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# **MARK AND SPIRIT POSSESSION IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT**

**Department of Theology and  
Religious Studies**

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**A Thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph. D**

**University of Glasgow**

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# **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis has been my own research. All quotations have been acknowledged in the footnotes, and no part of the thesis has been previously submitted for any other degree.

## **ABSTRACT**

**The Gospel of Mark is a moving story especially when one looks at the way Mark recounts Jesus' struggle with evil, the extent of the power and the fate of Satan and demons and the type of life the followers of Jesus are to lead: whether a demon-free life or a life of struggle with demons; and how scholars interpret Mark's views today. This thesis begins with a review of a debate between J.M. Robinson and E. Best who hold divergent views on Jesus' struggle with evil and the extent and the fate of Satan's power and demons in Mark. This is followed by a critical analysis of Mark's views on the baptism and the temptation narratives and Jesus' inauguration of the Kingdom in a world dominated by Satan and its implications.**

**The review of Mark 3: 22-27 serves as a background to the section that examines Spirit Possession cases and the ways Jesus exorcises these demons in Mark, bringing to light Mark's views and the views of Western scholars. This is followed by categorising diseases into those caused by demons and those caused naturally and how Jesus exorcises and heals these diseases, demonstrating his power over evil.**

**The section on Evil in African Traditional Religion focuses on the sources of evil and how evil is eradicated from the traditional African society. This is followed by a report of field research, which took the form of Bible Studies among Africans with the focus on Ghanaian Christians from twenty one churches in London. The purpose is to find out how these Christians whose world-view approximates that of Mark, read and interpret some texts in Mark. We were interested in what Ghanaian Christians would make of these texts because they might help us to see them as Mark's readers would have seen them, and to discover the issues and questions which they would have brought to the texts.**

**The final section of the thesis brings together the views of Mark, Western scholars and Ghanaian Christians showing how these views complement each other. The thesis calls on Western scholars not only to guard against over-interpreting and forcing one cosmology on Mark (because of the diversity of views in Mark) but also to have an anthropological study of societies that believe in the activities of Satanic powers. African scholars in general need to take cognisance of the differences in African and the Markan world-views while African/Ghanaian Christians, in particular need to bear in mind that the spirit world of Mark was destined to be destroyed. It further calls on both Western and African scholars to do further research on the concerns raised by the Ghanaian readers, one of which is living in a world peopled by demons in the light of Christ's engagement with Satan.**



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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ANRW</b>	<b>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</b>
<b>ATJ</b>	<b>African Theological Journal</b>
<b>BIB</b>	<b>Biblica</b>
<b>BWANT</b>	<b>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft von Alten und Testament</b>
<b>CBQ</b>	<b>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</b>
<b>CLEF</b>	<b>Calvary Love Evangelical Fellowship (Assemblies of God)</b>
<b>EKKNT</b>	<b>Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</b>
<b>EXT</b>	<b>Expository Times</b>
<b>EQ</b>	<b>Evangelical Quarterly</b>
<b>HNT</b>	<b>Hanbuch zum Neuen Testament</b>
<b>HTKNT</b>	<b>Herders theologischer Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament</b>
<b>HTR</b>	<b>Harvard Theological Review</b>
<b>IAMS</b>	<b>Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies</b>
<b>IRM</b>	<b>International Review of Missions</b>
<b>JBL</b>	<b>Journal of Biblical Literature</b>
<b>JRAS</b>	<b>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</b>
<b>JSNT</b>	<b>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</b>
<b>JSOT</b>	<b>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</b>
<b>JTS</b>	<b>Journal of Theological Studies</b>
<b>MDCC</b>	<b>Musama Dicso Christo Church</b>
<b>MT</b>	<b>Melita Theologica</b>

<b>NTS</b>	<b>New Testament Studies</b>
<b>NovT</b>	<b>Novum Testamentum</b>
<b>OBO</b>	<b>Orbis biblicus et orietalis</b>
<b>RAC</b>	<b>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</b>
<b>RivB</b>	<b>Revista biblica</b>
<b>SBL</b>	<b>Society for Biblical Literature</b>
<b>SBLDS</b>	<b>SBL Dissertation Series</b>
<b>SBS</b>	<b>Stuttgarter Bibelstudien</b>
<b>SDA</b>	<b>Seventh Day Adventist Church</b>
<b>SJT</b>	<b>Scottish Journal of Theology</b>
<b>SNTSM</b>	<b>Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series</b>
<b>SNTW</b>	<b>Society of the New Testament World</b>
<b>ST</b>	<b>Studia theological</b>
<b>TDNT</b>	<b>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</b>
<b>TWNT</b>	<b>G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.) Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</b>
<b>URC</b>	<b>United Reformed Church</b>
<b>USQR</b>	<b>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</b>
<b>ZAW</b>	<b>Zeitschrift für die altestamentliche Wissenschaft</b>
<b>ZNW</b>	<b>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentlich Wissenschaft</b>

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The motivation to research into beliefs about the power and the influence of Satan, demons, and spiritual powers on humanity arose during my duty tour as Ghanaian Chaplain in the United Kingdom from 1994 to 1999. This gave me the opportunity to travel across the country; attend conferences; preach in churches; engage in Bible studies; listen to debates and discussions on television; read newspaper articles and books by Western scholars on the power and influence of demonic and spiritual powers; and meet people of different traditions in the Christian faith. From these exposures one can affirm that there are divergent beliefs about the power and influence of Satan and demons and their activities in the Western world.

Among scholars, there are those who opine that demons do not exist<sup>1</sup> and those who affirm that even if demons existed at all, they existed in the time of Jesus and not now.<sup>2</sup> There are others who intimate that people (during the time of Jesus) explained certain phenomena by reference to demons, but suggest that in this contemporary era there is the need to look elsewhere<sup>3</sup> for the causes of such phenomena. They offer psychological, sociological or philosophical interpretations to the activities of the demons and spiritual powers, whilst others maintain that in the ancient world, demons and other spiritual powers were (and are still) operating<sup>4</sup> and that there is the need to exorcise them.

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<sup>1</sup> J. B. Cortes and M. F. Gatti, *The Case Against Possessions and Exorcisms* (New York: Vantage Press, 1975)

<sup>2</sup> See D. F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu, Zweiter Band* (Tuebingens Verlag von C. F. Osiander, 1836); R. Bultmann, *Jesus Christ and Mythology* (New York: Scribner, 1958); R. Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (London: SCM, 1985)

<sup>3</sup> R. A. Levine, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in a Gusii Community', in J. Middleton and E. H. Winter (eds.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963); M. H. Wilson, 'Witch Beliefs and Social Structure, in M. Marwick' (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982); R. W. Wyllie, 'Introspective Witchcraft Among the Effutu of Southern Ghana', in M. Marwick (ed.), *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982); I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (London: Routledge, 1989); T. O. Beidelman, 'Witchcraft in Ukaguru', in J. Middleton and E. H. Winter (eds.) *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963)

<sup>4</sup> F. Macnutt, *Deliverance from Evil Spirits* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1996); M. F. Unger, *Demons in the World Today* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1971); J. Richards, *But Deliver Us from Evil* (London: Darton, Longman and Tod, 1974); J. W. Montgomery, (ed.); *Demon*

## 1.2 THE PROBLEM

I have been raised in a culture where the belief in the power and influence of demons and other spiritual powers is widespread. During my one year teaching at Ramseyer Training Centre,<sup>5</sup> after my duty tour as a Ghanaian chaplain in Britain, I wrestled with the question as to whether beliefs in the power and influence of the demonic and other spiritual powers were culturally bound. Were these spirits limited to Africa (and for that matter Ghana) or operating in the world as a whole? I began to realise belief in the power and influence of demonic and spiritual powers is not purely an African belief.<sup>6</sup> Many African scholars and some Western scholars believe in the power and the influence of these forces. There are those who do believe and will read the texts from the Bible differently and in many ways closer to the contemporary readers of Mark. I have chosen to write on MARK AND SPIRIT POSSESSION IN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT. I will explore how people with different cosmological beliefs (Western scholars and African Christians) make sense of Mark and interpret the texts in Mark, in relation to the power of Satan or demons and as Mark deals with these texts.

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*Possession* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1976); C. F. Dickason, *Demon Possession and the Christian* (Westchester, IL: Crossway 1989); R. Baker, *Binding the Strong Man, Exorcism Past and Present* (London: Sheldon Press, 1974); G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993; Van der Loos, *The Miracles of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1965); R. Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror: Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1965); E. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology: A Study of Jewish and Christian Doctrine: Its Origin and Development* (London: Epworth, 1949); E. Langton, *Good and Evil Spirits* (London: SPCK, 1949); J. Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* (London: SPCK, 1961); J. Kallas, *Jesus and the Power of Satan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968); Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995); E. Ferguson, *Demonology in the Early Christian World* (New Haven: Mellen, 1984) A. Fridrichsen 'The Conflict of Jesus with the Unclean Spirits', in *Theology* 22 (1931) pp. 122-135; C. Bonner 'The Violence of Departing Demons', in *HTR* 17 (1944) pp. 334-336; C. Bonner, 'The Technique of Exorcism', in *HTR* 36 (1943) pp. 39-49; C. H. Cave, 'The Obedience of Unclean Spirits', in *NTS* II (1964-65) pp. 93-97, R. Yates 'The Powers of Evil in the New Testament', in *EQ* 52 (1980) pp. 97-111.

<sup>5</sup> The centre trains lay workers of the church and also runs courses, retreats and conferences for the clergy in the church and for workers from other churches in Ghana.

<sup>6</sup> The first year of my research was spent in studying/researching contemporary understanding of evil using the following books: *The Testament of Job*, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Jubilees*, *1 Baruch*, *The life of Adam and Eve*, *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *Sirach*, *Tobit*, *Wisdom Literature*, *The Qumran Community and related books* written by scholars. I also studied the works of scholars like G. Vermes, and Josephus. From this initial study, which served as the background for the thesis came the realization that belief in the power and the influence of demons and other spiritual powers is not just African but also Jewish.



### **I.3 WHY MARK'S GOSPEL?**

The Gospel According to Mark has many passages dealing with the activities of Satan and demons. These activities take the form of possession, inflicting diseases and temptation. A casual reading of the Gospels indicates that the Gospel of Mark has more passages dealing with miracles<sup>7</sup> than Matthew and Luke.

The number of cases of demonic activity in Mark requires thorough study. Mark's use of demons, unclean spirits and Satan brings to mind the spiritual agents at work in African cosmology. This will lead to the examination of Markan cosmology and African cosmology and to do further work in the area.

The term spirit possession raises a number of important questions for our contemporary life. Is spirit possession a myth, a physical ailment or a spiritual disease? If it is a myth, what implications do we draw from it as Westerners and Africans? If spirit possession is a physical ailment, which demands a medical cure, what do we make of the texts dealing with these cases? If spirit possession is a spiritual disease, which needs to be exorcised, and Jesus had to rebuke these spirits, what challenges do these possession cases pose to the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

The topic of the thesis is of interest to me as an African. More importantly, the activities of demons and spiritual powers including spirit possession, diseases and temptation are a reality for many Africans. Spirit possession is something that is believed in, especially by the adherents of African Traditional Religion. It has to do with the spirits from the ancestral world possessing people at festivals, funerals, in public gatherings and in the homes. Spirits are not always harmful. Sometimes the possessed bring information from the ancestral world in the form of warning, exhortation and revelation of secrets/information about the future. The impression one gets from Mark is that of negative attitudes of spirits in the form of causing injury,

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<sup>7</sup> Approximately 177 out of 666 verses or 27% of Mark's Gospel deals with miracles (taking the shorter ending). If the passion narrative (Chap. 11 ff) is excluded, this rises to 40% (some 168 out of 425 verses). In the first section alone to 8:26 Jesus' miracles comprise 47% (approximately 145 out of 311 verses), while in the remaining two sections 8:27-16:8, miracles represent only 11% (about 40 out of 355 verses).

with the demons possessing and inflicting diseases on their victims. We will compare spirit possession in Mark and that of African Traditional Religion.

## **1.4 AIMS OF THE THESIS**

### **1.4.1 MARK'S VIEWS ABOUT HIS COSMOLOGY**

Mark discusses the power and fate of Satan/demons in his Gospel in relation to his cosmology. He explains the extent to which the power of Satan/demons is reflected in the temptation of Jesus, exorcisms, diseases and in the Kingdom of God, thereby giving a picture of the world and his concept of the Christian life. The first aim of the thesis is to examine and evaluate Mark's concerns about Jesus' struggle with evil and the power and fate of Satan and the demons.

### **1.4.2 WESTERN SCHOLARS' INTERPRETATIONS**

The second aim of the thesis is to explore the scholarly interpretation of Mark, and find out how Western scholars make sense of Mark in the way they interpret the temptation of Jesus, exorcisms, diseases, and the concept of the Kingdom of God; and their view of the world and the Christian life in general. We will identify the limitations of these scholars in relation to their interpretations and find out how these limitations affect their interpretations on the issues raised by Mark. We will also identify the missing links in their interpretations; and find ways of filling in the gaps with the view of getting full understanding of how the 'Markan Community'<sup>8</sup> interpreted these concerns.

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<sup>8</sup> The popular view is that the Gospels were written for specific and different local communities-Markan, Matthean, Lukan and Johannine respectively. However, R. Bauckham sets out to challenge this popular view. See R.J. Bauckham, 'For Whom Were Gospels Written?' in *The Gospels For All Christians* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1998) pp. 9-48. He argues along the following lines: On the whole the Gospels were written for general circulation around the churches and so envisaged a very general Christian audience. Many of the concerns raised in the Gospels would have been faced by many of the churches of the time but not only by specific Christian community. There was the awareness of the trans-local dimensions of the Christian movement by the evangelists, and the historical context of the Gospels is the early Christian movement in the late first century but not the evangelists' community. The Gospels have been interpreted as if they were letters and that letters were sent to specific communities to address their particular needs and problems. Bauckham may well be correct in speculating that Mark hoped his Gospel would eventually reach a wider readership, but it was probably still intended in the first instance as a teaching tool for Mark's local church. See J. Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (London: Doubleday, 1999) p. 28. So far as Mark's Gospel is concerned the author seems to have written his work first and foremost for the Christian Community of which he himself was a member. Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 25. See Marcus, *Mark 1-8* pp. 25-28 for a critique of Bauckham's views. Our stance is that there is justification in using the term 'Markan Community' which refers to the specific Community that Mark had in mind of which he was a member. See also P.F. Esler, 'Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard

We will explore the work of E. Best<sup>9</sup> and J. M. Robinson<sup>10</sup> who have done significant work on Mark and later on examine the views of other Western scholars through exegesis of the Markan texts. According to Best, Satan is defeated decisively in the temptation narrative and in the rest of the Gospel what is of supreme importance is the struggle for the renewal of the human heart. Robinson opines that the whole of Mark's Gospel is a cosmic struggle between Jesus and Satan. The temptation of Jesus is the beginning of the struggle and the power of Satan is broken decisively on the Cross. J. Marcus<sup>11</sup> opines that the cosmic struggle will end in the second coming of Jesus when the power of Satan will be crushed. In the light of the views of these three scholars, (in relation to the place and fate of Satan and demons in Mark), what type of picture can we make of life within the 'Markan Community' and of the Christian life in general? Best argues that Satan and demons have been defeated, the Christian life is not a struggle with these powers, what matters is the renewal of the heart. Robinson intimates that since the Gospel is about a cosmic conflict between Jesus and Satan, the followers of Jesus are involved in a struggle. Thus, the Christian life is a struggle with Satan and demonic powers. For Marcus, the world of Mark is a world where on the one hand Satan is defeated (and bound), and on the other hand a world where Satan is strong and active, (the Parable of the Strong Man) and therein lies the mystery of the Kingdom. This implies that the Christian life is a life of struggle. We will attempt to assess how close the views of these scholars are to the views of the 'Markan Community.'

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Bauckham's Gospels for All Christians,' in *SJT* 51 (1998) pp. 235-248; D.C. Sim, 'The Gospels for All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham,' in *JSNT* 84 (2001) pp. 3-27; and M. Mitchell, 'Patristic Counter-Evidence to the Claim that "The Gospels Were Written for All Christians,"' in *NTS* 51 (2005) pp. 36-79. These references are cited by D. Horrell, 'Pauline Churches or Early Christian Churches? The Letters for All (local) Christians?' A Paper presented at British New Testament Conference at Liverpool in September 2005.

Liverpool in September 2005.

<sup>9</sup> E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1990)

<sup>10</sup> J.M. Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark* (London: S.C.M. Press Limited, 1957)

<sup>11</sup> J. Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992)

### **1.4.3 CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN READINGS**

The third aim of the thesis relates to contemporary African readings of Mark. The thesis will provide an analysis of contemporary African readings of Mark and show that the world-view of African readers approximates<sup>12</sup> to that of the 'Markan Community'. In particular we will find out how readings from people with such a world-view can shed light on how the contemporaries of Mark might interpret Mark, and whether the readings provide new ways of reading the texts of Mark which are different from the way Western scholars interpret these texts. From this we will explore what Western scholars and Western Christians can learn from African Christians and vice-versa. Ultimately, our aim is to establish a kind of agenda for African scholarly readings of these texts.

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.5.1 DESK RESEARCH**

We will carry out desk research which will examine Western scholars<sup>13</sup> assumptions; the questions raised about the power of Satan and demons, the methods used in answering these questions and the problems created, if any. In particular we will review the debate between Best and Robinson on the place and fate of Satan and demons in Mark. This is not an attempt to resolve the historical debate between these scholars, but to step back and ask, 'what is going on here?' If scholars who do not live so close to Mark and have never experienced demons come out with such assumptions, we will find out whether they really understand the texts of Mark in relation to the sort of questions they raise and how we evaluate that sort of enterprise. We will also find out what they miss or leave in examining these texts since their world-view is not so close to that of Mark. This part of the thesis deals with historical-critical issues, assessing the arguments of these scholars in the light of Mark, and it is also hermeneutical, finding out the kind of questions they are raising and how they are operating as interpreters.

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<sup>12</sup> The word 'approximates' is used in this context to show that there are similarities and differences between the world-view of Mark and that of African Traditional Religion.

<sup>13</sup> The Western scholars are those whose views are cited and discussed in this thesis. They include

### **1.5.2 PARTICIPATORY FIELD RESEARCH**

Through sampling, churches<sup>14</sup> will be selected and readers from these churches will read and interpret specified texts. My role in these studies will be to guide and record the discussions and later analyse the responses. My analysis will focus on the beliefs that Ghanaian Christians bring to their readings of Mark, how that affect the readings of the text and what Western and African scholars or Christians can learn about the nature of the texts. We will also find out how the 'Markan Community' might have read these texts. This work will provide an insight into how the 'Markan Community' understand the power and fate of Satan/demons and a host of spiritual powers; the practical ways of coping with these powers and the sense in which Mark fails to give a fuller picture of the world-view at the time. It is envisaged that the research will raise issues that will engage the attention of both Western and African scholars.

### **1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The present chapter deals with the motivation for the research, the problem, the reasons for examining Mark and spirit possession, the aims, methodology and structure of the thesis and what we hope to get out of the thesis. Chapter two will summarise and evaluate the views of Best and Robinson and their concept of Christian life in Mark. We will then examine Mark 1:9-15, focusing on the type of world-view the passage evokes, why we have such an opening scene and attempt to give a background to the text. This approach will explain why and how the characters in the Gospel behave in ways presented by Mark. Next, we will analyse the narrative on Jesus' Baptism, exploring its significance and how it equips Jesus for His ministry. The emphasis will be on the significance of the splitting of the heavens, the descent of the Spirit and the heavenly voice. We will also discuss the significance of the 'Son of God' in relation to the Gospel of Mark.

We will critically discuss the temptation narrative and evaluate its significance to the Gospel as a whole, juxtaposed with the views of Best and Robinson. On the basis of what happens in the temptation narrative, we will give our interpretation of the

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Best, Robinson and Marcus.

<sup>14</sup> These are churches where Ghanaians worship in London. The Bible studies will be conducted among only Ghanaians. For the type of churches chosen for the field research, see p.191

exorcisms in the Gospel. Are the exorcisms mopping-up operations as opined by Best because Satan is defeated decisively in the temptation narrative or are they to be seen as struggles between Jesus and the demons as affirmed by Robinson because Jesus resists Satan in the temptation narrative? If Satan is not defeated in the temptation narrative we will identify the role he plays in the rest of the Gospel. On the other hand if Satan is defeated decisively in the temptation narrative we will explain Mark's account of evil in the rest of the Gospel and his concept of the Christian life whether it is a demon-free life as intimated by Best or a struggle with spiritual powers as affirmed by Robinson. Our thesis is that Satan is not defeated decisively in the Temptation narrative. Jesus resists him and because of that He is able to inaugurate the Kingdom of God through exorcisms and healings.

We will discuss the inauguration of the Kingdom of God by Jesus. If Jesus resists Satan in the temptation and He inaugurates the Kingdom, why is Satan opposing this Kingdom? We will argue that Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom in a world dominated and ruled by Satan and his cohorts; and because the world is subjected to the rule of Satan and his cohorts, the Kingdom is hidden and will be fully inaugurated in Jesus' second coming. We will analyse Mark 1:15 and Mark Chapter 4 to explore factors that militate against accepting the word of God and in the light of that focus our attention on factors that militate against the 'Markan Community' in the Gospel of Mark. We will then evaluate the views of Best and Robinson in the light of what they fail to address. These scholars do not address questions about why people are possessed, how they are possessed and how they can resist Satan and demons. These practical concerns, which may well have been of considerable interest to Mark's readers will be explored in our readings with the Ghanaian readers in London.

Chapter three focuses on the source of Jesus' power in resisting Satan in the temptation narrative and in exorcising the evil spirits in the exorcisms in Mark. We will argue that the source of Jesus' power is the Holy Spirit and that in Mark 3:22-27 Jesus is describing what happens in every exorcism He undertakes. We will then discuss the significance of the Parable of the Strong Man and Satan bound and its implications for the 'Markan Community' and contemporary Christians. We will examine the exorcism narratives in Mark (1:21-28; 5:1-20 and 9:14-29) focusing on the nature and functions of the demons, their power to possess their victims and their

encounter with Jesus. We will find out whether they are bound or active. If they are active, we will explore the parallels we can draw regarding the Christian life, whether it is a life of struggle with these demons. If the demons are bound and defeated by Jesus, what impression do we get about the Christian life, a demon-free world or a world where there is still the need to depend on Jesus and why that need? We will find out whether Mark provides hints for living in such a world. Western scholars bring to light the way Jesus exorcises demons, and sets the possessed free. However, these scholars do not show us the practical ways of resisting these demons. The contemporaries of Mark might hold hints for coping with these demons. This is what we will explore in our readings with the Ghanaian Christians in London.

Demons can also inflict diseases on their victims. Chapter Four deals with how Jesus uses the Holy Spirit in healing people afflicted with diseases. After giving the contemporary understanding of diseases in the Graeco-Roman world and the Old Testament as a background to the chapter, we will examine the diseases in Mark's Gospel. We will attempt a general distinction between exorcisms and healings and distinguish between the exorcism and healing narratives in Mark. We want to find out whether the diseases mentioned in Mark are physical diseases or diseases caused by demons. We will then examine the motifs in Mark. This will be followed by a discussion on the form of the narratives, the way Mark presents Jesus in these passages as a healer and his reason for doing that and how these healings point to the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.

Both Mark and Western scholars fail to discuss how one can be protected against diseases – whether physical or spiritual diseases. If one believes in the physical causes of diseases there is the need to give practical ways of guiding oneself against these diseases, e.g. eating balanced diet, eating less fat and sugar and exercising. If the disease is a spiritual disease there is the need to pray. The two defences, physical and spiritual, are important, yet they are not examined by these scholars. This will throw light on how the 'Markan Community' might have understood the causes and cure of diseases.

Evil, which takes the form of possession, and diseases have been in existence for a long time from the era of Mark to the present time. Evil is found in the Jewish religion

and in African Traditional Religion. Chapter five examines the concept of the existence of evil in African Traditional Religion. Apart from demons, are there other spiritual beings responsible for evil? This chapter critically analyses the relationship between spirit beings and evil; the human agents of evil, moral evil, and the practical ways of warding off evil in African Traditional Religion. We will then compare and contrast the world-view of Mark and that of African Traditional Religion. The concerns raised in this chapter will then provide the background for the next chapter, the field research. The Ghanaian Christians are people who have been exposed to African Traditional Religion, and we will find out the influence of the traditional beliefs in the way they interpret the texts in Mark.

Chapter six, the field research, is in the form of Bible studies. This chapter examines how Ghanaians with their world-view and knowledge of traditional religion interpret some of the texts in Mark's Gospel. After assigning reasons for choosing the readers and giving a brief account of their socio-economic background, we will assign reasons for selecting the passages and explain the motives for structuring the questions. We will then analyse the responses of the readers. This analysis points to elements that are missing from the historical-critical accounts of the Western scholars and indeed from the way Mark examines the texts. This research will help Western scholars and Western Christians to have an understanding of how the 'Markan Community' might have coped with these spiritual powers, and it will also set an agenda for African scholars.

Chapter Seven reviews the whole thesis by bringing together the views of Mark, Western scholars and Ghanaian Christians. It outlines the concerns raised by Mark and finds out how they differ from those of his contemporaries in the Graeco-Roman and Jewish worlds. This is followed by outlining the views of the Western scholars on the concerns raised by Mark and finding out how the Ghanaian readers interpret some of the texts in Mark. The purpose is to find out how each contributes to advancing the understanding of the other. We will be looking at the views of Mark, the Western scholars and the Ghanaian readers and identify ambiguities common to them. The thesis ends with some recommendations.



