of artisans, athletes, actors and so on. Each Group catered for a person's particular need in at least one area of life, free of the stifling effects of the patriarchal system of patronage and control. It was so pervasive, that

the reciprocity of patronal relations obligated slaves to masters, sons to fathers, the elite to the emperor, and the emperor, together with all of Rome, to the gods....(T)he binding ethic of patronage was rooted in the divine. The ethic of obligation found its legitimation in the gods themselves. It was sacred. To deviate from the sacred order was not simply to embarrass oneself, but was a violation of the sacred order.³⁶⁰

Individual relations, free of the constraints of patronage in one area at least, explain the popularity of these associations. In this regard, a Christian household enjoyed great advantages: it offered personal choice and a new sense of identity, both a purpose in the Christian sense of life 'now' and, 'in the age to come eternal life' (10:30). The first Christian communities were an urban phenomenon with an accent on hospitality within the house-church because, in the movement of peoples, many were often poor and in desperate situations.³⁶¹ People in straitened circumstances were ensured communal help, a blessing for the Roman poor or refugees who faced an otherwise bleak existence.³⁶² And for the very poor, if life in the first century was bleak, with epidemics, fire, famine and sheer poverty, Christian groups offered security and care that, for orphans and

³⁵⁸ Lassen, 'Roman Family, 114-115; cf. Mk 11:25; 14:36; Mt 23:9.

³⁵⁹ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 128.

³⁶⁰ J.B. Green, 'The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God', *Int* 52 (1998), 28.

³⁶¹ Malherbe, *Social Aspects*, 30-31.

³⁶² Judge, *Social Patterns*, 30-39.

widows, was a new and expanded sense of family. In Rome's urban life, house-holds of were a sure basis for social solidarity.³⁶³ No other cult engaged its members at so many levels or at such a range of human needs and activities.³⁶⁴

Yet house-churches did not exist in a vacuum. Their graphic differences from the contemporary cultural model sharpened their distinctive religious and social nature. It was easily seen that, 'the first key difference between the exclusive Christian faith and Roman households centred on polytheism that was enshrined in the Greco-Roman pagan cults. For Christians, the exclusive demands they asserted for their God were part of the scandal of their faith to pagans. Such a religious focus on monotheism facilitated a religious and social unity in stark contrast to the widespread syncretism of household deities and shrines'.³⁶⁵

The Imperial period also witnessed a greater deification of virtues or benefits, the term *salus* - 'salvation' for example. In an obvious parallel, Mark portrays a Jesus who exemplified a divinely approved, authoritative healing and forgiveness and who felt profoundly for the fractured human condition (1:42; 2:27-28; 5:23; 7:29,37; 9:17-24). Mark emphasizes that Jesus is salvation in his person, healing and teaching. One who accepts Jesus is therefore saved 'now' in the house. Paul understood salvation as an ongoing reality (cf. Rom 12:1-2) understood salvation as an ongoing daily reality, coming to complete fruition only in the End-time (cf. Rom 12:1-2).³⁶⁶ Monotheism, in the terminology of pagan authors, left room for lesser deities whereas Mark focuses solely on the Father and the power of his divinely attested Son, the victorious 'Lord of the house' (13:32-37; cf. 8:38; 14:62).

Religion was not a private affair in first century Rome. Rather, the centuries old, traditional civic religion was prized. Similarly, the Old Testament

³⁶³ Stark, *Rise*, 156-161.

³⁶⁴ Gager, *Kingdom*, 130.

³⁶⁵ Ferguson, *Background*, 164.

³⁶⁶ A.E. Gilles, *Living Words*, (Cincinnati: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1985), 124.

provided Mark's households with a scriptural heritage, divine in origin and of unparalleled antiquity. No pagan or civic cult could make a similar claim, for, in an age which turned its eyes to the ancients for wisdom and to heaven for a truth beyond the attainment of reason, this was no small advantage.³⁶⁷ If Mark taps into God's ageless, prophetic promise at 1:2-3, it offered Rome's Christians an assurance that God's all-powerful word/rule was now present in their midst. The appreciation of this reality assured a victorious expansion of the 'good news' (cf. Isa 55:10-11; Mk 11:17; 13:10; 14:9).

Morality was not closely associated with religion in the Greco-Roman world. Cultic ritual was normally ceremonial and seldom ethical but in the Christian house-church the wedding of ethics and religious belief based on divine revelation was one of the important strengths of Christianity in the first century world.³⁶⁸ This is clearly outlined in Jesus' teaching on the 'way' (8:31 - 10:52), an individual and group blueprint for servant-discipleship in covenant fidelity in the household (12:28-32). It constituted a thorough reversal of patriarchal ethics for Mark focuses exclusively on a divine Father in the household in contrast to a multiplicity of Roman gods, cults and superstition. For a house-church, such an emphasis was a cause of persecution but it was also one of its greatest strengths.³⁶⁹ Against this background of Greco-Roman patriarchal culture, Mark's house and associated motifs are most effective from a literary perspective.

8: CONCLUSION

The Hellenists were opposed in Jerusalem for their Law-free and temple-free gospel. They accepted their rejection as a sign for mission, first to Antioch and then to other large urban centres, including Rome. The sizeable Jewish presence in Rome attracted the Hellenists' missionary zeal and from their house-church centres in Antioch, they first

³⁶⁷ Gager, *Kingdom*, 95.

³⁶⁸ Ferguson, *Background*, 165.

³⁶⁹ Gager, *Kingdom*, 131-132.

evangelised in Rome's synagogues with a radical message of a risen *Christos* that negated the Law and temple in Christian life. Such a graphic message caused social disruptions among the Jewish synagogue groups as in Jerusalem.

These disturbances in Rome's complex of synagogues intensified. To the authorities, that turmoil endangered public order. But the Jews, outraged by the Hellenists' gospel, disregarded the latent anti-Jewish sentiment in Rome and the authorities' concern at this threat to public order. Hence Claudius' exile edict of 49 CE, banned synagogue gatherings and banished Jewish and Hellenist Christian leaders.

Consequently, separated from the Hellenist Jewish Christian leaders, the Gentilisation and fruitful evangelisation of Rome's households proceeded apace against the background of a complete separation of the Jewish and Christian communities in Rome by the early 60's CE. Paul's epistle to the Romans, written circa 58 CE, reflects this pre-Nero-persecution lull prior to the Gospel that was Mark's response to the challenge in faith that Nero's brutal persecution presented (64-65 CE),

Therefore, in Chapter 3 this study will examine Mark's use of the house motif's relevancy for house-church communities in the latter part of first century Rome in order to intensify the rhetorical effectiveness of his narrative and render it more direct and challenging for the members of Rome's Christian households.

CHAPTER 3

THE HOUSE MOTIF IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK (1:1-8:26)

1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 this study argued that Mark addresses Gentile Christian' house-churches in Rome, circa 67-69 CE. Understandably traumatised by Nero's persecution, Mark saw their dire need of a 'good-news' to reinforce their faith and hope. Hence, he associates the motif of the house with the powerful word of the Gospel proclaimed in the household groups. It is an effective literary technique since the spatial house formed the arena in which the gospel's healing and teaching word exercised its power in Christian living. The word would empower Christians to live the ideal of servant discipleship, seen in Peter's mother-in-law's service to the group (1:29-31). The household was the key social, economic and political reality of the ancient world. It

constituted the focus, locus and socio-religious nucleus of the ministry and mission of the Christian movement. Historically, the movement originated in and owed its growth to the conversion of households or representative members thereof.³⁷⁰

Thus, by his choice of the house motif Mark effectively combines its cultural role with the gospel's inherent power to enable Christians to respond in faith to Jesus' call to live the servant ideal in Rome's small, intimate house-church communities (cf. 1:31).

Mark associates his rhetorical strategy with each of the individual addressees for the rhetorical 'anyone' or 'everyone' is challenged to 'repent and believe' the good news (1:15). The first disciples are named. Their response in faith paves the way for a further theme to emerge, the paradoxical 'inside'/'outside' theme - a dichotomy inherent in the house motif. The story's rhetorical nature demands this symbolic role of the house motif since the inside/outside dimension illustrates how key figures, 'Simon and those who were with him' (1:36), ironically prove that they do not hear or see Jesus in faith. Prior to Pentecost, in the story's unfolding, 'the twelve', supposedly insiders (4:10),

progressively become synonymous with Mark's blindness theme (4:12-13). They move 'outside' the house while 'those who sat about him' (4:10) reflect Christians who, gathered in intimate household groups and gifted with 'seeing' and 'hearing' the Markan Jesus, respond in faith to the 'secret of the kingdom of God' (cf. 4:10-11).

Very early, Mark hints at the disciples' failure to grasp the ramifications of their 'call'. At 1:36, the disciples, seeing Jesus had left their company, they pursue Jesus since, instead of focusing on their call to become hunters/evangelisers of men (1:17), the disciples seemingly deny their call in their attempt to keep Jesus within the scope of their own ambitions. From the first, their contrary agenda ensures the gradual narrative mapping of their failure to grasp Jesus' identity and the ambit of their call. Formerly insiders, their role as outsiders climaxes at 14:50: 'they all forsook him and fled' before another power, 'a crowd with swords and clubs' (14:43). Peter acts out this spatial paradox: he stands outside the High Priest's palace, denying he knew Jesus (14:68-71) while inside (14:55-65) Jesus fulfils his Father's will (8:31; cf. 3:35).³⁷¹ But it is not the disciples but the house-churches who are addressed.

Minor characters assist this development of the blindness theme; they form a backdrop that highlights the disciples' infidelity. These cultic-defiled outsiders have been 'called' (2:13-17) to be inside with Jesus (2:15-17; 3:14). The 'old' Israel, symbolised by the scribes and Jesus' family, also accentuate this dichotomy owing to their negative response to Jesus' word - they stand outside the 'house' (3:31). So Israel's failure to see or hear (cf. 4:12) is contrasted with those Jews who do hear (2:1-4, 13-17; 3:8, 13; 5:36).³⁷² Being in close proximity to Jesus through familial or ethnic ties is no guarantee to be inside through faith in the Lord's reign in the house-church.³⁷³

The spatial house motif represents the community's sphere for evangelisation

³⁷⁰ J.H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 230.

³⁷¹ J.R. Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 44.

³⁷² R.H. Smith, "'Inside' and 'Outside' in Mark's Gospel: A Response", *Exp Tm* 102 (1990), 364.

³⁷³ W.E. Moore, "'Outside' and 'Inside': A Markan Motif", *Exp Tm* 98 (1986), 41.

(2:11-12; 5:19-20; 7:31-37); it is also closely aligned with discipleship teaching (8:27-10:52). It forms the setting in which the Gospel describes the most intimate experience between Jesus and the disciples, exemplified in the Passover Meal in the 'upper room' (14:12-31). In these situations, the power of the crucified/risen Lord is central as Mark underlines his ongoing replacement theme inherent in the household group. From 1:16-8:26, the replacement house-church is the locus of the Lord's redeeming power as he draws people of faith into the secret of the kingdom (14:58; cf. 2:1-12,15-17; 3:31-35).

Therefore, Chapter 3 will outline how the house motif creates the most intimate suggestiveness possible for the addressees to unite their existential becoming in faith through the present power and authority of the living word of the crucified/risen Son of Man in their daily, household situation (1:15). Here, a

strength of divine magnitude - this will characterize Jesus, supercharged by the Holy Spirit in his dealings with others....and the angels' waiting on him shows him to be God's beloved Son....What we have, then, is not the story of a moral victory, but a series of narrative statements each pregnant with a Christology of power and divine Sonship.³⁷⁴

Centred on the risen Lord, such a Christology of power drives this social revolution that the living, risen *Christos* had initiated in spatial urban house-churches of first century Rome (cf. Chapter 2). In the metaphorical umbrella of the house, the risen Lord exercises his reign in confronting various issues in the early Church - such as the question of the necessity of the Law's observance for Gentile converts - as it moved from its Jewish Christian context into the broader Gentile world. Also, Hebrew Christian attitudes derived from the Law and temple spirituality were re-interpreted from a Greco-Roman religious and philosophical basis so as to express a new way of Christian living that epitomised a community open to receive 'anyone' (9:34) from 'all nations' (13:10). So in 1:16-8:26, the house motif is the setting for the risen Lord's creative power to call disciples to servant selflessness and messianic healing (1:16-20; 1:31).

This authoritative power of the glorified Son of Man, the Lord, in the

metaphorical house-churches is seen in typical characters, who, respond in faith and activate the power of the Lord. The ‘they’ in Simon and Andrew’s house (1:30) are, together with Simon’s mother-in-law and with the ‘men’ in the house (2:5), Jairus (5:21-43) and the Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30). Yet, Mark also invites the anonymous addressees, the ‘whoever’, (3:35; cf. ‘anyone’ 8:34b) of his house-churches to ‘hear’ and ‘see’ and, in their own human experience and testing, witness to the Lord’s resurrection power in their midst (2:1; 3:8; 7:25). For some in the crowd (2:2; 3:7,20) together with the scribes (2:6,24) and the Pharisees (3:6), ‘those who do not see or hear’, everything is ‘in parables’ (4:11b-12). They move ‘outside’ and do not share in the Lord’s reign within.

2. THE AUTHORITATIVE POWER OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

To heighten the house-church’s sense of the power of the risen Lord’s authority, Mark first describes Jesus’ triumphant victory in his battle with Satan in the desert. Justifiably, then, in Galilee the Markan Lord summons disciples to follow him in faith in his messianic ministry whereby they and the minor characters constitute the replacement house/temple. Second, Mark offers tangible evidence of Jesus’ victorious control over evil in his exorcism of the unclean spirit (1:21-27); it allows him to contrast the different response to Jesus’ power in the synagogue and the Christian house-church in 1:20-34. This comparison is accentuated by Jesus’ healings at the door of the house that suggests Rome’s Jewish/Christian divide by means of the leper pericope (1:40-45). Third, within the suggestiveness of the house motif (2:1-3:6), the authority of the glorified Son of Man, the Lord (2:28; cf. 5:20; 8:38; 11:3; 12:36; 13:35; 14:62) supplants that of the Law (2:1-12) and creates inclusive households (2:13-17). Fourth, at 3:7-35 Mark describes Jesus’ establishment of the new Israel (3:7-19), situated within the house motif (3:20-35). Fifth, Mark’s replacement expands as Jesus the Lord bestows life in the house (5:21-43; cf.

³⁷⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 4-5.

5:20), a crucial aspect of faith in a crucified risen Lord with whom they identify. Sixth, the Lord pronounces on the contentious issues that the Hellenist gospel encountered as it expanded into the Gentile, Greco-Roman urban world (7:24-30; cf. 7:1-13,17-23; 8:1-10).

First, belief in the disciples' present fruitful mission is justified by the victorious Messiah's return from the desert (1:12-13). Some scholars argue that the text does not clarify who was the victor in Satan's temptation of Jesus and while P.J. Sankey regards it as inconclusive,³⁷⁵ F.J. Matera seems correct³⁷⁶. He points to Mark's narrative technique: the superscription situates the Gospel post-resurrection in the power of the risen Lord (12:35-37). P. Danove argues similarly, holding that in the light of the superscription (1:2-3), the Christians' self-identification as believers is guaranteed by the assertion that Jesus is the Christ, Lord of the way and Son of God and all that these titles imply.³⁷⁷ Further, if the desert temptations are within the scope of the Spirit's power, then Jesus must be victorious over the unclean spirits in this cosmic conflict. By the Spirit's power, the disciple too will be victorious even if 'handed over' to governors and kings (13:11). And, although Jesus is tested as the Son of God (1:11), Mark's Son of Man Christology does not fit the context of Jesus as the Son of God for traumatised communities. Rather it reaches a climax in his Son of Man Christology (cf. 2:10; 2:27; 8:31,34-9:1; 9:9,31; 10:32,45; 12:35-37; 14:62) seen within Jesus' title as the crucified/risen Lord. Rome's Christians needed a fellow-suffering human figure. Though Son of God, Jesus was fully human also, otherwise his temptations would have lacked authenticity. Being Son of God, however, may be connected to the clear truth that in Mark Jesus acts with a divine authority that underlies his healings and exorcisms. He is a charismatic leader, with a unique authority, and in his actions and teaching the

³⁷⁵ P.J. Sankey, 'Promise and Fulfilment: Reader Response to Mark 1:1-15', *JSNT* 58 (1995), 3-18.

³⁷⁶ F.J. Matera, 'The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel', *JSNT* 34, (1988), 3-20.

³⁷⁷ P. Danove, 'The Narrative Rhetoric of Mark', *JSNT* 50 (1998), 25.

dawning kingdom of the Lord is visible.³⁷⁸

Mark's second emphasis opens with Jesus' authoritative call to others to follow him at 1:16-20. Gnilka regards this unit as a traditional unity³⁷⁹ but whatever its previous source or Markan redaction, it would not make sense outside the Markan narrative's post-resurrection viewpoint. Their positive response establishes the key contrast between the differing response in the synagogue and house groups, a literary pattern that continues till its rupture at 6:1-6a with Jesus' rejection by his townsfolk in the synagogue at Nazareth. By placing the call pericope before the house/synagogue contrast, Mark establishes that Christian identity is found only in faith in Jesus' authoritative call to discipleship in the house-church. In their response, Peter and Andrew immediately dropped their nets and 'followed him' (1:18). Obviously, the

very absence of psychological motivation here and in 2:14...serves to emphasize the overwhelming power of Jesus' word; all human reticence has been instantaneously washed away because *God* has arrived on the scene in the person of Jesus, and it is *his* compelling voice that speaks through Jesus' summons....Mark's Christian readers would no doubt identify with Peter and Andrew in their response.³⁸⁰

Placed at the Gospel's opening and seen from a post-resurrection viewpoint, the call pericope forms the backdrop against which Mark underlines how Jesus exercises his authority as the risen Lord. Without any apparent justification, Jesus' word calls the four disciples to follow him with whom they had no previous acquaintance. Narratively, if the addressees do not situate this call post-resurrection, the pericope makes no sense. Jesus comes as an unknown as far as the four characters are concerned. He offers no reason to validate his call, no proof of an exceptional authority to remove these four from their normal life setting to follow an unlettered rabbi from Nazareth. Their call includes an invitation to share in Jesus' own ministry,³⁸¹ a call that, when repeated at 3:13, broadens the creation of the rejection/replacement theme (3:15-16; cf. 1:16-20). The

³⁷⁸ J.W. Van Henden, 'The First Testing of Jesus: A Re-reading of Mark 1:12-13', *NTS* 45 (1999), 86.

³⁷⁹ Gnilka, *Markus*, 1, 72.

³⁸⁰ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 185; cf. Trainor, *Quest*, 88-90.

term ‘fishermen’ (Ez 47:1-12) presupposes a reconstituted Israel through God’s power, set in a temple not ‘made with hands’ - the risen Lord (14:58).³⁸²

Thus, visualised post-resurrection (1:1; cf. 2:20) the living word of the gospel calls the members of Mark’s house-communities to ‘follow’ Jesus along the symbolic ‘way’ of the crucified/risen Son of Man to Calvary (see further Chapter 4 below). Each disciple contributes to the creation and subsequent increase of an eschatological community, a reality that constitutes the risen Lord’s new Israel (3:7-19), the replacement theme. Its basis is the paradox of the victory of the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord (1:1,12-13; 4:10-11; cf. 11:13-21) since the superscription presumes the entire existential becoming of the crucified/risen Son of Man.³⁸³ The challenge, *deute opiso mou*, is a call from the perspective of faith³⁸⁴ and, as it includes the phrase, ‘fishers of men’ from Jeremiah (1:17) it denotes suffering as an integral part of ministry on the part of those addressed (Jer 16:14-21).³⁸⁵

There is no sign of antipathy towards familial and occupational ties *per se* in this ‘call’ to discipleship. The motivation is presented, not in negative, anti-social terms, but in terms of the prophetic call to all sinners who are invited inside the reign of the kingdom’s household (2:15-17). Furthermore, there is no indication that leaving home is to be a denial of normal household life. On the contrary, immediately after the disciples’ call to mission and the unclean spirit’s defeat (1:21-28), the Gospel describes the ideal house disciple as one who serves within a community of faith (cf. 1:31). As well, the symbolic leaving of familial, patriarchal and occupational ties for the sake of Jesus and the gospel (10:29-30) powerfully dramatises Mark’s sense of these new priorities that characterise the replacement urban household of prayer.

³⁸¹ Hooker, *Mark*, 60.

³⁸² L. Boadt, ‘Ezekiel’, in Brown, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 327.

³⁸³ Anderson, *Mark*, 66; cf. Gnllka, *Markus*, 1, 42; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 74-75; Taylor, *Gospel*, 152; Stock, *Method*, 43; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 149; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 7.

³⁸⁴ Hooker, *Mark*, 60.

³⁸⁵ G.P. Couturier, ‘Jeremiah’, in Brown, *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 281.

By initially describing Jesus as a teacher (1:21-22), Mark establishes

the tone for Jesus' relationship with his disciples both in terms of his earthly ministry and also as a paradigm for Jesus' relationships with the "disciples" in Mark's congregations who are to learn from Jesus, their teacher.³⁸⁶

It is 'new teaching with authority' (1:27). So armed, Jesus alone goes into the synagogue. Mark's reluctance to associate the narrative disciples with the synagogue (cf. 3:1; 6:2) may reflect the rigid separation of the Jewish households and Christian house-churches in Rome at the time Mark wrote his Gospel (67-69 CE).

Following Mark's initial focus on Jesus' victorious entry into Galilee, Mark's second emphasis is directed at the contrast between the synagogue and house motifs (1:21-45). The synagogue is described negatively; it not only lacks the power to the counter cosmic evil of 'unclean spirits' but it ironically provides a setting for this opposing power who has swallowed up the identity of its human host. In the face of a man 'possessed by an unclean spirit' (1:23), the synagogue and unclean spirit form a destructive nexus. That the comparison implicitly supports the victorious Jesus as the Spirit's emissary is echoed in the implicit positive response to the demon's question, 'Have you come to destroy us?' (1:24). Here the peoples 'were all amazed' (1:27) at the power of Jesus' authority but the scribes' later refusal to accept the Spirit's role in Jesus' eschatological battle with evil (3:21-28) is an unpardonable sin. Jesus' authority over the unclean spirits, indirectly testifies that the reign of God - declared near at 1:15 - is inexorably making its presence felt since Jesus' *exousia* is linked with God's reassertion of his authority in the end-time.³⁸⁷

In the synagogue, Jesus seizes the initiative (1:21). He 'enters' uninvited. He 'teaches' by his power (1:21) in immediately dealing with the demoniac.³⁸⁸ In Jesus' first cosmic confrontation with evil, the effects of his exorcism on the demon's unfortunate human host are not mentioned. But his central role in this initial clash with

³⁸⁶ Guelich, *Mk 1-8:26*, 60.

³⁸⁷ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 191.

evil is enhanced by the vague outline of the synagogue liturgy and the impersonal ‘they’ and ‘them’ he encounters there (1:22, 27). The exorcism is down-played and relegated to the background; it concentrates the focus on the God-given power of the teacher³⁸⁹ that is appropriate in the replacement theme expressed in a ‘new teaching with authority’, meaning the eschatologically ‘new’ in Jesus’ words and works.³⁹⁰ Confronted by God’s ‘holy one’, the demon’s use of Jesus’ name, the disclosure of his status (‘the Holy One of God’) and his use of biblical language are a futile attempt at a magical counter-attack.

The demon’s tactic, though, signals the start of an associated Markan motif in the Gospel: the gradual disclosure of the full identity and power of the one who is the foundation of the replacement temple, the house-church. The Old Testament describes how God’s rebuke of the chaotic evil powers ranged against him and his people when he ushers in the new age.³⁹¹ Jesus’ identity as the ‘Holy One of God’ is set in the Prologue’s reminders of the truth of who he is (1:1; 1:11) - the Son of God, an identity that fits in with an apocalyptic world-view and verified on Calvary (a point developed in Chapter 5),

Jesus’ Spirit-filled advent caused the demon’s counter-attack at 1:12-13. In this cosmic struggle because of Jesus proclamation of the ‘good news’ (1:15; cf. 13:9-13), faith groups are led to see themselves as the focus of the hatred of the whole world (13:13). The group needs to know in faith the power of the Spirit present in the community: ‘it is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit’ (13:11) - the power inherent in the kingdom’s reign, proved in Jesus’ victory over the unclean spirits. The amazed synagogue group can only ask, ‘What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him’ (1:27). The question of Jesus’ lordly authority (cf. 2:1-3:6; 6:1-6a) to teach in and out of the synagogue climaxes in

³⁸⁸ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 1, 69.

³⁸⁹ Anderson, *Mark*, 92.

³⁹⁰ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 1, 69.

³⁹¹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 95.

Mark's judgment/rejection section (11:12-21; cf. Chapter 5 below).³⁹²

At 1:29-31, the term *euthus* (1:29) and the *kai* parataxis add a sense of urgency and rapid movement to these initial accounts of Jesus' works.³⁹³ Thus, immediately after Jesus' foray into the synagogue, Jesus, his four disciples - and his addressees - are relocated in the privacy of the 'house' (1:29). In an urban environment in congested Rome, a Markan reader knew that *kata monas* (4:10) was possible only in the privacy of a Roman residence - to be inside a house or seeking privacy is a pervasive theme in Mark. Clearly, a physical house is used metaphorically to describe the power within this spatial sphere for the benefit of those who respond.³⁹⁴ This development also creates the house/synagogue dichotomy (1:29-34). Jesus is immediately situated in a house in which, if the power of Jesus is sought in faith, bears fruit in the motif of the resurrected Christian. His healing is shown in service to the other (1:29-31; 2:15-17; 3:20, 35; 5:37; 7:17, 24; cf. 4:11). The term 'unclean spirits' in the synagogue (1:23,27) evokes a Jewish context as does the compound verb *episynago*. In contrast, when the authoritative Markan Jesus is transferred to the house (1:29), it appears that the 'demons' at the door of the house (1:32-34) echoes a Hellenist setting for 'the whole city was gathered together about the door' (1:33).

Thus, in the house (1:29-31), and in direct contrast to the synagogue exorcism (1:29-31), the first-called disciples - 'James' and 'John', 'Simon' and 'Andrew' are contrasted with the vague 'they', 'themselves' and 'their' of the synagogue group. Jesus will deepen this intimacy. Constantly in his company (2:15; 3:14,20,34; 4:10,33; 5:37), Jesus and his first disciples form the nucleus of the ongoing reality, the replacement temple (14:58).³⁹⁵ Personal names, faith, prayer and Jesus' power to heal, exorcise and bestow life are features of this new eschatological community.

³⁹² J.D. Kingsbury, 'The Religious Authorities in the Gospel of Mark', *NTS* 50 (1990), 53.

³⁹³ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 81.

³⁹⁴ Cf. 1:29-31; 2:1-12,15-17; 3:20-12,31-35; 4:10,34; 5:19,37; 7:17,24; 9:28,33; 10:10; 13:35; 14:3,12,17.

³⁹⁵ L.E. Keck, 'Discipleship in Mark', *NTS* 12 (1965), 364.

Prior to Jesus first clash with evil (1:21-28), the four disciples who accompanied him to Capernaum do not enter the synagogue. Yet here (1:29-31), ‘they’ symbolise the replacement theme, forming part of the group that sought the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law. Given that at this point the four called constitute the Church from the narrative point of the Gospel (1:1), the healed mother-in-law ministers to the Church in embryo.³⁹⁶ If the key relevance of the physical house in defining the scope of the Christian ethical inversion of patriarchal household values is kept in mind, the swift introduction of this image is understandable. In the synagogue, no member has any involvement in the exorcism drama but in the petition for healing in the house there is an immediate expression of communal faith for ‘they told him of her’ (1:30). The house too is the focus for abundant healing since, at the door of the house ‘Jesus healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons’ (1:32-34). This setting suggests a Gentile house-church open to the poor and destitute and seen as a haven for those in both spiritual and physical need.

That the communal petition is due to faith is seen in Mark’s use of resurrection language (1:31a). In the primitive church, *egeiren* was employed prior to the Gospel’s composition in formulaic terms that indicated faith attitude in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.³⁹⁷ As well, though a member of the wider family group, Simon’s mother-in-law’s presence in Simon’s household represents a symbolic invitation to Rome’s destitute. A mother-in-law was normally included in her husband’s family circle so culturally she is either widowed or divorced. She reflects the distress of those who have no claim on another family group and, invited into the household in which Jesus’ disciples gather, the woman’s subsequent ministry reinforces this sense of her being raised through faith to a new level of becoming. If cured and now raised, she lives resurrection faith in serving the community. The Greek term *diekonei* was used earlier of

³⁹⁶ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 1, 71.

³⁹⁷ Cf. 2:9,11,12; 5:41; 6:14,16; 9:27; 10:46; 12:26; 14:28; 16:6; cf. 1 Cor 15:4; Gal 1:1; Rom 4:24; Acts

the angels ministering to Jesus in the wilderness (1:13). Later Mark describes household leadership as self-sacrifice in Jesus' service of others (10:45).³⁹⁸ This verb is also used to describe the women, who, after serving Jesus and the disciples, followed (*akolouthein*) him on the way to Calvary (15:40-41).

Given this early close identification of service with Jesus, the mother-in-law's cure underlines the crucial role that humble service expresses as the fruit of personal faith in family groups. La Verdiere suggests this emphasis:

Like many stories in Mark's Gospel, the story of Simon's mother-in-law was probably formed in view of baptismal catechesis. In the early church, everyone who was baptised was expected to share in the mission and ministry of the Church.³⁹⁹

It signifies a Christian's dedication through the healing reign of the risen Lord in the spatial urban house. The abundant miracles in 1:32-34 illustrate how kingdom-like healing and attitudes in the house-churches already exist, a feature also seen in the former leper's evangelising zest at 1:40-45.⁴⁰⁰ This sense of resurrection victory is reinforced by Jesus' command at 1:34, when, in the midst of the symbolic house and abundant healings and exorcisms, he imposes silence on the demons. This sign of his cosmic victory over evil forms the second use of the messianic secret motif. It expresses the Gospel's rhetorical strategy, for, if those specifically named are unaware of Jesus' identity as the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord, Rome's communities are not. The onus is on them to respond in faith and service in their house-church situation.

The house-church/synagogue contrast could well reflect the Gentile Christian position in Rome, circa 60 CE, outlined in Chapter 2. Hellenist house-churches, already meeting independently of the synagogue in house groups, subsequently became overwhelmingly Gentile, resulting in the significant increase in the number of Gentile-led Christian communities prior to, and, especially after Claudius' exile edict in 49 CE.

3:15; 4:10.

³⁹⁸ Trainor, *Quest*, 94.

³⁹⁹ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 73; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 46; Trainor, *Quest*, 94.

Structuralists note this ongoing Markan dichotomy between the house and synagogue. They see it as a key element in Mark's literary strategy to bring hope to the beleaguered household-churches in Rome. Faced with the Jewish dedication to the Law, Christians would have defined themselves as followers of the risen Lord. Now in the *eschaton*, the Son of Man continues to exercise his power and authority as Lord to teach, heal and bestow life in the embattled Christian groups (1:31; 2:1-12; 5:42; cf. 4:20,21-32). At 1:32-34, the power of Jesus' word may reflect the intercessory prayer of the house-church,⁴⁰¹ its fruit shown in the flow of Gentiles into the house-churches in 49-64 CE, a sign of hope in this typical day in Jesus' ministry (1:16-34).

This study disagrees with Marcus' claim that the dual time indication ('that evening, at sundown' - 1:32) points to Jesus' respect for the Law. But he also asserts, correctly, that the type of miracle and range of illnesses (1:32-34), 'presents a beautiful non-sectarian picture of Jesus fulfilling the universal longing for wholeness: not just the select few but the whole city congregates at the house...and he heals all of them'.⁴⁰² In the leper pericope, Marcus changes tack and is more correct when, in the light of Mark's stark rejection of the Law, he sees that the leper's blatant non-cooperation,

it is hard to see this result as a bad one...the man's disobedience causes Jesus' fame to spread further abroad - not only to all of Galilee (cf. 1:39) but "everywhere". This result would no doubt remind Mark's readers of the situation in their own day when the gospel was being disseminated to all the nations (cf. 13:10). Indeed, the man healed of scale disease seems in some ways to be a prototypical missionary: he broadcasts the good news everywhere and this proclamation causes others to repeat his experience of coming to Jesus...his preaching foreshadows that of the post-Easter church.⁴⁰³

With La Verdier⁴⁰⁴, we accept Marcus' concept of the Christians' human longing for wholeness. Yet it seems that Mark, post-exile and in a setting of a hardened separation of house-church and Jewish households (circa 67-69 CE), constructs this dual

⁴⁰⁰ F.J. Matera, 'He Saved Others; He Cannot Save Himself', *Int* 48 (1993), 17.

⁴⁰¹ Marcus, *Mark* 1-8, 200; cf. La Verdier, *Beginning*, 1, 69-73; Trainor, *Quest*, 95.

⁴⁰² Marcus, *Mark* 1-8, 201.

⁴⁰³ Marcus, *Mark* 1-8, 210.

time expression (cf. 1:35; 2:20; 4:35) to symbolise the division, even incompatibility, of Judaism and Christianity in Rome in the early 60's. This abundant post-Sabbath healing 'about the door' of the house suggests the flowering of Hellenist Gentile communities and their disengagement from Jewish groups and the Law. The cured leper's disdain of the Law (1:40-45) may reflect too the difference in Paul's and Mark's approaches to house-church unity in Rome in the hardened separation of Jews and Christian Gentiles at the time of the Gospel's composition.

This thesis is reinforced by the leper actions (1:45). Cured and sternly directed by Jesus to observe the regulations of Leviticus 14 regarding a healed leprosal condition, the leper completely ignores Jesus' directives. But this seemingly blatant ingratitude lightly cloaks the ideal evangelising attitude of the newly baptised Christian. The former leper's actions are clothed in the post-resurrection language of the primitive Church: *kerussein*, *ton logon* and a fruitful response to *ton logon* results as 'they came to him (Jesus) from every quarter' (1:45). For, contrary to this study's view above in regard to this pericope, Marcus, as with the time indication at 1:32, claims that Jesus' directive to the leper to carry out the prescriptions of the Law indicates his respect for the Law.⁴⁰⁵ Clearly Jesus did so historically but post-resurrection and, in a Markan Gentile anti-law community, this seems an odd emphasis. Not only does Jesus declare the leper cured, it is presumed that the priest's role in regard to the Law is merely symbolic: to rubber stamp Jesus' directives. Obedience to the Law seems the last thing on the leper's mind.

C.R. Kazmierski broadly supports this position on the leper pericope. He sees the leper being restored to health/wholeness so that he is able to carry on his life in community. Mark's community knows Jesus desires to heal the 'Christian' leper, a sinner, who (post-resurrection) knows this too. They would recognise the correctness of

⁴⁰⁴ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 1, 33-34.

⁴⁰⁵ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 32-33.

by-passing the need to prove this cure before the priest under Mosaic Law.⁴⁰⁶ The pericope, at home in the Jerusalem Christian community, may have been lifted out of the tradition and adapted by the Hellenist Christians in Rome. Whatever, the leper is narratively justified in his disregard for the Law's authority and the priest's role. For if

the text allows one to suggest that the leper is told to offer the prescribed sacrifices without any declaration of cleansing at all (for this is never clearly stated as the purpose of his showing!), except that made by Jesus, then Jesus' instructions become a dangerous confrontation of the entire ideological system.⁴⁰⁷

Such a condition now exists. Jesus is the risen Lord and so the struggle then, is between the faith community created by Jesus' healing power and the everyday affairs to which the man must return,⁴⁰⁸ - to the crowded Transtiberium. The community is challenged to greater faith in the period of social tension in Rome in the aftermath of Nero's brutal persecution. Kazmierski also argues that Mark uses *ekballein* to parallel how the leper is thrust into this adverse context with the Spirit's thrusting Jesus into the wilderness for his confrontation with Satan.⁴⁰⁹ Now, with the baptised, the leper shares in Jesus' mission 'for people came to him from every quarter' (1:45). In short, the leper's cure closes with the Law ignored and the entire focus is on Jesus.

In this suggested post-resurrection setting, the failure of Rome's Jewish communities to hear (cf. 4:12) is contrasted to the response of those Hellenist Christians who had heard and made other Gentile converts (2:1-4,13-17; 3:7-9; 7:36-37; 8:13).⁴¹⁰ Hence the emphasis on Jesus' teaching in 1:16-45; he teaches both by his words and actions. Terms for Jesus' teaching and their cognates occur 31 times in the Gospel. Teaching is emphasised at climactic points in the story. This is an understandable literary ploy since the authority for the teaching in the proclamation of the 'good news' (1:15; 4:10-11) is the power invested in Jesus as the Lord of the house (1:38-39; 14:9).

⁴⁰⁶ C. Kazmierski, 'Evangelist and Leper: A Socio-Cultural Study of Mark 1:40-45', *NTS* 38 (1992), 48.

⁴⁰⁷ Kazmierski, 'Evangelist and Leper', 48.

⁴⁰⁸ Kazmierski, 'Evangelist and Leper', 48.

⁴⁰⁹ Kazmierski, 'Evangelist and Leper', 48.

Mark's third emphasis, following the leper pericope and within the suggestiveness of the house motif, details how Jesus' authority as the risen Son of Man, Lord, replaces that of the Law (2:1-3:6). Mark notes that Jesus 'had returned (again) to Capernaum' (2:1 - *eiselthon palin* where *palin* associates one event with a previous one. Here, it recalls Jesus' previous entry into the house at Capernaum - cf. 1:29). Pesch argues for 2:1-3:6 being seen as a unit with the exception of 2:1-12. But 2:1-12 appears as an integral part of this pre-Markan collection, centring on the christological question of Jesus' right to forgive sins, not with the church's right to declare sins forgiven. Pesch allows this position, agreeing that, if 2:1-12 is integral to an earlier collection, the focus shifts from ecclesiastical problems to christology, a move that supports the claim that 2:1-12 is integral to 2:1-3:19's claim of Jesus' authority as Lord (2:28).⁴¹¹

Mark introduces a controversy (2:6-11) into a healing story (2:1-5,12). It appears his creation: repetitions, the sandwich structure and the emphasis on faith, the house and Jesus' command at 2:10 ('rise, take up your pallet and go home') define Mark grappling with contemporary issues in Rome's house-churches (2:1-12).⁴¹² The paralytic's healing may reflect a series of controversies between the Hellenists and Jews, centred on the Hellenist's claim for their stance against Jewish objections to the risen Lord's actions in light of their own time-honoured traditions.⁴¹³ Gundry agrees:

In fact these stories deal not so much in controversy as in Jesus' authority, his authority to forgive sins, to eat with toll collectors and sinners, to let his disciples neglect fasting, to let them pluck grain on the Sabbath, and he himself to heal on the Sabbath.⁴¹⁴

Mark makes this controversy the first of a series that climaxes dramatically at 3:6. It opens the clash between the authority of the establishment and that of Jesus in the house. The 'crowds' 'hear' and 'many were gathered together' (2:1) about the door. At 1:33

⁴¹⁰ Smith, "Inside" and "Outside", 364.

⁴¹¹ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 150.

⁴¹² Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 219.

⁴¹³ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 149-150.

⁴¹⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 6.

and 2:2, a double emphasis on the 'door' conveys a sense of an overwhelming response to Jesus' authoritative words at each location.⁴¹⁵ If the paralytic's symptoms are not detailed, there is a distinction between 'healing illness' and 'curing diseases':

The former...has a great concern for causes and symptoms....(The) latter has a socio-cultural perspective; it is a therapy that seeks to provide personal and social meaning for the life problems created by illness. This is the kind of therapy that is found in the Bible and in the ministry of Jesus.⁴¹⁶

Jesus' healing presence in the house raises a question. Does the house motif confine Jesus' power and authority to a particular house such as that in 2:1-12? A structuralist approach offers a partial solution to this question. Malbon argues that a house, which seems to enclose Jesus, ceases to do so when the friends of the paralytic remove the roof.⁴¹⁷ But what gives entry if otherwise there is no hope of entry for outsiders into the symbolic house of God? It is the faith of the paralytic and the 'four men' (2:3)⁴¹⁸ for the metaphor of 'lifting-the-lid' (2:4) in the action of unroofing the house illustrates a facet of faith. It is not just a literal meaning that replaces the first but 'a different type of meaning that opens a realm of significance that cannot be expressed literally. Metaphors are employed, not to be linguistically correct but in an attempt to express what cannot be conveyed in ordinary speech'.⁴¹⁹

At one level, the unroofing is an expression of a determined faith. In turn, faith assists the imaging of the expanding authority of the risen Lord (2:10,14,28). Also, the logic of the narrative in 2:1-12 highlights the power, yet hiddenness of the 'secret' of God's redemptive initiative in households as the metaphor suggests. But it will always be opposed. B. J. Malina sets out the case for seeing the mention of the scribes, as indicating a group/establishment's response to an individual's actions, this time Jesus'

⁴¹⁵ E. Van Eck, *Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark's Story of Jesus*, (HTSS 7; Pretoria: University of Pretoria Press, 1995), 317.

⁴¹⁶ Stock, *Method*, 83.

⁴¹⁷ Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 129-130; cf. Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 52.

⁴¹⁸ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 223.

⁴¹⁹ S. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, (New York: Harper Press, 1991), 31.

action in the house.⁴²⁰ Such opposition allows the gradual narrative enlarging of the kingdom's reign, via the metaphorical house and its associated connotations. Step-by-step, Mark's readers enter his narrational expose. Yet there is no premature breach of this self-confessed Son of Man's identity as the pericope outlines Jesus' consciousness of his capacity to declare 'sins are forgiven' (2:5). In crowded Rome, with the Christian dismissal of the temple, different versions of the Christians' attitude to the forgiveness of sin no doubt came to Jewish ears. For Mark, it is merely using a title, the Son of Man, but of acknowledging Jesus' divine right.⁴²¹

It was axiomatic in the Old Testament that forgiveness of sins is God's prerogative (Ex 34:6-7; 2 Sam 12:13; Isa 43:25; 44:2; Ps 51). It was expressed liturgically in daily cultic sacrifices and on the feast of Yom Kippur. Now, through Jesus' declaration of sins forgiven, God does what the prophets had foretold for the messianic age 'for the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity' (Isa 33:24; cf. Jer 31:34; Mic 17:18-20).⁴²² In the aftermath of persecution, the forgiveness of sins is a key issue for Christian communities. Rome's house groups would surely have wrestled with the question of the forgiveness and the readmission of those who, under the pressure of torture or imprisonment, betrayed fellow Christians or abandoned their communities (cf. 13:12; 4:13-20). Christians are reassured that the power to absolve sin is present in the reign of the Lord Jesus in their midst, a power described at 2:5-6; most exegetes accept that it is the crux of the pericope.⁴²³ Mark's addressees are given empirical evidence for this truth and assured that a Christian, forgiven, (2:5) 'risen' and so 'healed' in the fullest sense of the term, is now directed to go to 'your house' (2:11; cf. 5:19).

The paralytic's cure symbolises healing at the deepest level. It renews functional relationships that previously were curtailed by personal disability. The

⁴²⁰ B.J. Malina, 'The Individual and the Community Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity', *BTB* 9 (1979), 126-128.

⁴²¹ Rawlinson, *St Mark*, 25.

⁴²² Juel, *Mark*, 46-47.

physical cure, however, points to a parallel healing since the destructiveness of the sins of the paralytic - always referred to as such - prevents him from sustaining his faith-relationships and service in community. So the crucial, initial healing is through forgiveness of sin that flows from the presence of the Lord in the house (2:10). Presumably, the paralytic was brought from his house to Jesus' household (2:3) and now healed, he is directed to return; it is the meeting place for a Christian group that would entail fruitful relationships and community responsibilities. This challenge awaits the paralytic in an intimate urban house-church of 15-25 people. From the perspective of the servant concept (1:29-31), the healed paralytic is to serve fellow-Christians by living 'the secret' within the Lord Jesus' power (cf. 1:29-31).⁴²⁴

By 2:12, Mark has shown how the authoritative Son of Man heals physically and spiritually. He raises people of faith to resurrection servant life (cf. 1:30-31). Now he may appropriately introduce Jesus' authority to call sinners to join him in an inclusive, eschatological house Eucharist, another aspect of God's kingdom. Van Eck outlines how Jesus revolutionised Greco-Roman society by the principle of open commonality. Inclusivity was to be paramount and all most welcome; shared food could be everyone's right. In essence, it formed the creation of the new household of God.⁴²⁵ So, if Jesus calls Levi to 'follow me' (2:13-14), Mark promptly sets the fruit of Jesus' call to Levi 'in his house' (2:15). It is a radical choice of guests. Jews who aspired to religious purity shunned tax collectors as ritually unclean and, hence they were 'outside' in the cultic temple sense of holiness. Levi, presumably dishonest, was also defiled in a second sense through his constant contact with Gentiles. In addition, in Levi's case Mark appears to indicate a more serious concept of sin than ritual impurity.

The Markan narrator refers to sinners (2:15) along with references to sinners by the 'scribes of the Pharisees' (2:16) and Jesus (2:17). Marcus argues that 'it is

⁴²³ Harrington, *Mark*, 29-30.

⁴²⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 115; cf. Trainor, *Quest*, 95-97. See too 3:31-35; 4:10; 6:10; 7:30; 8:26; 9:33-36.

incredible that Jesus would consider ritual impurity in and of itself to constitute a sin', especially if the definition of a sinner 7:21-22 is accepted as the yardstick ('fornication, theft, murder...').⁴²⁶ Thus, sinners here stand for violators of the ritual purity code of the Mosaic covenant. From the scribal sense of ritual purity based on the temple as the sphere of God's presence, sinners were outside the kingdom. Not unexpectedly in an anti-Law Gospel, the scribes are seen negatively as they interpreted the Law for the Pharisees' party; it was in transition in Jesus' time. Known as the separatists, the Pharisees regulated life by every detail of the Law and tradition.⁴²⁷

For Jesus in his role as a wandering teacher, to call ordinary fishermen to be his disciples was extraordinary. To call a tax collector, a gross sinner who was culturally and morally unacceptable, was nothing short of scandalous, a scandal exacerbated by Jesus' second radical social move - gathering a group of sinners 'in his own house' (2:15). Implied in Jesus' dining with the unclean, 'is a critique of a piety so intent upon preserving its ideal of ritual purity that it is powerless to help the lost'.⁴²⁸ With Mark's setting in mind, membership of Jesus' house is not exclusive. It is a place of communion for those tax collectors and sinners, the outsiders who were 'many' and 'followed him'. This is discipleship language and suggests that Rome's faith communities had grown to include the socially undesirable,⁴²⁹ hardly the post-exile situation in a Jewish house.

In both settings (2:13-14 and 2:15-17), the focus is on Jesus' authority to call whether potential disciples were engaged in work 'sitting at the tax office' or 'casting a net in the sea' (1:16) or 'mending their nets' (1:19). Like Peter, Andrew, James and John, Levi will forsake his occupation right in the middle of pursuing it. Because the banquet scene (2:15-17) is tied to Levi's call, some exegetes opt for it being Levi's

⁴²⁵ Van Eck, *Galilee*, 305; cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 123; La Verdere, *Beginning*, 1, 84.

⁴²⁶ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 226.

⁴²⁷ Anderson, *Mark*, 104.

⁴²⁸ Juel, *Mark*, 52; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 95; Trainor, *Quest*, 98.

⁴²⁹ Trainor, *Quest*, 98.

house⁴³⁰ but, if the ‘he’ of ‘he sat’ (2:15) refers to Jesus, then ‘he was eating with sinners’ (2:16) indicates Jesus’ house. In Mark, the prerogative to call lies with Jesus’ initiative; he ‘came not to call the righteous but sinners’ (2:17) into his kingdom.

Earlier, the house is depicted as a focus for Jesus’ healing activity for ‘the whole city was gathered about the door’ (1:32-34). This pericope (2:13-17) stresses Jesus’ second key role as the host inside his metaphorical house; it includes his messianic healing ministry as the divine physician (2:15; cf. Ps 107:17-20 - ‘he sent forth his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction’ (cf. Lk 4:15-19; Isa 61:1-2). There are similar, symbolic references by Jesus to ‘my house’ (11:17) and ‘my guest room’ prior to the Passover Meal (14:14). Jesus will return as the ‘Lord of the house’ (13:35). With the metaphorical replacement house as Jesus’ house, it widens the image’s scope to infer the present reality of Jesus’ power in the urban house-church.

The issue of the ownership of the house requires clarification. Hooker opts for Jesus being the host in his own house for the last mention of ‘him’ in ‘he rose and followed him’ (2:14) refers to Jesus.⁴³¹ Malbon agrees:

The context also makes it clear, however, that Jesus said to Levi, “Follow me”, and that Levi did follow Jesus. With no intervening action reported, the setting at 2:15 is “his house”. Admittedly the *akolouthēo* has more than a physical sense in Mark but the verb retains its physical sense....(T)hus it would seem more likely that Levi followed Jesus to Jesus’ house than that Levi followed Jesus to Levi’s house.⁴³²

Levi followed Jesus to Jesus’ house rather than the reverse. Jesus’ action constitutes ‘a pivotal thematic gesture whereby he reverses a previously conceived notion of the house being a profane space and the synagogue a sacred space’. D.M. May, dissents from Malbon’s analysis. He rejects her thesis that Jesus, as host in his own house, intensifies the scandal, insisting that it is the scribes’ perception that now Jesus is in a long-term relationship with tax collectors and sinners, a dyadic contract that constitutes the scandal.

⁴³⁰ Nineham, *Mark*, 99; cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 124; Taylor, *Gospel*, 204; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 229.

⁴³¹ Hooker, *Mark*, 95.

⁴³² E.S. Malbon, ‘Mark: 2:15 in Context’, *NTS* 20 (1985), 282-283; against: Anderson, *Mark*, 105.

And, as Levi's guest, Jesus is obliged to him. These contracts are usually initiated by an invitation. If the positive challenge is taken up, this acceptance implies a continuing, reciprocal relationship between the two.⁴³³

But Mark's emphasis is on Jesus, the risen Lord as the initiator. He came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God' (1:14). He victoriously calls, heals and forgives, so progressively creates the new Israel, formally reconstituted at 3:7-19 (cf. 3:19b; 3:31-35; 7:24-30; cf. Isa 56:1-8). Jesus decides that sinners share now in the household's eschatological banquet signified by the verb *katakeisthai* (2:15). Further, the historic present tense in 2:17 confirms Jesus' ongoing, authoritative call to follow, to share within.⁴³⁴ This authoritative invitation to enter his house appears to strengthen the effect of the initiative by Jesus to "call" *inside* those previously on the *outside*.

In his ministry, Jesus had not only welcomed the marginalized within Israel (e.g. 2:13-17) but had also challenged those exclusivist "boundary markers" of Israel (such as the Sabbath, the food laws) which had set apart Israel as God's people. He had implicitly been re-drawing the lines around "the people of God." For Mark therefore, one of the main characteristics of Jesus' ministry was precisely its inclusion of the "outsider", his bringing the "outside" in.⁴³⁵

The house metaphor's evocative capacity lies in its diverse suggestiveness (cf. 2:15-17).

The scribes would have avoided being contaminated by getting too close to such disreputable company seems allusive. Also, the statement 'they saw' is appropriately vague.⁴³⁶ We could point to the house motif as constituting an oblique reference to the capacity of the house group to attract others into the community, even the most undesirable from a ritually unclean perspective held by a Jewish household in Rome.⁴³⁷

In his own house, Jesus' behaviour is the antithesis of the culturally accepted domination, even exploitation by the *pater familias* and patronage system in the Hellenist

⁴³³ D.M. May, 'Mark 2:15: The Home of Jesus or Levi?' *NTS* 39 (1993), 86-101.

⁴³⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 126; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 94; Anderson, *Mark*, 104; Harrington, 'Mark', 602.

⁴³⁵ Walker, *Jesus*, 16.

⁴³⁶ Hooker, *Mark*, 95; cf. Stock, *Method*, 103; Taylor, *Gospel*, 204; Anderson, *Mark*, 104; Malbon, 'Mark 2:15', 282-289. Against: Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 54.

