

## EYES (AND EARS) ON THE PRIZE JUDGING THE JESUS-EXPERIENCE OF MARK'S CHARACTERS

### *Introduction*

Reading the Gospel of Mark is a lot like watching a target-shoot. The reader is shown the bull's eye in the prologue and watches as the characters succeed at identifying and responding to Jesus, or miss the mark entirely. Jesus is identified as the promised, baptized, and tested divine son in the prologue and, though the characters in the Gospel are not privy to this information, their responses to what they see and hear of Jesus are judged against it. The disciples miss the mark; they are confused and afraid. Likewise, Jesus' opponents react to Jesus with hostility; they accuse Jesus, plot against him, torture, kill, and mock him. The exemplary group within Mark's Gospel are those who hear about Jesus, see what he is doing and respond in faith.

These conclusions are only preliminary observations. They are meant to define a narrative pattern of characterization within the Gospels upon which the socio-political make-up of each character group may be analyzed. However, narrative criticism has yet to apply a defined set of criteria for the division of Mark's characters into cohesive groups. These conclusions are based upon narrative critical theory,<sup>1</sup> and especially the assumption that the Gospel of Mark is an

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<sup>1</sup> There have been a number of studies that have examined Markan narrative characterization, many of which note the importance that Mark gives to his minor characters. For example, Williams' monograph on the subject makes a case for the Minor characters of Mark's Gospel (Williams, *Followers*). Though this particular work has done much to develop individual minor characters in Mark's narrative, it falls short when it comes time to organize Mark's minor characters into a cohesive group, with a cohesive message, nor has he provided sufficient criteria to measure his character's responses to Jesus. In a similar vein, Malbon argues that the minor characters represent "whoever hears or reads the Gospel of Mark" (Malbon, "Disciples," 104). That is, the minor characters in the Gospel are not representative of a single cohesive unit, but are simply stand out members of the crowd, Malbon's term of choice for addressing the minor characters as a whole, though she does seem to have a criteria for characterization, which relies on Jesus' actions toward them, and by Mark's use of "follow" (Danove, *Rhetoric*, 107–109). Malbon, Danove, and Tannehill are quick to point out that Mark characterizes the disciple as models of both success and failure (Malbon, "Disciples," 104; Danove, *Rhetoric*, 126; Tannehill, "Disciples," 398). Each of them recognizes the disciples' lack of understanding as a marker of their failure. However, they each also believe that Mark meant to portray them positively by reminding the reader that they followed him. Danove is the most thorough in this aspect. He traces a series of positive and negative vocabulary as it applies to the disciples, and claims that several verbs of motion shed positive light on the responses of the disciples. (Danove, *Rhetoric*, 91). (Danove, *Rhetoric*, 98; c.f. Malbon, "Disciples 107–109; Tannehill, "Disciples," 396). In Mark's case, the question that critics ask is, "with whom should the implied reader identify, and how does Mark shape his narrative to compel a specific response from the

independent, purposefully composed document, with its own self-defined plot, structure, and meaning.<sup>2</sup> Within this narrative framework, Mark organizes his plot around character development and, to some degree, setting. The characters in Mark's Gospel provide the way for Mark's plot to move forward. As a narrative reading of Mark, this study will recognize that it is Mark's goal to influence his reader to believe his message about Jesus, and to have the reader proclaim the message about Jesus. This goal is accomplished by setting up a series of episodes in which the reader can watch and listen as characters who have seen and heard Jesus respond to him. That is, the readers are observers of the characters in the same way that the characters are observers of Jesus. Through the development of his narrative, Mark introduces his readers to Jesus positively, and then introduces characters who respond to Jesus positively, and also characters who do not understand Jesus, and finally those who reject Jesus. This paper will trace the narrative development of several character episodes in order to show their rhetorical effect on the implied reader, and then group those episodes and characters based on their responses.

However, in order to confidently group Mark's characters this study will rely on the discourse analytical theory of Cynthia Long Westfall, and especially as it pertains to semantic chaining and lexical cohesion. This particular theory recognizes the lengths to which readers will go to read a text coherently.<sup>3</sup> With this in mind, Westfall asserts that repetition within a

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reader" (this is evident in Danove's insistence on measuring the positive or negative impact of Mark's vocabulary [*Rhetoric*, 10–11])? The question of implied reader and rhetorical impact is of far more importance than our present one. However, there has yet to be a satisfying delineation of character groupings within the Gospel of Mark, and this is a necessary first step in answering the question "with whom should the reader identify?"

<sup>2</sup> Rhoads observation that the Gospel of Mark is composed of "remarkably whole cloth" is typical of this assumption (Rhoads, "Jesus," 343; c.f. Dewey, "Tapestry," 224; c.f. Rhoads, "Narrative," 264–285; cf. "Without a doubt [the Synoptic Gospels] are unliterary writings. They should not and cannot be compared with 'literary' works... [Their] composers are only to the smallest extent authors" [Dibelius, *Tradition*, 2–3]). The Gospels may well have depended on source material, but the composite materials of the Gospel are irrelevant for this study. Mark as author or redactor, has masterfully composed a literary work. The question here is 'what story does the Gospel (the final form) tell, and how does that story impact its readers?'

<sup>3</sup> That is, similarities within a text exist to promote uniformity (cohesiveness) of meaning in a given text. Quoting Halliday and Hasan, Westfall asserts that "people 'will go to enormous lengths' to interpret something that ought to be a text as compete and intelligible" (Halliday and Hasan, *Cohesion*, 54; in Westfall, *Hebrews*, 36). Applied, we

discourse, such as the Gospel of Mark,<sup>4</sup> is an indicator of cohesiveness. In cohesive discourse, related terms should be identified with one another, and interpreted through each other.<sup>5</sup> This theory will be applied to the reactions from Mark's characters, and will show three repetitious patterns of language; those of faith, misunderstanding, and rejection.

Further, recognizing the individuality of the narrative, this study will make conservative use of redaction criticism. The intention here is not, as classical redaction critics have endeavored to do, to divide the source material or *kerygma* from Mark's editorial material.<sup>6</sup> Both redaction criticism and narrative criticism recognize authorial intent and so redaction criticism will be used to place Mark's individually formed Gospel into synoptic context, and view Mark's individual emphasis in sharper relief. Both narrative criticism and discourse analysis acknowledge that there is a great deal of subconscious communication that occurs in the reader-narrative relationship.<sup>7</sup>

Making use of narrative criticism in this manner, this study will first examine Mark as a whole, beginning with the prologue (1:1–13). It will be shown that the prologue quickly and definitively describes Jesus for the implied reader. The prologue is the truth about Jesus, and the criterion for membership in the Kingdom of God (1:14–15). However, since the characters in the Gospel are not privy to the same introduction to Jesus that the readers are given, this study will establish that Mark groups them based on how they react to what they see and hear. It will then attempt to produce a narrative characterization of three distinct groups in Mark's gospel, using linguistic criteria. It will show that each group is distinguished from the others with specific and

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understand that similarities in the description of character's reactions to Jesus are quite likely intentional by the author, and form the skeleton of Mark's structure. Further, they would most certainly have been noticed (as the foundation of cohesive discourse) by Mark's readers.

<sup>4</sup> Though Westfall's work is on the letter to the Hebrews (Westfall, *Blessed*; idem, *Hebrews*).

<sup>5</sup> That is, individual words within a given discourse should be constrained to the meaning that coheres to the meaning of related words in the same discourse (Westfall, "Blessed"; Idem, *Hebrews*; cf. Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*).

<sup>6</sup> See Bultmann, *Kerygma*, 39; in Ladd, *Theology*, 355; Dibelius, *Tradition*, 3; Wrede, *Secret*.

<sup>7</sup> see Fowler, "Reader," 5–23; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, 209; Rhoads et. al., *Mark*, 39–40; Syreeni, "Peter" 114.

cohesive language, specifically as it pertains to the emotions and reactions of a group to what they see and hear of Jesus. That is, Mark describes the disciples' reaction in terms of fear, doubt, a lack of understanding, and a lack of faith. He describes the reaction of Jerusalem's religious community in terms of accusation, testing, argument, conspiracy, threats of violence and, violence. Finally, he describes the exemplary characters in terms of faith.