### **1.7 INTENDED OUTCOMES FOR THIS THESIS**

It is envisaged that this thesis will provide a fuller understanding of how the contemporaries of Mark and people living in communities with beliefs in the existence and power of spiritual powers might read and understand these texts regarding the activities of these powers and how to cope with them.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2 THE OPENING SCENE OF MARK 1:9-15**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Mark discusses the power and fate of Satan/demons in his Gospel in relation to his cosmology. To what extent is the key theme of Mark's Gospel the struggle between Jesus and Satan or between Jesus and the human will? What view does Mark take about the power and fate of Satan and demons? Is Satan already bound? If so, when was he bound and if not, what is the extent of his power? When is his power going to be broken? If Satan's power is broken, how does Mark regard the Christian life? Is it a life devoid of Satanic and demonic forces? On the other hand if Satan is active, how does Mark regard Christian life? Is it a struggle with Satanic and demonic forces? How do Western scholars look at the issues raised in Mark? How do African Christians read some of the texts in Mark based on these topics? Do Western scholars, African Christians and Mark give comprehensive answers to these questions, answers that might satisfy Mark's contemporaries? What do Western scholars, African Christians and Mark miss in their interpretations? What can Western Christians learn from African Christians and vice-versa? How do African scholars engage in the issues raised by the African Christians? These are the concerns that will be examined in this thesis.

Best and Robinson, through debate, have made outstanding contributions to the questions raised above. In this chapter, we will begin by summarising and evaluating their views on Satan and demons in Mark and the implications of these views for Christian life, whether it is a demon free life or a struggle between Satan and the demonic forces. Next we will study Mark 1:9-15, (a) finding out the type of world-view this passage evokes, (b) outlining the reasons why we have such an opening scene and (c) giving a background to the scene. We will then examine The Baptism Narrative, The Temptation Narrative and Jesus' inauguration of the Kingdom of God. Furthermore we will discuss the causes of temptation and factors militating against the reception of God's word, the causes of diseases and evil in Mark's Gospel, and finally conclusions will be drawn.

## 2.2. BEST-ROBINSON DEBATE

### 2.2.1 A SUMMARY OF BEST'S VIEWS.

The Spirit which comes upon Jesus in His baptism drives Him into the desert<sup>1</sup>. The word ἐκβάλλειν has an element of violence in it, used by Mark in connection with the driving out of demons (1:34,39, 43; 3:15, 22; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18,28). The temptation is a conflict between the Son of God and Satan ( the prince of evil).<sup>2</sup> Satan is defeated and rendered powerless and Jesus proclaims his own victory in Mark 3:27.<sup>3</sup> The defeat of Satan is attached to the Temptation narrative rather than to the Passion.<sup>4</sup> The temptation narrative involves struggle<sup>5</sup> and it is cosmic.<sup>6</sup>

Because Best believes Satan is defeated decisively in the temptation narrative, he affirms that 'the exorcisms are mopping-up operations of isolated units of Satan's hosts and are certain to be successful because the captain of hosts of evil is already bound and immobilized.'<sup>7</sup> There are no signs of struggle between the demons and the Son of God in the exorcisms similar to his struggle with Satan<sup>8</sup>. From the beginning of the encounter with each demon, He is in control of the situation.<sup>9</sup> The demons address Jesus as Son of God 'in recognition of His lordship but not to overpower Him.'<sup>10</sup>

The demonic is present in the world of nature, in ordinary sickness (1:43; 4:39; 7: 35) and in the stilling of the storm (Mark 4:37ff.). Though sickness may be due to demon-possession, there are differences between 'exorcism and leprosy.'<sup>11</sup> Modern psychology attributes sickness to sin, and psychologically we cannot conclude that when Jesus heals sickness He defeats demonic powers. The demonic powers would hardly send sickness as a chastisement for sin. Mark falls back on the old view regarding sickness as a punishment from God.

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<sup>1</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.4

<sup>2</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.7

<sup>3</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.15

<sup>4</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.15

<sup>5</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.3

<sup>6</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.190

<sup>7</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.15

<sup>8</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.17

<sup>9</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.17

<sup>10</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.17

<sup>11</sup> Best, *Temptation*, pp.34-35

Best argues that apart from the temptation narrative, the exorcisms, and some of the diseases recorded in Mark where Satan's presence is identified, in the rest of the Gospel narrative Jesus deals with evil in the hearts of human beings. Throughout the Passion, the evil in the hearts of human beings is reflected in how they ill-treat Jesus. In Mark 4:10-12, 'human beings' culpable spiritual blindness is traced to God indicating how far Mark is removed from a Satanic explanation of Evil'.<sup>12</sup> The external evil attacks Jesus from outside, but Jesus has to meet evil which begins with Himself (Mark 14:34-36).<sup>13</sup> Jesus is horrified by the prospect of His immediate death, and His will rebels against God's will. For Best, 'it is gratuitous to see at this point a return of the devil to claim his prey.'<sup>14</sup> Terrified by death, it is Jesus, not the devil, who must drink the cup. But through prayer, though weak within Himself, He goes to encounter what He fears. As Best says, 'the most terrible evil in the Gospel is not demonic or sickness, but the evil in human beings; it comes to its climax in the Passion and lays its hand even on the heart of Christ himself. It is not diabolical but human.'<sup>15</sup>

Best expounds the discussions between Jesus and His disciples. Jesus explains the difficulties (Mark 8:14-21) and what is to happen in the Passion (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33ff.) to them. Jesus is ready to treat His disciples as human beings to the point where they can know God, 'for their culpable ignorance He holds them responsible and He does not blame any hidden demonic influence.'<sup>16</sup> Peter is only rebuked for not accepting the revelation given to him (Mark 8:33).<sup>17</sup> Peter is called Satan here and Satan is only used as a figure of speech.<sup>18</sup> Peter's thoughts are human.<sup>19</sup> Best maintains it seems better to see Peter behaving after the manner of Satan than as either indwelt by Satan or as his tool. This interpretation is confirmed by the expressions that follow where Peter is accused of not thinking the thoughts of God but of human beings. Peter tempts Jesus, but the temptation is not Satanic, it is human.<sup>20</sup> Moreover Mark does not see Satan released from his binding, thereby to tempt Jesus.

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<sup>12</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 37

<sup>13</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 43

<sup>14</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.43

<sup>15</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 43

<sup>16</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 42

<sup>17</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.42

<sup>18</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.xx

<sup>19</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.29

<sup>20</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.30

Mark is not to be accused of inconsistency at this point in relation to Satan. Satan has been bound, yet temptation comes, this time from man, who stands in close personal relationship to Jesus- making it more deadly.

Best argues that Mark does not connect the Kingdom of God with the demonic world and its defeat.<sup>21</sup> It is considered in terms of humanity; it is something which humanity receive or enter. It is the rule of God over humanity rather than the defeat of the demonic world. The Kingdom is concerned with repentance and faith,<sup>22</sup> with no reference to the subjection of demons or the healing of sickness. Mark's readers are brought into a relationship towards God and promised a part in the final consummation,<sup>23</sup> and the purpose of Jesus' ministry must be the bringing of human beings into this relationship with God.<sup>24</sup>

According to Best, Mark presents Jesus primarily as a teacher,<sup>25</sup> teaching in parables, without referring to His healing activities or exorcisms.<sup>26</sup> Jesus feeds His people with true teaching<sup>27</sup> and the tasks of the New Community are preaching, exorcism and healing, with the primary task of calling sinners to repentance<sup>28</sup> but not defeating Satan (exorcism).

Best regards faith as the continuing attitude of a disciple,<sup>29</sup> which saves one from evil (5:36; 5:34; 9:19, 23, 24, 10:52), connected with the forgiveness of sin (2:5) and can hardly be dissociated from the active presence of Jesus. Faith is closely related to following.<sup>30</sup> The duties of following include coming after Jesus (1:17, 20; 2:14), taking one's cross like Jesus (8:34), and serving like Jesus (10: 42- 45), not imitating Christ.<sup>31</sup> Closely linked to faith is understanding, classified as insight<sup>32</sup> The disciples are given insight into the Kingdom of God through the Parables (4:11-12), they fail to

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<sup>21</sup> Best, *Temptation* p. 67

<sup>22</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.68

<sup>23</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.68

<sup>24</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.68

<sup>25</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 71

<sup>26</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 75

<sup>27</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 78

<sup>28</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.188

<sup>29</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.180

<sup>30</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.181

<sup>31</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.182

<sup>32</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.181

understand the two feedings (6:52 and 8:17) and they are reproved. The understanding of the disciples is stressed with no suggestion of the demons preventing understanding, signifying how little Mark is concerned to show the member of the Christian community against the demonic world.<sup>33</sup>

What are our findings on the views of Best? Satan is defeated decisively in the temptation narrative and as such the exorcisms are mopping-up operations. The demons in their encounter with Jesus see Him as their master and the way they address Him demonstrates their recognition of Jesus' lordship over them. Satan does not feature in the Passion. The disciples have difficulty in understanding Jesus and this is attributed to their ignorance but not to Satan, because Satan is bound. Jesus does not defeat Satan on the Cross because He has already defeated him decisively in the temptation narrative. This summary shows that Best plays down the role of Satan in that he sees Satan as having only a minor place in Mark's cosmology.

### **2.2.2 A SUMMARY OF ROBINSON'S VIEWS.**

The Spirit takes Jesus directly into an encounter with evil in the person of its cosmic head.<sup>34</sup> The temptation narrative is an initial encounter between the Eschatological Spirit and the ruler of the present evil aeon<sup>35</sup>. This conflict is also seen in the exorcisms, the debates with the Jewish authorities, the debates with the disciples and in the Passion. Throughout this encounter the Kingdom of God draws near. Satan is defeated decisively at the Passion and the Resurrection and the power of God's reign is established in history.<sup>36</sup>

The way the exorcisms have been explained in 3:21-30 provides a close parallel in meaning to the introduction (the Prologue). The struggle which takes place in the temptation narrative continues, and the 'single event of the temptation narrative becomes...an extended history of redemptive significance.'<sup>37</sup> The exorcisms deal with the conflict between the Son of God and demons, yet the emphasis of the exorcism

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<sup>33</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 181

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 28

<sup>35</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.43

<sup>36</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.53

<sup>37</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.30

stories could be purely mythological, contextually placed in a struggle between the Spirit and Satan (3:22ff). Yet in many instances they appear to be historical.

The other miracle stories in Mark may be viewed as a continuation of the same struggle carried on in the exorcisms. There are traces of exorcism language in certain of the miracle stories: ἐκβάλλειν (1:43) in 1:34,39; 3:15, 22f; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18,28), ἐπιτιμᾶν (4:39) in 1:25; 3:12; 9:25; Φιμοῦν (4:39) 1:25; δέιν (7:35) in 3: 27 accenting the contrast between before and after the actions of Jesus,<sup>38</sup> (e.g. the completeness of the cure in 1:31 and 5:43). These miracle stories are not exorcisms and do not involve hostile opposition, since 'Judaism normally attributes various kinds of diseases and misfortunes to the actions of demons.' Robinson asserts that 'Jesus' opposition to the disease is as much a matter of course as His opposition to demons.'<sup>39</sup>

In Jesus' debates with the disciples and the Jewish authorities, they serve as agents of Satan in tempting Jesus. Though the debates lead to paradigmatic sayings, each saying is the climax of a struggle.<sup>40</sup> God's truth is not didactic exposition, but comes as a breakthrough against evil and as a result of conflict.<sup>41</sup> The nearest parallel to Jesus' debate is not the Rabbinic debate but the exorcism.<sup>42</sup> An exorcism story in the synagogue illustrates Jesus' authority (1:23ff) serving a pattern for interpreting the debates within the synagogue. An examination of the debates in Mark shows an intimate relationship of meaning between the exorcisms and the debates. There are traces of exorcism language in the miracle stories. Traces of this language can also be found in the debates. The debates with the Jewish authorities are designated temptations<sup>43</sup> (8:11; 10: 2; 12:15), exposing their diabolical investigation.

The debates with the disciples (8:32-9:1; 9:33-50; 10:35-45) are not normal discussions between master and disciples. One can discern opposition of viewpoint in them which can be categorised under the debates with the Jewish authorities.<sup>44</sup> The disciples' failure to understand the meaning of the feedings is due to the hardening of

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<sup>38</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.40

<sup>39</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.41

<sup>40</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.43

<sup>41</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.44

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.44

<sup>43</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.45

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, , p.51

their hearts (6:52; 8:15), parallel to that of the Jewish authorities (3:5;10:5). The disciples' attitude to the Passion is introduced as Satanic (8:33) and at its peak is put in the same context of temptation<sup>45</sup> (14:38) as had been the debates with the Jewish authorities. By yielding to Satan's temptation the disciples join the Jewish authorities in the cosmic struggle of Satan against Jesus. In the debates the disciples try to dissuade Jesus portraying their false understanding of discipleship, thereby joining the cosmic struggle on the side opposite Jesus.<sup>46</sup> The struggle with this form of evil is carried into the Passion, followed by Jesus' death and resurrection in which 'the force of evil is conclusively broken and the power of God's reign is established. It is in this way that Mark understands Jesus' history.'<sup>47</sup>

Jesus' teaching is frequently associated with exorcisms and healings (1:27; 6:2; 7:36) confirming the authority of Jesus' word (2:1-12; 11:12-14). The larger blocks of teaching have as their subject matter the historical struggle,<sup>48</sup> for example, the parables of the Beelzebul debate, the Sower 4:15, and the Markan apocalypse in chapter 13. Robinson concludes that 'the mental problem which confronts us in the teachings of Jesus is parallel to that which in the exorcisms is due to the presence of an evil spirit or demon.'<sup>49</sup>

Unless the understanding of history, evident in Mark's treatment, may be carried over into the interpretation of other history as well, Robinson intimates that it cannot be called an understanding of history.<sup>50</sup> After Jesus' baptism and temptation, history is 'essentially different in a more meaningful and intense plane than before....'<sup>51</sup> This difference also characterises what takes place after Jesus' earthly mission: 'the Marcan eschatology is such as to imply a continuation within the church of the same kind of history as Jesus, that is, a struggle between Spirit and Satan until the ...goal of history is attained.'<sup>52</sup> Though the Kingdom Jesus preached is to be viewed primarily as the future, the Markan apocalypse (Mark 13) sees a final future event as a 'fixed point of

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<sup>45</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.51

<sup>46</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.51

<sup>47</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.53

<sup>48</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.50

<sup>49</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.51

<sup>50</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.54

<sup>51</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.59

<sup>52</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 59



the horizon.<sup>53</sup> A struggle is in process pointing to the consummation of the future, and the future event gives the intervening period its orientation.<sup>54</sup> Thus 'history since the resurrection is conceived of as a continuation of the same cosmic struggle which Jesus began,<sup>55</sup> and this is illustrated in the success of the Gentile mission.

From the psychological or sociological perspective the attitude of Mark is historical. The religious attitude which Mark advocates is faith. Faith goes with action (e.g. the woman who touches Jesus' garment is given approval). Knowing is related to faith,<sup>56</sup> leading to follow, (1:18; 2:14f; 3:7) becoming a technical description of the disciples (10:32) with symbolical theological significance (10:21, 28, 32, 52). Closely allied to faith is following<sup>57</sup> which 'holds a centre of balance between the two aspects of faith.'<sup>58</sup>

The interpretation of the Parable of the Sower (4:14-20) can be dealt with at two levels-(i) the superficial level, illustrated by those who hear the word but fall away (vv. 15,16,18), and (ii) the deeper level. 'These hear the word and receive it and bear fruit thirtyfold and sixtyfold and hundredfold' (v.20). 'Progress from the first to the second level is blocked by the cosmic enemy of Christ, Satan, who causes those impediments in the parable that hamper the hearing of the word'.<sup>59</sup> The deeper level is given by God (v.11) and corresponds to what the Gospel calls repentance (1:4, 15; 6:12) and forgiveness (1:4; 2:5, 7, 9, 10; 3:28f; 11:25). Thus the struggle for understanding<sup>60</sup> is the inner aspect of the eschatological struggle between Satan and God constituting the history of Jesus.

What are our findings on the views of Robinson? The temptation narrative is the beginning of the struggle between Jesus and Satan and in this temptation narrative Jesus struggles with Satan. In the exorcisms the demons struggle with Jesus because they are not disempowered. Satan works through the disciples and the Jewish

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<sup>53</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 61

<sup>54</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 61

<sup>55</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.67. For other instances , see p. 67

<sup>56</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.75

<sup>57</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.76

<sup>58</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 76

<sup>59</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 77

<sup>60</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 77

authorities in their debates with Jesus. Satan is active in the Passion, and he is defeated decisively on the Cross.

### **2.2.3 PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE VIEWS OF BEST AND ROBINSON**

Although Best and Robinson argue convincingly, some of their views create problems for readers. For Best, Jesus declares His victory of the temptation narrative in 3:27. How can Jesus speak convincingly to the audience about an incident that happened in the wilderness where they were not there? Mark 3:27 is about Jesus' exorcisms and not His encounter with Satan in the wilderness. When was Satan bound and what is the nature of the binding? Does it also imply that Satan is immobile? Has Satan been released, and if so when? How do we explain the difficulty involved in the healing of the epileptic boy or the struggle between Jesus and the demons in 1:21-28? The confrontations in the exorcisms indicate that Satan is not bound because his agencies (the demons) are active, and this is seen in the way the demons harass and torment people. There is no mopping up but a full scale battle between Jesus and the demons, but in this battle Jesus wins.

Best finds it difficult to explain the presence of Satan in 4:15<sup>61</sup> or why Jesus calls Peter, Satan. Best affirms there is nothing in the Passion to show that Jesus is tempted by Satan, and that when Jesus rebukes Peter, Peter is not being used as a tool of Satan, nor is he Satan or behaving like Satan. This view is not convincing. When Peter behaves after the manner of Satan, is he not playing the role of Satan? Our Lord is not calling names here, but indicating in strong language to show that Peter is putting the temptation in the Lord's way and so acting as Satan. Jesus recognises that it is not Peter 'in propria persona'<sup>62</sup> that is speaking, but the spirit of evil speaking through him.

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<sup>61</sup> See Best, *Temptation*, pp. 28, 184-185 and 37n1

<sup>62</sup> E.P. Gould, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Edinburgh : T and T Clark, 1996 ) p. 155. Our stance is that since Satan is mentioned it brings to light the idea that Peter made himself a tool to be used by Satan.

The problem with Robinson's argument is whether the 'eschatological' emphasis is truly present to the same degree in the miracle stories and in the debates. In the case of the exorcism stories, one is inclined to agree. Regarding the discussion of the miracle stories, Robinson begins to make undue assumptions.<sup>63</sup> He admits the element of hostile opposition is lacking while Jesus was no doubt opposed to diseases. Is this opposition of the same order as His opposition to demons? In the absence of cosmic language and overt hostility, does the struggle occur at the same level of intensity? Regarding the debates, the mere existence of conflict is not sufficient grounds for concluding that these formal units are more nearly parallel to exorcisms than to Rabbinic debates. How can overt hostility and apocalyptic, cosmological metaphors be recast into a more subtle form<sup>64</sup> without being qualitatively changed? Robinson has probably laid too much stress on 3:22ff as normative for all debates.

There are significant differences between the debates with disciples and other debates. The disciples fail to understand Jesus' Messiahship, yet Peter discovers it at Caesarea, 'its implications are expounded to the twelve and something of its essential glory is made manifest to the privileged three on the occasion of the transfiguration.'<sup>65</sup> Do they not, in this instance, even though they are weak, differ from the Jewish authorities? Another problem with Robinson is that if Satan is defeated decisively on the Cross, why do we still have Satanic attack in the post Resurrection era? We have explored the difficulties associated with the views of these scholars; our next task is to examine the cause of the disagreement between the two scholars.

#### **2.2.4 THE CAUSE OF DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN BOTH SCHOLARS AND SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM**

The cause of the disagreement between the two scholars lies in the area of cosmology<sup>66</sup> with the focus on the origins of evil in the world underlying Mark's story. Is it primarily the work of angelic/ demonic power, or from the rebellion of the human will? Will God overcome it by destroying the dark powers through Jesus'

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<sup>63</sup> W. H. Harter, 'The Historical Method of Mark', in *USQR*. (November 1964. vol.xx No.1) pp. 21-38 esp. p.33

<sup>64</sup> Harter, 'History', p.33

<sup>65</sup> See T.A. Burkill, 'St. Mark's Philosophy of History, in *NTS* vol. III (1956) pp. 147-148 cited by Harter, 'History' 33n21.

<sup>66</sup> J. Riches, 'Conflicting Mythologies: Mythical Narrative in the Gospel of Mark,' in *JSNT* 84 (2001) pp. 29-50 especially p.34.

struggle with Satan and his cohorts or through the teachings and healings of Jesus? If it is the latter, then will Jesus demonstrate His own obedience to the divine will, 'the way of the Lord?'

Both scholars assume that there is a unitary kind of cosmology<sup>67</sup> underlying the narrative. There are two reasons for such a stance. (i) They partly stress the historical character of the narrative without probing into the properties of mythical narrative. (ii) Even if they did, they would assume that such myths were in principle unitary. J. Riches further explores how the people of the 1st Century understood myths. Myths/mythic narratives, of Judaism in the first Centuries BCE and CE, usually deal with fundamental oppositions.<sup>68</sup> They say what they have to say about the world and human patterns of behaviour by drawing on 'different indeed opposed views of reality'<sup>69</sup> for example the origins and the overcoming of good and evil. Riches cites Martin de Boer who argues for two forms or tracks<sup>70</sup> in the Jewish eschatology of the period- (i) cosmological apocalyptic eschatology<sup>71</sup> and (ii) forensic apocalyptic eschatology<sup>72</sup>. These two forms of apocalyptic eschatology offer quite distinct accounts of the world, the origins of evil in the world and the manner in which they are to be overcome. The two different forms of eschatology offer alternative views of the world, alternative cosmologies more often than not found intertwined in the Jewish apocalyptic literature of the time.

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<sup>67</sup> Riches, 'Mythologies', p. 34

<sup>68</sup> Riches, 'Mythologies', p.34

<sup>69</sup> Riches, 'Mythologies', p. 34

<sup>70</sup> Martin de Boer, 'Paul and Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology', in J. Marcus and M.L. Soards (eds.) *Apocalyptic in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. Louis Martyn*, ( JSNT Sup.,224: Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989) pp. 169-190 esp. pp. 174-180.

<sup>71</sup> See J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*. (London: T and T Clark International, 1997) p. 298. The term cosmological apocalyptic eschatology refers to 'a specific understanding of what is wrong, and a view of the future: Anti-God powers have managed to commence their own rule over the world, leading human beings into idolatry and thus into slavery, producing a wrong situation that was not intended by God and that will not be long tolerated by him. For in his own time, God will inaugurate a victorious and liberating apocalyptic war against these evil powers, delivering his elect from their grasp and thus making right that which has gone wrong because of the powers' malignant machinations.'

<sup>72</sup> See Louis Martyn, *Letters of Paul*, p. 299. The term forensic apocalyptic eschatology refers to ' a specific understanding of what is wrong, and a view of the future: Things have gone wrong because human beings have wilfully rejected God, thereby bringing about death and the corruption and perversion of the world. Given this self-caused plight, God has graciously provided the cursing and blessing Law as the remedy, thus placing before human beings the Two Ways, the way of death and the way of life. Human beings are individually accountable before the bar of the Judge. But, by one's own decision, one can accept God's Law, repent of one's sins, receive nomistic forgiveness, and be assured of eternal life. For at the last judgment, the deserved sentence of death will be reversed for those who choose the path of Law observance, whereas that sentence will be permanently confirmed for those who do not.'

Even though these two views can be distinguished and encountered in pure and contrasted form, they are more often than not found in combination. While there may be texts in which the two tracks are found in nearly pure form, other documents indicate that the two tracks can be like those 'of a railway, run side by side, crisscross or overlap in various ways, even in the same work'.<sup>73</sup> What are the merits for such a metaphor? (i) It gives the reader the chance to look for varieties of relationship between the two world-views. (ii) It discourages the search for a simple synthesis or complementarity. (iii) It shows clearly that the two cosmologies are complementary in the way they were used alongside each other giving expression to a view of the world by which whole communities were able to live. This of course should not lead to the assumption that they were easily reconcilable or that the conjunction of two such distinct views of the world would lead to a neat synthesis. For some, such views were sharply opposed. Riches is of the view that the solution to the problem of the two scholars can be found in the conjunction of alternative and conflicting/opposed views in the 1st Century Jewish mythological eschatology, and by using that in the study of the book of Mark, they can inform and give meaning to his narrative. We will now examine the prologue presented by Mark, but as a background study to the prologue, let us examine the world-view this opening scene evokes.

## **2.3. THE OPENING SCENE**

### **2.3.1 THE TYPE OF WORLDVIEW THE OPENING SCENE EVOKES**

Before Jesus enters the scene, John has already announced the way of the Lord exposing Israel's punishment for sin in exile and its return once Israel had repented. Jesus affirms publicly: 'The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel (1:15)'. This statement has with it a fundamental problem concerning the hearts and wills of human beings with the solution in 'a fundamental reorientation of the heart to receive the new word that Jesus brings'.<sup>74</sup> The essential struggle is for the hearts and minds of human beings, a forensic apocalyptic eschatology. On the other hand, we have an account of Jesus' struggle with Satan, and the exorcism in the synagogue at Capernaum with the demon shouting and confronting Jesus with the question, 'Have you come to destroy us,?' an imagery

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<sup>73</sup> De Boer, 'Paul', pp.176-177.

<sup>74</sup> Riches, 'Mythologies', p.41

suggesting a world of warfare between the dark spiritual powers who tempt and hold human beings in bondage and the divine power represented by Jesus, the Son of God,<sup>75</sup> a cosmological apocalyptic eschatology. In the opening scene, we have two alternative views of the world, forensic apocalyptic eschatology and cosmological apocalyptic eschatology 'extraordinarily closely intertwined.'<sup>76</sup>

### 2.3.2 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE OPENING SCENE

Mark intends his readers to have a proper understanding of the nature of Jesus' ministry in terms of a cosmic battle between Jesus and Satan<sup>77</sup>. With this background, we then understand why Jesus has to go through struggles with different agencies: Satanic, demonic, and human. The reader understands why the characters in the story develop certain attitudes towards Jesus; and why Jesus ends up on the Cross.