⁴³⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 124.

culture.⁴³⁸ He ‘came’ (1:14) to be ‘servant’ (1:31; cf. 10:45), the physician who serves in the household. Just as Jesus goes beyond the symptomatic healing of sickness, so his eating with invited social and religious misfits offends contemporary Jewish ritual rectitude by his calling a new people into the sphere of his reconciling power. People, previously rejected, are now inside the Jesus’ reign in his household kingdom.⁴³⁹ Cranfield sees ‘came’ (2:17; cf. 1:14) as a theological term: Jesus comes mysteriously and unexpectedly in response to God’s redemptive will and exemplifies his divine mission within his house.⁴⁴⁰ Exegetes concur; they recognise that the ‘I came’ carries the Markan connotation of Jesus’ entire mission. Anderson adds that with Jesus’ coming so did God’s power that enabled discipleship.⁴⁴¹ The initiative is solely the Lord’s.

Mark enacts a still greater cultural paradox in the house. Jesus takes the initiative at 2:17 when he hears the scribes’ question, ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ He directs his answer to the Markan scribes, the models of cultural, dyadic correctness, in a saying from proverbial wisdom (2:17b). Its effect here is accentuated by dropping the term ‘tax collectors’ (2:17c). Thus, ‘those who are well have no need for the physician but those who are sick’. The clash occurs in the terms, ‘righteous’ versus ‘sinners’ for ‘I came not to call the righteous but sinners’.

In the Old Testament, Yahweh alone is the physician, his healing a sign of the messianic age (Sir 38:1-15; Hos 14:4; Jer 3:22; 17:4; 30:17).⁴⁴² Against this background, Jesus’ reference to the ‘physician’ implies more than a proverbial justification of his conduct since, if he eats with sinners, he does so because sinners need the physician. Ironically, the ‘Pharisees’ of Rome’s house-churches also have need of the divine physician. Hardness of heart may surface anywhere. Among house-churches’ members, there must have been those who, post-persecution, cannot forgive informers or

⁴³⁸ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 48-80.

⁴³⁹ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 106.

⁴⁴⁰ Cranfield, *Mark*, 62; so too Gundry, *Mark*, 126; cf. Mk 1:7, 14, 24, 38, 39.

⁴⁴¹ Anderson, *Mark*, 87.

those who have been unfaithful during Nero's recent persecution.⁴⁴³

In this narrative context, the Pharisees are hostile to Jesus. Yet in light of the historical circumstances of the Jewish/Christian gulf in Rome - the statement, 'I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners' (2:17) satirises the Pharisees' claim to have achieved righteousness through the Law and their ritual separation from the unclean. It is difficult to see Mark regarding anyone as righteous who does not embrace the gift of the secret of the kingdom of God (4:10-11b). Earlier, Pesch noted the ironic situation in the symbolic synagogue. The power of the demons is nullified only when Jesus is present (3:4; cf. 1:21-28) yet from now on, Jesus will save life, exorcise and teach in the house, an outcome symbolising the synagogue/house clashes in Rome described in Chapter 2.⁴⁴⁴

Fourth, the suggestiveness of the house motif up to this point is strongly reinforced by Mark's placement of the new Israel in the house at 3:7-35. He prepares for this change from synagogue to house in Jesus' movement from the synagogue - the traditional teaching sphere - to the lakeside (3:7-19b). This is a key, preparatory element to Mark's use of the metaphorical house in refining his outside/inside strategy at 3:20-35 (cf. 4:10-11). From synagogue to house (1:21-31), room to tomb (14:12-16; cf. 16:6-8), all are enclosures yet finally none of these encloses Jesus or his followers. To be within the metaphorical range of 'the will of God' (3:34-35), equates with being inside with Jesus in the 'secret of the kingdom' in service to the other.⁴⁴⁵ This is Mark's purpose at 3:34. In a key statement, he depicts Jesus' mother and his brothers standing outside (3:31) while Jesus exclaims that his 'mother and brothers' are...whoever does the will of God...those who sat about him' (3:34) inside the house (3:35).

The house motif in Greco-Roman culture conjured up a complex of ideas:

⁴⁴² Harrington, *Mark*, 72; cf. Trainor, *Quest*, 98-99; see also Isa 66:1; Mt 10:1,8.

⁴⁴³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 253.

⁴⁴⁴ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 193.

⁴⁴⁵ Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 129; cf. Van Eck, *Galilee*, 343-344.

household, its values, its members' relationships and family and civic responsibilities. From this semantic reservoir, Mark's addressees would sense a range of allusions indicating that Jesus' call epitomises a unique relationship with others drawn by Jesus and are together inside (3:31-35). But, prior to examining Mark's outline of this new complex of relationships, Jesus is separated from the Jewish establishment. At 3:6, Jesus' opponents sought 'how to destroy him' and the source of his authority. At 2:1-12, 18-22, 23-28 and 3:1-4, the Gospel outlines the scope of Jesus' authority. Here, since even more is at stake than a dispute with the scribes over the Law's interpretation, namely the Son of Man's authoritative claim to inaugurate a new time (2:23-28), the reign of God's word announced by Jesus at 1:15 - 'repent and believe the good news'.⁴⁴⁶

This claim quickens the hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees, climaxing in their reaction to his challenge at 3:4 in the synagogue: has Jesus the authority to heal on the Sabbath? The challenge becomes fully intelligible when set against the broad scope of Jesus' ministry summarised at 1:14-15 and Jesus' implicit claim to a special authority in 2:23-28. In Guelich's view,

in terms of 2:23-28, Jesus' healing on the sabbath shows him to be indeed the "Lord of the Sabbath" (2:28)...this action was anchored in the nature of his work and ministry (2:25-26). To the degree that he brings wholeness to this crippled man by restoring his hand and his relationship with God, he brings to reality God's promised intent at creation.⁴⁴⁷

Jesus here is 'grieved at the hardness of their hearts', shown in the Pharisees' obdurate silence, (3:5). In other healing formats too (cf. 6:52; 8:17), the Pharisees' response is couched in language reminiscent of Israel's rejection of a prophet's message, a Markan construction as only the Markan Jesus uses the term 'hardness of heart'.⁴⁴⁸

To officially enact the foundation and role in his replacement temple in 3:20-35, Mark prepares the theological ground at 3:7-19a. The Pharisees' murderous opposition at 3:6 provides the reason for Jesus abandoning the synagogue. Initially, the

⁴⁴⁶ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 133; cf. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 255; La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 17.

⁴⁴⁷ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 136.

‘seaside’ (3:7) provides Jesus with a non-traditional setting for his teaching. The choice of verbs is instructive for, although *anechoresen* (3:7) may merely mean Jesus’ departure from the synagogue, its major use in the New Testament signals a withdrawal from a threatening situation. This latter meaning fits neatly here. Jesus’ teaching outside the traditional synagogue liturgical structure⁴⁴⁹ may reflect the widening gap between anything Jewish and the Gentilisation of the household groups in Rome post-49 CE. Previously, the now banned Roman synagogues were venues for evangelisation.

Now, ‘by the sea a great multitude...followed’ (3:7) in this context, a phrase that reappears in the reverse order, *plethos polu* in 3:8 after all the regions are mentioned, a reversal that signifies the theological import of Jesus’ power to attract. This construction too may represent the new Israel in the urban Hellenist cities, circa 51-63 CE: from the Gentile areas such as ‘Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon... a great multitude followed Jesus’ (3:7-8).⁴⁵⁰

Mark’s syntax indicates his strategy. He envisages the ‘twelve’ to be ‘with him’ (3:14). Then they are immediately ‘to be sent out to preach’ by Jesus at 3:14b, an authoritative mission set between two impressive descriptions of his messianic healing power and authority at 3:7-12 and 6:53-56.⁴⁵¹ Jesus’ capacity to bestow this gift of sharing in his authority to exorcise and heal forms a key theme in this section (cf. 1:2, 7-8,15).⁴⁵² Indeed, the twelve’s house agenda (6:10) is founded on Jesus’ ministry (cf. 6:6b). It is preparatory and provisional (3:14b) though unrestricted in comparison to the synagogue’s ritual boundaries - Jewish teaching took place only there. From Mark’s viewpoint, Rome’s Gentile Christian households now provide such a setting.⁴⁵³

The ‘unclean spirits’ (3:11-12) identify Jesus thereby reintroducing the

⁴⁴⁸ Gnllka, *Markus*, 1, 126; cf. Jer 3:17; 7:24; 9:13; 11:18; 13:10; 16:12; Ps 81:13; Deut 29:18.

⁴⁴⁹ Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 364.

⁴⁵⁰ Stock, *Method*, 120-121.

⁴⁵¹ Stock, *Method*, 123; cf. Gnllka, *Markus*, 1, 154-155, on the historicity of this call.

⁴⁵² Hooker, *Mark*, 156.

⁴⁵³ Harrington, *Mark*, 82; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 156.

Gospel's narrative evaluative appreciation of Jesus. If the disciples, crowds and the Twelve stand in ignorance of Jesus' dignity as the crucified/risen Lord within the full dimension of him as the Son of God, Rome's Christians do not. They live within the power of the risen Lord. Should they endure social duress and the threat of renewed persecution (cf. Chapter 2), the Gospel's methodology faces them with the ramifications of the secret of the kingdom for mission. The Son of Man, who bolsters their hope by humiliating the demons (3:11-12), 'will enter, bind and rob the strong man in his house' (3:27; cf. 3:22-27). This exorcism is more significant than 1:24; its scope surpasses a verbal confrontation for, in the eschatological battle between two kingdoms, it restates the reality of God's rule in the risen Son of Man on earth.⁴⁵⁴

In this summary pericope (3:7-12), Mark intensifies his depiction of an authoritative Jesus, the 'Lord', an identity intensified by the overtones of Mt Sinai, the 'mountain' (3:13; cf. Lk 6:12; Mt 5:1).⁴⁵⁵ This symbolism is strengthened by the syntax in the present historical tense of *anabainei* and *proskaleitai* (Mk 3:13), emphasising the setting and Jesus' exercise of authority, an emphasis also strengthened by the relative clause, 'those whom he desired' which reveals the freedom of Jesus' choice and further underlines his sovereignty.⁴⁵⁶ This is a Markan stress that the strong *autos* - 'he himself' intensifies; *proskaleo* is reserved for Jesus' initiatives.

If Jesus 'called those whom he desired', 'they 'came to him' on the mountain (3:13) solely to be 'with him' since he called them. Here, it is not mutual accompaniment but heeding

his summons from a distance, going up to him after he has gone up, and thus testifying all the more to the authority of his summons. Similar phraseology in 14:10 will support this understanding, which implies that Jesus goes up the mountain, not to get away from the large multitude or to commune with God, but to survey the crowd in preparation for his summons.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 83; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 110.

⁴⁵⁵ Gundry, *Mark*, 164.

⁴⁵⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 164.

⁴⁵⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 164.

The participle phrase ‘to be with him’ (3:14) is almost a technical term for discipleship. Constantly with Jesus, the Twelve are entrusted with a secret whose power, present in Jesus, cannot be hidden (cf. 4:22). Their proclamation of the good news perhaps refers to the Roman churches’ evangelisation strategy circa 65-69 CE, when the spread of the gospel was, perforce, through Rome’s house-churches’ links to extended families or acquaintances. R. McMullen insists that after Paul the church overall had no mission procedure; it made no organised or official approach to unbelievers for each member of the house-church was presumed to share in the missionary task of the church.⁴⁵⁸ For Rome in its crowded housing this seems the likely procedure.

Not unexpectedly, the mountain is not identified. Its relevance here is primarily theological (cf. Ex 19-20),⁴⁵⁹ though obviously Moses’ ascent of Sinai springs automatically to mind (Ex 19:24,34; Num 27; Deut 9-10, 32).⁴⁶⁰ Other indicators illustrate Mark’s careful construction. On the ‘mountain’ (3:13), his ‘Jesus Christ, Son of God’ (1:1) exercises an elective prerogative where *poieo* literally translates ‘to do’ or ‘to make’. Stock insists that translating *epoiesan* as ‘appointed’ is hardly adequate for *epoiesen* signifies the act of creating (cf. Gn 1:1). The Twelve should be seen as Jesus’ creation,⁴⁶¹ the new Israel (Mark’s replacement motif).⁴⁶² The apocalyptic imagery of ‘unshrunk cloth’ (2:21) and ‘fresh skins’ (2:22) has prepared us for this understanding,⁴⁶³ a viewpoint reinforced by a scholarly consensus: the Twelve are symbolic of the twelve tribes of (the new) Israel.⁴⁶⁴ The focus is on Jesus during this revelation by the chiasm in the Greek: that ‘they’ might be with ‘him’ and in order that ‘he’ might send ‘them’ (3:13-14). Next, Jesus abruptly returns to the house, to his

⁴⁵⁸ R. McMullen, *Christianising the Roman Empire (AD 100-400)*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 34.

⁴⁵⁹ Hooker, *Mark*, 111.

⁴⁶⁰ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 266.

⁴⁶¹ Stock, *Method*, 124.

⁴⁶² La Verdere, *Beginning*, 1, 101, notes the link with the same verb *epoiesen* at Gn 1:1 and Mk 3:14; cf. Hurtado, *Mark*, 58; Ex 18:25; 1 Kgs 12:6; Isa 43:1; 44:2; Mk 1:18.

⁴⁶³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 238.

⁴⁶⁴ Anderson, *Mark*, 116; so too Harrington, ‘Mark’, 604; Hooker, *Mark*, 111; Harrington, *Mark*, 41;

‘home’ (3:20a) where he situates his new kingdom, ‘those who were sitting about him’ (3:35) inside the house.

When, for the fourth time, Mark situates Jesus in the house the ‘crowd came together again’ (3:20b). The repetition of *palin* (3:20b) connects this opening verse to those previous instances of Jesus’ authority in his ‘house’ at Capernaum (1:29-31,33-34; 2:5,12,15-17). The phrase *oi par’autou* (3:21) can mean neighbours, ‘friends’, ‘relatives’ or ‘family’. Outlined chiastically, the practical consensus is that the last meaning fits Jesus’ family and not merely his ‘friends’. In the first century, chiasms were a literary norm.⁴⁶⁵ An accepted form of 3:20-35 is

A			The friends/family of Jesus seek him	3:20-21
	B		Accusation: Jesus possessed by Beelzebul	3:22a
		C	Accusation: by the prince of demons	3:22b
			D	Logion on Satan
				3:23-26
		C ¹	Response to second accusation	3:27
	B ¹		Response to the first accusation	3:28-29
A ¹			The true family of Jesus	3:31-35

By the phrase, Jesus being ‘beside himself’ and the verb ‘to seize’ (3:21) in A, Mark associates Jesus’ natural family’s judgment of him with the scribes’ evaluation at 3:22a in B and so sets Jesus’ natural family in affinity with the scribes’ accusation (3:20-21).⁴⁶⁶

Then in the narrow confines of an urban community, Mark presents a crucial criticism, embedded in the scribal accusation that ‘by the prince of demons he casts out demons’ (3:22). Does Jesus have the authentic power and authority to form the new Israel? But this question has been already answered: first, in the narrative point of view contained in the stress on Jesus’ dignity as Lord (1:3; 2:28; cf. 12:35-37). As Lord he heals, and dismisses the demons (1:26,34,39; 3:11; cf. 1:12-13) and forgives sin (2:5b). Second, by the Mt Sinai symbolism with its parallel imagery of God, he creates the new Israel. This is authoritative action, anticipated by the eschatological nature of his healing

Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 266-267; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 164-165; cf. Mt 19:29; Lk 22:10.

⁴⁶⁵ A. Stock, ‘Chiastic Awareness and Education in Antiquity’, *BTB* 14 (1984), 23-27; cf. Harrington, *Mark*, 43; Hooker, *Mark*, 114; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 278-279; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 168-169.

⁴⁶⁶ Stock, *Method*, 127.

of the man 'with the withered hand' on the Sabbath - the fulfilment rather than an infringement of the Sabbath (3:1; cf. Ps 107).⁴⁶⁷

The scribes maintain that Jesus is possessed by an 'unclean spirit'. In the Old Testament concept of 'uncleanness', this places Jesus outside the holiness of God, and so excluded from his presence.⁴⁶⁸ In the narrative's viewpoint, the irony is inescapable. The citizens of the 'unclean spirit' world have already witnessed to Jesus' union with God (1:24,34), particularly so in their cry, 'you are the Son of God' (3:11). Also, in light of 1:12-13, at 3:26-27 the Markan Jesus describes his cosmic victory over the 'prince of demons' (1:27; 2:10,28). Mark's replacement theme demands this reading if the Gospel is to be a source of hope to household groups (1:32-34; 3:5; 3:13-19).⁴⁶⁹ Jesus' power must be exceptional. One recent study reinforces this point. J.B. Gibson insists that Jesus' desert temptation points to God's ongoing redemptive plan and its consequent fruit in households of faith.⁴⁷⁰

The ironic parallel between Jesus' family in 3:21 and the scribes' assessment (3:22) disqualifies both from being included in Jesus' identification of his new family. His natural family, standing outside (3:31) is literally standing 'outside the house' (cf. 3:20). Metaphorically and theologically they do not belong to the circle of Jesus' followers inside and 'alone' with Jesus (4:10). The fact that 'they sent to him and called him' forms a dramatic contrast to the 'great multitudes' (3:7-10), who hearing of Jesus' power and authority, come to him to be healed. But 'they' (Jesus' family - 3:31) attempt to exert cultural, familial control over Jesus whereas it is the authoritative Jesus that 'calls', 'heals', 'appoints' and 'sends out' (3:13-14). In addition, 'those whom he desired' (3:13b) would constitute the group about Jesus inside with the Twelve and the crowd (3:32,34; 4:10). Mark notes this group as 'those...about him.' In addition, the

⁴⁶⁷ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 252-253.

⁴⁶⁸ P. Pimentel, 'The "unclean spirits" of St Mark's Gospel', *Exp Tm* 98 (1987-88), 174.

⁴⁶⁹ Van Eck, *Galilee*, 42; against Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 32.

⁴⁷⁰ J.B. Gibson, 'Jesus' Wilderness Temptation According to Mark', *JSNT* 53 (1994), 3-34.

ochlos about Jesus in the house (2:4) and at 2:13 being taught by Jesus are positively described; likewise at 3:32, for the ‘crowd’, those ‘around him’ in the house, presumes a very much restricted group, given the size of a normal Greco-Roman dwelling.⁴⁷¹ ‘Those who sat about him’ (3:32) symbolise Jesus’ disciples in the house. Hooker too regards the ‘crowd’ (3:32) as the new family; it replaces the old, ‘outside’.⁴⁷² Except for the one instance at 14:43, the crowds are closely associated with Jesus in key pericopes. Later, he invites them to follow him at the start of the way (8:34; cf. 2:4,13; 3:20; 6:34; 8:2; 9:15,17 and so on).⁴⁷³

Furthermore, the crowd’s role is enhanced by two factors: first, Mark uses the phrase, *peri auto* three times (3:32,34; 4:10). Each refers directly to this ‘crowd’ (3:32). Mark takes pains to separate the crowd from the family of Jesus in 3:31-35. Those who relay the message to Jesus that his natural family is outside are not the crowd. Logically, the scribes comprise ‘they’ of 3:32. Gundry agrees; he also maintains that

we might think that the “they” who speak to him are the just-mentioned crowd. But since Jesus has been addressing the scribes (see vv 22-23,28 with 30) and since he will speak to them *about* the crowd (vv. 33-35), it looks as though “they” and “them” are the scribes. Thus they and Jesus’ natural family act in concert.⁴⁷⁴

Secondly, Mark states that Jesus looked around on ‘those who sat about him’ (3:34), a deliberate action that would seem to form some kind of judgment. The historical present tense of *legei* stresses Jesus’ rhetorical question that follows (3:33): ‘Who are my mother and my brothers?’ For Mark’s addressees, it preludes not only a surprising answer but for Jesus’ action in ‘looking around’ (3:34), a deliberate gesture suggesting an intimacy between Jesus and those inside the house who now replace *oi par autou* of ‘they went out to seize him’ in 3:21. As a result, Mark is free to omit the definite articles before ‘brother’, ‘sister’ and ‘mother’ in Jesus’ explanation (3:34-35), a construction that

⁴⁷¹ Gundry, *Mark*, 195.

⁴⁷² Hooker, *Mark*, 127.

⁴⁷³ S. Freyne, ‘Disciples in Mark and the *Maskilim* in Daniel’, *JNST* 16 (1980), 18.

⁴⁷⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 177.

stresses the quality and depth of the new relationships.⁴⁷⁵

In opening his climactic statement with *hos an* (3:35 - his sole positive use of the term in 1:1-8:26), Mark intends his community to recognise itself in the rhetorical term, 'whoever', the ones who 'sat about' Jesus (3:34) - an understanding that the syntax would seem to support.⁴⁷⁶ This relationship defines eschatological family ties in faith whereas the Greco-Roman family was based on marriage, patronage, business and family ownership of property. In contrast, the welfare of the house-church is underpinned by mutual service in faith in these fictive ties of brother, sister and mother.⁴⁷⁷

The significance of 'whoever' is clear in the sequel to the parable of the sower. There, Mark writes, 'when he was alone those who were about him with the twelve' (4:10). The clause, 'those who were about him' (4:10) may have been inserted to avoid an exclusive sense if he only referred to 'the Twelve (4:10b).⁴⁷⁸ By adding the unannounced phrase, 'those around him', Rome's house-churches can situate themselves there for they too were taught 'the secret' in the house-church (3:31-35; cf. 1:1). It is not given to 'those standing outside' (3:31b). By pointing to the sandwich technique in 3:19-20 + 3:21-30 + 3:31-35 it illustrates how

the distinction between those around Jesus and the outsiders is not between called disciples and the crowd, nor is it between Jews and Christians, but it is a distinction between those who will understand the true meaning of discipleship and those who will not. "*Inside and "outside" are existential, religious categories, determined by the kind of response one makes to the demands of Jesus.*"⁴⁷⁹

Yet a conundrum remains. Does God not want 'those outside' to come to a knowledge of the truth? In answer, first, narratively the scribes' hostility to Jesus gradually intensifies - for those who reflect a similar attitude, their condemnation to blindness and obduracy in terms of the Gospel is an unfolding corollary of the

⁴⁷⁵ Gundry, *Mark*, 178.

⁴⁷⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 179.

⁴⁷⁷ S.C. Barton, 'Living As Families in the Light of the New Testament', *Int* 52 (1998), 130-144.

⁴⁷⁸ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 301; cf. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 207-208; Trainor, *Quest*, 104-105.

⁴⁷⁹ Donahue, *Gospel*, 43.

replacement theme (cf. 1:1-3; 2:6,16,24; 3:6,2-23; 1:14a - cf. Chapter 5 below). But to claim that God is responsible for the plight of those outside who ‘do not perceive...not understand’ (4:12) ignores the Gospel’s narrative point. Second, within it 4:12 applies Isaiah’s prophecy to Rome’s house-churches for the superscription outlines the ‘secret’ for Christians. If gifted with faith, ‘they’ who do not do ‘the will of God’ as servants will ‘see but not perceive...hear but not understand’ (4:12); it is

unlikely that “those outside” referred to “the crowds” in contrast to the disciples. For Mark, therefore, as with his tradition “those outside” meant those who had rejected Jesus’ ministry, the seed/word sown that did not bear fruit for various reasons...The antithesis lies in the contrast between the two groups.⁴⁸⁰

Rome’s house-churches were no exception. Understanding comes only by belief in, but living out the paradox inherent in the ‘secret of the kingdom’. To ‘see but not perceive...hear but not understand’ (4:12) does not denote a reality incomprehensible to human reason but God’s once hidden, now revealed salvific plan in the crucified/risen Son of Man on Calvary (1 Cor 2:1-2,7; Rom 11:25; Eph 1:9; 3:3,4,9). Donahue continues:

“In parables”, used frequently in Mark, is generally admitted to mean...“in riddles” or “enigmatic sayings” that need explanation....(Also) *ginetai* suggests that deeds as well as the sayings of Jesus are enigmatic to outsiders. The mystery (RSV: “secret”) of the kingdom of God does not denote, as in later Christian usage, something incomprehensible to human reason but the once hidden, now revealed salvific plan of God now manifest in the proclamation of a rejected and crucified Messiah.⁴⁸¹

The Gospel insists that only servant discipleship situates one around the risen Son of Man, the Lord inside the house (cf. 14:26; 1 Cor 1:23). To those who remained outside, Jesus’ teaching in parables remained opaque because they did not live the paradox of the cross. F.J. Moloney supports this view; he adds that in terms of Mark’s account to this point, 4:11-12 presupposes that ‘outsiders’ are people who don’t listen to Jesus’ word or

⁴⁸⁰ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 208.

⁴⁸¹ Donahue, *Gospel*, 44-45.

who refuse to follow it faithfully;⁴⁸² those who don't follow the secret of the cross.

C.H. Dodd adds a balanced observation of the sense of the 'secret' here. He writes, 'The meaning of *basileia tou theou* in the Gospels generally is that the emphasis shifts at times from the work of Jesus to his person. Where the emphasis lies in Mk 4:11 depends partly on the sense of *mysterion* there, so in what way are we/the disciples granted a share in it?'⁴⁸³ Due to the Gospel's post-resurrection viewpoint, the focus here is on the personal decision to accept a risen Lord Jesus who is the way for Rome's Christians by virtue of his victorious way as the suffering servant on the cross. With his rhetorical question 'Do you not understand this parable?' (4:13), Mark rhetorically confronts Rome's Christians, a question whose effectiveness is intensified when read against the background of the households' experience of the infidelity of Christians under stress. House-churches had already witnessed how pleasure, wealth and fear before suffering explain why those Christians, who were once inside, are now outside the house-church kingdom in the crowded capital (4:13-19). Mark's narrative's rhetorical strategy presupposes, that 'repent and believe the good news' (1:15), challenges a straitened faith-group to deeper faith. By more deeply embracing this divine paradoxical 'way', Christians more intimately share in the Lord's reign in the house (12:35-37). For a Christian, by nature the parables prove to be mysterious speech presenting the far deeper of the kingdom.⁴⁸⁴

3. JESUS BESTOWS LIFE IN THE HOUSE

Mark's fifth emphasis concerns communities who, having endured sustained persecution, enjoy the bestowal of life through faith in the risen Lord in their midst. For them, this truth constitutes a crucial aspect of the good news. Mark utilises the evocative qualities of this metaphorical house to associate faith and life in his arrangement of the healing of

⁴⁸² F.J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 90.

⁴⁸³ C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, (New York: Scribner's Press, 1965), 38.

⁴⁸⁴ Matera, 'He Cannot Save Others', 18; cf. Freyne, 'Disciples in Mark', 15.

Jairus' daughter in the house (5:20-43). The intercalated cure of the woman with the issue of blood (5:25-34) reinforces this association since baptismal faith is treated as the *sine qua non* of sharing in the kingdom within the group. M. McVann outlines how this theme may be distinguished in the successive miracles of the demoniac (5:1-20), the unclean woman (5:25-34) and Jairus' daughter (5:21-43). Through baptism, the Gerasene exchanges the marginality of the demon-possessed for the state of the evangelising, newly baptised disciple (5:19-20). The 'unclean' woman also exchanges the state of marginality by risking separating herself from the anonymity of the crowd in order to confess faith in Jesus. She is the ultimate outsider - a nameless woman, ritually unclean who had lived in impoverished isolation (5:26). Jairus, a synagogue leader who heads a large Jewish household, accepts that only by faith, paradoxically found inside the house and not the synagogue, is the gift of life bestowed on his daughter in the house.⁴⁸⁵

Initially, Jesus' encounter with Jairus is set in the context of the *ochlos polus* who gather about Jesus at the seashore (5:21). The synagogue context offers no help in restoring life since on four occasions Mark identifies the Jew as the 'synagogue official'; in the house he is 'father' (5:40b).⁴⁸⁶ From such a viewpoint, Jairus - a Jewish figure - comes to Jesus. He kneels and pleads for a double healing for his daughter: 'that she may be made well' and she may 'live' (5:23). The two verbs are significant: *hina sothe* and *kai zese* reflect each other since in Judaism, death has come so close that deliverance will bring life for Jairus' daughter (Ps 30:3-4 portrays illness as death). Yet Mark could have used *iathe* or *therapeuthe*. He probably intended *sothe kai zese* to carry overtones of a healing that includes eternal life. Marshall states that Mark

employs *sozein* in healing contexts...to make two points about Jesus' ministry. First, by using the term usually associated in the Old Testament with God's deliverance of his people, he indicates that in Jesus' healing work we are to see the saving activity of God Himself. And secondly, in view of the eschatological and soteriological import of *sozein* elsewhere in the

⁴⁸⁵ M. McVann, 'Baptism, Miracles and Boundary Jumping in Mark', *JBL* 21 (1995), 150-151; cf. Stock, *Method*, 163.

⁴⁸⁶ Trainor, *Quest*, 119.

gospel...and in wider Christian usage, his use of it in the healing narratives implies that the restoration granted to faith goes beyond physical recovery to effect a more comprehensive salvation, entailing both physical and spiritual wholeness.⁴⁸⁷

The evangelist inserts his intercalation at 5:25 in introducing the ‘suffering woman’ (5:25-34). For Gundry, there is no proof that this is not a natural meeting during Jesus’ journey to Jairus’ home.⁴⁸⁸ But by deliberately including the intercalation at this point, Mark focuses on the faith that Jairus needs, a need accentuated by the frustrating delay created by Jesus to seek out the woman who will know healing through his power. Her faith (5:34) is the result of ‘hearing of the things about Jesus’ (5:27; cf. 2:1; 3:8; 4:3,9,15,16,18,20,23,24; 6:11,55);⁴⁸⁹ faith through hearing is a constant in this section of the Gospel. The woman’s has knowledge of ‘what had happened to her’ (5:33) while the literal Greek suggests that her reaction is anticipatory awe before the amazing power of Jesus.⁴⁹⁰

From Mark’s perspective, Jesus is aware of the power and authority invested in him by his Father (cf. 1:14-15,16-20,29-34; 2:1-36; 3:13-16). At 5:30, Jesus asks, ‘Who touched my garments?’ a ploy that uses the disciples’ ensuing abrupt answer to show their deepening insensitivity to Jesus’ healing power. They are blind to the wonder happening in their midst, shown in the bracket, begun at 5:25-26 and completed in Jesus’ word, when ‘the girl arose and walked’ (5:42-43). The woman and the child are both ‘dead’: the woman, due to this disruption of her fertility cycle while the child, now dead, was 12 years old and had died at the child-bearing age. Both, presumably, are restored to life in its fullest sense.⁴⁹¹

In Greco-Roman culture clothing expressed a person’s identity. Equally pointed but for a different reason is the result when Jesus asked ‘Who touched

⁴⁸⁷ Marshall, *Faith*, 96; cf. Gnllka, *Markus*, I, 214.

⁴⁸⁸ Gundry, *Mark*, 268.

⁴⁸⁹ Marshall, *Faith*, 98; cf. Nineham, *Mark*, 157.

⁴⁹⁰ Hooker, *Mark*, 149.

⁴⁹¹ J.A. Grassi, ‘The Secret Heroine of Mark’s Drama’, *BTB* 18 (1988), 10.

my garments?’ The disciples change it to ‘Who touched me?’ (5:31). It is necessary

to notice the parallel between, “Who touched *my clothing*?” and “Who touched *me*?” Jesus’ clothing and Jesus’ person are clearly presented as identical. In the woman’s attitude, the contrast is consequently not between Jesus’ clothing and Jesus’ person. Rather the contrast is between merely touching Jesus and communicating with him in some other way.⁴⁹²

Faith defines the difference for, if there is a personal choice in the woman’s action, the first initiative of the word remains with God yet the minor characters’ faith activates their response. In both cycles of miracle-stories (4:35-6:34; 6:52-8:9), faith or insight is stated prior to any working of a miracle. Likewise, when Jesus’ addressed the parents: ‘Do not fear, only believe’ (5:36). Owing to her faith the woman’s uncleanness came to naught; instead of barrenness she found life. The story anticipates that the daughter too will also live the secret in service to the community in which she will now participate (5:34).⁴⁹³

Faith links the two pericopes. No sooner does Jesus commend the woman’s faith at 5:34 than he challenges the synagogue ruler to faith (5:36) despite the sudden news at Jairus’ house that his ‘daughter is dead’ (5:35). The ‘some people’ (5:35) who carry this bleak message from the ruler’s house may symbolise Christians who situate God’s power and authority within their own human limitations or fears, an attitude no doubt present among ‘some’. It is unlikely that Mark’s community would receive a word that discouraged belief and then render it readily believable - defantasise it. Faith must be tried (cf. 9:14-27).⁴⁹⁴ Apart from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, Christians also faced the ordinary demands of daily life in crowded and unhygienic housing.⁴⁹⁵ So the question of death and what lay beyond it proved a crucial, contemporary human question.⁴⁹⁶ If we add the Neronian duress to the uncertainty of renewed persecution and imprisonment and the poor quality of life, some concept may be

⁴⁹² E. La Verdere, ‘Clothed in Radiant White’, *Emmanuel* 90 (1984), 16.

⁴⁹³ L.W.M. Countryman, ‘How Many Baskets Full? Mark 8:14-21 and the Value of Miracles in Mark’, *CBQ* 47 (1995), 643.

⁴⁹⁴ G. Aichele, ‘The Fantastic in the Discourse of Jesus’, *Semeia* 60 (1992), 54-66; Anderson, *Mark*, 154.

⁴⁹⁵ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 31-35; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 154.

⁴⁹⁶ M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 95.

gained of this pericope's importance for Mark's community.

The present imperative 'believe' stresses this imperative. Jesus' exhortation, 'Do not fear, only believe' (5:36), is generally used to tell somebody to stop doing something.⁴⁹⁷ In this context, 'do not fear' (5:36) fits neatly here. Jesus is in firm control of this situation and, at this point, if he is accompanied by the 'inner' three (9:2; 14:33; 13:3), they represent the house-church standing before an epiphany of Jesus' power to give life to the dead, and to 'the ones with him'.⁴⁹⁸ Again, if the disciples alone accompany Jesus, it hints that only faith inspired Christians- *tous met' autou* (5:40) will know the resurrection power in the Lord's reign in household Church.⁴⁹⁹

To stress the control that Jesus exercises, Mark creates a context of unbelief in the front, public section of the ruler's house. There, death appears triumphant in 'the tumult and people weeping and wailing loudly' (5:38). Each sizable Greco-Roman house incorporated both public and private areas. The former catered for business and social affairs, the latter for family and invited friends.⁵⁰⁰ If Mark writes for a community that meets in a typical Roman house, then this pericope would be very relevant socially.⁵⁰¹ Jesus first encountered the cultural reaction to the child's death in the front, public area of the Greco-Roman house (cf. Chapter 2), whereupon he puts the professional mourners outside (5:40). Thus, at 5:38 Mark depicts Jesus standing with the three disciples and the mother, father and mourners in the front section of the house. Then, Jesus invites the parents and the three disciples 'inside where the child lay' (5:40), into the intimacy of the inner room in a conventional middle class residence. If so invited, one gained access to a peristyle courtyard and the family's private areas, reserved for their dining, bedrooms and baths since domestic architecture in Rome was

obsessively concerned with distinctions of social rank...not merely between

⁴⁹⁷ Gnlika, *Markus*, 1, 186; cf. Stock, *Method*, 173.

⁴⁹⁸ Stock, *Method*, 174.

⁴⁹⁹ Anderson, *Mark*, 156.

⁵⁰⁰ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 6-12.

⁵⁰¹ Judge, *Social Patterns*, 37.

one house and another...but within the social space of the house. Slaves did not, of course, remain in only one area of the house, but served everywhere day and night....When such a house owner became a Christian and the house ekklesia assembled for worship, eating and drinking the Eucharist together, at which there is neither slave nor free (Gal 3:28).⁵⁰²

In contrast, all and sundry frequent the public area in the front section of the house.

Here a clarification must be made. A certain vagueness is apparent in the clause, 'those who were with him' (5:40), 'those' who also accompany Jesus inside the private area of the house. This clause reflects previous phrases such as 'those' inside the house of whom Mark writes: 'those who sat about him' (3:34) or yet again, 'those who were about him' (4:10). Why did he not refer to the three apostles named at 5:37? Clearly, he included them with the 'mother and father' (5:40) among 'those who were with him' (5:40c).

A number of reasons suggest themselves. From a literary perspective, Mark always faced the task of creating a scene to which his addressees could readily relate. They are called to respond to Jesus' powerful word, which clearly trumps death. So the clause 'those who were with him' (5:40c) invites Rome's communities to link themselves to the narrative's development in the inner room. Now, neither the temple nor synagogue but the domestic house is the sacred space of the kingdom where entry into the Lord's was offered.⁵⁰³ The 'woman' (5:34) and the 'daughter' (5:41-43) enter this reign for,

like the woman, the girl has no verbal interaction with Jesus; she is given the gift of life through touch. Also like her, the girl's body is redeemed by Jesus' contact, and is no longer unclean...not only does she regain her life, but she regains it at the point where she will at the same time become a source of new life "for she was twelve years old" (5:41). She is restored to life at the time when she physically comes of age.⁵⁰⁴

The narrative's strategy presents a faith-challenge to the community to prove to be genuine insiders who, step by step accept the exposition of the range of Jesus' authoritative power. Later, they will be tested at the climax of the great paradox: belief

⁵⁰² Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 29-30.

⁵⁰³ Van Eck, *Galilee*, 319.

⁵⁰⁴ S.L. Graham, 'Silent Voices', *Semeia* 54 (1991), 150.

in God's hidden reign in the broken rejected Christ on the cross (cf. Chapter 5 below). Now, they are dared to believe in the power of this paradox in their current situation.

Those people outside the house (5:38), who lacked faith fail to see any power inside capable of changing the girl's condition from death to life, 'laughed at him' upon Jesus' statement that the 'child is not dead but sleeping' (5:40). Yet the child's rising up is paralleled with Jesus' own resurrection. Mark is careful to state this close association. The two verbs used to describe the girl's rising up (*egeire* - 5:41; *aneste* - 5:42) duplicate the resurrection of Jesus (*egerthe* - 16:6; *anastesetai* - 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). Early Christianity described Jesus' resurrection in identical language, an implication that Christian communities would have readily grasped. As well, the ridicule that greeted Jesus' words, 'the child is not dead but sleeping' (5:39) may reflect the ongoing negative Jewish response in Rome to the Hellenist proclamation of the risen Christ.

Belief in Christ's power to guarantee eternal life is a vital component in Mark's strategy of building a basis for hope in his household communities. The unprepared-for 'I say to you', which abruptly follows the diminutive title, *korasion* (5:41b), is an intimate personal communication, one which presumes that Jesus' power enables him to directly command the dead. Hence, hearing Jesus' word the dead girl 'immediately rose up', a response to a powerful word causing *ekstasei megale* (5:42). This is a realistic response compounded by Jesus' directive 'to give her something to eat' - in a Eucharistic sense in a post-resurrection context, her need, indeed her right (5:42).⁵⁰⁵ Trainor adds that at twelve years old, the girl is at an age when she 'ceases to be a girl and becomes a marriageable woman who could be linked to a new household through a spouse...in which different relationships operate...not based on patriarchal structures'.⁵⁰⁶

The Markan Jesus heals (1:29-31), forgives (2:1-12) and hosts celebratory

⁵⁰⁵ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 141.

⁵⁰⁶ Trainor, *Quest*, 119.

meals in household groups (2:15-17). By faith, the ones around him in the house (3:31-35) define those who experience the kingdom's reign (cf. 5:21-43). Then in a Markan contrast and for the last time, Jesus goes into a synagogue (6:1-6a). Though initially neutrally received (6:1-3), the mood changes dramatically at 6:3b since, rather than take pride in one of their own the synagogue listeners stage a stark reversal (cf. 1:21-28) - 'they took offence at him' (6:3b); its result, Jesus no longer enters the synagogue.

Some stress the principle of divine determinism in Israel's rejection of Jesus. They see it in the Nazarenes' attitude in 6:3-6 (cf. 4:12,34) for the synagogue members do not disbelieve because of Jesus' power and authority in his 'mighty works' (6:2) but because of them - ultimately, the lack of faith meant their failure to recognise that God was at work in Jesus.⁵⁰⁷ Marshall adds: 'By placing this episode after a series of dramatic miracles (4:35-5:43), Mark shows how the powerful Son of God who calms storms, expels demons...is finally checkmated by entrenched unbelief in his hometown'.⁵⁰⁸ But who are Mark's audience? It is not the distant Nazarenes of forty years ago. It seems that the Gospel echoes ongoing rejection of Jesus post-51 CE by Rome's Jewish community and faithless Gentiles. This is an eschatological struggle:

The opposition that God's dominion is suffering does not cancel belief in it but rather testifies to its provocative power and demands a continual exercise of patient, hopeful, eschatological insight on the part of those who have heard the rumour of its arrival.⁵⁰⁹

Two points support this reading. The miracles indicate an eschatological setting. They are followed by the Twelve's successful apostolate, set in the allusive, sobering suggestion of future judgment at 6:12-13. To accept or reject the word about Jesus also opens one to eschatological life or judgment in Mark's communities. So 'they took offence at him' (6:3; cf. 3:22). From here on, Jesus never enters the synagogue again. Of this sharp divergence, Malbon writes that,

⁵⁰⁷ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 312; cf. Trainor, *Quest*, 121-122.

⁵⁰⁸ Marshall, *Faith*, 190.

⁵⁰⁹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 380.

(I)n terms of the fundamental opposition underlying the architectural spaces, the sacred realm is inadequate to contain this “new teaching” (1:27) and it overflows into the secular realm⁵¹⁰

At 6:1-6 Jesus declares that the reason his teaching is unacceptable *en te oikia autou* is ‘their unbelief’ (6:6) so Mark would seem to install the ‘house’ as the chief architectural centre for teaching; in effect, the house replaces the synagogue. From 6:1-6a forward, Jesus heals and teaches only in the houses of those who hear and see (7:17,24-30; 9:28,33; 10:10; cf. 8:26; 10:28-31; 14:12-21).

Mark’s sixth focus centres on the inclusivity of the Hellenist gospel in its full religious dimensions of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the risen Lord. Thus, Mark’s treatment of the associated issue of inclusive Eucharists in the Syrophoenician pericope (7:24-30) personifies this metaphorical re-direction that the Gospel demands. In a household setting, the validity of the pro-Gentile case for inclusive Eucharists is prepared for by the rejection of the continued relevance of the Law at 7:1-23.

Mark divides his immediate preparation for the Syrophoenician pericope into a controversy account (7:1-13) and a teaching unit (7:14-23). The original core from Jesus’ mission may consist of 7:1-2,5b,15.⁵¹¹ The Pharisees’ question, ‘Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders?’ (7:5), invites the type of excoriation (‘you hypocrites’- 7:6) that emerged from an early Christian polemic - possibly an echo of the severe strife during the Jewish/Hellenist synagogue clashes before the exile decree in 49 CE.⁵¹² The repetition of *anthropos* (7:7,9,11,15) is Markan for however laudable the original impetus of the human traditions in which the Law was set, sin/hardness of heart inevitably strives to suffocate the effect of God’s word. The heart of *anthropos* (7:18,20,21,23) is defiled from the inside for ‘if we define a human being as essentially a being in relationship with others, then sin ruins relationships’ (cf.

⁵¹⁰ Malbon, ‘Mark 2:15’, 287.

⁵¹¹ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 361-362; cf. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 438-447; Hooker, *Mark*, 173-174.

⁵¹² Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 448; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 174.

12:38-40; Rom 3:21-25).⁵¹³ The challenge Jesus poses is whether people will continue to take their point of departure from those scribal boundaries or learn to see others through the eyes of the good news of a Christian's shared humanity in the crucified/risen Lord. A 'traditions' mentality may have led some Jewish Christian groups to refuse admittance of Gentiles to the Eucharist. For rhetorical relevance, 'hardness of heart' and the dialogue about shared Eucharists are set within the scope of the house motif (7:17; 7:24-30).

Jesus then 'entered a house' (7:24), an indeterminate clause that nominates any house-church as the site of the Gospel's engagement with opponents of the concept of a shared Eucharist. In the house, Mark argues that in God's redemptive plan Gentiles had every right to share in the Eucharist, a point reinforced by the introduction of the second multiplication of the loaves, this time in a Gentile setting (8:1-10). He stresses God's freedom in granting gifts: *dechomai* (4:11; 6:11; 9:37; 10:15) and *paralambano* (7:4; cf. 4:36; 5:40; 9:2; 10:32; 14:33).

The Syrophoenician 'heard about Jesus' (7:25) and then demonstrates that she enters the house through faith in Jesus in the lively debate that follows (7:26-29). Van Eck sees considerable irony in the next pericope where the Twelve's understanding falters yet the woman acknowledges Jesus as her Lord.⁵¹⁴ She too accepts the gifts of the 'secret of the kingdom' and the capacity to understand it, two preparatory elements which the woman personifies. From the Law's standpoint, given her cultural and religious background, the woman had no automatic right of entry into the household of God. From the Gospel's viewpoint, however, both a Christian Jew and Gentile share in God's reign and enjoy new fictive relationships (cf. 3:34-35; 5:34, 42; cf. 10:29-31). Other differences, including ethnic, are irrelevant.

Van Eck downplays the Gentile mission in Mark (5:1-20; 7:24-8:10). Yet he

⁵¹³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 461; cf. Trainor, *Quest*, 132-133.

⁵¹⁴ Van Eck, *Galilee*, 43.

accentuates the symbolic shift from the synagogue to the dismissal of the Law (2:1-3:5) together with the rhetorical role played by the post-resurrection narrative point at 1:1,31,45; 5:19-20.⁵¹⁵ He also argues that the shift of Jesus' ministry from a Jewish context (6:53; 7:1) to an indeterminate location 'in the region of Tyre and Sidon' (7:24) reflects a change from the strictures of the Law to faith in the Gospel among the Gentiles (1:14-15). Such a move would resonate with Law-free groups in Rome. There, in the new household family, honour was not won by keeping to any ritual demarcations in society but by serving the house-church which formed the basic unit of the Church.⁵¹⁶

As elsewhere, here God's evaluative viewpoint is expressed indirectly through Jesus, whose intentions the Syrophoenician acknowledges.⁵¹⁷ The pericope implies too that whether it is a Eucharist sharing for a Jew or Gentile is of no importance but faith in Jesus as Lord who calls everyone (7:24b). It must be kept in mind that this house is vaguely situated 'in the region of Tyre and Sidon' (7:24). Thus, the house may be visualised as a metaphorical ante-room through which Gentiles enter the reign of the kingdom of God, an emphasis strengthened not so much in the healing itself but by the pericope's rhetorical effectiveness in the dialogue which precedes it. In light of 7:24-30, all that has been stated by Jesus in Mark 7 becomes transparently clear - the Law is not an issue for Gentile Christians.⁵¹⁸ Rome's Christians surely identified with this woman.

Having abruptly entered, the woman 'fell down at his feet' (7:25). She represents the quintessential beggar. Culturally and ethnically she does not deserve anything from the Jew, Jesus. Hence the stress in the pericope is that all is gift. The pericope's thrust does intensify the theme of inclusivity for, in the web of the narrative, this episode has a key position. If Mk 7:1-23 deals with the removal of boundaries that

⁵¹⁵ Van Eck, *Galilee*, 322-323.

⁵¹⁶ Van Eck, *Galilee*, 382; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 189.

⁵¹⁷ Nineham, *Mark*, 199.

⁵¹⁸ Nineham, *Mark*, 199.

divide foods (and people), 7:24-30 focuses directly on whatever divides people.⁵¹⁹

From the dialogue within the encounter, the traditional hypothesis seems correct that the metaphorical dogs in Jesus' use of the term are domestic dogs. They symbolise the Gentiles who have their pre-ordained place in the house of faith.⁵²⁰ The Jewish children have been fed (6:34-44), hence the correctness of the second loaves miracle that follows it (8:1-10), a point made in the dialogue between Jesus and the Syrophenician. It demonstrates the Gentiles' right to share in the Eucharist, a unity that rejects the mindset like that of the devotees of the 'traditions of the elders' (7:1-17). This unity presupposes the irrelevance of the Jewish sacred/profane distinction as Jesus announces the child's healing within a Gentile region: 'And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone' (7:30).⁵²¹ With the man-made barriers to the Gentiles' entry removed (cf. 7:1-23), the mission to the Gentiles, authorised by the God of Israel (Isa 65), may climax in a shared Eucharist.

Only those inside the house benefit from the public dispute and private explanation pattern throughout the Gospel (cf. 7:17-23; 9:28-29,33-34; 10:11-12).⁵²² The inside/outside contrast in 7:24-30 also forms a dramatic illustration of this theme offered by the woman's clear grasp of God's redemptive plan inside a house (7:28). Pimentel argues that, in Mark's view of the good news, human cultural barriers could not exclude a Gentile from the house.⁵²³ If the woman who accosts Jesus can offer nothing, she receives his gift since Jesus had stated in a Eucharist context, 'I have come to call sinners' (2:17) in an inclusive approach reflected in Mark's repeated use of *anthropos* (7:7,8,11,15,21,23). It precludes ethnic distinctions.⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁹ W. Loader, 'Challenged at the Boundaries: A Conservative Jesus in Mark's Tradition', *JSNT* 63 (1996), 45-61.

⁵²⁰ P. Pokorny, 'From a Puppy to the Child: Some Problems of Contemporary Biblical Exegesis Demonstrated From Mark 7:24 / Matt 15:21-28', *NTS* 41 (1995), 331.

⁵²¹ Welfald, 'Separate Gentile Mission', 8.

⁵²² A. Stock, *Counting the Cost, New Testament Teaching on Discipleship*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1977), 98-99.

⁵²³ Pimentel, 'Unclean Spirits', 174.

⁵²⁴ Moore, 'Outside', 42.

The Gospel presumes God's redemptive reign is present now (cf. Isa 56:1-8).⁵²⁵ Now, large numbers of Gentiles are called to enter it.⁵²⁶ Some Christian Jews believed that the Gentiles' call belonged essentially to the last days whereas the Hellenists, with their post-resurrection emphasis, championed the Gentiles' right to receive salvation then and there.⁵²⁷ No doubt they also did this in Rome for the Gospel reflects this understanding: an inclusive Hellenist proclamation of the risen Lord and the welcome of Gentiles into a complete sharing in the life of the community (cf. above Chapter 2).⁵²⁸

From 1:45-2:1 and 3:13-19-3:20, Mark creates a pattern of Jesus' movement from outdoor locations to inside a house (cf. 5:37; 7:17) that results in a narrative concentration on the person of Jesus within. Here, he is challenged by an audacious woman and, as the dialogue of the 'you and I' in the sentence structure attests, no other characters are mentioned. References to meals, pets and children strengthen the domestic setting of the dialogue. Scholars differ over Jesus' reply to the woman, 'let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs' (7:27).⁵²⁹ Though unexpected in view of the fact that this Gentile woman had ventured into the Jewish territory,⁵³⁰ there seems to be no clear reason for softening Jesus' saying. The repetitive, personal pronouns illustrate this personal stand-off: 'she begged him' (7:26); 'he said to her' (7:27), while 'she answered him' (7:28) and 'he said to her' (7:29). All the verbs are finite in the Greek.⁵³¹ Anderson takes a balanced stand in his focus on the woman's humility and readiness to receive:

The woman's words may have had a certain apologetic value for Gentile Christianity as a defence of the "Jewishness" of Jesus, for here a Gentile acknowledges the distinction between Jew and Gentile and yet expresses dependence on the Jesus who speaks out of Israel.⁵³²

⁵²⁵ Cf. 1:15; 4:11,26,30; 9:1,47; 10:14,15,23,24,25; 11:10; 12:34; 14:25; 15:43.

⁵²⁶ Isa 19:19-25; 60:1-22; 66:19-22; cf. the Markan sense of Isa 56:1-8; Mac 4:1f; Zech 8:20-23.

⁵²⁷ Nineham, *Mark*, 200.

⁵²⁸ Loader, 'Challenged at the Boundaries', 50; cf. Gnifka, *Markus*, 1, 290.

⁵²⁹ Stock, *Method*, 213.

⁵³⁰ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 460-461.

⁵³¹ Harrington, *Mark*, 104; cf. Juel, *Mark*, 108.

⁵³² Anderson, *Mark*, 191.