In sum, Mark has three distinct vocabulary lists, which describe the responses of three distinct character groups. There is a small problem in that only two of these groups are named. The language of doubt and fear is descriptive of the response of the disciples.<sup>8</sup> Further, Mark directly attributes violence, threats, testing, and accusation to characters associated with Jerusalem; namely Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, Elders, Chief Priests, the High Priest, and, collectively, the members of the Sanhedrin. However, the exemplars are not named in Mark's Gospel. The group is undoubtedly present in the Gospel. It is held together with the language of faith, though its constituents are often minor characters who appear only long enough to interact with Jesus, and then disappear from Mark's narrative.<sup>9</sup> As such, this study will define the relevant vocabularies for each of the three groups and provide the reader with a test case for each. This will be followed by a brief excurses exploring the problematic characterization of the centurion at the foot of the cross, and solutions that this study might supply.

### 1. *Larger Thematic Structures in the Gospel of Mark.*

<sup>8</sup> The disciples are introduced by name, and the reader is told that they followed Jesus (1:16–20; 2:14; 3:16–19). From this point onward, they are referred to by name (1:29; 3:16–19; 8:32; 9:2,5,38;10:28,35,41; 11:21; 13:3; 14:10, 29,31,33,37,43,45,54,66–72), and are called μαθητής (2:16,18,23;3:7; 4:34;5:31; 6:1, 45; 7:2,5,17; 8:1,4,6,10,27,34; 9:18; 10:10,13,24,46;11:1,14; 12:43;13:1;14:12,–13,16), δώδεκα (3:14;4:10; 6:7; 9:35;10:32;11:11; 14:10,17,32;14:43), ἀποστόλος (6:30; though this is likely a reminder to the reader of ὀπισθέλκειν in 6:7). It is important to recognize, however, that “following” Jesus is not an indication of characterization (i.e. those who follow are not all disciples). Mark's use of denotes exposure to Jesus, rather than a response to him (see, for example, 3:7–10).

<sup>9</sup> Williams argues that these minor characters constitute a major character group (Williams, *Characters*, 30). However, Williams (*Characters*), Malbon (“Fallible”), Rhoads et. al. (*Mark*), and Danove (*Rhetoric*) insist on evaluating every character not explicitly labelled a disciple among a common minor characters group, who are evaluated both positively and negatively, thereby missing the nuances of Mark's characterization, and the character groups that arise out of patterned responses to Jesus.

It is the goal of this paper to associate distinct character groups within the Gospel of Mark with specific lists of vocabulary, which describe their reactions to Jesus. It will prove that the disciples misunderstand Jesus, Jesus' opponents accuse, question and kill Jesus, and the exemplary characters respond to what they have seen and heard in faith. As Danove has shown, the language associated with Mark's characters is, by no means, limited to faith, hostility, and misunderstanding. However, this study will not (as Danove has done) measure the character's responses by Mark's use of these in relation to them. A narrative is a complex web of words and ideas. This study will argue that verbs of motion, proximity and transmission (and especially ἀκούω, κηρύσσω, and ἀκολουθέω) are not indicators of the implied author's values, nor are they used rhetorically to urge the reader to emulate them. Rather, they are the means by which the characters in the Gospel are exposed to Jesus. As such, this section will explore Jesus' identity as it is developed in the prologue, as the standard to which the characters responses are compared, and the transmission of the message of Jesus throughout the Gospel.

### 1.1. *Jesus' Identity in the Markan Prologue (1:1–13, 14–15).*

There is a sharp division between the prologue (1:1–13) and the rest of the Gospel of Mark. The prologue offers the reader a foundation for understanding Jesus. Jesus is described as the Son of God, the Christ (1:1), and the fulfillment of Jewish expectation (1:2–8).<sup>10</sup> His sonship

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<sup>10</sup> Mark portrays Jesus as the one prophesied by Elijah and the prophets. In 1:3, he is plainly portrayed as Isaiah's coming Lord. Though introduced as Isaiah, the first half of the prophetic quotation is from Malachi. Here, ἄγγελος refers directly to Elijah (LXX Mal 3:22) which hints at a connection between John, the referent of ἄγγελος in Mark 1:2, and Elijah. One should also note the commonalities between Elijah in 4 *Kgdms* 1:8 (ζώνην δερματίνην περιεζωσμένον τὴν ὀσφύν αὐτοῦ), and John in Mark 1:5–6 (cf. Öhler, "Elijah," 461–76; contra Guelich, *Mark*, 21; Joynes, "Elijah," 62). This connection is confirmed in Mark 9:13, and likely alluded to in Mark 16:5. Some have argued that the man in the white robe is meant to remind the reader of the young man in 14:51–52 (Hester makes the connection based on the repetition of the term νεανίσκος, and his estimation that the first instance (14:51) contributes little to Mark's story without such connection [Hester, "Inconclusion," 72–73] However, there is little obvious connection between the two characters [contra Hester, "Inconclusion"] and fuller comparisons to be drawn. It should also be noted that the first instance of νεανίσκος contributes a great deal to its immediate context without later qualification. That is, the young man carries Mark's vivid depiction of the fear of the disciples to a new extreme, only to be outdone by Peter's dramatic denial [14:66–72]). It is likely that the man in the tomb is a Markan conflation of John the Baptist and Elijah. As discussed above, the two are conflated in Mark. Further, John's death

is affirmed by a heavenly sign at his baptism (9–11), and his Spirit-testing demonstrates that he is, in every way, obedient to God (12–13).<sup>11</sup> This information is strictly for the benefit of the implied reader.<sup>12</sup> It is necessary for the reader to understand who Jesus is from the outset.

Without this information, the reactions of those who hear about Jesus has little meaning, and the reader might simply associate with the conclusions of a preferred social group. The prologue reveals the truth about Jesus to the reader, and the reader is then free to watch as various characters attempt to interpret what they have seen or heard about Jesus. The relationship between the reactions of character groups and to the standard set in the prologue provides the reader with the tools that he/she needs to choose which group that he/she will emulate.

### 1.2. *The Kingdom of God is Near: Verbs of Proximity, Motion, and Transmission*

Jesus' ministry begins, appropriately, with a change in scenery. After his wilderness temptation, he moves into Galilee and begins preaching (1:14). The content of his message is of no small significance. He claims that “Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ” (1:15). From the outset, two things are clear. Though the characters in the Gospel have no knowledge of Jesus' divine calling, baptism, etc., Jesus is now in their geographical proximity,<sup>13</sup>

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(6:14–29) affords him a place with the prophets, such as a Moses and Elijah (cf. 9:5) He is the first prophet of the resurrected Jesus (16:6–7; cf. 1:2, 7–8) and bears striking resemblance to the prophets on the mount of transfiguration (16:6; cf. 9:3). It is likely that Mark is underscoring the importance of the message given to the women by the use of an Elijah/John the Baptist prophet figure.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Henten, “Testing,” 363–64; Gibson, “Temptation,” 3–34; France, *Mark*, 84 (review Old footnote to make your own argument).

<sup>12</sup> cf. Hooker, *Mark*, 16; France, *Mark*, 58–59; Williams, *Followers*, 89–90. Smith makes a claim for three distinct forms of prologue in ancient literature; the preface, the dramatic prologue, and the incipit (Smith, “Narrative,” 1–9). Though it is clear that Mark does possess an incipit (1:1), one cannot typify the prologue (1:2–13) with confidence by any of Smith's categories. Though arguments have been made that Mark is a drama (Bilzekian, *Gospel*; Smith, “Tragedy”), and the there are certain affinities between the dramatic prologue form and Mark's prologue (c.f. Smith, “Narrative,” 3–4), it is unlikely that Mark introduces his reader to information about Jesus for the purposes of dramatic irony or comic relief. The Markan prologue does introduce the reader to information about Jesus that the characters are not privy to, but his intent is rhetorical, and he intends to present characters who experience Jesus (as the reader experiences the characters) and understand what they have not been told.

<sup>13</sup> The Gospel begins with the note that Jesus is among his listeners (in Galilee [1:14]), and by noting the proximity of the Kingdom of God to his audience, the Gospel's characters (ἤγγικεν; c.f. Porter, “Jericho,” 125–38).

and he is preaching the Kingdom of God. Mark is prolific in his use of verbs of motion,<sup>14</sup> and includes one at the beginning of every episode in which he encounters a new character. By moving Jesus, the disciples, exemplars, and Jerusalem's envoys about, Mark is moving the story of Jesus about and providing more characters with the opportunity to interact with Jesus.