### 2.3.3 BACKGROUND

There are various frameworks within which Mark 1:9-15 can be read. Is it possible to read it as a text with an apocalyptic background? Apocalyptic is a highly contested term and difficult to define. To define it as a literary genre has 'its related problems, and to define it theologically, results in different theological perceptions.'<sup>78</sup> Apocalyptic can be used in four senses<sup>79</sup> - as literary characteristics, a world-view, pattern of ideas, and as a type of a social setting. We must look for a type that will suit our context with the focus on 'the theme of direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity.'<sup>80</sup> These words point to revelations, and for aspects of revelations with a bearing on Mark 1:9-15, we have to direct our attention to J.J. Collins.

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<sup>75</sup> Riches, 'Mythologies,' pp.40-41

<sup>76</sup> Riches, 'Mythologies,' p.41

<sup>77</sup> M.D. Hooker, *The Message of Mark* (London : Epworth Press, 1986 ) p. 14

<sup>78</sup> See R. Sturm, 'Defining the word 'Apocalyptic' : A Problem in Biblical Criticism', in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament Essays in Honour of J.L. Martyn*, edited by J. Marcus and M.L. Soards (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989) pp. 17-42 and T. F. Glasson, 'What is Apocalyptic?', in *NTS* 27 (1981) pp. 98-105

<sup>79</sup> P. D. Hanson, 'Apocalypses and Apocalypticism', in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:279- 294 particularly 1:280

<sup>80</sup> C. Rowland, *The Open Heavens: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London : SPCK, 1982) p. 14.

For Collins,<sup>81</sup> the type with a bearing on Mark 1:9-15 consists of two sections: the framework and the content of the revelation. The former, deals with the manner of the revelation and the concluding elements. The revelation is in the form of visions and epiphanies, followed by auditory revelation in the form of discourse and dialogue. There is an otherworldly mediator who communicates the revelation in the form of direct speech and eventually with concluding remarks involving the consequent action of the recipient. The latter embraces historical and eschatological events on a temporal axis and otherworldly beings and places on a spatial axis. The temporal axis (the content) of the revelation provides a context in which the transcendent eschatological salvation is seen to contrast sharply with previous history and the afflictions of eschatological crisis. The temporal axis has to do with cosmic transformation where the whole world is renewed while the spatial axis refers to what happens in the heavenly world. Given the above as a case that has a bearing on Mark 1:9-15, let us examine the opening scene in Mark

In the opening scene, there is revelation in the form of a vision, auditory revelation and the concluding remark involving the consequent action of the recipient and this is seen in Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. With this framework the opening scene fits Collins' example.

Concerning the content of the revelation, Collins considers three features: the historicity of the event, its eschatological and its cosmic dimensions. The opening scene of Mark is historical, implying the baptism of Jesus happened in the course of the Baptist's ministry.<sup>82</sup> Jesus is the one who comes in fulfilment of Isaiah 40:3, introduced as the Son of God, the coming one of Isaiah 40:3 who comes as the equipped servant of Isaiah 42:1, making the opening scene eschatological.<sup>83</sup> The rending of the heavens, descent of the Spirit and declaration of God indicate the cosmic significance of the event. The analysis of the opening scene shows that it agrees with the example given by Collins; and this will guide us in identifying it as

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<sup>81</sup> J.J. Collins, 'Towards the Morphology of a Genre', in *SEMEIA 14, Apocalypse, The Morphology of a Genre*, 1979, pp.1-19 esp. pp. 5-8. See also W.G. Rollins, 'The New Testament and Apocalyptic,' in *NTS* 17, 1970/71 pp. 454-476 esp.p.462.

<sup>82</sup> H. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1976) p. 74

<sup>83</sup> R.A.Guelich, 'The Beginning of the Gospel; Mark 1:1-15', in *Society of Biblical Research*, 27 (1982) pp.5-15 esp. p. 9

having an apocalyptic background. A statement from F. Hahn can buttress the fact that this opening scene, Mark 1:9-11 has an apocalyptic background:

According to late Jewish Apocalyptic understanding the opening of the heavens, the appearing of the spirit and the issuing of the voice directly from heaven all stand in relation to time, and originally it is a matter of a threefold paraphrase of the one wonderful event that being recognised in this person who is being baptized<sup>84</sup>.

The passage that can be cited in support of Hahn's statement is Isaiah 63:19b. In Hahn's words 'in Isaiah 63:19b the eschatological reference is unambiguous',<sup>85</sup> implying that for Mark there is an 'irreversible cosmic change with this picture of the torn heavens',<sup>86</sup> compared with the pictures in Matthew and Luke where the heavens are merely opened.<sup>87</sup> What is opened may be closed, 'what is torn apart cannot easily return to its former state.'<sup>88</sup> The imagery that is portrayed here can be linked with the imagery of the death of Jesus. At the moment of Jesus' death, the curtain of the temple is torn (ῥαγίσθη) from top to bottom.<sup>89</sup> The word used here is the same word used to describe the opening (σχιζομένου) of the heavens at the moment of Jesus' baptism (1:10). As soon as the heavens open, the Spirit descends upon Jesus. He is declared 'beloved Son' by the Father. The curtain is torn from top to bottom and the centurion confesses that Jesus is truly the Son of God.<sup>90</sup> In Mark, then, God has ripped

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<sup>84</sup> F. Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology: Their History in Early Christianity* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969) p.338

<sup>85</sup> Hahn, *Titles*, 343n31

<sup>86</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, 1-8 (London: Doubleday, 1999) p.165

<sup>87</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.165

<sup>88</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.165

<sup>89</sup> F.T. Matera, 'The Prologue as the Interpretative Key to Mark's Gospel,' in *JSNT* 34 (1988) pp. 3-20 esp. p. 14. The tearing of the temple curtain in Mark 15:38 presents two exegetical problems: (i) the impression created is that it seems to interrupt the narrative flow of vv. 37 and 39. (ii) It brings to mind the type of curtain being described- whether the inner curtain before the Holy Place or the greater outer curtain. See H.L. Chronis, 'The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37-39', in *JBL* (1982), pp. 97-114 and H.M. Jackson, 'The Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle of the Cross,' in *NTS* 33 (1987), pp. 16-37 for the solution to these exegetical problems. See also J. Riches, *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels Of Mark and Matthew* (Edinburgh: T and T. Clark, 2000) p. 136. The revelation of Jesus' 'glory' on the cross... is contrasted with the tearing of the Temple veil. The divine *Shekhina* departs from the Temple and is strangely present in the crucified figure on the cross. For a discussion on the rending of the veil, see Riches, 2000 136n45.

<sup>90</sup> For the similarity between the rending of the heavens at Jesus' baptism and the rending of the temple curtain, see S. Motyer, 'The Rending of the Veil: A Markan Pentecost?' in *NTS* 33 (1987) pp. 155-157.



the heavens apart at Jesus' baptism, never to shut them again. Through this gracious gash in the universe, He has poured forth His spirit into the earthly realm. This advent of the Spirit is an eschatological event.

## 2.4 THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

### 2.4.1 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE BAPTISM OF JESUS: MARK 1:9-11

Mark begins the section on the baptism of Jesus with the expression 'in those days.'<sup>91</sup> Mark uses this expression frequently (8:1; 13:17, 24) and in relation to the text it refers to the time when Jesus was baptising in the desert. With this expression, Mark links the narrative to what has gone on previously, that is John's baptism. The baptism is described in the simplest possible manner,<sup>92</sup> in the words, 'and was baptised in the Jordan by John,' καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου. The word ἀναβαίνων in verse 10 is a participle indicating that the vision and the audition take place as Jesus comes out of the water. Nobody else saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending or heard the voice, implying Mark intended to record a vision of divine communication from God to Jesus.<sup>93</sup> What is of significance to us is what follows after the Baptism, and we will discuss (i) the splitting of the heavens, (ii) the descent of the Spirit and (iii) the heavenly voice.

#### 2.4.2. Splitting Of The Heavens

When Jesus came out of the water, He saw the heavens open. The 'opening up of the heavens,'<sup>94</sup> has four<sup>95</sup> values. (i) It is a sign that the ancient prayer that 'He rend heavens and come down' (Isaiah 63:19) is about to be answered. (ii) The promises foretold by the prophets long ago are about to be fulfilled and the end time events are

<sup>91</sup> See C.R. Kazmierski, *Jesus the Son Of God: A Study of the Markan Tradition and Its Redaction by the Evangelist* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1979) 33n20. Kazmierski cites J. Schreiber, *Theologies des Vertrauens: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums* (Hamburg: 1967) pp. 121-126 and Von Rad 'ἡμέρα', in *TDNT* II (ed.) G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) pp. 943-953 esp. p. 946.

<sup>92</sup> V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1966) p.159

<sup>93</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963) pp. 52-53; See also M.D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (London: A and C Black, 1991) p. 45

<sup>94</sup> Anderson, *Mark*, pp. 76-77. The opening of the heavens goes back to the Old Testament (Isaiah 64:1; Ezekiel 1:1), but it is a familiar symbol of late Jewish apocalypse (e.g. Bar. 22:1; Test. Levi 2:6; 5:1; 18:6; Test. Judah 24:2). It is also found in the New Testament (John 1:51; Acts 7:56; Rev. 4:1; 11:19; 19:11). According to Taylor, *Mark*, p.160, the underlying idea being that of a fixed separation of heaven from earth to be broken in special circumstances.

<sup>95</sup> Marcus, *The Way*, p.58

going to be set in motion. (iii) How is He going to set the end time in motion? He is going to do that by putting His own Spirit which can be described as the 'life giving power' of the new age into the world by giving it to 'the shepherd of the flock', (cf. Isaiah 63:11). (iv) The implications of the references in Isaiah 63 are that for the 'Markan Community', what was foretold in the Old Testament has taken place in the baptism of Jesus.

### 2.4.3 The Descent Of The Spirit

The second event, which is important for our thesis is the Spirit descending upon Jesus. This does not mean that Jesus was possessed by the Spirit but it means that the Spirit came upon Jesus. Jesus is now equipped with power and with authority<sup>96</sup> for His work. The Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove and with this description Mark brings to mind the manner in which the Spirit descended rather than the shape.<sup>97</sup>

### 2.4.4 The Heavenly Voice

The important point of the baptism narrative is the voice in verse 11. It is a voice from heaven,<sup>98</sup> the direct voice of God.<sup>99</sup> The heavenly voice declares, 'Thou art my beloved son, with thee I am well pleased.' Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. These words are not a direct quotation of any Old Testament passage; and to take one particular text from the Old Testament will not give full meaning to the content of the voice. That will create problems<sup>100</sup> because 'no single text adequately accounts for the statement as a whole.'<sup>101</sup> The words are a mosaic of Old Testament elements,<sup>102</sup> possibly Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1 and Genesis 22:2 (LXX). The voice declares Jesus as the Son of God. It is because He is the Son of God that He resists Satan, He exorcises evil spirits, He heals diseases, He teaches and preaches with authority, He raises the dead and performs miracles, He forgives sin and eats with

<sup>96</sup> A.E.J. Rawlinson, *The Gospel According to Mark* ( London: Methuen and Company Limited, 1925) p.11

<sup>97</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p. 46. See also L.E. Keck, 'The Spirit and the Dove', in *NTS* 17 (1970) pp. 41-67

<sup>98</sup> See Taylor, *Mark*, p. 161, Cranfield, *Mark*, p.54 and T.A. Burkill, *Mysterious Revelation* ( New York: Cornwell University Press, 1963) p. 16

<sup>99</sup> See H. B. Swete, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* ( London: Macmillan and Company, 1898) p. 16. See also Hooker, *Message* p. 46; M.Cahill. *The First Commentary on Mark* ( Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 34 and A. Menzies, *The Earliest Gospel: A Historical Study of the Gospel According to Mark* ( London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1901) p.61

<sup>100</sup> See I. H. Marshall, 'Son of God or Yahweh? A Reconsideration of Mark1:11', in *NTS* 15 (1971) pp. 326-336

<sup>101</sup> Guelich, *Mark*, p.33

<sup>102</sup> Anderson, *Mark*, p. 79

sinners, and He dies and resurrects. What are our findings on the Baptism narrative? In the Baptism narrative the Spirit descends upon Jesus. He is declared the Son of God and is to be engaged in a struggle with Satan in the wilderness.

## **2.5 THE TEMPTATION NARRATIVE**

### **2.5.1 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE TEMPTATION NARRATIVE: MARK 1:12-**

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#### **2.5.2 THE BREVITY OF THE PASSAGE**

Why is the temptation narrative so brief? One theory affirms 'all that Mark knew was that Jesus was tempted in the wilderness,'<sup>103</sup> implying Mark would not be in a position to account for the nature and the outcome of the temptation. Another theory maintains that Mark abridged the narrative because 'he and his audience knew the story.'<sup>104</sup> This means if he gives details on the nature and the content of the temptation, his readers would be bored because already they knew the story. The third theory states that Mark was aware of a lengthier version of the temptation narrative than what he has written in 1:12-13, but 'for theological reasons or in pursuit of redactional concerns related the details of this tradition elsewhere in or throughout his Gospel'<sup>105</sup> implying for theological and redactional purposes, he has pruned the section dealing with the temptation narratives. Even though the narrative on the temptation is brief, it is of significance to Mark.

#### **2.5.3 THE ACTION OF THE SPIRIT**

The same, Spirit which comes upon Jesus at His baptism now forces<sup>106</sup> Jesus and drives ἐκβάλλει, Him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. The word ἐκβάλλει has an element of violence in it. The word does not mean either Jesus was transported<sup>107</sup> by the Spirit or Jesus being violently taken up and carried to another

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<sup>103</sup> Taylor, *Mark*, p.214

<sup>104</sup> Rawlinson, *Mark*, p.125

<sup>105</sup> J.B.Gibson, 'Jesus' Wilderness Temptation according to Mark,' in *JSNT* 53 (1993) pp. 3-34 especially 4n3. For similar views, see R.H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950) pp.17-18, U. Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1963) p.100, W.L.Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: W.B.Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974) pp.60-61, F. Danker, 'The Demonic Secret in Mark: A Re-Examination of the Cry of Dereliction (Mark 15:34)' *ZNW* 61 (1970) pp.48-69

<sup>106</sup> R.F.Collins, 'The Temptation of Jesus', in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* VI (London: Doubleday, 1992) pp.382-383.

<sup>107</sup> See 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Ezekiel 3:12; Ezekiel 8:3 and Acts 8:39

place. Rather it means Jesus is compelled<sup>108</sup> to go. One thing which is not clear is the nature of the compulsion. However, there is nothing to suggest that Jesus was in an ecstatic condition.<sup>109</sup> The compulsion may have been moral<sup>110</sup> or deterministic as in 1QS iii.13ff. where the picture painted is a member of the Qumran community under the control of the Spirit of Truth.<sup>111</sup> In this temptation narrative, the Spirit drives out Jesus to the desert. We are not given any indication of the Spirit tempting or helping Jesus during His stay in the desert.

In Mark 1:13a we are told that Jesus was tempted, and the term tempted is expressed through the use of the word *πειραζόμενος*, the present passive participle of the verb *πειράζω*. Literally the participle stands for the phrase ‘being tried’<sup>112</sup>. The verb *πειράζω*, the root word of the participle used in 1:13a is attested in secular Greek and used by other classical and Hellenistic writers. It is found (some forty-four times<sup>113</sup>) in the Septuagint. It is found in the Pseudepigrapha and in the vocabulary of early Christianity.<sup>114</sup> According to J. Korn<sup>115</sup> and B. Gerhardsson<sup>116</sup>, *πειραζόμενος* connotes the idea of being probed and ‘put to the proof’, that is, ‘tested’ to show trustworthiness.<sup>117</sup> The use of the participle *πειράζω* in Mark 1:13 with reference to a person brings to light a specific connotation: being probed and proved often through hardship and adversity, in order to determine the extent of one’s worthiness to be entrusted with, or the degree of one’s loyalty, or devotion to, a given commission and

<sup>108</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 4

<sup>109</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 4

<sup>110</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 4

<sup>111</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 5

<sup>112</sup> Gibson, ‘Wilderness Temptation,’ p. 10

<sup>113</sup> Gibson, ‘Wilderness Temptation,’ p. 11. In the Septuagint it was a translation of the piel of *nāsâ* and, notably, is primarily a theological term. The actual number of instances varies depending on whether one reads *πειράζω* with Alexandrinus and Vaticanus or *ἐκπειράζω* with Sinaiticus in Deuteronomy 8:2.

<sup>114</sup> H. Seesemann, ‘πειράω, κτλ.’, *TDNT*, VI, p.28

<sup>115</sup> J. Korn, *ΠΕΙΡΑΣΜΟΣ: Die Versuchung des Gläubigen in der griechischen Bibel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1937)

<sup>116</sup> B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God’s Son* (Matthew 4:1-11 and par.) (Lund: Gleerup, 1996) esp. pp. 25-35

<sup>117</sup> Korn, *ΠΕΙΡΑΣΜΟΣ*, pp. 18-19, 24-26; Gerhardsson, *Testing*, pp. 25-26. see also B. Van Iersel, *The Bible on the Temptations of human Beings* (De Pere, WI: St. Norbert Abbey Press, 1966), pp. 1-6. To show that the specific connotation of ‘testing’ and ‘proving’ is inextricably linked with *πειράζω* can be identified by intimating that in both the secular and biblical Greek the synonyms of the verb are *πυρόω* [ἐξ-] *εἰσάγω* and *δοκιμάζω*. See S. Brown, ‘Deliverance from the Crucible: Some Further Reflections on 1QH III. 1-18,’ in *NTS* (1967-68), pp. 247-259 esp. p. 258

its constraints.<sup>118</sup> The statement someone was πειραζόμενος creates the impression that the person was undergoing an experience in which his character or fidelity was being ‘put to the proof.’<sup>119</sup> This was the experience that Jesus had to go through. The temptation came to Jesus through a personal figure Satan;<sup>120</sup> an experience in which ‘Jesus’ fidelity to God’s commands was put to the test.’<sup>121</sup>

Why is Jesus tempted by Satan? (i) It is Christological.<sup>122</sup> (ii) It shows the role to be followed by the anointed one.<sup>123</sup> (iii) It has to do with the inauguration of the Kingdom of Jesus.<sup>124</sup> (iv) It is an opportunity for the Devil to assess whether Jesus meets the standard of faithfulness expected of the Son of God<sup>125</sup>. The features associated with the temptation of Jesus can be identified as the wilderness, forty days, the wild beasts and the ministering of angels.

## 2.5.4 THE FEATURES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

### (i) *The Wilderness*

Jesus was in the wilderness. (a) The wilderness can be interpreted as loneliness or remoteness, denoting ‘the absence of human help’<sup>126</sup> implying the struggle is not physical involving human assistance because Jesus as Son of God would not need human support. (b) The wilderness can also be related to the abode of demons<sup>127</sup>. Generally in the Old Testament, the wilderness is supposed to be a place where fierce animals frequently live.<sup>128</sup> These animals are a danger to humankind and in the inter-testamental period they were associated with demons. This is supported by the text below.

<sup>118</sup> Korn, ΠΕΙΡΑΣΜΟΣ, pp. 18-20, 24-48, 87-88; Gerhardsson, *Testing*, pp. 26-27. In both secular and biblical Greek, the terminology for persons who have been ‘tempted/tried’ is limited to such words as δοκιμνή/δοκιμος/αδόκιμος/τέλειος/πιστός and the virtues necessary to withstand being ‘tempted/tried’ are ὑπομενή and πίστις.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Korn, ΠΕΙΡΑΣΜΟΣ, pp. 18-20, 44-48. See also F.J.A. Hort, *The Epistle of Saint James* (London: Macmillan, 1909) p. 4

<sup>120</sup> In Mark 1:13a ὁ Σατανᾶς is not a common noun but a proper noun, denoting a particular being, a distinct personality. See, Taylor, Mark, p. 164.

<sup>121</sup> Cranfield, Mark, p. 58

<sup>122</sup> Hooker, *Message*, p.14

<sup>123</sup> Cited by Hooker, *Message*, p.14. Hooker does not mention the scholars who hold this view.

<sup>124</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.28

<sup>125</sup> S. R. Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998) p.56

<sup>126</sup> Cranfield, *Mark*, p.59

<sup>127</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.5

<sup>128</sup> Mauser, *Wilderness*, pp.100-101

You do these as well, my children  
and every spirit of Beliar will flee from you.  
Every wild creature you shall subdue so long  
as you have the God of Heaven with you and  
work with all mankind in sincerity of that heart.<sup>129</sup>

T. Issachar 7:7

In popular belief at the time, the wilderness was a favourite haunt of evil spirits and it was natural that the Lord of the demons should appear there.<sup>130</sup> (c) The wilderness is where the Israelites had their experience. The word ἐρημῷ in Mark 1:13 is accompanied by τῇ and according to Mark temptation takes place there. However, it is Israel that put God to the test, whereas Satan tempted Jesus and not the Israelites. Contextually the wilderness as the abode of demons seems convincing because it creates a scene where Jesus is battling with evil with its cosmic head, Satan.

## **(ii) Forty Days**

Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness. Forty is significant in the Old Testament tradition. Moses spent forty days and nights on Mount Sinai (Ex 24:18; 34: 28) while Elijah spent forty days and forty nights on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19: 8). Both Elijah and Jesus were ministered to by angels. But Moses and Elijah met with God, while Jesus was tempted by Satan. The two were on a mountain while Jesus was in the wilderness. Moreover, while Moses and Elijah fasted, Jesus never fasted. Mark may have been working on a different level of allusion by making use of the Old Testament passage.

The forty years spent by the Israelites in the wilderness mirrors the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness and on that basis classifies Jesus as embodying Israel<sup>131</sup> (See Numbers 14:34). Even though Jesus was in the wilderness, the temptation He went through was 'hostile'<sup>132</sup> as opposed to the testing that the Israelites went through. As to the reason why this Old Testament text is cited, see above.

<sup>129</sup> H.C.Kee, 'The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs', in the *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol.I edited by J.H. Charlesworth (London: Doubleday, 1983) p.804

<sup>130</sup> Burkill, *Revelation*, p.21. For a similar view, see W. Harrington, *Mark*, p.8

<sup>131</sup> B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1966) pp.42-43

<sup>132</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.49

Other scholars<sup>133</sup> see Jesus as embodying Israel. They refer to LXX Deut. 8: 2-4 where the Israelites were instructed to remember the way the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ that He might afflict you and tempt you these forty years, τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη. However the Israelites were tempted forty years while Jesus was tempted for forty days. What then is the meaning of the forty days? The present tense of the participle of the word tempted suggests that the struggle was not over in a moment but was protracted over the whole span of time, 'lasting all through the forty days,'<sup>134</sup> throughout his whole ministry. The forty days can also be interpreted as 'a fixed time of symbolic meaning,'<sup>135</sup> throughout his whole ministry. Our stance is that the forty days refer to a specific period that Jesus spent in the wilderness.

### (iii) *The Wild Beasts*

Jesus was with the wild beasts. One theory maintains the wild beasts signify the story of Adam in the Garden of Eden,<sup>136</sup> implying Jesus, the second Adam, was victorious in the temptation. This theory is weakened by the following observations : (i) There are topographical shifts involved in the two instances. Adam was in the Garden while Jesus was in the wilderness and the features in the Garden were different from those in the wilderness. (ii) The ἐκβάλλει<sup>137</sup> of Mark 1:12 hardly draws on LXX Gen. 3:24. In LXX Gen. 3:24 God thrusts Adam out of Eden after the temptation narrative but in Mark 1:13 the Spirit thrusts Jesus out before the temptation narrative. There are other criticisms<sup>138</sup> against this theory. (a) No single phrase of Mark 1:13 is found in the first three chapters of Genesis where the Garden story and the seduction by the snake are narrated. (b) The phrase 'being with the wild beasts,' ἦν μετὰ τῶν θηρίων, does not occur in the LXX version of Gen. 1-3. Finally, if Satan is present throughout the forty days, 'then the conditions of Paradise do not truly exist.'<sup>139</sup> Therefore the theory of Jesus being the second Adam does not help us.

<sup>133</sup> Gibson, 'Wilderness', p.17

<sup>134</sup> G.A.Chadwick, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* ( London: Hodder and Stoughton, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, MDCCCXCI) p.15

<sup>135</sup> Mauser, Wilderness, p.99

<sup>136</sup> E. Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark* ( London: S.P.C.K. 1971) p.43

<sup>137</sup> R.H.Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993) p.58

<sup>138</sup> J.W. Van Henten, 'The First Testing of Jesus: a Rereading of Mark 1:12-13' in *NTS* 45 (1999) pp.349-366 esp. pp.355-356.

<sup>139</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.xvii

The second theory views Jesus' being with the wild beasts as an allusion to the eschatological age of salvation when humankind and wild animals will once again 'dwell in peace with one another,'<sup>140</sup> (Isaiah 11: 6-9; 65:25). Contextually this theory is not convincing. Satan was still in the wilderness, and that being the case to give that episode an eschatological dimension signifying the age of salvation including Satan makes the whole argument misleading. This theory creates a scenario where the wild beasts are seen as supporting Satan against Jesus in the conflict, signifying its cosmic nature.