In the dialogue, the mother epitomises the role of the narrative's minor figures;⁵³³ they illustrate discipleship traits and serve as foils to the major characters and carry dramatic weight.⁵³⁴ The implied audience is encouraged to see how Jesus' fallible disciples fall short of the ideal of faith and, though these minor figures appear briefly,

they serve as models for attitudes and behaviours appropriate also for the major characters of the narrative and especially for the implied audience. These exemplars, though minor characters, are the type healed by Jesus in the story and exemplify faith in Jesus' power and authority.⁵³⁵

The Syrophoenician's involvement also indicates her awareness of the exceptional dignity, power and authority of Jesus present 'in a house' (7:24). The woman calls Jesus *kurie* - the single first person use of 'Lord' in the narrative (7:28). Though the term may be read as 'sir', the woman's belief in Jesus' power favours a deeper meaning - the compound formula 'and she answered and said to him' (7:28) indicates this reading. Rome's Christians would recall that Paul repeatedly names Jesus as Lord in his epistle (cf. Rom 1:2-3; 2:28; 5:19-20; 12:35-37; 13:35; Phil 2:6-11).⁵³⁶

In 7:27 Jesus speaks of the *tekna*. The change in 7:28 to *paidion* (cf. 7:30) correlates with letting the little dogs eat the little children's little crumbs since both *kunaria* and *psichion* are diminutives.⁵³⁷ With the title 'Lord' indicating an eschatological setting (7:28), a little Gentile dog might 'receive' a crumb of the one 'loaf' (cf. 8:1-10,14) at the same time as little Jewish 'children' received their portion. The woman's faith, actions and the dialogue are suggestive of a Roman liturgy: 'heard' (7:25), 'came' (7:25) and calling Jesus 'Lord' when kneeling (7:25), are expressions of the language of Christian liturgy.⁵³⁸

Their dialogue over, Jesus neither accompanies the woman to her house nor speaks a word of exorcism since her faith has already activated his authority and

⁵³³ Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 25.

⁵³⁴ E.S. Malbon, *The New Literary Criticism and the NT*, (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1994), 64.

⁵³⁵ Malbon, *Literary Criticism*, 65.

⁵³⁶ Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 202; cf. McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 517; Stock, *Method*, 213.

⁵³⁷ Gnllka, *Markus*, 1, 293.

power in the house (cf. 5:25-34). In fact,

she comes making no legal claims and pleading no special merits, but just as she is, empty-handed and in need, and dares only to expect God's gift in Jesus.⁵³⁹

H.M. Humphrey notes that *artos* occurs 18 times in the whole narrative; 15 of these are found in 6:30-8:21. Hence, the symbolism of the 'bread' at 7:24-30 anticipates the bread symbolism that is stressed in the boat journey (8:14-21).⁵⁴⁰ So the one 'call' or healing also parallels the one 'bread' for the unity of the Jewish and Gentile mission.⁵⁴¹ This second parallel strengthens the view that this is an ingathering pericope. The woman's daughter was possessed by a *pneuma akatharton*. In both Jewish and Gentile exorcisms, *ekballein* is used; ethnic origin is of no consequence and, going home, the mother 'found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone' (7:30). The time for the ingathering and participation of Gentiles in the secret of the kingdom had come (Isa 56:1-8).⁵⁴²

Each section from 1:16-8:26 opens with the disciples call to mission, to share Jesus' existential becoming and participate in his ministry (1:16-20; 3:13-19; 6:6b-13). In 8:14-21, the reiterated, rhetorical questions show Jesus' dramatic exasperation at the disciples' obtuseness to his call.⁵⁴³ They form a highly rhetorical contrast to the second bread pericope (8:1-10); it was most likely transmitted in the tradition along with stories in 7:24-30 and 7:32-37 that reflects a Gentile Hellenistic mission, forming a contrast with the later Pharisees' negative questioning of Jesus in demanding a sign (8:11-13).

Furthermore, Chapter 8 acts as a preparation for the way journey (8:1; 8:27-10:52). Jesus is the Lord of the inclusive Gentile Eucharist (8:1-9). Next, the Pharisees' testing of Jesus (8:11-13) and the disciples' continued blindness (8:14-21) offers a stark contrast to this fruitful Gentile mission in the house (cf. 1:31; 2:11,15-17; 3:4:10-

⁵³⁸ Pokorny, 'From a Puppy', 331.

⁵³⁹ Anderson, *Mark*, 191-192; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 398; Harrington, *Mark*, 105; Hurtado, *Mark*, 115-116.

⁵⁴⁰ H.M. Humphrey, 'Jesus As Wisdom in Mark', *BTB* 19 (1989), 48-53.

⁵⁴¹ Moore, 'Outside', 41; cf. Welfald, 'Separate Gentile Mission', 25.

⁵⁴² Harrington, *Mark*, 104; cf. Stock, *Method*, 213; Anderson, *Mark*, 191.

⁵⁴³ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 426.

11,20,21-23,26-29,31-32; 7:24-30,36-37; 8:1-9).⁵⁴⁴ Also, seen post-resurrection, a link exists between the blind man's gradual restoration of sight (8:22-26) at Bethsaida - prior to the way segment and its inclusio - Bartimaeus' restored sight at the way's end (10:48-52). Way servant discipleship teaching is wedged between these two sight restorations. With his sight healed, Bartimaeus followed Jesus 'on the way' (10:52 - there, 'the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped' - Isa 35:5) 'and a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way' (Isa 35:8). By situating the first cure (8:22-26) between 8:14-21 and 8:27,31-33, E.S. Johnson sees Mark testing Rome's Christians: will they 'see' the servant pattern in the teaching received in the house by means of rhetorical, symbolic figures on the way to Jerusalem?⁵⁴⁵

Johnson emphasises the gradual nature of the cure of this minor character,⁵⁴⁶ pointing to the absence of any characteristic 'amazement' (cf. 1:27; 2:12) and sees its lack justified in house-church relevance in the close connection of this passage with the rhetorical intensity of 8:14-21.⁵⁴⁷ He also examines *eneblepen telaugos* (8:26), insisting that the verb illustrates how key characters 'look into' or 'understand someone' within the Gospel's living word (cf. 10:21,27; 14:66).⁵⁴⁸ Faith-groups are faced with the word's power to search their hearts in the pivotal context of 8:22-26.⁵⁴⁹ If persecution is renewed, are Rome's Christians able to intensify their faith in the paradox of way discipleship? Faith leads to sight and offers a basis for deepened hope:

After the harsh censures which follow the feedings, the cure at Bethsaida communicates a word of hope. Just as the second laying on of hands restores the man's sight, so Mark is confident that the blurred spiritual vision of his church will be corrected. And just as the cured man "looked intently" (intensive imperfect, v. 25) so the Church will also see into all things clearly, and its new insight will be a continuing experience.⁵⁵⁰

Mark views this positive result in the light of the resurrection. He questions

⁵⁴⁴ M.N.Keller, 'Opening Blind Eyes: A Revisioning of Mark 8:22-10:52', *NTS* 49 (2003), 152.

⁵⁴⁵ E.S. Johnson, 'Mark 8:22-26: The Blind Man from Bethsaida', *NTS* 35 (1979), 270-283.

⁵⁴⁶ Johnson, 'Mark 8:22-26', 270-271; cf. Taylor, *Gospel*, 369; Cranfield, *Mark*, 254.

⁵⁴⁷ Johnson, 'Mark 8:22-26', 274; cf. Trainor, *Quest*, 139-140.

⁵⁴⁸ Johnson, 'Mark 8:22-26', 278.

the house-churches' capacity to see Jesus as a radical, authoritative teacher, who presents a vivid alternative to the way that first century scribes understood God's holiness, teaching that God was not present among the unclean and sinners. But, working from the ancient theory of vision emanating from the eye to the object, the former blind man - a sinner with impediments removed - now sees with 'far beaming sight', the vision of faith. This symbolic, gradual cure is climaxed at the way's close at Jericho for having heard of Jesus (10:47), Bartimaeus reflects the fruit of way discipleship in his following Jesus to Jerusalem/cross, holiness lived in selfless service, even martyrdom (cf. 10:45).⁵⁵¹ Christian hope is in the fruitful way of the victorious Jesus, the risen Lord.

It follows from this that Mark paints the colours of way discipleship in a crucified/risen Lord (8:27-10:52). He offers a necessary, vital, companionable, suffering human figure along the way of the cross to the Gentile communities, rejected by Rome's Jews and brutalised by Nero (cf. 2:13-17). Here, God's holiness is expressed in solidarity and compassion towards the human condition and not as separateness, thus changing the way in which God is perceived. In sending the former blind man 'to his home' (8:26 - a house-church?) and avoiding the 'village' - symbolic of current, conservative Jewish concepts of God's holiness? - Mark warns the house-churches not to revert to the blindness of pre-faith concepts regarding paradoxical servant suffering.⁵⁵²

Stated differently, Mark sets out an alternative way of being, based on a shared relationship with the risen Lord through the paradoxical secret of the cross (8:34-35; 10:45; cf. 9:37). Mark's way precludes the traditional dominance in Jewish thought of a ritual culture of holiness that could be misdirected into the politics of separation, manipulation and power (12:38-44). Now the Gospel is woven into the fabric of daily life in an urban setting, a claim justified by its constant return to the house motif in which

⁵⁴⁹ Stock, *Method*, 229.

⁵⁵⁰ Stock, *Method*, 229; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 24.

⁵⁵¹ J. Marcus, 'A Note on Markan Optics', *NTS* 45 (1999), 254-255.

⁵⁵² Keller, 'Opening Blind Eyes', 154.

fullness of life in the Lord is deepened in service to the group. Marcus recognises

that another reaction to this revelation (of God's way), one that rejects the folly of a Messiah "crucified in weakness" (2 Cor 13:4), is not only possible but inevitable....the proclamation of a crucified Messiah is scandalous and contrary-to-sense...because it calls on human beings to see God's eschatological power, life and glory displayed in a scene of the starkest human weakness.⁵⁵³

Hence, the Gospel associates the Markan Jesus' discipleship teaching with the social reality of life within the urban faith household.⁵⁵⁴

From a post-resurrection perspective, the power of Jesus' living word in both healing and teaching must be fruitful, (cf. 4:20; 1:40-45; 5:20; 5:21-43; 10:52). Mark suggests this theme rhetorically by its opposite - the motif of the disciples' negative response to Jesus' teaching. They do not see as they travel the way (9:34,38; 10:13,32,37,41). Ultimately, the flawed disciples ingloriously climax their weakness and blindness at Gethsemane: literally, the Greek reads 'And they left him, they fled, all of them' (14:50). Despite this, Mark anticipates that Rome's Christians will recognise his intertwining of the two perspectives of Jesus' messianic power: healing and teaching and its fruitful presence in Galilee, and now made present through his word as the risen Lord in the capitol's house-churches. This flowering is presupposed in the primitive churches' understanding of the current fruit of the word (4:2-9), seen in the climax to the allegory of the sower parable (cf. 4:20, 26-32). Nineham quotes Lightfoot in explanation:

The preceding two chapters have been full of controversy, and there has been little to relieve the darkness of the gathering storm. And yet the Gospel opened with the proclamation of the arrival (in some sense) of the kingdom of God. In these parables, a supreme confidence is expressed in the certain triumph of good, and of that kingdom, which we may say is tacitly identified with the cause and work of Jesus and of his followers.⁵⁵⁵

Fittingly, there is an intense personal focus in 8:14-21. The disciples - in the third person - are not named yet the direct 'you' confronts Mark's groups. 'The five critical questions

⁵⁵³ Marcus, 'Mark-Interpreter', 480; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 42.

⁵⁵⁴ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 84; cf. Osiek & Balch, *Families*, 119-120, 126-127, 182-183; cf. C. Osiek, 'The Family in Earliest Christianity: Family Values Re-Visited', *CBQ* 58 (1996), 9-14, 16-22.

⁵⁵⁵ Nineham, *Mark*, 132.

all concern the disciples' lack of understanding. For readers of Mark, the most resonant of them is the penultimate one, "Having eyes, do you not see, and having ears, do you not hear?" (8:18).⁵⁵⁶

The tenfold reiteration of the singular 'you' challenges the addressee to confront the substance of the pericope. Together with its derivatives, Mark uses 'you' 7 times in verses 8:14-21 before the final rhetorical question at 8:21 - 'Do you not yet understand?' which offers increased scope and inducement for a personal assimilation of the Word. Seen in the light of the boat image as the Church, the one loaf that the disciples had with them in the boat was Jesus, who offered himself as nourishment for all.⁵⁵⁷ The rhetorical sense of the passage (8:14-21) encourages this reading.

Therefore, in Mk 1:16-8:26 the evangelist offers his fellow Christians a human, crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord who, by his power and authority, is a source of hope and life in the secret of the kingdom for the house-church members. Like the minor characters in the narrative, they too may share now in the Markan Jesus' messianic healing and life through faith and servant discipleship.

4. CONCLUSION

Chapter 3 outlined how Mark takes advantage of the metaphorical richness of the house symbol to establish his progressive visitation/judgment and replacement theme from 1:16f. Entry into the kingdom follows a Markan pattern: first there is the 'coming of Jesus into Galilee' to call disciples to share in an eschatology reality in Jesus' paradoxical victory (1:16-20). Then a succession of minor characters hear 'the gospel of God' (1:14b); by responding in faith, they share in the authoritative power of the reign of the secret of the kingdom of God within the metaphorical replacement 'house' (1:31,44).

At 3:31-35, Mark formally associates this new eschatological family with the spatial house. From that point on, he gradually separates people of faith from those still

⁵⁵⁶ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 510.

attached to Law-based Jewish attitudes (7:1-23; cf. 5:22). In the Markan construction at 8:14-22, the rhetorical directness of this profusion of questions ostensibly targets the disciples in the boat. Nevertheless, the real targets are Rome's household Christians and their degree of faith in the Lord's powerful presence in the house (8:14-21).

In turn, Chapter 4 will discuss the link between the house motif and the ideal of servant dedication in 8:27-10:52. Communal service personifies the concept of an existential Christian becoming based on the secret of the kingdom (4:10-11): servant dedication in the house complex that is the antithesis of secular household values, a 'way' of life introduced by Jesus' call to his disciples to follow at 8:34-35 (cf. 1:16-20).

⁵⁵⁷ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 215.

CHAPTER 4

THE MARKAN PARADOX: CHRISTIAN FULFILMENT THROUGH SERVANT-WAY DISCIPLESHIP

1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 it was argued that the Gospel illustrates how the Son of Man's authoritative power as the Lord is active in the house-churches. In Chapter 4, this study now insists how that same power both calls Rome's Christians to follow servant discipleship and enables them to live it (8:34-35). And, as the 'house' symbolised the whole gamut of daily living for Christians, Mark intertwines the house motif with Jesus' authoritative, servant teaching to the disciples during their journey from Galilee to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52). To live way discipleship requires knowing its challenge and, by Mark's literary plan of way teaching within the house motif, he encourages the house-churches to a faith-filled hope in 'the secret of the kingdom' (4:11) - the paradox of life through death. There, if 'anyone would be first, he must be the last of all and servant of all' (9:35) just as Jesus is the epitome of service to the other (10:45).

Thus, the Lord's ongoing authoritative power, demonstrated in Chapters 1-8 in the house, is duplicated in the house motif on the way (9:28-29, 33-50; 10:10-31), and anticipated in the two healing miracles (8:22-26; 10:46-52) and in Jesus' lordly power in the exorcism (9:14-27). His status as the crucified/glorified Son of Man, the Lord, is also presumed in the Transfiguration pericope (9:2-8) and at his anticipated parousia (13:33-37). The passion predictions too make clear Jesus' victory through the cross for Jesus' present authority is based on his power as the present crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord. His authoritative power dismisses the unclean spirit; it is the basis of his promises to those who follow him (8:34-35) and to he who 'receives one such child in my name...' (9:37). It also guarantees the 'hundredfold now...and in the age to come eternal life' (10:30). The one who validly claims to enjoy an eternal affirmation ('the Lord said to

my Lord' - 12:36a) also claims to possess the authority necessary to fulfil such promises.

As with Chapters 1-8, the journey narrative has to be read in the light of the superscription. P.M. Head maintains that the Gospel's original superscription lacked the title Son of God. By adding 1:1 to the text it exemplifies the sweeping range of wordy reverent and doctrinal alteration of the New Testament text.⁵⁵⁸ Yet the frequency and key positioning of that text's statements about Jesus as the Christ, Lord and Son of God reflect the good news. The 'beginning' also presupposes the dignity that Jesus achieved existentially along the way as the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord. These titles are viewed within the truth of Jesus being the Son of God, teaching that meets the needs of Mark's groups and the literary demands of the Gospel as narrative.⁵⁵⁹

As mentioned above, Mark links his rhetorical pattern of the three passion predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34) to teaching units on the way and in the house (9:28-29; 9:33-50; 10:46-52). To these three pairings, a geographical detail is added: 'on the way' near Caesarea Philippi (8:27), 'they passed through Galilee' (9:30) and ominously, as they were 'going up to Jerusalem' (10:32). From a literary perspective, these references reiterate how the notion of the teaching expressed on the journey/way reflects the basis of the present rejection/replacement motif through house/way servant faith lived in the new eschatological family (10:29-31). At the start of the journey, the demoniac's father has faith - but it needs to be deepened. This is also the thrust of the first blindness cure - a deepening hope in the efficacy of servant way/suffering. So, in his arrangement of Jesus' movement from Galilee to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52), Mark uses the 'house' motif (9:28,33; 10:11; cf. 10:29,30) to transpose the way motif from Galilee to Jerusalem into his metaphorical *hodos* of Christian discipleship. It is lived in urban centres in the first century Greco-Roman world (8:27; 9:33-34; 10:32,52; cf. 12:14).⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ P.M. Head, 'A Text-Critical Study of Mark 1:1 "The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ"', *NTS* 37 (1991), 627.

⁵⁵⁹ Head, 'Text-Critical Study', 627-629.

⁵⁶⁰ J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*,

To illustrate the above factors at work, Chapter 4 will first offer a brief analysis of the biblical concept of the way. Second, it will point out how way discipleship teaching is linked to the twin motifs of the way/house. Third, the study will analyse the key role of the call to discipleship at the beginning of the way (8:27-9:13) that demands a constantly deepened faith in the risen Son of Man, the Lord (cf. 8:38). Fourth, from 9:14 - 10:52, Mark sets forth the basics of way discipleship: faith and service. Fifth, the reward of the fruits of Christian way fidelity (10:28-31) constitutes an ongoing source of hope. And, sixth, the relationship of Bartimaeus' faith to his following of Jesus' way to Jerusalem and the cross climaxes the way narrative.

First, the Gospel introduces the concept of the 'way' (16 times) in the relative clause- 'who shall prepare thy way' (1:2c) at its opening. In the Wisdom literature (Prov 2:7-20; Ps 1.1; 32:8; 101:2,6) *hodos* refers to a way of life, a frequent motif in the story.⁵⁶¹ Mark sets it in the blended Old Testament excerpts at 1:2-3 (Ex 23:20; Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1). Introduced by the adverbial clause, *kathos gegraptai en to Hsaia to prophete* (which exercises a transitional role), *kathos gegraptai* should be read as a comment on verse 1:1 ('The beginning...'). The combined effect of 1:1-2 is 'The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God, as written by Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face; he will prepare your way"'.⁵⁶² Thus, God's mysterious but victorious 'way' 'of good news' (Isa 40:9-11; 52:7-10; 61:1-4) of the suffering Son of Man introduces the Gospel. The way is also presupposed in the post-resurrection, fulfilled replacement theme anticipated in the superscription (1:1).⁵⁶³

Through the twin motifs of the good news and the way, Mark relates 1:1-3 to the triumphant opening to Deutero-Isaiah 40:9:

(SNTW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 12; cf. E. Best, *Disciples and Discipleship*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 5.

⁵⁶¹ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 8.

⁵⁶² Marcus, *Way*, 13; cf. Matt 3:7-12. Note Lk 3:7-18 who uses Isa 40:3 but omits the quotes from Exodus and Malachi.

⁵⁶³ Marcus, *Way*, 14.

Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

The lordly power of God is here, 'for the Lord comes with might' (Isa 40:10a). As well, Isa 40:5a ('the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken') interconnects with Mark 1:2-3,11. These verses presume Yahweh's way of victory over evil by the Lord ('I will uphold you with my victorious right hand' - Isa 41:10a).⁵⁶⁴ They provide a sure basis for hope within Rome's traumatised house-churches, an understanding present in Jesus' victorious encounter with Satan in the desert (1:12-13) and in his constant dismissal of the demons in the synagogue and the house (7:24-30; cf. 1:21-28,32-34; cf. 3:11-12,22-27). Miracles are seen as a sign of the eschatological age; authoritative promises throughout the story do likewise (5:36; 7:30; 9:29,37; 10:29). By linking the resurrection theme to Jesus' transfiguration (9:2-8) and the epileptic pericope (9:14-27),⁵⁶⁵ this triumphant way anticipates Christians sharing in Jesus' present existential victory, a sharing whose nature is examined in Chapter 6.

Clearly *ten hodon Kuriou* is objective. It is proclaimed as a baptism of repentance (1:4) and, if the subject of the verb *kerussein* is invariably John, Jesus or the apostles, the object is someone who, through faith, has been healed by Jesus (1:45; 2:11-12; 5:19-21; 3:7; 7:36-37 - *ton logon*; cf. 1:7,14,38,39,45; 3:14; 5:20; 6:12; 7:36). The verb, 'to proclaim', however, does not occur in 8:27-10:52 but Mark describes Jesus as the way or replacement temple in his human fidelity to his Father's will along the 'way' to Jerusalem, a reality outlined in the passion predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 10:45).

Thus, if the living word of the Gospel accompanies Rome's redeemed house-churches along the 'way of the Lord', in faith they will 'see the glory of the Lord' (Isa 35:2c) in the broken and derided humanity of the Son of Man on the cross (cf. Chapter 5

⁵⁶⁴ Marcus, *Way*, 13-15.

⁵⁶⁵ Marcus, *Way*, 14-15.

below). This is the outcome of God's 'way' or righteousness in the gospel (1:2-3; 8:31). For house-churches, this victory is present in the 'good news' (1:15). Reminded of this truth by the superscription (1:1), Mark's audience would recognise the mounting climax of the Lord's way in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.⁵⁶⁶ Also, 'they will know that, as frequently happens in the Gospel, there is a deeper meaning to the crowd's acclamation than they are aware of themselves. *'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'* (11:9) is not just an invocation of the Lord's blessing on Jesus, but also an unwitting acknowledgment that his advent is a revelation of God himself'.⁵⁶⁷ Marcus analysed 2:28; 5:19-20; 11:3 and 12:3-37, concluding that where Jesus acts there God is also acting. Moreover, in the journey's narrative, Jesus' 'way' is painted in the familiar biblical colours of the Deutero-Isaian 'way of the Lord'.⁵⁶⁸ As the messianic Lord, Jesus teaches with authority; even the demons must obey him - all this is related to his being Son of God. Yet Mark never describes Jesus' right to such authority and power - he has it because of who he is now.⁵⁶⁹

Mark anticipates that his addressees will view the blindness cure (8:22-26) in a positive light. So the disciples and the crowd that follow will come to true sight through the power of the Lord.⁵⁷⁰ Moloney argues that the restricted nature of Peter's confession leads Jesus to charge them to tell no one about him (8:30). With this warning, the overlap from 8:22-30 ends and Jesus utters the first passion prediction (8:31). Then

for the first time in the Gospel, Jesus speaks clearly of who he is, the Son of Man, and he describes the destiny of the Son of Man: suffering, rejection, killed and risen. Phrased to point forward to the death and resurrection of Jesus, these words also build upon the traditions behind Mark 14-16. The use of *dei* indicates that the future suffering, dying and rising of the Son of Man ...forms part of God's design for Jesus, the Christ, the Son of Man...His Messiahship is to be found in his future as the Son of Man.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁶ Marcus, *Way*, 37-41.

⁵⁶⁷ Marcus, *Way*, 40.

⁵⁶⁸ Marcus, *Way*, 40.

⁵⁶⁹ Brown, *Introduction*, 128-129.

⁵⁷⁰ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 164.

⁵⁷¹ Moloney, *Gospel of Mark*, 173.

Jesus' call that follows is to 'anyone' and 'whoever' to come after him (8:34-38), its triple repetition deepens its rhetorical force. Donahue adds that

Mark 8:27-38 is a rich resource for those who seek to make Mark's Gospel come alive in the lives of Christians today. It sets before us the basic question of Mark's Gospel and indeed of the entire NT: "Who do you say I am?". It confronts us with the mystery of the cross and challenges us to integrate the reality of Jesus' suffering (and our own) into our understanding of Jesus' and discipleship...In a sense Mark 8:33, with its contrast between God's thoughts and human thoughts, is the nub of the gospel.⁵⁷²

The evangelist outlines the 'way' of faith in the Lord's presence in the 'house' (13:32-37). He sharpens the teaching's rhetorical effectiveness by repeatedly intertwining both motifs since, 'if anyone wishes to come after me' (8:34) 'on the way' (8:27), they immediately receive teaching in the house (9:28; 9:33-50; cf. 10:10-27,29-30).⁵⁷³ Earlier, Mark first linked the two motifs in the second miraculous feeding (8:1-10)⁵⁷⁴: 'if I send them away hungry to their homes they will faint on the way' (8:3).

Mark obviously structured the prelude and ending of the way narrative by the two blindness cures (8:22-26; 10:46-52). They mention or insinuate the house motif: 'And he sent him away to his home' (8:26) and 'Bartimaeus - son of Timaeus' (10:46), a term that conjures up a family setting. The first cure works gradually as Mark's addressees remain faithful to way discipleship while the second illustrates the full flowering of faithful discipleship as Bartimaeus, his faith in the way of the crucified/risen Son of Man now fully restored, follows Jesus along the way to Jerusalem. Mark's bracketing of the house motif and way teaching in the three sections will be analysed in turn at 8:27-9:29,30-50 and 10:1-52.

Our study's second focus is on Mark's literary arrangement of the way and house during the way to Jerusalem. For example, if there is a sustained rhetorical stress on the inclusive 'anyone' or 'whoever' (8:34-35; 10:30), the familial household language

⁵⁷² Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 266.

⁵⁷³ Marcus, *Way*, 12-33.

⁵⁷⁴ Gnlika, *Markus*, 1, 10-17; cf. Kelber, *Kingdom*, 82-83; Schweizer, *Mark*, 88-93; Cranfield, *Mark*, 266-281; Taylor, *Gospel*, 377. For a contrary opinion, cf. Pesch *Markusevangelium*, 2, 47.

of child, husband, wife and brothers contributes towards the ease of personal identification with the pervasive way teaching.⁵⁷⁵ This is understandable, since it is the individual, the ‘anyone’ (8:34) in the house-church who first has been called to hear (8:34-35) and so follow Jesus in a new family of faith.⁵⁷⁶ Yet Mark does not lose sight of the story element. He endows the journey motif with a sufficient physical basis for it to express the concept of a journey,⁵⁷⁷ in which the way pericopes are geared to some aspect of household living (houses, children, servants, personal relationships and marriage). Set within the structural use of the joint house/way motif, these associations prevent an undue focus on the physical aspects of the journey from obscuring the personal implications of Jesus’ discipleship teaching.

Such an approach presupposes Mark’s confidence in the efficacy of Jesus’ authoritative word at the prologue’s close: ‘repent and believe in the Gospel’. It is not surprising then that Mark’s way narrative shows a pronounced rhetorical stress (cf. Chapter 3 above). Above all, Mark’s integration of the house and way themes in his rhetorical strategy encourages the possibility of Christians’ personal assimilation of Jesus’ call to way/discipleship within their existential development in their daily faith journey. Mark prepares for this personal sense by the intense rhetorical focus in the rhetorical ‘one loaf’ pericope (8:14-21).⁵⁷⁸ The house-churches are confronted; will they stay in the Pharisees’ mind-set, they who tempt Jesus to stay within theirs (8:11-13), or reach out to Jesus in faith? The Pharisees’ leaven represents the disposition to believe only if signs which are congenial to their concept of faith are present.⁵⁷⁹

Mark’s strategy of challenging faith in the paradoxical way victory (8:34-35) works in several ways. At an early stage, if Mark collates discipleship teaching within the way section (cf. 8:34-9:1), he relates it to an immediate prior passion prediction (e.g.

⁵⁷⁵ Keller, ‘Opening Blind Eyes’, 152.

⁵⁷⁶ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 508.

⁵⁷⁷ Stock, *Method*, 238.

⁵⁷⁸ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 496.

8:31). Both are then linked to the ensuing teaching in the house motif (cf. 9:28-29) that concerns the servant theme. The reverse pattern is also employed. The evangelist introduces the house symbol (9:33) by means of a passion prediction (9:30-32) that leads to discipleship teaching. In Chapter 10, a third literary structure operates: the Pharisees instigate a discussion about divorce in the unlikely 'region of Judea beyond the Jordan', a non-traditional teaching location (10:1-2). There, Jesus teaches how the primacy of God's word in marriage strengthens the permanence of the ongoing, spiritual and communal stability of the house community (10:3-9). This teaching is immediately reiterated in the ensuing definitive teaching in the privacy of the house (10:10-12).

Strategically placed, the challenge to Rome's households of faith is to hear/read the way narrative in a receptive frame of mind. A Christian had heard of the power of Jesus in the house where he forgives sin (2:1-12), raises the dead (5:21-43), exorcises demons (1:21-28) and heals the sick (1:29-31). Now the journey focuses on the challenge to see and hear the Gospel (1:15) of a crucified/risen Lord in the teaching about the 'secret of the kingdom of God' (4:11).⁵⁸⁰ It is only in faith and the servant way that the secret may be received (4:10-13). In the last years of Nero's reign (67-69 CE), there was the possibility of a renewed persecution of house-churches owing to the social and political instability in the capital. A confident faith in the paradox of the cross was an ever-present necessity.

2. MARK'S MODEL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Mark's third focus along the way is on the consequences of Jesus' question to Peter at 8:29 ('Who do you say that I am?'); it is a key theme. From 1:20-8:26, he has emphasised Jesus' powerful authority as teacher, healer and exorcist. Yet group after group misunderstand him or reject him: Jesus' family (3:21), the Pharisees and Herodians (3:6), and people in Nazareth (6:1-6). Later, his own disciples will desert him

⁵⁷⁹ Stock, *Mark*, 225.

(14:50). At the start of this metaphorical journey, there is the need to clarify just who Jesus now is for a Christian (9:2-8) and the personal cost involved in following him (8:34-35).

Jesus is the paradoxical servant/Son (1:2-3; 10:45; 12:35-37). After each passion prediction along the way he is misunderstood, first by Peter (8:32-33), next by the whole group (9:32-34) and lastly by James and John (10:35-37). These three scenes outline two crucial themes: the suffering aspect of Jesus' mission and the indispensable servant discipleship for personal sharing in the way paradox. It appears that Mark is responsible for linking these two themes in 8:31-33 and 8:34-37. Both were formerly separate sayings in the tradition. By associating the 'crowd' with the disciples (8:34), the intense rhetorical stress expressed in 8:14-21 is continued. In the open-ended term the 'crowd', Mark confronts the disciples and 'those who were about him with the twelve' (cf. 4:10-11) - clearly those gathered in the privacy of small household groups.

Mark no sooner establishes the sense of the risen Son of Man's power in a suggested post-resurrection setting (8:31; cf. 8:38-9:1), than Jesus figuratively continues his 'way' in order to sustain his victory in the ongoing cosmic battle with evil along his way (9:14-27). On 11 occasions from 1:16-8:26, the demons under Satan's authority are known as *pneumati akatharto*. But in 8:27-10:52, it is used only at 9:25; here, the exorcism links faith with the resurrection theme, for Jesus 'lifted him up and he arose' (9:27). 'Teacher' (9:17) hints at key teaching on discipleship in a household church but it should be repeated that Christians, both singly and communally, fail to grasp this teaching if it is not lived in faith in a crucified/risen Christ.⁵⁸¹

The metaphorical journey opens with 'along the way' at Caesarea (8:27). Then, within four verses, Mark relates that Jesus 'began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things...and be killed and after three days rise again' (8:31).

⁵⁸⁰ Keller, 'Opening Blind Eyes', 153.

⁵⁸¹ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 48.

Confronted with possibly renewed persecution, Rome's house-churches faced a crisis of faith. To bolster faith at the start of the journey section, the paradox of the crucified, victorious Son of Man is seen post-resurrection by intertwining the resurrection in the crucifixion in the first passion prediction (8:31). Also, Christians are alerted to the truth that just as Jesus was transfigured along the way to his cross so they will be transfigured as they participate in faith in his ever-present human becoming. They inter-twine their human experiences in his glorified humanity (8:34; cf. 9:2-8). Mark offers further reassurance to his followers in setting this paradox within the scope of God's providential will (*dei* - 8:31).

Calvary's victory is further emphasised in the anticipated coming of the glorified Son of Man at the parousia; it presumes his victory over evil (8:38). Hope too is reinforced by the sense of the resurrection fruit pre-supposed in the bridging verse, 'truly I say to you' that 'they will see the kingdom of God come in power' in Jesus as Lord (9:1). But Rome's faith groups have their part to play in this ongoing victory that is set in the dynamic of a risen Son of Man. If some in the group expected an imminent parousia, it was an expectation that must be situated in the whole perspective of God's redeeming plan, including the dawning insight that the Gospel must first be 'preached to all the nations' (13:10). Then Jesus would return in glory (13:24-26).

The proleptic resurrection aspect of the Son of Man prior to the parousia's revelation is further graphically depicted at Jesus' transfiguration (9:2-8). Mark's concept of the present kingdom controls his concept of Jesus' identity for 'just as the baptism precedes the kingdom preaching (1:14, 15); so here the climax of the story (which has focused on Jesus as the centre of the conversation of the two prophets and the disciples' attention) is the renovated baptism (1:11-12). The Markan disciples quail in stupefaction before this disclosure, which is proleptic of their inability to grasp the

cross (*ou gar edei ti apokrithe*)'.⁵⁸²

This is a dominical assurance for Mark's communities. There is also the parallel between Jesus' descent of the mountain and his confrontation of the disciples' disbelief in the epileptic pericope with that of Moses' confrontation with rebellious Israel after his Mt Sinai descent (Exodus 32,3):

Both leaders descend from the mount to find that their lieutenants have been involved in controversy with the people and have been party to general unfaithfulness; both utter condemnations of what has happened (Ex 32:19; 33:5). Moreover, Moses had in some sense been transfigured on the mount (Ex 34:29) and the glory which still shone from his face ...made the people afraid (Ex 34:30). We know that these facts were treasured in the early Church (cf. 2 Cor 3:7 ff.) and if something of the sort was thought to have happened to Jesus we might have an explanation of the otherwise motiveless "great amazement" of the crowd in v. 15.⁵⁸³

By linking these two symbolic mountains, Rome's house-churches are further reassured that Jesus' way to Calvary is the template for ensuring the implementation of God's authoritative will. But they must 'Listen to him' (9:7). Also, in 9:9-13, the familiar pattern of prophet, prophecy, death/resurrection in the forward movement of God's redemptive plan (8:31) is highlighted by the linking of Elijah (John) with Jesus' resurrection (9:11-13).

Mark presumes a household of Christian faith and hope. Besides sharing in the narrative's viewpoint (1:1), the linking of the two symbolic mountains anticipates Jesus' prophetic word prior to his departure for the Mount of Olives (14:27-28; cf. 3:13-19; 9:2-8). He reassures the house community regarding his present reign in his authority as Lord (cf. 9:38; 12:35-37), a reality also presumed in Mark's structure of the resurrection/parousia nexus (8:31-38). The challenge to believe in the power of a crucified/risen Lord lies at the heart of the subsequent exorcism pericope (9:14-29).

⁵⁸² B.D. Chilton, 'The Transfiguration: Dominical Assurance and Apostolic Vision', *NTS* 31 (1985), 120.

⁵⁸³ Nineham, *Mark*, 245; cf. Hurtado, *Mark*, 147.

3. THE SERVANT IDEAL IN HOUSE-CHURCH LIFE

From 9:14-10:52, Mark's fourth emphasis, the basics of way discipleship, are set forth. In the exorcism account in the journey section, the indispensable requirement namely faith, is caught in the father's cry, 'have pity on us and help us' (9:22b; c/f. 1:41; 6:34; 8:2). It has a communal character since the plural 'us' includes at least the father, son and the crowd (9:17) - symbolic of those who hear the word in the house group. As above, the title 'Teacher' echoes discipleship teaching and exorcisms in Jesus' sequence of 'mighty works' in 1:16-8:26 before this incident (cf. 1:21-28,29-34; 6:53-56). Jesus, as the present, therapeutic Messiah/Lord, so needed in Rome's straitened house-churches,⁵⁸⁴ is signified by *splanchnizesthai* (1:41; 6:34; 8:2; cf. 1:1; Ps 107:10-16).

The sense of wonder expressed by the crowd at the sight of Jesus (9:15) draws us back to 1:27 - the paradigmatic miracle. There, Jesus is the 'beloved Son' (1:11); here, he is again the 'beloved Son' (9:7); here too, amazement is evoked before an exorcism and Jesus is identified as an exceptional *didaskolos*. A clear redactional insertion follows - 'All the crowd, when they saw him, *exethambethesan* and ran up to him and greeted him' (9:15). This description hints at the intervention of the living word of the Lord in the replacement house-church (cf. 1:29-31; 2:1-12,15-17 and so on).

Jesus' response to the father's prayer for his demonised son expresses this reading: 'All things are possible to him who believes' in his resurrection power (9:23). Rome's Christians are challenged to identify with the crucified/risen Son of Man, the ultimate reigning servant of the three passion predictions. They exercise a role

in the training of his followers in the meaning of discipleship. The emphasis on faith is equally relevant to this section, and the significant response to Jesus is the cry of belief uttered by the boy's father. Perhaps for this reason, the narrative does not conclude with the customary expression of the onlookers' astonishment.⁵⁸⁵

This lack of astonishment suggests the resurrection power present in the

⁵⁸⁴ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 278.

household (1:29-31; 2:1-12,15-17; 5:21-43; 7:24-30), a power released by prayer (9:28-29). Through faith (9:23) lived existentially (9:29), such power ensures the progressive conquest of Satan's kingdom (cf. 3:11,22-30; 6:7). The epileptic's father as the paradigm of the 'called' is referred to repeatedly, 'as the model of Christian faith, expressed in the father's agonised cry, "I believe; help my unbelief". Like the disciples, this man has faith in Jesus but his faith is insecure. For the early community, his response would be an encouragement to those who were beginners in the Christian faith to deepen their commitment to the gospel...Were they perhaps attempting to exorcise unclean spirits...and failing to do so? If so, the story would suggest to them that their failure was due to their lack of faith and the neglect of prayer'.⁵⁸⁶

As presented by Mark, the dispute seems to reflect a problematic situation within the Christian community rather than a controversy between the disciples and the scribes in the course of Jesus' historical ministry. The scribes, the outsiders, are more likely to have scoffed and walked away than to have argued about the disciples' failure. Rather, there is the communal cry for God's pity and help in the community's need for deeper faith in the aftermath of Nero's persecution for the father cries out for 'us'.

Consequently, before the continued journey towards Jerusalem (9:30), this brief house incident (9:28-29) at the conclusion of the epileptic pericope (9:14-27) highlights the prime necessity of resurrection faith through prayer for way discipleship. Previously, faith has been prominent in Mark's strategy right at the promulgation of the Gospel: 'repent and believe in the Gospel' (1:15) and in Jesus' works of power (2:1-12; 5:21-43; 7:24-30). Not surprisingly, the father, here a minor figure, acts as a stark backdrop to the disciples' lack of faith. They had failed again as a group (9:18).

Some scholars link Mark challenging the community's faith in this instance

⁵⁸⁵ Hooker, *Mark*, 222.

⁵⁸⁶ Harrington, *Mark*, 142.

with the first century house-churches' attitude to exorcism⁵⁸⁷ but others regard it more generally. Whatever the case, prayer was an imperative especially during persecution. Without it the Christian was powerless before injustice and difficulty. Hope lay in prayer to a fellow-suffering, risen Lord who had triumphed over sin and death before them.⁵⁸⁸

As applied to the nine disciples, the pejorative *genea* indicates that in their faithlessness, all the disciples are indistinguishable from their unbelieving compatriots represented by the scribes (2:6; 8:12) who represent 'a perverse and crooked generation' (Deut 32:5). The repetitive *heos pote* expresses the feelings of a teacher who has been persistently misunderstood whereas the two rhetorical 'how long' questions (9:19) echo the recurring Old Testament's lament over the faithlessness of Israel.⁵⁸⁹ In contrast to the disciples, the crowd seems to be in harmony with the father since his cry, *boethei mou te apistia* (9:24), represents a basic cry of faith.

The father's awareness of the inadequacy of his faith points to house groups' still insufficient belief in the power of the secret of the kingdom of God (9:28-29; cf. 10:26; 11:22). In Chapters 8-10, *eperotao* occurs 12 times yet only 13 times in the other 13 Chapters.⁵⁹⁰ If failure to believe in Jesus is blameworthy, it is also paralysing for

it is shown in vv. 22b-24 that, if men have faith, there is no limit to what God will do for them. This is something that the boy's father needs to learn for the words in which he appeals for help appear to set limits on what God can or will do through Christ. He is taught otherwise first by an explicit statement from Jesus (v. 23; cf. 10:27 and 11:22-25).⁵⁹¹

In light of the superscription, Freyne sees Jesus' timeless ministry, described in the exercise of resurrection power, as already breaking into the present life of the faith-communities in Rome.⁵⁹² The necessity of prayer, which is introduced here (9:28-29), is echoed in 10:27 where, in these new eschatological communities 'all things are possible

⁵⁸⁷ Anderson, *Mark*, 231.

⁵⁸⁸ Harrington, *Mark*, 143.

⁵⁸⁹ Freyne, 'Disciples in Mark', 18.

⁵⁹⁰ Anderson, *Mark*, 231-232.

⁵⁹¹ Nineham, *Mark*, 243.

⁵⁹² Freyne, 'Disciples in Mark', 19.

to God' (10:27; cf. 11:22-25). Mark seems to hint at this connection because it is only after Jesus' statement that 'all things are possible to God' (10:27) that Mark introduces the fruit of faith, the eschatological community (10:28-31). Prayer is the necessary corollary to faith. Fasting in order to perform mighty works strikes the wrong note. Prayer, not the word we expect in this brief pericope (9:28-29), points to a dependence on God. The father seeks help 'for us', underscoring that the boy's demonic possession has social consequences and stressing the communal implications of Jesus' power to heal. The atmosphere of privacy and reassurance in faith within the household, shown also at 3:31-35 and 4:10-11, is linked to a vague journey marker ('and they went on from there' - 9:30) and in Mark's aside: 'he would not have anyone know it; he was teaching his disciples' (9:30-31). Then it is reinforced abruptly by 'he was in the house' (9:33).

In 9:28-29, the disciples' need for prayer highlights God's role in living the secret of the way; it prepares for what follows. In spite of martyrdom, inclusivity and servant discipleship that were the antithesis of patriarchal values, he challenges his communities to faith and hope in Jesus' radical call: 'whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospel's will save it' (8:35b). Whether lived in constant, hum-drum service in life's daily round or climaxing in martyrdom, the call is the same. Perhaps some of Rome's Christians have

become impotent before the political powers they seek to overcome; they are unable to heal because they need to be cured of the same malady that afflicts the boy. They too are deaf and dumb; they are insensitive to what is happening around them.⁵⁹³

The disciples' insensitivity to the core challenge to faith presupposes their ongoing obtuseness due to selfishness. They appear in a negative light in their debating, 'which is the greatest?' (9:34) and when attempting to prevent good works not under their control (9:38). Power too, rather than openness and inclusivity preoccupies them as they push for a more rigorous screening of new members of the community (10:13-14).

⁵⁹³ Trainor, *Quest*, 149.

The disciples' constant obtuseness rather than failure in the face of a more than normally difficult case⁵⁹⁴ would seem Mark's preoccupation at this stage of the journey.

Mark again unites the motifs of the house and way in 9:33-50, as he introduces key aspects of the servant ideal in the household when Jesus 'was in the house in Capernaum' (9:33). His previous use of *kat' idian* highlights the revelatory nature of this structure (9:28; cf. 4:34; 6:31,32; 7:33; 9:2). It represents

the evangelist's way of signalling a significant revelation to privileged persons...Rhetorically, the privacy motif functions as an invitation to the reader to share the privileged intimacy select addressees. It also heightens the tension surrounding Jesus' words. The weight of the words as esoteric disclosure is augmented by the setting of withdrawal and the narrowing of Jesus' audience.⁵⁹⁵

This discourse is given not only in the house (9:33b) but it is the setting for teaching 'on the way' (9:33c) in the triple sequence: passion prediction, teaching on discipleship and the placement of each in a different geographical locale in three place names.⁵⁹⁶

Before this analysis, we should note the slight variation in the setting of the second passion prediction (9:30-32). Mark offers the vague narrative marker - 'through Galilee' (9:30), before the arrival of the group in Capernaum. The journey's goal, Jerusalem, is given only at 10:32.⁵⁹⁷ This dearth of precise topological data supports our initial view that, from 8:27 to 10:52, Mark is preoccupied with a highly symbolic series of private, authoritative teaching episodes (9:14-28,30-50; 10:1-9,10-12; cf. 10:28-31). Assembled chronologically, they constitute a journey story of existential Christian becoming through servant/way discipleship.

In the second passion prediction, Jesus presents the disciples with a more concise version of the fate that awaits him in Jerusalem (9:31). Also, the sense of the crowd is present through its association with the allusiveness of 'anyone', 'whoever' and 'no one' (9:35,37,39,41) in this segment of teaching that outlines a counter-cultural

⁵⁹⁴ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 135.

⁵⁹⁵ Barton, *Discipleship*, 116.

⁵⁹⁶ Stock, *Method*, 238.

servant mind-set diametrically opposed to the disciples' thinking. Not only are they 'afraid to ask him' (8:31) about the implications of his first passion prediction, which they rejected (8:33), but the challenge to associate exalted status and suffering escapes them.⁵⁹⁸ But Mark would hope that a Christian would catch the allusion to Isaiah's suffering servant (Mk 9:31; Isa 53:7-8).

With the note, 'they came to Capernaum' (9:33), Mark completes the preliminary, nebulous first phase of the journey to Jerusalem. Fleddermann sees this as a Markan beginning of this section with *kai* + verb of motion + *eis* + place name (cf. 1:21; 8:22; 10:46; 11:11,27).⁵⁹⁹ Other exegetes recognise the literary boundaries that Mark draws about the subsequent household discipleship material (9:33b-50). It opens with a loose geographical marker, 'Capernaum' (9:33) and closes with 'he left there' (10:1), though there are some logistical problems with 9:30. Teaching on household relationships is also summarised by an *inclusio*: the section opens with a dispute (9:33) and ends with the imperative, 'be at peace with one another' (9:50).⁶⁰⁰

In 9:33-50, three symbols predominate: the 'child'/'servant' (9:33-37), the perceived 'outsider' (9: 38), and the 'stumbling block' (9:42). Some exegetes insist that the image of the 'child' (9:36-37) symbolises the Christian, though others see an actual child indicated here, a focus that may be partially true. D.M. Sweetland justifies this understanding; he cites the link between the 'child' (9:36) and the 'little ones' (9:42). Hence, if 'little ones' symbolise Jesus' followers and the child (9:36) and, is identified with these 'little ones' (9: 42), the 'child' can be regarded as the model for the Christian. As well, if we accept the parallel of the 'child' image in 10:13-16 with that of 9:36-37, the 'child' image of lowliness and humility ought to be the Christian's model.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁷ Anderson, *Mark*, 232.

⁵⁹⁸ Green, 'Death of Jesus', 32.

⁵⁹⁹ H. Fleddermann, 'Discipleship (Mark 9:33-50)', *CBQ* 43 (1981), 57-58.

⁶⁰⁰ Hurtado, *Mark*, 152.

⁶⁰¹ D.M. Sweetland, *Our Journey With Jesus*, (Wilmington: Glazier, 1987), 63; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 107, who sees 9:36-37 in the light of charitable work for poor children.

But the parallel breaks down. The Aramaic translated by *paidon* can mean both servant and child - male or female. Jesus' symbolic gesture appears to change the narrative's direction from 9:33-35 from the servant to those served. So a 'child would symbolize not so much innocence or unspoiledness as a lack of social status and legal rights'.⁶⁰² This opens the way to a more accurate understanding of Jesus' symbolic gesture. The servant, the one, 'who is the last of all and the servant of all' (9:35), is not the child but the disciple who 'receives' the child (9:37b) as a gift to be served.

A solemn setting is created for this key discipleship teaching. The statement, 'And he took a child...whoever receives one such child in my name receives me' (9:36-37) fits only awkwardly at this point.⁶⁰³ Perhaps it represents an independent tradition but the arrangement suits Mark's intention. He confronts the Christian with a new basis for individual status - those, who by serving, seek to have none.⁶⁰⁴ Jesus esteems the disciple, who is 'the lowliest servant of all' and associates himself with one such child.⁶⁰⁵

To receive this symbolic child in the house in the context of 9:33-37 requires a servant attitude towards all but especially to those who, like this symbolic child, may lack cultural or family status - for instance a slave. Mark's structured Roman society did not normally endow freedmen, refugees, and children with any legal status.⁶⁰⁶ Indeed, 'a child was a "non-person" totally dependent on others for nurture and protection...one could not expect to gain anything either socially or materially from kindness to a child'.⁶⁰⁷ As for slaves, Ferguson states that

by and large, the slaves were denationalised and simply became a part of Greco-Roman civilisation. The legal status of a slave was that of a "thing"...The slave had no legal rights and was subject to the absolute power of the master.⁶⁰⁸

Just how one would receive a slave ('one such child') would be based on faith and

⁶⁰² Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 285.

⁶⁰³ Hooker, *Mark*, 228.

⁶⁰⁴ Juel, *Mark*, 134.

⁶⁰⁵ Fleddermann, 'Discipleship', 61; *enagkalizomai* occurs only twice in the N.T., at 9:36 and 10:16.

⁶⁰⁶ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 285.

expressed in the variations in relationships and the type of household-church involved. Presumably, where the natural family formed the nucleus of a house-church, it required a greater faith and selflessness on the family's part to express the ideal relationship towards a slave rather than in a poorer, voluntary group in an insula - a crowded apartment building. There, Christians from assorted family backgrounds met in a rented room to celebrate their faith.⁶⁰⁹

Altruistic service to outsiders or strangers contradicted the current, pervasive patronage system, where, in its tightly controlled web of relationships, an entrenched situation of service to former masters was obligatory.⁶¹⁰ But by embracing the child, the Markan Jesus displays his acceptance of the symbolic child, the poor, the slave or the refugee in a sense of intimacy that shows how the last could be the first and the first, last. In this context, Jesus' actions of sitting depicts a teaching position while his summoning the Twelve, symbolic of the house-church, are typical Markan descriptions. In a faith setting, the principles on which relationships are based are counter-cultural (3:31-35; 10:29-30).⁶¹¹ Disciples quarrel over 'greatness' but greatness in their terms is the opposite of servant discipleship (8:34-35).⁶¹² Jesus eulogises those who are 'last of all and servant of all' (9:35) whatever their cultural status.

On another level, a house-church would, of necessity, represent a typical Roman household. A child had no status in contemporary legal terms so Jesus' vivid teaching on discipleship forms a graphically counter-cultural image. C.S. Mann adds another dimension to our reading of the child image by arguing that the original intent (of the child image) concerned neophytes, the recent converts in the community who should

⁶⁰⁷ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 285.

⁶⁰⁸ Ferguson, *Background*, 56-57.

⁶⁰⁹ Sweetland, *Our Journey*, 63; cf. Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 32-36.

⁶¹⁰ Ferguson, *Background*, 54-56.

⁶¹¹ D.H. Juel, *Master of Surprise: Mark Re-interpreted*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 140.