For example, after coming into Galilee, Jesus begins to preach the message of the Kingdom of God (1:14–15). Many who are healed by Jesus go from him and preach what he has done for them.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, many, having heard about Jesus, come to him to be healed. In the case of Bartimaeus, Jesus has come into and is leaving Jericho when Bartimaeus hears that Jesus is nearby and cries out a messianic title, hoping to get his attention (10:46).

Mark does not intend for his readers to evaluate characters based on proclamation.<sup>16</sup> Rather, used alongside verbs of motion, the language of proclamation is part of the Markan rhetoric. Mark groups his characters based on their response to what they hear about Jesus, and the readers are measure the characters' responses based on the knowledge that they received in the prologue. The language of proclamation, used with verbs of motion, is a tool built into the text to explain how each of the characters came to be faced with Jesus. Further, it explains how every character experiences Jesus, though their reactions to him vary.

### 1.3. "Seeing" and "Hearing" as evidence for Jesus

<sup>14</sup> ἔρχομαι, εἰσέρχομαι, ἀπέρχομαι x 138; though εἰσπορεύομαι is occurs only 8x (it is interesting, as a text critical note, that the longer ending of Mark uses only πορεύομαι); cf. Best, "Discipleship," 326..

<sup>15</sup> There is some controversy over meaning here, since Jesus often warns people to be silent (e.g. 1:44;7:36, 8:30). The result, in each case, is the same; they proclaim what Jesus has done for them freely (1:45;7:36; c.f. 5:19–20). Only the disciples obey Jesus' command to stay silent, and those associated with them stay silent when they are commanded to speak (16:7–8). Many recognize ties between the disciples' fear and misunderstanding, and that of the women at the tomb (See esp. Miller, *Women*, 178–81; Malbon, "Fallible," 44; Tannehill, "Disciples," 404; Danove, *Rhetoric*, 134–35; Williams, *Minor*, 198). It would be a misunderstanding to claim that proclaiming Jesus' works, despite prohibitions from Jesus, portrays certain characters negatively (so Danove, *Rhetoric*, 62, 134–35). Far from that, Mark is simply building the idea of an unstoppable Gospel the reader's minds, and providing the means by which many could hear about Jesus and respond to him. Hence "the messianic secret" is not a theological argument for the resurrection (see Wrede, *Secret*), but a rhetorically formed dyke that is incapable of holding back the Gospel message for those who believe.

<sup>16</sup> 16:9 is not an exception. The evaluative language applied to the women is that of fear.

By and large, the characters in Mark's Gospel experience Jesus through what they see and hear. For each character group, the language of seeing and hearing has different applications, but each group hears Jesus' words, or words spoken about Jesus, and sees him in action.<sup>17</sup> Mark's telling of the parable of the sower is illustrative of this (4:1–12). There is very little **teaching material in Mark**, and so it is striking that Mark would include a parable in his discourse that contains repeated reference to seeing and hearing the Gospel, and the fruit of seeing and hearing that certain defined groups bear. The parabolic language presents four sets of propositions using the metaphoric referent “seeds,” the repeated verbal idea “fell” and a series of metaphoric goals, including a road, rocks, thorny ground, and good soil. The parable is punctuated with “seeing” and “hearing” language (4:9, 12). In the explanation, each of the three parabolic ideas is given actual semantic equivalents. The seed finds its semantic equivalent in the word,<sup>18</sup> and the verbal idea illustrated in seeds falling is actualized in the hearing of the word (4:15, 16, 18, 20). The message here is clear; each will experience Jesus' message through what they hear about him, and each will be measured by their response.

This particular theme in Mark is not limited to parabolic language. Both ἀκούω and εἶδον are used descriptively of the characters' experience of Jesus throughout the Gospel. For example,

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<sup>17</sup> A search for derivatives of ἀκούω in the Gospel showed 44 instances. Only five of those had no bearing on the present study. Similarly, a search for εἶδον, revealed 34 instances in the Gospel of Mark, of which 25 related to the characters' experience of Jesus.

<sup>18</sup> In Mark “the word” is not John's “word become flesh,” (Jn. 1:1–5, 14–18) nor anything so complex. The *logos* here is the message (the words) that Jesus has spoken; the message of the kingdom (Mk. 1:14–15; see France, *Mark*, 122, 204; contra Taylor, *Gospel*, 259). Rather, the content of Jesus' teaching (which is sparse in Mark, but at hand in the parables[4:1–34]) is the only referent that *logos* requires. **Perkinson's article is illustrative of the importance of this claim.** He has assumed that Mark uses *logos* as a divine word (in character, and not just as the result of its speaker) calling it “the logos of God,” and then proceeds to argue that the saying (*logos*) of the Syro-Phoenician woman represents a God-saying that does not come from the mouth of Jesus, which seems to represent a body of salvation theology that is separated from Jesus' teaching (Perkinson, “Caananitic,” 61–85). He is correct to note the significance of the Syro-Phoenician woman's words, and her contribution to Mark's salvation theology. However, it is not useful (nor necessary) to separate the woman's words from those of Jesus in the narrative. *Logos* here is not “the divine word” by semantic convention, but by content. The passage immediately follows a discourse in which Jesus declares things typically rejected by his religious opponents clean (cf. 7:19). **One might argue that the woman's word is evidence that she is, in fact, clean.**

Jesus' opponents (2:16; 7:2), and the exemplary characters (2:12; 5:6,14,16,22; 6:33; 9:15; 12:28) both experience Jesus through what they see. The disciples' situation is slightly more complicated. Mark uses ἀκούω and εἶδον with Jesus as the goal in reference to the disciples at points (6:38,49,50; 9:8–9; 11:20; 16:5). However, having followed Jesus, the disciples are in near constant proximity to Jesus (1:20,29; 2:14–15,23; 3:7,14–19; 4:10, 34–36; 5:22,37; 6:1, 35; 7:17; 8:1, 27,34; 9:2,14,30–31; 10:10,13,28,32,46; 11:1,14; 12:43; 13:1; 14:10, 12, 32). That is, they are ever-present witnesses to his actions. The characters in Mark's Gospel see and hear what Jesus is doing, and they are grouped based on their responses. Jesus disciples, who are in frequent proximity to him, doubt and misunderstand his actions. Jesus' opponents see and hear about Jesus, and react with hostility, threats and accusations. Certain minor characters, however, recognize Jesus immediately by his actions and respond to him with faith. In the remainder of this study, I will demonstrate the uniformity with which Mark categorizes his characters' responses to Jesus, the faith of the exemplars, the doubt of the disciples, and the hostility of Jesus' opponents.

## *2. The Verdict: Linguistically Separating Narrative Character Groups*

Jesus began his ministry preaching the message of the Kingdom of God, in Mark. However, the realization of this Kingdom is portrayed in terms of healings and exorcisms, and very rarely proclamation.<sup>19</sup> In Mark, this role is filled by minor characters, who have seen and experienced Jesus and now ensure that many others hear about him (1:28,45; 2:12; 5:14,20; 7:36–37; 8:27–28). In the discussion that follows, the responses and interpretations of Mark's characters, upon hearing Jesus, or hearing of Jesus, will be analyzed for patterns of semantic repetition. It will show that Mark groups his characters based on their responses to what they

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<sup>19</sup> There is a notable divide between the preaching implied in 1:14–15 and the healings and exorcisms that characterize Jesus' early ministry (see esp. O' Donnell, "Strongman," 169).

hear about Jesus and that there are three immediately distinguishable groups; the disciples, Jesus' opponents, and a third set of exemplary characters. This study will demonstrate the cohesive vocabulary used to describe the reactions of group members. It will then attempt a narrative reading for a test case within each larger group to corroborate the findings of the broader semantic examination.

### 2.1 *The Disciples in Mark's Gospel*

We have already seen that Mark uses semantic and referent chaining in parabolic language and its explanation. This section will apply similar theory to the Gospel as a whole in order to find patterns in language use. It will reveal that there are striking semantic similarities in the way that different character groups respond to Jesus. It should be noted that these conclusions do not depend on the isolation of one or two synonyms that are repeated without variance throughout the Gospel. Though synonyms will appear, we must acknowledge that Mark's Gospel is a narrative, and not a simple list of vocabulary. Thus, Mark's portrayal of characters will be descriptive, and not technical.