The third theory stipulates that, for Mark, the wild beasts symbolise the dangers<sup>141</sup> Jesus faced from which He was protected in accordance with Ps. 91. (i) Ps. 91:1-4 promises those who put their trust in God, angelic protection from beasts. (ii) The Jews of Mark's era interpreted Psalm 91 as a prayer for angelic protection against demonic power (Test. Levi 18:12 and Test. Naph. 8: 4). (iii) In the Messianic Kingdom the beasts at peace with human beings signified that originally they were fearful, leading to the impression the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestinians would receive. (iv) Mark's Roman reader would also get the same impression because of the way the beasts behaved in the arena. (v) The Jews thought the wild beasts were associated with demons (e.g. Test. Iss. 7:7; Test. Benj. 5:2, and in Test. Naph. 8:4).<sup>142</sup>

#### ***(iv) The Ministering of Angels***

One view is that δῆκόνου<sup>143</sup> in 1:13 suggests the angels were serving Jesus food. This limits the meaning of the word δῆκόνου in the Old Testament and in the inter-testamental period where the angels had different ways of ministering.<sup>144</sup> We need an explanation that will be applicable to the context in 1:13. There is one possibility:<sup>145</sup> the angels are there to support Jesus in His conflict with Satan. This theory is convincing. Contextually, we have a scene where Jesus is in battle with the cosmic

<sup>140</sup> J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1983) p. 68

<sup>141</sup> Garrett, *Temptation*, p.57, P. Pokorny, 'The Temptation Stories and their Intention, in *NTS* 20 (1973-74) pp. 116-117 and Hooker, *Mark*, p.50

<sup>142</sup> Views iv-vi are summaries from Best, *Temptation*, p. 8

<sup>143</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p. 55

<sup>144</sup> D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SCM, 1964) pp. 236-249 Their functions, among others included interceding for human beings (Zech. 1:12; Job 5:1; 1 Enoch 15:2; 40:9; 89:76), guiding human beings (Jub. 4:6), ruling over nations (Dan. 10:13, 20; Jub.15: 31-32; 1 Enoch 89; 59ff.) and waiting upon God and running errands for him (Jub. 30:18).

<sup>145</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.51



head Satan, the wild beasts and angels serving Jesus. With the struggle involved, διηκόνουν shows the angels ministering to Jesus in His struggle with Satan. The most striking 'testimony'<sup>146</sup> is the connection of angels, wild beasts and the Devil in the Testament of Naphtali viii: 4 quoted below:

If you achieve the good my children, men and angels will bless you;  
and God will be glorified through you among the gentiles. The devil  
will flee from you; wild animals will be afraid of you, and the angels  
will stand by you.<sup>147</sup>

The Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness and He was there for forty days. The angels minister to Him in His struggle with Satan. The setting is apocalyptic. One theory views Mark's apocalyptic scenario as strange because 'there is no mention of either the conflict between the forces of evil and the chosen one of God or any mention of the ultimate victory of God's appointed one.'<sup>148</sup> This theory overlooks the word πειράζω which denotes the idea of tempting.

### 2.5.5 THE OUTCOME OF THE TEMPTATION

Mark does not specify the outcome of the temptation narrative. One theory given is that for Mark 'it was so obvious that it was unnecessary to spell it out.'<sup>149</sup> Mauser<sup>150</sup> intimates that Mark does not report Jesus' victory because for Mark, Jesus did not win the victory nor did He cease to be tempted. It is the clash which is significant and the whole Gospel is an explanation of how Jesus was tempted, but this stage of the drama deals with the confrontation between Jesus and Satan. Other commentators have expressed their views on the outcome of the temptation narrative. These commentators can be categorised as follows who believe that (i) Jesus was victorious, (ii) there was no temptation at all, (iii) Jesus resisted Satan and (iv) that the temptation narrative inaugurated a battle which was won, finally, at the Crucifixion.

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<sup>146</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.10

<sup>147</sup> Kee, 'Patriarchs', p.812

<sup>148</sup> R. F. Collins, 'The Temptation of Jesus', in *Melita Theologica* 27 (1974) pp. 32-45 esp.p.34

<sup>149</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.5

<sup>150</sup> Mauser, *Wilderness*, p.100

**(i) *Jesus' Victory Over Satan***

Best<sup>151</sup> argues, 'Mark does not state explicitly in 1:12f the result of the contest; this must be sought in the continuity of the narrative: either in 1:14f, for Jesus would not have been able to proclaim the Gospel if He had not first overcome the rule of Satan, or in the exorcisms, where Jesus displays His power over evil, or in 3:27 where, as was argued in the first edition, Satan is held to have been bound, thus enabling the exorcisms to take place'.

How accurate are Best's inferences? What in 1:14f shows Jesus defeated Satan? For the apocalyptic mindset proposed throughout Mark, that announcement would imply the opposing dominion of Satan had been undermined,<sup>152</sup> rather than decisively defeated. At best, Jesus resisted Satan, hence His ability to proclaim the Gospel. Moreover, a powerful exorcism takes place (1:21-28) showing further the Satanic side in the cosmic war has been substantially weakened.<sup>153</sup> This is reinforced by T. Naph. 8:3-4, which combines several of the motifs found in 1:12-13 and 1: 14-15.<sup>154</sup> Again Mark regards all the exorcisms in terms of the cosmic struggle between the Spirit and Satan which began in the Temptation narrative. Thus, Jesus' activity would not presuppose that Satan had already been defeated or bound.

When was Satan bound? Mark is silent on the issue and so 'we ourselves must decide.'<sup>155</sup> But how we fill in 'this particular gap in the narrative'<sup>156</sup> influences our reading of the rest of the story. Satan had not been bound in 3:27. Rather, Jesus seems to be speaking of the meaning of His present activity. How could He have expected the Scribes to know what happened in the wilderness?<sup>157</sup> Moreover in the next chapter, Mark reports Jesus speaking of the continuing menace Satan presents<sup>158</sup> (Mark 4:13f), implying Satan is not bound.

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<sup>151</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p.xx

<sup>152</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.170 cf. L.E.Keck, 'The Introduction to Mark's Gospel' in *NTS*12 (1996-1997) pp. 352-370 esp. pp. 361-362.

<sup>153</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.170

<sup>154</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.170

<sup>155</sup> Garrett, *Temptation*, p.8

<sup>156</sup> Garrett, *Temptation*, p. 8

<sup>157</sup> H.R.Heirs, *The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition* (Florida: Florida Press Gainesville, 1970) p. 45

<sup>158</sup> Heirs, *Kingdom*, p.45

Best's thesis of Satan's decisive defeat is weakened by the presence of Satan in 4:15, and working through Peter in 8:33. This means Best's view that Satan is bound in the temptation is not without problems. How do we explain the continued prevalence of evil, human as well as divine? If Best had explained the binding (if indeed it happened at all) in an 'incomplete sense',<sup>159</sup> that would clarify many things. It implies that Satan had not been bound completely and his power will be limited in terms of his operation. But that would also explain why his evil influence persisted, implying he is not totally bound. If Satan is bound (or will be bound by Jesus), then it is 'binding in some way'<sup>160</sup> but not complete binding, suggesting that Satan is still active. The point in 3:27 deals with Jesus' exorcisms in general whereby in every exorcism He has to bind Satan or the demon.

**(ii) *No Temptation At All***

Gundry sees the episode as 'so called temptation',<sup>161</sup> rejecting various aspects of the testing narrative, and intimating that Satan never tempts Jesus, or even confronts Him elsewhere in the Gospel. Rather Jesus is acknowledged by Satan with wild beasts and angels. This view is untenable. Gundry loses sight of the struggle between Jesus and Satan.

**(iii) *Jesus Resists Satan***

For J. Gibson, the ending of Mark's testing account is not ambiguous, in as much as Mark's references to Jesus being with the wild beasts and the angels serving Him both indicate that 'Jesus successfully resisted the efforts of Satan to sway Him from His divinely appointed path and had proven Himself loyal and obedient to the commission He received at baptism.'<sup>162</sup> By enduring Satan's temptation, Jesus proved Himself worthy of God's acclamation of Him, (see 1:11), thereby foiling Satan's effort to show Jesus was unworthy. Jesus successfully resisted the efforts of Satan to sway Him from

<sup>159</sup> S.H.Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) p.109. See R. H.Heirs, 'Satan, Demons and the Kingdom of God', in *SJT* 27(1974) pp. 35-47 especially p.47. Heirs opines that Satan has not been bound.

<sup>160</sup> Garrett, *Temptations*, 8n14.

<sup>161</sup> Cited by Garrett, *Temptations*, p.54

<sup>162</sup> J.B.Gibson, *The Temptations of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) pp. 30-32. J.R. Bauckham sees Jesus with the wild beasts, as prefiguring Messianic age. See J. R. Bauckham, 'Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mark 1:13): A Christological Image For An Ecological Age,' in J.B. Green and M. Turner (eds.) *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ*. (Grand Rapids, 1994) pp. 3-21

His divinely appointed path. This is not decisive victory for Jesus as the temptation narrative is just the beginning of the war<sup>163</sup> implying 'it is scarcely the case that Jesus accomplished the decisive victory over Satan, so that the entire rest of His ministry is but a mopping-up operation.'<sup>164</sup> Jesus endured Satan's test. This view places the power of Jesus on a par with that of Satan implying neither was victorious. The outcome of the temptation is inconclusive.

#### ***(iv) The Beginning Of The Battle***

Robinson affirms the temptation narrative is the beginning of the struggle between Jesus and Satan where Jesus is locked up in a fierce battle with Satan. Both combatants were testing their strength, in an initial encounter.<sup>165</sup>

Mark's account of Jesus' temptation lacks a decisive ending. Mark places the testing episode at the outset of Jesus' ministry, using ἐκβάλλει and integrating the testing narrative with Jesus' baptism. It was God who put Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. 'The test was a real one in which Jesus was free to choose whether He would follow God's way or not. His obedience could not simply be assumed. Otherwise it would not have achieved its purpose of proving Jesus to be righteous.'<sup>166</sup> Worthy people are often tested. Abraham (Jubilees 18) and Job were tested more than once, and Jesus 'will be tempted throughout the story.'<sup>167</sup> The outcome of the temptation is inconclusive. It is just the beginning of the struggle. At that time it was the belief that the triumphant inauguration of the Messianic Age would be immediately preceded by a supreme conflict with the forces of evil; and when verses 12-13 are read in that context, the temptation seems to possess 'an eschatological significance as the required prelude to the Lord's announcement of the good news.'<sup>168</sup> The struggle was between the forces of evil and the forces of good, making it 'cosmic.'<sup>169</sup> This cosmic battle is between Satan and Jesus.

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<sup>163</sup> Gibson, *Temptations*, p.31

<sup>164</sup> Garrett, *Temptations*, 59n21

<sup>165</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p. 43

<sup>166</sup> Garrett, *Temptations*, p.59

<sup>167</sup> Garrett, *Temptations*, p.59

<sup>168</sup> Burkill, *Revelation*, p.228

<sup>169</sup> Robinson, *Problem*, p.29

What are our findings so far? There is nothing showing that Satan was defeated decisively in the temptation. Satan does not leave Jesus after the temptation, but lurks around for an opportune time. Jesus resisted Satan and with Satan's power undermined, Jesus was able to launch His programme. There are still struggles in the exorcisms. The disciples are not able to cast out a demon. Jesus Himself describes a kind of demon that can be cast out only by prayer, implying the agencies of Satan are still strong. Though Satan has been weakened, he is still active. This is the beginning of the war, but whether it is a cosmic battle or a battle between Jesus and the evil in human beings, or the interplay of both spiritual and human will be explored as we go through the Gospel of Mark. The human will is seen in how the Israelites wilfully disobeyed God and had to repent. Given this picture about the outcome of the temptation where Jesus resists Satan, we will examine the proclamation of the Kingdom by Jesus beginning with the setting in which the proclamation is made.

## **2.6 THE PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

### **2.6.1 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD: MARK 1:14-15**

#### **2.6.2 THE PRESENCE OF SATAN'S INFLUENCE**

If Jesus indeed launches the Kingdom of God why is Satan's influence being felt? The community in which Jesus launches the Kingdom is still endangered by Satan, exposed to outer and inner temptations, perplexed by the ways of the Kingdom and being tempted to prefer 'its own, all the human fancies about it.'<sup>170</sup> The proclamation of the Kingdom is set in a world plagued by persecution and 'anxieties over life's demands, and the desire for wealth and cravings of other sorts' (Mark 4:19). Thus we can get a glimpse of Christian life and the struggles people experience. In spite of these pressures, God has decided to bring about His Kingdom through Jesus' word which is being heard and accepted. It is only God who 'can and will bring about the harvest' in the end.

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<sup>170</sup> A.M. Ambrozic, *The Hidden Kingdom* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1972) p. 121

### 2.6.3 THE BACKGROUND TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The expression, 'the Kingdom of God' or 'the Kingdom of Heaven' cannot be found in the Old Testament or in the apocalyptic writings. But the Kingdom involving the revelation of the sovereignty of God is basic to the teachings of these writings,<sup>171</sup> with the coming of the Kingdom marking the great climax of history. Both look to the time when the Kingdom will be fulfilled. The dualistic view of this world, finds expression in the doctrine of two ages in which this age<sup>172</sup> is set over against the age to come. There was the idea that the Golden Age would come upon the earth as the final act of history, preceded by the destruction of the wicked by God and resulting in the blessing of God in the age to come. In this earthly Kingdom, all forms of evil will be destroyed (Dan. 7:18, 27) cf. 1 Enoch 6-36, with no oppression and sin (1 Enoch 10:20-22; cf. 25:6) with Jerusalem as the centre (1 Enoch 90: 28f.). This Kingdom will be shared by the living and those resurrected from the dead (Dan. 12:2). The coming of the Kingdom is described in terms of a powerful king who will come and free Israel from tyranny (17: 24-27). This ruler, a descendant of David (17:23) will rule over his people in righteousness. In Psalms of Solomon 18, the ruler is God's anointed, the Messiah. We have an earthly Kingdom, eternal, ruled over by God's Messiah under whom the Gentiles will be made to serve.<sup>173</sup>

### 2.6.4 THE MEANING OF THE KINGDOM AND OF מְלִיכָהּ IN 1:15

The Aramaic term used by Jesus means sovereignty.<sup>174</sup> Whenever biblical texts speak of God becoming King, the Targumin speaks of God's exercise of sovereign authority, and render the Hebrew verb by an Aramaic noun.<sup>175</sup> The Kingdom of God means God invading history in order to secure the redemption of human beings. Why מְלִיכָהּ in 1:15 and how do we interpret it? Mark 1:15 is a summary of the message Jesus brought to His nation unfolded in the Gospel. It included the message of the coming revelation of divine Kingdom, to be understood in the context of Mark 1:15. 'In His word and work there is an initiation of the sovereign action of God that brings

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<sup>171</sup> Russell, *Method*, p.285

<sup>172</sup> Russell, *Method*, p.286

<sup>173</sup> Russell, *Method*, p.289

<sup>174</sup> Lane, *Mark*, 64n92. See R.T. France, *Divine Government, God's Kingship in Gospel of Mark* (London : S.P.C.K., 1990) pp. 12-13

<sup>175</sup> Lane, *Mark*, 64n92 For example in Isaiah 40:10, we have 'Behold, the Lord will come as a mighty man, and his arm will rule for him.' The Targum translates it as, 'The sovereignty of your God will be revealed.' For the Lord to come as a mighty man and for his arm to rule for him signifies the revelation of God's sovereignty through a saving action.

salvation and it is to end in a transformed universe.'<sup>176</sup> It is because of the proclamation of this message that we have the term ἡγγικεν used in the summary statement of the Kingdom.

How are we to interpret ἡγγικεν in the light of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom in 1:15? Should we translate ἡγγικεν in the light of an 'imminent nearness' or as 'having arrived'? One theory argues that (i) the meaning of the Semitic and the Greek terms are not very clear, (ii) that 'imminent nearness and actual arrival do overlap; thus it is extremely difficult to speak of the one without also speaking of the other and practical distinctions break down'<sup>177</sup> and (iii) ἡγγικεν in Mark 1:15 neither suggests nearness at the expense of arrival nor arrival at the expense of nearness.

The second theory identifies a weakness in the imminence and the arrival of the Kingdom, which 'lies in their failure to come to grips with the semantic significance of words in their contextual settings.'<sup>178</sup> This is applied to Mark 1:15 in that the statement does not begin with ἡγγικεν but with πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς implying that the time span assigned by God for the fulfilment of the promise of the Kingdom has been filled up and as such it has come to its end. If it has reached its limit then there is no further waiting.

The third theory emphasises that the time has become really full, not only almost. 'One must read the prophets to grasp the immense dynamic of the expectation, the unbroken and ever newly awakened faith in an absolute future of God. Only then does one know what this statement says in which the faith of early Christianity has been shaped. The unsurpassable future of God has begun.'<sup>179</sup> This weakens the notion in Mark 1:15 that the time of waiting is over and the Kingdom is to come in the near future. If the time preceding the Kingdom is finished, then time of the Kingdom has begun. It is in this vein that we want to discuss the views of A.M Ambrozic.

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<sup>176</sup> G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986) p.74

<sup>177</sup> R.F. Berkey, 'EGGIZEIN, PHTHANEIN, and Realised Eschatology', in *JBL* 82 (1963) p. 181

<sup>178</sup> W. Kelber, *The Kingdom of God in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) p.9

<sup>179</sup> W. Trilling, 'Christus Verkündigung in den synoptischen Evangelien: Beispiele gattungsgemässer Auslegung Biblische Hanbibliothek, nr. 4. Munchen, 1969.

## 2.6.5 THE KINGDOM HAS COME

For Ambrozic<sup>180</sup> contextually ἡγγικεν is to be translated as the Kingdom of God has come. First, he examines the two statements in 15a and affirms that in terms of grammar and style, the two statements in 15a πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς and ἡγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία are alike. The first clause shows that 'the divinely decreed time of waiting has come to an end.'<sup>181</sup> The prophecies of 1:2-3 are taking place. The second clause interprets the first clause, but stating the same truth. The difference is that the first clause looks backwards while the second looks to the present and future. The first announces the end of the old era; the second proclaims the beginning of the new.

Secondly, he introduces the Kingdom of God as the new reality because Jesus constitutes the end. The Old Testament prophecies in Mark bring to light the one who has been promised, suggesting since the time of promises looked forward to the way of Jesus, it is His way to the Cross which constitutes the Kingdom. A close look at the beginning of the Gospel reveals the ministry of the man who prepares the way by His proclamation and destiny. As such, the Gospel of God serves as the heading of the ministry of the man who 'goes the way'. Yet this heading speaks of the coming of the Kingdom not 'of the way.'<sup>182</sup>

The third factor is the significance of κηρύσσων. Jesus' primary aim involves proclaiming and teaching the Gospel. For Mark, the time of salvation consists in the proclamation and the teaching of Jesus.<sup>183</sup> The properly eschatological event is the proclamation, for it is in the proclamation itself that we have the presence of the Kingdom.

Fourth, by examining statements about the Kingdom of God in the Gospel we will find out that: (a) the absence of the reference to knowledge in Mark 4:11 makes the Kingdom 'a present gift.'<sup>184</sup> See also Mark 10:15. (b) The Kingdom is portrayed as a reality into which human beings may enter. Mark has added the phrase 'with power'

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<sup>180</sup> A. M. Ambozic, 'The Hidden Kingdom: A Redactional-Critical Study to the references to the Kingdom of God in Mark's Gospel', in *CBQ* 1972, pp.1-31 esp. p. 21

<sup>181</sup> See Gould, *Mark*, p.16 and Nineham, *Mark*, p.69.

<sup>182</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom,' p. 22

<sup>183</sup> See Keck, 'The Introduction to Mark's Gospel,' *NTS* 12 (1965-66) pp. 352-370 esp. p. 361; cited by Ambrozic, *Kingdom*, p. 22

<sup>184</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom,' p. 23



at the end of Mark 9:1, distinguishing the future coming of the Kingdom from its presence in the word and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; and also the perfect tense of the verb 'to come' serves to stress the difference between the future fulfilment of the Kingdom and its presence in the Son of God who is on his way to the Cross. (c) The two parables in 4:26-29 illustrate the presence of the Kingdom. (d) The contrast between the growth of the Kingdom, and the certainty of the harvest between the smallness of the seed and the size of the tree point to the final state of the Kingdom. The contrast implies that the final result is not 'confined entirely to the future.'<sup>185</sup> The same idea is implied in Mark 10:30 where the rewards for the present for following Jesus are broadly described and distinguished from the future ones. The reasons assigned above clearly show that for Mark, the Kingdom is already present in the word and work of Jesus and the phrase the Kingdom of God has come.<sup>186</sup>

Ambrozic offers different reasons as to why Mark uses ἤγγικεν. One of the reasons is to be found in the missionary vocabulary of the church. The Kingdom which is present is hidden, and is 'still waiting to manifest itself and unfold all its eschatological powers.'<sup>187</sup> The tension in a Kingdom which is presently hidden and the one which will be revealed fully in the future is in the 'very flesh and blood of the Second Gospel.'<sup>188</sup> The verb ἤγγικεν in 1:15 implies the Kingdom, though already present, has not fully appeared. It is present, but it will be consummated in the future.

This is the content of the Gospel proclaimed by John the Baptist, Jesus and the church.<sup>189</sup> The one who enters the Kingdom must repent and believe in the Gospel. The word repent, μετανοεῖτε, has its roots in the LXX where the Hebrew verb <sup>sub</sup> (turning back from one's sinful ways) is used. The word μετανοεῖτε involves conversion. For Mark, to place one's trust in the Gospel implies placing one's trust in Jesus. Jesus is calling for a radical decision: either a person submits to the summons

<sup>185</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom,' p. 23

<sup>186</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom,' p. 23

<sup>187</sup> See Burkill, *Revelation*, pp. 29-31

<sup>188</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom,' p. 24

<sup>189</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom', p.25. The content of the Gospel is not like the one envisaged by E.G. Gulins, *Die Freude im Neuen Testament* (Helsinki: Druckerei-A.G. der Literatur-Gesellschaft, 1932), I,33. For Gulin it refers to the 'victories' of the in-breaking Kingdom. Gulin's view is cited by Robinson, *Problem*, 23n2. For Robinson the Gospel in 1:14f is not in consonance with the general early Christian Gospel of the cross and the Resurrection.

of God, or chooses this world and its riches and honour controlled by Satan. This implies a struggle between deciding to submit to God or to Satan.

#### **2.6.6 CONCLUSION TO THE PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM**

Let us bring our findings on the Kingdom of God together. Mark 4:1-2 create a picture of Jesus teaching His readers. Verse 11 deals with the content of this teaching, the presence of the Kingdom, and herein lies the mystery. Once the Kingdom is present, it is bound to achieve its goal in the end. Verses 21-22 bring to light the final manifestation of the powers of the Kingdom, already realised and its glory visible to those who have eyes to see. Verses 10 and 34 stress Mark's awareness and his emphasis on the difference between the community's present and Jesus' past. This Kingdom, brought by Jesus into the world, has ten references to 'hearing' in the Parable showing the importance of what is being taught and the urgency of the message.

The Kingdom condemns, blinding the eyes and stopping the ears of those who will not accept Jesus as the one in whom God's Spirit is at work. This phenomenon occurs everyday. Jesus in His teaching is creating the community; giving it firm hope that its present acceptance of Him as Son of God and Messiah will find its confirmation at His final coming in the clouds with great power and glory.<sup>190</sup>

The present Kingdom is a hidden one with the community waiting for its coming. Even though the members of the community have accepted the word, there is the danger that they will be unfaithful to the word. But the members are being consoled and exhorted through the demand for repentance and faith; and the warning that they heed what they hear. The community knows that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God in whom the Kingdom is already exercising its powers and proclaims these truths. The community does not know as it should know; 'defects of necessity disfigure its life and it is subject to doubts and discouragement.'<sup>191</sup> This is an indication that the teaching of Jesus has not yet produced its definitive result.

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<sup>190</sup> Ambrozic, *Kingdom*, p.135

<sup>191</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom,'p.135

The three parables bring to light the destiny of Jesus' teaching. The first one deals with the preaching of the word, in the past and the present with the emphasis on 'the word'. The community is aware that the words of Jesus have not been fully experienced in their lives. But the community refuses to be discouraged, for it knows that the word, being the 'divine eschatological manifestation'<sup>192</sup> cannot fail. Since the community exists it shows that Jesus' teaching has power and this unfailing power is the theme of the second parable. The power in the word is such that once the word is proclaimed; it begins its way towards its final goal. The hidden Kingdom belongs to God alone. Human beings cannot understand how it operates and can do nothing to change its course. The aim of the last parable is to present the final goal of the hidden Kingdom. Jesus' words and works may appear to be insignificant, yet the beginning of the end has arrived and the end itself cannot but come. All the nations will finally be gathered into the Kingdom where there will be joy and God's plan will be revealed in its full perspective.

## **2.7 THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM TO THE WHOLE GOSPEL**

The rest of the Gospel consists of illustrations of the way in which the deeds and words and character of Jesus (exorcisms and healings) bring the sovereignty of God to bear on His people. Wherever Jesus goes, the people are confronted with the Kingdom of God; and although Jesus Himself seems to have pointed forward to events which were to happen before the Kingdom of God was fully recognised, clearly to this extent, it had begun to come already. Let us discuss further the solution to the Best-Robinson debate and in that light examine how temptation, the human will, God, Satan and evil (physical and spiritual) are reflected in Mark's Gospel.

## **2.8 ROBINSON-BEST DEBATE-A SOLUTION AND ITS IMPLICATION IN MARK**

We affirmed that the solution to the Robinson-Best debate lies in the combination of the forensic apocalyptic eschatology and cosmological apocalyptic eschatology, implying no one cosmology is exhaustive in explaining the issues raised in the debate. Temptation is a struggle between the human will and Satan. At other times the forces

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<sup>192</sup> Ambrozic, 'Kingdom,' p.135

of Satan are so great that the human will has to succumb to these forces. At times the human will is able to resist the forces of Satan. In 1:12 - 13, Jesus has to resist Satan, implying there is a limitation to Satan's power. Temptation can come from human beings, from our inclinations and desires, as well as from the cares and pressures of the world. We can affirm that the Christian life is indeed a struggle.