⁶¹² H.M. Humphrey, *He is Risen*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 87-88; cf. D. Rhoads, 'Losing Life For Others in the Face of Death', *Int* 47 (1993), 358-370.

be encouraged and supported in their new experience as Christians.⁶¹³

The servant ideal is addressed to all in the house. Though it is not mentioned specifically in this segment of teaching (9:33-50), Mark includes the sense of the crowd along with Jesus and the disciples in the journey to Jerusalem. As noted above, the crowd has been stressed before the start of the way section. Even prior to the way narrative proper, the 'they' and the 'way' are linked at 8:2-3 and the crowd are directly included at the start of the way instruction since Jesus 'called to him the crowd with the disciples' (8:34). He refers repeatedly to the crowd in the exorcism pericope (9:14,15,17,25) and later situates the crowd in the improbable setting 'in the region beyond the Jordan' (10:1). He also left Jericho with a 'great crowd' (10:46). Similarly, Mark conveys this indirect sense of a group about Jesus other than the twelve by varying the first person address forms. They form an interplay between the inconclusive 'they' (9:14-15) intermingled with the direct 'you', 'your', 'us' and 'yours' (9:15,20,38,41,43; 10:5). Such rhetorically flavoured language would have been especially effective in an intimate group of some 25 Christians, gathered in a private house-church in Rome.

As noted above, Mark appears to alternate the previous term 'crowd' with open-ended terms, 'any one', 'whoever', 'some' (9:1), with 'they' (9:30,33,34) along with the sudden introduction of 'anyone' at 9:35. There is too the repeated *hos an* (9:36-37). The unattached 'no one' receives Jesus' blessing (9:38-41), a reward available to 'whoever gives you a cup of water to drink' (9:41). Mark presumably addresses his own house-churches in addition to the narrative disciples for at 9:35 and 10:15 Jesus offers the gift of discipleship to the relevant 'anyone'.⁶¹⁴ When Jesus warns of scandals in a household context, it is a warning again given a wide application by *hos an*, which is especially applicable in a house context in 10:11,15,29.

The immediacy of the symbolic household fits neatly into the context of

⁶¹³ Mann, *Mark*, 376; cf. Gnllka, *Markus*, 2, 25.

⁶¹⁴ Sweetland, *Our Journey*, 62.

Mark's teaching that could only be relevant in a house setting. There is the personal focus on faith at the start to the way narrative, 'I believe, help my unbelief' (9:24). When the motif of faith and service are combined, these two factors suggest a sense of participation in the present reign of the kingdom within the house. It is expressed in Jesus' traditional teaching posture (9:35a), his unexpected summons ('he...called the twelve'; 9:35b), and his magisterial statement 'if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and the servant of all' (9:35c).⁶¹⁵ Jesus' own self-sacrifice (10:45) guarantees that service is the basic principle on which the new social reality or house-church way of discipleship is based (*diakonos* is used only at 9:35 and 10:43).⁶¹⁶

At this point, some exegetes doubt that Mark understood this household kingdom as a present reality. Humphrey exemplifies this position. He holds that the

"of all" phrase makes sense not only in the context of this section on discipleship but also in the context especially of an instruction to "the twelve" (9:35), if it refers to that community of disciples which is the church. Mark does not seem to be a gospel in which the "church" as the community of those who follow Christ is much in evidence; it cannot be, of course, because of the perspective Mark has taken for his story of Jesus.⁶¹⁷

Yet Humphrey ignores the perspective of the fruit of the risen Lord's word present in the household (cf. 1:40; 4:21-33; 7:30,35-37; 8:1-2). Pericopes such as 8:14-21 would not make sense apart from the understanding that the word's hundredfold was a constantly endangered reality among house-churches in Rome. The opposite is true too for the community was also conscious that while some disciples in the kingdom have produced great fruit (4:20) others in the past have failed the test of servant household discipleship (4:13-19). In these situations there is no sense of this result being confined to a single house-church or individual Christians (9:38-41).

Humphrey also insufficiently appreciates the Gospel's narrative structure. The first call pericope (1:16-20) enables Mark to describe Jesus as the ongoing, powerful

⁶¹⁵ Fleddermann, 'Discipleship', 60; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 105.

⁶¹⁶ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 137-138.

⁶¹⁷ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 87.

catalyst within the replacement house-churches (2:1-12,15-17; 4:10-12,21-34; 5:19-20,40-43) - with his servant fruitfulness. Similarly, with the servant fruitfulness in the house (1:29-31) that also illustrates its contemporary reference for Rome's house-churches where Jesus already reigns as the ultimate servant. After healing Peter's mother-in-law with a touch, he 'raised her' where upon she immediately 'served' them (1:31; cf. 1:13; 10:45; 15:41), verifying her authentic expression of faith. Household service was an integral part of discipleship, a key dimension of the secret (4:10-11; 13:35-37; cf. 9:28-29,33; 10:10; cf. 10:28-31).⁶¹⁸ The superscription too (1:1) sets the Gospel's narrative point in light of the ongoing response of the house-church to 'the gospel of God' (1:14); it is something to be believed, indeed a mystery in whose power and authority a Christian could live here and now.⁶¹⁹ Mark closes this key discipleship pericope with a re-affirmation of a 'call' to communities of faith to be counter-cultural.⁶²⁰

Furthermore, in terms of the Gospel rather than the Greco-Roman patriarchal culture, faith in the risen Son of Man lived in a servant attitude to the other is basic to a life of self-denial. This is a prerequisite in order to 'receive' the gift of 'the secret of the kingdom' (4:10-11). At the start of the way, the discipleship imperative, 'let him deny himself' (8:34) prepares a Christian to receive Jesus' statement in the relative clauses, 'whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me' (9:37). This condition also highlights how Mark sees all as gift. Fledderman argues that the first use of *dechomai* means to accept/serve the child (9:37a) while the second implies belief (9:37b). As a result,

to receive one such child in Jesus' name is to enter into a faith-community with him, which is to enter into a faith-community with Jesus and the one who sent him...Both the lowliness of the child and the ideal of service to the community are opposed to the *status seeking of the disciples*.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁸ Judge, *Social Patterns*, 9-10.

⁶¹⁹ Hooker, *Mark*, 33.

⁶²⁰ Rhoads, 'Losing Life', 360-361.

⁶²¹ Fleddermann, 'Discipleship', 63-64.

The contrary attitude is suggested in John's complaint: 'Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name and we forbade him, because he was not following us' (9:38). John seems to speak for the Twelve in addressing Jesus as teacher; they 'see' him from a non-faith perspective. They lacked faith just as they did when confronted by the possessed demoniac (9:14-27). John may represent house-church leaders who perceived a threat to their authority in this unattached stranger - they do not receive him (9:38b) since in John's objection, 'he does not follow us' (9:38), that is, our leadership. There is no sense of the reference being restricted to any particular house-church.

Donahue insists that the exorcist pericope (9:38-41) should be read in the light of an overall Christian community facing persecution. Such a single

instruction would have encouraged a positive attitude toward the adherents of other religions while reinforcing belief in the absolute centrality of the "name of Christ" in the economy of salvation. It would also serve as critique of Christian exclusiveness.⁶²²

He also suggests this was an indirect way of accentuating John's failure to understand that Jesus was the real source of the disciples' effectiveness (6:7).⁶²³ 'My name' reinforces the reality that, receiving a child in Jesus' name, equates with receiving Jesus. The name communicates the person's identity; John failed to appreciate the implications of Jesus' name and, with the other disciples, in this incident he failed to live the servant ideal. Of course, this challenge is meant for Mark's communities.

So does John represent the Christian in Rome who doesn't really know Jesus in faith? If John understood the full identity of Jesus, he would have known that anyone who performs a mighty deed in Jesus' name could not speak ill of him (9:39b). Jesus adds, 'For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose his reward' (9:41a). On this issue, La Verdiere notes the importance of the lived experience of fruitful faith. The

expression "you belong to Christ" (*Christou este* - literally, "you are of

⁶²² Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 290.

⁶²³ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 286.

Christ”) stands out. It presupposes considerable experience and reflection in the Christian community. For the context of Jesus’ historical ministry in Galilee, we would expect an expression like, “because you are my disciples.” In the context of the Church, we see that the disciples thought of themselves in relation to Christ. It was a short step from calling themselves “of Christ” to calling themselves Christians (cf. Acts 11:26).⁶²⁴

Mark follows his focus on the servant motif with an analysis of the term scandal (*skandalon*). Here and at 9:43,45,47, *skandalizein* is used metaphorically to refer to someone enticing another to sin, and thus frustrating that little one’s attempt to follow way discipleship. In contrast to 9:38-41, section 9:42-50 negatively expresses the servant motif positively spelt out in 9:33-37. It warns about actions that could weaken the key principle of community solidarity: Christians who live against the key faith concept of community life (9:40)⁶²⁵ - the servant ideal - cause little ones to falter on the way and leave the group (9:42),⁶²⁶ behaviour causing community scandal.

However, the graphic imagery of 9:42 (‘it would be better for him...’) does not detail any punishment for ‘anyone’ who ‘causes one of these little ones to sin’. Though the RSV favours this translation, some scholars including Stock, opt for a less specific rendering: ‘whoever should cause to stumble, to fall,’ a reading applicable to the little ones (9:42) while Hooker translates *skandalizo* as portraying the concept of ‘to cause to stumble’ for a household member.⁶²⁷ Working from Mark’s understanding of *paidion* as a type of the ‘little ones’, to cause such a little one to stumble along the way offends against the ethic of service, especially if the little one is a recent convert or any type of *paroikoi*. Such actions would lessen the intensity of faith within the group.⁶²⁸

This block of teaching (9:42-50) is built on four key words: ‘name’, ‘scandal’, ‘fire’ and ‘salt’. Their logic is external and formal. It does not proceed by argument or the force of ideas, so that a process of memorisation is suggested, making it

⁶²⁴ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 58.

⁶²⁵ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 89.

⁶²⁶ Fleddermann, ‘Discipleship’, 67; cf. Barton, *Discipleship*, 89

⁶²⁷ Stock, *Method*, 259; Hooker, *Mark*, 231.

⁶²⁸ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 89.

likely that these verses were part of the oral traditions underlying the Gospel. Mark targets egotism, whether in one's position in the group or household patriarchal influence that would hinder the difficult ethic of selfless service (cf. 4:10-12). Fledderman sees

the dual role of the child in v. 37. The child is both a symbol of the needy member of the community the disciples must serve and also an image of the lowly person the disciple must become.⁶²⁹

The gift of Christian life in the community calls for a spirit of selfishness for a 'little one' (9:43,45) especially in view of extraordinary nature of this gift.⁶³⁰ So if *scandalise* (9:42) talks about scandalising another, 9:43-47 is concerned with self-inflicted scandal. Stock describes 'the different member's hand, foot or eye (9:43-47) as the acting subject. Ultimately, the individual disciple is responsible for his/her actions⁶³¹ as the next three conditional clauses illustrate (9:43-47).

That the whole community shares the responsibility to avoid any kind of scandal is underlined by the syntax. If 'whoever', (third person singular) directs the focus of the first saying to community leaders, the next three types are addressed in the second person singular, starting with a modifying clause; for example, 'If your hand causes you to sin...' (9:43). Each Christian is warned to avoid the destructiveness of scandal that inevitably corrodes the unity and peace of the household. Whether a verse refers to scandal given or received, its startling language exemplifies a raw prophetic statement, designed to jolt its audience into a realisation of what is at stake for each Christian in this particular issue of scandal. From the nature of a hyperbole, a moral hyperbole is not a moral prescription; its role is to change attitudes and conduct.⁶³²

The singular *sou* (9:43) intensifies the personal choice involved. This is a more direct challenge than the previous impersonal *hos an* (9:42). The Markan Jesus calls each little one to share in the gift of the kingdom. Personal and communal aspects

⁶²⁹ Fleddermann, 'Discipleship', 71; cf. Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 89.

⁶³⁰ Mann, *Mark*, 384.

⁶³¹ Stock, *Method*, 260.

⁶³² La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 61.

of this gift should not be sacrificed to sinful desire. Jesus had previously set out the basis of the dignity of a disciple when he identifies his Father and himself with the least of these little ones (9:37) - the presupposition of this identification was the practice of rulers sending out emissaries. In a Christian context, the little one is to be treated with the respect appropriate to the one who sends them. His dignity is enhanced by the change in the rhetorical pattern in 'entering into life' (9:45) to 'enter the kingdom of God' (9:47).

The catchword 'fire' (9:48) exemplifies the pericope's hyperbolic language apart from summarising this section of teaching in 'everyone will be salted with fire' (9:49).⁶³³ It cannot mean the fire of *Gehenna* since Mark designed the instruction of 9:43-48 to prevent this type of judgment ever occurring in the community.⁶³⁴ Hurtado maintains that the liturgical custom of salting the holocaust victim may have influenced the choice of this symbol (Lev 2:13).⁶³⁵ He argues that 'fire' (9:49) does not convey the sense of an eternal judgment but no doubt means the fires of crosses and difficulties in the believer's life, the type of fire that purifies.⁶³⁶ This includes the living sacrifice of a Christian's daily living of the Markan servant ideal in the life of the household - whatever the cost (cf. Rom 12:1). Exegetes indicate a possible future testing of the community's experience by persecution (as Hooker does) in the way that salt purifies a sacrifice. Intense selflessness would constitute the fruit of the disciple's household testing by salt/suffering in fidelity to the servant ideal (9:35; cf. 8:34-35).⁶³⁷

There is a stress on the salt image at 9:50. The ancient world viewed salt as a necessity of life. Taste was its vital sign of quality so disciples who did not sincerely live servant-faith are like salt-bleached material, now tasteless and useless. The two earlier situations of conflict and disunity (9:38-41) highlight the disciples' selfish concern about rank and the unnamed exorcist's perceived threat to their role. To such aberrations, Mark

⁶³³ Gundry, *Mark*, 515.

⁶³⁴ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 139; cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 515; La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 61.

⁶³⁵ Hurtado, *Mark*, 156.

⁶³⁶ Hurtado, *Mark*, 156; cf. Stock, *Method*, 262.

proposes the peace of covenant fellowship - salt was a symbol of the covenant (Lev 2:13b; Num 18:19; Ezra 4:14). To share salt with someone is to share fellowship, to be united in covenant peace.⁶³⁸ Thus, the Christian ideal is to have salt in oneself and be at peace with the other (9:50), the fruit of mutual selflessness. Where servant-dedication formed the basis of a house-church, disputes would be muted, even at times eliminated and an enduring peace would ensue.⁶³⁹ But, if the salt of the household's covenant relationships had become insipid, there is a need to listen to the Gospel and repent (1:15). A greater communal covenant peace would then ensue.

Pesch situates the salt and fire in the context of both the Eucharist and persecution for the faith, two aspects that presume a household context for their relevance.⁶⁴⁰ The emphatic, hyperbolic nature of Mark's structure in 9:33-50 indicates that his anti-cultural servant ideal flourished in at least some households of faith - the challenge was to sustain it. Perhaps the outlook of some Christians in Rome had slipped towards current social norms, then, 'if salt has lost its saltiness how will you season it?' (9:50). In order to persevere in living the servant ethic, faith inspired prayer is an imperative for Christians; by it they espouse the Father's will (9:49; cf. 3:35).

4. FURTHER ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY LIFE

Mark continues his outline of the basis of servant discipleship in 10:1-31. As with 1:16-8:26, 10:1-31 reveals the unspoken supposition of the norm of faith in the word of God (10:3-9) as the foundation of way household-church's life. A geographical detail, 'he left there (Capernaum) and went to the region of Judea' (10:1), reveals the shift in setting towards Jerusalem for this teaching. It also hints at the coming fulfilment of the passion predictions that challenge Rome's house-churches to faith in a crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). Gundry sees the historical sense of *erchetai*

⁶³⁷ Hooker, *Mark*, 233.

⁶³⁸ Fleddermann, 'Discipleship', 73; cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 233; La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 63.

⁶³⁹ Fleddermann, 'Discipleship', 73; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 239; Hurtado, *Mark*, 156; Mann, *Mark*, 384.

⁶⁴⁰ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 116-118.

stressing Jesus' entry into 'the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan' as the start of the fulfilment of his predictions concerning Jerusalem's fate.⁶⁴¹ La Verdiere adds that 'across' or 'beyond' the 'other side' can also mean 'over against or opposite' and from the districts of Judea over by the Jordan, Jesus would be well positioned for his journey to Jerusalem.⁶⁴²

By hinting at the shadow of the cross, Mark associates his instructions in 10:1-31 with the previous servant teaching at 9:14-50, teaching that will climax with Jesus' dramatic servant statement: he came 'to give his life as a ransom for many' (10:45). Based on faith, it relates discipleship norms in Chapter 10 to Christian conduct in the house-church.⁶⁴³ Literary features align 10:1-52 to the symbolic way/house synthesis. (10:10-12,28-31,32).⁶⁴⁴ The Markan symbolic house, way and child motif and the associated domestic themes of hospitality, together with charity to the poor, are present. In addition to the theme of the disciples' blindness, Mark's rhetorical strategy and his technique of public teaching/private explanation at intervals along the 'way' reappear (9:33; 10:10). The ubiquitous 'crowd' (10:1,13,46), suggested at 8:35,38; 9:14,37,41,42 and 10:28, assists this continued unified pattern.

The crowds at 10:1 personify this narrative unity 'for the crowds gathered to him again' (10:1).⁶⁴⁵ Rhoads and Michie argue for a negative understanding of this crowd by citing 14:43, 'Judas came...and with him a crowd'.⁶⁴⁶ But in that incident, it was a Jerusalem 'crowd with swords and clubs' (14:43-47), who previously, had no contact with Jesus; they had not heard his message (3:31-35) nor had they been privy to key Gospel scenes (cf. 9:15) or challenged to follow Jesus along the way (8:33-34). This group came at the order of an opposing cosmic power, an extension of Satan's power in

⁶⁴¹ Gundry, *Mark*, 529.

⁶⁴² La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 66.

⁶⁴³ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 128-130; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 239.

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. *hodos* - 'way': 8:27; 9:33,34; 10:17,32,46,52; *oikos* - 'house': 9:28,33; 10:10,29,30.

⁶⁴⁵ Rhoads and Michie, *Mark As Story*, 134-135; cf. 8:34; 9:14,15,17,25; 10:1,46.

⁶⁴⁶ Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 135.

the establishment's strategy to destroy Jesus by seeking his crucifixion.

The positive image of the responsive 'way' crowd, which is repeatedly attracted to Jesus (10:1; 3:35; 8:34-35) and referred to at crucial rhetorical pericopes in the narrative also opposes Rhoads' and Michie's thesis (cf. 2:13; 3:7,20,32,34; 4:1; 5:27; 6:34; 8:34-35 and so on). The fact that the Markan crowd came to Jesus at 10:1,13,23 29 endows Jesus' words and actions with an inclusive dimension, especially by *oudeis* (10:29). It intimates that discipleship, far from being the preserve of the twelve or the disciples, is within reach of everyone (10:11,15; cf. 6:34). Mark's Christians would have sensed that they too were addressed through the image of the crowd.⁶⁴⁷ As well, in the context of the journey it is difficult to envisage the existence of the concrete setting from which the Pharisees' question came regarding divorce. For the Pharisees to materialise here in the desolate region 'beyond the Jordan' (10:1) seems historically improbable. But, gathered to hear Jesus' teaching, the Markan crowds symbolise a timeless audience in the privacy of the house, a frequent construction in the text.

In first century Rome, a man could legally divorce his wife; hence divorce was an issue to be dealt with.⁶⁴⁸ The group of Pharisees, who keep popping up in order to tempt Jesus (10:2), may point to a doctrinal dispute in Rome's house-churches. Mark, by 'adultery against her' and 'adultery against him' (10:2), apportions the responsibility for the impasse on both husband and wife. Re-marriage by either makes reconciliation impossible and runs counter to eschatological ethics.⁶⁴⁹

An occasional household may have allowed divorce due to hardness of heart in the marriage relationship (10:5) while other groups opposed it. Roman law also influenced this question of divorce by offering women, as well as men, the legal right to initiate divorce proceedings⁶⁵⁰ yet it is a law that jars with the concept of the

⁶⁴⁷ Hooker, *Mark*, 119.

⁶⁴⁸ Anderson, *Mark*, 240.

⁶⁴⁹ Stock, *Method*, 267.

⁶⁵⁰ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 142; cf. Ferguson, *Background*, 69–70, 70–71; Gundry, *Mark*, 533.

eschatological times when family bonds are radically redefined (3:31–35). Hence, in this community teaching the crucial issue of divorce deals with the question the permanence of marriage viewed in the light of the word of God (Gn 1:27; 2:24; 9:50).⁶⁵¹ From a faith perspective, now in this time the family's unity is based on a household's 'brother, sister and mother' relationship of those 'who do the will of God' (cf. 3:35). But Mark was forced to deal with the issue of divorce since it disrupted the stability of durable house-churches set in nominally patriarchal households or in an *insula*.⁶⁵² Juel states:

The major criticism aimed at Christians in the Roman world - and the reason for later persecutions - was that they were antisocial, threatening bonds that held together the human community from the family to the state.⁶⁵³

So, in what concerns marriage, Mark's teaching cuts across Rome's current social norms. He applies appropriate scriptural teaching on the sacredness of marriage in order to outline a social renewal designed to transform the patriarchal family structure while rejecting current Jewish practice.⁶⁵⁴ Mark cites God's evaluative point of view (cf. 7:1-13) by invoking his creative plan in Genesis 2:24: 'the two shall become one' for 'they are no longer two but one' (10: 7-8). This type of relationship could be formed only through mutual selflessness. The teaching seems to imply that some

members in Mark's communities appear to have forgotten or challenged Jesus' teaching. Being countercultural was not easy. Mark's Gospel reminded them of Jesus' prophetic message and preserved it for future generations.⁶⁵⁵

God's will is normative for unity. So 'the emphasis on unity thus established in marriage reflects...the command to "live in peace with one another" in 9:50. The comments...to control one's life..."to save one's life" (8:35)...reflect the egocentric drive that leads to disunity'.⁶⁵⁶ Mark treats this issue again in outlining the

⁶⁵¹ Gnilka, *Markus*, 2, 119.

⁶⁵² Ferguson, *Background*, 65.

⁶⁵³ Juel, *Mark*, 137.

⁶⁵⁴ Juel, *Mark*, 137-141; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 75.

⁶⁵⁵ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 75.

⁶⁵⁶ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 90.

eschatological features of the Christian family at 10:31 and 10:45.⁶⁵⁷ From the Gospel's narrative viewpoint, D.O. Via presupposes that now in the *eschaton* of the good news (1:1) such a reality 'recovers the original vitality of the first time' in creation. The reference points to the reign of the Lord in the replacement 'house of prayer'. The eschatological references in the Markan sense mean that the time inaugurated by Jesus constitutes the new creation, the *kairos* of the new beginning (1:14-15); it continues, in time, the kingdom's reign in the house-church. Since the community stands post-resurrection, a stable marriage - apart from its intrinsic challenge to selflessness - buttresses faith-based permanent relationships that are being deepened along the way.⁶⁵⁸

Historically, Jesus may have taught various aspects of marriage 'in the district of Judea' (10:1). But here, the teaching of 10:5-9 is repeated to an eschatological community 'now in this time' (10:30). Gnilya argues that, if the summary (10:10-12) is situated in the 'house', it indicates a different teaching prevailing against that in the symbolic 'district of Judea' (10:1).⁶⁵⁹ Also, the sudden transfer to the house of this teaching - at loggerheads with the nature of first century ethical advice dealing with the family - suggests that it is an expression of the mysterious reality of the kingdom's reign in the house group. The Lord's living word was the catalyst for the transformation of society through the renewal of the family. It was to be a social restoration. Its 'ultimate goal was the rebuilding of the human family, not its destruction'.⁶⁶⁰ If house-churches express God's will (3:35), peace and unity would be signs of his presence in its daily life. Disunity would not only run counter to the unity ideal presupposed in the 'two shall become one' (10:8) but, from a discipleship perspective, it would lessen the households' integrity necessary for a united faith community being an effective evangelising medium.

The phrase, 'and in the house again' (10:10), connects this teaching to other

⁶⁵⁷ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 90.

⁶⁵⁸ D.O. Via, *The Ethics of Mark's Gospel in the Middle of Time*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 103-105; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 76.

⁶⁵⁹ Gnilya, *Markus*, 2, 12.

instances of Jesus' authoritative statements in the community. 'Again' is related to Jesus being at home, not with the disciples' questioning; it forms a link between Jesus' teaching on divorce (10:1-9) and the specific teaching in 9:33-50. There, Jesus also taught in the house. In this pericope, there is no element of amazement for the pattern of instructing the disciples in private is already established (cf. 3:31-35; 4:10-25; 7:17-23; 9:28-29). These cases reflect the tradition's treatment of moral issues that the Gentile mission faced once it moved out of a Jewish context into the wider Gentile world. In each case, Jesus' historical teaching of what was once applicable under the Law in the Jewish culture is reinterpreted in the light of the resurrection for Gentile addressees.

But the very fact that Jesus prohibits divorce is to acknowledge that it was an issue within the Christian community in Rome, fracturing the community. And, despite understanding the house-church in the light of servant discipleship, hardness of heart and human weakness pose an ongoing challenge to faith and charity in the community. The 'time is fulfilled' (1:14-15) so in the *eschaton* the ideal of discipleship in Christian household life is determined by Jesus' challenge to foster the servant ideal in accord with the word's call for covenant charity.⁶⁶¹ Obedience to it will underpin the exclusive, servant nature of marriage relationships (Gn 1:27; 2:24).

It appears that 10:10-12 is strategically placed in the context of the 'little ones', teaching that is also preceded by sayings about the little ones in 9:42-50. This is

followed by Jesus' teaching about the availability of the *basileia* to "children" (10:13-16). Jesus presents the child as the paradigm of the *basileia's* recipient. This further confirms the welcome of the divorced in Mark's household. Any consideration of "the little ones" of the household must be broadened to include those who are victims of divorce.⁶⁶²

For the straitened Christian partner in a divorce, being welcomed into an eschatological group would be a 'gift' - the kingdom received. From the type of faith community envisaged at 3:31-35, the primacy of family relationships is preceded by the prior

⁶⁶⁰ Juel, *Mark*, 137; cf. La Verdere, *Beginning*, 2, 76.

⁶⁶¹ Hurtado, *Mark*, 161.

inclusivity of relationships founded on faith. Mark states that the disciple now in this time will receive a hundredfold, including brothers, and sisters and mothers. Via agrees:

The eschatological new creation both recovers the possibility of permanent marriage and reconstitutes the structures of community. Both marriage and a concern for all the brothers, sisters, children and so forth, rest on faith as freedom for the other.⁶⁶³

To act as a basis for this resurrection reality is a primary consideration for enduring marriages in the principle of freedom for the other in communities of faith.

At 10:13, Jesus is presumably still in the house with his disciples, since Mark does not state otherwise (10:10). The reference in the clause ‘they were bringing little children to him’ (10:13) alludes to a household context. It would be the natural place for children to be. Then the ‘they’ (10:13) are house-church members, who receive ‘the child’ into the community, drawn from the crowds attracted to Jesus. There, the child was to be accepted in the spirit of relating to the ‘other’, whatever the ‘child’s’ natural relationship or lack of, to the community’s members (10:1). ‘They’ in the crowd (10:1), not the parents, bring the symbolic children to Jesus.

The disciples respond unfavourably; hence Jesus’ indignation. But to the converts or poor, who do ‘become’ like a child (10:14), Jesus displays his approval in his threefold, symbolic actions. He received the children, blessed them, and laid ‘his hands upon them’ (10:16), actions which could signify a type of liturgical action or the baptismal reception of a convert into the community.⁶⁶⁴ The disciples’ negative reaction (‘they rebuked them’) may indicate individual or household objections to certain types, whom over-demanding house leaders may consider unsuitable for house-church membership. It would also suggest the growth of the community since Mark’s reiterated use of *pros auto* (10:1; cf. 1:32,36,40,44,45; 2:3,13; 3:13,31; 4:1,36,38 and so on) points

⁶⁶² Trainor, *Quest*, 152.

⁶⁶³ Via, *Ethics*, 152.

⁶⁶⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 544; cf. Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 91-92.

to Jesus' power to attract crowds - with their needs and weaknesses.⁶⁶⁵ In Markan terms, the disciples who do not relate to or receive such *paroikoi* into the kingdom 'shall not enter it' (10:15).

The disciples fear that their role is endangered.⁶⁶⁶ This is an extension of their constant failure on the way to fully absorb the concept of a servant attitude (9:34,38; 10:35-40,41-44; cf. 9:28-29). With such a viewpoint, it is hardly likely that their behaviour at 10:13b ('and the disciples rebuked them') results from a protective attitude of Jesus. Rather, it demonstrates a mistaken sense of what constitutes authority in the community. If so, their action reflects a tendency among some house leaders who use their role in the group as a basis for power, conduct typical of non-kingdom behaviour. Such an attitude is shown again in Zebedee's sons' request for preferential, authoritative roles (10:35-40).⁶⁶⁷ Jesus teaches that authority and service are interchangeable terms.⁶⁶⁸

Yet what causes Mark to raise the issue of children? Culturally, (as noted above) they were regarded largely as 'property' and had no rights. This left them open to exploitation but, Jesus adds, 'to such (children) belongs the kingdom of God' (10:14-15). Clearly, the phrase, 'like a child' is a metaphor. Just as with 9:36, Jesus' indignant rebuke in 10:14 corrects household members who obstruct the openness of the community to outsiders who are ready to accept Jesus' teaching as children. No human action can merit the kingdom.⁶⁶⁹ Jesus insists that Christians have yet to learn the hard lesson that to enter the kingdom of God demands that we receive it - everything is gift for everyone on God's terms. To accept Jesus' teaching on marriage in the context of divorce meant receiving it as a child within the kingdom's reign (10:15).⁶⁷⁰

For Via, the disciple must become as a child, a learning process by which he

⁶⁶⁵ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 91.

⁶⁶⁶ Hurtado, *Mark*, 162; cf. Mann, *Mark*, 396.

⁶⁶⁷ Hooker, *Mark*, 238; cf. Harrington, 'Mark', 617.

⁶⁶⁸ Anderson, *Mark*, 245.

⁶⁶⁹ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 81.

⁶⁷⁰ Gnlika, *Markus*, 2, 132.

retraces the path that a child follows in becoming an adult; he takes risks in abandoning a false security and moves back to his youth.⁶⁷¹ Best adds that the disciple receives the Kingdom but to receive it in a household of faith is not to accept a lower status or less material security; it is to allow God's will to guide his life (10:15).⁶⁷² Human merit does not guarantee the right to enter the kingdom. For an adult, to receive the gift of the kingdom demands that one becomes a child, an ongoing attitudinal change that involves passing through death to life (8:34–35).

Jesus embraces the child. Arguing from 9:37 with its sequence of little children, Jesus and the Father, Jesus' embrace of these metaphorical children intimates something more than the Jewish custom of a father's blessing. The verb *enagkalizomai* means 'to take into one's arms' or 'put one's arms around someone'. In the New Testament, it appears only here and at 9:36. In both instances, Jesus' symbolic embrace is also directed to those, anyone or everyone, who are 'such as these' (10:14b). In this gesture, Jesus proclaims the advent of the kingdom, a gift offered by God to all. Selfless human service to the other is its secret (cf. 1:32–34,41; 5:21–43; 6:34; 8:2; 9:25–29; 10:46–52). La Verdiere sees an indirect rhetorical stress in this symbolic gesture from a different angle: Jesus' embrace had awesome implications since embraced by Jesus, the children, and those who were joined in Jesus' message of the kingdom, are taken into the mystery of his death and resurrection.⁶⁷³

To 'receive' and 'to enter' appear to indicate a 'child' being offered a gift 'in this time' (10:30). Harrington argues that receiving and entering the kingdom are depicted as present possibilities for the two acts are simultaneous.⁶⁷⁴ This post-resurrection perspective is also indicated by both verbs (*dexetai, eiselthe*) being in the same tense and mood (aorist subjunctive). This present gift of life within the kingdom is

⁶⁷¹ Via, *Ethics*, 130.

⁶⁷² Best, *Disciples*, 96–97.

⁶⁷³ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 88; cf. Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 300.

⁶⁷⁴ Harrington, 'Mark', 618; La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 84.

the reverse of Mark's statement, 'whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it' (10:15). Here is an implied imperative, because becoming a child requires a decision to receive/respond to the living word of Jesus who has the authority and power to transform a person of faith (cf. 4:20; 9:2-8).⁶⁷⁵ In the previous episode on the necessity of household service (9:36-37),

Jesus used the example of a child as a way of teaching about the service of others, especially those who seemed to be social nobodies. There the emphasis was on the child's lack of social status and legal rights. Here children are presented as symbolizing powerlessness, dependence, and receptiveness....Here the focus is on the dependence of children and the fact that they necessarily receive everything as a gift.⁶⁷⁶

Therefore, the word 'receive' challenges the disciple to 're-appropriate childhood; a new beginning (1:15) with the power to exist, to be, which is prior to the achievement of being through doing for without physical power or legal status, children know best how to receive'.⁶⁷⁷ It also appears that 10:15 is an authentic saying of Jesus, issuing from a dominical context. For Marcus, the first part of the verse, with its reference to receiving the *basileia*, demands an appreciation of the dynamic aspect of the phrase. The gift of entry into a kingly sovereignty or reign may be received, but not an actual realm itself.⁶⁷⁸ This saying reflects a Jewish context for the child is the one who must submit to the wisdom, will and rule of his parents.⁶⁷⁹ In faith, this rule is the wisdom and will of the Father of the house, the source of the secret of the kingdom (8:31; 14:36; 10:29-30; 11:22-25; cf. 3:35).

The child exhibits no initiative and certainly does not activate any process that could be construed as earning the kingdom. Rather, the child who receives accepts that his life is set in the reign and activity of another whereas the Pharisees spoke of

⁶⁷⁵ Via, *Ethics*, 131.

⁶⁷⁶ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 301.

⁶⁷⁷ Via, *Ethics*, 132; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 285.

⁶⁷⁸ J. Marcus, 'Entering Into the Kingly Power of God', *JBL* 107 (1988), 663-665.

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. A. Oepke, *Pais*, *TDNT* 5, 642.

accepting the rule of the kingdom of heaven.⁶⁸⁰ The sense of gift is precisely the opposite to the Pharisees' concept of maturity who saw adulthood linked to the observance of the Law. To observe the Law meant to cross from childhood to adulthood, to merit righteousness whereas the statement that 'all things are possible to him who believes' (9:23; cf. 11:23) suggests that those who 'receive' share in God's reign in his Son, present in the house. It also presupposes that the house-church is the spatial focus of the new temple not made with hands.⁶⁸¹

To enter the *basileia* is not an autonomous human action that transposes the disciple into another world. It is a humble acceptance of a gratuitous incorporation into God's revealing reign in the hum-drum of life whether based on a natural family household or in a voluntary Christian group.⁶⁸² Given that Via agrees that 10:14-15 forms an entering saying, he does not view it as an 'entering' into the apocalyptic battle but sharing in the final result of that battle. Even here the *basileia* does not constitute a realm; it is into the reign of God that the chosen child enters at the eschaton.⁶⁸³

In this context, there is a focus on the child since the term is repeated seven times in four verses along with *enagkalisamenos* (9:36; 10:16). As Marcus notes, as a child refers to the non-resistance of the children who come to Jesus, but 'whoever does not receive' bestows the dynamic meaning of 'rule' on the concept of the kingdom; it points to the presence of God's reign now, ready for being received (cf. 1:15). Mark clearly sees this kingly rule as currently present in the 'house' for it presupposes a disciple's acceptance and fidelity to God's will as enunciated at 3:35.⁶⁸⁴

In the Mediterranean world, the dyadic personality needed another to know who he or she is. A person perceives himself or herself as always interrelated with others

⁶⁸⁰ Marcus, 'Kingly Power', 672-73.

⁶⁸¹ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 89; cf. Via, *Ethics*, 130.

⁶⁸² Marcus, 'Kingly Power', 671.

⁶⁸³ Via, *Ethics*, 131; cf. Marcus, 'Kingly Power', 672-673.

⁶⁸⁴ Marcus, 'Kingly Power', 675; cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 545.

in the community (12:35-37).⁶⁸⁵ It appears then that the symbolic house/home was characterised much more by interlocking relationships than by a specific place. But when Jesus is associated with the disciples or a minor character, both are set in the sphere of the house motif. Compared to key images of the mountain, the sea and the boat, the house for most people had a greater symbolic range because in Greco-Roman culture the house is the spatial setting for the whole range of life's experiences in urban centres.

As stated above, to receive the 'secret of the kingdom of God' (4:10) is to accept the gift of living in the midst of the reign of the Lord in an eschatological household of faith. Mark returns to his fusion of the 'house' (10:30) and 'way' symbols immediately prior to the second mention of Jerusalem (10:32) for in 10:28-31 there are further concepts associated with the house motif.⁶⁸⁶

5. THE MARKAN HOUSE-CHURCH

This chapter's fifth point - the fruits of way discipleship - is reinforced at 10:28-31 with the introduction in Jesus' solemn, 'Truly I say to you' (10:29). Some scholars query any link between 10:17-27 and the outline of eschatological families in 10:28-31,⁶⁸⁷ but this house-church pericope seems anticipated by the indissoluble nature of marriage, the child symbolism, Jesus' discipleship challenge to the rich man (10:21) and the key necessity of faith.⁶⁸⁸ Apart from the internal consistency of the discipleship links (cf. the disciples' blindness - 10:10,14,24,26,28), the material is gathered under the umbrella of the pervasive metaphorical house motif. Best regards 10:1-31 as a pre-Markan arrangement. The sections mesh since they all deal with discipleship in relation to an external family factor: wife, children of this union, marriage itself and property.⁶⁸⁹ The section too is couched in Markan terms: Jesus the teacher, way discipleship ('with persecutions'

⁶⁸⁵ B.J. Malina, 'The Individual and the Community Personality in the Social World of Early Christianity', *BTB* 9 (1979), 126-138.

⁶⁸⁶ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 91.

⁶⁸⁷ E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, (JSNTSS 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 110; cf. D. Malone, 'Riches and Discipleship: Mark 10:23-31', *BTB* 9, (1979), 78-87.

⁶⁸⁸ Via, *Ethics*, 142-143.

10:30), ‘no one’ (10:29), crowds, public question/private explanation and the living word of the ‘gospel’ (10:29; cf. 1:15).

Peter’s question, ‘What will we receive?’ (10:28) bonds 10:1-27 to Jesus’ teaching at 10:28-31. Jesus’ answer opens with ‘Truly, I say to you’, a frequent solemn introduction from 9:33-10:52; it summarises the rich young man pericope (10:17-27) and extends the way theme and focuses on the heart of discipleship, ‘for my sake and for the gospel’ (10:29), within communal life. Arguably, the reference to pristine creation, expressing the will of God (10:6b-9) is restated in 10:29-30 in terms of the sense of fullness: the hundredfold link ‘in this time and eternal life in the age to come’ (10:30; 4:20). ‘Now in this present time’, the Lord’s reign constitutes the ongoing replacement house of prayer; the Father of the community is presupposed:

the “hundredfold” is a present reality in the Christian households at Rome. They are tangible signs of the fruitfulness of the seed in the parable of the sower (4:8) as its members experience in their renewed kinship structure “house, brothers and sisters, mothers and children and fields” (Mk 10:30). What is clearly absent in the redefinition of membership in Jesus’ family is the *paterfamilias*. This does not mean that male parents are absent from the community. On the contrary, through the restructure of power relationships with its focus on the least, servant and slave, the ultimate figure of power in the Greco-Roman world, the *paterfamilias*, will have no part to play.⁶⁹⁰

In the household, members experience the peace and security of the community’s anti-cultural kinship structures while the practice of hospitality and welcome towards fellow Christians metaphorically allowed early Christians to possess many houses. Because of the refocusing of power relationships on the least, the poor and the slave, the role of the *paterfamilias* is to serve. The redactional stress on household servant discipleship, moreover, catches up the pervasive theme of centring the servant Lord within the group.⁶⁹¹ Mutual service allows the servant Lord (10:45) to reign in the midst of the household whether in the exercise of his healing power at 1:16-20; 2:1-12,13-15; 3:20-35; 5:19-20; 7:24-30 or in authoritative teaching in the house along the

⁶⁸⁹ Best, *Following Jesus*, 99.

⁶⁹⁰ Trainor, *Quest*, 153.

way (9:28-29,33-50; 10:10-12).

While Best sees the repetition of ‘house and brothers and sisters and mother’ as clumsy and unnecessary (Luke and Matthew omit it), Gundry argues for Mark’s intentional focus on the complementarity of these elements in the house. The

similarity between the lists of those items, in that the items in both lists makes sense as defining “house” in terms of a household, plus the sharing of the term “house” itself (and this at the head of both lists) supports the definition. Thus, “house” in the sense of a household would supply the general category to which belong a man’s brothers, sisters, mother, father, children and fields.⁶⁹²

For La Verdere, 10:30 recalls 3:20-21,31-35 defining the mother, brothers and sisters of Jesus for ‘their house or home is wherever the disciples gather’.⁶⁹³ Fathers are omitted from both lists (10:30; cf. 3:35), indicating God’s paternity in this new social phenomenon (cf. 9:37; 11:25; 14:36). He guarantees the secret now (cf. the passive verb, *dedotai* - 4:44; cf. *labe* - 10:30a) and ‘eternal life in the age to come’ (10:30b). Mark reminds his groups that God’s overarching control offers reassurance before the spectre of more persecution in the narrative aside, ‘not without persecution’ (10:30b).⁶⁹⁴ Post-Nero, not only was it a constant possibility (13:12) but the counter-cultural Christian household and its servant ethic guaranteed continued social hostility. The house-church knew this from first hand experience (4:14-19)

Selflessness (8:34-35) disposes disciples to receive (10:15). ‘Now in this time’ (10:30), if houses are left (10:29) such discipleship ensures what the stress on the house motif makes explicit: eschatological union with Jesus and the ‘one who sent me’ (9:37). This relationship buttressed a new framework of relationships within the cultural setting of houses, lands and so on. In the reiteration of ‘houses’, the fruits that are present ‘now in this time’ separate the eschatological reward from that to come in the

⁶⁹¹ Best, *Following Jesus*, 114.

⁶⁹² R.H. Gundry, ‘Mark 10:29: Order in the List’, *CBQ* 59, (1997), 467.

⁶⁹³ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 2, 103; cf. Best, *Following Jesus*, 114; Gundry, ‘Order in the List’, 467.

⁶⁹⁴ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 245.

future 'eternal life' (10:30b).⁶⁹⁵ So Mark directs his redactional modifications of traditional material in 10:1-31 to describe the state of an eschatological group wherein lies the hundredfold 'now'. This image catches up the sower parable (4:2-9) and its ramifications for Christian living (4:13-19,20-32).⁶⁹⁶

The 'now' life in the eschatological household is also linked to life in the 'age to come' (10:30). Logically, servant discipleship in the first finds its perfection in the second since living within this reign is incompatible with the values of the social structures and dynamics of this age (cf. 9:49-50). In Mark's terms, genuine household disciples divest themselves of egotism (8:34; cf. 10:17-27); they relate freely to the other, 'for my sake and for the gospel' (10:30), offering themselves as the servant of all (9:35). In order to be first, the servant must be the last of all. Those who do so do not express authority like the Gentiles but as servants of the community (10:42-43). Yet, Mark is also aware that the community must exist in this existential world; its members need shelter/houses, sustenance, and the security of a united Christian household. This is particularly true for a convert, faced with the decision to forsake 'house or brothers' for Jesus' 'sake and for the gospel' (10:29). Thus, of necessity, the actual house of the Christian house-church formed ongoing historical connections.

The eschatological household (10:28-31) comes immediately before the third passion prediction (10:32-34), its shared theme of suffering gives it a sharper Roman edge. The clause 'they were on the way going up to Jerusalem' (10:32) hints at the understandable fear in the house-churches over the possibility of further persecution for, in the light of their recent experience, the phrase 'with persecutions' (10:30) constitutes a solemn warning for Rome's Christians. Moreover, the phrase 'ahead of them' (10:32b) reintroduces the questions first of who were 'they' who were amazed and second, who does Mark designate in his clause 'those who followed were afraid' (10:32b)? After the

⁶⁹⁵ Barton, *Discipleship*, 99.

⁶⁹⁶ Nineham, *Mark*, 139; cf. Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 82, for a cross section of views on this topic.

first passion prediction, Peter rebuked Jesus (8:32). After the second,

the disciples who did not understand were too afraid (*ephobounto*) to ask about it (9:32). Even so, Jesus had gone to great lengths to map “the way” and make clear what it meant to follow him (8:33-9:29; 9:33-10:31). Now Jesus was leading them to Jerusalem. Many had come from Jerusalem to be healed by him (3:8), but many others had come to denounce him as possessed and demonic (3:22). There was reason for the disciples’ amazement.⁶⁹⁷

In contrast, within the repeated Markan sense of the Twelve (10:32) and the disciples on the way, ‘those who followed’ form that allusive, indeterminate crowd, perhaps a larger group of Jesus’ disciples beyond the Twelve (10:32c).⁶⁹⁸ Rhetorically, they include Rome’s house-church members (2:2,13; 3:7,20,32; 4:10-11; 5:19-20; 6:34; 7:14). It should be kept in mind that the journey motif for Mark’s house-churches is not solely a literary template but alludes to the real ‘way’ of suffering that fits in with the social opprobrium that Christians faced in Rome, circa 67-69 CE. The crucified/risen Lord led, they are following; ‘going before’ can refer to ‘going earlier’ (6:45) or ‘going in front of’ (11:9), indicating someone’s position relative to others on a journey. Here, given the symbolic power of ‘the way’, it very likely also refers to Jesus’ personal relationship with each Christian and the nature of their response. Chapter 6 illustrates this theme: faith enables disciples to merge their existential becoming with that of the servant/Son of Man in Jesus’ present reign as the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord.

Thus, once more we have the reiterated, allusive rhetorical invitation to follow to the impersonal ‘those’ (10:32c), no doubt meant to be offered to Rome’s Christians in order to position themselves symbolically in the group that make its way to Jerusalem. Mark deliberately separates this ‘those’ from the disciples who represent the special historical group of followers who have their roots in Jesus’ Galilean ministry. The fact that this ‘they’ (10:32a) are tied to the physical journey, however Mark expresses it, reinforces this impression. When Mark excludes the identity of ‘they’, then

⁶⁹⁷ La Verdier, *Beginning*, 2, 107.

⁶⁹⁸ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 310.

the clause, 'those who followed were afraid' (10:32c) would refer to Mark's addressees.

The evangelist then intensifies the cost of discipleship by adding new details to the previous passion predictions (10:33; cf. 8:31; 9:31). Exegetes comment differently on this point ⁶⁹⁹ but Stock seems correct, writing that

Jesus himself provokes astonishment; expressions of fear and astonishment emphasize the revelatory content and christological significance of many incidents. "Those who followed were afraid" - just a short time before the disciples had said: "We have left everything and followed you" (10:28). Both groups, the people who look on and those who follow, sense that something special is happening.⁷⁰⁰

For the disciples who have heard what Jesus said previously, this sense conveys fear before a divine revelation for 'those' in the house. Thus, as stated above in 'those who followed were afraid', Mark addresses Rome's Christians, who still follow despite their fear before the spectre of renewed persecution. They see and so are typified in Bartimaeus. He follows the crucified/risen Son of Man, who 'now in this time' (10:30) is the way. The difference for Rome's household groups is Mark's accent on the present human dimensions of following: fear, loss of hope, anger at the betrayals in the community and the raw suffering which fidelity in following entails. In the Bartimaeus pericope, the crucial issue of sight through faith is the key in light of Jesus as the suffering/risen Son of Man, the Lord (10:48-52). The same theme prepared for the way (9:14-29); it now closes this literary construction.

6. FAITH - GATE TO THE SERVANT WAY

The sixth point in our study of the way concerns the *inclusio* that the Bartimaeus healing (10:46-52) makes with the blind man pericope at 8:22-26. Bartimaeus was blind. It is unlikely that he is symbolic of blind people begging in the market place since, from a literary point of view, Bartimaeus' blindness is symbolic of all those whose insufficient faith prevent them from adequately appreciating the paradox of the way of the

⁶⁹⁹ Hooker, *Mark*, 244; cf. Gundry, *Mark*, 569-571.

⁷⁰⁰ Stock, *Method*, 278.

crucified/risen Lord. Thus, a minor character represents Christians who are called (1:16-20) to be 'with' Jesus in faith (3:14), and follow him on the way as servants (8:34-35; cf. 9:35; 10:45).

The Bartimaeus episode climaxes the theme of faith in Jesus' discipleship teaching set at strategic points along the 'way' and within a 'house' (cf. 9:28-29; 9:33; 10:10). Only two scenes in this section are not set specifically within the house motif though they too refer to discipleship (8:27-9:13; 10:32-52). Even outside Jericho the sense of family is echoed in 'Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus' (10:46), an allusion to the patriarchal household context for family life in the Greco-Roman world.

S.H. Smith points out that the verb *akoloutheo* is particularly evident in the way section (8:27,34; 9:38; 10:21,28,32,52); so too is the phrase *en te hodo* (8:3,27; 9:33,34; 10:32,46,52), the 'way' of servant discipleship.⁷⁰¹ The Gospel emphasises 'those' (3:13), who have often followed him privately into a house (4:10-11; cf. 'those who were with him' - 5:40c) or, 'those who followed were afraid' (10:32; 3:13,20,31-35). There in private, Jesus instructs them on their journey to Jerusalem. 'Now in this time' they gather in house-groups, sharing in the victory gained through the power of selflessness in the Spirit-filled word (cf. 13:11). And, if Mark has seldom referred to the abiding presence of God in Rome's house-churches through the Holy Spirit, it is that he takes for granted that the risen Christ with them.⁷⁰²

Various aspects of the miracle are unusual: the repetition of Jericho, the naming of the petitioner and the allusion to his subsequent way discipleship are details not usually linked with miracles.⁷⁰³ For some, this is the call story of a disciple. Yet Mark's literary strategy points to it as the climax of the rhetorical thrust of 8:27-10:52. At the culmination of the way, Bartimaeus typifies a faith-filled hope. He is an example in a

⁷⁰¹ S.H. Smith, 'The Function of the Son of David Tradition in Mark's Gospel', *NTS* 42 (1996), 537; cf. Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 319.

⁷⁰² E. Best, 'The Role of the Disciples in Mark', *NTS* 19 (1977), 104.

⁷⁰³ Taylor, *Mark*, 441; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 169.

sequence of minor characters that personify a fruitful interaction with Jesus, illustrating a Christian's sight through faith in the way teaching of the secret of the kingdom (cf. 8:22-26). Bartimaeus' real sight, faith, is the cause not the result of the cure; it is a pre-condition for healing, a point acknowledged in 'your faith has saved you' (10:52).⁷⁰⁴ Bartimaeus hears and responds (10:47). Jesus stopped and ordered, 'call him' (10:49), a call that Mark repeats three times (10:49 - *phonein*) and so carries a heightened significance. In the redactional statement the indeterminate 'he' (not Bartimaeus) followed him along the way' (10:52).

So, not only the broader narrative context (8:27-10:45), but also the structure of the journey encases the healing within the scope of the Lord's power. In the light of the house/way motif, the response is lived within the house (9:28-29,33-30; 10:10-27,28-31). It is in this motif that the two crucial movements of the pericope are set: Bartimaeus hears then seeks the healing power of Jesus (10:46-48). The remainder of the pericope verifies the fruits of his faith in the dialogue between the two. In addition, his symbolic physical position is particularly instructive. He is first described sitting by the side of the way (10:46), there he cries out for healing from Jesus. When called, he responds and enters the way. He who symbolically was outside / by the way is now 'inside' / 'on' the way in the reign of the victorious crucified/risen Son of Man on his way to Calvary.

Mark accentuates the fact that Bartimaeus reacts to Jesus of Nazareth as the messiah (cf. 1:24; 14:61; 16:6), the 'Son of David',⁷⁰⁵ a title accenting the therapeutic nature of Jesus' mission. It also directs attention away from any nationalistic messiah's entry into Jerusalem.⁷⁰⁶ Achtemeier insists that to gauge the import of this title, it must be seen against the Davidic pericope (12:35-37) where Jesus is described in the 'Lord said to my Lord', an identification which, if inspired by the Holy Spirit, must be accurate

⁷⁰⁴ P.J. Achtemeier, "'And He Followed Him": Miracles and Discipleship in Mark 10:46-52', *Semeia* 11 (1978), 117-137.

⁷⁰⁵ Marshall, *Faith*, 127.

⁷⁰⁶ Smith, 'Son of David Tradition', 539.