That said, Mark's portrayal of the disciples is surprisingly uniform. Fairly early in the Gospel, Jesus' actions elicit fear from the disciples, and he questions their lack of faith (4:40). They are afraid upon seeing Jesus walk on water (6:50), and are afraid for their lives as they approach Jerusalem (10:32). The disciples abandon Jesus, presumably out of fear, upon his arrest (14:50–52). The disciples fear, in this instance, is dramatized in the story of a man so eager to escape that he abandoned his coverings and fled naked from Jesus (14:52). Even those women who were close to him, upon hearing the news of the resurrection, are silent out of fear (16:8).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Some critics point to the intent of these women to embalm Jesus' body as the first sign of their misunderstanding. Munro argues that this misunderstanding is rooted in Jesus' pre-crucifixion anointing (Munro, "Women," 239). Dowd may be interpreted this way when she notes that "The women disciples' conversation on the way to the tomb suggests that resurrection is the last thing on their minds" (Dowd, *Mark*, 167; cf. Dowd and Malbon, "Death," 297).

Jesus frequently questions the disciples' faith and understanding. Jesus questions their faith when they fear death on the Sea of Galilee (4:40). The disciples are afraid at the stilling of the sea (6:45–52) because they do not understand what they have seen and heard (6:52; c.f. 8:4,21). They are unable to perform miracles, because they lack faith (8:18–19). Mark notes that the disciples lack understanding of Jesus' parables (7:17–23), question his teaching (10:10–16), and misunderstand the suffering implicit in Jesus' ministry (10:32–45).

Mark underscores Peter's lack of understanding by noting that Jesus' message, in plain speech,<sup>21</sup> was rebuked by Peter (8:32). Peter's final appearance tells a dramatic story. With Jesus' execution impending, following his arrest (14:52), the disciples' lack of faith has climaxed in all out denial (15:66–72).<sup>22</sup> Mark's portrayal of the disciples is consistent. Time and again, they misunderstand what they see and hear. The disciples are perpetually present with Jesus, see each and every exorcism, healing, and feeding and are still afraid when they are beset with new dangers, and still lack faith when they are called on to represent Jesus.

### 2.1 Test Case: *The Feeding of the Five-Thousand* (6:33-44).

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Though Shiner does not make specific note of this, she claims that Joseph of Arimathea, who is usually portrayed as a hero, is painted with the same brush. His attempt to provide Jesus with a dignified place for burial shows his misunderstanding of Jesus' resurrection (Shiner, "Ambiguous," 3–22). However, when the present criteria are applied to his story, especially as it compares to the man with the withered hand, it seems that Joseph's actions align him with Jesus, especially in light of his allegiances to the body who condemned Jesus to death, and his new found allegiance to Jesus. As for the women, they have followed Jesus to the cross (15:40–41); that is, a little longer than the disciples with whom they are characterized. However, their visit to the tomb brings them within proximity of the final miracle of the Gospel and, like the disciples before them, they misunderstand and are afraid (16:8)

<sup>21</sup> It is likely that Mark's use of *παρησία* suggests that his speech should instill understanding (*ἀκούω*) in the disciples. Though the reader will soon discover that this is not the case.

<sup>22</sup> It is not of small significance that Peter's first and last appearances are semantically connected. At Peter's first appearance, he is commanded to follow Jesus (*Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου*), and complies immediately (*ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ* [1:17–18]). In Peter's final episode, he denies Jesus with heightening emphasis (*ἠρνήσατο* [14:68]; *ἠρνεῖτο* [14:70]; *ὁ δὲ ἤρξατο ἀναθεματίζειν καὶ ὀμνῆσαι ὅτι Οὐκ οἶδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον ὃν λέγετε* [14:71]). What is most interesting are the verbal connections between *ἀκολουθέω* in Peter's calling and *ἠρνεόμαι* in his denial. The semantic connections would be intuitive to a native reader; the one suggests adherence as a follower, and the other can suggest the dissolution of that relationship. Louw and Nida, for example, noted their semantic relationship (*Louw and Nida*, 36.31,43). This is no simple convergence of possible meanings of distantly related terms. These are two terms, applied to the same character, in diametrically opposite situations and accordingly, with diametrically opposite (related by direct intentional opposition) meanings.

We have seen, so far, an overwhelming body of semantic evidence that suggests that the disciples are characterized in Mark by doubt, fear, and misunderstanding. In what follows, two such stories will be read narrative critically, in order to put Mark's characterization into narrative perspective.

The first of these is the story of the feeding of five-thousand. It is the first of two such stories in the Gospel, and is closely related to the story of Jesus walking on water. The story begins when Jesus commissions the disciples to a task. The disciples are sent out as envoys from Jesus and instructed that they had authority over unclean spirits (6:7). What is more, they are to embark on their journey completely empty-handed; they are not even allowed to take bread (6:8). This command is redoubled with a short saying on the rules of their engagement, and the provision that they should expect (6:9–11). The reader is placated with the knowledge that things are going well for the disciples with the brief note that demons were being exorcised and many sick were being healed (6:12–13). Apparently, the disciples were fed sufficiently to go about their work. Mark is not specific as to how long the healing mission lasts, but Mark has enough time to tell to another story while the disciples go about their work (6:14–29).

Mark differentiates from Luke and Matthew in reporting that the disciples' successes, when Herod hears of it, set events in motion that will lead to John's execution (Mt 14:3–12; Lk 3:19–20). At the conclusion of this story, which gives the illusion of the passage of time, the disciples gather together with Jesus to discuss all that they have done (6:30).<sup>23</sup> By this time, they

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<sup>23</sup> Intercalation of one story within another is typically used as interpretive of the intercalated story, in much the same manner as chiasm and inclusion are used to emphasize (interpret) their central strata. The discovery of such structures has become en vogue in literary studies on Mark (see, for example, Dowd's dependence on chiasmus within Mark [Dowd, *Mark*; also Ulansey, "Heavenly," 123–25; Achtemeier, "Followed," 115–45]). Though I do not deny the presence of interpretive structures in Mark, it seems that they ought to be measured by their ideological coherence, and not confused with simple repetition. For example, the story of the cursing of the fig tree and temple has been noted by many scholars (e.g. Brown, "Intercalation," 78–89; Dowd, *Mark*, 117; Gray, *Temple*, 23), and seems to hold together independently of a chiastic structure. That is, there are distinct similarities to be drawn between the seemingly meaningless cursing of a fruitless fig tree, and the effective cursing of the temple. There is no

are very hungry (6:31), though apparently full of the news of the amazing things that they have seen and done. The disciples have been so influential, and have done so many miracles, that they are unable to escape the great number of people that recognize them (6:33–34).

It is arguable that, at this point, the reader is ready to acknowledge that the disciples have a certain degree of faith, and may be inclined to identify with them.<sup>24</sup> However, despite their successes in the performance of miracles, and in procuring food for themselves (c.f. 6:8–11), the disciples fail to understand the miraculous feeding of five thousand. The crowd, after listening to Jesus teach, finds themselves alone, in a secluded place (see 6:32) with no food (6:34–35). The reader is presented with a group of exuberant, experienced miracle workers who, at this point, cannot see around the issue of food for five thousand. Having read about the disciples, who have had their fill of the miraculous, and have been fed all the while, the expectation is that the disciples should react to this situation in the same manner that they have to demons and illness. They have authority (6:7) and they have been provided for (6:8). But the disciples have no answer, and are exasperated (6:35–37). The disciples do not understand all of the things that they themselves have done, having been given authority by Jesus.

The reader might expect that the disciples would grow to expect the miraculous, and grow in confidence. However, in the very next scene they are once again terrified when faced with an unknown Spirit; Jesus himself (6:49). It was implied for the reader that the disciples' failure at the feeding of the five thousand was the direct result of their misunderstanding of the miracles that they had just performed. Now, Mark is clear. After Jesus has calmed the rough sea,

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such coherence of meaning in the 'sandwich' structure of this particular story. That is, neither story is without independent meaning, nor is it reasonable to expect (structure aside) that the two unrelated stories should be interpretive of one another (and much less that the story of John's execution is of central importance in the story of the disciples' miracle mission). The story of John's execution is of significance to Mark, though its inclusion here is as an aside to allow for the passage of narrative time.