Jesus asks people to repent (1:14-15). Repentance involves human choice. The human will can refuse to accept the message. God Himself can blind people to refuse to repent and Satan himself can either blind people or play on the weaknesses of human beings to refuse to repent. The Parable of the Sower is very significant for our discussion. In 4: 10-12, it is very clear that divine hardening comes into play. In 4:15, Satan takes away the message. What do we make of the other factors that cause people to be unreceptive: persecution, the cares of the world and the desires of the world? Can we affirm that these things are independent of Satan? Once we have affirmed that no single theory can explain things fully, do we not have Satan working alongside the persecution, the cares of the world and the desires of the world; thereby using them to play on the weaknesses of human beings?

The disciples fail to understand the parables (4:13) and the power of Jesus (4:40f; 6:37, 49-52; 8:4, 14-21). They are mystified by His teaching (7:18), especially on the need for suffering (8:32-34; 9:32-34; 10:32, 35-40), and they fail Him at the crucial hour (14: 32-42, 47, 50, 66-72). What caused their failure, their betrayal and their misunderstanding? This could have come from themselves because they are human or from their wilful disobedience or 'ignorance,'<sup>193</sup> or from Satan with the view to preventing them from knowing the truth; or from God himself. The 'mystery of the Kingdom of God'<sup>194</sup> has to do with God's strange decision of bringing His Kingdom in Jesus Christ, yet unleashing the forces of darkness to blind human beings so that they can oppose that Kingdom.

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<sup>193</sup> J.K. Riches, *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew* SNTW (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 2000) 82n35. Unlike Marcus, Riches affirms that ignorance is not per se evidence of darkening of the mind by angelic agencies, it may be the result of divine hardening or human failure, and in 8:33 there is an interplay between notions of divine necessity and human choice and failure.

<sup>194</sup> J. Marcus, 'Mark 4:10-12 and Marcan Epistemology,' in *JBL* 103/4 (1984) p.567

In the Passion narrative, it is evil in human beings that causes Jesus to die eventually on the Cross (see above). In the Prologue, we have the demoniac crying for help, because he is possessed by a demon. Spirit Possession is a disease. This disease came about because of the activities of the fallen angels. Disease could also have come about as a punishment from God (Mark 2; 1-12) or as a malfunction of the body.

Evil in the world can be attributed to two<sup>195</sup> causes: (i) demonic invasion of the world and (ii) the direct result of human disobedience. In the former case, people commit sin because they are led astray by the powers of darkness which hold them in bondage. In the latter case, the disobedience is archetypally represented in Adam. The former cause of sin is checked by the destruction of the powers of darkness while the latter cause of evil can be overcome through revelation and teaching of God's rule. There is also another cause of evil which is the evil impulse in human beings which leads human beings to do evil, and this evil impulse can be overcome by obeying God's laws. The solution to the Robinson-Best debate lies in the combination of the forensic apocalyptic eschatology and the cosmological apocalyptic eschatology, and that have been shown in the temptation, the call to repentance, disease and the root of evil in the world.

## **2.9 GENERAL CONCLUSION**

Examination of the opening scene (Mark 1:9-15) affirms that it evokes a world where forensic apocalyptic eschatology and cosmological apocalyptic eschatology are 'extraordinarily closely intertwined'; and then reviews the baptism narrative. We affirmed that for Mark, the baptism of Jesus is preceded by the splitting of the heavens; and the same Spirit which descends upon Jesus in the baptism to strengthen and equip Him for His ministry, drives Him into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. It is the first power struggle between Jesus and Satan. This struggle creates a scenario where Jesus battles with evil and its cosmic head, Satan. The struggle lasts for the whole period that Jesus is in the wilderness. The temptation narrative creates a setting with Jesus and the angels on the one side struggling with Satan and the wild beasts on the other.

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<sup>195</sup> Riches, *Mythologies*, p. xiii

Mark does not give any indication concerning the outcome of the temptation narrative. This struggle between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness is of interest to Western Scholars. Gundry sees no struggle or temptation at all between Jesus and Satan. Hooker intimates that it was obvious that Jesus would defeat Satan and for that reason it was not necessary for Mark to record it. Mauser opines that the whole of Mark's Gospel explains how Jesus is tempted but the temptation narrative in the wilderness is a confrontation between Jesus and Satan. Gibson intimates that Jesus resists Satan in the wilderness while Smith and Garrett indicate that if there is any binding at all of Satan in the wilderness, it is binding in some way or partial binding. This struggle between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness raises the question: Is the key theme for Mark, according to Best and Robinson, the struggle between Jesus and Satan or the struggle between Jesus and the human will?

According to Best the temptation narrative is a real struggle between Jesus and Satan. In the exorcisms the struggles between Jesus and the demons are not similar to the struggle in the temptation narrative; and Satan's influence is felt in some of the diseases narrated in Mark's Gospel. For Best, apart from the temptation narrative, the exorcisms and in some of the diseases where Satan's influence is felt, the rest of the Gospel deals with evil in the hearts of human beings. In Jesus' discussion with the disciples, it is the human will that comes to the fore. Peter is rebuked for his human thoughts which have nothing to do with Satan. The disciples in their debate with Jesus show ignorance which has nothing to do with Satan. Their ignorance shows their human nature which is reflected in their actions. It is the evil in the hearts of the Jewish authorities which leads to the debate between them and Jesus. In the teachings of Jesus, He does not teach about Satan and demons. The teachings are all in parables and they show how human beings can have an intimate relationship with God through obedience to the word.

In the Parable of the Sower, Satan is not the only cause of evil, and disobedience in human beings can be attributed to divine hardening. In the Passion narrative there is no mention of Satan. It is the evil in human beings that leads Jesus to the Cross, and Jesus' death has nothing to do with the defeat of Satanic and demonic forces. The temptation of Jesus in Gethsemane is an internal struggle within Jesus and a struggle between the will of Jesus and the will of God. Jesus is fighting with evil in Himself. It

is not a cosmic conflict and Satan is not involved in it. For Best, the key theme of Mark's Gospel is not the struggle between Jesus and Satan but the struggle between Jesus and the human will.

Robinson takes a different stance altogether. According to Robinson the key theme of Mark's Gospel is the struggle between Jesus and Satan. This struggle begins in the temptation narrative and it continues in the exorcisms. The nature of the struggle in the temptation narrative is similar to the struggle in the exorcisms; and in the exorcisms the struggle is between Jesus and the agents of Satan, the demons. For Robinson, Jesus' debate with the disciples can be set in the context of opposition which is spearheaded by Satan, and it is cosmic. Satan works through Peter to oppose Jesus. Satan blinds the disciples from hearing the Gospel, and this blinding can be removed by divine intervention. This same opposition which is in the form of a struggle continues in Jesus' debate with the Jewish authorities with the latter being incited by Satan. Jesus' death can be set in the context of a cosmic struggle between Jesus and Satan. For Robinson, the key theme of Mark's Gospel is not the struggle for the human heart but the struggle between Jesus and Satan.

The key theme in Mark's Gospel for these scholars is linked with their views on the extent of Satan's power. Even though there is no way of ascertaining whether these scholars believe in Satan, they argue vigorously about the power and the fate of Satan. For both scholars Jesus is engaged in a fierce battle with Satan in the temptation narrative. Best argues that even though the struggle is fierce, Satan is defeated decisively and bound in the temptation narrative and because of this the demons are defeated decisively. Satan is not seen in Jesus' debates with the disciples and with the Jewish authorities and neither is Satan seen in the death of Jesus on the Cross because he had already been bound.

Robinson takes a radical view. His view is that Jesus engages in a struggle with Satan which begins in the temptation narrative and this fierce struggle continues throughout the exorcisms. Satan's agents, the demons are engaged in a struggle with Jesus in the exorcisms, and even though Jesus defeats them He does so with difficulty. Satan works through the disciples in their debates with Jesus trying to oppose Him. He works through Peter in opposing Jesus from taking the path set for Him. He blinds the

minds of the disciples, confusing them and this confusion is to be eradicated by divine intervention. The teachings of Jesus involve struggle with Satanic and demonic forces. For example, in the teaching of the Beelzebul Controversy, the Parable of the Sower and the teaching on the Apocalypse in Mark 13, there are elements of struggle with Satanic and demonic forces. In the Passion Satan is still at work and the Crucifixion is a struggle between Jesus and Satan, and it is on the Cross that Satan's power is decisively broken. Marcus opines that the power of Satan will be decisively broken in the Parousia. What are our findings so far regarding the fate of Satan's power in Mark's Gospel for these scholars? Best intimates that Satan is bound in the Temptation narrative while Robinson opines that Satan is bound on the Cross.

What can be deduced from the views of Best and Robinson regarding the world in which we live in relation to the power of Satan? Best gives a view of a demon-free world, a world where Satan and demons are bound and what is crucial for the followers of Jesus is not the struggle with these forces because they have already been bound but the struggle for the human heart. Robinson on the other hand gives a view of a world where there is a conflict between Jesus on the one hand and Satan and demons on the other hand. The implication being that the followers of Jesus in such a world are caught up in a struggle between Satan and the demonic forces.

We discussed Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God in Mark 1:14-15. We indicated that the Kingdom is launched in a community where the people are exposed to outer and inner temptations including persecutions, anxieties over life's demands and the desire for wealth. Best argues that the Kingdom which is proclaimed by Jesus has nothing to do with the defeat of demons. It has nothing to do with Satan but it deals with the relationship between God and human beings and it is seen in relation to the way human beings receive the Gospel through repentance and having faith. Robinson affirms that Satan tries to prevent people from entering the Kingdom which is being established by Jesus. The techniques employed by Satan include persecutions, the desires of the world, the cares of the world and removing the word from the hearts of the people. We intimated that for Mark the Kingdom is present in the word and work of Jesus. The parables of the Kingdom deal with the preaching of the word underpinned by unfailing power of Jesus' teaching and because of that the Kingdom will reach its final goal leading to the consummation of the Kingdom. Even though



there is the danger of members of the community (the family of Jesus) being unfaithful to the word they are being consoled and exhorted through the demand for repentance and faith.

Even though Best and Robinson argue vigorously about the role and the fate of Satan and demons in Mark's narrative, they do not give much consideration to the effect that the narratives would have on the communities of readers who believe in Satan and demons. They do not address the issue of how these readers would be reassured about ways of coping with Satan and demons in terms of resisting them. They do not comment on the extent to which Satan and demons would disturb these readers in terms of the damage they can cause, the fears they can create and the tensions they would create leading to diseases and spiritual attacks including possession. They do not address how and why people are possessed and the ways of combating Satan and demons. They do not give indications as to how readers in that context might find a sense of security and freedom from such powers. Because of these omissions, we can intimate that Best and Robinson do not give answers that might satisfy readers in communities that believe in Satan and demons. In the light of these omissions we will find out whether the Ghanaian Christians in London might be able to supply information on what is missing from these scholars when we examine contemporary African readings on some of the texts in Mark's Gospel.

We revisited the debate between Best and Robinson. We affirmed that each of them was assuming a unitary form of cosmology underlying the Markan narrative and that the solution to the debate lies in the combination of the forensic apocalyptic eschatology and cosmological apocalyptic eschatology because a single cosmology is not exhaustive in explaining the issues raised by them. We then indicated that in the light of the combination of these cosmologies, we will have different views about temptation, the call to repentance, the root of evil and diseases in Mark. Temptation can come from four agencies – Satan, human beings, inclinations and desires as well as from the world. Repentance involves human choice. Obstacles to repentance can be from the human will, God, Satan or the struggle between the human will and Satan or the struggle between Satan and God. The disciples' failure to understand Jesus could have been caused by their disobedience, ignorance or even by God or Satan.

Evil in the world can be caused by three factors. The first factor is demonic invasion, where people commit sin because the powers of darkness lead them astray and hold them in bondage. This can be checked by the destruction of the powers of darkness by God's intervention. The second factor, human disobedience, is archetypally represented in Adam and it can be overcome through revelation and teaching God's rule. The third factor, the evil impulse in human beings, can be overcome by obeying God's laws. We stressed that diseases are caused by the activities of the fallen angels through their disobedience. Other causes of diseases include malfunction of the body and punishment from God.

We have examined the background of the opening scene. We have discussed the Markan narratives on baptism and the temptation and outlined the views of Western scholars on the temptation narrative with the emphasis on the views of Best and Robinson. We discussed their views on their key themes in Mark's Gospel, the extent of Satan's power and the world in relation to the power of Satan and demons. We have examined Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God in the context of the world in which it is launched and stressed four significant factors: the preaching of the word, the unfailing power of Jesus, the struggles the members of the community go through and the final consummation of the Kingdom. We have identified what these Western scholars omit in their debate on Markan theology and have pointed out that what they omit will be discussed in the contemporary African readings. We have offered the solution to the debate between Best and Robinson and suggested new interpretations for temptation, repentance, and the roots of evil and the causes of diseases. The next chapter will deal with the way Mark's Gospel handles a disease called spirit possession and how this disease is exorcised.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3. SPIRIT POSSESSION AND EXORCISM IN MARK**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Satan (and his cohorts) use possession, as well as temptation to harass people. Possession is the process whereby people are forced to act against their will in accordance with the wishes of evil spirits. This chapter deals with how the possessed are liberated by Jesus. This is part of an ongoing struggle between the forces of good and evil. In the previous chapter we examined the views of Best and Robinson on exorcisms. Robinson affirms that in the exorcisms there are struggles between Jesus and the demons similar to the struggle in the temptation narrative, the titles used by the demons in addressing Jesus in the exorcisms are ways of overpowering Jesus and the exorcisms are a real struggle between Jesus and the demons. Best argues that the struggle in the exorcisms are mere 'mopping up operations' in contrast to the decisive victory over Satan in the temptation narrative. The titles the demons use in the exorcisms recognise the superiority of Jesus. In this chapter, we will examine the Beelzebul Controversy, the exorcism in the synagogue, the healings of the Gerasene demoniac and the Epileptic Boy. There will be a discussion on the picture painted by Mark; the role exorcisms play in establishing the Kingdom of God; what is established and what is lacking in the readings of the Western scholars and a conclusion.

#### **3.2 THE BEELZEBUL CONTROVERSY**

##### **3.2.1 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE BEELZEBUL CONTROVERSY: MARK 3:20-35**

The significance of the exorcisms is discussed in the Beelzebul Controversy, providing the key to their interpretation. We will examine the source of Jesus' power, the significance of the word 'first,' the new /true family and draw conclusions from them.



We can deduce from the above that ‘any domain containing hierarchies of authority cannot stand if it is divided against itself.’<sup>7</sup> It is not likely that Satan would cast one of his allies out of a possessed man. The two arguments on the Parable of the Divided Kingdom imply that Satan’s βασιλεία, his royal power, remains unshaken.<sup>8</sup>

We have a different response to the Scribes with a different view of Satan’s power when we examine the Parable of the Strong Man:

- (i) To be able to enter the house ‘of’ or ‘protected by’ a strong man and plunder his possessions, the strong man must first be bound.
- (ii) If Jesus can cast out a demon whose strength is from Satan, He has the strength to bind (or: is a stronger man who has come and subdued) a demon whose strength is from Satan.
- (iii) If Jesus subdued a demon whose strength is from Satan, then Jesus’ strength is not from Satan but from a stronger source than Satan.<sup>9</sup>

This would mean Jesus is stronger than a demon. A demon’s strength is from Satan while Jesus’ strength comes from a power greater than Satan. Thus it is not true that Satan casts out demons, since a strong man must be overcome before his house can be plundered, indicating ‘a greater power must be overcome by a lesser power before the possessions he is guarding can be plundered.’<sup>10</sup>

The second parable implies Satan’s Kingdom ‘has been invaded in a very violent, devastating way’.<sup>11</sup> The devil’s house has been attacked and seized, with himself paralysed, that he is henceforth unable to prevent Jesus, the stronger man, from releasing those who ‘previously were held in thrall.’<sup>12</sup> The devil’s rule over the human race has been replaced by the Kingdom of God reflected in Jesus’ exorcisms. The binding of Satan and other evil spirits shows the end of their βασιλεία and stands in contradiction with a parable implying Satan’s βασιλεία is intact. The two aspects of the devil’s βασιλεία are interconnected, yet they create a tension: while the Parable of the Divided

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<sup>7</sup> Robbins, ‘Controversy’, p.165.

<sup>8</sup> Marcus, ‘Beelzebul’, p.166.

<sup>9</sup> Robbins, ‘Controversy’, p.166.

<sup>10</sup> Robbins, ‘Controversy’, p.166.

<sup>11</sup> Marcus, ‘Beelzebul’, p.250.

<sup>12</sup> Marcus, ‘Beelzebul’, p.250.

Kingdom implies the continuity of Satan's rule, the Parable of the strong man implies the overthrow of Satan's rule.

Is there any solution? There are three<sup>13</sup> approaches to solving the tension. The first approach<sup>14</sup> interprets the passage without emphasising the Parable of the Divided Kingdom, because the only purpose of the Parable is to show God's work (not Satan's) in Jesus' exorcism. This approach is faulty because it does not consider the polemical setting of the discussion.<sup>15</sup> The second approach hinges on the grammar of the Divided Kingdom, separating the saying about Satan rising against himself (in Mark 3:26) from the metaphors of the Divided Kingdom and the house in Mark 3:24-25. In Mark 3:26 there is a change in grammar in the protasis from ἐάν + aorist subjunctive to εἰ + aorist indicative meaning Satan has risen against himself and therefore he has no power.<sup>16</sup> One flaw with such a stance is that though there is a difference in the form of the conditional sentence in 3:26, the verse is closely parallel to 3:24-25 and it is difficult to see how they can have radically different meanings.<sup>17</sup> In the flow of the argument, 3:24; 3:25 and 3:26 seem to refute the charge of 3:22 and to justify the negative implication of the rhetorical question in 3:23b. Why does Jesus suddenly accept the premise of 3:26a of Satan rising against himself when He has been arguing against it consistently since 3:23b.<sup>18</sup> In 3:26a Jesus is not accepting fully the premise that Satan has rebelled against himself as momentarily granting it for the sake of argument, in order to move on and make His own point.<sup>19</sup>

The third approach interprets the passage by analysing the logic of the two parables. The emphasis is not on Satan's kingship under attack but on how it is being attacked. What is being denied in the Parable of the Divided Kingdom is Satan's Kingdom becoming self-

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<sup>13</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.251.

<sup>14</sup> See Hans-Josef Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978) pp.178-179 cited by Marcus, 'Beelzebul', 251n14

<sup>15</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.251

<sup>16</sup> J. Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (2 vols. EKKNT 2: 1-2. Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978 ) i.150; cf. S.E.Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with reference to Tense and Mood* ( SBG1, New York and Bern; Peter Lang, 1989 ) p.310.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.263.

<sup>18</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.253

<sup>19</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.253.

destructing, not that it is being undermined<sup>20</sup> In the Parable of the strong man, Jesus affirms that through His onslaught the devil's domain is being reduced by an outside force rather than through an internal division.<sup>21</sup> A clever way of putting the two Parables - the Divided Kingdom and the strong man - together agreeing with the canonical writers' understanding of the link between the two sections.<sup>22</sup> But it is difficult to see how it agrees with Mark 3:23-26. If Jesus' argument implies Satan's Kingdom has been exploded rather than imploded, how would there be a justification in the argument in the Divided Kingdoms resulting in being destroyed?<sup>23</sup> Invaded Kingdoms also end up by being destroyed. Jesus cannot leave the two supposed explanations on an equal footing. The way He interprets His exorcisms should 'trump' that of His opponents by appealing to outward circumstances which are visible to all and a clear testimony not to the equality but the superiority of His interpretation. Jesus has to prove to His opponents that their accusation is false by indicating that their charge would lead to a consequence that obviously does not exist, namely the fatal weakening of Satan's power.<sup>24</sup>

The problem with the distinction between internal revolt and external invasion does not lead to an absurdity, but the effectiveness of the argument 'requires a reduction in the absurdity.'<sup>25</sup> Thus the Parable of the Divided Kingdom in Mark 3:23-26 is a *reductio ad absurdum*: If the charge of demonic collusion were true, then Jesus' exorcisms would testify to a division within and consequent collapse of Satan's Kingdom, but such a collapse is refuted by the continued and obvious strength of Satan.<sup>26</sup> Satan revolting against himself can be viewed as a subjective possibility rather than an accomplished

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<sup>20</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul,' p.254.

<sup>21</sup> See C. K. Barrett, *The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* ( London: SCM Press, 1947) p.60. Anderson , *Mark*, p.123 and D.H. Juel, *Mark* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1990) p.63. These three scholars agree on this affirmation yet there are differences in their point of view. Barrett and Anderson maintain that Satan is still strong, while Juel intimates that Satan's power has come to an end.

<sup>22</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul,' p.255.

<sup>23</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul,' p.255.

<sup>24</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul,' p.255.

<sup>25</sup> See Barrett, *Spirit*, pp. 60-61. For Barrett the empire of Satan is still strong.

<sup>26</sup> See W. Schmithals: *Das Evangelium nach Markus* ( Gutersloh: Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1979 ) p.222. Schmithals maintaining that the argument is *reductio ad absurdum* concludes that Satan has been shorn of his power. For Marcus this conclusion is wrong, one reason is that the way the alternatives have been stated is too categorical.

fact.<sup>27</sup> Thus it seems safe to conclude that Jesus' point is that the internal division postulated in Mark 3:26 cannot have happened, because if it had, the fatal weakening of Satan's Kingdom 'would rapidly have transpired- which is obviously not the case.'<sup>28</sup>

The proposition that Jesus casts out demons by Beelzebul has been put forward by Jesus' opponents. Jesus responds with a *reductio ad absurdum* concluding with a conditional sentence implying, if the opponents' charge were true, then Satan's Kingdom would have fallen. This sentence does not need to be in standard unreal form, indeed its statement in such a form would represent rhetorical overkill, because 'the proposition of an impotent Satan is refuted at face value by the obvious continuance of evil in the world'<sup>29</sup>. In the Jewish tradition it is a standard theme, especially apocalyptic ones, where 'the sad state of the world testifies to the sovereignty of Satan over the present age'<sup>30</sup> ( 1QS 1: 18-19; 2:19; 1QM 14:9; Apoc. Elijah 1:3-4 cf. 1 Enoch 9: 1, 6-9 ). The Parable of the Divided Kingdom, then, is a *reductio ad absurdum*, and there is a real and irreducible difference between its portrayal of a strong man, on the one hand, and on the other hand the depiction of a paralysed Satan in the Parable of the strong man.

There are three ways of handling the contradiction. One way is to affirm that what is predominant is the claim that Satan is strong. This will mean Satan's Kingdom is not divided but is alive and well. This suggests that Christians are enlisted in a cosmic battle with their weapon in Jesus Christ and they still have a battle to be won and there is the need to depend on Jesus. Another way is to maintain that Satan, the strong man is bound. This suggests that the danger is past, Jesus has bound the demonic householder, and He can therefore take out Satan's demons at will and that those who are in Jesus are His brothers and sisters in His house. They listen to His words and do God's will and live in a

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<sup>27</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.256. For the views of scholars who see this as a *reductio ad absurdum*, see: R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* ( 2 Volumes, HTKNT 2.1-2; Freiburg: Herder, 1976) 1214-1215. Pesch opines that in relation to v. 23b, " it is not the intention of Satan to destroy himself, to cast himself out. Therefore the reproach against Jesus is senseless," and Barrett, *Spirit*, pp. 61-62. Barrett in quoting T.W.Manson affirms, " the argument is simply, Satan is not casting out Satan, because Satan is not such a fool'.

<sup>28</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.258.

<sup>29</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.259

<sup>30</sup> Marcus, 'Beelzebul', p.259



safe zone where Satan cannot touch them. The third way is to suggest that there is a tension which cannot be resolved. The impression one gets is that we live in a world where on the one hand Satan's Kingdom is alive and well and, on the other hand, Satan's Kingdom is overpowered.

### **3.2.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD 'FIRST'.**

When was the strong man first bound? We have argued that there is nothing in the prologue showing that the strong man or Satan was bound. Mark does not provide any clue to the outcome of the temptation narrative, and we have argued that it is inconclusive. Moreover, Jesus would not tell the Scribes what happened between Him and Satan in the wilderness when they were not there. Jesus resisted Satan, but that did not necessarily mean that Satan was bound. If Satan was first bound in the temptation narrative how do we explain the confrontations between Jesus and the demons in the exorcisms? The struggles between Jesus and the demons, and the demons not leaving their victims immediately they confront Jesus in the rest of the narrative, shows that the strong man has not been bound. There is nothing in the Crucifixion to show that the strong man was bound. Jesus, in this passage gives us a clue regarding His exorcisms. Satan is considered a strong man who holds people captive, and the captives are in his Kingdom, and in order to release his victims, this strong man must first be bound. This means Satan or his cohorts must first be bound, in the form of a rebuke or command, in every exorcism. Anytime Jesus meets these demons, He had to bind them before He could cast them out. For some scholars this is Jesus' general response to a general question relating to the power relationship between Him and Satan. Satan is the king of this world, and for Jesus to go into the world and set the captives free, He must first bind Satan. The question of when Satan was bound is still not settled.

### 3.2.4 THE NEW /TRUE FAMILY

In v.31 Jesus' mother and brothers<sup>31</sup> arrive at the scene resuming the account suspended in v.21,<sup>32</sup>: a Markan sandwich. The family stand outside the house. The word *ἐξω* stresses the distance between Jesus and His family. Theologically, 'the family does not belong to the circle of Jesus and his followers.'<sup>33</sup> The crowd sitting around Jesus differentiates them from the Scribes and the outsiders. It is only in Mark where we have the 'crucial interpretation of the paradigmatic Parable of the Sower,<sup>34</sup> addressed to *οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα* (Mark 4:10b). For Mark, Jesus is addressing the same group as the one identified as His true family. The secret of the Kingdom is revealed to this privileged group alone (4:11b), while 'for those outside everything is in parables', (4:11c). In the mind of Mark, *ἐκείνοις δε τοῖς ἐξω* includes Jesus' natural kin, who are outside.