(12:36). To ignore that pericope and its clear superiority regarding the inadequate Son of David title, reasons must be found for Mark's use of this term as he forgoes the title at 10:51 (rather *rabbouni*). Achtemeier argues that rather than finding in 11:9-10 the climax of Jesus' title as Son of David, it points in the opposite direction for, by its ambiguity, it prepares the way for the negative judgment of the Davidic title in 12:35-37. Mark's use seems implicitly to repudiate the title's significance in this pericope.⁷⁰⁷

But it seems that this position is only partially correct. The title 'Son of David' is later absorbed, not repudiated in the term, Lord (12:36); its double citing and the fact that Jesus accepts the title support this view. So named, Jesus calls Bartimaeus, commends his faith and heals him. However, La Verdiere approaches the title 'Son of David' from a different perspective to Achtemeier. He argues that in Mark's time, the title was emerging as a theological interpretation of Jesus' historic life and mission (cf. 11:10; 12:35-37). The early tradition related Jesus to David; Paul quotes a creed (Rom 1:3-4), which referred to Jesus as descended from David according to the flesh. Yet, before Mark the title itself had not appeared in New Testament writings. Between Paul and the later Synoptics, the Gospel reflects an intermediary stage in which the meaning of the title had yet to be clarified. Matthew and Luke-Acts would secure its place among the major titles of Jesus. La Verdiere adds:

In 8:22-10:52, Mark clarifies the title, "Christ" and associated it firmly with the dying and rising Son of Man. In 11:1-13:37, Mark associated the messianic title, "Son of David", with Christ's glorious return as the Son of Man. Just as the title "Christ" had to be purified of all political and military expectations, the title, "Son of David" had to be purified of hopes for a restoration of David's earthly kingdom.⁷⁰⁸

Chapter 6 will maintain that in 12:35-37 Mark completes this development by subsuming the title 'Son of David' within the concept of Jesus as the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord of Mark's communities (cf. 13:32-37).

There are messianic overtones in Bartimaeus' faith. His recognises that the

⁷⁰⁷ Achtemeier, 'And He Followed Him', 126; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 98; Via, *Ethics*, 162.

Davidic Jesus unites the messianic and eschatological hopes associated with the Messiah as he recognises the merciful rather than the nationalistic figure in Jesus of Nazareth. The plea ‘have mercy on me’ (10:47) illustrates the therapeutic nature of Jesus’ Davidic Sonship, which Mark accentuates in the Gospel’s first section (1:32-34; 2:15-17; 3:7-11; 6:7-13,34,53-56; 7:24-39,37; cf. Ps 107). There, he situates messianic healing in the house (1:29-31, 32-34; 2:1-12,15-17; 5:35-43; 7:24-30). Bartimaeus centres his hopes on a personal meeting with Jesus and, while some in the crowd attempt to hinder him, others (the indeterminate ‘they’) relay Jesus’ call. Bartimaeus’ faith is equal to the test.

Following Jesus’ command, ‘they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage; get up, he is calling you.”’(10:49). By their call ‘they’ enable Jesus to act through and in them, a mediation that was unnecessary in the historical setting, where distance was not a factor. But it makes sense in the Markan communal setting where temporal and chronological distance from the historical days of Jesus was a key consideration.⁷⁰⁹ Now the spread of the good news necessitated Christian mediation for its contemporary relevance and propagation. An additional dimension to the contradictory nature of the crowds’ reaction to Bartimaeus’ attempts to attract Jesus’ attention is contained in ‘many rebuked him telling him to be silent’ (10:48). Do they represent an anti-faith element among Rome’s communities? Yet the nature of this ‘many’ is not clear though Trainor makes this observation:

Besides the disciples, the only group we know of in the story so far is the crowd accompanying Jesus. Is this “many” (1) some of the disciples who react negatively to Bartimaeus’ plea...or the children who came to be blessed by Jesus (10:13)? Is the “many” (2) the crowd of potential disciples or (3) casual observers who, like Bartimaeus, are on the side of the road? Perhaps the lack of clarity is deliberate and is the evangelist’s way of indicting all three groups that have their representatives in Mark’s house-churches.⁷¹⁰

Trainor’s analysis falls within the approach to the concept of the crowd

⁷⁰⁸ La Verdier, *Beginning*, 2, 123.

⁷⁰⁹ Trainor, *Quest*, 155.

⁷¹⁰ Trainor, *Quest*, 155.

expressed above in which the crowd forms a pool of first century potential disciples. Those who say 'yes' to the word do not necessarily respond *en masse*. Trainor also suggests that in Bartimaeus' cries in which he represents a Christian's

request to Jesus to "see again"...we are dealing with a story about one who was once a true disciple, fell from the path of discipleship (apostasy), and seeks to return. The harsh treatment which Bartimaeus initially received, is indicative of the reaction that former members of Mark's house-churches are receiving as they seek full membership. There are "many" in Mark's community who are withholding reconciliation from former apostates. The evangelist's point is clear. These "many" hold the key for other Bartimaeuses returning to full, reconciled membership in the Christian household.⁷¹¹

The small, intimate Christian groups in Rome would have been deeply pained at a community member breaking faith. Yet, from among them comes the rhetorical 'they' who obey the command of Jesus to 'call him' (10:49). Their language shows their faith and forgiveness of Bartimaeus when they repeat Jesus' command, 'call him'. And in the resurrection language of the early Church, they acknowledge Bartimaeus' openness to Jesus, for with 'he (Jesus) is calling you' (10:49c) he responds with alacrity. After 'throwing off his mantle he sprang up (*egeire*) and came to Jesus' (10:50). By throwing off his mantle - his cultural security blanket in response to Jesus' call - Bartimaeus' action suggests a readiness to be with Jesus and a trust that Jesus will provide everything he needs, including sight inherent in faith.⁷¹² In Mark, faith and obedient response to the word are interdependent realities (cf. 1:15).

This perception of an intimate call to communion from within the group is reinforced by the question on Jesus' lips, 'what do you want me to do for you?' Obviously on a secondary level this inquiry did not refer to the fact that Bartimaeus was blind; rather, it is a rhetorical device by which Mark fleshes out his description of the object of Bartimaeus' faith. His request implicitly acknowledges Jesus' power to accomplish his healing and reconciliation. The power of Jesus' salvific authority that centred in his teaching in the house 'along the way' (cf. 10:23-27) is also implied.

⁷¹¹ Trainor, *Quest*, 155-156.

Drawn to Jesus in faith, Bartimaeus cries, ‘Master, let me receive my sight’ (10:51). By the use of *anablepein*, Mark suggests an allusion to Isaian prophecy that underpins Mark’s ploy in seeing Jesus as the dispenser of the blessing of the eschatological age (cf. Isa 61:1-4; 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:16). Bartimaeus’ blindness and status as a beggar indicates his sinful condition that opens him to a curse yet he sees in Jesus, the ‘Son of David’, the full dawn of God’s eschatological mercy.

Mark finalises the way narrative with an ironic flourish involving a reversal of roles. Bartimaeus takes the stage as a blind outsider on the periphery of the passing crowd - he sat ‘by the way’ (10:46). After his encounter with Jesus, he not only sees physically again but in faith as well, and, having been reconciled, follows his master ‘on the way’ (10:52).⁷¹³ Now he is a true insider again, living the secret of the crucified/risen Son of Man in faith. This pericope suggests a baptismal context:

The constituent elements of a baptismal liturgy are symbols, gestures, and dialogue. In the story of Bartimaeus, “the blind one” is a symbol for all who “have eyes and do not see” (8:18) and for all who can be baptized with the baptism with which Jesus is baptized (see 10:38-39).⁷¹⁴

Mark repeatedly warns his communities that faith is a gift, a warning embedded in his literary treatment of those initial insiders, the Twelve, in the narrative. There, they are blind to the demands of way discipleship and hence the rhetorical ‘Do you not yet understand’ (8:21; 10:10,13,23,26,32,35,41; cf. 9:10,19,34,38).

7. CONCLUSION

In the first century, it was within Greco-Roman households that Christians experienced human growth and fulfilment in servant discipleship in faith. Thus the blending of the house and way motifs was the natural strategy in the journey narrative. There was no other physical entity in which Christians could live their journey of faith.

This chapter first analysed Mark’s literary strategy in his use of this

⁷¹² Keller, ‘Opening Blind Eyes’, 156.

⁷¹³ Matera, ‘He Saved Others’, 22.

⁷¹⁴ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 130.

way/house motif, a consistently rhetorical approach. His intention is to set before Rome's intimate house groups the paradox of God's redeeming will in the unlikely figure of the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord. House-churches are called to 'repent and believe in the gospel' (1:15) for in faith-inspired hope in the Lord's word lay the gift of sharing in Jesus' resurrection. In other words, it presupposes that the rejection/replacement theme is inherent in the Gospel's outline of servant discipleship in the house as well. It is a constant, individual and communal fruit during the journey together. Yet the heart of this core replacement theme depends entirely on the identity of the ultimate servant, the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord.

Therefore, the issue of the full identity of the Son of Man and the gradual portrayal of the heart of the secret of the kingdom forms the focus of our analysis of the rejection/replacement theme in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

THE JUDGMENT/REJECTION/REPLACEMENT THEME

1. INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 5 analyses Mark's gradual depiction of his dual judgment/replacement theme and the contrasting development of the temple not made with hands (11:22-12:37). First, this chapter will offer an over-view of the judgment/replacement theme within the framework of Jesus' baptism, temptation and the founding of eschatological house-church communities. Second and concurrently the evangelist prepares the ground for the dismissal of the temple by his prior, gradual narrative outline of the fruit of the replacement house motif in 1:16-10:52. The house replaces the synagogue; there, Mark sets the Son of Man's messianic healing and exorcisms. Further, the house provides a focus for the Lord's authoritative spatial presence. Third, from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the subsequent dismissal of the temple, Mark portrays how the house-church, the new Israel, supplants the temple as the spatial focus of God's presence in the risen Lord's reign in Rome's eschatological communities. Fourth, by using the torn curtain symbolism on Calvary, Mark challenges Rome's Christians to believe the paradox of the secret of the kingdom in the crucified Son of Man. Fifth, God's new presence among his people is in Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord and Son of God, and in whom Mark sets his judgment/ replacement theme from 1:16 forward.

To achieve this development, Mark first sets the narrative's replacement theme in motion at 1:16-20 after challenging Rome's house-churches 'to repent and believe in the gospel' (1:15). As the replacement temple, the house-church is 'not made with hands' (14:58) but through the power and authority achieved existentially by the crucified/risen Son of Man, now the Lord (cf. 1:2-3,16-20,29-31; 2:1-12,13-17; 5:21-43; 10:29-31; 13:32-37). The replacement theme is gradually enlarged in the clashes

between Jesus and the religious authorities. Mark's treatment of them is polemical and not historical.⁷¹⁵ The Jerusalem religious authorities' hostility intensifies until it climaxes in their handing over Jesus for crucifixion thereby paralleling their hostility by the enlargement of the replacement house; in this process, Jesus rejects the Law and any temple-based ritual practices in living the Christian faith.

Throughout the Gospel, Jesus is the Son of Man, the Lord.⁷¹⁶ This truth is the basis of the Gospel's replacement motif so from the outset Mark sets Jesus' Galilean ministry within the theme of his cosmic, resurrection power. His authority to create this new eschatological reality is reflected the composite, prophetic 1:2-3 and then presumed in the eschatological community composed of disciples whom he calls at the opening of the Gospel proper (1:16-20). Mark then clarifies this reality by illustrating the acute differences in response in two spatial locations, the house and the synagogue. In the house, resurrection healing bears fruit in service (1:29-31), while in the synagogue (1:21-28) Jesus' authority is greeted only with astonishment ('for he taught them as one who had authority' - 1:22; cf. 6:3).

In subsequent encounters with the scribes, such astonishment hardens into murderous intent (3:6), resulting from direct confrontations between Jesus and the Jewish authorities in controversies dealing with blasphemy, tradition and the Law. This situation results from Jesus' claims to exercise a unique authority (1:16-20; 2:6-7,28; 3:5,13-19). Clashes develop from indirect scribal or Pharisaic questioning of Jesus' authority (2:6-7) to direct stand-offs that shift from matters dealing implicitly with authority (2:6) to treating it explicitly (3:1-5; 8:15; 11:27-33; cf. 14:64).⁷¹⁷

The entire existential becoming of the crucified/risen, servant Jesus is achieved in the human experiences of the Son of Man. In the way journey (8:27-10:52),

⁷¹⁵ Kingsbury, 'Religious Authorities', 45.

⁷¹⁶ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 68.

⁷¹⁷ Kingsbury, 'Religious Authorities', 54-55.

the passion predictions and the looming presence of Jerusalem reflect the gulf between Jesus and the authorities. It leads ultimately to the replacement theme's inevitable outcome on Calvary. The narrative finalises this paradoxical reversal in the roles of the house and the temple in two interwoven pericopes. First, in Mark's prior intercalation of Jesus' rejection of the temple in the two fig-tree pericopes (11:12-14, 20-21), and in its replacement, the house not built with hands, whose basis is revealed in Mark's climactic pericope on Calvary (15:29-39). There, by means of the symbolism of the torn veil (15:38), he dismisses the temple's role as the privileged locus of God's presence among his people. The nature of its replacement - the house-church (11:22-12:37) - is analysed in Chapter 6.

The temple (11:1-21) together with the Law has no relevance in Gentile Christian life, a position first exemplified in the Hellenists' gospel message in Rome. But it serves as a contrast with the spatial house-church motif.⁷¹⁸ This position is illustrated in two scriptural building blocks in Jesus' composite claim, 'my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations' (cf. Isa 56:7) as opposed to its current state as a 'den of robbers' (11:17; cf. Jer 7:11). In Mark's construction, Jesus teaches in the metaphorically described temple yet the authorities seem unconcerned at his claim to exercise an overriding authority, for in the midst of his graphic actions in the temple, Jesus 'taught continually' (11:17). Such controversial teaching is a doubtful historical activity, given Jesus' unopposed but supposed highly controversial teaching at such a potentially volatile time of religious celebration at the Passover.⁷¹⁹

The Gospel uses the concept of a 'kingdom' twenty times. Five refer to either the kingdom of Satan or a worldly kingdom; in the remaining fifteen, Jesus uses it as 'the kingdom of God'. From 9:1, the kingdom is referred to seven times during Jesus' teaching about 'way' discipleship that offers entry into the 'kingdom of God'. Rather

⁷¹⁸ Anderson, *Mark*, 264.

⁷¹⁹ Anderson, *Mark*, 266.

than as a political base for a Davidic King, Jesus' kingdom comes about through the selflessness of the Suffering Servant, the Son of Man (10:45). Isaiah 56:6-7 is presumed: 'foreigners who join themselves to the Lord...these I will bring...in my house of prayer...for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'. For Mark, Isaiah alludes to the entry of Gentile Christians into the kingdom of the crucified/risen Lord in the new house of prayer, the urban household.

For the Gospel's addressees, this symbolic house, one 'not made with hands', reflects each house-church in Rome's largely Gentile communities (5:19-20). The Gospel's inclusive nature and the secret's present fruit stress the immediacy of this replacement theme (cf. 1:16-20,45; 4:20-34; 5:19-20), an alternative 'way' of being in urban households. Such foreshadowing becomes clearer if we consider that the evangelist, having symbolically dismissed the temple in 11:1-21, immediately outlines the characteristics of God's reign in the new house of prayer (cf. 11:22-12:34): faith, prayer, forgiveness and servant charity. These features allow for 'everyone' and 'anyone' to follow the crucified/risen Son Man in servant selflessness in a community context (10:28:31). Such discipleship is contrasted with a traditional Jewish Law-based religious expression, justifying Mark's stress on a dual, eschatological judgment of the symbolic temple and Rome's house-churches.

The Gospel presents the synagogue/temple's symbolic failure to facilitate the spatial presence of Gentiles in Isaiah's inclusive house of prayer. This aspect of the synagogue - a reference perhaps to the rejection of the Hellenist gospel by Rome's synagogue during the pre-exile period - is intertwined with the ongoing focus on the Christian response to the gift of the kingdom in the spatial house (1:16-8:26). Mark achieves this result by various rhetorical strategies, including (noted in Chapter 3) the use of minor characters acting as models of present, household Christian discipleship. They are a catalyst for the themes of faith and service and witness to the fruit of the Lord's

power in the house (cf. 1:31; 2:1-12; 15-17; 7:24-30). Language proper to the early Church's fruitful proclamation of the good news is placed on the lips of the narrative's characters in a domestic setting. Issues debated in the house focus on the problems that the Church faced as it moved from a Law/temple oriented religious context to a fruitful house-centred faith for Gentile groups in the second half of the first century.

In a study of the Old Testament material on the fig-tree imagery and its relationship to that in Chapter 11 (11:12-14,20-21), W.R. Telford concludes that the fig tree fruit and harvest imagery were employed in the New Testament, as in the Old, almost exclusively in a symbolic sense; it was often applied with the clear concept of an eschatological judgment upon the temple. Mark has confirmed this reading. His fig-tree story was designed to be understood from this viewpoint.⁷²⁰ From the Gospel's beginning, Mark prepares the ground for the dual, parallel rejection/replacement theme explicitly described in the temple's rejection (11:1-21) and replacement in the Markan house of prayer (11:22-12:37).

2. MARK'S JUDGMENT / REPLACEMENT THEME

Mark's second emphasis is on the formal commencement of the replacement motif in the call pericope (1:16). There, the Gospel narrative's opening proper describes a

new social world in the making: the advent of the authorized and tested agent of God who announces a new and climactic stage in time and with authority calls into being the nucleus of a renewed people summoned to mission...in the time of a revelatory beginning (*arche* 1:1)...it provides a basis of authority - Jesus himself and those called by him - for the persistence and development of their life together and their missionary activity (13:10; 14:9).⁷²¹

Isaiah and Malachi (1:2-3) are invoked to express a particular concept of Jesus as the victorious Righteous Man/Suffering Servant (Isa 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). He fulfils these prophecies for, as the paradigmatic Just Man, he will encounter

⁷²⁰ W.A. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree*, (JSNTSS 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 15.

opposition and worse as Israel's messiah.⁷²² By alluding to the squaring off of Jesus and Jerusalem at the very start of his story (1:4-5), Mark also underlines the crucial import of the superscription's double role, since it encompasses the prologue and the good news as a whole⁷²³ - a reality to believe in, a way to live. The linking of John's appearance - significantly placed east of Jerusalem - in the Judean wilderness (1:4), suggests a comparison with Israel's testing in its wilderness journey. Israel failed whereas John and Jesus prove faithful to their mission (cf. 1:38-39; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34; 14:36). When Rome's Christians are confronted with the wilderness/injustice of Nero's persecution, they are called to appropriate Jesus' historical human becoming in their servant discipleship⁷²⁴ as Jesus goes before them (16:6; 10:32; 14:27).

Immediately following his baptism, the Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness to face the eschatological test of fidelity to his Father's will. It is as the victorious Lord, and in the power of the Spirit, that Jesus goes there since the associated prophecies of Isaiah (40:3) and Malachi (Mal 3:1) identify Jesus as the 'Lord' (1:3c). The Lord God sends a messenger 'to prepare thy way...the way of the Lord' (1:3b). Mark later (11:3) echoes prophecies that depict 'the Lord' approaching the temple 'for the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple' (Mal 3:1). Metaphorically, at one level the risen Lord comes to judge Israel's fidelity to the Law, a response embedded in the integrity or otherwise of its temple cult. Yet, rhetorically at another level, the sustained Gospel's underlying focus is on Rome's house-churches to whom the Law and temple are irrelevant. Their call to repentance is caught in the prophetic 'I will draw near to you in judgment' (Mal 3:1-5; cf. Mk 1:15).⁷²⁵ Taylor reads the temple section (11:1-21) in this

⁷²¹ Barton, *Discipleship*, 66.

⁷²² P.W.L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1996), 19.

⁷²³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 143.

⁷²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Many Religions - One Covenant: Israel, the Church and the World*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 80-81.

⁷²⁵ Gundry, *Mark*, 34-35; cf. Matera, *What are they Saying?*, 18-36; Marcus, *Way*, 37-41; Walker, *Jesus*, 1-2.

lordly sense.⁷²⁶

Jesus' baptism strengthens this sense of how correct it is for Jesus, the Lord and 'Son of God' (cf. 1:1,11; 12:35-37) to come in authority. The evangelist draws on the royal symbolism of Ps 2:7; its context suggests not the theme of a Davidic kingship in Jerusalem, but a lordly rule that extends 'over the nations...and to the ends of the earth your heritage' (Ps 2:7-9; cf. 12:35-37). Supported by this allusive language and the Gospel's narrative point (1:1), a triumphant Jesus comes into Galilee at 1:14, the result of his victorious desert encounter with Satan with its eschatological flavour of the wild beasts and the angels who ministered to him (1:13; cf. Isa 11:1-12; 65:17-25). From here, the narrative contrasts the two responses, that of the synagogue and house groups.

Jesus' eschatological victory (1:12-13), signals the first stage of the narrative's interwoven rejection/replacement motif. By it, the prologue anticipates an ongoing judgment of the eschatological group that is 'called' at 1:16-20. They are challenged to repent and believe in the gospel (1:15). J.B. Gibson represents the majority of exegetes who assert that 1:12-13 makes clearly evident that in the wilderness Jesus proved victorious over Satan. Nothing would sway him from the divinely appointed path he accepted at his baptism.⁷²⁷ Matthew depicts Jesus' complete victory over Satan before the public ministry (Matt 4:1-11) whereas Mark describes Jesus' victory as a 'mopping up' campaign as the narrative unfolds.

The replacement motif is further developed when Jesus' Galilean ministry is introduced in the context of John being handed over as a prophet (cf. 3:19; 10:33): 'after John was arrested Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of God' (1:14). As Israel rejects John and the Baptist will meet a prophet's fate (6:17-29), so Israel will reject

⁷²⁶ Taylor, *Gospel*, 253-254.

⁷²⁷ J.B. Gibson, 'Jesus' Wilderness Temptation According to Mark', *JSNT* 53 (1994), 32; so too Taylor, *Gospel*, 162; Lane, *Mark*, 57; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 65; Anderson, *Mark*, 78-80; Hurtado, *Mark*, 6; Mann, *Mark*, 201; Rawlinson, *Mark*, 10; Schweizer, *Mark*, 37; Swete, *Mark*, 10; I.H. Marshall, 'Son of God or Servant of Yahweh?: A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11', *NTS* 15 (1968-69), 335; C.T. Davis 'Mark The Petrine Gospel', in W.R. Farmer (ed.), *New Synoptic Studies*, (Macon: Mercer University

Jesus (3:6) and he, too, will meet a prophet's fate (15:1) at the hands of official Israel - the 'elders, chief priests and the scribes' (8:31). At every point, Mark either directly or by inference links Jesus' arrest, passion/death with the Jerusalem authorities and their power base in the temple (cf. 14:1,43,53; 15:1, 31). He reiterates this link at 9:31 and 10:33 (cf. 9:9). Jesus and the disciple form a similar parallel: should the Jewish leaders refuse to accept Jesus and subsequently 'hand him over', Rome's Christians too will know rejection and persecution.

3. THE SYNAGOGUE/HOUSE CONTRAST

From the outset, Mark's focus is on the gradual enlargement of the replacement theme. He traces Israel's handing over of John, Jesus and 'you' (13:11), a rejection that continues the timeless, triumphant paradox of the present reign in the secret of the kingdom of God. And in his parallel reception in the house and synagogue, the responses are radically different. Israel rejects Jesus and clings to its traditional Jewish life, based on the Law and centred on the synagogue/temple. But the household responds in faith and service, thereby offering a completely new way of life, an existential blending of the disciples' living in the Son of Man's existential, eschatological risen humanity as Lord, a contrast first shown at 1:21-31.

To reinforce the synagogue/house divide, and hence the replacement motif, Mark begins his narrative strategy by describing Jesus' teaching, which unveils a new 'authority' (1:21-28). Jesus teaches in the synagogue. There is a shift from the plural to the singular for if 'they came to Capernaum' only 'he entered the synagogue and taught' (1:21a), even though the Markan Jesus came to Capernaum with his chosen followers (1:16-20). They abruptly disappear and receive no mention in this pericope (1:21b). Given Mark's counter-Law Gospel, it is unlikely that he would link the disciples with the synagogue, owing perhaps to the synagogue/house divide in Rome, circa 66-69 CE.

Also, at 3:2 and 6:1 only Jesus goes into the synagogue. So, most likely, in the oral tradition the story did not include the disciples. It is claimed that Mark has turned it into a story about Jesus and his followers⁷²⁸ for, though the text says that ‘they’ came to Capernaum, only ‘he’ went into the synagogue.

The second phase of the judgment/replacement begins at Jesus’ entry into the synagogue (1:21a). From there, Mark depicts Jesus not exclusively in a house but with parallel visits to the synagogue (1:21-28; 1:29-31; cf. 6:1-6a). In the house, Jesus is consistently in the midst of a group, whether with the twelve as a distinct group, or linked with his disciples and their potential converts in the ‘crowd’ about Jesus (cf. 3:34-35; 8:34-35; 10:28-31). To be inside, to share in the reign of the risen Lord, was determined not by the Law or ritual rectitude but by servant discipleship (8:34-35). Then, Mark links his new creation (1:16-20) with Jesus’ first entry into a house. He notes the disciple’s response, for no sooner had Jesus ‘lifted up’ Peter’s ‘mother-in-law’ (2:9,11,12; 5:41; 9:2; 16:6) than she ‘served’ them (1:31). By linking the woman’s service with Jesus’ role as the paradigmatic servant (10:44-45; cf. 1:13b; 15:41), Mark underlines selfless service as the norm in the replacement house, a sense strengthened by the repetition of resurrection imagery in 2:1-12. Similarly raised up, the paralytic is sent back *eis ton oikon sou* (2:11; 5:42-43; 7:30). There he is to serve in household relationships and responsibilities (cf. 1:29-31; 5:19-20; 7:30; 9:30-50).

Mark’s early accent is not on what Jesus taught but his authority as Lord to teach (2:10,28; cf. 1:1,12-13). This ensured that it was ‘new teaching’ (1:29-31), ‘new’ in its eschatological sense with Jesus’ coming as Lord. With him came the ultimate restoration of creation in the fulfilment of messianic history. The unclean spirit’s freedom of operation shows how the synagogue lacked the power to defeat evil, a point seen in Jesus’ later exercise of authority and power in the house apart from the

⁷²⁸ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 68.

synagogue exorcism (1:29-34). The unclean spirit may know Jesus' name but not his power. Real knowledge of Jesus requires faith in his capacity as Lord. In opposing Jesus, the combined unclean spirit/synagogue symbolically and ineffectually oppose the Holy One of God and with him 'the gospel of God'.⁷²⁹

Then Jesus is immediately located in a 'house' (1:29). Mark understates the contrast in Jesus' reception here with that in the synagogue. Apparently, he separates James and John, Simon and Andrew from the nebulous 'they' (1:30), who immediately approach Jesus in a petition from faith (a post-resurrection viewpoint) since they had not seen Jesus exercise his power in the synagogue. That the vague 'they' are members of a house-church seems likely: the disciples are already with Jesus but 'they' come to Jesus and the historical personal names of the disciples are dropped. Mark seems to isolate them, a move necessary in view of the subsequent negative description of the disciples at 1:35-39. 'Simon and those who were with him' (1:36) attempt to keep Jesus' mission within the limits of their own ambitions.

But through communal faith/prayer, the woman is healed and 'lifted up', a post-resurrection reference. The woman's response is central: she serves the community, a highly symbolic act due to its crucial link to Mark's depiction of Jesus' serving the 'many' for whom he dedicates his life (10:45; cf. 9:35-36; 8:31; 1:13). The same context is presupposed in the messianic restoration of the possessed and the sick 'with various diseases', at the door of the house (cf. Ps 107).

So a basic architectural pattern is set in place before 6:1-5: in synagogues and in houses Jesus preaches, or teaches and/or heals' (1:21,29,32; 2:1; 3:1,19).⁷³⁰ Mark's portrayal of Jesus' sharing in the synagogue liturgies (1:21; 3:1; 6:2) could demonstrate the Pauline order of Jew first then Gentile in God's redemptive plan (cf. Rom 9:1-11:32). Yet Jesus sharing table-fellowship with tax-collectors and sinners (2:15) violates

⁷²⁹ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 70.

the Jewish ritual purity laws that have proved divisive and exclusive. Such house scenes, at 1:29-31 and 2:15-17, reflect his challenge to that religious, cultic purity tradition symbolized by the synagogue (the temple's surrogate) in fundamental ways....In this portion of the Markan narrative (1:21-6:4), synagogue and house are interwoven as architectural settings not only for teaching and healing but also for controversy.⁷³¹

Jesus' ministry produces astonishment by his authority and mighty works - a Markan motif. His freedom to act also causes the Jewish establishment to view his works with concern since they realise that Jesus is quite 'conscious of, and claiming to be acting as Son, with the authority of God himself in innermost unity with God the Father. Only God reinterprets the Law and transforms its actually intended meaning'.⁷³² This authority is later seen in Jesus' declaration of sin forgiven, Levi's call and Jesus' meal sharing with sinners (2:15-17). Jesus' actions signal his break with the elders' traditions regarding the Law and the scribes' exclusivist approach and their manipulation of an inside/outside religious mentality, an attitude anticipating Jesus' later inspection and rejection of the temple as a symbol of exclusiveness (11:12-21).

Throughout 2:1-3:5, Mark uses an allusive technique to describe Jesus' authority to teach and heal in the house. By quoting Malachi 3:1, Mark includes his reference to the Lord's approaching, cleansing judgment of Israel's response to the Covenant and the questionable integrity of its temple liturgy since who can

endure the day of his coming? For he is like a refiner's fire. Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be swift to bear witness against those who oppress the widows and the orphans. You are cursed with a curse for you are robbing me - the whole nation of you. Bring the full tithe into the storehouse...that there may be food in my house (Mal 3:2-5, 9-10).

The underlying theme of the Lord's power and authority to teach is entwined with the metaphorical house pattern. If the spatial urban houses replace the synagogue as a teaching centre, they are not secret centres of specialised knowledge. Jesus' presence

⁷³⁰ Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 113; cf. 2:1; 3:1,19; 5:38; 6:2.

⁷³¹ Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 113; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 84-85.

⁷³² Ratzinger, *Many Religions*, 38-39.

‘could not be hid’ even if Jesus’ strategy is to be incognito in a house (he ‘would not have anyone know’ - 7:24). Malbon situates the new Israel there for, as she argues, this process of substitution, begun at 1:16-20, was confirmed at (1:29-31). Now, as with houses spatially, the disciples are forming a new community, a new Israel.⁷³³

To the scribes, it is disturbingly ‘new’ teaching that is offered to those who ‘hear’ or ‘see’ him in his ‘house’ (2:6-7) and by the lakeside (2:13). Jesus’ authoritative call is inclusive. He enacts it in his freedom to invite ‘sinners’ - whoever - to his eschatological meal in his ‘house’ (2:15-17). The Jewish authorities are not pre-judged so Mark avoids lessening the story’s later dramatic climax. But as the tension deepens, his narrative ploy traces their choice to accept or reject his messianic presence.⁷³⁴ Indirectly, the temple’s atoning function is now presumably irrelevant because sin is forgiven in the Lord’s present healing and forgiveness in the urban faith groups (2:1-12,15-17).⁷³⁵

Understandably, the tension between the establishment and Jesus deepens. The vague ‘some people’ (2:18) instigate Jesus’ rejoinder at (2:20): ‘the day will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day’. Donahue opts for a chiastic structure in 2:20, a pattern that will call ‘attention to the reason for fasting and shifts the thrust of the saying from a defence of the disciples’ practice of not fasting to a passion prediction’, adding that the using the

Greek aorist passive subjunctive (*aparthē*) between the two futures “will come” and “will fast” suggests action antecedent to the fasting and heightens the removal of the groom....Since the groom would normally leave the feast rather than be removed, the allusion is most likely to the violent death of Jesus. The verb, which is never used elsewhere of the violent death or of the “removal” of Jesus, receives this nuance here because of an intertextual echo of the fate of the servant in Isaiah 53:8 (“his life will be taken from (*airetai*) the earth...and he will be led to death” (LXX)).⁷³⁶

⁷³³ Malbon, *Narrative Space*, 130; cf. Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 9.

⁷³⁴ Van Eck, *Galilee and Jerusalem*, 34.

⁷³⁵ Seely, ‘Jesus’, 281.

⁷³⁶ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 107; cf. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 112.

The term 'scribes' occurs 21 times; 19 are hostile, yet Jesus is one who simply carries out his messianic mission (2:6). During these five clashes with the authorities' religious sensibilities from 2:1-3:5, Jesus is patient with his opponents. Before 3:6 the evangelist notes the scribes' challenge to Jesus' authority (2:6,18). If these first stirrings of scribal disquiet (2:6) emerge in the face of the initial proofs of Jesus' mission, it is an unease that grows into murderous hostility at 3:6 by the synagogue Pharisees. Prior to this, Mark illustrates Jesus' sensibility towards things Jewish by presenting a patient Messiah: Jesus justifies his action in eating with sinners (2:17), a reasonableness that he repeats in the matter of fasting (2:19-22) and his claim to authoritatively legitimate the disciples' plucking 'of ears of grain' (2:23). Yet, at 3:2 an ominous note is sounded - 'they watched him'. It prepares for the Markan Jesus' statement at 3:5 that describes the Pharisees' hardness of heart.

Yet, even at the final clash at this point, Mark sets the responsibility for the severance of relations between Jesus and the authorities solely with his opponents (3:6). Though Jesus challenges 'them' (3:3), he formally constitutes the new Israel (3:7-19) only after they actively seek 'to destroy him' and so removes the threat to their power-base, their traditions that encase the Law. Ironically, the Pharisees, by their rejection of Jesus and his mission, ensure a pivotal development of the replacement theme in the house at this point (3:20-35). As shown in Chapter 3, the references to the mountain and house point to Jesus' creation of the new Israel and its situation in a household community (3:7-19,20,31-35). It formalises the incompatibility between a corrupt Law-based religious attitude (cf. 3:22-30) and the Lord's reign as the crucified/risen Son of Man in the eschatological house-church.

4. TRANSFORMED ISRAEL

Mark formally constitutes the new Israel at 3:7-19. This move leads to the sharp change in narrative tone from 3:6, a necessary change as Mark gradually broadens the scope of

the Lord's reign in the works of power and authority in the house in 3:6-8:26. To bring this about, Jesus, as Lord, claims a higher authority than the Law (2:27-28; 3:1-5). In turn, the scribes' implacable opposition to Jesus is expressed in their charge of demonic possession (3:22-23). The clause 'the scribes...came down from Jerusalem' (3:21) is an ominous portent of an intensified hostility to Jesus; it climaxes only with his arrest and death in Jerusalem.

Faced with the threat to his life in the synagogue (3:6), Jesus withdraws. At 3:7 *anachoresen* is often inadequately noted. Up to this point Jesus uses the synagogue as a teaching venue. Yet it perpetuated and extended the ritual power-base of the Jewish establishment. His withdrawal 'to the sea' (3:7) points to his distancing himself, not only with official Israel, but also from its sphere of influence. Prior to 3:3, Jesus takes refuge from the throng so that he could carry on his preaching ministry 'in their synagogues' (1:35-39). Following 6:1-6 the strategy is reversed as Jesus does not enter the synagogue again but heals and teaches in Rome's house-churches.⁷³⁷

Mark reinforces Jesus' authoritative establishment of the transformed Israel through Jesus' symbolic actions: as Lord of nature, he sits in the boat on what, at times, is a symbolic turbulent sea (4:35-41; cf. 3:9; 4:1). He heals (3:10) and accepts the resulting unclean spirits' cries of recognition, 'You are the Son of God' (3:11), prior to calling and naming the Twelve on the 'mountain' (3:13-14). There, Mark's temple replacement theology is especially apparent (3:13-19). The objective displays of the miraculous and public explanations were ineffective in convincing the religious leadership to side with Jesus⁷³⁸ but from those who do 'hear' (3:8) he 'called to him those whom he desired' (3:13). From these, an authoritative Jesus chose new leaders to replace the old, just as the house, the new centre of God's presence, replaces the temple. Its heart is the symbolic cross covenant (cf. 12:28-34). Crucially, the disciples are to be

⁷³⁷ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 30-47; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 101-104.

‘with him’ (3:13-14; cf. 8:34-35; 14:14,17-21,28; 16:7).

Jesus mediates God’s evaluative point of view that is the norm for faith in the replacement reality. So the disciples, who are ‘with him’ (3:14), are within the eschatological house ‘now in this time’ (10:30; cf. 3:32-35). They are ‘those’ (‘anyone’ - 3:35) ‘with’ Jesus, the Lord (14:12-16; cf. 12:35-37). Later, Jesus clarifies these discipleship norms in his prayer in the garden (14:36). There he

fulfils the conditions for disciples stated earlier in the Gospel. The disciple is one who does God’s will (3:35), prays to God with a faith that believes that God will bring about what is sought (11:23-24), and become like a child in order to enter the kingdom of God (10:15)....The radically communal nature of discipleship is stressed by the incorporation into a new family that does the will of God. Therefore “doing the will of God” and becoming a member of Jesus’ family is in the most radical sense being willing, like Jesus, to accept even suffering and rejection as willed by God.⁷³⁹

In other words, Donahue sets out not only the indispensable role of faith, ‘now in this time’, but describes the expansion of the replacement theme. Post-resurrection, Jesus’ entire ministry is a gradual description of the christological downfall of Satan⁷⁴⁰ and the parallel creation of the new Israel in the house-church. J. Dewey sees this development present from 1:29. The Twelve illustrate an aspect of this sharing in their eschatological apostolate to ‘house’ communities (6:10; cf. 6:7a).⁷⁴¹

The reconstituted Israel is situated ‘within the house’ (3:20,31-35). Mark again hints at the ongoing post-resurrection viewpoint of relationships based on faith by using the present tense: ‘Here are my brothers and sisters...whoever does the will of God *is* my brother, and sister, and mother’ in the house (3:35). With the new Israel set in the house (3:20), those ‘called’ are to be teachers for all people,

both Jews and Gentiles. Their interpretation of Scripture and tradition in the limited Jewish setting, to which they were accustomed, would no longer be adequate. In effect, Jesus was challenging the role of the scribes, the

⁷³⁸ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 44.

⁷³⁹ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 135.

⁷⁴⁰ Hooker, *Message*, 15-16; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 109-110.

⁷⁴¹ J. Dewey, ‘Mark As Interwoven Tapestry’, *CBQ* 53 (1991), 221-236; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 112.

synagogue...and Jerusalem itself, the ancient centre of Jewish authority and teaching. Hence the explicit mention of the fact that the scribes had come down from Jerusalem. These were not ordinary scribes invested with ordinary authority...(but) the highest scribal authority in Judaism....In response, they challenged not only Jesus' authority and power, but the very source of his authority and power, that is the holy Spirit (3:29; cf. 1:10,12-13).⁷⁴²

Not unexpectedly at this point, the scribes' hostility to Jesus coalesces in their blunt claim that he is possessed by 'Beelzebul' (3:22). They describe Jesus' work, not as the fruit of the Holy Spirit, but of Satan. Seen in the light of the Spirit inspired victory in the desert (1:12), the Jewish leaders' reaction to the same power in Jesus' miracles is as critical as their reaction to his words because such house miracles are christological: the miracles are not isolated phenomena narrated because of their interest, but integral building blocks in the growth of the kingdom of God, due to Jesus' risen power and authority set within the house (cf. 2:1-7:30).⁷⁴³

The Jerusalem representatives are blind to the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus, the same Spirit whom Mark described as having *ekballei* Jesus into the desert to confront and to defeat Satan (1:12; cf. 1:1). Seeing that Jesus was tempted, though not tempted like ordinary mortals (Matt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13; cf. Heb 4:15), Mark had insinuated that the battle in the wilderness was a now-concluded cosmic battle between Satan and the Lord (cf. 1:12; cf. Lk 4:1-13; Matt 4:1-11).⁷⁴⁴ If eschatological, the resurrection victory through the Spirit is an ongoing power in the daily service of a house-hold Christian (13:11), a reality presupposed by the superscription.⁷⁴⁵ In fact, the demons' cry at 1:24 evokes overtones of Mk 1:12-13 and the implication of Jesus' triumph over Satan. Within its context, it serves to answer the confused crowd that the demons have a new Lord. For the moment, however, it remains a secret as Jesus silences the testimony.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴² La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 108-109.

⁷⁴³ Hooker, *Message*, 41.

⁷⁴⁴ Hooker, *Message*, 14-15.

⁷⁴⁵ Gibson, 'Jesus' Wilderness Temptation', 32.

⁷⁴⁶ Davis, 'Mark the Petrine Gospel', 443.

But it is not a secret for Mark's audience. They are reminded of the Spirit's power active in their house groups. The same Spirit who animated Jesus in his way of being the paradoxical, victorious Son of Man through his brokenness on the cross, now makes possible their own living of the secret of the kingdom in the house (13:11). It assures that, in faith, it is possible for Rome's communities to give 'to God the things that are God's' (12:17; cf. 8:33).

After Chapters 1-3, the Markan Jesus' tactics change. He offers no more objective proofs to the scribes-led opposition of official Israel (3:22). Instead, he plants seeds in receptive hearts that 'listen' and see in faith 'the light' that enters the house (4:21), another sign of the replacement theme's growth at this point (4:3,9; cf. 4:21). By setting the Church's understanding of the first three negative responses to the word in the parable sower (4:14-19), Mark underlines that the same human propensity for deafness and blindness is evident in the new Israel as in the Old.

With the house-church established, Mark describes its unfolding fruit in the hundredfold in the new house of prayer. Fay observes that the entire context (4:1-34) is concerned with fruitful hearing that is clearly set in the present.⁷⁴⁷ By his introduction (4:1-2) and the rhetorical 'those who were about him' (4:10-11), Mark stresses that Jesus addressed the two groups separately in a post-resurrection context. He proclaimed the parables publicly to the crowd (4:12) but in private he explained them to 'those who were about him with the twelve' (4:10), a phrase that appears to be a rhetorical post-resurrection device. The ongoing Christian community is analysed in the varied responses to the word, where, a lack of dedication (4:15), persecution (4:17) and a continued patriarchal lifestyle (4:19) have weakened the group's servant secret (8:34-35).

Initially Jesus, as 'the Lord of the Sabbath' (2:28), patiently justifies and defends his own (2:10) and his disciples' actions (2:25) as noted above. The second

⁷⁴⁷ G. Fay, 'Structure of Mark 4:1-34', *CBQ* 51 (1989), 79.

clash exhibits no such tone. To the Pharisees' complaint, 'Why do your disciples...eat with hands defiled?' (7:5), Jesus begins, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites' (7:6). This sharp exchange leads to the Pharisees' outright demand to Jesus (8:11-13) for direct proof of his authority.⁷⁴⁸ It could point to the initial post-exile Jewish/Christian hostility in Rome. As the complex of Rome's house-churches developed through fruitful evangelisation, Jewish antagonism intensified in drastic familial rejection of converts to the *Christos* (13:12-13). The father did betray the child, circa 64-65 CE. It is not surprising that Mark's Roman house-churches' themes emerge: house symbolism, private teaching, and their anti-Law stance at 7:17-23.

When Mark comes to the inspection and rejection of the temple, the Gospel's post-resurrection viewpoint demands its presentation in Chapters 11 and 12 in a highly symbolic manner. This literary strategy enables Mark to apply his rhetorical inspection and judgment theme to Rome's house-churches in the material in 11:22-12:37. To distant and faith-inspired Gentile house-churches, the temple was irrelevant for Rome's Christians. Yet the temple's metaphorical potency enabled Mark to use its symbolism to create the sense of judgment of the new temple, the 'house of prayer for all the nations' (11:17), which are Rome's Christian communities.

Before any analysis of Mark's symbolic use of the motif of the Jerusalem temple (11:12-21), there are links to the previous material. The symbolic 'scribes and Pharisees' form a warning thread through the Gospel's previous sections (1:16-8:26; 8:27-10:52). Clearly, the passion predictions link Chapters 1-8 to the temple's treatment in Chapters 11-12. They presuppose Jerusalem through the mention of the 'elders, the chief priests and the scribes' (8:31) who are also insinuated in the phrase, 'hands of men' (9:33). The third prediction makes these two references explicit: 'we are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and

⁷⁴⁸ Kingsbury, 'Religious Authorities', 56.

they will...kill him and after three days he will rise' (10:33). Given the way's stress on the resurrection, it anticipates the title 'Lord' (11:3) Mark bestowed on Jesus upon his entry into Jerusalem. The superscription too (1:1) acts similarly. In fact, all 11:1-12:44 presupposes that the replacement temple equates with each house-church in Rome.

5. THE LORD JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

Mark begins the third stage of the implementation of the replacement theme with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem at 11:1. From here, his initial literary strategy in 11:1-21 centres on the temple's symbolic rejection by the Lord's power (11:3). 'Lord' is a title that was no doubt reinforced among Rome's Christians by the tradition (Acts 1:6,21; 2:21,34,36; 4:33) and Paul's epistle (Rom 10:5-13). As Lord, Jesus confounds the establishment in the controversies in the temple (11:22-12:34);⁷⁴⁹ furthermore, he comes 'in the name of the Lord' (11:9) as he

demonstrates to his disciples his authority over a fig tree (11:12-14). Since a fig tree in leaf has failed to produce what the hungry Jesus expected, which is symbolic of the failure of people to achieve their purpose by producing what God expects (Jer 8:12-14; Mic 7:1-2), Jesus conclusively condemns it: "May no one ever eat fruit from you forever" (11:14). The disciples ominously hear the severe condemnation, which those who do not fulfil their God-given purpose will receive.⁷⁵⁰

As noted above, the contexts of the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah (1:2-3) had earlier suggested the judgmental nature of the Lord's eschatological visitation of Jerusalem and its temple, a development seen in the contrast between Jesus' fruitful messianic mission and the scribes' hostile attitude to it throughout 1:21-10:52. At Jericho (10:46-52), Bartimaeus addresses Jesus as 'Son of David.'(10:47), a title he accepts in silence. It fits Mark's literary plan for the gradual, full revelation of the christological portrait of Jesus as the risen Lord at 12:35-37 (cf. 13:32-37).

Within the scope of the over-arching title for Jesus, the Son of God (cf. 1:1;

⁷⁴⁹ Hooker, *Mark*, 33; cf. Marcus, *Mark* 1-8, 145; Stock, *Method*, 43; Gundry, *Mark*, 30.

⁷⁵⁰ J.P.Heil, 'The Narrative Strategy and Pragmatics in the Temple Theme in Mark', *CBQ* 59 (1997), 77.

15:39),⁷⁵¹ Mark's ironic sense emerges in the Jerusalem crowd's nationalistic cry of 'our father David' (11:10). It is an anticipated irony as Zech 9:9-13 described the king, not as triumphant and victorious, but as humble and riding on an ass, an understanding that contradicts the later rabbinical tradition describing the appearance of the glorious messianic King (cf. Dan 7:13).⁷⁵² It is an ironic understatement too since it is 'the Lord' (11:3) of the prophetic 1:2-3 who 'will suddenly come to his temple' (Mal 3:1; cf. Zech 14:1-9), a prophecy anticipating the Spirit-inspired, 'the Lord said to my Lord' (12:35-37; cf. 13:35).⁷⁵³ Post crucifixion/resurrection, this strategy denotes how, in his word, the Lord comes to judge Rome's house-churches, an approach overlaid by the symbolic rejection of the temple. Rome's Christians require visitation; Mark has absolutely no pastoral interest in the temple in Jerusalem.

In part, this also could explain why Jesus is depicted entering Jerusalem on an ass (11:7). Pesch sees it as Jesus' royal prerogative (cf. I Sam 8:10-11).⁷⁵⁴ But the key emphasis in 11:1-11 occurs in the dialogue in 11:2-3 where Jesus' knowledge, understanding and acceptance of what is due to unfold is accented as he accomplished the Father's will as the Markan Lord (8:31). Various scholars assume that the colt was used in contrast to the manner adopted by normal pilgrims but all references to the animal cease after 11:7, a result due to the composite nature of the pericope.⁷⁵⁵ The Markan suffering Servant is described as anything but a nationalistic Messiah (cf. Is 42:1-3; 49:3-7; 50:4-9; 53:10-12; cf. Wis 2:12-3:9).⁷⁵⁶ For the house-church members, he who comes to Jerusalem and its temple is the crucified/risen Lord (*dei* - 8:31). Here, Mark's ongoing visitation theme expands the replacement theme for the Lord Jesus' spatial location is neither Jerusalem nor Galilee but somewhere in between. He is always

⁷⁵¹ Hooker, *Mark*, 252-253.

⁷⁵² Marcus, *Way*, 162.

⁷⁵³ Telford, *Barren Temple*, 253-261.

⁷⁵⁴ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 180.

⁷⁵⁵ Smith, 'Son of David', 531.

⁷⁵⁶ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 285; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 144-147.

in movement, 'going before' on the way as the risen Lord in the house. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is symbolic.⁷⁵⁷

So as the risen Lord, Jesus carries out a divine inspection of his temple. He abruptly 'entered Jerusalem and went into the temple' (11:11). A sense of appraisal is implied in the next bare statement as Jesus 'looked around at everything' (11:11). Of course, it is not a question of the historical nature of this inspection of the temple since temple abuses did not concern Rome's Christians, especially as they grappled with suffering in the aftermath of sustained persecution. But is there an historical basis to Mark's symbolic purification of the temple? At some point Jesus came to Jerusalem but aspects of Mark's account point to his overwhelming symbolic treatment of Jesus' coming.⁷⁵⁸ The factual details about Jesus' entry into the city and the cleansing as well as what effect these two events had on the general population are not recoverable on the historical level. Yet, narratively, Jesus' cleansing justifies the development of the authorities' plan to arrest Jesus and hand him over to Pilate (15:1).

With La Verdiere, G.W. Buchanan rejects any historical basis to the outline of the temple pericope, pointing to the typical Markan language (11:18,19) and 11:16 as a halachic recollection probably added later. He regards 11:17 ('and he began to teach') as similar to 11:16, also added later.⁷⁵⁹ There is too the improbable easily-breached, strict security of the temple, especially at the great feasts. Further, the Scriptures did not expect the Messiah to destroy the temple but many scriptural references point to a messianic cleansing. For Buchanan, this cleansing of the temple is a creation of the early Church that Mark has crafted for his own purposes.⁷⁶⁰

From a Christian perspective, the focus is on the replacement temple's responsibility for intensifying the reception of Gentiles, not into the temple but into their

⁷⁵⁷ Malbon, 'Galilee and Jerusalem', 253.

⁷⁵⁸ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 142-150.

households and removing any obstacles preventing this welcome occurring. Smith sees Jesus' coming as claiming the temple for Gentiles⁷⁶¹ though Rome's house groups are under the microscope. Why construct an elaborate intercalation (11:12-21) if the image is directed at the irrelevant, historical temple. Anderson seems correct:

So theologically oriented is the story and so much has each Evangelist given it his own particular interpretation that it provides no firm basis for historical reconstruction....it appears (that)...a minor episode in a corner of the Temple court has been magnified in the tradition and developed according to the theological predilections of the Evangelists.⁷⁶²

'It was already late' (11:11). It is also too late for the failed Jerusalem temple, though not for a fruitful outcome to the risen Lord's judgment of Rome's house-churches.

There is also a metaphorical use of the temple imagery in the allusion to Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 11:17; cf. Jer 7:11). With its context, it formed an oracle that threatened the temple with the same fate as that of the temple at Shiloh, a reference to be taken symbolically. If ambivalent, Jeremiah relates the Shiloh imagery of the 'den of robbers' to Israel's leaders (Jer 7:8-11); they are 'robbing God'.⁷⁶³ Malachi echoes Jeremiah: 'Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me' (Mal 3:8). Geddert sees this metaphor as the root disease underlying all the other symptoms in the temple narrative,⁷⁶⁴ relating it to the symbolic fruit in the vineyard parable (12:1-12) that the vineyard's owner did not receive. Both the fig tree and vineyard pericopes question whether the house-churches will be any different. Do they, in turn, 'rob God'?