<sup>24</sup> See Danove, *Rhetoric*, 103; Tannehill, "Disciples," 386–405; Malbon, "Fallible," 31; idem., "Text," 92.

he challenges the disciples' disbelief and, as an editorial note, Mark comments that they were afraid because they did not understand the feeding of the five thousand.

To compound this lack of faith, and resistance to the understanding of Jesus' ministry, Mark includes a second story nearly identical to this one (8:1–10, 14–21).<sup>25</sup> Again, the disciples are asked to feed a large, hungry group (1–3), and again the disciples are not sure where to find enough (8:4). The crowd is fed, and the account seems to end uneventfully. However, in the next scene they are back on the water and they themselves have little food (8:14–16). In the remainder of the story, Jesus repeats to them incredulously the things they have just seen and heard, questions their sight and mind, and asks, in exasperation, why they do not understand (6:16–21).

In the Gospel of Mark, the disciples do not understand what they see and hear of Jesus, they are afraid in situations when their experience of Jesus should teach them not to fear, and they lack faith when presented with a situation that they should be able to overcome. Mark's characterization of the disciples is consistent, and the disciples, within the narrative of Mark's Gospel, never quite come to understand the Jesus of the Markan prologue.

## 2.2 *Jesus' Opponents in Mark's Gospel*

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<sup>25</sup> There are three common approaches to the two feeding stories in Mark. 1) One of the two stories represents an original kerygmatic tradition, which Mark has redacted to create a second story. Dibelius argues that the brevity of the second feeding account indicates that the preaching material implicit in a miracle story has been stripped away, which indicates that 6:33–44 is original (Dibelius, *Tradition*, 78 cf. Fowler, *Loaves*, 43–90). 2) Mark had separate sources containing each of the stories, which are variants of the same story (Guelich, *Mark*, 401). 3) There were two historical feedings, and each is represented in the Gospel (Lane, *Mark*, 271–72). Further, Witherington has noted that Mark seems to believe that there were two feedings. As an aside, Witherington notes that there are sufficient differences between the two stories for them to be original (Witherington, *Mark*, 235). Nineham has presented significant similarities between the two stories, “(a) a deserted setting (6:38; 8:35), (b) the same question about available food (6:38; 8:35), (c) a command to recline (6:39; 8:6), (d) essentially the same words and sequence used for serving loaves (6:41; 8:6), (e) the same result (6:42; 8:8), (f) gathering the leftovers (6:43; 8:9). (g) a dismissal and boat journey (6:45; 8:10); (this is Guelich's summary, and is quite helpful [Guelich, *Mark*, 401], though Nineham writes in far greater detail [Nineham, *Gospel*, 207–209]). These similarities seem to serve Mark's purposes. They reinforce the similarities in experience for the disciples, who fail to understand. Witherington is correct to note that Mark likely knew of two feedings, but one should also expect that Mark would describe these two events similarly to reinforce his rhetoric. These conclusions, however, have more to do with the historicity of Mark's Gospel account than its composition. The purpose for the inclusion of this second feeding account is clear. Mark is compounding the idea that the disciples will not learn from what they see and hear from Jesus. They are typified, in Mark, by their resilient lack of faith, fear, and misunderstanding.

Like the disciples, Mark makes it clear that Jesus' opponents, best represented by the Jerusalem religious community, miss the mark entirely in their estimation of Jesus. The readers are introduced to Jesus in the prologue and the magisterial language with which he is described there is entirely antithetical to the response he elicits from his opponents. Where the disciples are faithless, fearful, and ignorant, Jerusalem is skeptical, accusatory, and ruthless.

That Mark intends for his readers to interpret Jerusalem this way is clear from the beginning. From the very outset of his encounters with Jerusalem, Jesus is accused of blasphemy (2:7; 14:57). As Jesus ministers among a receptive group of Galileans, envoys are sent up to meet him (3:7–8, 22; 7:1),<sup>26</sup> his actions are scrutinized according to the law (2:16–3:6; 7:1–13; 10:1–9, 17–22), he is accused of demon possession (3:20–30), and he undergoes much testing as Jerusalem plans his downfall (3:6; 8:11; 10:33; 11:18; 12:13, 18; 14:1).<sup>27</sup> Further, there are significant differences between the Matthean and Markan trial accounts which suggest that Mark placed a far greater emphasis on the role of Jerusalem in convicting Jesus in a Roman court (15:1–5).<sup>28</sup> This is not accomplished until Jesus is first falsely accused (14:57), and beaten

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<sup>26</sup> Initially, 3:7–8 sounds as if some from Jerusalem became followers of Jesus. This is not so. It has been argued before that ἀκολουθέω does not necessarily (though, c.f. 1:17–18; vs. 14:68, 70). indicate a positive alignment with Jesus. The context is cleared in 3:22, where Mark mentions that some of those (with reference to 3:7–8) who had come from Jerusalem began to accuse him. If Mark included ἀκολουθέω in 3:7–8, then it could be dismissed as a simple verb of motion, used to place Jerusalem within proximity to Jesus, so that they, like the disciples and exemplary characters, could see, hear, and react to him according to their character group's tendencies. However, there is a clearer verb of motion which accomplishes the same goal with less tension (ἀναχωρέω [3:7]), and a great of doubt over the inclusion of ἀκολουθέω. The textual evidence includes a mess of alternative readings, with very few early witnesses agreeing on any one variant. The committee opted to use the reading of B L 565, which maintained some of the rough grammar likely to have been corrected by other early manuscripts (Metzger, *Commentary*, 68). In my opinion, however, ἀκολουθέω (omitted by D W f<sup>13</sup>) represents the longer, clearer meaning, and thus is less likely the original one, despite its inclusion in several early witnesses (8 A B L etc.).

<sup>27</sup> Mark's term of choice for "testing" is πειράζω. Though Louw and Nida miss the connection, Mark's usage indicates that it is a profoundly negative action. Satan is the first actor in Mark's temptation scheme (1:12–13)

<sup>28</sup> While it is true that Rome will be presented as a violent and oppressive kingdom in Mark 15, Mark seems to indicate that Rome is acting under the influence of the Jerusalem council. This directly contradicts Carter who, along with the majority of post-colonial scholars, holds to the (admittedly historically based) Jerusalem hierarchy's submission to Rome (Carter, *Explorations*, 81–82). However, that Jerusalem is symbolic of Jesus' opponents is reinforced by some notable differences in the Roman trial scenes. Matthew notes that Jesus had not answered the accusations of the Jerusalem establishment when they had asked him (καὶ ἐν τῷ κατηγορεῖσθαι αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀρχιερέων [Matt 27:12]). This appears to be a redaction of Mark, who indicates that the Jerusalem

(14:65). Further, Jesus' trial at the hands of the council provides the context for his only public Christological claim (Mark 14:62).<sup>29</sup> This good news (cf. 1:1) is met with charges of blasphemy (14:63–64).

In each case, Jesus' opponents react to what they have heard him say, or what they have seen him or his disciples do. The opponents of Jesus in Mark's Gospel see and hear much of the same as the exemplary characters, though their reaction is quite different. The Disciples are faithless, fearful, and lack understanding, the exemplary characters respond in faith, and Jesus' opponents test, question, accuse, plot against Jesus, and ensure that he meets his end.

### 2.2.1 Test Case: Jesus' Jerusalem Trial (14:53–65).

In order to put these conclusions into narrative context, this study will provide a narrative reading of Jesus' trial before the Jerusalem religious counsel. By analyzing Jesus' trial as the pinnacle of a series of escalating rejections and conflicts, this study will show that the opponents of Jesus are characterized by accusations, tests, threats and, finally, acts of violence.

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establishment were participants in Jesus' Roman trial, and influenced that judgement also (καὶ κατηγοροῦν αὐτοῦ οἱ ἄρχιερεῖς πολλά [Mk 15:3]).