Jesus poses a question -Who are my mother and who are my brothers? These five references to Jesus' mother and brothers are catchphrases holding the narrative together and drawing attention to the constitution of Jesus' true family. The repetition is 'rhetorically powerful.'<sup>35</sup> Jesus constitutes a new family for Himself,<sup>36</sup> not based on family ties which were very important for first Century Palestinian Jews. What is strange is 'Jesus' authority to upset established mores,<sup>37</sup> involving alienation from family members, new life style, opposition and discipleship. The members of the family do 'the will of God'<sup>38</sup> which can be either objective: that which God wishes to be done or

<sup>31</sup> There is an ongoing debate among scholars concerning brothers *ἀδελφοὶ* as used in the text. There are (i) the Helvidian theory (ii) The Epiphonian theory and (iii) the Hieronymian theory. For a fuller discussion of the three theories, see Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 247-249. Contextually, *ἀδελφός* in v.31 refers to the real brothers of Jesus (the Helvidian theory), that is brotherhood by blood.

<sup>32</sup> Lane, *Mark*, p. 147.

<sup>33</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p.177

<sup>34</sup> S.Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961) p.72.

<sup>35</sup> R.C.Tannehill, *The Sword of his mouth: Forceful and Imaginative Language in Synoptic Sayings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) pp. 166-171.

<sup>36</sup> See B. Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans publishing Company 2001) p.159. Witherington calls this Jesus' vision for a new community, based on a spiritual kinship but not on physical relationship.. It is radical serving as a challenge to the traditional authority structures; and by taking this action, he has repudiated the 'old fabric' (2:21) in order to make a new order.

<sup>37</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p. 178.

<sup>38</sup> See Best, 'Mark III', p. 318. Best affirms it is most improbable Mark created the concept 'the will of God' because he does not employ it; and if it was his creation he would have used 'my will.' Best interprets it in the light of discipleship, especially Mark 14:36, where God's will for Jesus is

subjective: God's own action of willing and desiring.<sup>39</sup> The latter is what Jesus engages in when dealing with exorcisms. Those who do God's will, do so through God's initiative. Belonging to the new family depends on Jesus' initiative. Is there any implication for the Christian life in a world where there is a battle between Jesus and Satan? Those in the circle of Jesus, the true family of Jesus, who do the will of God and who belong to the household of God, are assured comfort and solace because they are set free from the clutches of Satan.

### 3.2.5 CONCLUSION

The family of Jesus try to restrain Jesus because He is mad. The Scribes accuse Him of being possessed by Beelzebul. With the prince of demons He casts out demons, implying Jesus is using the power of Beelzebul in His exorcisms. Jesus, speaking in parables, refutes these accusations. Jesus intimates that if He really uses the power of Beelzebul in exorcisms, the implication of the first parable would be that Satan's power might come to an end, but that is not the case. Rather, Satan is still powerful. In 3:27 by contrast He opines that He, the stronger man has been able to enter the arena of the strong one, and made mockery of his power, by defeating him. This is what Jesus does in every exorcism. He first binds the strong man and then He is able to release the victims. We are not told whether the strong man is untied at the end. If the source of Jesus' power in the exorcisms is not the power of Beelzebul, then it means He is using the Holy Spirit in exorcising the evil/unclean spirits. Throughout the Beelzebul Controversy the point is made in different ways that the exorcisms of Jesus are not wrought by magic or by any alien power, but by the power of God. Jesus constitutes a new family, based on one's relationship with Him. Those who are in the circle of Jesus, the new family, do the will of God, and find comfort and solace in Jesus; and they are set free from the clutches of Satan.

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the Cross, drawing the analogy that if the will of God for Jesus is suffering and the Cross, the same is for the disciples. Our stance is that contextually the focus is on the relationship between Jesus and his new family including discipleship as part of their lifestyle.

<sup>39</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.227.

### 3.3 EXORCISM IN THE SYNAGOGUE

#### 3.3.1 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE EXORCISM IN THE SYNAGOGUE: MARK 1:21-28

We will discuss, analyse and draw conclusions from different aspects of the exorcism: the exorcism as the opening scene in Jesus' ministry; the confrontation; the dialogue between Jesus and the unclean spirit; the reaction of Jesus; the exit of the unclean spirit and the reaction of the crowd. This section will form part of a thesis affirming a conflict between Jesus and the demons in the exorcisms.

#### 3.3.2 EXORCISM AS THE OPENING SCENE IN JESUS' MINISTRY

The account of the exorcism<sup>40</sup> in Mark 1: 21-28 is Mark's first record of Jesus' public activity, after His struggle with Satan in the wilderness- the first power struggle between Jesus and the forces of Satan. It is placed at this stage of Jesus' ministry. 'The placement...probably due to the conscious decision of each evangelist',<sup>41</sup> describing Jesus' encounter with 'the powers of darkness with the view to destroying them.'<sup>42</sup> The presence of the unclean spirit in the synagogue seems to be suggesting that by Jesus teaching in the synagogue, Jesus has invaded the territory of the spirit.<sup>43</sup> The exorcism takes a 'programmatically aspect' which is why the evangelist places it at the beginning of the Gospel.<sup>44</sup> It is a miracle story 'carefully introduced and concluded.'<sup>45</sup> We have a picture of the supernatural insight<sup>46</sup> of the evil spirits with which they were able to recognise Jesus' authority and identity. This pericope is the opening battle,<sup>47</sup> because this is the first time that people see a confrontation between an unclean spirit and Jesus resulting in a public exorcism.

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<sup>40</sup> R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* 1 (HTKNT) (Freiburg, 1976) p. 119. Pesch describes the story as typical of exorcism. See R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. J. Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963) pp. 209-210. Bultmann classifies this narrative as a miracle.

<sup>41</sup> J.P.Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1991) p.409.

<sup>42</sup> Witherington III, *Mark*, p. 90.

<sup>43</sup> Witherington III, *Mark*, p.91

<sup>44</sup> K.Tagawa, *Miracles et Evangile: La Pensée personnelle de l'évangéliste Marc. Etudes d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 62 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966 ) p. 68.

<sup>45</sup> P.J. Achtemeier, ' "He taught them many things" ', *Reflections on Marcan Christology*, in *CBQ* 42 (1980) pp. 465-448 esp. p.478.

<sup>46</sup> D.E. Nineham, *St. Mark* (London: SCM Press Limited, 1963) p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p. 186.

### 3.3.3 THE CONFRONTATION

A man appears suddenly in the synagogue creating the impression that confrontation is about to take place. He is described as a man in an unclean spirit, intensifying the terror. The phrase ‘a man with an unclean spirit,’ is a Semitic idiom implying ‘his personality had been damaged to the point that the demonic power had usurped the centre of his self and spoke through him.’<sup>48</sup> One theory affirms that Jesus is the cause of the confrontation. His advent is responsible for the demoniac attack just as the Spirit is the real instigator of the struggle between Jesus and Satan.<sup>49</sup> While the latter assertion is acceptable, contextually the former seems to be objectionable. The man with the unclean spirit appears at the time when Jesus is teaching in the Synagogue. Jesus does not address him, rather the man, sensing the presence of Jesus responds by crying aloud, ἀνέκραξεν. The verb expresses not only a sudden emotional excitement and outburst, but it has a deeper meaning since the demoniac’s cry reveals its horror that Jesus has come to destroy them. Jesus is interrupted suddenly and assaulted by the unclean spirit and that leads to the confrontation.<sup>50</sup> The unclean spirit realises that the mission of Jesus is bent on overthrowing the demonic structure.<sup>51</sup> It is the sudden interruption and the attack by the unclean spirit, rather than the presence of Jesus on the scene, that leads to the confrontation- an indication that the unclean spirit is not bound.

### 3.3.4 THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN JESUS AND THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT.

The unclean spirits confront Jesus with questions and affirmations, indicating that they are not bound. ‘What have you to do with us?’ τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί; In classical Greek it would mean ‘What have we in common?’<sup>52</sup> This expression corresponds to the Hebrew<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Lane, *Mark*, p.73.

<sup>49</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.195.

<sup>50</sup> C.F.Evans, *The Beginning of the Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1968) p.27

<sup>51</sup> Kelber, *Kingdom*, p.15.

<sup>52</sup> Cranfield, *Mark*, p.75, Nineham, *Mark*, p.75. cf. De la Potterie, *Exegesis quarti evangelii. De matre Jesu in quarto evangelio*. Romae: 1982-1983 pp. 45-46. Potterie affirms that in the Old Testament it can mean hostility or lack of proper understanding. Contextually the verse points to the former pointing to diametrically opposing forces, enemies in the arena of salvation history.

<sup>53</sup> Rawlinson, *Mark*, p.16, M. J.Lagrangé, *Evangile selon Saint Marc* (Paris:Librairie Lecoffre, 1947) p. 22

and Aramaic<sup>54</sup> idiom and means ‘why are you bothering us?’ It has an Old Testament background<sup>55</sup>. By posing the question, the unclean spirit recognises its own position in the light of Jesus’ authority and the position of the unclean spirit comes to light from the statement, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the holy One of God’. Contextually, the question implies hostility. The demon, by asking this question shows that it has nothing to do with Jesus.

Have you come to destroy us? ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ημᾶς; Is this a question<sup>56</sup> or defiant assertion?<sup>57</sup> Whatever form it takes, there is an element of hostility involved. The expression can be explained in two senses: (i) It refers to the concrete action of Jesus’ coming to the Synagogue.<sup>58</sup> But it also has an eschatological dimension, which can be derived from the structure of the verse.<sup>59</sup> In 1:24, ἦλθες (the coming of Jesus) is followed by the infinitive of purpose ἀπολέσαι with the object the evil spirits ἡμᾶς, pointing to the Jewish apocalyptic imagery ‘according to which the Messiah establishes the Kingdom of God by defeating and destroying the realm of Satan and his hosts.’<sup>60</sup> The thrust of the demoniac’s question or assertion is that the evil spirits, meaning all the forces hostile to God recognize Jesus as a threat to their safety ultimately leading to their definite destruction. By placing ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς on the lips of the demoniac as the representative of the evil spirits<sup>61</sup>, Mark opines that one of the goals of Jesus’ coming into the world is the destruction of the evil spirits.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>54</sup> H.M.Buck, ‘Redactions of the Fourth Gospel and the Mother of Jesus’, in D. E. Aune (ed.) *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden; Brill, 1972) p. 77 and Anderson, *Mark* p. 91, cf. Marcus, *Mark*, p.187 who opines that it can also mean ‘what is the cause of enmity between us?’ See A.H. Maynard, ‘ΤΙ ΕΜΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΣΟΙ,’ in *NTS* 31 (1985) pp. 582-586, esp. p. 583. Maynard affirms it involves the demons’ recognition of Jesus’ identity.

<sup>55</sup> See for example 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 16:10, 19:23; 1 Kings 17:18; 2 Kings 3:13; Judges 11:12; 2 Chronicles 35:21.

<sup>56</sup> Swete, *Mark*, p.19, and A. Plummer, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914) p.67. See Burkill, ‘Blasphemy’ pp. 51-74 esp. 59n20. Burkill sees it as a categorical statement.

<sup>57</sup> E. Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament)* (Tübingen, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1950) p. 250. E. R. Micklem, *Miracles and the New Psychology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922) p.51

<sup>58</sup> S. Kuthirakkattel, *The Beginning of Jesus’ Ministry According to Mark’s Gospel (1:14-3:6): A Redactional Critical Study* (Roma; Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990) p. 83

<sup>59</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.83.

<sup>60</sup> cf. ‘διαβῶλω, διάβολος,’ in *TDNT* II (ed.) G. Kittel (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964) pp. 71-81 esp. pp. 79-81, W.G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment. The Eschatological Message of Jesus* (trans. D. M. Barton) (London; 1957) pp.105-109.

<sup>61</sup> ἡμᾶς in this context does not refer to the Scribes as intimated by C. Myers. See C. Myers, *Binding*

I know who you are, οἶδός σε τίς εἶ. This is the ‘climax of the whole narrative.’<sup>63</sup> The idea was that if an opponent discovered the name of the other, it was a means of overpowering the enemy. There is a change from the first person plural (ἡμῶν) to the singular (ἐμοῖ). Why? The plural denotes demons as a class and the demoniac speaks as the representative of the demonic world as such.<sup>64</sup> The context suggests confrontation between Jesus and the demonic powers.

‘I know who you are, the Holy One of God’( 1:24 ). This expression is a defensive manoeuvre adopted by the unclean spirit to take advantage over Jesus in the cosmic war. In the ancient world, names were very significant because they contained spiritual power, and the unclean spirit, uttering the name of Jesus, would in essence gain mastery over him.<sup>65</sup> This view has been challenged. One theory affirms that the use of a name by the demon in an exorcism is rare; and rather than being an apotropaic mechanism in gaining control over the exorcist, it is the demon’s recognition of the exorcist’s deity and the subordination of the demon that are at stake.<sup>66</sup> As in the following parallels:

‘You come in peace, you great god who expels demons...

I am your servant.’<sup>67</sup>

The above assertion would mean the demon identifies the deity and acknowledges the superiority of the exorcist.<sup>68</sup> This implies that the unclean spirit would recognise Jesus as ‘the Holy One of God’ and would plead with Jesus not to destroy him. Another theory

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*the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* ( New York; Orbis Books, 1997) p. 142.

<sup>62</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p. 135.

<sup>63</sup> G. Twelftree, ‘ ΕΙ ΔΕ ...ΕΤΩ ΕΚΒΑΛΩ ΤΑ ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ?’ in *Gospel Perspectives*, vol.6 ed. D. Wenham and C. Blomberg ( Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986) pp. 361-400 esp. 376-377.

<sup>64</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, 135n86. See also E. Arens, *The HΛΘON-sayings in the Synoptic Tradition: A Historico-Critical Investigation* (OBO 10), Fribourg-Göttingen 1976 p.212. H.C.Kee, ‘The Terminology Of Mark’s Exorcism Stories’, *NTS* 14 (1967-68) pp. 232-246 esp. p.243. E. Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT3), Tübingen 1950 p.17.

<sup>65</sup> See O. Bauernfeind, *Die Worte der Dämonen im Markusevangelium* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1927) pp. 3-10, 28-31.

<sup>66</sup> D.A.Koch, *Die Bedeutung der Wundererzählungen in der Christologie des Markusevangeliums* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975) pp.57-61.

<sup>67</sup> K.Thraede, ‘Exorcism’, in *RAC* 8 (1967) p.48 cited by Koch.

<sup>68</sup> See Best, *Temptation*, p. 17. Best sees the demon’s assertion as his awareness of the identity of Jesus, affirming Jesus’ superiority.

links this with the view of the Messianic Secret<sup>69</sup> where the commands that the demons be silent (1:25, 34; 3:11) are not encounters but injunctions to secrecy because they knew Him (1:34 cf. 3:11) not to make Him known.

Two theories oppose the above views. 'The first'<sup>70</sup> affirms their viability on two grounds, that they make sense of the Markan language and that they have Christological dimensions heightening the Christological force of the title 'the Holy one of God.' However, the language used in the context supports that of defensive manoeuvre<sup>71</sup> on the part of the unclean spirit because it becomes plain that conflict setting is present. This is further supported by another theory which affirms that ἀπολέσθαι reflects the belief that the control of demons over human beings would be destroyed<sup>72</sup> before the Day of the Lord when God would gain control on behalf of the people (cf. 1QM1:10-14; 14:10-11) and would be reflected in the casting of the demons into the abyss ( Luke 8:31; Revelation 20: 10-11). Moreover, ἐπετίμησεν<sup>73</sup> in v. 25 has its roots in the Semitic technical word used in the Qumran texts to imply the command by which God or His emissaries force evil power into submission. Realising the reason for Jesus' coming, the unclean spirit tries to disarm Jesus<sup>74</sup> by asserting that he knows His true identity, οἶδά σε τίς εἶ, and by uttering His name ὁ ἄγιος τοῦ θεοῦ. This verbal confrontation is not a formula for confession (3:11; 8:29; 15:39) or declaration (1:11), but of recognition<sup>75</sup> (cf. 1:34; 5:7), gaining control over Jesus rendering His work ineffective. Moreover οἶδα in this context means the knowledge is gained from 'insight or intuition'<sup>76</sup> and not from observation or experience (in which case the appropriate verb would be γινώσκω). The

<sup>69</sup> R.A.Guelich, 'Mark, Gospel of', in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. J.B.Green and S. McKnight (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1992) p. 521.

<sup>70</sup> G.R.Osborne, 'Structure and Christology in Mark 1: 21-45' in *Jesus of Nazareth; Lord and Christ. Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* edited by J.B.Green and M.Turner (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1994) pp. 147-163 esp. p. 150.

<sup>71</sup> Osborne, 'Structure', p.151

<sup>72</sup> J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* Vol. 1 AB 29 (New York: Doubleday, 1981) pp.545-546.

<sup>73</sup> Kee, 'Exorcism', p.235.

<sup>74</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.136.

<sup>75</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p. 136.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. De la Pottere, 'οἶδά et γινώσκω. Le deux modes de la connaissance dans le quatrième évangile,' in *Bib.40* (1959) pp. 709-725.



word *σε* is emphatic<sup>77</sup> not pleonastic or redundant.<sup>78</sup> The context suggests confrontation and as such the titles used by the demon are to be seen as attempts to overpower Jesus.

### 3.3.5 THE REACTION OF JESUS

How does Jesus react to the unclean spirit? Jesus reacts sternly to the unclean spirit's verbal confrontation by a divine word of rebuke *ἐπετίμησεν*. The word *γῶ* the Semitic equivalent underlying *ἐπιτιμῶν* in the Septuagint,<sup>79</sup> occurs in the Qumran 'material'.<sup>80</sup> Why does Jesus rebuke the unclean spirit? (i) The exclamation *οἶδά σε τίς εἶ* comes from unholy lips and at the wrong time and (ii) the man's spirit is invaded by an 'alien power'.<sup>81</sup> In this verse, *ἐπετίμησεν* is fully explained in the form of a double command, *φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ*. *Φιμώθητι* is imperative and it enhances the revelation of Jesus' true identity (1:24) and *ἔξελθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ* is the counterpart to the invasion of the man's spirit by an alien power (1:23). The command to be quiet is Jesus' battle cry.<sup>82</sup>

The verb *ἐπετίμησεν* in v. 25 is crucial. In the Qumran document *γῶ* is a technical term for the commanding word uttered by God (or His spokesman). Evil powers are brought into submission and thereby the way is prepared for establishing God's rule in the world (cf. 1Qap. Genesis 20: 28-29; 1QM. 14:9, 1QH. 9,11); *γῶ* can even be found in the Old Testament<sup>83</sup> and in the Jewish apocalyptic literature.<sup>84</sup> Structurally Mark 1:24 and 1:25 are parallel and 1:24 can be interpreted against the background of the 'apocalyptic soteriological perspective'.<sup>85</sup> With the background of the verb *ἐπετίμησεν* and in the context of Mark 1:24, Jesus uttered 'the commanding word by which the unclean spirit, as the representative of the forces opposed to God and his purposes, is overcome'.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.136.

<sup>78</sup> See Swete, *Mark*, p.20 and Taylor, *Mark*, p.174.

<sup>79</sup> J.A. Fitzmyer, 'Some observations in the Genesis Apocryphon', in *CBQ* 22 (1960) p.284. W. H. Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964) 210n41.

<sup>80</sup> See 1QM.14:10; 1QH. 4:6; 1Qap. Gen. 20:28-29.

<sup>81</sup> Swete, *Mark*, p.19. See also Taylor, *Mark*, p.175.

<sup>82</sup> Schweizer, *Mark*, p.52

<sup>83</sup> cf. Kee, 'Terminology', pp.234-237.

<sup>84</sup> Kee, 'Terminology', pp. 237-238.

<sup>85</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.137.

<sup>86</sup> Kee, 'Terminology', p.242.

In Mark the verb *φίμοϋν* occurs only twice, both in the imperative (1:25; 4:39). Contextually it means to tie shut.<sup>87</sup> *Φίμοϋν* is a technical term for binding a person with a spell and in Mark 1:25 it is a command to silence similar to the injunction in 1:34 and 3:12 to the unclean spirits to keep silent. There are two ways of using the verb *ἐξέρχεται* with the preposition *ἐκ*,<sup>88</sup> in Mark: (i) of place (1:29; 5:2; 6:54; 7:31) and (ii) of person (1:25,26; 5:8,30; 7:29; 9:25). With the exception of 5:30, all the references in the latter group relate either to Jesus' command ( in the imperative ) to the unclean spirits to come out of the person ( 1:25; 5:8; 9:25 ) or the narration ( in the indicative ) of the actual coming out of the unclean spirits from the person ( 1:26; 7:29 ). It implies then that, *ἔξελεθε ἐξ αὐτοῦ* is a typical formula by which Jesus commands the evil spirits to 'quit the person.'<sup>89</sup>

### 3.3.6 EXIT OF THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT

How does the unclean spirit leave the person? Jesus' word of command effects a prompt response from the unclean spirit. *Σπαράξαν αὐτὸν ...φωνῆσαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ἐξῆλθεν ἐξ αὐτοῦ*. In classical Greek the verb *σπαράσσειν* meant 'to tear, rend, pull to and fro.'<sup>90</sup> Contextually it means convulse. The verb *φωνεῖ* has 'three nuances'<sup>91</sup> in Mark. (i) It is used with the accusative of person, implying the sense to call someone (9:35; 10:49; 15:35). (ii) It can also mean the cock crowing ( 14:30, 68, and 72 ) and (iii) it is followed by *φωνῇ μεγάλῃ* (1:26). It is only in 1:26 that the subject of *φωνεῖ* is the evil spirit, and by *φωνῆσαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ* is meant a very loud shriek. Mark employs *φωνῇ μεγάλῃ* in two contexts<sup>92</sup>: (i) loud shriek when the demon comes out of the possessed person (1:26; 5:5 ) and (ii) Jesus' loud cry at his death ( 15:34, 37 ). What Mark seems to be emphasising by the details *σπαράξαν αὐτὸν ...φωνῆσαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ* is that the word of command from Jesus to the unclean spirit was accompanied by a struggle, 'part of a wider conflict of which this is but a single phase.'<sup>93</sup> The screaming of the departing

<sup>87</sup> Cranfield, *Mark*, p.77

<sup>88</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.137.

<sup>89</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.137.

<sup>90</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.138.

<sup>91</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.138.

<sup>92</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.138.

<sup>93</sup> Kuthirakkattel, *Beginning*, p.243.

demon, φωνήσαν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ points to the magnitude of the victory and can also be classified as a death wail, indicating that the unclean spirit has been vanquished.

### 3.3.7 THE REACTION OF THE CROWD

The crowd was astonished. What caused the astonishment? Is it the new teaching, the exorcism or both? The problem has to do with how we punctuate v.27b. Should it be ‘what is τοῦτο διδαχὴ καινὴ with authority? He even commanded the spirits...?’ or ‘what is this? A new teaching with authority He even commanded...?’ Should the ἔξουσίν modify the teaching or the exorcism or both? In 1: 22 Jesus teaches with authority and this teaching causes astonishment among the crowd. In 1:27 with authority He commands the unclean spirits to obey Him. The ἔξουσίν in this exorcism is καινῇ in that while the Jews were applying magical formula to their exorcisms, Jesus’ authority was in the word. The exorcism is occasioned also by the teaching of Jesus as the comments of the crowd show. Contextually, the astonishment is not due only to the authority of the teaching but also in the methodology involved in the exorcism. Both the teaching and the exorcism cause astonishment.

Is there any interpretation for the astonishment? Do the reactions of wonder in Mark imply ‘negative connotations or insufficient response?’<sup>94</sup> Views about this vary: (i) The effect of the astonishment in 1:27 is not understanding and belief, but rather ‘dull amazement with a question,’<sup>95</sup> implying there is an element of suspicion involved. (ii) The reaction in 1:27 is necessary but insufficient guarantee that Jesus has correctly been understood.<sup>96</sup> This view would mean the crowd would be confused. (iii) The amazement is imperfect as a response, for although it is positive to a degree, it is aligned with misunderstanding.<sup>97</sup> What indication is there in the pericope itself that these reactions of

<sup>94</sup> T.Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark*. JSNT Supplement 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) p.98.

<sup>95</sup> E.Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, Meyer K (Gottingen vandenhoek and Ruprecht, 1951) p.35.

<sup>96</sup> B.D.Chilton, ‘Exorcism and History: Mark 1:21-28’, in *Gospel Perspectives*, JSOT, vol. 6 eds. D. Wenham and C. Blomberg (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1986) 267n18.

<sup>97</sup> A.M.Ambrozic, ‘New Teaching with Power (Mark 1:27)’, in *Word and Spirit: Essays in Honour of David Michael Stanley, S.J. on His 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, ed. J. Plevnik (Willowade, Ontario: Regis College, 1975) pp.113-149 esp. pp.130-131.

wonder at the teaching of Jesus indicate a lack of understanding or a lack of faith? Is not the question of 1:27 natural since those in the synagogue do not have the information of 1:1, 9-11 as to the identity of Jesus?<sup>98</sup> It is probably better at this point to agree with the view that the amazement in 1:27 may be the first step towards either faith or stumbling,<sup>99</sup> but only as one follows the progress of the motif throughout the Gospel will one be able to make a complete determination.<sup>100</sup>

### 3.3.8 CONCLUSION

We have examined the reasons why this narrative is placed at the beginning of Mark's Gospel. We have also argued that the confrontation of the unclean spirit with Jesus was an attempt to overcome Jesus. The unclean spirit was able to disclose the identity of Jesus, yet it was not able to defeat Jesus. Jesus was able to rebuke the evil spirit, commanding it to come out of the man. The spirit convulsed the man, there was a struggle (implying that the demon is not bound) and in the end the unclean spirit, crying in a loud voice, left the man. The people were astonished and the fame of Jesus spread around the vicinity. While some would be suspicious, others would express wonder and belief, while others would express wonder but not belief. Jesus destroyed the power of evil working through the life of a man in a Synagogue, and set him free.