Both Juel and La Verdiere stress the symbolic, didactic function of the fig-tree intercalation. La Verdiere also links the 'cloaks' and 'way' symbolically (11:8) and sees the 'fig tree withered away to its roots' as finalising the judgment image.⁷⁶⁵ If

the fig tree (had) withered away to the roots' (11:20), it is reasonable to

⁷⁵⁹ G.W. Buchanan, 'Symbolic Money-Changers in the Temple', *NTS* 37 (1991), 281.

⁷⁶⁰ Buchanan, 'Symbolic Money-Changers', 286-290.

⁷⁶¹ Smith, 'Son of David Tradition', 534.

⁷⁶² Anderson, *Mark*, 264.

⁷⁶³ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 117-119.

⁷⁶⁴ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 119-130.

⁷⁶⁵ Juel, *Messiah*, 130-131; La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 48.

assume that the image embraces the priestly functions and the absence of the fruits of the temple liturgy. That the ongoing Gospel's replacement theme is further embedded in the ironic repetition of the hostile establishment's 'chief priests and the scribes and the elders' (11:18), makes this clear (14:10-11; 15:1; 12:38-44)⁷⁶⁶

For, given that the 'the fig tree is widely held to be symbolic of the temple, it may symbolise the building itself but, if so, only in addition to its primary objectives, the religious leaders'.⁷⁶⁷ They are also presumably referred to in the allegory at 12:1-12: so 'the Lord of the vineyard will come (and) will give the vineyard to others' (12:9), namely 'whoever' and 'anyone' who follows the Lord. A. Milavec sees Mark's modification of Isaiah's parable as a sign that the husbandmen have rebuffed the prophets of the Lord. They will be destroyed and suitable replacements sent.⁷⁶⁸ Concurrently, current patterns of control 'now in this time' must be rejected in the faith context of the new houses of prayer in Rome.⁷⁶⁹

The summary statement, 'when he had looked around at everything...he went out to Bethany' (11:11) implies the temple's rejection, concretised in the fig-tree intercalation. No other details are given of the temple's state from Jesus' perspective before he confronts the barren fig tree the next morning (11:12). On Jesus' return to Jerusalem the 'next day' (11:12), Mark focuses immediately on the fig tree. In the prophetic books, the fig tree appears as imagery: its blossoming depicts Yahweh blessing Israel, its withering signals Yahweh's judgment.⁷⁷⁰ But viewed as a composite account of fig-tree imagery from the Old Testament (11:12-14, 20-21),⁷⁷¹ Jesus' action in the temple presents problems if seen only as a cleansing.

If this is the case, it must be accepted that the temple may be renewed. This interpretation could encourage a lingering connection between temple-based, ritual purity

⁷⁶⁶ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 126; cf. 11:27; 12:12,13,18,38; 14:1,10,43,53,55,66; 15:1,11,31.

⁷⁶⁷ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 126.

⁷⁶⁸ A. Milavec, 'The Identity of "the Son" and the "Others": Mark's Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen Reconsidered', *BTB* 20 (1990), 36.

⁷⁶⁹ Juel, *Messiah*, 206; cf. Donahue, *Gospel*, 56.

⁷⁷⁰ Telford, *Barren Temple*, 156.

spirituality and resurrection faith. The text states specifically that the fig tree is cursed. It withers 'to its roots' (11:20), a metaphorical state that suggests an enacted parable of God's judgment on Israel's leaders since a corrupt liturgy flowed to, and from, corrupt temple-based religious attitudes and practices (12:38-44).⁷⁷² But the Markan Jesus' narrative cleansing is seen as a catalyst for the authorities' ire and ensures the continuation of the replacement theme since the passion predictions demand a tangible incident to intensify the threat to Jesus. For the second time, 'they sought for a way to kill him' (11:18; cf. 3:6). Ironically 'they' resume their unwitting role as servants of God's redemptive will in Mark's rejection/replacement motif.

It is argued that the fig-tree imagery prepares for the physical destruction of the temple as prophesied at 13:2. Yet no timetable, person or cause is linked to its destruction (13:1-4) though Jesus unambiguously predicts that one day the temple will be destroyed. To Rome's Christians, faced with the aftermath of persecution, the fate of a distant temple was irrelevant in the turbulent years after Nero's onslaught.

6. THE HOUSE: A TEMPLE NOT MADE WITH HANDS

An analysis of 15:21-39 reveals the fourth aspect of the Gospel's replacement theme: the exact nature of the secret of the kingdom which was set earlier in the privacy of the house motif (3:31-35; cf. 9:28-10:52). It supplants the image of the temple as the focus of God's presence among his people. There are three key verses (15:37-39). Jesus' 'loud cry' (15:37) precedes the pivotal next verse where 'the curtain was torn in two from top to bottom' (15:38), and leads to the centurion's witness: 'Truly this man was the Son of God' (15:39 - RSV). Taken together 15:37-39 describe the heart of the 'secret': God's reign in the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord, in the house (12:35-37).

In preparation for this revelation, the Markan Jesus 'cried out: 'My God, My

⁷⁷¹ Telford, *Barren Temple*, 158.

⁷⁷² Walker, *Jesus*, 5; cf. Gnlika, *Markus*, 2, 198; Telford, *Barren Temple*, 193-195.

God why hast Thou forsaken me?’ (15:34; cf. Ps 22:1). It is a ‘loud cry’ (Ps 22:1), expressing Jesus’ experience of being forsaken but the cry has to be interpreted within Ps 22’s entire scope. So Jesus’ abandonment should be seen in the context of his words ‘it is necessary’ (8:31) and so willed by God. But abandonment is not the end of the story even though the just one of this psalm makes no mention of his rights or his sins and does not curse his adversaries.⁷⁷³ He is the selfless servant.

Mark’s description of the crucifixion parallels Ps 22’s mood shifts: Ps 22:1-10 focuses alternately on God’s power and the struggles of the Just One, while the cry at 15:37 epitomises the sense of abandonment echoed in Ps 22:11-21. But Ps 22:22-31 reassures Mark’s community that, in the crucifixion scene, Jesus’ ignominious failure and death would blossom into a victory outlined in the concluding movement of the Psalm; there, hope is reinforced despite the bare, ‘they crucified him’. At 15:24a and 15:25, in the two clauses that bracket the casting of lots for Jesus’ clothes (Ps 22:18), Jesus is the just Sufferer,⁷⁷⁴ whose death and resurrection inaugurate the reign of the crucified/risen Son of Man. Marcus insists

that not only the psalm’s description of innocent suffering but also its promise of vindication are essential background for understanding the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus...the entire psalm (Ps 22) is framed by references to the kingship of Yahweh (vv. 3,28)...the psalm speaks of a proclamation to the ends of the earth (v. 27) and asserts that it hints at the resurrection of the dead (v. 29). Understood against this background, the psalm is used in the passion narratives not only to provide Old Testament background for Jesus’ suffering but also to hint at a deliverance from death that is a revelation of the kingdom of God to all, including the Gentiles.⁷⁷⁵

D.C. Duling also argues that the psalmist’s prayer, ‘that God raise him up’ and placed him in his presence, harmonises with the full Markan story by which Jesus, through resurrection triumphs over the plots of the chief priests, the scribes and elders.⁷⁷⁶

⁷⁷³ L. Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning*, (New York: Alba House Press, 1970), 226-227.

⁷⁷⁴ Sabourin, *Psalms*, 227.

⁷⁷⁵ Marcus, *Way*, 180. Marcus here is dependent upon the earlier work of H. Gese

⁷⁷⁶ D.C. Duling, ‘The Promises to David and Their Entrance into Christianity - Nailing Down a Likely Hypothesis’, *NTS* 19 (1973), 55-77.

His exaltation to God's right hand completes the outline in the passion predictions (14:62).⁷⁷⁷ In 15:16-41, the allusions to the Psalms (cf. Pss. 10, 14, 69) link Jesus to the righteous sufferer and connects Isaiah's 'suffering servant' to the verb *paradidomi* (Isa 53:6,12). Jesus

is an inclusive figure and the first in a series of suffering but ultimately triumphant warriors in the apocalyptic battle. Jesus calls the disciples to be with him (3:14), and he twice speaks of their suffering loss for his sake, even to the point of joining him in death (8:35; 10:29).⁷⁷⁸

The martyr church's proclamation of the gospel leads some of its hearers to cast in their lot with Jesus and thus 'save their lives' (8:35-38). Then we may say that, indirectly, Mark's community is giving its life as a ransom for many (10:45) and pouring out its blood for their sake. Such vicarious suffering presupposes the full Markan call to repent and believe in the victorious good news and make their becoming one with his (1:15; cf. 8:34). Logically, in their present suffering they share in the efficacy of the secret of the kingdom 'for all things are possible with God' in this beloved Servant/Son (10:27). Ironically, on Calvary though God saves while seemingly defeated, Jesus does not 'save himself' (15:29-32); yet elsewhere he declares others 'saved' (5:23,28,34; 6:56; 8:35; 10:52). Miracles too are a proclamation of God's reign in the victorious Son of Man.⁷⁷⁹ Mark does not describe a vanquished Messiah for even a hint of it would have weakened hope among Rome's house-churches members.

The death of Jesus is related simply and briefly. After uttering a second, wordless cry, Jesus expires (15:37). The fact, that this is a 'great cry' reinforces the notion that Jesus embraces death even as he continues to trust in God. Shortly before, in Gethsemane, Jesus' overriding goal, 'Father...not what I will but as thou wilt' (14:36; cf. 8:31), was an obedience whose fruit constitutes the good news, 'for that is why I came out' (1:38; cf. 1:15,39,45c; 3:7; 6:7a). If aware of this, Jesus is also aware of the

⁷⁷⁷ Marcus, *Way*, 172-198.

⁷⁷⁸ Marcus, *Way*, 184.

outcome. Three times he predicts that ‘after three days he would rise again’ (8:31; 9:31; 10:34; cf. 14:28) so as to ‘go before’ them in Galilee (16:7).⁷⁸⁰ Elsewhere, the aorist circumstantial participle of *aphiemi* (15:36-37) equates with the main verb of the clause (cf. 1:18,20; 4:36; 7:8; 8:12; 13:34; 14:50). To summarise:

In the present text, therefore, Jesus’ letting loose a loud voice equates with *exepneusen*, “he breathed out, expired.” That is to say, that his shout of superhuman strength *was* his last breath. No wonder the one who filled a sponge with sour wine and tried to make Jesus drink ran. But it was too late to revive Jesus...Jesus had expired with the shout.⁷⁸¹

Even given the stark nature of Jesus’ death, these two cries convey a sense of extraordinary strength that, in turn, rest upon the effect of the narrative structure that Mark creates immediately before the death of Jesus. Apart from the unspoken irony of Jesus’ suffering being victorious, these cries reflect on the blindness of those on Calvary, since Mark’s literary emphasis falls on the theme of sight, which is stressed in the two pericopes prior to Jesus’ death (15:29-30; 15:33-36). In the former, it is shown in the bystanders’ derisive call, ‘save yourself and come down from the cross’ (15:29-30). In the latter, it is seen in the chief priests’ taunt, ‘come down from the cross for us to see it and believe’ (15:31-32).

Some exegetes stress that despite the witness to Jesus as the ‘beloved Son of God’ (1:11; 1:1; 9:7; cf. 4:62), Jesus’ cry can scarcely be viewed as a prayer of resounding trust. Others argue that Gethsemane’s human agony (14:32-42) and the two great cries must be balanced against the Gospel’s viewpoint of Jesus’ victory over sin (Ps 22; cf. 1:1,12-13; 8:31). Mark, however, surely presumes on Rome’s communal awareness of the Old Testament allusions and their appreciation of the Gospel’s superscription and opening (1:1-3). It is unlikely that Mark would chance community misunderstanding by using ineffective allusions to Ps 22 at the climax to his Gospel.

⁷⁷⁹ Matera, ‘He Saved Others’, 22, 24.

⁷⁸⁰ Gundry, *Mark*, 949.

⁷⁸¹ Gundry, *Mark*, 948-949.

Painter insists that the force of the cry indicates that Jesus' life had not been squeezed out of him, but he offered his life from a position of strength.⁷⁸² This reading is vital for Rome's Christians, desperately needing to be reassured of their sharing in the fruit of the Son of Man's triumphant victory.

If Jesus' triumphant cry discloses a Jesus who could do what only God could do as the 'beloved Son' (1:1; 1:11), he lives his mission in the reality of being the Son of Man (1:38; 2:5,17; 10:45; cf. 8:38; 12:7; 14:62). Equally, in his humanity he knew his existential becoming in opposition, rejection and betrayal in addition to the agony of his passion, whose lordly fruit is shown in the constant allusions to his healing, exorcising and resurrected life in disciples of faith (1:25,29-31; 2:12; 5:42; 6:7-13; 7:31-8:10; 9:27; 10:50). Rome's Christians share too in the familial relationship with God in the 'house' (3:35), a gift that, in faith, is constantly more fruitful (cf. 4:20,21-32).

Should the 'bystanders' (15:34-35) misinterpret Jesus' first cry, their mistake illustrates the carefully prepared setting for the death of Jesus. With Ps 69:21 ('in a loud voice') in mind, the suggestion, 'Let us wait to see if Elijah will come', provides a link with Malachi's expectation of Elijah's appearance in the temple (Mal 4:1). This points to the 'day of the Lord' with its themes of judgment for sinners and healing, victory and hope for the 'righteous' (Mal 4:1-5). Then, with the great cry (15:37), Mark reaches the final step of the 'way of the Lord.' For Stock notes that

historical investigations which lead to speculations about the physical aspects of Jesus' death must not be allowed to obscure the crucial question - the meaning of the death-cry, whether historically or kergmatically transmitted....For the early Christians, the only important thing was that at the moment of death, Jesus had not sunk unknowingly into death⁷⁸³

He must 'go before' in Galilee (14:28). Therefore, the ensuing description of the temple curtain being 'torn apart' casts Jesus' death in a most ironic light, since it is the

⁷⁸² Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 207.

⁷⁸³ Stock, *Method*, 408.

supernatural power unleashed by Jesus' death that rends the curtain asunder. This juxtaposing of outward appearance and hidden reality intensifies the irony of Jesus' seeming abandonment by God in his death.⁷⁸⁴ Yet Mark's narrative purpose thrives in this literary structure for the temple authorities' murderous hostility has ensured that the secret of the kingdom is a triumphant reality within the house-church (4:10-11).

Previously, Mark's merged replacement and house motifs maintain the ongoing metaphorical sense of the kingdom's present secret within the image of the house not 'made with hands' (14:58). Stated differently, Jesus' dedication in his crucified/risen humanity is the eschatological way that offers access to God. In an unwitting ironic sense, at his trial the false witnesses maintained that Jesus said of the temple that he would 'build another not made with hands'. They were unaware that this is what God had done. Their patent lie, caught in the exchange between Jesus and the High Priest and addressed to Rome's Christians, makes Jesus' identity as the crucified/risen Lord explicit in the humanity of the Son of Man. Jesus does not return as the glorified Son of God but as the Son of Man, the Lord, 'sitting at the right hand of Power and coming with the clouds of heaven', a truth repeated in the Davidic pericope (14:62; 12:35-37). There, Jesus is an eternally, fellow-human suffering yet triumphant, glorified figure.

It is this gift of the Christian's identification with the Son of Man in his crucified, glorified humanity that pervades the whole narrative (3:14; 14:14; 3:35; 8:34-35; 9:35; 10:45). Thus, Mark's apocalyptic statement that the 'curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom', (*eschisthe* - 15:38) constitutes an apt conclusion to his treatment of the temple from 11:1, which, in turn, forms a dramatic inclusion with the prologue to the Gospel (1:1-15). There, Jesus sees 'the heavens being rent' (1:10). While the RSV translates the same verb in *eiden schizomenous tous ouranous* as 'he saw

⁷⁸⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 948.

the heavens opened' (1:10), a more descriptive clause like 'and he saw the heavens being torn apart' is warranted; it offers a more striking revelation of Jesus' identity (cf. *antigen* - Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:21). Both uses of this strong, even violent, verb indicate key revelations. Mark's rhetorical story develops between these two 'tearings', climaxing in a momentous apocalyptic revelation of the replacement temple based on the identity of the Son of Man.⁷⁸⁵

The Father proclaims Jesus the 'beloved Son' (1:9-11), though Mark is not supporting an adoptionist Christology. Davis argues that the aorist tense of *eudokesa*, probably indicates that God's pleasure in Jesus is already established and does not arise unexpectedly, for a rare, combined Markan biblical quotation shows that the events narrated are part of God's eternal plan (1:2-3; cf. 8:31).⁷⁸⁶ Though 1:11 is framed in terms of Ps 2:7, the specifically adoptionist element in 'today, I have begotten you' is omitted.⁷⁸⁷ The 'torn heavens' imagery fits this graphic climax.

At 15:33, Amos' day of darkness (Am 5:18-19) opens the high point of the Gospel. Some exegetes argue that the household theme is insinuated in the symbolic sense of abandonment or homelessness in the pain expressed in Jesus cry, 'My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' (15:34). They argue that the apocalyptic note

of darkness (15:33) prepares the reader for the tragic death of one who epitomizes the homeless and rejected figures familiar to Mark's householders. In his final death screams that echo from the cross, Jesus shouts out to Mark's audience his familiarity with the most painful and shattering experience of any human being, the experience of divine abandonment. This is the real and incontrovertible experience of absolute homelessness, of which the quest for home is its shadow.⁷⁸⁸

The opening *phonen megale* (15:34) prepares for the second *phonen megale* that Jesus utters (15:37). These two cries in turn lead to the centurion's dramatic,

⁷⁸⁵ Juel, *Surprise*, 34-35.

⁷⁸⁶ P.G. Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', *JSNT* 35 (1989), 12.

⁷⁸⁷ Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', 12-13.

⁷⁸⁸ Trainor, *Quest*, 169; also Hooker, *Mark*, 377; Harrington, 'Mark', 628; Senior, *Passion*, 122-123.

unknowing yet conclusive identification of Jesus (15:39).⁷⁸⁹ The juxtaposition and parallelism in 15:37-39 link the insinuations of the torn curtain to the figure of Jesus on the cross.⁷⁹⁰ Mark's *houtos exepneusen* (15:39) also forms a logical climax to the directions set at 15:37 and 15:38 in light of the key, yet supposedly disruptive role of the curtain (15:38).

As well, 15:37 and 15:39 bring to a climax two basic themes in Mark's narrative: the question of the identity of Jesus, whether in his authoritative teaching or healing (1:27,34; 2:7; 3:11; 4:41; 6:2; 8:29) or on Calvary (15:29-30,31-32,34-36), and Jesus' suffering servant role (10:44-45; cf. 9:36). The question of Jesus' identity drives the Gospel drama to its climactic revelation, a necessary point in light of the *huios theou* in the superscription (1:1; cf. 1:11). Gnllka sees Jesus' authority rather than his identity as the dominant issue here though we agree with the balance D. Knigge presents when he argues that the messianic secret demands an answer.⁷⁹¹ This is a literary satisfaction that is pre-fuelled in part by an emphasis on the recurring secrecy motif (1:34,43; 5:42; 7:36-37) - a motif that has acted as a curtain to protect the integrity of the story. But it is regularly pierced to imply the present victorious fruit of the 'secret' already lived in household service (cf. 1:31,45; 2:10-12, 15-17; 3:31-35; 4:19,20-34; 5:20; 6:10,13,30; 7:24-30,36-37; 9:28-29 and so on). For dramatic purposes, Mark forestalls a first person witness and the premature disclosure of Jesus' identity; he silences the unclean spirits' cries of recognition prior to the centurion's unwitting witness on Calvary (cf. 3:11).

There, on Calvary, against the backdrop of the ironic blindness shown by the chief priests and bystanders, the evangelist now presents a type of sight that challenges his addressees to understand and believe in the full identity of the paradoxical crucified/risen Son of Man.⁷⁹² The narrative disciples or other figures never fully pierce

⁷⁸⁹ N. Perrin, 'The Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark,' *Int* 30 (1976), 115-124.

⁷⁹⁰ J.R. Donahue 'Jesus as the Parable of God', *Int* 32 (1978), 383-385,

⁷⁹¹ Gnllka, *Markus*, 1, 26; against D. Knigge, 'The Meaning of Mark' *Int* 22 (1968), 54-56.

⁷⁹² Kingsbury, 'Religious Authorities', 61-62.

this veil of secrecy. The onus is on Mark's addressees to face the challenge to see and understand in faith what is paramount in a balanced perception of the centurion's role at Calvary. Also, against exegetes who hold that the Son of God title carries royal-messianic import only, there is an overwhelming agreement among exegetes that the centurion's witness to Jesus' identity is correct. The divine element, suggested in the cry of dereliction on the cross, forms the Son of Man's ultimate dedication to his Father's will as the suffering Servant/Son (Isa 53:37).⁷⁹³

Literary considerations substantiate this majority view of the full import of *huios theou* at this point. In the story, only the Father and those that inhabit the spirit-world use the term 'Son of God' with an understanding of the title's full scope before Calvary. Previously, Mark baulks at the suitability of the title, 'Son of David', where it does not include the concept of Jesus' cosmic dignity as the risen Lord (12:37) set within the over-arching title of Son of God (12:35-37). The High Priest's Jewish circumlocution for the Godhead ('Son of the Blessed' - 14:61) and his charge of blasphemy at the trial (14:64; cf. 2:7) indicate that Jesus' claims to divine status are the real sticking point at the trial. Pesch and Juel opt for Jesus' perceived messianic status as the cause for Jesus' condemnation whereas Kingsbury insists that they stand against the whole movement of the post-resurrection point of view of the Gospel.⁷⁹⁴ They ignore too the repeated textual indications of the divine nature of Jesus' sonship since, where Jesus' identity is in question, Mark includes suggestive expressions of his divine power or prerogative (1:9-11; 2:10,17,28; 5:19-20; 8:38; 9:7-8; 11:3). Of the stilling of the storm (4:35-41), the disciples' realisation

is expressed in the form of a question and the early Christian congregations would have had a ready answer...Jesus was, if not actually God, undoubtedly the eschatological agent of God, entrusted with the plenitude of divine power for the protecting and saving of his Church.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁹³ Gundry, *Mark*, 950; against Juel, *Messiah*, 80-83; Gnllka, *Markus*, 2, 281.

⁷⁹⁴ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 437; cf. Juel, *Messiah*, 100-107; Kingsbury, *Christology*, 112-113.

⁷⁹⁵ Nineham, *Mark*, 147.

On this point, it is of decisive importance for this study that the Father names Jesus as both Lord and Son. On the question of the Son, Davis argues that on the levels of narrative and theology, the centurion's statement climaxes Mark's story. The grammatical point at 15:39 is inconsequential since most references to Jesus as the Son of God contain the article (1:11; 3:11; 9:7; 14:61). Mark writes, not from a divine-man context, but from a Christian background.⁷⁹⁶

As Lord and Son, both dimensions of Jesus are treated as the narrative progressively outlines the concept of the crucified/risen Jesus as the selfless Servant of Humanity, the Lord (12:35-37; cf. 1:1,3; 11:3).⁷⁹⁷ From the interdependence and unity of these two verses (15:37,39), the truth of Jesus as Lord and the beloved Son of the Father (15:39) offers a profound theological thesis by uniting these two themes in a simultaneous culmination and juxtapositioning serving Mark's theology of the cross. If paradoxical suffering love defines the beloved Servant/Son the Lord, it also demonstrates how his divine mission is inherent in his sacrificial death (10:45). But from the story's viewpoint, the affirmation of Jesus as the 'Son of God' reinforces the earlier uses of the title. H.M. Jackson adds that the retrospective way in which Mark phrases the centurion's statement, as if to say, 'This man really was, after all' indicates that the centurion validates the earlier ascriptions of the title to Jesus.⁷⁹⁸

Clearly, Jesus' full identity is a vital issue in Mark's strategy when the curtain is torn 'from top to bottom'. It clarifies for those challenged to believe the truth on the centurion's lips. Painter holds that the framing of 15:37 and 15:39 'heightens the significance of the role of the centurion' though he queries the centurion's historical awareness of the nature of his identification for Rome's Christians. He adds:

Whatever the centurion might have meant, for Mark this is the climax of the recognition of Jesus. At the depth of his passion a centurion made what for

⁷⁹⁶ Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', 18.

⁷⁹⁷ At 1:2-3; 2:28; 5:19-20; 7:27; 8:31; 9:33,33-34; 10:45; 11:3; 12:37; 13:35 the status of Jesus as the Lord is stated outright or implied (cf. Isa 42:1-7; 52:13-53:12; cf. Wis 2:12-3:9).

⁷⁹⁸ H.M. Jackson, 'The Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle from the Cross', *NTS* 33 (1987), 35.

Mark was the most perceptive confession (cf. 1:1,11; 9:7; [14:61]; 15:39). The centurion then represents the mission to the nations (13:10), where the true confession of faith first finds expression in association with the mystery of the crucified Messiah.⁷⁹⁹

Yet the centurion makes only a brief appearance in Mark's story. Nor is he the one who needs to understand the profundity of his words - Mark's fellow Christians do.⁸⁰⁰ Though it seems the centurion delves into the full dimension of Jesus' identity, in view of the whole narrative it is unlikely that Mark would lay the responsibility for this climactic function on the centurion's shoulders. Above all, Mark writes for his community, not to verify a centurion's insight.

The Jewish authorities utter the truth without understanding. 'Are you are the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' demands the High Priest (14:61; cf. 15:2,26,32). It 'would seem more appropriate to read the statement of the centurion in such a light'; Juel adds that the Christian knows what the centurion

cannot, the statement becomes a "confession", another testimony to the truth at a most unlikely moment in the story. Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the Blessed" as the high priest put it. Testimony is offered but by people who say more than they know. And only by means of this last piece of irony - the unwitting confession of Jesus' executor - can Mark adequately capture how the "gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" must feel.⁸⁰¹

The issue after all, is not what Mark's communities thought of the centurion and the quality of his faith; it is what they believed of Jesus. Faith in the full dignity of Jesus as both Lord and Son of God (1:15) is an imperative for a Christian.

In light of the crucial nature of verses 15:37 and 15:39, an explanation is essential for the situation of the curtain's rending. The rent curtain being 'torn in two from top to bottom' discloses the absolute irrelevance of the temple for Rome's Christians. By means of the 'loud cry' (15:37), linked with the torn veil (15:38) and the resulting centurion's witness (15:39), Mark suggests that Yahweh's abiding presence

⁷⁹⁹ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 207.

⁸⁰⁰ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 158.

⁸⁰¹ Juel, *Mark*, 228; cf. Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 53-54; Gundry, *Mark*, 949-951; Hooker, *Mark*, 378-379;

with his people is no longer set in the temple. So where does he envisage it to be? It can only be in Jesus' dignity in his crucified and broken humanity as the Son Man, the Lord on the cross (13:36). Mark's strategy directs Christians to recognise that those (3:34) who sat about Jesus in the house and lived God's will as servants (3:35) existentially shared the way of the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord (11:17), a dignity within the dimension of his divine status (1:1,11).⁸⁰²

Exegetes adopt different approaches in adapting the symbolism of the torn curtain to the centurion's testimony.⁸⁰³ Juel holds that it carries a secondary function in the Gospel. It documents the evangelist's claim that, for Mark's household-churches, Jesus is the anticipated, and in some sense, historical Messiah-King who would destroy then rebuild a temple that opens man to union with God.⁸⁰⁴ Yet viewed in this way, Mark's graphic treatment of the curtain pericope carries no weight at the narrative level for rounding off the evangelist's basic purpose in constructing the scene on Calvary. If the centurion does not witness the event of the torn curtain, then his statement as a proof of Jesus' royal messiahship in his role as the servant Son carries no weight. Yet Juel insists that the centurion makes his statement without understanding what he is saying though he was amazed at Jesus' death.⁸⁰⁵ Our study holds that only Juel's last point is correct. Trainor comments:

The lack of precision in the centurion's statement can mean only one thing. The ambiguity or obscurity of Jesus' identity throughout the gospel is maintained right to the end. It further affirms the struggle in Mark's readers as they wrestle with experiencing divine communion in their own encounter with suffering and death.⁸⁰⁶

Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 207-208; Trainor, *Quest*, 171-172.

⁸⁰² References to the 'group' about Jesus within a house abound in the Gospel: cf. 1:29,32; 2:1-2,15-17; 3:20-35; 5:19,40; 6:10; 7:17,24; 9:28,33; 10:10,30; 14:3,15-16,18. The sense of Jesus and the disciples being together in a house is also implied or symbolically expressed for a community within the urban culture in which the Gospel is set: cf. 4:10,34; 8:26; 11:11,20; 12:10; 13:33.

⁸⁰³ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 498; cf. Taylor, *Gospel*, 596; Donahue, *Are You the Christ?*, 203; Juel, *Messiah*, 137-138.

⁸⁰⁴ Juel, *Messiah*, 81-82; cf. Nineham, *Mark*, 430-431.

⁸⁰⁵ Juel, *Messiah*, 83.

⁸⁰⁶ Trainor, *Quest*, 171.

Scholars presume this is a statement of faith by the centurion.⁸⁰⁷ But the truth of this revelation of a personal 'secret' is exactly what the above literary analysis demonstrates when the centurion describes Jesus as the Son of God. For it is from the soldier's unwitting identification of Jesus' identity that the full explanation of the secret of the kingdom emerges - not for the centurion, since Mark does not write for him - but for a Christian of faith 'inside' Rome's Christian households. They need to be reassured of the victorious nature of Jesus' authority as Lord because he is Son.

Failure to provide an answer to Jesus' identity at this climactic moment to these engineered situations in which the question of who/what arises seems to suggest an ineptness on Mark's part that does not fit his painstakingly planned story line. This is especially true when considering Peter's inadequate answer to Jesus' question, 'Who do men say that I am?' (8:27). Compare this to hints of faith in Jesus as Lord shown by characters along the way: the healed leper (1:40-45), the demoniac (5:20), or the Syrophoenician woman (7:28) and the perceptive intuition of the woman in the house of Simon at Bethany (14:3-9). But the very nature of the replacement motif (8:14-21, 22-26; 9:28-29 and so on) depends on an answer as to what spatial dimension encloses God's continuing redeeming presence among his people. Within this theme, Mark recognises the necessity of a statement of just who heals, teaches, and forgives sin in household-churches. Alternatively, what is the nature of God's presence in the household? - a crucial question for Rome's Christians.

All the above factors demand that the centurion's confession be evaluated from Mark's narrative viewpoint. In this necessity, Jackson offers a way forward. He notes Mark's apparently odd selection of *eiden* in order to describe the centurion's reaction to the 'loud cry' that Jesus utters on the cross (15:39b; 15:32,36). Jackson doubts that it was Mark's intention to identify Jesus on this basis whereas Achtemeier

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. Taylor, *Gospel*, 597; also Senior, *Passion*, 129; Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 253-254.

holds that the natural phenomenon of Jesus' cry leads the centurion to identify Jesus.⁸⁰⁸ Certainly, Mark specifically says that Jesus cried out but it is what the centurion sees that is accentuated not what he hears (15:39). At the trial too Jesus assures the Jewish establishment (14:53) that they will 'see' Jesus as the Son of God at the parousia. Thus the centurion's testimony to the divinity of Jesus on Calvary constitutes a symbolic representation of Jesus' prior confession: 'for you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power' (14:62; cf. 9:1). On Jesus' lips, this avowal must be accurate. The centurion knows nothing of this; it is this type of sight, which Mark presupposes in the house-church as Christians await the coming of the *Kurios tes oikias* (13:35). But where in faith will they 'see' the dignity of the risen Lord before that moment if not in the broken body of Jesus, the Lord, on the cross?⁸⁰⁹

To analyse the relationship between 15:39 and 15:38 in order to convey a full appreciation of the centurion's words (not of the centurion's own appreciation of them), requires a different understanding of 15:38. It demands an interpretation that does justice to the symbolic effectiveness of the curtain tearing in order to advance Mark's narrative purpose but not in equating it with Juel's thesis of a royal messianism.⁸¹⁰ Mark uses the passive *eschisthe* (15:38) and adds the seeming redundant phrase 'from top to bottom', hinting that God has caused the curtain's rending. There is no proof that the centurion could see the torn curtain. Nor is there any evidence that he understands the secret of the Lord's reign in the house or that he shared in the narrative hints about Jesus' identity.

W.T. Shiner holds that if the centurion's pronouncement is the end of the messianic secret in the text itself, the pronouncement is deliberately ambiguous. By it Mark allows his audience to hear a deeper meaning in the text.⁸¹¹ It is unlikely that a

⁸⁰⁸ Jackson, *Death*, 16-17; cf. Gnllka, *Markus*, 2, 324, who differs from P.J. Achtemeier, 'Jesus as the Son of David in Mark', *Semeia* 11 (1978), 61-62.

⁸⁰⁹ Donahue, *Gospel*, 57-60; cf. Donahue, *Are You the Christ?*, 201-202.

⁸¹⁰ Juel, *Messiah*, 37-38.

⁸¹¹ W.T. Shiner, 'The Ambiguous Pronouncement of the Centurion and the Shrouding of Meaning in Mark', *JSNT* 78 (2000), 22.

pagan centurion could convey by his statement the same thing that a Christian confession entails. Would a first century pagan observer be able to overcome the stumbling block of a brutal crucifixion when considering the status of the crucified Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 1:23)? Whatever the state of a Christian's knowledge of Jerusalem's geography (would they know which curtain in the temple was being torn?), the rhetorical flow of the entire narrative leads the household's members to associate the darkness, the cry and the veil splitting with the centurion's exclamation. Yet the portents of a noble person's death do not suggest divine status.⁸¹² The centurion shows no sign of being converted apart from his ambiguous witness. But he unwittingly confirms the ironic disclosure of the blindness of the story's characters on Calvary while challenging the faith of household Christians in Rome.⁸¹³

The ambiguity of the tearing of the curtain demands that Christian faith is challenged, and simultaneously, or, even antecedently, the tearing also serves as a sign of the ultimate theophany. An unseen Yahweh, whose presence was formerly concealed within the Holy of Holies (Ex 33:11, 14), now himself rends the veil asunder (*eschisthe*) and manifests his presence in the 'face' of the crucified Christ. It is the face of 'the beloved Son' (cf. 9:37).⁸¹⁴ Hence the nature of the double shout that Jesus utters merits further attention (15:34,37).

Mark employs the verb *eboesen* to introduce the first shout with a certain formality (15:34). He follows this verb with a transliteration of the Aramaic of the 'shout' which, because it being in a foreign tongue carries the notion of power'.⁸¹⁵ Here, Gundry moves into the imaginative realm, endeavouring, with the assistance of irony and scriptural allusion, to describe what defies logical description.⁸¹⁶ The power of this

⁸¹² Shiner, 'Ambiguous Pronouncement', 3-10.

⁸¹³ Shiner, 'Ambiguous Pronouncement', 15.

⁸¹⁴ Gniska, *Markus*, 2, 324; cf. Taylor, *Gospel*, 596; against Donahue, *Are You the Christ?*, 202-203; Juel, *Messiah*, 140-142.

⁸¹⁵ Gundry, *Mark*, 948.

⁸¹⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 948; cf. Nineham, *Mark*, 428-429.

‘loud’ cry, when joined to the Son of Man’s wordless cry of triumph (15:37)

will turn out so superhuman that the breath-Spirit which Jesus exhales in shouting the Aramaic makes a wind strong enough to rend the veil of the temple....and just as the force of the Spirit coming down (*kata-*) caused the heavens to be rent (*schizomenous* - 1:10), so the force of the Spirit’s exhalation by Jesus causes the veil of the temple to be rent (*eschisthe*) from the top downwards.⁸¹⁷

Jackson offers two reasons for supporting Gundry’s reasoning. He first points to the scriptural ‘breath of God’ image (Isa 11:1-4; 30:27-28; 40:7) and that the Gospel’s concept of the Spirit is consistently dynamic (1:11; 13:11b), an approach that would also support a faith-inspired view of the paradoxical challenge of suffering discipleship and persecution in the house-church.⁸¹⁸ S. Motyer, in supporting this interpretation, cites the role of the *inclusio* at 1:1,11 and 15:39.

In both places something is rent, the verb being *schizo*; in both cases the rending involves a theophany, an opening of the Holy Place; in both (cases) something descends, whether the Spirit-dove or the tear in the curtain; in both Elijah-symbolism lies close at hand and informs the meaning.⁸¹⁹

There is the parallel promise of the Holy Spirit (1:8) and his Pentecost-like advent at 15:37-39. As during the Baptism and the Transfiguration, at the very ‘moment when Jesus experiences finally what it means to be the anointed Son of God in whom he (the Father) delights, another rending of the heavens takes place; it signals what it means to be baptised by the Holy Spirit. The moment of death is the moment at which the Spirit is given’.⁸²⁰

Mark may now direct his community to contemplate the ‘face of God’ in the abandoned suffering servant. The sense of the momentous import of the cry, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’, is also more apparent if viewed within the symbolic, victorious second cry (15:37) that signals Jesus’ completed passion predictions (15:34b). Nineham dismisses the question of the historicity of the words of Ps 22 on

⁸¹⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 948-50.

⁸¹⁸ Jackson, *Death*, 31-32.

⁸¹⁹ S. Motyer, ‘The Rending of the Veil: A Markan Pentecost?’, *NTS* 33 (1987), 155.

Jesus' lips,⁸²¹ but it is clear that they play a significant role in Mark's theology of the cross.

At this point, it is important to weigh the combined import for Mark's addressees of the literary effect of setting 15:38 in immediate juxtaposition with 15:37. As a first consequence of this balance, the evangelist not only underlines the fact that Jesus' 'loud cry' at the moment of death has resulted in the torn curtain but also calculates on its effectiveness in order to draw out the metaphorical self-revelatory force of Jesus' death. Mark uses the rent curtain as a strategic cipher that enlarges the capacity of this image to disclose the secret of Jesus' identity in 15:37. Because the rent veil is already an inherent cipher for revelation, the force of its location here is clear. It describes a christophany (the selfless love of the suffering Servant - 10:45) as a theophany. In his crucified humanity on the cross, Jesus the Lord discloses his Sonship. If a Christian stood on Calvary as one who 'sees', he sees God's face in the broken body of the Son of Man, the Lord (cf. 8:31; 14:62).

For Mark, Jesus' self-disclosure is an act of divine self-disclosure. His death, which climaxes his mission of rejection and suffering (and thus justifies the need of messianic secrecy in the narrative to this point), manifests his real identity for Christian faith. God himself shows his 'face' that, prior to this moment, was veiled within the Holy of Holies. Ironically, the centurion unknowingly stands before the very face of God.⁸²² Looking up at Christ on the cross, he is ignorant of way discipleship and is set outside house-church kinship for the centurion is a character that

makes only a brief appearance in Mark's story, the centurion is not the one who need understand the profundity of his words but the reader. For the reader, the centurion's acclamation is climactic. The centurion asserts that

⁸²⁰ Motyer, 'Rending of the Veil', 156.

⁸²¹ Nineham, *Mark*, 429-430.

⁸²² Black, 'Christ Crucified', 199; cf. R.E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, (2 vols; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 2, 1144-1146.

Jesus “truly” was the Son of God.⁸²³

On this point, Stock takes a middle view: the purpose of this motif - the secret of Jesus’ identity - is to invite readers to appropriate for themselves this thinking about Jesus as the Son of God.⁸²⁴ Mark challenges his house-churches to a deeper faith as they grapple existentially with the victorious ‘secret of the kingdom of God’ in their situation in Rome. The argument that the rent curtain stamps Jesus’ identity-disclosing death with a liturgical, theophanic import is intensified by the fact that it requires no questionable hypothesis to explain the link between the rent curtain and the centurion’s witness to the divinity of Jesus. It presumes only that Mark would have known, what (or whom) the tearing of the curtain would have left exposed.

A second key element of Mark’s approach to the symbolic effect of the torn curtain lies in its capacity to illuminate the major themes within Mark’s overarching *theologia crucis*. It outlines the reason why the evangelist recognises the visited/rejected temple as a fitting foil for the parallel presentation of the glorified Son of Man in his crucified/risen way discipleship within the house. It discloses, too, why Mark associates the theme of the temple ‘not made with hands’ (14:58) with the climax of Jesus’ rejection in the Gospel’s revelation of Jesus’ divinity, signifying that the veil’s destruction removes the barrier between God and man (cf. Heb 9:1-12,24-28; 10:19-25; 6:19). Thus, the narrative’s entire drive centres on Jesus in his ever-present suffering, dying, and rising as Lord, a secret entered by the faith of those ‘who sat about him’ inside the house and do God’s will (3:34-35).⁸²⁵

An evaluation may now be made of the final effect of the dismissal of the temple, its torn veil and the centurion’s witness. Calvary’s rejection of the temple’s sacred role crowns Jesus’ earlier judgment of the temple (11:1-21). It involves the whole

⁸²³ Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 53-54; cf. Painter, *Mark’s Gospel*, 207; Hurtado, *Mark*, 269.

⁸²⁴ Stock, *Method*, 414.

⁸²⁵ Taylor, *Gospel*, 596; cf. Harrington, ‘Mark’, 628.

thrust of the rejection/replacement theme that climaxes in the creation of the temple ‘not made with hands’ in the brutalised, suffering human becoming of the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord (14:58). Given the replacement of the temple cult is complete and permanently sealed in Jesus’ death/resurrection, then the presence of God among Rome’s small household groups must be in the secret: the reality of the reign of the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord in the house (12:35-37).

Therefore, ‘now, in this time’ (10:30) the Lord Jesus ‘goes before’ (cf. 14:28; 16:7) just as Yahweh ‘went before the people in the wilderness’ (Ex 13:21). The verb, *proago* has the sense of to ‘lead forward’ or to ‘lead on’ in the manner of Jesus the shepherd leading his flock.⁸²⁶ In Isa 53:12 *proago* reappears in ‘the Lord will go before you’, a renewed, shepherding presence, which occurs immediately prior to the fourth Servant Song in Isaiah; it is the sense also of ‘I go’ in Isa 42:16; 43:5,6; 49:10. To offer sincere worship the disciple must ‘deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’ (8:34) ‘on the way’ (8:27) in service to the other (cf. Rom 12:1-2). The arena for Christian becoming is the house-church where each one personifies servant discipleship to the other (10:45; 9:35-37).

We argue that the motif of wonder reinforces this underlying sense of the presence of the replacement motif. T. Dwyer stipulates the necessary conditions for this assessment: first, the frequent use of the wonder theme indicating purpose rather than the needs of the plot; and, second, its use in avoidable places in the narrative and, third, the sense of wonder in significant contexts where its use should be appropriate to its subject.⁸²⁷ The four verbs, *thaumazo*, *existemi*, *phobeomai*, *ekplesso* and their cognates occur 32 times. For example, at 1:27, Mark’s intrusive response of wonder to Jesus’ teaching reflects upon the teacher’s authority in his claim to announce the in-breaking of the kingdom that had been formally revealed in the call pericope (1:16-20) and sin

⁸²⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 844-845.

forgiven in the house (2:10-12). The healed Gerasene causes the wonder expressed by his hearers to the announcement of the kingdom present in their midst (5:1-20).⁸²⁸ Out of many instances of wonder, the cross - the climax of the replacement theme - forms

a subtle irony, (for) Jesus is addressed as king six times in Mark 15 (15:2,9,12,18,26,32) The breaking-in of the kingly rule as God comes in power and saves through Jesus is evidenced in the first half of the Gospel in miracles, teaching, forgiveness and restoration. It is further manifest in the passion as is evidenced by the reactions of wonder....The paradox of Mark is that supreme power is manifest in Jesus' powerlessness! Mk 15:5 and 44 use wonder to signify that God is acting to rule and save *in the midst of* the rejection and death of Jesus.⁸²⁹

Jesus' victory and power as Lord over death is made present in faith in the martyrs of their own house-churches; it is a source of wonder and hope for Rome's Christians.

The function of the torn curtain clearly reinforces this theophanic self-disclosure, though the emphasis here is more on the self-sacrificial nature of Jesus' death than on its self-revelatory impact.⁸³⁰ If both of these functions are simultaneously operative, they outline the impressive depth and symbolic power of the torn curtain (15:38) and its capacity for stating the *theologia crucis* in terms of its own effective, cultic imagery. By regarding the verse in this light, the seemingly pointless and disruptive placement of 15:38 discloses its power as a most effective literary symbol. Its momentous effect stresses this truth that the torn temple-curtain reveals God's face in the figure of the suffering servant Son on the cross. Further, it offers Mark's community the consoling truth that God's only beloved Son continuously walks the 'way' of suffering with them in their rejection and cross. He is the replacement reality that Mark sets in the heart of the house-church. In a persecution context, this is a powerful inducement to deepen faith in a crucified/risen Lord, the Son of God.

As noted earlier, the most profound of the Markan ironies (the symbolic

⁸²⁷ T. Dwyer, 'The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark', *JSNT* 57 (1995), 51.

⁸²⁸ Dwyer, 'Motif of Wonder', 53.

⁸²⁹ Dwyer, 'Motif of Wonder', 55.

temple's destruction and rebuilding) is progressively defined in the existential becoming of Jesus in his messianic mission. The fact that the curtain rending (15:38) reflects back to and vindicates the passion prophecies proves that they function as a sign of the new temple's destruction and rebuilding while accentuating Jesus' participation in his sacrificial death, an event anticipated in the upper room. Immediately afterwards, Jesus describes the fruit: his whole existential becoming in his words, 'after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee' (14:28).

This 'beloved Son' is no longer enthroned in the Holy of Holies surrounded by the ark or the adoring cherubim, but is seen in the 'face' of the dis-enfranchised, rejected, 'crucified' 'little one(s)' of Mark's own household-churches (9:42; 10:15; cf. 9:36). Such a graphically presented image of the Son of God would be disquieting in the extreme for demarcation or cult-inclined Roman Christians. If they were so inclined and retained cultural attachments to the Sabbath observance and elements of the temple liturgy and ritual purity attitudes expressed by the Law, such attachments could lead to a division of liturgy and life. In turn, it would lessen an inclusive, servant attitude in the community towards the 'child' whoever that was at any given moment.

Mark's criticism of the scribes (12:38-44) exposes the type of dichotomy between liturgy and life that facilitated the historical manipulation of the temple cult in accepted, corrupt practices that led to a liturgically detached morality (cf. 12:40). So Mark's warning to his groups about the scandalising of 'little ones' by the self-aggrandisement of scribes and the rich appears relevant (cf. 9:42; 10:41-44; 12:38-44). The prophets railed against the lack of integrity in daily life, glossed over by a participation in impressive liturgies (cf. Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:8,9-16). Some house groups, particularly leaders, may not have fully integrated liturgical and daily life.

⁸³⁰ O. Michel, 'Hieron and Naos', in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the New*

7. THE RISEN LORD REIGNS IN THE HOUSE

Mark's fifth emphasis in his replacement/judgment theme accentuates that the crucifixion (15:37-38-39) leads to the reality of Jesus' resurrection. It justifies Mark's gradual narrative expansion of his intertwining a victorious resurrection theme in Jesus' interaction with the hostile scribes and the authorities in Jerusalem. By offering a crucified/risen Lord as the basis for Christian hope in the gospel (1:15), it legitimises Mark's portrayal of the historical Son of Man - in all his human experiences - in his risen state. It allows the prologue (1:1-15) to parallel the epilogue (16:8), suggestively reinforced by the parallel between the revelations at 1:11 and 16:7 and Mark's promise to recount the good news about Jesus (1:1). The final element of the good news is not given until this passage (16:1-8). In an obedient, selfless but risen Jesus, humanity has proof of God granting life beyond death to the righteous. A brief comparison between Mark and the Wisdom tradition reveals that

the Wisdom tradition's confident hope in immortality for the righteous was not a vain one. God had in fact and in human experience given confirmation to the assertion that "the righteous live for ever." And this was the good news indeed, to be proclaimed everywhere.⁸³¹

Jesus is always the Son of God. By the young man's proclamation, 'He has been raised! He is not here!' Mark also confirms that Jesus is the righteous Servant-Son (Isa 42:1) now risen from the dead as Lord of the house. In a context of persecution, this is an imperative for the basis of Christian faith and hope in a victorious Lord. The crucified/risen Son of Man, the paradigm of the Christian, now absorbs the Christian's own daily round of way servant discipleship in the life and relationships encompassed by the Greco-Roman house-church (cf. 1:29-34; 3:32-35).

In the Gospel's final verse, the fact that the women said 'nothing to anyone for they were afraid' (16:8) prevents the emptiness of the tomb from being the basis for

Testament, vol.2, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1964), 884; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 497.

proclaiming the resurrection. Rather, the disciple 'sees' the risen Jesus through faith in the Lord's reign in the secret of the kingdom. Until disciples have seen Jesus in faith they can only react humanly and fearfully. An addressee's seeing is presupposed in Jesus' command not to 'be afraid' (cf. 6:50; 4:40),

but they could not *but* be afraid since they had not yet experienced the coming of the kingdom of God in power that was his resurrection. No amount of proclaiming that Jesus "is risen" (even by an angel!) will bring the faith response that "seeing" the risen Jesus will occasion.⁸³²

Peter's mother-in-law needed no instruction to serve the community, thereby illustrating the first fruits of following Jesus. Neither did the leper (1:45), nor Levi (2:14), nor the healed demoniac (5:19), let alone the 'group' at 7:36-37, express any fear at Jesus' injunctions - likewise the 'woman' at 14:3. The mention of Peter 'and his disciples' is significant. Peter is part of a special focus in the narrative (1:16-20,29-31; 3:13-19; 8:29; 9:2 and so on). In this context, 'his disciples and Peter' would represent the house-church members in their challenge to see and hear the word in faith (1:15) as a martyred Peter did before them.

Thus, in the figure of risen faith, symbolised by the baptised *neaniskos* (16:5; cf. 14:50-51), the community confirms the prophetic word of Jesus (14:27-29). In that house-church (in the symbolic 'his disciples and Peter') you 'will see him as he told you' in a Christian's existential becoming 'along the way' (16:7). The assurance of Jesus' prophetic word is enough (cf. 1:15). Mark ends his Gospel with a brief narrative that does not constitute a description of a resurrection appearance but a simple statement of the truth of Jesus' resurrection.

Since Mark has only promised to recount the beginning of the good news - the resurrection of Jesus for his community - he does not leave his household facing a sense of incongruity rather oddly embedded in the story's ending. The 'young man'

⁸³¹ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 148.

proclaims the good news to all: Jesus of Nazareth 'has been raised; he is not here' (16:6). Presented with this living word, those 'within' the house' face a decisive moment. They have heard the 'word' (like many in the Gospel who acted upon it 'in the house' - 1:30; 2:1,14,3:8; 5:36; 7:25; 9:39; 12:28; cf. 14:3). Will they respond in faith in their house-church? Or will they remain just 'amazed and afraid' (16:8), if their response to Jesus' actions does not go beyond that of 'amazement', 'fright' or scorn? (1:27; 4:40; 5:15; 5:40; 6:52; 10:24,32).⁸³³

8. CONCLUSION

Mark first situates the visitation/judgment, rejection/replacement theme in the clash between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness. Then, in a dramatically heightened tension between himself and the Jewish authorities owing to his exercise of his authoritative power as Lord, Jesus extends his resurrection power in healings and exorcisms in the house. The judgment/rejection theme is further implemented in the Lord's visitation of his temple and its rejection (11:1-21). Mark then describes the 'temple not made with hands' in the ongoing Christian response to the 'secret of the kingdom' (11:22-12:37) in the broken figure of the crucified Christ. The ripping of the temple curtain 'from top to bottom' symbolically discloses God's new presence - no longer in the Holy of Holies - but in the crucified/risen body of the Son of Man, the Lord of the house (13:32-37). This ongoing victory is the heart of the replacement motif, its fruit is in the hundredfold in the house-churches in Rome (cf. 1:31; 4:20,21-32; 5:19-20).

Chapter 6 will explore the characteristics of the secret of the kingdom and its intertwining in the Christian's household servant discipleship with the existential becoming of the crucified/risen Son of Man the Lord, an ongoing reality in which all Christians of faith participate.

⁸³² Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 151.

⁸³³ Cf. 1:30; 2:1,14,3:8; 5:36; 7:25; 9:39; 12:28; 14:3.