<sup>29</sup> Schweitzer dismissed the eschatological son of man sayings as inauthentic, resulting in a human Jesus convinced of his own suffering (Schweitzer, "Son of Man," 119–129; cf. Kim, *Son of Man*, 7–8), while Bultmann claimed the opposite, dismissing all but a few of the eschatological sayings, and claiming that Jesus meant to distinguish himself from the son of man (Bultmann, *Tradition*, 112; cf. Jeremias, *Theology*, 260–61; cf. Winn, *Purpose*, 102). Many scholars responded, attributing the self-designation to Jesus (e.g. Hooker, *Son of Man*, 189–198; Kim, *Son of Man*). Most who accept the title as authentic, and not a reference to another son of Man, do not hold that "son of man" is a messianic title (e.g. Evans, *Mark*, lxxiii–iv), however even Evans recognises the implicit reference to Daniel 7 (Evans, *Mark*, 450–52). Vermès, on the other hand, dismisses any Danielic reference, calling "the son of man" a circumlocutory phrase meaning "I and I alone" (Vermès, "Aramaic," 310–28), while Jeremias dismisses the term as a general term for humanity, (Jeremias, *Theology*, 261; though he recognizes a Danielic son of Man, he believes that Jesus does not believe himself to be this person [274]). Winn follows Jeremias in his claim that circumlocutory idioms were not present in Aramaic until the third or fourth century (Winn, *Purpose*, 104), but maintains the link between 'son of man' and other Christological titles, such as 'Son of God' and 'Christ' (Winn, *Purpose*, 107; c.f. Kim, *Son of Man*, 1–3). However, Jesus claims, in the face of the ruling elite in Jerusalem, that he is the son of Man from Daniel 7:13–14, imply that he is a king with a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and will rule over all kingdoms (It is likely that "sitting at the right hand of power" is a Markan redaction of Daniel 7:13–14 to include Ps. 110, which contains further reference to the subversion of earthly empires under Jesus' feet [Evans, *Mark*, 451]). Mark alludes to Daniel 7, and possibly to 1 *Enoch*, depicting the kings of the earth bowing before God's enthroned elect (1 *Enoch* 55:4, 62:3) to depict Jesus as the representative of God's kingdom who subjects all kingdoms under the rule of God (though this process will involve suffering on the part of the Son of Man).

When the reader comes upon Jesus in Gethsemane the other characters in the Gospel have nearly all been developed. The disciples have, time and again, acted out of fear and, to this point, all but Peter and the women who followed Jesus have run for their lives (14:43–52; 15:40). The majority of the exemplary characters have entered the scene, acted in faith, and have gone their way.

Jesus' trial begins with the most complete list of Jesus' opponents in the Gospel. Every character associated with the Jerusalem religious hierarchy, and all of those who have been critical of Jesus' ministry are present. They have accused him of blasphemy and demon possession, but are afraid that a public trial would reveal Jesus' innocence (11:29–33; 12:12). Shortly thereafter, Jesus condemned the temple (12:38–13:2) and Jerusalem began looking for a way to kill Jesus (14:1). They find their way when they are approached by an insider (14:10–11) and arrest Jesus in secret, away from the public eye (14:43–49). The scene for the reader is grim; it is Jesus against the entire Sanhedrin (14:53, 55). However, as in public, Jesus' opponents are unable to find Jesus guilty of anything. Not even with the help of false witnesses (14:55–59). The trial comes to a climax when Jesus is asked if he is the Christ, the son of the blessed one (14:61). The question mimics closely the Markan incipit and the reader, who is aware of the prologue, knows immediately that the answer is yes. However, here at the climax of the Gospel, the reader does not hear a simple repetition of the prologue. Jesus' answer is positive, but a great deal of new information is revealed to Jesus opponents and to his readers.

The readers know a significant amount more than the characters. They have had access to the prologue. Further, they have watched as the characters in the Gospel have experienced Jesus, and have either reacted in a way that affirmed what the reader already knew (as in the case of the exemplars), reacted out of disbelief and misunderstanding (as in the case of the disciples), or

have acted with hostility, not just toward Jesus, but to God, since the reader knows that Jesus is his representative. At this point, however, the jury and the reader have equal footing. Jesus finishes a quotation that he has made brief mention of throughout the Gospel, and claims to be the coming Danielic ruler in God's Kingdom, and the destroyer of all other kingdoms (Dan. 14:62).<sup>30</sup>

It is at this point that the reader needs to make some sort of decision. They will follow the lead of Mark's exemplars and believe what they have read, or take the lead of the council and, having heard the truth about who Jesus is, reject him. In the case of the council, they accuse him of blasphemy (14:63–64) and ensure that his case is prosecuted to death (15:3:8–15).

When Jesus' opponents see and hear what Jesus is doing and saying the Gospel of Mark, they react with accusations, trials, and eventually with a death sentence. Mark loosely groups characters in the Gospel by name (e.g. disciple, scribes, etc.),<sup>31</sup> but he is uniform in his grouping of characters by their reaction to Jesus. The disciples see, hear, do not believe and act fearfully. Jesus' opponents see and hear him, and are even witness to Jesus ultimate self-declaration (15:62). However, in response, they accuse him, try him, and eventually kill him. However, there is a group of exemplary characters who, when faced with Jesus' words and actions, believe.

### *2.3 Exemplary Characters in Mark's Gospel*

The disciples and opponents of Jesus are regularly called by name in Mark's Gospel. However, the exemplary characters are never present in the narrative long enough to become

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<sup>30</sup> It is likely that this element within the Daniel quotation was the direct cause of the council's violent reaction to Jesus. However there is likely further allusion to Daniel in Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple. In Daniel 2:31–45 a great statue is described, the parts of which are attributed to kingdoms which will rule in the coming years. Much like the temple is to be left with no stone on stone (Mk 13:2), the statue will be broken to pieces so small that the wind will carry them away (Dan 2:34–36). The destruction of these kingdoms, and especially the last "blended" kingdom (which Mark likely interpreted as the Romanized temple), will be the setting for the establishment of a kingdom that will never be destroyed (Dan 2:44; 7:13–14; cf. Mk 14:62[see §2.2. above]).

<sup>31</sup> The disciples are uniformly characterized (see § 2.1 above), though there are some interesting cases late in the Gospel (unexplained by other theories) that seem to defy social/geographical characterization in favour of a response-based method (e.g. 12:28–34; 15:42–46).

rounded characters, though there seems to be some degree of socio-political similarity between the characters.<sup>32</sup> This study is, admittedly, preliminary. The study of the socio-political makeup of the exemplary group is the ultimate goal. However, there has been little work done on establishing a set of criteria for defining the exemplary group. This study will show that the exemplary characters in the Gospel of Mark are those who respond in faith to what they see and hear of Jesus.

There is a trend within Mark, especially as it concerns the exemplary characters, toward using language and story descriptively as a substitute for an adjective. There are times when Mark tells a richly detailed story of a minor character's faith without ever using the word. As a point of departure, Mark records on several occasions that, after news of Jesus' healings spread, many people come to him and are healed (1:28,32–34,45; 2:1–2,12–13;4:1; 5:20,21; 6:33–34,53–56; 7:24,35–8:1; 9:15; 10:1,13; 10:46). The exemplary characters, as a sign of their faith, seem to place complete confidence in Jesus' ability to heal (1:40; 2:1–5, 3:1–6; 5:22–23, 28; 6:53–56; 7:24–26,31–32; 8:22; 10:46–51).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> There have been a number of studies that have identified the minor characters in Mark's Gospel, though they have not (sometimes intentionally) properly identified the narrative function of Mark's characters. Miller has commented on the prominent role that women play in the Gospel (Miller, *Women*), and seems to recognize that certain female characters rise above others as exemplary. It is also notable that a number of Mark's exemplar characters are racial and religious outsiders. To this end, Iverson (Iverson, *Gentiles*) identifies the Syro-Phoenician woman (7:24–30) a deaf man (7:31–37) the crowd of 4000 (8:1–9), a blind man (8:22–26) and the father of the demon possessed son (9:14–29). While it is clear that some (and especially the Syro-Phoenician woman) as gentiles. However, it seems likely that many are Galilean and diaspora Jews, since Mark makes a concerted effort to note the Syro-Phoenician woman's race, which is featured heavily in the dialogue (7:26–30). It is notable, however, that all of these characters are social, religious, and economic outcasts. That is they are foreigners (7:24–30), unclean women and Galilean Jews (5:21–43), demon possessed Gerasenes (5:1–13), a crowd of hungry people, for whom only Jesus can provide (Mark 8:1–9; post-colonial critics have been quick note a comparison here between the benefaction of Jesus, versus that of Caesar [Carter, *Explorations*, 140–42; idem., "Matthew," 5–6, 12; *SB* 8897 "αὐτωκράτωρ Καίσαρ Σεβαστός σωτήρ εὐεργέτης"]).