## 3.4 THE GERASENE DEMONiac

### 3.4.1 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE GERASENE DEMONiac: MARK 5:1-20

This narrative is an exorcism story or a miracle in the sense of being synonymous with the narratives of ancient Jewish and Hellenistic exorcism,<sup>101</sup> with features derived from ancient stories of miraculous healing<sup>102</sup> and features of exorcism ritual.<sup>103</sup> It is the most

<sup>98</sup> Dwyer, *Wonder*, p.98

<sup>99</sup> Cranfield, *Mark*, p.73

<sup>100</sup> Dwyer, *Wonder*, p. 98.

<sup>101</sup> R. Bultmann, *Tradition*, p.224. K. Thraede, 'Exorzismus,' in (RAC)VII pp. 44-117 esp. pp. 55-63. The features of the exorcism are the encounter, defensive reaction of the demon (6-7), the command to expel the demon (v.3), and the exit of the demon.

<sup>102</sup> Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 236ff. This includes the peculiar nature of the disease and the futile attempts to cure it; the cure itself and the awe and fear of the crowd.

<sup>103</sup> Bultmann, *Tradition*, pp. 238-239, Thraede, *Exorzismus*, pp. 44-45. This will include the naming of the demon(v.9), the plea for mercy (vv. 10-12) and the banishment of the demons (vv. 12, 13a).

extensive<sup>104</sup> and perhaps the most perplexing of all exorcism narratives,<sup>105</sup> presenting innumerable problems<sup>106</sup> with ‘display of Jesus’ power over life threatening force.’<sup>107</sup> This is the only account where Jesus’ initial command of exorcism is not immediately effective. Jesus inquires about a demon’s name and grants a request from demons. The demons are transferred from one host to another (in this case, from a man to a herd of pigs), indicating that the demons are active. We will explore: (a) the plight of the demoniac, (b) the confrontation between Jesus and the demoniac, (c) the demon’s request, (d) the significance of the drowning of the pigs, (e) the reaction of the onlookers, (f) the demoniac and Jesus and draw conclusions. This section of the thesis attempts to affirm a conflict between Jesus and the demons.

### **3.4.2 THE PLIGHT OF THE DEMONIAIC**

No one was able to subdue the demoniac. He pulled apart the chains and smashed the fetters into pieces, indicating the type of exorcism Jesus is about to engage in, an impressive one showing the demonstration of His power. The demoniac yells and this accounts for the gravity of the struggle that he goes through, indicating the power that the demons had over their victim. He lacerates himself with stones showing the aim of the unclean spirit - to harass this victim. The worst part of the picture is that this behaviour goes on constantly showing ‘how unrelentingly the spirit plies its death-dealing trade,’<sup>108</sup> an indication that the spirit had not been bound. This brings to light the power of the demon working in the man, and demonstrates Jesus’ power over this demon - working vigorously in this man, a very impressive approach by Jesus.

### **3.4.3 THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN JESUS AND THE DEMONIAIC**

When the demoniac saw Jesus, the man ran to Him and fell on His knees. One theory senses a contradiction between this act of submission and the demon’s attempt to defend himself against Jesus and affirms that the ‘reference to the demoniac’s kneeling may be

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<sup>104</sup> Page, *Evil*, p.145.

<sup>105</sup> Cortés and Gatti, *Exorcisms*, p.312.

<sup>106</sup> For some of the problems, see Loos, *Miracles*, pp. 382-397

<sup>107</sup> Page, *Evil*, p.146.

<sup>108</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p.249.

secondary.’<sup>109</sup> It plays down the demons’ recognition of Jesus’ mastery over them in the exorcism account in the Gospel. In spite of their hostility to Jesus, they recognise He is their superior. The demoniac confronts Jesus with a question and an affirmation.

The question ‘What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?’ presupposes conflict between Jesus and the demon and represents the unclean spirit’s attempt ‘to resist exorcism,’<sup>110</sup> indicating the demon is not bound. The use of such title is a defence mechanism in protecting the demon from Jesus’ power,<sup>111</sup> showing Jesus’ superiority to the demons.

He affirms: ‘I adjure you by God, do not torment me.’ The adjuration is violent and fierce.<sup>112</sup> The term ‘to adjure’ is ‘standard exorcistic terminology’<sup>113</sup> employed by the exorcists to evoke the name of a deity but, ironically, it is used contextually by the demon. The demoniac was acquainted with this formula through its use by exorcists who have frequently attempted to deliver him.<sup>114</sup> The unclean spirit tries to exorcise Jesus by using the most potent name possible but the attempt fails. Jesus never uses such a formula.<sup>115</sup> The formula is a plea to Jesus not to torture the demon, for the demon recognises that Jesus poses a danger to him. This means that even though the demon was exercising his power over the man, when he saw Jesus, he realised that in terms of power, he was powerless. If Jesus had been able to resist his master in the temptation then he stood no chance, being an agent of his master.

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<sup>109</sup> R. Pesch, ‘The Markan Version of the Healing of the Gerasene Demoniac’, in *Ecumenical Review*, 22 (1970) pp.349-376 esp. p.357.

<sup>110</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p. 250. cf. Best, *Temptation*, p.17. Best opines that for Mark the title Son of God is the highest title that can be given, and that it is unlikely that its use by the demons is an attempt to overpower Jesus. Rather, it is a recognition of the Lordship of Jesus, and whenever the demons meet Jesus, they prostrate themselves before Him.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Guelich, *Mark*, p. 279.

<sup>112</sup> Loos, *Miracles*, p.385.

<sup>113</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.344.

<sup>114</sup> Mc. Casland, *By the Finger of God. Demon Possession and Exorcism in Early Christianity in the Light of Modern Views and Mental Illness* ( New York: Macmillan, 1951) p. 113

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Carol Schersten LaHurd, ‘Biblical Exorcism and Readers response to Ritual in Narrative’, in *The Daemoniac Imagination*, ed. R. Detweiler and W. G. Douthett ( Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) p.37.

There is no mention of an injunction to silence. Jesus orders the demon to depart, in an unusual way. Using a flashback technique, Mark indicates that Jesus had already commanded the demon to leave.<sup>116</sup> In Mark, the verb translated ‘he said’ (ἐλεγεν) is in the imperfect tense implying Jesus’ initial command was not immediately effective. The impression created in other exorcism accounts was that the demons obeyed Jesus without hesitation.<sup>117</sup> Is there any reason for such a delay in the cure? The failure of Jesus’ command to come out was not due to His ignorance of the demonical name as such. For neither here, nor anywhere else does Jesus use demonical names in exorcism as exorcism requires ( see T. Sol. 2:1: 3:6; 4:3-4; 5: 1: 6:7 ). Jesus’ power needs no such ‘tricks of the trade’. One theory affirms that the failure of Jesus was due to His commanding a single unclean spirit to come out, when in fact the victim needed to be ‘dispossessed of several unclean spirits.’<sup>118</sup> This view underestimates Jesus’ power and classifies Jesus as short-sighted. Once Jesus is all powerful, His word could have removed all the demons inhabiting the victim. This illustrates one unusual instance in Jesus’ ministry regarding exorcism.

Jesus inquires about the name of the demon, the only time Jesus engages in a dialogue with a demon. The demon replies, ‘My name is Legion, for we are many’ and identifies himself by a word that shows plurality.<sup>119</sup> Legion is an idiomatic expression referring to a very large number.<sup>120</sup> Even though the demoniac was possessed by a multitude of demons, they are represented as being present together and as being expelled together.<sup>121</sup> The demon bargains with Jesus regarding his fate,<sup>122</sup> - not to be sent out of the area. If two thousand demons enter into such a bargain with Jesus, this indicates that they had

<sup>116</sup> S. Eitrem, *Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament*, Symbolae Osloenses Fascicle Supplement, No. 2, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition ( Oslo: Aedibus Universitetsforlaget, 1966) pp. 70-71. Eitrem affirms that the account in Mark does not accurately reflect the order in which the conversation took place, and that the command originally came after the exchange regarding the demon’s name.

<sup>117</sup> M. Green, *I Believe in Satan’s Downfall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) p.129. For Green modern exorcists find they often have to repeat the command to demons to leave their hosts. The impression one gets from the New Testament is that this was unusual in the ministry of Jesus.

<sup>118</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p. 251.

<sup>119</sup> For the multiplicity of the demons, see L. Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* ( Berlin: 1914) pp. 10ff; Eitrem, *Demonology*, p.56.

<sup>120</sup> Lane, *Mark*, pp. 184-185.

<sup>121</sup> Page, *Evil*, 154n67.

<sup>122</sup> The attempt of the demon to bargain regarding its fate finds its parallel in T. Sol. 1:12 and 2:6.

met someone who was more powerful than them. Sending a demon to a different geographical region also appears<sup>123</sup> in Tobit 8:3. Jesus agrees to their request and the whole herd rushed down the mountainside into the lake and were drowned.

### 3.4.4 THE REQUEST OF THE DEMON

We will examine some interpretations of why Jesus granted the demon's request. (i) Jesus permitted the demons to enter the swine which eventually went into the sea. The theory of 'the motif of the cheated devil,'<sup>124</sup> shows the demons have been cheated. The interpretation is faulty because the drowning of the swine in the sea is the express purpose of their destructive attempts but not an unforeseen defeat of the demons.<sup>125</sup> (ii) Jesus is the one cheated not the demons. Because the demons are guilty of the destruction of the herd, Jesus has to leave the country.<sup>126</sup> This interpretation further affirms that elsewhere in the New Testament the possessed always do the will of their possessor, so it is unlikely that the death of the pigs is unintended by the demons. Rather, by destroying the herd of pigs, the demons have caused Jesus to be rejected in Gerasa and have forced him to leave the area. The weakness of this theory is that the demons seem to be thwarted in their desire to stay in the Gerasene land, at least in their present form. They immediately assume a different form and launch a counter attack.<sup>127</sup> (iii) For Mark, the swine drowning in the sea means, this is to serve as a proof of the miracle,<sup>128</sup> and their destruction shows the possessed man was delivered.<sup>129</sup> This theory goes beyond the evidence. (iv) Since Jesus permitted the demons to enter the swine, whose owners were Jews, it could be interpreted as punishment for keeping the swine.<sup>130</sup> This theory is faulty

<sup>123</sup> Page, *Evil*, p.154. In Tobit 8:3, a demon takes flight when he smells the heart and liver of a fish burning. He flees to far-off parts of Egypt where he is bound by an angel.

<sup>124</sup> Scholars who hold on to this theory include Bultmann, Klostermann, Lohmeyer and Lagrange (cited by H. Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, trans. H. Jongste ( Philadelphia; Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969) p.113.

<sup>125</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p.113

<sup>126</sup> O.Bauernfeind, *Die Worte der Dämonen im Markusevangelium*. BWANT 44 Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1927 pp.42-4

<sup>127</sup> Bauernfeind, *Die Worte*. Cited by Marcus, *Mark*, p.345.

<sup>128</sup> The proponents of such theory includes Klostermann who is cited by Ridderbos.

<sup>129</sup> For scholars who support this theory, see Zahn, Schlatter, and Mason ( cited by Ridderbos).

<sup>130</sup> The scholar in this camp is Greijdanus (cited by Ridderbos)



because this incident occurred in Gentile territory and to suggest that the owners were Jews is a purely speculative hypothesis.<sup>131</sup>

(v) The request of the demons is an attempt to incite the inhabitants of that country against Jesus. Jesus' permission can be seen as a test of the Gerasenes, and a punishment. The theory further intimates: '*Caeterum ut nulla nobis constet certa ratio occultum tamen Dei iudicium reverenter respicere ea pia humilitate adorare convenit.*'<sup>132</sup> Literally it means, for the rest, as we can find no certain reason for it, it is fitting rather reverently to behold and with devout humility to adore the hidden judgement of God<sup>133</sup>. This view may signify an additional motif but not the chief reason for Jesus' permission.<sup>134</sup> What can be seen is the superstition of the Gentiles who were afraid of Jesus' continued presence. But one is not too certain whether Jesus' permission to the demons is to be seen as disposing the Gentiles to the test because He had 'not yet worked among them'.<sup>135</sup> (vi) Even though historically, the cure of the possessed and the panic among the swine, 'form an accidental coincidence, they were at a later time related to each other.'<sup>136</sup> This theory is rationalistic.<sup>137</sup> (vii) The fright among the swine was caused by a last act of paroxysm by the lunatic, before his cure and because of that it cannot be explained from the entry of the evil spirits.<sup>138</sup> This theory plays down 'the supernatural character.'<sup>139</sup> (viii) Jesus, by granting permission to the demons to enter the swine, reinstates their freedom to continue their work of destruction.<sup>140</sup> This view, 'offers no new perspectives.'<sup>141</sup> Whatever the reason for the request, the begging posture of the demons show 'their subjection to Jesus.'<sup>142</sup> Even though they seemed to be showing their power in harassing the man, they realised that they could not contend with Jesus and that the only remedy was to beg Jesus

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<sup>131</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p.114

<sup>132</sup> The words of Calvin cited by Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p. 114.

<sup>133</sup> I am grateful to Father Thomas Crean O.P. of St. Bede's church at Clapham Park in London for translating this latin quotation into English.

<sup>134</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p. 114

<sup>135</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p.114

<sup>136</sup> See Robinson and Major, cited by Ridderbos.

<sup>137</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p. 114

<sup>138</sup> The proponent of this theory is Gould.

<sup>139</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p. 115

<sup>140</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, p. 115.

<sup>141</sup> Loos, *Miracles*, p.392

<sup>142</sup> Page, *Evil*, p.155

not to cast them out of the area, an indication that Jesus was more powerful than them. The demons realise that they are before a superior power who has the authority to cast them out. The root of Jesus' authority was from God, given to Him during His baptism. It was that authority which enabled Him to resist Satan in the temptation in the wilderness. In Mark 1:21-28 we have the demon struggling with Jesus, and in this particular instance we have the demons shrieking in the presence of Jesus and asking for mercy. Mark gives us instances of demons, who in spite of their number and of their strength, submit to Jesus whenever they meet and are defeated.

### 3.4.5 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DROWNING OF THE PIGS

Mark does not provide an explanation for this. It is likely he intended to stress the destructive power of the demons possessing the Gerasene. In the light of 5:5, he already knew the demons had caused the man to injure himself. It is also likely Jesus might have allowed the destruction, to expose the character of the demonic forces.<sup>143</sup> It is better to understand the death of the pigs as the demons' proclivity to cause harm and injury than as symbolising their punishment.<sup>144</sup> The text does not say what happened to the demons after the drowning, 'but the parable of the restless demon would suggest that they were free to possess others.'<sup>145</sup>

For a moment the two parties have come to an agreement; the demons leaving the man, which suits Jesus, but they will not have to leave the Gerasene land, as they want. The demons, upon entering the pigs could not control them, but sent them careering over a cliff into the sea.<sup>146</sup> This ending affirms the destructiveness of the demons as well as their short sightedness:<sup>147</sup> they unintentionally destroy their new lodgings thereby thwarting their own desire to stay on the Gerasene soil (Mark 5:10). They have been outwitted by Jesus. Like Pharaoh's army, they, or rather their swinish hosts, 'have met a watery death through God's will and mediation of his human agent.'<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Page, *Evil*, p.155.

<sup>144</sup> Ridderbos, *Kingdom*, pp. 112-113

<sup>145</sup> Page, *Evil*, p. 156

<sup>146</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.352

<sup>147</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.352

<sup>148</sup> Marcus, *Mark*, p.352

### 3.4.6 THE REACTION OF THE ONLOOKERS

People rushed to the scene where they found Jesus and the demoniac, now dressed and of sound mind again. The people described the demoniac, emphasising the sudden change that had taken place in him. They urged Jesus to leave the area as they were afraid (ἐφοβήθησαν). From Mark's perspective, what caused the fear among the townspeople? Was it the economic loss brought about<sup>149</sup> by Jesus? This is not likely because those who ask Jesus to leave are townspeople not the herders, and there is nothing in the passage showing that they own the pigs. One theory affirms that 'the townspeople like the Scribes in 3:22-30 interpret Jesus' exorcism as the work of the devil.'<sup>150</sup> This view is far-fetched. The impression created at the end of the story makes the ending unusual especially for a miracle story which usually ends with a claim not a rejection.<sup>151</sup> It could be that they were afraid of Jesus.<sup>152</sup> The reaction of the onlookers is negative and unnatural.

### 3.4.7 THE DEMONIAK AND JESUS

Jesus agrees to the request of the townspeople to leave the area (5:17) but He disagrees that the former demoniac should follow Him. Rather Jesus commissions him to return to his own people (the Gentiles) and to proclaim to them the great things the Lord has done for him. For Mark this would be the first proclamation of the good news, and this may help to explain Jesus' command that he stays in his own Gentile region<sup>153</sup>

The story points to the 'Gospel's theology of the Cross, as experienced within the 'Markan Community.'<sup>154</sup> Eschatological healing power coming from God provokes a vicious counterattack. But it does not affect Jesus who here seems all powerful even invulnerable, serving God's cause by providing an arena for His grace to be shown in the midst of persecutions. Those who are being persecuted are those attacked by demons. Just as the hostility of Pharaoh did not thwart God but actually furthered the

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<sup>149</sup> Guelich, *Mark*, p. 284

<sup>150</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 346

<sup>151</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 346

<sup>152</sup> K. Bornhauser, *Das Wirken des Christus, durch Taten und Worte*: Zweite Auflage Gutersloh, 1924, p. 83

<sup>153</sup> R.H.Lightfoot, *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935) pp. 89-90

<sup>154</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.354

announcement of His glory in all the earth (Exodus 9:16), so the hostility of the demons has not 'impeded the proclamation of the great things God has done through His eschatological agent, Jesus.'<sup>155</sup> The conclusion of the narrative buttresses the demons' earlier acclamation of Jesus as Son of God Most High, who has power to defeat demons.

### 3.4.8 CONCLUSION

In this episode, Jesus comes out of a boat and a man with an unclean spirit meets Him. The unclean spirit has controlled the man to the extent that he has cut and tortured himself and has been living in the tombs. The way the demons controlled the man would create the impression that when they meet Jesus, He would have difficulty in dealing with them. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped Him, questioning and crying out with a loud voice, the motive being to conquer Him. Jesus asked his name, and he replied, 'My name is Legion, for we are many' (implying many demons were inhabiting the man). They begged Jesus not to send them out of the country, but to send them into the swine. Jesus granted their request, and they entered the swine, rushed into the sea and were drowned, signifying that the demons had not been bound. The news spread in the neighbourhood. The people came and found the former demoniac sitting with Jesus and they were afraid. They begged Jesus to leave the area. The man who has been healed wanted to follow Jesus, but Jesus asked him to tell others what the Lord has done for him. In this encounter, the demons are defeated by being sent into the sea.

## 3.5 THE EPILEPTIC BOY

### 3.5.1 MARK'S VIEWS ON THE EPILEPTIC BOY: MARK 9:14-29

This narrative is the only exorcism found in the second half of the book,<sup>156</sup> after the Transfiguration. When one examines the Transfiguration with Moses on Mount Sinai, one finds direct allusions in both stories,<sup>157</sup> especially the confusion that both Jesus and Moses encountered upon their return from the mountains. Our focus will be on the cause of the dispute between the crowd and the disciples; the rebuke of Jesus; the dialogue

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<sup>155</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.354

<sup>156</sup> W.Harrington, *Mark* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier,1979) p.140

<sup>157</sup> S.B.Johnson, *A Commentary on the Gospel according to Mark* ( London: A. and C. Black, 1960 ) p.161; L.W. Hurtado, *Mark* ( New York; Harper and Row, 1983) p. 133. For a detailed account of the similarity between the story of Moses and that of Jesus, see, Myers, *Binding*, p.254.

between the father of the epileptic boy and Jesus; the nature of the disease of the afflicted boy, the exorcism itself; and the discussion between Jesus and his disciples. This section of the thesis affirms a conflict between Jesus and the demons in the exorcisms. The demons are not bound, and in the exorcisms, one can find an ongoing struggle between Jesus and them.

### 3.5.2 THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THE SCRIBES AND THE DISCIPLES

What was the cause of the dispute? The disciples were not able to heal the boy.<sup>158</sup> They ‘were no match for this spirit.’<sup>159</sup> The father explains that his son had a spirit which did not allow him to speak (ἐχοντα πνεῦμα ἄλαλον). There are two meanings to this phrase<sup>160</sup>: (i) The demon refuses to speak, creating the difficulty of exorcising it because the spirit would not reveal its identity. (ii) The demon keeps the boy from speaking at any time. Another meaning will be granted the relationship between the ‘epileptic’ seizures and the demonic dumbness, the father means that his son is unable to speak during the time of the seizures.<sup>161</sup> From the father’s description, the boy was permanently or periodically unable to speak. The demon had been attacking the boy for a very long time; an indication that the demon had not been bound. This is not a mopping up because in the temptation narrative we are not told that Jesus overpowered Satan. Mark is inconclusive on the outcome of the temptation narrative and our position is that Jesus resists Satan, hence, no mention of mopping up. This conflict between Jesus and the demons is an indication of an ongoing struggle between them. Best’s point is that once Satan is bound then Jesus can dispose of his minions with ease, as one would once their commander is captured. We have already argued that we are not told that Satan has been bound. In every exorcism, the first step that Jesus takes is to bind the demon and release the captives.

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<sup>158</sup> Lane, *Mark*, p.330

<sup>159</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p.489

<sup>160</sup> J.C.Thomas, *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) p.151

<sup>161</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p. 488

### 3.5.3 THE REBUKE OF JESUS

Jesus makes a rebuke by claiming ‘O unbelieving generation.’ It is not clear who the rebuke is directed at. One theory identifies the disciples<sup>162</sup> as an unbelieving generation. This theory is faulty because generation<sup>163</sup> seems too broad a term to apply to only a few disciples, especially when a large crowd is present. Another theory affirms that the rebuke is directed to all those present, thus pointing to a ‘general condemnation of the world.’<sup>164</sup> Contextually, the rebuke is aimed at all the people around because they lacked faith, an important pre-requisite for exorcism.

### 3.5.4 THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE FATHER OF THE EPILEPTIC BOY AND JESUS

On Jesus’ command, the boy is brought to Him. Immediately the spirit sees Jesus, it harasses the boy in ways described earlier by the father (an indication that the spirit is not bound). Such a display of the demon’s power can be interpreted by the reader as ‘the demon’s attempt to intimidate Jesus.’<sup>165</sup> The display is exceptional, heightening the sense of the narrative drama as the reader awaits Jesus’ encounter with the spirit. Not content with the spirit’s power over the demoniac, Mark includes a dialogue which provides further details. Jesus does not rebuke the demon but asks the boy’s father how long he has had the affliction. The father replies ‘from childhood,’ making the possession lifelong and therefore harder to break. It will demand someone powerful to cast out that demon and to set the boy free. The father stresses the many times that the spirit had cast the demoniac both into fire and into waters. If Satan had been bound, the child would not have gone through this ordeal. The description given shows the spirit’s power and therefore the super power which Jesus is about to exorcise.

Whilst the father discusses the boy’s condition with Jesus, the young boy is ‘wallowing helplessly on the ground’. Thus signifying the demon’s power at work, which would not have happened if he had been bound. The father pleads with Jesus for help. If the father’s

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<sup>162</sup> See Gould, *Mark*, p.168

<sup>163</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p.489

<sup>164</sup> See Hooker, *Mark*, p.223

<sup>165</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p.489

statement in v.18 implied indirectly that Jesus was unable to cast out the demon, in v.22 the father seems to suggest that possibility directly to Jesus<sup>166</sup> even though he had every hope that 'Jesus was indeed able to help his son.'<sup>167</sup> Jesus quotes the very words of the man to challenge the people,<sup>168</sup> by affirming that 'all things are possible to the one who believes.' Thus implying that the problem lies with the man's lack of faith and that nothing is impossible for the one who believes (in God or Jesus); an implication which Jesus clarifies in Mark 10:17 and Mark 14:36. These ideas serve as a challenge to the father; they show that faith sets no limits upon what 'God is able to accomplish.'<sup>169</sup> The father's response to Jesus' strong words is genuine. He cries out (κράζας), showing the intense passion he has for his son, emphasising his 'extraordinary desperation,'<sup>170</sup> and revealing a faith that is 'headed in the right direction.'<sup>171</sup>

### 3.5.5 THE NATURE OF THE DISEASE

The symptoms point to 'epilepsy' implying the healing might not involve exorcism and that there would have been different treatment.<sup>172</sup> But in accordance with the views of the time, it could be attributed 'to the periodical attacks of a demon.'<sup>173</sup> According to the boy's father, the disease was caused by a dumb spirit (Mark 9:17), which refuses to speak. Jesus in curing the disease addresses the demon (the cause of the disease) as 'thou dumb and deaf spirit' (Mark 9:17). The view that these occurrences are naively ascribed to the malignity of the demon, who was attempting to destroy his victim,<sup>174</sup> is to be

<sup>166</sup> C. Runacher, *Croyants incredules: La Guérison de l'Epileptique Marc 9: 14-29* (Paris: Cerf, 1994) p. 175

<sup>167</sup> cf. Gundry, *Apology*, p. 490. See the implications of the disciples' failure for Jesus.

<sup>168</sup> Cranfield, *Mark*, p.302 and Runacher, *Incredibles*, p. 179

<sup>169</sup> J.F.Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark's Gospel* (JSNT sup.102; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) p. 140

<sup>170</sup> See Lohmeyer, *Markus*, p. 188. Lohmeyer interprets this cry as divinely inspired. This is cited by Thomas, *Deliverance*, 154n97.

<sup>171</sup> See Taylor, *Mark*, p.400; Hooker, *Mark*, p.224, C.S. Mann, *Mark* ( Garden City, New York: Doubleday,1986) pp. 370-371. These scholars refer to the man's belief as half faith or belief.