CHAPTER 6

MARK'S HOUSE-CHURCH OF PRAYER

1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 traced the climax of the Gospel's judgment, rejection and replacement theme in the revelation of God's redeeming will in the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord and Son of God. He is the new temple 'not made with hands' (14:58), the fruit of his fidelity to his servant mission (10:45; 8:31). In his ongoing reign as the victorious Lord, the Markan Jesus is the secret of the kingdom of God in the house. In turn, Chapter Six will illustrate how Mark invites Christians to live the servant ideal more intensely in the secret of the kingdom. In his sequel (11:22-12:37) to the culminating judgment and rejection of the temple (11:1-21), the evangelist details the shift in God's presence from the temple to the Lord in urban households of faith. This is the good news, caught in the first words the Markan Jesus utters: the invitation to Roman Christians to more deeply 'repent and believe in the gospel' of the crucified/risen Son of Man, Lord (1:15).

Before anything, Rome's house-churches first needed a vulnerable, suffering, fellow-human figure with whom they could intimately relate in their day-by-day difficulties in living the servant ideal. Someone who would endow the suffering they experienced with meaning due to Nero's persecution apart from the difficulties of first century life and in community living. Mark answers these needs in three themes: first, the nature of the replacement 'house of prayer' (11:22-25), second, the basis of the basis of Jesus' authority as the Lord of the house (11:27-12:34), and third, the challenge to live in the secret of the crucified/risen, Servant Son of Man (12:13-34), the Lord of the house (12:35-37). These themes are built into a series of debates between Jesus and the Jewish-leadership groups in the temple (11:22-12:37).

2. A HOUSE OF PRAYER, FAITH AND FORGIVENESS

After the temple's rejection, Mark first develops the nature of the household as the replacement motif. On the third day of the Jerusalem saga, Jesus and his disciples pass the fig tree, now 'withered from its roots' (11:20). Jesus' response to Peter ('the fig tree you have cursed had withered' - 11:21) intimates that a momentous change has occurred for the blighted fig tree refers to a barren Israel (Jer 8:13; Hosea 9:10; Micah 7:1). In its place, Mark challenges a household of faith to be a house of prayer for 'all the nations' (13:10).⁸³⁴ For this, faith is paramount. Peter's remembering that Jesus had cursed the fig tree is met with Jesus' terse imperative, 'Have faith in God' (11:22).⁸³⁵ As a key feature, faith is shown in Peter acting a 'role or thinking for others; the distinctive aspects of Peter's behaviour are often significant in a scene or add power to the story'.⁸³⁶

Peter's 'Master look!' is an outburst that deserves attention. His *ekouon* (11:14), *eidon* (11:20), and *anamnestheis* tie the previous incidents in the temple into a narrative unity (11:11-21). Rhetorically, this outburst reflects not incomprehension, but a deep sense of the importance of what he sees.⁸³⁷ In 11:22-25, the communal aspect of this material is also evident in the change from a focus on Peter to 'them' (v. 22), together with its plural imperative *echete pistin theou* (v. 23).⁸³⁸ In 'them', Christians are reassured that faith guarantees their sharing in the Lord's divine power in the house necessary 'to destroy what appears impossible to destroy' - the evil ranged against them (11:23; cf. 3:15; 6:8).⁸³⁹ They are urged to generous discipleship and participation in the Lord's reign by responding to the challenge, 'repent and believe in the gospel' (1:15).⁸⁴⁰

Whatever the source of 11:22-25, their applicability to the Church at large is

⁸³⁴ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 159-160.

⁸³⁵ For varying views on 11:22-25, cf. Marshall, *Faith*, 163; Nineham, *Mark*, 300; Taylor, *Gospel*, 24.

⁸³⁶ T. Wirada, 'Peter as Peter in the Gospel of Mark', *NTS* 45 (1999), 363.

⁸³⁷ Heil, *Temple*, 70; cf. E.S. Malbon, 'Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers', *NovT* 28, (1986), 104-130.

⁸³⁸ Stock, *Method*, 298-299; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 268.

⁸³⁹ Heil, *Temple*, 79.

⁸⁴⁰ Marshall, *Faith*, 164.

ensured, for 'Jesus answered them' (11:22). The reply merges into 11:23-25, begun with 'have faith in God'. By it, God's eschatological work will come to pass for in the exercise of faith lies its fruit (11:22; cf. 1:30; 2:12; 5:19-20,36; 7:32; 9:24). At the 'story' level, the 'now' in this time ensures that Jesus' call to the disciples is enshrined in the replacement motif since, by Christian faith the eschatological power of the 'Lord of the house' (13:35) is actualised in each addressee in 'his work' (13:34) in the household. Apart from bestowing an entry permit into this community, faith is its *modus operandi* for 'all things are possible to God' (10:27; cf. 12:32).

The directive, 'have faith in God', focuses on the addressees' attention on God's evaluative point of view. In the house, the 'one God' reigns (12:32b) for Rome's Christians who are rhetorically addressed in the 'whoever' (11:23). The Father determined that Jesus is 'the head of the corner' since it is 'the Lord's doing' (12:11). Hence the abrupt imperative to the household: 'have faith in God' in the secret of the kingdom (11:22; 4:11). Jesus' union with his Father is the source of Jesus' authority. 'Now in this time' in the household pericope (10:28-31) he is the disciples' Father too (11:25; cf. 3:35; 10:28-31; cf. 14:36).

Seeing that the Father's redeeming will is the basis of the secret of the kingdom, the imperative, *exete pistin theou* is usually translated 'Have faith in God' since only God in his Lord Jesus (1:2-3; 12:35-37) can sustain the Christian during persecution and hardship. But a more accurate translation here is 'Have the faith of God' (11:22). Jesus seems to be urging the disciples to ensure their faith must be equal to the faith that God himself has. If God is viewed from a relationship angle, his faith would be based on a personal union that includes a type of dependence - yet God could not be dependent on anyone, as Genesis illustrates (Gen 1:1-2:4a).

The Gospel conceives of faith as not only the basis for entry into the

community but as a Christian's continuing *modus operandi*.⁸⁴¹ Hence, *elabete* is used proleptically to describe the reception of the fruit of prayer (11:24b) for great expectation should characterise the petition.⁸⁴² La Verdiere comments: the literal Greek in the imperative is "have the faith of God" (11:22) but it is

hard to imagine that God, the creator of the universe and the lord of history, would have faith in anyone. And so we assume "the faith of God" must actually refer to "faith in God." A second dimension of faith is based on someone's personal authority and consists in a form of confident power. It is easy to imagine God having this kind of faith. "The faith of God" would then refer to the divine confidence of God when God commands light and creation into being (see Gen 1:1-2:4a). Jesus would thus be telling Peter and the others that their faith must equal the faith of God.⁸⁴³

On the disciples' part, by invoking the faith of God his effective power operates through them. Hence, Mark's two imperatives, 'believe' and 'receive' (11:24), describe two qualities necessary for the prayer of faith to be answered. To possess this gratuitous gift from God, they were to pray for it. Mark links the motif of discipleship to faith within the concept of a Hebrew monotheistic God. After all, at the Jordan it is God's prior approval of Jesus' pre-existence to which the voice from heavens refers in 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased' (1:11).⁸⁴⁴ So the Gospel reveals a dual focus: the kerygmatic in the way of the crucified one, and the apologetic, following Jesus in his obedience to his Father.⁸⁴⁵ If the Markan Jesus refers directly to God (11:25), at the same time he speaks for God with a unique authority since he 'truly...(teaches)...the way of God' (12:14). That 'all things are possible to God' (10:27), stresses the truth that the paradoxical 'way of God' and fidelity to it depends upon the gift of the Spirit (13:11; cf. 1 Cor 1-2).

Jesus recommends prayer anywhere by *tinós*. The only other directive about prayer in 11:25 is 'standing' so there no indication of a deceptive reliance on a sacred

⁸⁴¹ Marshal, *Faith*, 165.

⁸⁴² W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, (Edinburgh: St Andrew's Press, 1964), 289.

⁸⁴³ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 161.

⁸⁴⁴ Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', 12-13.

⁸⁴⁵ Donahue, 'Neglected Factor', 581.

place or the performance of correct ritual observances. But in Mark's terms, 11:22-24 presume the gift of participation in the power of God by 'whoever' (11:23) desires to live the way of the secret (4:11; cf. 10:15). To this necessity Mark attaches two interrelated clauses, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea' and 'does not doubt in his heart but believes' (11:23). Sincere prayer issues in hope, 'a hope that excludes "any doubt in the heart" or ambivalence towards the authoritative efficacy of one's word to the mountain'.⁸⁴⁶

If so, the Gospel then dramatically describes the catalytic nature of faith in the 'Father in heaven' (11:22) through the proverbial metaphor of 'whoever says to this mountain' (11:23).⁸⁴⁷ For God's community, this imagery carries added emphasis for mountain 'arrangement' was solely God's work. 'A good teacher, who could remove difficulties his students encountered, was called a *mountain remover*' (cf. Ex 19:18; Job 9:5; Ps 68:8; 114:4-7; 144:5; Jer 4:24),⁸⁴⁸ a capacity characterising the eschatological age.⁸⁴⁹ Its outcome is seen in 'may God lift you up (this mountain) and throw you into the sea'.⁸⁵⁰ The plural, 'I tell you' (11:24) conveys the sense of community catechesis⁸⁵¹ while the passive *arthati* and *bletheti* (11:23) on any disciple's lips who believes, includes the sense of the listening/sharing house-church. Marshall sees it in this light:

By ascribing to faith what is a prerogative of Yahweh alone, it opens up the awe-inspiring proportions of the injunction to have faith in God (v. 22). It is not an invitation to a state of placid reliance on God but to active participation in his kingly dominion. For, whoever moves mountains is, *ipso facto*, wielding the creative and judging word of God himself.⁸⁵²

By praying as 11:24 demands, the group ensures that personally and communally, they share in the power of prayer in faith, enabling them to receive the gift of living the secret. Consequently, for Rome's Christians, temple holiness is completely irrelevant.

Mark stresses the inclusive nature of the eschatological household. Because

⁸⁴⁶ Barclay, *Gospel*, 289.

⁸⁴⁷ Marshall, *Faith*, 165.

⁸⁴⁸ Barclay, *Gospel*, 289.

⁸⁴⁹ Cf. Ps 6:2,6; Isa 40:4; 49:11; 54:10; 64:1-3; Ezek 38:20; Mic 1:4; Hab 3:6; Zech 14:1-4.

⁸⁵⁰ Gundry, *Mark*, 653.

⁸⁵¹ Stock, *Method*, 300.

⁸⁵² Marshall, *Faith*, 167.

of the Gospel's rhetorical drive of such terms as 'whoever' and 'anyone', the indeterminate reference 'whoever says' (11:23) anticipates that the words apply to any member of a house-church (10:30). Then, 'Truly, I say to you' (11:23), does not specify any particular person save the one who listens in faith. There is too an ironic aptness in the following vivid, proverbial metaphor on Jesus' lips. Owing to its symbolic relevance to the Lord's authoritatively rejected Mt Zion temple, Jesus' directive, 'say to this mountain', (11:23) presupposes that the eschatological community replaces the now rejected temple as the spatial context of God's presence and forgiveness.

As Rome formed the Gospel's setting, there is the understandable situation of bitter divisions following the trauma of betrayal and infidelity during Nero's persecutions (13:12). Severed relationships, desertions and rejections (4:13-19) could have proved stumbling blocks to post-persecution reconciliation, unity and growth among household groups. If the prayer of faith permits a disciple to mediate the power of God so that it is effectively present in human affairs, conversely non-forgiveness shuts out a disciple from the unified reality of God's faith, power and mercy in the house (cf. 2:15-17).

Mark challenges 'whoever' to that faith-inspired prayer which would release a God-given power sufficient for personal and communal coping with any difficulty facing the house-churches. Family animosity and opposition or even betrayal by a community member and the necessary forgiveness of former Christians who return to the community when persecution ceased (13:9-13) are such hurdles.⁸⁵³ So, to counter a literal interpretation of the mountain metaphor, the traditional forgiveness saying (11:25) does not set down legalistic conditions for its implementation but is the reverse side of Jesus' teaching on the mercy and love of God. Uncluttered by artificial boundaries of sacred versus profane space, an attitude of forgiveness would generate an inclusive community open to reconciliation and so to the peace and unity that the lived secret

⁸⁵³ Barclay, *Gospel*, 287-288; cf. Nineham, *Mark*, 304-305; Gundry, *Mark*, 649.

brings (cf. 9:50).⁸⁵⁴

The first characteristic of the Markan house of prayer offers a radical understanding of God's holiness. A Christian disciple shares in the unity of God and the 'other' (9:37; cf. 12:28-34). A pre-requisite for this sharing is a constant endeavour to forgive the other completely despite the type or number of an offence. The paradigm of forgiveness is depicted in Judas' presence at the Last Supper (14:17-21). Knowing his perfidy, the Markan Jesus still says to Judas and 'anyone' or 'everyone', 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many' (14:24) - you too Judas! In the house-church, the power of the Lord's forgiveness is a gift that determines the intensity and efficacy of a disciple's union with God.⁸⁵⁵

In previous key symbolic situations in a house, Mark paints a dramatic scene of Jesus' encouragement of household openness. He describes the ritually unclean, sitting in invited intimacy at table 'with Jesus' in his house (2:15-17) or a shared Eucharist (7:24-30) or, again, Jesus as a guest in Simon's house (14:3-9). In such gatherings ritual purity is a non-issue. Thus, 11:22-25 teaches that the disciple cannot live by and in the risen Lord apart from his forgiveness and covenant charity (12:28-34) - he must live in it. To be immersed in the unity of the spiritual reality that reigns in the house, three aspects of God's kingdom, faith/prayer, charity and forgiveness are irreplaceable imperatives in sharing in the Lord's reign within (13:35; 3:35).

3. THE BASIS OF THE LORD'S AUTHORITY IN THE HOUSE

The first controversy (11:27-33) illustrates the basis of the risen Lord's power and authority as the beloved servant, the crucified/risen Son of Man (8:31; 10:45), the Lord. His becoming is ever-present in his risen humanity, which now constitutes 'the secret of the kingdom of God' (4:11). In faith, a Christian lives within the authoritative reign of

⁸⁵⁴ Heil, *Temple*, 80.

⁸⁵⁵ Stock, *Method*, 355.

the Lord by following Jesus in servant discipleship (8:31; 14:36; cf. 3:35; 1:11).⁸⁵⁶

In rejecting the temple (11:12-21), Jesus as Lord exercises a divine authority.⁸⁵⁷ He passes a crucial, authoritative judgment on Israel's temple prayer and liturgy, an action that depicts him abrogating an enormous authority.⁸⁵⁸ But such judgments are one of a piece in the Gospel's gradual unfolding of Jesus' powerful actions whereby the Son of Man heals, dismisses demons, declares sins forgiven, forms the new Israel, controls nature and assures the gift of eternal life (1:25; 2:5; 3:13-14; 4:39; 10:30). In Jerusalem, and narratively understandable from the story's evaluative point of view, Jesus is immediately confronted by the scribes and the chief priests after his authoritative cleansing of the temple. They are representatives of an opposing power,⁸⁵⁹ in seeking justification from Jesus' for his authority to do 'these things' (11:28). Their hostility would refer, not only to his temple rejection (in Jewish terms an enormous claim to extraordinary authority) but to his whole preaching and teaching activity (11:11-19).

Exegetes regard 11:27-33 as the first of five controversies, ironically set in the temple (cf. 2:1-3:6), by which Jesus illustrates his self-awareness of his authority as Lord of the house (13:35). The first controversy (11:27-33) concerns Jesus' authority to finalise the judgment/replacement reality (13:35; 1:1; 8:38; 12:35-37). His antagonists were the 'chief priests and the scribes and the elders'. Priests, particularly the high priest, took their place at the centre of the Jewish religion. They exercised divine exclusive rights to prophesy.⁸⁶⁰ It is unlikely that they would come, cap in hand, in order to debate with this disruptive, unknown rabbi from Nazareth. Rather, these temple controversies reflect the Markan Jesus' rejection of an exclusive mind-set by which some house leaders rob Gentiles of their right to be inside in God's presence in his house (cf. Isa 2:1-5; 56:1-8). Thus the ones considered the ultimate religious insiders, the symbolic

⁸⁵⁶ Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', 16.

⁸⁵⁷ Harrington, *Mark*, 183.

⁸⁵⁸ Cf. 1:29; 2:10,28; 3:13-19,31-35; 5:21-43; 6:7; 8:38; 9:23; 10:29.

⁸⁵⁹ Gnlika, *Markus*, 2, 152-153. For contrary views, see Mann, *Mark*, 456; Gundry, *Mark*, 657.

authorities, become the ultimate outsiders, perhaps a veiled authoritative correction that was applicable to some of Rome's wayward house-church leaders.⁸⁶¹

Mark's construction points to the source of Jesus' authority. Ironically, 'the chief priests and the scribes and the elders' (11:28a) unwittingly disclose the Father's involvement through the passive *tis soi edoken ten exousian* in their question (11:28c).⁸⁶² Jesus' counter-attack, 'Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?' (11:30) includes John's ministry and his divinely authorised witness to Jesus (1:2-3). The question caught the authorities in a dilemma. In effect Jesus asks,

was John the Baptist's work, in your opinion, human or divine? This impaled them on the horns of an insoluble dilemma. If they said it was divine they knew that Jesus would ask them why they had stood out against it. Worse than that, if they said it was divine they knew that Jesus could reply that John, in fact, had pointed all men to Jesus, and therefore that he was divinely attested and needed no further authority.⁸⁶³

If they accept John, they have to accept Jesus, to whom John attests. Furthermore, pre-Markan Christianity spoke of Jesus in a way that was at the very least open to the notion of his divinity. Hence, he possessed such power (Mk 1:1,9-11; 4:35-41; 9:7; cf. Rom 1:3-4; Phil 2:6-11; Gal 1:1; 4:4; 2 Cor 4:4; 8:9).

Mark's purpose is clear. He challenges Rome's Christians to take this step in faith and so deepen their faith in Jesus' victory as the ultimate servant and, in hope, to follow the Lord along the way of the cross (8:34-35). In the Son of Man's fidelity to his Father lies his authority 'for it was necessary' that 'the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' (8:31; 10:45). Sharing in this reality is open to the rhetorical 'anyone' (8:35) and though the way embraces unavoidable suffering, it is filled with a sense of hope. As Geddert points out,

But those texts are not Mark's attempts to over-shadow his entire work with a dark cloud. They are his way of helping the discerning reader to begin to

⁸⁶⁰ Green, 'Death of Jesus', 30.

⁸⁶¹ Donahue, *Gospel*, 43.

⁸⁶² Kingsbury, 'Religious Authorities', 59.

⁸⁶³ Barclay, *Gospel*, 290; cf. Hooker, *Message*, 78-79; Gnllka, *Markus*, 2, 210-211; Smith, 'Son of David Tradition', 537.

trace the silver lining, the promise of glory and vindication at the end of the road.⁸⁶⁴

Should the house-churches again be visited by renewed persecution, faith reassures them that they live in the post-resurrection reality of the Lord's reign as the authoritative, risen Son of Man. No wonder Mark sets 'Sit at my right hand till I put thy enemies under thy feet', at the climax of Jesus ongoing victory in the Davidic pericope (12:35-37).

From a post-resurrection perspective (1:1), Mark describes the Father's authoritative commissioning of Jesus as a present reality in the crucified/risen Jesus' 'going before you' 'on the way' (cf. 14:27; cf. 16:7). The sense of an ever-present resurrection victory is reiterated by the narrative juxta-positioning of the successive ministries of John, Jesus and the Twelve (cf. 1:4-8,14; 6:6b-7) and the text's suggested resurrection outcome of God's word at 1:1-3. Geddert adds that, one may be rejected but the work goes on and expands,⁸⁶⁵ a point seen in the Gerasene demoniac. He is refused admittance to the Twelve since he has his own ministry in spreading the good news. Literally, he is directed 'to go to your house and to your household group' (a Greco-Roman house complex) to proclaim 'how much the Lord has done for you' (5:19). 'He went away and proclaimed in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him' (5:20). John had prepared for the Son of Man's mission among Jews (1:2-5). Now, the Gerasene facilitates the way for the Lord's mission among the Gentiles. Earlier, people had feared at the sight of the cured demoniac; now, in the eschatological period of salvation 'all men marvelled' at the Gerasene's call to the Gentiles (5:20c). From the difference in the two receptions, the Gospel indicates a Gentile urban mission.

Others also spread the 'good news' (1:45; 7:36-37; 9:38-41), yet Mark does not ask these minor characters to carry the same symbolic role as the Twelve. His literary strategy uses the symbolic Twelve to hint at the lived fruit of the secret of the kingdom. The twelve share in the power and authority of Jesus' reign (3:13-14; 6:7b,

⁸⁶⁴ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 157.

30), an eschatological sense intimated by the reference to the Lord's return to judge their fidelity - and the rest of the community - to servant discipleship to the community (13:35). So, with the 'servants in charge' they are warned to 'watch' and 'the doorkeeper to stay awake' (13:34)!⁸⁶⁶ The Lord could come at 'evening' or 'midnight' (13:35) so 'watch' as at Gethsemane (14:36-37).

At the same time, the repeated, accentuated role of the minor characters, the 'crowd', 'whoever' and 'anyone' acts as a broad backdrop that redirects the spotlight on to the Twelve's obtuseness towards the concept of service. By this strategy, Rome's house leaders are left in no doubt that theirs is an authority of service for it is in Jesus' authority as the servant that the house-church leaders serve their communities (13:33-37; 10:45). This is the logical result of Jesus' reassurance: 'whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me' (9:37) - and so shares in the authoritative reign of the risen Lord (11:22-25).

Jesus exercises an authority that comes from God. He is the authoritative 'One who is mightier than I', identified as such by the Spirit as God's beloved Son (1:9-11; cf. 12:36).⁸⁶⁷ It is precisely the authority of God before which the temple authorities stumble. They would not accept that John's authority came 'from heaven' in the first place (11:29; cf. 11:33), let alone Jesus' claim to speak and act in a manner that was of God (cf. 2:5,17,27; 3:13; 4:39; 8:38). The authorities have no answer - 'we do not know' (11:33). But Mark expects the house-churches to appreciate the authoritative role of the risen Jesus as Lord. In his terms, their subsequent response redirects the spotlight on to the Twelve's obtuseness that 'the Son of Man claimed to be acting as Son with God's authority in innermost unity with God the Father'.⁸⁶⁸

Jesus is also the suffering Servant/Son of Man (10:45). His consequent

⁸⁶⁵ Geddert, *Watchwords*, 157.

⁸⁶⁶ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 208-209.

⁸⁶⁷ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 167.

⁸⁶⁸ Ratzinger, *Many Religions*, 39.

dignity as the risen Lord is revealed only on the cross within its defining *inclusio* of the Son of God title at the Jordan (1:11; 15:39; cf. 12:35-37). The following controversy pericopes reinforce this stress on Jesus as Lord (12:13-17; 12:18-27; 12:28-34).⁸⁶⁹ The wicked husbandmen parable (12:1-12) recalls the crucifixion/resurrection theme through the symbolic vindication of the cornerstone (cf. Ps 118): in

this parable, Jesus identifies himself with the “one, beloved son” whom the owner of the vineyard calls “my son” and sends to the wicked tenant farmers (12:6). In other words, in this parable, Jesus views himself the way the reader otherwise knows God views him, as the beloved Son whom God has empowered with the Spirit for messianic ministry in Israel.⁸⁷⁰

Hooker adds that the cornerstone/resurrection theme was central in the early Church (Acts 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:4-8). There, the image of Christians as living stones of a spiritual house is linked to the risen Lord as its ‘cornerstone chosen and precious’ (1 Pet 4:5; cf. Rom 9:32; Eph 2:20).⁸⁷¹ It is a sequential rejection and exaltation that reiterates the theology of exaltation ‘in the midst’ of crucifixion. Marcus adds that,

Mark’s community knows that it owes its very existence as part of God’s Israel to the vindication of the rejected stone, that stone’s exaltation to the head of the corner....They too have been rejected stones, but contrary to all expectations they now find themselves incorporated into a living sanctuary that pulses with the very life of God.⁸⁷²

Challenged to believe in the full dignity of Jesus as Lord and Son and reassured by Mark’s narrative, Christians could confidently embrace this understanding as the basis of evangelising hope in servant discipleship. The living word of the Gospel assures them that, if they unite their servant becoming with Jesus, they follow God’s attested way of the crucified/risen One (9:7; cf. 1:1-2; 3:35; 8:31; 10:5-7,40; 12:9,29; 14:36). Mark’s temple setting is ironic. His creative will as the risen Lord is also central in the next issue - the payment of taxes.

No details of time are given in the next confrontation over the issues of taxes

⁸⁶⁹ Hooker, *Mark*, 273-277; cf. Juel, *Mark*, 162-163; Harrington, *Realistic Theologian*, 43; Hurtado, *Mark*, 190; Stock, *Method*, 305; Painter, *Mark’s Gospel*, 162; Gundry, *Mark*, 694.

⁸⁷⁰ Kingsbury, ‘Religious Authorities’, 59.

⁸⁷¹ Hooker, *Mark*, 277; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 175.

(12:13-17) and the reality of the resurrection's fruit that follows (12:18-27), thus offering support to our contention about the symbolic nature of this section. But there exists an understated connection between the 'tax' pericope and the sense of the Lord's way/house nexus highlighted in the journey narrative since Mark positions this pericope (12:13-17) within the shadow of the 'Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes' (12:11). As Marcus stated above, ('already Markan Christians experience the eschatological power that bursts forth at the exaltation of the rejected stone'), the evangelist underlines the sense of the 'already' in this issue. He stresses that the phrase 'the things that are God's' (12:17) demands the comparison of the present payment of taxes with the current issue of fidelity to servant discipleship since it is this faithful servant dedication that comprises 'the things that are God's' (8:34-35; 12:17).⁸⁷³ Hence, the pericope's crux is the 'things of God' owing to the Father (3:35; 10:28-31) and not what is owed to Caesar.⁸⁷⁴ Compared to Christian dedication to God's will, taxes are a relatively minor matter.⁸⁷⁵

The Pharisees' and Herodians' reference to the 'way' (12:14) creates an immediate link with the allusions to the suffering servant image in the rejection/resurrection theme for 'the very stone rejected by the builders has become the head of the corner' (12:8-11). The Book of Proverbs uses the term 'way' 44 times: a typical example - 'I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness' (Pr 4:11). The Pharisees acknowledged that Jesus 'does not regard the position of men but truly teaches the way of God' (12:14).

The evangelist constructs a dramatic scene in which Jesus is tempted to conform. Guelich describes *peirazo* as uniformly negative' (cf. 12:15; 1:13; 8:11; 10:2), adding that the term also happens at 10:2 and 11:15 and, though seeming a sincere

⁸⁷² Marcus, *Way*, 127.

⁸⁷³ Smith, 'Jesus' Opponents', 176-177; cf. Mann, *Mark*, 468; Anderson, *Mark*, 273-274; Donahue, 'Neglected Factors', 571-572.

⁸⁷⁴ Gnilka, *Markus*, 2, 225-226.

⁸⁷⁵ Humphrey, *He is Risen*, 107.

inquiry, it is harassment for they hope to compromise Jesus (cf. 1:13),⁸⁷⁶ as Peter had unwittingly done (8:32). Jesus takes up the offensive; not having a coin himself, he asks for one. The fact that they do may indicate that they are not so troubled by their question as they pretend. In the ancient world, it was accepted that coins belonged finally to the ruler whose image the coins carried since the reign of a particular potentate extended wherever his coin was the de facto currency of his kingdom.⁸⁷⁷

So Jesus declares that since the temple authorities carry the coin of the realm, it implies they accept Caesar's authority. It suggests too that they are indebted to Caesar and already give back the 'things that are Caesar's' (12:17). Yet, should Hooker see *apodidomi* in this context implying 'the payment of a debt', La Verdiere notes that the

denarius bore the image of Tiberius, the son of the god Augustus and the goddess Livia, with the abbreviation for the words "Tiberius Caesar Augustus, Son of the Divine Augustus" inscribed on the obverse, and the title "Pontifex Maximus" that is, "Sovereign Pontiff" or "High Priest" on the reverse.⁸⁷⁸

So, in opposing Jesus, however, they fail to give back to God 'the things that are God's' (12:17). Though what is the point of the pericope for there is no sign that Christians seek to escape their social obligation to pay tax?

The concentration on the symbolism of the two terms 'image' and 'inscription' offers a reasonable explanation (Matthew and Luke also focus on these two aspects of the coin - Lk 20:20-26; Mt 22:15-22). Exegetes agree that whether the 'things of God' is the image of God in humanity or it embraces all reality, Jesus is affirming the authority of God over all spheres of life. This includes God's redeeming will in 'the house of prayer' shown in Jesus' servant discipleship (3:35; cf. 14:36; 8:31; 1:38). The use of 'the things of God' usually refers to the specifics of the second noun in the genitive. Byrne argues that the 'things of the Law' refers to the requirements of the Law

⁸⁷⁶ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 68; Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 38, 413.

⁸⁷⁷ Nineham, *Mark*, 315.

⁸⁷⁸ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 180; Hooker, *Mark*, 281.

(Rom 2:14).⁸⁷⁹ As with the 'things of God' in 1 Cor 7:32-34, C.H. Giblin accepts that it is not a question of an alternate choice but the priority of one over the other.⁸⁸⁰

From biblical sources of 'image' and 'inscription, Giblin notes that the derivative of *epigraphēin* occur six times in the LXX⁸⁸¹ while Isa 44:1-5 - significantly in a new creation context - contains both symbols. At Isa 44:45cd, the RSV translates *epigraphēin* as 'to inscribe in' and 'another will write on his hand the Lord's (name)':

I shall pour out my Spirit upon my descendants, and my blessing on your Offspring. They spring up like grass amidst waters, like willows by flowing streams. This one will say, 'I am the Lord's', another will call himself by the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hands 'The Lord's' and surname himself by the name of Israel (Isa 44:3b-5).

C. StuhlmueLLer understands *epigraphēin* in Isaiah 44:1-5 to express the coming of the kingdom in which the 'Gentiles shall confess Yahweh as their only saviour and even tattoo the name Yahweh on their hands'.⁸⁸² This seems to reflect Yahweh's initiative; its outcome was the decision of proselytes to accept the Law.⁸⁸³ In particular, Giblin understands Isaiah 44:5a as indicating service of God in terms of inscribing 'I belong to God on one's hand'.⁸⁸⁴ Proverbs advises: 'bind ('the things of God') on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart' (Prov 7:3; cf. Jer 31:33).

Barclay argues that 'image' points to the essential direction of human nature.⁸⁸⁵ For its own good, there is the necessity for humanity to answer this deepest orientation of its nature to the divine (Gn 1:26-27). Giblin insists that if in the last analysis, man and state belong to God, so if the claims of God and state conflict, loyalty to God comes first.⁸⁸⁶ But how does this understanding apply to the term, 'image' in the sense of the service one owes to the Lord or King? Though Giblin finds no direct link

⁸⁷⁹ Bryne, *Romans*, 93.

⁸⁸⁰ C.H. Giblin, 'The Things of God', *CBQ* 33 (1971), 521.

⁸⁸¹ Giblin, 'Things of God', 523, notes Prov 7:3; Jer 38:33; Isa 44:1-5; Num 17:2-3; Deut 9:10.

⁸⁸² C. StuhlmueLLer, 'Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah', in Brown, *New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary*, 336.

⁸⁸³ Giblin, 'Things of God', 523-524, draws on the Targum of Isaiah in C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 136-138.

⁸⁸⁴ Giblin, 'Things of God', 524.

⁸⁸⁵ Barclay, *Gospel*, 299-300.

between this text and the image symbol in Gen 1:26 ('Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'), there are similarities. The origin of humanity is due to God's will (Genesis) and his authoritative reign sustains all creatures (Isaiah). In both too there is a thematic link with the creative power of God. With general biblical support (eg. Gen 1:26) and the imagery of a disciple's dedication to the Lord (cf. Isa 44:5,21-28), it seems reasonable to accept that these texts depict a response to God in moral conduct, and the dedication of himself to his acknowledged Lord.⁸⁸⁷ Thus the 'things of God' demands that faith and dedication required for servant-discipleship in a household group (10:45; cf. 8:34-35; 10:29-31).

Therefore, 'the things of God' are intimately tied to God's way for his Son in the merged scriptural quotation at the opening of the Gospel (1:2-3). In the context of the passion predictions 'along the way' (8:27-10:52), specifying Jesus' death and resurrection and linked to the combined house/way motif, 'the way' (12:14) stands for Jesus' house/servant role of selflessness and its culmination on the cross (14:36; cf. 10:45). It is in the 'secret of the kingdom' at the start of the journey (8:34-35) that Jesus calls on the 'crowd' and disciples (and 'any one' - 8:34) to follow him as servant along the way ordained by the Father (*dei* - 8:31). For Gundry, 'the things of God' insist that Jesus was aware that to go 'up to Jerusalem' involved his enduring rejection

and being killed (see 8:33 with 8:31); and right after mentioning them he called on the crowd, to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow him at the possible cost of their lives (8:34-38). For his audiences there and here, then, "the things of God" consist in the divine obligation to follow Jesus thus. "Give" (*didomi*) has become "give back" (*apodidomi*) to emphasize the obligatory character of the command to pay tax and follow Jesus.⁸⁸⁸

In paying tax to Caesar in his own coinage, Mark's community carries out a civic duty as a matter of course. And, as each member bears the image of God,⁸⁸⁹ they ought, as a 'matter of course and as a matter of choice, follow Jesus' example to

⁸⁸⁶ Giblin, 'Things of God', 523.

⁸⁸⁷ Giblin, 'Things of God', 524.

⁸⁸⁸ Gundry, *Mark*, 694.

surrender always to the will of God as outlined in Jesus' example' (3:35).⁸⁹⁰ So a community's duty to the social obligation to pay taxes is insignificant when compared to the discipleship challenge Christians faced in their covenantal relationship with their Father (11:25).⁸⁹¹ In light of this understanding, Mark situates the 'way' in the ironic introduction in the dialogue between Jesus and his tempters. If gifted to be in the reign of the risen Christ in the house-church, it would be foolish to believe that a disciple could intensify or enlarge the hundredfold (4:20; cf. 10:30) by the rejection of a mere obligation of rendering 'to Caesar the things that are Caesar's' (12:17).

Jesus' final statement is enshrined within the wonder of his listeners: 'They marvelled at him' (12:17c). It is of course Mark's assessment. They who tried to 'entrap him in his talk' (12:13) succumbed finally in admiration at the power of the Lord's supreme authority as teacher.⁸⁹² When the previous question of Jesus' authority (11:27-33) and the underlying question of what 'belongs to God' (11:17) in this pericope is recalled, Mark offers a glimpse of a revelation of the divine in the establishment's admiration of the Markan Jesus. He too intimates God's reign in the house and the varied responses that followed from union with this gift.

The resurrection pericope immediately follows (12:18-27) in which Mark outlines the privileged assurances of eternal life given by Christian faith. In Jesus, the Lord and cornerstone, households of faith will experience an initial sharing in eternal union with 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob' (Ex 3:6; Mk 10:30; 4:20; 12:26-27). The resurrection language discloses the eschatological fruit in giving to God 'the things that are God's', a type of response constituting a conclusion to Jesus' miracles in narratives of divine revelations.⁸⁹³ The first century world was awash with a host of gods and cults. There was a necessity for the evangelist to associate the

⁸⁸⁹ Heil, *Temple*, 83.

⁸⁹⁰ Anderson, *Mark*, 275.

⁸⁹¹ Harrington, 'Mark', 623.

⁸⁹² Anderson, *Mark*, 276.

good news with resurrection life in the risen Jesus through the Jewish connotations of the title for Yahweh, the 'God of your Fathers' (12:26; Gn 26:24; 31:53; 46:1-3; 49:25). Thus, the centrepiece of Mark's theistic creed emerges from the need to understand the resurrection pericope (12:18-27); its location is due to him.⁸⁹⁴ Resurrection theology (cf. 12:26-37) is crucial to the secret of the kingdom as it is intertwined with Jesus' authority and dignity as Lord of the house. If Jesus is not raised, then Mark's call to Rome's Christians to seek life in servant dedication in death to self - even martyrdom - is groundless (Rom 15:12-19). No mention is made of any alternative.

The reality of the resurrection offers victory over death. But Mark carefully separates his concept of it from any association with the type of materialistic understanding symbolically voiced by Herod (6:16) or the Sadducees (12:18-23). His perspective reflects the spiritualising tendency of Hellenistic thought which, when viewed against the Jewish concept of a bodily resurrection, hints at a controversy over this issue in the early Church. Mark views the Hellenist concept of the resurrection as an entry into a new spiritual life, a teaching earlier proclaimed by Paul in Romans (Rom 1:3-7; 6:1-6; 8:14-17) and Corinth (cf. 1 Cor 15:35-38; cf. Acts 17:32).

The Sadducees' trick question assumed the dead who rise again would resume their former life, marriage and relationships.⁸⁹⁵ Compare this to the Markan Christian concept that, through the resurrection, God ensures that the present gift of union with the risen Lord 'now in this time' blossoms into eternal life in God 'in the age to come' (10:30). As with Pauline house-church communities in crowded urban centres, Christians in Rome's households of faith knew this life to be uncertain and difficult. Further, in the case of the capital's Christians, there was the devastating trauma of past persecution to confront apart from the spectre of renewed persecution throughout 66-69 CE. A guaranteed hundredfold in faith was a crucial personal and communal need.

⁸⁹³ Donahue, 'Neglected Factor', 573; cf. Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 164-165.

⁸⁹⁴ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 229.

The resurrection also raises the question of the nature of God. He is not only a unity in his attributes (11:22-25) but reveals that his creative power is a crucial reassurance. Hence, at the heart of his treatise on the fruit of a Christian's covenantal relationship with God (12:28-34), Mark reiterates the core of Jewish monotheism: God is a God of the living and a living God. The passion predictions reaffirm this foundation of Christian faith. Schweitzer adds that 'resurrection is not a return from the grave, but enduring life hidden in the power of God. God is not met primarily in figures who return from the dead but in the one who has power over death.'⁸⁹⁶

Oddly, this pericope contains no reference to Jesus' resurrection. Also the Old Testament provides thin Christian argumentation for belief in eternal life (cf. Ex 3:6,15,16; 4:5). Based on Jesus' resurrection (cf. 1 Cor 15), however, the resurrection of the just was a given in the primitive Church. Paul taught, 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?... (A)s Christ was raised from the dead...we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom 6:3-4). Presumably, this consoling text was memorised in Rome's house-churches.

The Sadducees' opening use of the term *didaskale* and the question 'whose wife will she be?' (12:18-19), provide a lead-in to Jesus' own rhetorical question to Rome's Christians: 'Is this not why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God?' (12:24). In a post-resurrection context, this rhetorical question seeks to deepen Christian faith in the power of God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob enjoyed eternal life through God's power; likewise the Markan Jesus emphasises faith in God's capacity to offer eternal life in the present - 'have faith in God' (11:22). Equally, in servant discipleship one is assured of eternal life (8:34-35; 10:30; cf. 8:31; 8:38-9:13; cf. 2:18-22).

The resurrection supports the repeated cry, that 'all things are possible to

⁸⁹⁵ Donahue, 'Neglected Factor', 577; cf. La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 1, 184.

⁸⁹⁶ Schweitzer, *Good News*, 249.

God' (10:27c), including the power necessary to ensure a disciple's new way of being in union with God. In this case, it is God offering the Christian a communion with himself through an unspoken vindication of the obedient Son, who remains faithful to his Father's will as the suffering servant (14:36; cf. 8:31; 10:45; cf. Isa 42:1-7). In Markan terms, by following Jesus in obedience to the Father's will, the Christian enjoy eternal resurrection-life, now. The crux of this Gospel passage lies

in its emphasis on God as the basis for belief in life after death. Rather than tracing hope for an afterlife to human nature (the immortal soul), the text bases the doctrine of resurrection on the power of God and on communion with God ("I am the God of Abraham..."). Resurrection is a gift from God. It is a vindication of the righteous who remain faithful to God in times of testing and suffering. And Jesus becomes the best and first example of his own teaching.⁸⁹⁷

Thus, in the light of 'repent and believe in the gospel' (1:15), servant discipleship guarantees a 'hundredfold now in this time...and in the age to come eternal life' (10:30).

The evangelist further endows the authoritative scope of Jesus' role as the obedient Servant/Son of the Father (14:36) by illustrating how the crucified/risen Son of Man personifies the heart of God's covenant, the *Shema*, at 12:28-34. He associates this pericope with the previous three (11:22-12:27) since there is no indication of a time or spatial change. Not only do all the pericopes refer to the centrality of Jesus' response to his Father but each links anyone, everyone, and the scribe and Jesus to the centrality of the covenant. Jesus' motto is 'not my will but thine be done' 'in the way of God' (14:36; cf. 3:35). Then, in the covenantal relationship (12:28-34) there must be a link between 'the way of God' and the central motif of the narrative, God's will for Jesus (1:2-3). Also, if the 'secret of the kingdom of God' is God's will for Jesus, it is his will too for Rome's Christians (cf. 1:2-3; 8:31; 8:27-10:52). Hence, the issue of motive will now be examined. It forms the heart of the servant ideal.

Mark places a heavy stress on ethical monotheism. There is no place for a cultic basis for morality (cf. 7:1-23; 12:38-40). Pesch insists that Mark's literary strategy

in his use of the image of the house with all its connotations of servant discipleship reflects the servant sense (cf. 9:37; 10:15). It is the result of a prophetic focus on an appreciation of the Law under the headings of one's obligation to God (in fidelity to God's way) and one's servant duty to one's neighbour (9:35; cf. 10:45), both are a unity for the whole person is presumed here. Assigning heart and soul to one's personal existence but mind and strength to one's powers wrongly severs the heart and soul from one's powers and the mind and strength from one's personal existence. Persons cannot be separated from their faculties.⁸⁹⁸ Clearly, the unity of the persons and their faculties is set in an apologetic form for a Hellenist world (cf. Micah 6:6-8; Amos 5:18-24).⁸⁹⁹

Gnilka too bases his analysis of 12:28-34 on the servant image. In light of it, he describes how the reality of God's covenantal love issues in a selfless love of a neighbour - to 'love ones neighbour as oneself' in the house (12:33c). This is a servant attitude that is much more than all the burnt-offerings and sacrifices (12:33).⁹⁰⁰ Rome's Christians knew that Jesus became the Lord of the community by his servant death 'as a ransom for many' (10:45; cf. 8:38; 12:35-37; 14:62). The ideal presumes this possible, ultimate servant response for 'all' in the house (13:37) since the issue of eternal life for the dead (12:18-27) and the motive of servant charity (12:28-34) relies on the present Lord's human expression of the lived secret of the kingdom in his risen humanity.

First, Mark separates 'one of the scribes' (12:28) from the 'them' who endeavoured to trap Jesus - the authorities' envoys (11:18-27) - in the odd trio of Pharisees, Herodians (12:13) and Sadducees (12:18). Unlike them, the scribe is sincere and praised as such by Jesus (12:34); he 'hears' (12:28) an expressive action for one who listens and hears something in the word of another that is beyond the ordinary. He hears Mark's précis of Christian covenant responsibilities in the Caesar pericope (12:13-17; cf.

⁸⁹⁷ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 353.

⁸⁹⁸ Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2, 240.

⁸⁹⁹ J.L. Daniel, 'Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period', *JBL* 98 (1979), 45-65.

⁹⁰⁰ Gnilka, *Markus*, 2, 242-244.

12:28) and its fruit in an eternal spiritual union with God (12:18-27; 11:14,18b; 12:28,29,37) - *akouein* is used five times within the temple scene. Four uses indicate a positive response to Jesus' teaching by the crowd and this scribe. Their delight in Jesus' teaching (12:37) aligns them with God's will in relation to servant discipleship within the group (3:35).

In view of the schema regarding the servant pericope (9:35-50), the challenge, 'you shall love your neighbour as yourself' (12:31) suggests that Mark had Rome's *paroikoi* in mind.⁹⁰¹ Such people, without legal rights or economic resources, relied on the house group for a sense of belonging and, in some cases, for the necessities of life.⁹⁰² Exegetes acknowledge too that Mark uses the term neighbour in an inclusive sense for the Markan Jesus had freed the house-churches from the exclusivist mentality brought about by the manipulating of the Law (2:17,18-22,27-28; 3:31-35; 7:17-23). Jesus sets the example; he receives people from different backgrounds (cf. 1:32-34,40; 2:13-17; 5:19-20; 7-19,24-30; 13:10).⁹⁰³ Hence in clamping the two commandments tightly together, Mark ensures that his community will not be able to rest on an abstract fulfilment of the first to the neglect of the social expression of the second (Lev 19:18b).

The double charity commandment seems to indicate a Hellenist's anti-law and inclusive household mentality. But in a Hebrew Christian context, it is doubtful that, historically, Jesus' double love commandment would be seen as abrogating the Torah but as simplifying and facilitating the observances of all its commands. Matthew illustrates this in case of the temple tax (17:22-27). If Matthew's Christians were freed from the obligations of temple worship, payment of the tax was a part of their Jewishness. To avoid scandal, they observed it (17:24-27). Rome's Gentile Christian groups seem very wary of anything Jewish - Mark's good news is strongly anti-Law and anti-temple.

The Hellenists saw the double love commandment negating the whole law.

⁹⁰¹ Donahue, *Gospel*, 56.

⁹⁰² Elliott, *Home*, 34-49.

This truth had already been expressed in Paul's letter to the Hellenist Christian households in Rome: 'the one who loves another has fulfilled the Law' (Rom 13:8, 10).

The scribe assumes this unity of the two commandments for he goes

beyond (or draws a conclusion from) Jesus' statement in 12:30-31 by proclaiming the superiority of love of God and of neighbour over the many laws in the Torah about sacrifices. For similar sentiments in the OT see 1 Sam 15:22; Hos 6:6; Prov 21:3. This position fits well with the episodes in Mark 11 that highlight the superiority of Jesus and his preaching of God's kingdom over the Jerusalem temple.⁹⁰⁴

Mark may have perceived that the pro-law groups in individual house-churches were inclined to become less inclusive, leading to a ritual demarcation.

Jesus' reply to the scribe (12:34) presents a further enigmatic reference to the kingdom of God in which the concept is that of a realm in which the will of God is unquestioned (cf. 14:36). The Markan Jesus answers the scribe: 'you are not far from the kingdom of God' - but not in it as noted above. He needed to live the 'love' commandment from the Markan viewpoint, the servant ideal (9:35-37) if he were to share in the Lord's present kingdom. The text stresses this fact by taking the scribe's answer well beyond the more traditional separation of the two great commandments. The scribe has drawn near to the secret of the kingdom, a present reality that may be entered 'now'. This clearly presupposes a pronounced sense that God's rule is already realised (10:30) rather than at some future state.⁹⁰⁵ As well, in such a positive scene, the term 'listen Israel' (12:29) indicates the present fruitfulness of the fledgling Church in Rome noted in Chapters 3 and 4 (cf. 1:45; 4:3,9,15,16,18,19,24; 2:1; 3:7-35; 5:27; 7:25; 8:18; 10:47). In terms of this study, it points to the recurring replacement motif.

For the Jewish people, the term 'neighbour' included all Jews along with strangers living in their midst. So, in relation to God as Lord of all human beings in Mark's terms, the Gentiles are included. Was the scribe able to accept that

⁹⁰³ Nineham, *Mark*, 326-327; cf. Anderson, *Mark*, 280-283, Hooker, *Mark*, 287-288.

⁹⁰⁴ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 355.

⁹⁰⁵ Stock, *Method*, 314; cf. Mann, *Mark*, 481-482.

conclusion?⁹⁰⁶ StuhlmueLLer holds that the scribe would have been aware that

foreigners living within Palestine...were granted limited rights and protection....but Tr-Isa extends full privileges even to the *nekar*, those living outside the boundaries of the promised land....Tr-Isa was reaching into Israel's early history to reintroduce the diverse kind of people whom God elected: Aramean (Deut 26:5); Amorite and Hittite (Ezek 16:3); mixed foreign elements (Ex 12:38; Num 11:4).⁹⁰⁷

It appears that he was so aware yet he was not in the 'house of prayer for all the nations' (11:17). With the endorsement 'well' (12:28), 'truly' (12:32) and 'wisely' (12:34), Jesus' teaching finds its echo in the scribe's statements and its relevancy for Rome's Christians. Gundry argues that the syntax supports the sense that the addition of the second commandment had the purpose of stressing that 'the scribe must not stop thinking lovingly about God but must also go on to act lovingly towards his neighbour'.⁹⁰⁸ As well, if the house-church is the 'new Israel', 'the things of God' - servant relationships - must be normative for its life. In turn La Verdiere notes:

The scribe answered with understanding. Responding to Jesus' teaching, he addressed Jesus not as *Rabbi* but as *Didaskale*, a Greek title suggesting that Jesus was a teacher for Gentiles as well as Jews. He also confessed his faith in the one who was God for all human beings. In effect, the scribe saw that God's house had to be a "house of prayer for all peoples" (11:17).⁹⁰⁹

So the scribe defines a Hellenist gospel for a Roman house-church. By prioritising the two great commandments, he describes the kingdom of God being open to all who accept the *Shema*: 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he' (12:32). For Hellenistic Rome, surrounded by a plethora of gods, this scribal figure reaffirms the truth of the one God, the Father of the community (11:22,25; cf. 1:11; 9:7; 14:36). But, as mentioned above, his affirmation lacks the completion set out by Jesus' authoritative response to this one God. The scribe is left, not in, but 'not far from the kingdom of God' (12:34). Perhaps he stands for the well-disposed Jew/Gentile in Rome who stumbled at the concept of a crucified, servant Christ

⁹⁰⁶ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 188.

⁹⁰⁷ StuhlmueLLer, 'Deutero and Trito Isaiah', 344.

⁹⁰⁸ Gundry, *Mark*, 710.

or cannot make the break from the synagogue mentality and enjoy the full benefits of the kingdom's reign in the house-church. Mark's addressees have this gift. In the post resurrection house-church, the *Shema* encompasses the full extent of the cost to self of a servant/way response to the gospel.

The parable of the wicked husbandman stresses the transfer of the vineyard to 'others' (12:9). At 12:12b, where Mark notes that the authorities 'feared the multitude'. Mark uses this reading again for, in the concluding pericope (12:35-37), he again refers to the 'great crowd' (of well-disposed Gentiles in Rome?) that 'heard' the Markan Jesus proclaim: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand till I put thy enemies under thy feet"' (12:36). There is no spatial change from the statement at 11:27: that, 'as he was walking in the temple, the chief-priests and the scribes and the elders came to him', and its ironic sequel at 12:37b, where 'the great throng heard him gladly.'

It appears that the crowd theme, symbolic of potential converts, is linked to the covenant pericope (12:28-34). Mark may be referring to people living in close proximity to house-churches in Rome's congested insulae and multi-unit housing. There, Christian groups were particularly prominent in the public eye; overcrowding was very common.⁹¹⁰ It is in God's reign that the house-churches live their communal witness. There is a parallel logic in the Caesar pericope: if Caesar's image reflects Rome's domination in the Greco-Roman world, so Yahweh's will for Jesus reigns supreme in his redemptive way in charity (1:2-3).⁹¹¹

The implicit universalism in 11:28-12:34 also counters the charge of exclusivism. Mark consistently returns to the theme of Jesus' rejection of religious barriers: 'all' are called to follow Jesus 'along the way' (8:34-35; 10:29-30). Donahue also observes of these three pericopes (12:13-28) that these three pericopes illustrate an apologetic to a non-Christian world. Markan Christians are to worship God, but not

⁹⁰⁹ La Verdere, *Beginning*, 2, 189.

⁹¹⁰ Osiek and Balch, *Families*, 20.

directly confront the state; the resurrection is a re-affirmation of the authority and power of the living God, and the worship of this God is solely theistic.⁹¹² It appears that behind 12:13-34 stands an early Christian apologetic, indebted to the Hellenistic proclamation of the risen *Christos* as proclaimed initially in Antioch and then in other Greco-Roman urban centres, including Rome circa 40-45 CE.