<sup>33</sup> Mark's characterization of exemplars meets a small snag in 9:14–29. Hear, the words of a minor character upon seeing and hearing Jesus do not express implicit faith (ἀλλ' εἴ τι δύνη, βοήθησον ἡμῖν σπλαγχνισθεῖς ἐφ' ἡμᾶς). However, the reader is meant to understand this lack of faith (9:19,23) as the result of associating with Jesus' disciples, who are characteristically fearful, ignorant, and unbelieving (9:18). The father, however, is redeemed by a declaration of faith (9:24), which acknowledges Jesus' religious authority and not simply his ability to heal (c.f. 2:5). Though this particular character's faith has come under a great deal of scrutiny (Danove is uncharacteristically silent when it comes to an evaluation of this Father [*Rhetoric*], whereas Dowd suggests that blame is passed around to

Like the disciples, some characters must overcome fearful situations. For example, Mark tells the story of a man with a dysfunctional hand who is healed by Jesus (3:1–6). The passage, initially, reports nothing that indicates the man had any faith, he only responds to Jesus' commands. However, the reader of the narrative should recognize that this man is caught between two poles. Jesus, on the one side, is directing his actions. The scribes, on the other, question the legality of Jesus' actions. The consequences of crossing the scribes have not yet been detailed, but the careful and culturally informed reader will suspect that they are violent. The man in question is torn between obedience to Jesus' command (Ἐκτεινον τὴν χειρῶν[ 3:5]), or alignment with Jesus' powerful opponents. Alignment with Jesus in this situation is tantamount, in Mark, with faith.

For some characters, Mark opts to include Jesus' evaluation. Jesus word's to the woman healed of her hemorrhages (Θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε[5:34]) are typical of Mark's estimation of the exemplary characters, and are repeated on occasion to clarify the meaning of his descriptive narrative (2:5; 5:34; 10:52). In the Gospel of Mark, the exemplary characters are those who see and hear what Jesus is able to do, and choose to align themselves with him in faith.

### *2.3 Test Case: A Blind Man Sees Jesus*

The nature of the exemplary characters in Mark's Gospel prevents them from being diachronically developed. For example, the disbelief of the disciples begins with characters who, being experienced mariners (1:16) and inexperienced disciples, fear for their lives in a violent

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each character (including the father and the disciples) in turn for their inability to exorcise this demon [in Malbon, "Disciples," 119]. Evans calls the belief of the father "weak," even in his exclamation "I believe" [9:24; Evans, *Mark*, 52]), his faith is truest to the Markan understanding of Jesus, the object of faith (cf. 1:1–13). That is, despite the initial weakness of the father's request ("if you are able" [9:22] cf. "if you are willing" [1:40]), his declaration of faith displays a unique fullness in an exemplary character's understanding of Jesus authority, not just over unclean spirits, but over faith.

storm (6:45–52), but escalates into Peter’s all out denial of Jesus (14:66–72). The minor characters appear just before they interact with Jesus before disappearing in Mark’s narrative. That being said, Mark has a tendency to develop each exemplar synchronically in each episode. There are several quality, fully developed faith narratives. It is difficult to choose one. However, the story of Bartimaeus occurs at a pivotal point in the Gospel, as Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem, and is more roundly developed as far as Jesus’ identity is concerned.

The account of Bartimaeus healing set the foundation for Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem, much in the same way that the prologue set the tone for the characters experience of Jesus. It is wedged neatly between an account detailing the disciples’ lack of understanding of what Jesus will do in Jerusalem (10:32–45), and Jesus a-triumphal entry into the temple (12:1–11).<sup>34</sup> Two disciples, James and John, have just made a power play, expecting greatness in God’s Kingdom as a result of their affiliation with Jesus (10:35–40). The reader is well acquainted with the disciples’ failures by this point, and is likely not surprised that they would misunderstand the kingdom in this manner. However, even the reader is unsure, at this point, what the kingdom of God looks like. This is the closest to Jerusalem that Jesus has been to this point in the Gospel. At the beginning of Bartimaeus narrative, the reader is sure that something will happen to Jesus, that the disciples lack the faith required to accompany Jesus, and that he is on Jerusalem’s doorstep (that is, on his way out of Jericho [10:46]).

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<sup>34</sup> The a-triumphal entry has been noted, by many, as a significant feature of Mark. For example, Brown rightly acknowledges the discontinuity between Jesus’ entry into the temple and the Messianic temple entry motif of Zech. 9:9, and also the a-triumphal entry’s connections with the following discourse, in which Jesus curses a fig tree and, symbolically, the temple (Brown, “Intercalation,” 82–84; this sentiment is mirrored in Hiel, “Narrative,” 78–79; Duff, “March,” 70–71; Myers, *Binding*, 294). It is clear that Mark does not want to form favourable associations with the temple for his readers. However, the same sentiment communicated in Zech. 9:9 (the entry of the Davidic King) is communicated with new associations. That is, Jesus the Son of David does not ride victoriously into the temple, rather he is hailed (and enthroned) by an exemplary character (Bartimaeus) outside of Jerusalem (10:47).

<sup>34</sup> Brower, “Kingdom,” 121–41; Malbon, “Widow,” 589–604.

The disciples had been instructed (though the reader is correct to assume that they have misunderstood) that their ministry, as disciples of Jesus, will involve serving those lower than them (10:44). And they are presented with just such a person: Bartimaeus.<sup>35</sup> At this point, however, Bartimaeus is dismissed by those following Jesus (10:48). They misunderstand Jesus' ministry. In contrast Bartimaeus' words develop the reader's understanding of Jesus' ministry. Many scholars have noted the absence of Zech. 9.9 from the Markan triumphal entry account.<sup>36</sup> That is, Mark does not celebrate Jesus' entry into the temple as the fulfillment of Jerusalem expectation. The temple is not Jesus' ally in Mark, it is his opponent.<sup>37</sup> Rather, here on the fringes of Jerusalem, Jesus is celebrated as the coming king of Jewish expectation by an outcast beggar. The last in Jerusalem's eyes is among the first to declare Jesus' kingship.

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<sup>35</sup> While the disciples here seem to indicate that they understand that Jesus' kingdom will replace (though in the same place) the elites, Jesus' attention is on the non-elites. Mark's readers experience this development in 10:17–52. The story begins with a rich young ruler, whose wealth prevents him becoming a Markan exemplar (10:17–25). The disciples feel that they themselves are immune to such criticism, since they have left everything to follow Jesus (10:28). This is not necessarily a positive evaluation of the disciples (so Danove, *Rhetoric*, 98). Rather, it establishes a basis for the disciples self-evaluation (which is as faulted as their evaluation of Jesus, as the reader will soon discover). John and James' bid for position in the Kingdom is likely based on this self-evaluation (10:35–40). That is, Jesus has promised that the last will be first, and they have humbly abandoned family for Jesus (10:28–31). They are the last that Jesus speaks of in their own minds, and their reward ought to be first-rate. However, Jesus' kingdom will be characterized by service. The disciples will indeed be first, but first they will suffer with Jesus, and will serve those who are last in the kingdom (10:41–45). We meet one of those last in the conclusion of the story. Bartimaeus is a blind beggar; socially and economically last (10:46–52).

<sup>36</sup> e.g. Evans "King Jesus," 1; Brown "Intercalation." See note 41 above.