Mark's house-churches encompass the source of the new wine. They are gifted with the full revelation of faithful, covenant love, a love that needed 'new wineskins' (2:21-22). It is an image epitomising God's revelation of that uniquely new counter-cultural selflessness (1:11; 15:39; cf. 9:2-8), expressed first in faith, prayer and forgiveness (11:22-25) and authenticated in the ideal of communal servant love of neighbour.⁹¹³ Its fruit is 'peace with one another' (9:50) in the house. The Markan Jesus' first priority is the fulfilment of his Father's will. He fulfils the second commandment in giving 'his life as a ransom for many', including the poor and aliens (3:35; 14:62; 15:37; 10:45; cf. Deut 6:4-5; Lev 19:18; Gn 12:10; 15:13; cf. 10:30; 14:36).⁹¹⁴ What was once inscribed on the stone tablets at Mt Sinai is now written in living flesh of the risen humanity of the Lord, namely the twofold command of love.⁹¹⁵

The critique of the scribes' corrupt use of the Law (12:38-40) before the widow's mite (12:41-44) highlights that it is the heart that counts. By his attack, Mark implies a similar refashioning of the traditional outlook seen in the scribe's reply to Jesus when he quotes the two great commandments at 12:32-34. It is love that matters rather than the 'burnt offerings and sacrifices'. The implications of the scribe's answer go beyond the scope of Jesus' answer to this initial question (12:29-31). Mark's use of a Latin loan word (*kodrantēs* - 12:42) ensures that his Roman audience do not miss the symbolism of the gift that makes Jesus' comment on the unity of the love of God and

⁹¹¹ Cf. 7:6,10; 10:6,7,18,19; 11:9; 12:10,29-30,36; 14:27,62; 15:34.

⁹¹² Donahue, 'Neglected Factor', 580.

⁹¹³ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 115.

⁹¹⁴ Elliott, *Home*, 27-28. Israelites as aliens: cf. Gen 12:10; 15:13; 19:9; Ruth 1:1; Ex 12:45; Lev 22:10.

neighbour all the more appropriate if viewed from a Gentile, Law-free position.⁹¹⁶

After that, Jesus' word reigned supreme. 'No one dared to ask him any questions' (12:34) - an ironic finale since Jesus utters it within the metaphorical ruins of the dismissed temple. So, with the opposition to Jesus' authority silenced, Mark presumes the victorious servant discipleship in the crucified/risen Lord in the Davidic pericope (12:35-37). No doubt Christians in the capital caught the rhetorical suggestiveness of their present post-resurrection life in the risen Lord.

4. SON OF MAN: LORD OF THE HOUSE

Jesus as the Lord in Rome's communities (12:35-37; cf. 13:32-37) constitutes the third theme in an analysis of the nature of the replacement temple. Aware of a Christian community's dire need of hope in the immediate aftermath of Nero's persecution, Mark depicts the source of such hope as belief in Jesus as the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord. Three motifs predominate. For Rome's Christians, the Gospel first stresses the recurring motif of Jesus' resurrection that guarantees the consoling risen presence of a fellow-suffering, victorious Jesus in his crucified/glorified humanity as the Son of Man, the Lord (13:35). Second, rather than as Son of God, Mark's emphasis is on the secret in Jesus' crucified/risen humanity as Lord of the house. Third, the first two motifs are supported by the relationship of Jesus, Son of Man, with the titles 'Son of David' and 'Lord': Jesus is not only the Christ and Son of God but also the risen Lord (12:35-37).

Throughout Mark, though the Father's evaluative viewpoint is paramount, his redeeming activity is expressed completely in Jesus' messianic works. The result, there is a minimal focus on the Father's role. All Jesus' messianic activity is directed towards fulfilment of the Father's will while the good news of the resurrection validates God's redemptive plan (1:1). But the Father's redeeming role is carried out in Jesus' humanity, an identification realised in Jesus as the Son of Man: 'All things are possible to God' but

⁹¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Many Religions*, 70.

they become so only through the Son of Man's obedience as the Servant/Son (1:11; 8:31; 10:45; 14:36). This study holds that the title 'Lord' is presumed in the term 'Son of Man'. The term 'Son of Man' is also kept in any description of Jesus as the Lord 'in the glory of his Father with the holy angels' at the parousia (8:38). Crucially, too, 'Lord' is used in expressing the Markan Jesus' authority in his eschatological reign in the secret of the kingdom (5:19-20; 7:24-30; cf. 1:44-45; 2:11-12,15-17,28; 4:20,26-29).

The persistent stressing of Jesus' messianic works in the title 'Son of Man' greatly lessens any direct accent on the Father's initiative in the Gospel. The disciples' relationship to God in obedience to his will is the touchstone of the Gospel, set within faith in sharing in the way of the Son of Man (8:31,34-35; 10:29-30; cf. Isa 52:13-53:12). Further, there are no direct, personal links of any characters to God or overt manifestations of his power. God always operates through Jesus' initiatives that are repeatedly set in the house or linked to it as the first summary of Jesus' healing and exorcising makes clear (1:29-34).

Authoritative statements such as 'I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners' are placed on Jesus' lips (2:17). Redemptive initiatives are also ascribed to him (1:38; 2:10,17,28; 3:13-19). What seems a contradiction to Jesus' directions highlight his role in expressing the power of God and a sense that where the Son of Man acts there God acts (5:19-20). In the reversal at 5:19-20, where Jesus directs the healed demoniac to proclaim 'what the Lord had done for him', the man 'went away and began to proclaim how much Jesus had done for him', implying that the Old Testament title 'Lord' is transferred to Jesus. This results in an echo of Paul:

The passage in Mark echoes the primitive creed in Paul's greeting to the Romans. Paul was "set apart for the gospel of God,...the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom 1:1,3-4).⁹¹⁷

⁹¹⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 729.

⁹¹⁷ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 191.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as Lord (11:3) seems based on a liturgical reading that presupposes an historical event though we hold that its exact nature is impossible to reconstruct - rather it was faith celebrating history.⁹¹⁸ In the temple Jesus takes up the dominant position, besides assuming an extraordinary authority in referring to 'my house' (11:17) as he rejects the temple and describes the new 'house of prayer' (12:22-12:37). At the end of the wicked husbandman's parable, Jesus presumes to speak for his Father 'who will...destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others' (12:9).

Should Mark dramatically introduce God at crucial points in the narrative, at the baptism (1:11), the transfiguration (9:2-8), and the agony in the garden (14:32-42), his involvement is muted by passive verbs apart from his redeeming will being outlined through some aspect of the Son of Man' initiatives. Thus, the Father's will is eschatologically enacted indirectly through 'new wine' in 'fresh skins' in the reign of Jesus as the Lord of the house (2:10,15-17; 3:13-19; 8:34-35; 9:36-37).⁹¹⁹ Further, Mark sets a broad range of questions concerning authority in the circumlocution, the Son of Man, for the human Jesus. In these instances, its correct sense comes from its context.

Mark uses the term 'Son of Man' 14 times. Apart from 2:10 and 2:28, its use occurs from 8:27 onwards. As a title for Jesus, it portrays how he suffers in his humanity.⁹²⁰ Current scholarship shows there is a general acceptance that 'Son of Man' covers the full dimensions of 'the secret', that is, the fulfilment of God's will in Jesus' humanity.⁹²¹ As well, the eschatological promise to those who 'left everything' (10:28) is based on fidelity, not to the Father, but to Jesus: 'for my sake and the gospel' (10:29).

On one level, Jesus' suffering arises from the fact that his claim to authority is repudiated by the religious leadership. On another, Jesus' sovereign acceptance of his fate as being the will of God is an expression of his authority, not the renunciation of it.⁹²²

⁹¹⁸ La Verdiere, *Beginning*, 2, 147.

⁹¹⁹ Other instances: 3:32-35; 4:11,20,26-29; 5:19-20,42-43; 6:6b-13,30; 7:36-37; 13:26; 14:62.

⁹²⁰ Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 54, against Hurtado, *Mark*, 49.

⁹²¹ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 224,530; cf. Nineham, *Mark*, 106; Hooker, *Mark*, 105; Gundry, *Mark*, 143-144; Harrington, *Mark*, 128; Stock, *Method*, 241-242.

⁹²² Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox,' 10.

Jesus' authority is based on both who he is and his fidelity to his Father's will. If he is one with his Father (cf. 9:37), the Son of Man speaks for the Father and so there is less need for the Father's involvement in the storyline (9:36-37). The cry of Jesus on Calvary, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (15:34) seems addressed to an empty sky. God too appears absent from the Gospel's conclusion for Mark's brief 'he is not here...he is going before you in Galilee' (16:6-7) directs our gaze to the timeless purpose of Jesus' existential becoming as Lord rather than the Father's role in the resurrection. So the contrast in Mark occurs between God's mighty saving acts in the Old Testament and the Son of Man's messianic mission in the New.

Understandably, for a persecuted community the centrality of the suffering Son of Man, the risen Lord is stressed. The exceptions are the references to the covenant and the Passover in the Last Supper narrative. Both measures presume God's action but stop short of describing it explicitly. Unlike Luke (31 times - 1:15,42; 2:5,20,27; 3:5,28; 4:11-12,24-25 and so on), Mark does not attempt to describe the attributes of God. In contrast, Luke sets Jesus within God's orbit right from the start of the Gospel: 'He will be great and be called the son of the Most High' (1:32); for Mary too 'the power of the Most High will overshadow you' (1:35). In fact, the *Magnificat* and *Benedictus* are summaries of Yahweh's role in Old Testament salvation history and its extension into the New.⁹²³ But with Mark, there is a constant focus on Jesus' human becoming; he uses the indirect *dei* without direct reference to God. It suggests a divine determination of events without directly referring to the Father. The Son of Man is the locus for redemption and judgment at the parousia (8:38; 14:62) while God's redemptive will is hidden in *gegraptai*, a point reinforced by Mark's 27 uses of the divine passive in the Gospel.⁹²⁴

At Jesus' baptism, 'a voice came from heaven' (1:11). Mark presumably expects his addressees to situate the baptism within the connotative scope of the

⁹²³ M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 168.

⁹²⁴ Cf. 1:2-3; 7:6; 9:12-13; 11:17; 14:21,27 and so on.

superscription (1:1). Rome's house-churches know that, historically, Jesus has already actualised the secret of the kingdom by his resurrection in his glorified humanity as Lord (cf. 16:6). This reality is driven home in the house/replacement theme intimated as early as 1:1, and formally begun at 1:16-20. Moreover, it is the crucified/risen Son of Man - not God - who calls (1:16-20; 3:13-16) and confers authority and power upon the twelve for their delegated mission to house-churches (6:6b-13). He too feeds the people as the Father did in the desert (6:34-44; 8:1-9). Mark also anticipates and intensifies the recognition of the Spirit's affirming the risen Lord of the house (13:35) following the Davidic pericope (12:36). It is this same Lord, the crucified/risen Son of Man, who invites 'all' into the reality of the secret of the kingdom (8:34-35). Overall, there is a pervasive narrative accent on the Son of Man, which, in light of the *paradidomi* theme centred on Jesus. He invites all into a faith-based hope in the efficacy of servant discipleship. Mark's whole rhetorical purpose is to stimulate faith and hope in the reality of the victorious, risen Son of Man, the Lord.⁹²⁵

The passion predictions likewise stress the resurrection theme of the crucified/glorified Son of Man as the Christian basis for hope. If Jesus is crucified, he will rise. In addition, the Davidic pericope (12:35-37) summarises 'the things that are God's' (11:22-12:34): for Mark's audiences. The 'things of God' consist in the divine necessity to follow Jesus along the way.⁹²⁶ Rome's Christian has no other divinely guaranteed, authoritative answer to the Gospel's challenge (1:2-3; 8:31,34-35; cf. 1:15; 10:21,29-30) than to follow Jesus in his response to his Father's will in his vulnerable, crucified yet victorious, risen humanity as Lord (1:16-20; 2:14; 8:34; 10:32).

Furthermore, the narrative emphasis on Jesus as the risen Lord is the basis of the post-resurrection viewpoint (1:1). It illuminates the ongoing presence of the Son of Man's authoritative healing, together with his teaching and his rejection (2:10,28). Its

⁹²⁵ Donahue, 'Neglected Factor', 569.

⁹²⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 694.

essential nature is revealed when it is challenged or denied (8:38; 14:62).⁹²⁷ Hope is offered to Rome's beleaguered groups in the narrative's continuing literary stress on the replacement theme as Mark continually inter-weaves Jesus' human experiences with his victorious reign as the risen Lord (13:26-27). Its completion is expressed in the equality shown in the Davidic 'the Lord said to my Lord' (12:36; cf. 4:20-34). Jesus' equality with his Father justifies his right to judge 'in the age to come' (10:30), accentuating the proleptic enthronement of Jesus as the glorified Son of Man, the Lord.⁹²⁸

The reality of the Markan Jesus as Lord offers a new way of being for Rome's Christians. With the Son of Man's final coming, he is set in the midst of subordinate angels, a striking indication of his humanity's transcendent majesty (8:38; 13:27). Moreover, it is only possible to explain the term 'glory' (8:38; 13:26; cf. 10:37) from the Septuagint, where it usually refers to the divine mode of being.⁹²⁹ The term 'Son of Man' is used even when the Markan Jesus returns at the parousia as the Son of God. Such consistency down-plays references to the Father's involvement. The underlying centring of the replacement theme on the Markan Jesus demands that the narrative gives prominence to the glorified humanity of the Son of Man, as the Lord in his divine authority and status as the Son of God. For persecuted Christians, such an understanding of Jesus (8:38; 9:9; 10:34; 13:26; 14:62) would offer companionship in their human suffering. Donahue argues that Mark's basic use of the Son of Man title reaffirms the Pauline understanding that by sharing in way discipleship, the Christian shared concomitantly in the life, death and risen glory of the Lord Jesus:

First, he makes he makes explicit references to Dan 7:13-14 in 13:26-27 and 14:62, thus altering...direct attention to the parousia. Second, he integrates the Son of man very strongly with his *theologia crucis*. Third, he designates the earthly power of Jesus as that of the Son of Man (2:10,28). Such a pattern integrates the earthly ministry, the suffering, and the return of Jesus.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁷ Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', 9.

⁹²⁸ Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', 9.

⁹²⁹ Davis, 'Mark's Christological Paradox', 10.

⁹³⁰ J.R. Donahue, 'Recent Studies on the Origin of the Son of Man in the Gospels', *CBQ* 48 (1986), 498.

If Mark describes Jesus as the Son of Man, Kingsbury, however, holds that 'Son of Man' is not a title as is 'the Christ'. No person addresses Jesus by that title, nor is there any controversy about it, nor does Jesus explain it to his hearers. Unlike other titles, such as 'the Christ', 'Lord' and 'Son of God', it never entered the creedal formulas of the early church (2:10,28; 8:31; 9:12,31; 10:33,45; 13:26; 14:21,62).⁹³¹ Yet, through its use, the term's significance logically demands recognition because of its culmination in the present reign in the Markan Jesus in his risen humanity as the 'Lord'.

The title 'Lord' is buttressed by the prolific references to Jesus' resurrection in Mark's use of the two verbs, *egeiro* and *anistemi* (35 times). Resurrection language climaxes Jesus' healing and exorcism miracles apart from his own resurrection (cf. 1:31; 2:9,11,12; 5:41; 6:14,16; 9:27; 12:26; cf. 10:49; 14:28; 16:6). Such references also occur at the start of the 'way' (9:9,10). The passion predictions detail suffering that bears fruit in the bodily resurrection of Jesus (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). It is a most pervasive motif.

The reality of the resurrection also underlies the five pericopes in 11:27-12:34 that describe the 'new' house of prayer for all the nations. Indeed, the reality of the resurrection underlies the whole narrative. It must, of course, since Mark points to the crucifixion/resurrection reality as the basis for the entire replacement theme that he consistently presents to Rome's communities as a source of hope in their current crisis. In urban house-churches like Rome (and many Pauline churches), the Hellenists and Paul encouraged the widespread concept of Jesus as Lord. In Romans, *Kurios* occurs 41 times; 8 only refer to God the Father. The others point to some aspect of the 'secret of the kingdom' in which Jesus is the risen Lord.

To stress this outcome, Donahue identifies the suffering/risen Son of Man with suffering humanity in the Christian household communities. He firstly argues

that the Son of Man sayings in the Gospels represent a melding of two traditions: (a) the use by Jesus in a "non-Christological sense" and (b) the

⁹³¹ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 166-179.

creation of it as a title by the early church primarily in reference to Dan 7:13-14.⁹³²

Hence, there is the understandable Markan preoccupation with blending the rejected, crucified/glorified humanity of Jesus with the brutalised humanity of Rome's Christians. It reflects Daniel's glorified Son of Man figure. Daniel 7:13-14 is from apocalyptic literature; it is persecution literature, embodying the hopes of a traumatised people such as Rome's households. In Revelation 1:13 as well, the figure of the Son of Man is non-titular but it is a clear reference to the glorified Lord who has suffered and will come again in glory. As in Daniel, it encourages a suffering community by blending the victory of the Son of Man as Lord with their own implicit vindication. Donahue sees the same use of Dan 7:13-14 in Stephen's speech (Acts 7:56).⁹³³ He argues that Mark where the aim is the blending of the experience of two human figures in the risen Lord.⁹³⁴

Against the titles 'Son of God' and 'Christ' (8:29), 'Son of Man' is placed exclusively on the lips of Jesus. The term encompasses Jesus' historical existential becoming.⁹³⁵ In turn, it must be placed within God's evaluative point of view regarding Jesus since the title, Son of God, is the Father's witness to the culminating dignity of Jesus. It is never, 'Jesus, Son of Man',⁹³⁶ but as the 'Son of Man' it catches up the good news embedded in the human servant, Jesus, in his ongoing dedication as the servant, 'for that is why I came out' (1:38; 8:31). If only on Jesus' lips, it indicates that Jesus understands the scope of his human responsibility (1:38-39; 2:17; 4:30-32).

The Markan Jesus restores the pristine state of humanity (2:28) by guaranteeing divine forgiveness (2:10). Since Mk 2:27 already recalls the Adam story, the natural transition to 2:28 shows how the divine gift of the Sabbath rest was for the

⁹³² Donahue, 'Recent Studies', 496-7.

⁹³³ Donahue, 'Recent Studies', 497.

⁹³⁴ Donahue, 'Recent Studies', 498.

⁹³⁵ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 157.

⁹³⁶ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 157-166; cf. Achtemeier, *Mark*, 41-47.

good of Adam; thus, the second Adam reigns over it as well.⁹³⁷ He was thus fulfilling the Servant prophecies (Isa 42:1-7; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12; cf. Mk 9:12; 14:21,62). He is the one who 'should suffer many things and be treated with contempt' (9:12c). In this regard it should be emphasised that the

passion sayings point ahead of themselves to the saving event, the death and resurrection...of Jesus. When the event finally takes place, the Son of Man title is superseded...in (Jesus) undertaking his unique role as the one who must suffer, die, and rise again in order to bring salvation.⁹³⁸

The concentration on Son of Man logically extends into the reality of the crucifixion/ resurrection victory and Jesus' position as Lord. It should be stressed that Rome's Christians pre-eminent need is for a companionable, fellow-suffering yet triumphant human figure. For someone brutalised by Nero's persecution, it would be difficult to relate his or her sufferings to the ethereal sense of Jesus as the Son of God. Hence, Mark reassures the traumatised Christians that they now share in the secret of the kingdom of the crucified/risen Son of Man. As he is the reigning victorious Lord, they share in the victory of his human becoming. In their own ordinary, daily becoming in service and suffering - each with his work (13:34b) - they share with Jesus in this crucible of a paradoxical selflessness in community living. This ensures that they share eternal life now in his triumphant victory as Lord of the house (13:35).

This sense is conveyed in the Markan Jesus' discipleship norms for eternal life by balancing two aspects of time in the secret of the kingdom. The Gospel first states 'for my sake and the gospel' at 8:35b; it repeats this phrase at 10:30. The former points to the historical Jesus and the latter to the living word of the Gospel that makes Jesus' Spirit-filled, glorified existential becoming, as the risen Lord, a present reality, shared by Rome's Christians.

In the Pauline churches, the title 'Lord' witnessed to the cosmic proportions of Jesus' lordship (cf. Phil 2:5-11). Through Paul's epistle, Rome's house-churches

⁹³⁷ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 246; cf. Kingsbury, *Christology*, 164.

presumably would be familiar with the formulae ‘if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved’ (Rom 10:9). A later Pauline formulation of Christian belief expressed the pattern for Christian living: ‘As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord so live in him rooted and built up in him and established in the faith’ (Col 2:6; cf. Col 1:24-29; 2:9,12-13; Gal 2:19-20; Eph 4:15-16 and so on.). This belief came from the Church’s lived experience, that Jesus, by his ascension (cf. 14:28; 16:7), ensured his mysterious but real and powerful re-entry into the ongoing historical process. The Son of Man, the Lord, was forever up to date, continually abreast of the happenings of this world. Post resurrection, ‘he is going before you in Galilee’ (Mk 16:7) in his ever-present human becoming.

Mark sustains this sense of Jesus’ lordly authority in his ‘house’ (11:17) in the ‘authority’ pericope (11:27-33), an authority that is consolidated in the succeeding pericopes: 12:13-17; 12:18-27; 12:28-34. There, ‘the things of God’ (12:13-17) should be seen from the touchstone of God’s overriding will (3:35; 8:34-35; 10:28-31) in the Son of Man’s paradoxical, suffering obedience. Marcus rhetorically asks the question:

Which set of images truly shows where the Markan community stands? The radiant Jesus or the darkness of his tribulation?...Thus the unearthly radiance of the transfiguration and the darkness of the Markan present are seen finally to cohere with each other, but only because they are tied together by the eschatological figure of the dying and rising Christ, in whose sufferings - but also in whose glory! - the Markan community participates as it follows him on the way.⁹³⁹

Thus, if Rome’s Christians follow Jesus in his suffering they share too in his rising now (10:30). Ps 118:22-23 celebrates the resurrection (12:10-11) that justifies the claim that Jesus is to be acknowledged as Lord. ‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner...it is marvellous in our eyes’ (Ps 125-126.⁹⁴⁰ Kingsbury seems out of step with the majority of exegetes when he declares that in 12:37 that *kurios* does not function as a christological title. By dismissing the title *kurios*, he

⁹³⁸ Davis, ‘Mark’s Christological Paradox’, 11.

⁹³⁹ Marcus, *Way*, 93.

underestimates the value of the contexts in which *kurios* relates to Jesus and the critical import of the pericopes in 11:22-12:37 for Mark's addressees. He makes no mention of the role the term plays in the replacement motif, crucial to Mark's rhetorical purpose and ignores the Spirit-guaranteed identity of Jesus as Lord (12:36a).⁹⁴¹

In retaining the title 'Son of Man' in scenes of the parousia, Mark suggests the truth, among other ensuing christological truths arising from the resurrection, that Jesus chose to remain human for eternity. John Paul II argues that the risen Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth: to separate Jesus from the Christ or to speak of the 'historical Jesus' as if he were someone other than the Christ of faith.⁹⁴² J.P. Galvin offers indirect support for this position. He posits that acknowledging Jesus as the Christ demands linking his incarnation, public life, crucifixion, and resurrection in a unity and not choosing any one of these four aspects as contrary to the remainder.⁹⁴³

By his resurrection, Jesus became the image of God in flesh and blood, the servant-model by which every human being must be configured. It is the Father's declared design that we 'be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the first born among many brethren' (Rom 8:29). To describe the risen humanity of the risen Markan Jesus in this way allows the disciples in their humanity to be described as the 'brothers and sisters and mothers and children' of the risen Son of Man (3:35; 10:30). In return for Christians offering Jesus their existential daily situations (Rom 12:1-2), the Lord Jesus shares with them his own existential becoming present in his risen humanity. He indicates this by his call, 'if any man would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Mk 8:34). In faith expressed in prayer, the *modis operandi* of the house-church, Christians are encouraged at the cost to themselves to make present in their own lives the selfless experiences of Jesus' existential becoming as

⁹⁴⁰ Hooker, *Mark*, 292.

⁹⁴¹ Kingsbury, *Christology*, 108-114; cf. Nineham, *Mark*, 331.

⁹⁴² John Paul II, 'Redemptoris Missio' AAS 83 (1991), 25.

⁹⁴³ J.P. Galvin, 'I Believe...in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, Our Lord', *Int* 50 (1996), 380.

the crucified/risen Son of Man.

Essential to this conviction is the resurrection. It demands the theme of Jesus' personal continuity in and through the transformation of death.⁹⁴⁴ D.M. Stanley explains how the Apocalypse writer (5:6-9) hints at this union between the Christian and the crucified/risen Son of Man. The author

seeks to impress his reader with the all-important truth that the exalted Christ exalted Christ has not merely chosen to remain man throughout eternity....(but) Jesus Christ, (has) become Master of history through His earthly life, death and resurrection, *is what He now is* in virtue of His past existence upon earth...all the mysteries of Jesus' earthly history...have been mysteriously endowed in His glorified humanity with a totally new and enduring *actuality*.⁹⁴⁵

So the human, crucified/risen Lord endows the whole range of a Christian's human experience as a house-church servant (13:9-14; 9:37) with a special dignity in the Lord (cf. 10:30; 12:35-37). A Roman Christian could therefore claim that

if I am to be ultimately redeemed by accepting my own death...I must throughout my life be assimilated gradually more and more to Jesus Christ, in whom the paschal mystery is now completely realized. This means that the Christian life is a graduated process in which, over and over again, I am "elected" by God in Christ with my own free co-operation.⁹⁴⁶

The replacement theme demands such an understanding that guides the choice, construction, and placement of the transfiguration pericope at the start of the way (9:2-8). If the Son of Man is progressively vindicated and glorified as the crucified/risen Son of Man in his journey to Jerusalem, Christians of faith experience a present, ongoing transformation as they follow his way in daily household life (Gal 5:18,22-26).

Scholars concur on what the Transfiguration pericope is not: a relocated resurrection appearance or a corporate vision (if it is argued that the narrative has an historical basis), or an allusive piece linking the transfiguration exclusively with Moses on Mt Sinai. These theories are not Mark's concern. At the critical start to the way for traumatised households, these theories are clearly inadequate - they explain nothing.

⁹⁴⁴ Galvin, 'I Believe', 380.

⁹⁴⁵ D.M. Stanley, 'Contemplation of the Gospels', *TS* 29 (1968), 429-430.

In his God-filled universe...Jesus is a hidden mystery which breaks out from time to time, and for Mark these revelations do not require explanations.⁹⁴⁷

Instead, he sought to invest an ordinary, servant household life with a profound spiritual value as a source of hope for Rome's Christians. They knew Paul's words,

for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...that he might be the first-born of many brethren....Those whom he predestined, he also called...those called he also justified;...those whom he justified he also glorified (Rom 8:29-30; cf. 2 Cor 3:17-18).

Situating the transfiguration before the start of the way reinforces this perception. Mark repeatedly turns to the eschatological risen Jesus in which the Lord reigns through the power of the cross. The fact that Jesus' death had been willed by God takes

away the scandal of the Crucifixion, by putting the death of Jesus in God's predetermined plan, known and told ahead of time by Jesus himself and including the suffering of his disciples and compensatory glory to follow.⁹⁴⁸

From the Gospel's narrative viewpoint, Mark addresses house-church members. They know of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (1:1). Logically it is they who are rhetorically challenged to seek hope through the inherent glory in their servant discipleship. In their historical situation, they would be familiar with Paul's letter: 'we were buried...with him by baptism...as Christ was raised from the dead...we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom 6:4). Clues are scattered through the narrative that repeatedly suggest the replacement motif's present fruit (cf. 1:45; 2:10-12; 5:19-20; 7:24-30; 10:52), a strategy that presupposes that servant discipleship is a present reality in the risen Lord. It is illustrated in the 'hundredfold' (4:20) and the four parables in 4:21-32.

Rome's house-churches knew human weakness (cf. 4:13-19). But this human vulnerability is embedded in Jesus' glorified body, a Hellenist concept (8:38; 13:26; 14:61-62). In interpreting Stephen in Acts, Johnson argues that, with Jesus' resurrection and the power of his Holy Spirit in mind, we must understand the 'holy

⁹⁴⁶ Stanley, 'Contemplation', 432,

⁹⁴⁷ Hooker, *Mark*, 214; cf. Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 128; Anderson, *Mark*, 222; Gundry, *Mark*, 439-40.

⁹⁴⁸ Gundry, *Mark*, 457.

place' in terms of a house-church group,⁹⁴⁹ rather than a physical shrine. Now, the Lord's proclamation of the Good News becomes theirs (1:45; 5:19-20; 6:6b-13; 7:36-37); they share in Jesus' intimacy with his Father and his brethren (9:37; 10:29-31). This study holds that Mark sums up these truths in the title 'Lord'.

Apart from the Son of Man sharing his crucified/risen humanity with each Christian, the present reality of the glorified Son of Man also leads logically to an identification of the disciple as one within the glory of the Lord. This is a restatement of the basis for hope among Rome's Christians. If Mark's ripped curtain accentuates the climactic revelation of Jesus' identity on Calvary in the centurion's witness, he centres this apocalyptic revelation in Jesus' broken humanity on the cross. In the light of the resurrection, this is a reality to which a tortured humanity could relate in Jesus, the Lord.

A further element in clarifying Jesus' presence and identity as the risen Lord of the house, our next focus is on the third motif the relationship of the term 'Son of Man' to the titles, 'Son of David' and 'Lord'. Matera argues that to treat the Davidic pericope accurately (12:35-37), we must appreciate the import of both titles within the christological thrust of the whole narrative.⁹⁵⁰

Anderson underlines the early Church's stress on Ps 110:1 in the Davidic pericope as the basis of Christian faith. He comments that,

Ps. 110:1 is one of the most widely used OT testimonies in the whole NT. The early Church related it to Jesus' victory and exaltation after Easter (e.g. Heb 5:6; Ac. 2:34f; 1 C15:25), his taking his seat at the right hand of God (Ac. 2:30; Heb. 1:3; Col. 3:1), and no doubt Mark regarded 35b-37a as an indicator of the heavenly Lordship of the Christ who on his way in lowliness to his passion could not be explained in purely Davidic categories.⁹⁵¹

Hooker too insists that using the Aramaic phrase (for Lord) in 1 Cor 16:22 illustrates how Jesus was always Lord among first century Christians.⁹⁵² But the basic question lies in Jesus' 'David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?' (12:37a). Mark does not

⁹⁴⁹ Johnson, *Acts*, 135; cf. Brown, *Introduction*, 295.

⁹⁵⁰ Matera, 'What are they saying?' 24-29.

⁹⁵¹ Anderson, *Mark*, 285.

regard this correction as a repudiation of Davidic messiahship but he exposes a mystery hidden in the affirmation that the crowd could not be expected to solve (12:37b). But Smith offers a way forward: the titles, 'Lord' and 'Son of David' answer the house-church's ability to distinguish between pre- and post-resurrection eschatology for with

the benefit of hindsight the disciples would have recognised the eschatological significance of Jesus' earthly mission, but how was it possible to distinguish that from the eschatological expectation of the post-Easter faith? The answer was to regard Jesus in his earthliness as the son of a mortal - namely David - but Christ in his transcendent glory as Lord.⁹⁵³

Yet to whom is this rhetorical question addressed? Mark couples the 'crowd' (35 times) with the related 'whoever' and 'anyone' who are invited to follow the Son of Man on his way to Calvary (8:34-35). It is arguable that Mark anticipates that his house-churches' 'servants' will sense themselves included in the 'great crowd' who heard him gladly' (12:37b). They constitute the real audience. Matera accepts that it is correct to set the titles - 'Lord' and 'Son of David' - in the servant/way of Jesus for Mark's house-churches (1:3b; 8:31).⁹⁵⁴ Juel agrees, holding that the contradiction between the two titles can be resolved only

if the Son of David is exalted to the right hand of God - only if the Messiah, according to the Christian view, is raised from the dead. Jesus, the one, who died as "King of the Jews", was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God. He is thus both the **Son of David** and the one David calls **Lord**. Only if Jesus is the crucified and risen Christ can the alleged scriptural contradiction be explained.⁹⁵⁵

Appreciating this necessity, Mark designates Jesus as the Servant/Lord at the very start of his Gospel (1:2-3; cf. 10:45; Isa 42:1-7). Marcus recognises that 'your way' in 1:2 and the 'way' of the Lord form a parallelism, 'since it is Mark himself who has prefaced 1:2 to 1:3 and eliminated the phrase 'before you' from the end of 1:2.'⁹⁵⁶ (cf. Mal 3:1). From the context, though, it is clear that only one way is in question since John prepares 'your

⁹⁵² Hooker, *Mark*, 293.

⁹⁵³ Smith, 'Son of David Tradition', 535.

⁹⁵⁴ Matera, *What are they Saying?*, 18-20.

⁹⁵⁵ Juel, *Mark*, 171.

⁹⁵⁶ Marcus, *Way*, 37.

way' (of Jesus) which John next designates as the 'way of the Lord' (1:3). Thus, 'a close connection between Jesus and the "Lord" (as servant) is implied by 1:2-3'.⁹⁵⁷

The term 'Lord' (11:3,9) is associated too with the climax to the servant/way narrative (10:45,52). Within three verses (11:1-3), Jesus enters Jerusalem and as Lord, he rejects the corrupt temple (11:3). Mark's construction strengthens the sense of Jesus' awareness of his lordly authority prior to the Davidic pericope (12:35-37). And in his outline of the features of the secret of the kingdom (4:11) in servant-selflessness within the house-church (11:22-12:34), the replacement theme has been presumed.

Thus, given the temple-replacement reality of the crucified/risen humanity of the Son of Man as Lord, Jesus exercises this exceptional authority 'now in this time' (10:30). It is an authority shown in forgiving sins (2:6-12), the replacement of the Sabbath (2:27-28) and bestowing life (5:21-43) apart from parousial judgment (8:38). That Mark accepts that Jesus is aware of this self-understanding is also clear in that the four questions that oppose this sense - and in which he demonstrates his authority as Lord (11:30; 12:14; 12:23; 12:28) - come from a power opposed to him in the temple (11:28; 12:14, 19, 28). In the fifth question, 'David himself calls him Lord; so how is he his son?' (12:37), the Markan Jesus himself poses the question from his own self-awareness as Lord. It is as the Lord of the house that the 'now' glorified Son of Man 'will come suddenly' (cf. 13:35; 13:26; 14:62).

The evangelist prepares the ground for his introduction of this Davidic theme. There is an initial sense of awe since, following Jesus' answers to the scribe (12:28-33), 'no one dared to ask him any questions' (12:34c). The preparatory scene is unsurprising since in his use of the clause 'sit at my right hand', Mark suggests that the figure so addressed, the majestic Son of Man, is invited to sit in the heavenly throne room. There, in that position, he rules 'in the midst of your enemies' (Psalm 110:2), wielding an

⁹⁵⁷ Marcus, *Way*, 38; cf. Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 77; K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 48.

authority that is presupposed (1:1) and shown in his victory over Satan in the desert (1:2-3,12-13; cf. 3:21-29) and in his exorcisms (1:26,34; 2:13-17; 3:11; 7:24-30). By it, he restores life (5:19-20,21-43), teaches (7:36-37; 9:28-29,33-41; 10:10-12) and vows eternal life for faithful disciples (10:29-30). The household forms the setting for these messianic works so the sense of ongoing joyful hope among his house-churches in the closing clause is anticipated in, ‘And the great throng heard him gladly’ (12:37b).

At 1:2-3 and 12:35-37, Mark separates Jesus and ‘the Lord’ (Yahweh), who, while distinct from Jesus, stands in an intimate union with him, a point symbolically expressed in Jesus sitting ‘at my right hand’ (12:36c). This aspect of Jesus’ identity and role is expressed in the discrepancy in the possessive pronouns in 1:2-3. If the differing, ‘your way’ and ‘his way’, illustrate the balanced closeness of Jesus to the Lord they also points to their distinctive identities (cf. 10:18,40; 13:32; 14:36; 15:34). In a relationship, where Jesus acts authoritatively as the Lord, he works powerfully (11:9). So in Jesus’

triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Mark’s readers will know...there is a deeper meaning to the crowd’s acclamation than they are aware of themselves. “Blessed is he who comes *in the name of the Lord!*” (11:9) is...an unwitting acknowledgment that his advent is a revelation of God himself.⁹⁵⁸

Should Jesus come as Lord to his temple, Mark carefully maintains the concept of the unity of God; it is foremost in 12:28-34 and 12:35-37. Verbal links (‘teacher’, ‘teaching’, and the repeated ‘Lord’) and their proximity unite the two sections and prepare for the interpretation of 12:35-37 when Jesus affirms the heart of the *Shema*, that there is one God (Deut 4:35; Isa 45:21). The combination of the Son of Man’s exalted status, balanced with subordination to God (Ps 110:1; 12:36c), is consonant with Mark’s overall Christology. He sustains the delicate balance between the one God and the Son of Man, yet it is in the Son of Man that the redemptive authority of God is active. It is as the Son of Man, the Lord, that God reigns through him (2:7,10; 12:36c).

The evangelist was also aware that the term ‘Son of David’ did not

⁹⁵⁸ Marcus, *Way*, 40.

communicate Jesus' full stature.⁹⁵⁹ In the Gospel, this title reflects a perception of Jesus not yet informed by the cross and the resurrection. Donahue adds that, taken by itself,

Mark 12:35-37 is the proclamation of the lordship of Jesus. Taken in the context of Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem, the passage serves as a reminder of the true identity of the one who will soon enter into his Passion and death. The mystery of the cross is part of Jesus' identity as Messiah and Lord.⁹⁶⁰

There is a down-playing of any triumphalism in Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, paradoxically it is not triumphant enough to reveal the type of lordly Messiah whom Mark wishes to portray in the risen Christ, the Lord (11:22-12:34; cf. 8:38; 13:26; 14:62). But the text offers no answer to Jesus' question. 'David himself calls him Lord; so how is he (David's) son? (12:37). Clearly the answer lies in a Christian appreciation of the full scope of Mark's use of the term Son of Man. As the crucified/risen Son of Man and Son of David, he sits at the Father's right hand. In the house, he exercises his lordly reign (cf. Dan 7:13; Ps 110:1). Mark's literary strategy strongly implies that the risen Lord acts as the *kurios* of the Old Testament, an identity first-century Christians endorsed. The term probably originated in the original Palestinian community for there is the source of all the Aramaic words in the Gospels. The personal pronoun corresponding to the suffix was dropped in Greek speaking house-churches. Thus the lordship of Jesus is expressed by the absolute *Kurios*.⁹⁶¹

In terms of the pericope, the Messiah must be the expected son of David. The scriptures say so - David calls him Lord. How can both be true? It is true in the Spirit's witness to the Son of David as Lord and true, only if the Messiah is raised from the dead as the crucified and risen Christ. Then we can explain the scriptural contradictions. Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God and from there he reigns in the house (12:36b). The heavenly dimension of the crucified/risen Son of Man is vital to Mark's christological thought. He cannot

⁹⁵⁹ Cf. Ps of Solomon, 17; Isa 9:6-7; 16:5; Jer 23:5; 30:8-9; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11.

⁹⁶⁰ Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 361.

⁹⁶¹ W. Foster and G. Quell, 'Kurios', in G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds), *Theological Dictionary of the*

let Jesus' messiahship be conclusively defined by the restrictive Davidic image....In questioning the adequacy of the Davidic image of the Messiah, the Markan Jesus points to divine Sonship and cosmic exaltation as the true horizons of the Messiah's identity...his messianic kingship is infinitely more secure than the short-lived rule of Simon and the other "messiahs", since it is not threatened but rather advanced when he and his followers are persecuted, arrested and driven to death.⁹⁶²

In the light of this resurrection motif, Mark would expect his addressees to understand the suggestiveness of Jesus' question to the crowd regarding the Davidic 'Lord' (12:37). It rounds off his description of the house of God in 11:22-12:34. In addition, by extending the post-resurrection viewpoint of the Lord in the Jerusalem narrative (11:1-21, 11:22-12:44), Mark depicts Jesus' dismissal not only of the temple but opposition to his teaching of the secret,⁹⁶³ a further source of hope.

In this study's view, the concept of Jesus, as the reigning Lord fits more logically into this context rather than the term 'Son of God'. Apart from 9:7 (to a very restricted group), this title is not stated explicitly from 1:11 to 15:39. Given that the risen Lord Jesus now shares in the power and authority of his Father by fidelity to his servant mission, it is an authority that justifies Mark's whole purpose in writing his Gospel. He offers hope to Rome's brutalised Christians; he stresses that their present traumatic path is glorious in their aligning their way with that of the selfless servant, now the Lord. This purpose demands that due weight be given to the *kurios* sign posts that Mark situates at critical moments in the narrative (cf. 1:2-3; 2:28; 5:19; 7:28; 11:3; 12:35; 13:36). It presupposes too the entire overlay of the replacement theme, how the Son of Man exercises his lordly power 'now in this time' (10:30) on behalf of his house-church members so as to coalesce his and their victorious obedience to their Father (3:31-35; 14:36; 3:35). The invitation, 'Sit at my right hand' (12:36) formally conveys this right to the glorified Lord to do so in the name of God (cf. 13:32-37). Marcus insists that an

New Testament, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Press, 1965), 1096.

⁹⁶² Marcus, *Way*, 150-151.

⁹⁶³ L.W. Hurtado, 'New Testament Christology: A Critique of Bousset's Influence', *TS* 40 (1979), 314-315; cf. H. Boers, 'Jesus and the Christian Faith: New Testament Christology Since Bousset's 'Kurios

unprecedentedly close relationship between Jesus and God is also implied by the way in which the OT citations parallel Jesus' "way" to the "way" of the Lord"...The close connection made by Mark between Jesus and "the Lord" is borne out by other passages in the Gospel (2:28; 11:3; 12:36-37) in which the term "lord" is used for Jesus. In all of these passages, to be sure, "lord" *could* be understood in its secular sense of "master" and the last of them *distinguishes* David's lord (=Christ) from *the* Lord, God....Mark, then, does not want simply to *identify* Jesus with "the Lord", even though he seems to think that the way of Jesus is the way of the Lord. Perhaps the best way of putting all these observations together is to say that, for him, where Jesus is acting, there God is acting.⁹⁶⁴

As well, Marcus argues that the redactional links of 12:28-32 to the Davidic pericope and then to the abuses suggested in 12:38-44 hint at a decisive opening to its fruition, beginning with his resurrection. He adds that

the fact that 12:35-37 is followed by the denunciation of the scribes points to its complete fulfillment at the parousia, when the scribes "will receive the greater condemnation" from God himself (12:40). For Mark, this divine judgment probably represents the final step in the realization of the scriptural prophecy that God will put the Messiah's enemies under his feet and thus bring the *Basileia tou Theou* into effective existence....Despite a modern reader's first impression of God's invitation to the Messiah to *sit*, the scene is anything but a static one. Rather, the assumption of the sitting position symbolizes an entry into power, a power which is already beginning to manifest itself in the submission of human and demonic opponents to the divine will embodied in Jesus, and which will become totally and publicly effective at the parousia.⁹⁶⁵

This power is now publicly manifesting itself in servant dedication in Rome's household groups, a power that already has borne fruit in the present hundredfold, which, in turn, reflects Jesus' role as the Lord of the house (13:35). Yet Mark balances the background sense of the Father's evaluative point of view with the Son of Man's dedication as the beloved servant/Son. There is no bitheism in Mark.

Finally, the concept of Jesus as Lord presupposes that he is the ongoing replacement motif: first, through the use of the title 'Lord' (2:28; 5:19-20; 7:28; 11:3; 12:35-37; 13:35-37) and second, by the zealous living of the gospel by Mark's contemporary Christians and outlined by the way's present fruit especially in the

Christos', *JBL* 89 (1970), 450-456.

⁹⁶⁴ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 147-148.

⁹⁶⁵ Marcus, *Way*, 136-137.

controversy and sower sections.⁹⁶⁶ It is seen in the logic inherent in the reality of the prophetic word of Jesus (1:9; 6:3), who states that ‘after my resurrection’ he ‘is going before’ the disciples in Galilee (14:28; 16:7). Included in that sense is the Spirit-guaranteed Davidic pericope that summarises and offers a focus for the Markan material on the new ‘house of prayer’ (11:22-12:37) through the theme of the reigning Lord. In the title ‘Lord’, Mark enshrines the human existential becoming of Jesus while challenging Rome’s Christians to see the union of their own becoming in his as Lord.

It is the ‘crowds’ (12:12) that form a narrative constant about Jesus. Mark addresses his query of the Lordship of Jesus to them (12:37b). This recurring rhetorical ploy⁹⁶⁷ indicates that this ‘whoever’ refers to the individual Christian in the ongoing ‘great crowd that heard him gladly’ (12:37b). Read post-resurrection, Mark alludes to first-century house-churches, for, at the time of the Gospel’s writing, Gentiles were entering the Church in increasing numbers.⁹⁶⁸ The Gospel invites Rome’s Christians and those about them in time to see or hear themselves called in the Markan ‘anyone’ who follows the crucified/risen Son of Man, the Lord along the way (10:52).

5. CONCLUSION

Chapter 6 centres on the reality of the visitation, rejection and replacement motif of a temple not made with hands. Jesus’ authoritative, symbolic replacement of the temple, begun at 1:16-20 and culminating at 11:1-12:37, is filled out in the detailed characteristics of the living house of prayer (11:22-12:37; cf. 14:58). It comprises those Christians in union with the Lord in Rome’s house-church groups, circa 67-69 CE. Christians enter this reality by living in the ‘secret of the kingdom’ by faith, prayer, charity and forgiveness expressed in servant-discipleship (1:2-3). In the crucial action on the cross, with Jesus identified as the Son of God (15:39), Mark uses the graphic imagery

⁹⁶⁶ Donahue, ‘Neglected Factor’, 583; cf. 1:45; 3:34-35; 4:21-34; 5:19-20; 7:28-30,36-37; 9:14-29,36-37; 10:28-31; 11:22-25; 13:33-37.

⁹⁶⁷ Cf. 1:37,45; 2:13,17; 3:13,35; 4:24,26; 6:34; 8:34-35; 9:35,37,41,50; 10:15,29; 13:10,37.

⁹⁶⁸ Anderson, *Mark*, 285.

of the temple's curtain to direct Christian faith to see God's presence in the crucified/risen humanity of Jesus the Lord who reigns in the house (12:36; cf. 4:11). Those who respond in faith and hope to Jesus' invitation to follow, live in the unity of God in a covenantal relationship in the reign of crucified/risen humanity of Jesus, the Lord of the house, under the metaphorical roof of Rome's Greco-Roman urban house.

The house motif plays an indispensable rhetorical role in effectively presenting the reality of the Lord's reign in the secret of the kingdom of God to Christians assembled in the complex of household communities of faith in Rome.

CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 1 argued the case for a Gospel from Rome, written during 67-69 CE and prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. We cited the pro-Rome evidence of Papias and the Fathers, plus the presence of Latinisms and Latin's influence in the story's grammatical structure and language and the necessity for the explanation of Aramaic words and phrases in the Gospel for a Gentile audience. These pro-Rome factors are bolstered by the secular, written evidence of the unsurpassed, brutal persecution of Christian house-churches by Nero in 64-65 CE. Arguments that favour a Galilean or Jordanian source for Mark lack documented proof of a specific community that knew sustained persecution as that suffered by Christians in Rome. These studies present no justification for the need to translate the instances of Aramaic language let alone explain the emergence of the Gospel's radical anti-Law stance from a presumably conservative, relocated Law-observant, Jewish Christian group from Jerusalem.

In Chapter 2, this study outlines how, due to philosophical and language reasons, the Greek speaking Hellenist Christian group in Jerusalem separated from the Hebrew Christian community in Jerusalem. And, because of their vigorous evangelising, Law-free and temple-free charter, they incurred the wrath of the Jews. Persecution ensued, forcing the Hellenist Christians to spread to nearby Gentile, urban centres such as Antioch and, finally, to Rome. We argued too that, in Rome, Law-free, Hellenist Christians first founded house-churches communities. They then sought out the synagogue Jewish groups as their first missionary field but the Jews found the Hellenists' Law-free gospel anathema. Internal friction ensued between the two groups that led finally to public disturbances. Wary of such civil unrest, Claudius finally issued his exile decree (51 CE), a move hastening the growth of Gentile-led, Hellenist Christian house-churches and their total separation from and rejection of anything Jewish, including the Mosaic Law.

Throughout the Gospel's first section (1:16-8:26), the Gospel clearly outlines how the house motif formed the constant setting for Jesus' messianic, authoritative power and healing in response to the key references to Christian faith in the house. Therefore, Chapter 3 describes how this outcome is sharpened by the initial spatial contrast of the household's response in faith (1:29-31) to the synagogue's negative reaction to the Lord's power and authority (1:21-28). Then Mark accentuates how, in the house, the risen Lord offers forgiveness (2:1-12), life (5:34-43) and communion with himself (7:24-30) as the glorified Son of Man. Earlier, following the Pharisees plan to kill Jesus (3:6), he moves to the seashore. Next, on the mountain (3:13-19), the Markan Jesus founds the new Israel and, significantly, immediately situates it in the house (3:20, 31-35). From this point on, we traced the Gentilisation and household focus of Jesus' messianic ministry in the house. The Pharisees' subsequent hardening hostility provides the backdrop that clarifies the intensifying of the inspection, judgment, rejection/replacement theme that Mark contrasts with positive responses in faith by the household groups.

In particular, in Chapter 4 our study traced Mark's literary strategy of combining the house motif with the initial call to Rome's Christians to take up the cross in faith and follow Jesus (8:33-34). During the way section (8:27-10:52), he creates an intimate association between Jesus' key servant teaching and the house motif - an obvious association since Christians lived the daily expression of their life in Christ in the relationships and service ideals in the spatial dimensions of a house-church group in Rome. It was stressed too how such domestic Christian servant teaching forms a vivid contrast to the patriarchal household ethics of the first century Greco-Roman culture.

The close connection in Mark between the house motif and the secret of the kingdom within was further stressed in Chapter 5. This is apparent as Mark's intensifying of the inspection and rejection/replacement themes with the heart of the

secret of the kingdom in his treatment of the temple. His approach climaxes in the Son of Man's victorious death on the cross, a fidelity that took the form of Jesus being the ultimate servant who came, not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. And, by using the cipher-like image of the torn curtain, Mark confronts Rome's Christians with the challenge to faith in the secret of the kingdom in the centurion's statement: 'In truth this man was the Son of God' (15:39). The Son of Man's crucifixion witnesses the extent of his dedication to the servant ideal in his broken and bruised humanity on the cross.

In Chapter 6, we asserted that, no sooner does Mark insist that the temple and its association with the Law's concept of ritual purity has figuratively died to its roots (11:21), than he defines the features of Markan service in the replacement house of prayer for all the nations (11:17). As our study has insisted throughout, Mark here reiterates the Christian necessity of faith in order to live the servant ideal in a house context, a faith that is linked to charity, forgiveness and communal harmony (11:22-25). We held too that the next five pericopes (11:27-12:37) parallel the controversies in 2:1-3:6. The first establishes the risen Lord's authority in the house-church (11:27-33); the second with the challenges inherent in servant discipleship (12:13-17) while the next reinforces faith in the gift of eternal life for the Christian disciple (12:18-27). The fourth (12:28-34) and fifth pericopes (12:35-37) describe the dynamic for a life of faith and the reality that the crucified Jesus, the Son of Man, is the victorious, risen Lord of the house (13:33-37).

This study affirms that Mark emphasises that it is in the Son of Man's becoming as the suffering servant with whom the Christian is invited to merge his following of the way/servant ideal (8:34-35). To make this configuration possible for the individual Christian, we argued that Mark reiterates three aspects of the Son of Man: first, the accent on Jesus' bodily resurrection so as to offer hope to persecuted house

communities in the tangible, yet glorified presence of Jesus of Nazareth's fellow-human becoming as the Son of David and glorified Lord. This is a becoming in which the Christian participates rather than attempting to resonate with the ethereal reality of Jesus as the Son of God. Rather, to find hope and fulfilment in servant discipleship in the risen Christ. Second, Mark thus emphasises the vulnerable Son of Man's human becoming with which the Markan disciples may configure their own fidelity to the Father's will as the vulnerable servant in the Christian household. Third, Mark therefore repeatedly returns to the house motif in order to situate there the very human, suffering and risen Jesus of Nazareth, now triumphant as Lord of the house in the community's midst (13:33-37). It is in him in hope that the Christian lives and moves and has his being.

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