<sup>37</sup> The scribes (γραμματεῖς), Pharisees (φαρισαῖοι), Herodians (ἡρωδιανοί), the high priest (αρχιερέυς), chief priests (ἀρχιερεῖς), Sadducees (σαδδουκαῖοι), and the elders (πρεσβύτεροι), that is Jesus' opponents, are all associated with the temple (see §3.2.2 below), and constitute a very small part of the population. Their corruption and oppression is evident in comparison to the widow at the Temple. Many have noted that her small gift was "her life" because of the robbery committed at this group's hands (Mk 12:38–40). This comparison is caught by most studies in Mark (Miller, *Women*, 119; Malbon, "Widow," 595; Wright, "Mite," 264). It is also beneficial to compare Mark's representation of the Jerusalem establishment with other Jewish writing. Mark's characterization of Jerusalem's ruling elite is similar in nature (if not in language) to that of the Qumran community. For example, the temple in Jerusalem is commonly referred to as "the house of Peleg/defilement", especially as it is associated with the "wicked ones of Judah and with Manasseh" (4Q *Nahum Peshar*; Hogeterp, *Temple*, 74), an emphasis which is also extant in *T. Levi*. (Hogeterp, *Temple*, 76; Winn, *Purpose*, 60). Evans has prepared a thorough reading of temple destruction predictions within the few surrounding centuries (including *T. Levi*; *T. Judah*; Josephus, *War, Ant.*; 1 *Enoch*.; and several others from the DSS collection [e.g. 1QpHab]) and concluded that Roman and Herodian influences had led to the dismissal of the temple by many within Judaism, not least the Qumran community (Evans, "Prediction," 89–147). Given this trend within the first century, and the internal evidence surrounding Mk. 11–13, one can assert with relative certainty that Mark did not consider the temple among Jesus' allies.

Mark reveals Jesus' spiritual authority early in Jesus' ministry (2:5, 10–12). Later, a conflicted father recognizes Jesus' authority over his own faith, as well as his son's illness (9:24). Here, the healing of a blind man is predicated with Jewish royal language. Bartimaeus' words catch Jesus' ear (10:49), Bartimaeus is confident that Jesus, the son of David, is able to remedy his situation and Jesus heals him, offering his own commendation of Bartimaeus' faith (10:49–52).

*Excurses on an Executioner: Where does he belong?*

This study has established a set of criteria on which to measure the characters in Mark's Gospel, and three distinctive groups in which they will typically be a part. Studies on the characterization of the Gospels do not always agree on the manner in which Mark presents certain characters. One such character is the centurion at the foot of the cross. This excurses will, briefly, apply the criteria established above to this character, and conclude that he is not, as has oft been concluded, an exemplary character but one of Jesus' oppressors.

To begin with, the centurion displays none of the confidence of an exemplary character. He is torn, as the man with the withered hand, between two poles. His words sound as if they may align him with the exemplars.<sup>38</sup> However, his actions are characteristic of the violence of

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<sup>38</sup> The trend, here, is to acknowledge some sort of Christological claim from the centurion, whether understood, or as some sort of foil for the disciples (Evans, *Mark*, lxxxiii; Kim, "Anarthrous, 221–41; Tannehill, "Disciples," 404; Fowler, *Reader*, 204–208). However, this claim does not stand up to scrutiny. Shiner, comparing the text of Mark to other martyr and executioner conversion stories, claims that Mark does not present the centurion positively. Rather, he speaks the truth out of the same ignorance as Mary at the Tomb, and Joseph of Arimathea, in his attempt to bury the unburiable (Shiner, "Ambiguous," 3–22). Though her assessment of Joseph does not follow the criteria established by this paper for characterization, her type-form analysis of conversion executioners confirms this study's findings. In a similar note, Hurtado suggests that the centurion's claim is ironic, given that he has just executed Jesus (Hurtado, *Lord*, 289). Johnson has attempted to cast doubt on the Christological implications of the centurion's confession based the lack of an article in  $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  (Johnson, "Confession," 406–13; so Fowler). However, his grammatical argument is weak, and Mark's article usage in this construction is too minor a detail to be considered telling on this issue. Carter, too, is quick to conclude that the centurion's claims are subversive, and show Romans serving another Son of God (Carter, *Empire*, 42; c.f. Evans ["Incipit," 68–69; idem., *Mark*, lxxxii–xxxiii, 510], who calls on substantial documentary evidence to claim that  $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  is an intentional reference to Augustus' title *divi filius*, and is meant to subvert the claims of the Imperial Cult). It might be noted, however, that the centurion's confession mimics that of demons, and parallels an exorcism account within the Gospel (i.e. without

Jesus' oppressors.<sup>39</sup> He is semantically aligned with the cohort of Roman soldiers who carried out Jesus' torture and execution (15:16–27). Further, his language is reminiscent of a legion<sup>40</sup> of demons that recognize the Son of God (5:6–13). Here, that scene is reversed almost perfectly. The two named characters are the same; the Son of God and a legionary executioner (a centurion [15:39]). However, in this scene it is not the Son of God who will allow a legion of demons to exercise violence on a herd of pigs (i.e. send them to their death [5:13]). Rather, at this point the legionary executioner has been granted the authority to execute another victim, and he participates in the brutal torture and execution of the son of God (15:16–39). His claim is no faith statement.<sup>41</sup> Rather, it is an acknowledgement of another victim successfully deposed.

Markan exemplars are characterized by their sacrificial alignment with Jesus, driven by faith. Jesus' opponents are characterized by their accusations and violence. As a member of Jesus' execution squad, who does not act in a way that aligns him with Jesus, but rather enacts

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having to leave Mark's narrative for interpretive frames of reference). If one is looking for subversion of the Roman Empire, one needn't look for centurion's conversions when the comparison of its soldiers to Satanic oppressors is evident.

<sup>39</sup> Carey misses this connection completely. She acknowledges that Mark quite often uses irony in telling the truth about Jesus, by putting the truth into the mouths of Jesus' antagonists. However, though the centurion has just tortured and executed the Son of God, at whose lifeless feet he stands (15:16–39), Carey writes "there is a complete absence of any negative portrayal of the centurion as an antagonist of Jesus in the narrative" (Carey, "Cross," 66). Perhaps the author of Mark ought to inform his readers directly that crucifixion is not an appropriate action for Jesus' protagonists.

<sup>40</sup> In his interpretation of the story of the Gerasene demoniac, Myers notes that *legion* is strictly a Roman military term (i.e. it was not used to quantify anything except Roman military units), that "herd" did not ever refer to pigs (c.f. Mk. 5:13) but often to bands of military personnel, and that the story is reminiscent of Pharaoh's soldiers being swept into the sea at the Exodus, symbolizing freedom from Roman rule in the language of Torah (Myers, *Binding*, 190–92). While it is interesting that Mark uses military language to describe a demon possession, it is instructive to the structure of Mark that the same elements present in this story (i.e. a legionary executioner, a victim, and the Son of God who has demonstrated authority over legions) are also present at the crucifixion, though Mark's message has developed. In the first story, Jesus' authoritatively recommissioned the legionary executioner to a herd of pigs. Here, Jesus is the victim of the executioner, though the reader is of the impression that Jesus is still the authority, and even this action has been authorized.

<sup>41</sup> Gray has attempted to show that the criteria of "seeing, hearing, and understanding" are fulfilled in the centurion's confession (Gray, *Temple*, 144). Seeing and hearing in Mark are not criteria for measuring characters, they represent the common experience of each character. However, understanding is clearly delineated in Mark, takes the form of faith. Christological confessions have occurred previously in the Gospel and have never endeared the reader to their speaker (3:11; 5:7; cf. 14:61), except when the speaker is God.

the sentence given at Jesus' trial (14:64; 15:11–15) the centurion fits in perfectly with Mark's characterization of Jesus' opponents.

### *Conclusions*

The exemplary characters in the Gospel of Mark see and hear Jesus speaking. They respond to the proclamation of those who Jesus has healed before them, recognize Jesus' identity, and even develop the reader's understanding of the prologue. The reader, having been informed of Jesus' identity, is meant to identify with the exemplary characters, to listen to Mark's Gospel and respond to what they hear in faith. The disciples are developed as characters in a different manner. They do not learn from what they see and hear, they fail to develop a faith in Jesus that reflects what they ought to have learned, and they abandon Jesus out of fear. Finally, Jesus' opponents see and hear what Jesus is doing, and call his expected, anointed, and tested message blasphemy. This response elevates throughout the Gospel and ultimately, they try and prosecute Jesus, and ensure that he is executed. Mark has crafted his Gospel as a rhetorical document, and the portrayal of each of these character groups is meant to encourage the implied reader to identify with the faith of the exemplary characters, to align themselves with Jesus faithfully, and to proclaim what they have seen and heard at any cost (see 13:5–13).

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