<sup>172</sup> J.K. Howard, 'New Testament Exorcism and its Significance Today,' in *Ext. Tim* 96 (1984-85) p. 106. For an extensive analysis from a medical perspective, see J. Wilkinson, 'The Case of the Epileptic boy,' in *Exp. Tim.* 79 (1967-68) pp. 39-42

<sup>173</sup> Taylor, *Mark*, p.398; Lohmeyer, *Markus*, p.186; B. Standaert, *L'Evangile selon Marc: Composition et Littéraire* (Brugge: Zevenkerken, 1978) p.144; see G. Petzke 'Die historische Frage nach den Wundertaten Jesu' in *NTS* 22 (1975-76) pp. 180-204 esp.189-190.

<sup>174</sup> See Rawlinson, *Mark*, p.124: cf. E. Yamauchi, 'Magic or Miracle? Disease, Demons and Exorcisms', Vol. VI (eds.) D. Wenham and C. Blomberg in *Gospel Perspectives: The Miracles of Jesus*, VI (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986) pp. 129-131; P.J. Actemeier, 'Miracles and the Historical Jesus', *CBQ*

rejected. It presupposes the father's ignorance about the cause of the disease and Jesus mistakenly rebuking the demon instead of just touching the boy. It was not only a chronic nervous disorder but demonic possession distorting the image of God in this child.<sup>175</sup> The boy was not deaf and dumb by nature, rather his tongue and his ears were possessed by the devil.<sup>176</sup> Mark clearly attributes the disease to demon-possession, an indication that the demon has not been bound.

### 3.5.6 THE EXORCISM ITSELF

Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit by commanding it to remain silent. Ἐπιτιμάω occurs in Markan contexts where someone or something is being silenced (cf. 1:25; 3:11; 4:39; 8:30; 10:13 and 10:48). The way Jesus rebukes the spirit throws light on this particular unclean spirit. Jesus describes it as a dumb and deaf spirit (τὸ ἄλαλον καὶ κωφὸν πνεῦμα), implying this situation is even more difficult than previously thought,<sup>177</sup> (an indication that Satan is not bound) and this heightens the reader's appreciation of Jesus' knowledge.<sup>178</sup> Jesus uses a formula (ἐγὼ ἐπιτάσσω σοι) and 'the demon has no choice but to obey.'<sup>179</sup> Jesus then issues a two-fold command to the demon to come out and never enter the boy again. This command is unusual implying Jesus regarded the demonic possession to be periodic rather than permanent coinciding with the boy's fits<sup>180</sup> or it could mean that the double rebuke is in response to the demon's contempt for Jesus in v.20<sup>181</sup> The double commands might not be unique in Mark's Gospel, yet from contemporary views they were part of the exorcisms with no additional meaning to it,<sup>182</sup> further assurance that the demon would not return.<sup>183</sup> The demon would be cast out completely, and the child would be liberated. However, there is the likelihood that the demon would attack another victim, (a sign of ongoing battle).

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37 (1975) 481n35 and Wilkinson, 'Epileptic Boy', pp.39-42. These scholars find the disease to be demonic.

<sup>175</sup> Lane, *Mark*, p.331.

<sup>176</sup> Loos, *Miracles*, p.403.

<sup>177</sup> Gundry, *Apology*, p.491.

<sup>178</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.155.

<sup>179</sup> W.Grimm, ἐπιτάσσω, in *EDNT* II p.41

<sup>180</sup> For this interpretation cf. B. H. Branscomb, *The Gospel of Mark* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, (1937) p.167 and Nineham, *Mark*, p.247.

<sup>181</sup> Lane, *Mark*, p.334.

<sup>182</sup> cf. e.g. Josephus Ant. 8.45; Philostratus, vit. Apoll 4.20 and Achtemeier, 'Miracles', p. 480.

<sup>183</sup> Hiebert, *Mark*, p.224.



The demon harasses the boy by crying out loudly and ‘convulsing’<sup>184</sup> him. The boy was left so weak that he resembled a dead person. Many people affirmed the boy had died. Even though such unconsciousness is common after an ‘epileptic convulsion,’<sup>185</sup> Mark wants to point out to his readers ‘the significance of his emphasis upon death imagery,’<sup>186</sup> similar to his actions with Jairus’ daughter.<sup>187</sup> Jesus takes the boy’s hand and raises him up so that he stands on his own. This gesture, raising an apparently dead boy, anticipates His own death and resurrection which is shortly to come,<sup>188</sup> and this interpretation is in harmony with the emphasis this theme receives in the latter part of Mark’s Gospel.<sup>189</sup> The exorcisms are described in ways which point to Jesus’ own death and resurrection because they are all signs of the new world which has been (or is being) inaugurated.

### 3.5.7 THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES

The story ends with Jesus and the disciples in the house. They asked why they were not able to cast the evil spirit out as they had been able to perform this task (6:7) successfully (6:13). Why were they not successful on this occasion? Jesus affirmed this kind (of demon) is exorcised only by prayer. We must examine the phrase ‘this kind’ (Τοῦτο τὸ γένος). Even though one school of thought argues that the phrase should be translated the genus evil spirit,<sup>190</sup> rather than ‘this kind of spirit’, it is difficult not to explain that Jesus here means a specific kind or class of demons,<sup>191</sup> bringing to light the idea that there are various kinds or a class of ‘demons.’<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> See Best, *Temptation*, p. 17. Best intimates that the demon convulsing the boy does not mean that the demon is strong, but it is a sign that the demon has been thrown into confusion at the presence of Jesus. This view cannot be sustained.

<sup>185</sup> See Wilkinson, “The Epileptic Boy,” p. 42.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.156.

<sup>187</sup> cf. Mann, *Mark*, p.370.

<sup>188</sup> Anderson, *Mark*, p. 231.

<sup>189</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.156.

<sup>190</sup> Gould, *Mark*, p. 171.

<sup>191</sup> Swete, *Mark*, p.202, Taylor, *Mark*, p.401.

<sup>192</sup> Juel, *Mark*, p.132.

One theory argues that ‘several textual indicators make a tentative answer possible.’<sup>193</sup> (i) This kind of demon seems to be different from demons described in other parts of Mark’s Gospel. (ii) Regarding other exorcisms performed by Jesus, the demon relates to Jesus by disclosing His identity. In this exorcism narrative, as soon as the demon sees Jesus, he harasses the boy either to attempt to intimidate Jesus or in a show of his contempt for Him. (iii) One unique difference between this demon and the others is that this is the only one within Mark’s Gospel where an illness is attributed directly to demon possession. (iv) It is likely that demons responsible for causing the interplay of these specific symptoms deafness, dumbness and life-threatening convulsion ‘belong to a special category of demons.’<sup>194</sup> (v) Mark makes it plain that the boy’s condition started very early (ἐκ παιδιόθεν). On the basis of the above, Jesus then explains why the disciples were not able to cast out this demon: due to the kind of demon which they had encountered,<sup>195</sup> an indication that Satan had not been bound.

Jesus affirms this kind of demon can be exorcised only by means of prayer. The impression one gets from this statement is that Satan is alive and well and because of that different demons require different techniques in exorcising them. In this particular instance there is the need to pray before casting that demon out. Though Jesus never prayed during this exorcism, ‘He is clearly presented as a model of prayer in Mark’s Gospel’<sup>196</sup>(see 1: 35; 6:41; 8:6; 14: 22; 14:32-39). Jesus teaches the necessity of prayer by expounding on it in 11:14-25. Prayer in Jesus’ life becomes clear to the reader and is ‘not completely taken back by his words here.’<sup>197</sup> Jesus’ statement implies the disciples had not adequately prepared themselves in prayer for an event like this. From the text it is not easy to ascertain whether the disciples prayed or not prior to previous experiences. Theoretically it is possible to argue that they did not need prayer for all exorcisms, only for some. On the other hand, granted that this is the last exorcism narrative in Mark, and the last one attempted by the disciples, this warns the disciples not to be deceived into

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<sup>193</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.157.

<sup>194</sup> See Gundry, *Apology*, p.493 and Loos, *Miracles*, p. 401.

<sup>195</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.158.

<sup>196</sup> See Dowd, *Power*, pp.119-121.

<sup>197</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.158.

thinking that the power to cast out demons resides with them, but what is prominent to be successful in exorcism 'is the absolute dependence upon God.'<sup>198</sup>

Many manuscripts include the words 'and fasting' (καὶ νηστείας). Because the early church put emphasis upon fasting, many interpreters regard the phrase as 'secondary.'<sup>199</sup> Can we do away with the phrase so easily? From Mark 2: 18-20 Jesus wanted His disciples to fast after His resurrection. Since this phrase is included in many of the manuscripts, it would rather point to qualify it as the more difficult reading, although some would say perhaps too difficult.<sup>200</sup> Moreover, 'it would make a great deal of sense as words of instruction for the (future) 'Markan Community.'<sup>201</sup> If the words causing dispute are original, then this verse stresses that 'an intensive consecration to God is needed in casting out these kinds of demons',<sup>202</sup> even though 'on balance it is probable the phrase is secondary.'<sup>203</sup> From the study of Mark 9:14-29, we can identify five things.<sup>204</sup> (i) A physical infirmity has been unmistakably attributed to a demon or unclean spirit. (ii) The demon is able to prevent the child from hearing or speaking thereby causing epileptic-like-seizures. (iii) The intention of the demon or the unclean spirit is to torment and kill the child. (iv) Mark 9:29 implies there is more than one category of demon and (v) prayer is the remedy for demons of this category and because the disciples did not pray, they were unable to exorcise the demon.

### 3.5.8 CONCLUSION

We identified the cause of the dispute between the crowd and the disciples. The disciples were not able to exorcise the demon attacking the boy. The crowd knew the disciples had been with Jesus; and they would have the power to cure the boy. Their failure gave the

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<sup>198</sup> Taylor, *Mark*, p.401, Lane, *Mark*, p.335 and Harrington, *Mark*, p.143. See also Runacher, *Incredibles*, pp.169-174 for the relationship between prayer and faith.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. esp. B. M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London:UBS, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1994) p. 101. For a different view, see R.A. Cole, *The Gospel According to Mark. An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WmB Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 1989) 218n1.

<sup>200</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.159.

<sup>201</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.159.

<sup>202</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.159.

<sup>203</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.159.

<sup>204</sup> Thomas, *Deliverance*, p.159.

crowd the opportunity to dispute with them. Jesus had to make a rebuke to the crowd, including the disciples. From the dialogue between Jesus and the father of the epileptic boy, we looked at the extent of the damage that the demon caused the boy; indicating the demon has not been bound. The father's cry causes the assembling of the crowd, and Jesus had to cast out the demon by giving two commands: 'demon come out of the boy and 'do not enter into him again'. This was very unusual, indicating the disease had been periodic. The evil spirit tried to show its power by convulsing him, implying the demon was not bound. Jesus had to exorcise the spirit.

Jesus and the disciples are in a private house. The disciples asked Jesus why they were not able to cure the boy and cast out demons (6:13) as they had done before. Jesus affirms this kind of demon can be exorcised only by prayer. The expression 'this kind' brings to mind the type of demon(s) Jesus is dealing with. Even though we are not told Jesus prayed before exorcising this particular demon, the lifestyle of Jesus suggests that Jesus was a man of prayer. Jesus' response implied their success in a previous encounter was no guarantee for future success. Rather their success would depend on their dependence upon God through prayer. Generally we can identify the following key features from the story or narrative. The disease is caused by a demon who prevents the boy from hearing or speaking with the aim of killing him. This type of possession is unusual because the demon is of a different kind, and such a demon can only be cast out through prayer. Eventually the demon was cast out.

### **3.6 THE PICTURE PAINTED BY MARK**

The type of picture painted by Mark in 3:22-27 can be viewed from two perspectives. (i) From Jesus' point of view, general response to a general question relating to the power relation between Him and Satan. Jesus is affirming that Satan is the King of this world, powerful with people under his captivity. For Jesus to go into Satan's camp and set these captives free, He must first bind Satan. This means Jesus is stronger than Satan. The timing of the binding is still unknown. (ii) If we take the passage to show what Jesus does in every exorcism because the focus is on exorcisms in general, then the impression we get is that in every exorcism, demon(s) are bound first before they are exorcised. The

exorcism passages show how Jesus is able to liberate those possessed by demons. Mark provides further information regarding how we should live in order not to be attacked by demons. These steps include prayer, exercising faith in Jesus, doing God's will, and being in the household of God, which is the church.

One striking feature about Mark is that he mentions only demons as the source of possession or spiritual affliction. He does not mention why people are attacked by demons and the type of people who are attacked. He does not mention the type of life that can easily lead them to be attacked by demons. He does not indicate how to resist these demons. Mark was writing his Gospel at the time when there was belief in magic, witchcraft, gods, and other spiritual powers.<sup>205</sup> Mark does not mention witches and their impact on the 'Markan Community'. At that time it was believed that witches could steal a body and leave a puppet in its place. He does not mention the role of the gods and the part astrology played in shaping the destiny of human beings. Why does Mark mention only demons? Maybe Mark was living in a world where people believed in demons and wanted reassurance that they could be saved from the power of demons. Why is he distancing himself from other forces that were at work at the time? Does it mean that the world-view at the time was changing? Has Mark succeeded in satisfying his audience at the time by focusing on demons? Does it mean that Mark assumed that his readers were already familiar with these spirits (like they were familiar with the outcome of the temptation) and as such he omitted mention of these forces? If that is the case, why did he not leave the demons? If he intentionally left out witches does it mean that the peoples' views about witches and other spiritual powers were changing? Or does it mean he just concentrated on the demons to show that Jesus has power over the demons, as well as over other spiritual forces? It could be that Mark was part of that change of world-view, and at that time Jesus had power over Satan; and in recalling the stories in relation to Jesus' confrontation with these powers, he remembered only the demons. Thus, for Mark, Jesus is able to bind these spirits.

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<sup>205</sup> See J. G. Griffiths (ed.), *Apuleius of Madauros. The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, BookXI)*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1975)

### **3.7 THE ROLE THESE EXORCISMS PLAY IN ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

Satan and his cohorts have their Kingdom made up of people who are held in bondage to them, including the possessed. Jesus has affirmed what is involved generally in these exorcisms. In every exorcism Jesus enters into the household or Kingdom of Satan and his cohorts, binds them first and with that technique He is able to release those who are possessed and to set them free. Through these exorcisms, Jesus was liberating people from the Satanic Kingdom and bringing them into the Kingdom of God. They are a manifestation of the Kingdom of God and signs of warfare against Satan. Satan's power is waning, and the Messianic Age is dawning through the exorcisms of Jesus. When Jesus is casting out demons, the implication is that the Kingdom of God has come as a reality among human beings. The exorcisms themselves are regarded as a victorious combat with Satan and his Kingdom. Each exorcism is a further spoilation of Satan's goods and signifies his defeat. This does not mean Satan has been bound; but in every exorcism the demons are first bound and then the persons possessed are freed. The Kingdom of God is thereby advanced a step further, and the Messianic Age becomes a reality.

Let us bring our findings together on the three exorcism narratives which we examined. Jesus, whilst teaching in the synagogue had to exorcise a demon. He was able to exorcise a demon from Gerasene. His last exorcism occurred on His return from the Mount of Transfiguration, when He had to exorcise a dumb and deaf spirit. In these exorcisms, Jesus was liberating people from the Satanic Kingdom into the Kingdom of God; establishing the Kingdom where people would be no more under the dominion of Satan and his cohorts. Does that mean that there would be no further exorcisms? Apart from Jesus, the disciples were given the authority to cast out demons, which means this is an ongoing battle. The church throughout the ages has also been using that power in exorcising evil spirits. Whenever exorcism takes place, people are redeemed from the Satanic Kingdom into the Kingdom of God. These exorcisms will continue until the second coming of Jesus when the Kingdom will finally be consummated; when Jesus will finally bring to an end the Satanic and demonic power over human beings who are

enslaved in their Kingdom. The church, as an agent of Jesus and heir to this legacy should continue to embark on this exorcistic ministry.

### **3.8 WHAT IS LACKING IN THE READINGS OF THE WESTERN SCHOLARS ?**

We have examined the readings of the Western scholars on exorcisms and interacted with their views. These scholars bring to light the way the demons behave when they meet Jesus. Robinson opines that the struggles in the exorcisms are like that between Jesus and Satan in the temptation narrative, while Best affirms that the struggles in the exorcisms are not similar to that in the Temptation narrative. They explain the titles the demons use in addressing Jesus. For Robinson the titles are ways of overpowering Jesus, while for Best they show the superiority of Jesus over the demons. These scholars describe the difficulty Jesus had in defeating the demon in one instance even though eventually the demon was defeated. However, they do not consider why people are possessed; what type of people are possessed and what ways are there to resist these demons. They do not consider the concerns Mark and his readers may have had about how to cope with these demons, how people should order their lives so that they are not possessed by Satan and his cohorts. What type of life should people lead so that they are not attacked by demons? Finally, what should people do in order to free themselves from demonic possession and attack by demons? This important feature will be discussed later in the thesis when Ghanaians in London churches read and interpret these passages.

### **3.9 GENERAL CONCLUSION**

We began by examining the Beelzebul Controversy. In this episode Mark presents Jesus defending Himself against the Scribes' accusation. The accusation does not concern Jesus' ability to use supernatural power but rather it hinges on the source of His power. Jesus is accused on two counts: being possessed by Beelzebul and by the prince of demons He casts out demons. If the accusations are true, the implication will mean that even though Jesus is on the side of Satan (because He is using his power), He is at the same time opposing Satan thereby causing internal conflict. Jesus, in a series of logical arguments disproves this charge indicating that the Scribes have accused Him falsely. The implication of Jesus' defence is that He is using the Holy Spirit in casting out

demons. Mark presents Jesus dilating on power relation between Him and Satan in the two parables- the Parable of the strong man, (Satan is strong) and in the Parable of the Divided Kingdom (Satan is bound). The impression one gets from Mark's presentation of the parables is that we have a world where Satan is strong and another where Satan is defeated. The combination of these two parables, create a tension and this tension is not solved by Mark and might have spawned different moods<sup>206</sup> amongst Mark's readers. Mark does not give any indication as to when Satan was bound or would be bound.

Mark then presents the exorcism stories in which Jesus exorcises the demons with His power, the Holy Spirit. The exorcisms show Jesus invading the territory of the evil spirits. We examined three exorcism narratives in Mark. In the first exorcism narrative (Mark 1:21-28) Jesus is teaching in the synagogue when He is confronted suddenly by an evil spirit. The evil spirit realises that Jesus' mission is bent in overthrowing the demonic structure. The confrontation takes the form of a series of questions and affirmations. The questions show the gulf between Jesus and the evil spirit because Jesus is holy and the affirmations are an attempt by the evil spirit to overpower Jesus. Jesus rebukes and casts out the evil spirit to astonish the crowd.

In the second exorcism narrative Mark presents a picture of a man who has been completely overpowered by an evil spirit to the extent that his behaviour is controlled by the evil spirit. All attempts by people in the vicinity to set him free failed. There is confrontation between Jesus and the evil spirit, in the form of a question and an adjuration. Jesus asks the name of the demon who replies that we are many, showing the number of demons working in this victim. One would have expected the demons to overpower Jesus because of their number. But the picture presented by Mark is that of the demons requesting Jesus not to be sent out of the area. On the request of Jesus these demons are drowned. This shows that Jesus has power over demons. People who knew the demoniac initially now come to see him healed and restored to normal life.

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<sup>206</sup> See C. Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System,' in C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana, 1993) pp. 87-125. Geertz discusses the various moods experienced in different cultures.



Mark presents another exorcism narrative in 9:14-29. In this episode Mark presents a picture of the disciples finding it difficult in exorcising a demon from a child. Jesus rebukes the crowd for their lack of faith and a dialogue ensues between the father of the boy and Jesus. Here, Jesus is portrayed as having difficulty exorcising the demon. The demon convulses, with the boy falling flat on the ground. The demon with this gesture showing off his power, but in the end the demon is cast out of the boy. Jesus then affirms that this type of demon can be exorcised only by prayer, stressing that prayer is needed when exorcising demons. The impression we get from Mark is that Jesus, in exorcising demons, is establishing the Kingdom of God.

There are, given the widespread contemporary belief in magic and witchcraft, interesting omissions in Mark's account. Mark mentions only demons, creating the impression that demons are the only agents that can possess people. Nor does he mention why and how demons attack. He does not tell us whether people are transformed into creatures or beasts, when they become possessed. Nor does he tell us how demons are to be resisted. He does not mention witches (who have the power to possess people) nor does he mention how people are bewitched.<sup>207</sup> Witches do not only have the ability to cause problems in the lives of people by bewitching them, they also have the power to make the lives of people happier. For example, they can cause progress in the lives of people. The progress can be in the form of helping people to be successful business men and women, helping people to get promotions in their jobs and helping people to pass examinations. Mark's Gospel is a 'high context' document that is why he does not give us a taste of the world at the time where there was the belief in magic, witchcraft and sorcery. It was a time when people could be turned into horses, and pigs could be turned to human beings,

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<sup>207</sup> See G. Bannerman-Richter, *Don't Cry! My Baby! Don't Cry! Autobiography of an African Witch* (Careyback Avenue, Elk Grove: Gabari Books, 1984) pp. 115-162. This is a true story of how a witch bewitched her son and eventually the son died. The whole process took the form of victimization through witchcraft before the son was killed. This witch confessed of how one night she went out witching. She went to sleep and woke up in the spirit world. According to the witch she rose from her physical body and was told by a witch and a wizard to kill her son. This witch dashed her son's head on the ground twice and the son's astral body convulsed and stiffened against her body. The witch returned to her physical body, lying besides the husband in bed, and narrated the story to her husband. A week later the boy suddenly moaned, 'Aunti, my head is aching terribly.' Two days later, the side of the head which she had struck on the ground began to swell. This led to many symptoms-headaches, bodily pains, loss of appetite- and eventually the boy died. The bewitchment took the form of the victimization through bodily pains which led to the son's death.

etc. The idea portrayed in Mark 5, where spirits entered into pigs and were eventually drowned, indicate that the world of Mark was dominated by spirits; and when we talk of the world of spirits we cannot ignore witches, sorcerers, magic and evil eye. Mark's narrative omits many features of the world-view of his time in a way that might not satisfy his readers. How do Western scholars and African scholars take this on board for further investigation?

If Mark was writing at a time when there was belief in magic, witchcraft and other spiritual powers, then we would expect him to give hints about techniques employed by magicians, diviners and other healers in treating exorcisms. Mark does not address that concern. For example, at that time, Zatchals<sup>208</sup> could raise a dead man to life. Mark has no place for people going to diviners to ask for causes of possession as a disease. We can intimate that Mark has changed or shaped his views on spiritual powers, and has not been wholly consistent. It could be he was writing against a certain cosmological background where two major causes of evil were operating, forensic and dualistic. Mark was caught between two world-views. On the one hand there was exorcism and spirit possession, with demons as the source of evil, and on the other hand there was divine punishment, with diseases and suffering caused by the human will.

Mark talks about Jesus defeating the demons. Is it partial or final overthrow of the demons? Where did the demons that were exorcised in Mark 1:21-28; 5:1-20 and 9:14-29 eventually go? Will they eventually enter other people or other creatures? What really happens to them? Will they come back and torment or possess other people? If they come back does that not imply struggle with the demons in life? and if that is the case does it mean that Satan has actually been bound? Has the binding actually taken place? Mark does not tell us what happens to the demons when they are exorcised.

We have examined the views of Mark in this chapter. What impression do these Western scholars create about Jesus in relation to the exorcisms? The scholars see Jesus as sovereign. He defeats the demons in Mark 1:21-28 and 5:1-20 but in Mark 9:14-27 Jesus

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<sup>208</sup> Griffiths (ed.) *Apuleius*, p. 29

appears to struggle with the demon even though eventually the demon is defeated. There is an ambiguity here which seems to be reflected in the Beelzebul Controversy in Mark 3:26-27. In this narrative, on the one hand Satan is stronger, yet on the other hand he is bound. There is a contradiction between 3:26 and 3:27, especially when the two verses are put together. How do we resolve this contradiction? For some scholars, this does not refer to individual exorcisms, but the passage shows Satan being King of the world and in order for Jesus to go into the world and set these captives free, He must first bind Satan. This is on a cosmic dimension. The question then arises, when was Satan first bound? Best opines that Satan was bound in the temptation narrative and as such the exorcisms are mopping up operations. Garrett and Smith opine that Satan is bound partially, creating the impression that Satan is not powerless. Robinson affirms that since Jesus is locked up with Satan in the temptation narrative, the exorcisms are struggles between Jesus and the demons. According to Robinson, Satan is bound on the Cross. Is Satan permanently bound? If the binding has not happened, when will it happen? Is it going to happen in the Parousia as intimated by Marcus? Our stance is that the word 'first' describes what Jesus does in every exorcism. It shows how Jesus in every exorcism first binds the demon(s), and this binding takes the form of rebuke and through that strategy the captives are set free.

We have examined the views of Mark and Western scholars on spirit possession and exorcism. Both see demons as the only source of spiritual affliction. They do not address how people are possessed, why they are possessed and ways of coping with these demons. Mark was writing at a time when there was belief in magic, witchcraft, sorcery, evil eye and other spiritual powers. We would have expected Mark to discuss the influence of these powers on the life of the people at the time without necessarily focusing on only demons. This will be addressed in the section on the contemporary African readings. Mark does not give any clue as to when Satan was bound or would be bound. The idea of the binding of Satan creates divergent views among Western scholars. We have identified how Mark and the Western scholars view the power relation between Jesus and the demons and that between Jesus and Satan. Mark and Western scholars agree that Jesus defeats the demons in 1:21-28 and 5:1-20 but in 9:14-29 Jesus defeats the

demon but with difficulty. Both Mark and the Western scholars agree that Jesus has power over the demons. In the next chapter we will consider the other afflictions in Mark's Gospel which take the form of diseases (not possession) and find out whether from the point of view of Mark these diseases have demonic or other causes.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4**

### **HEALING IN MARK**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the preceding chapter we outlined how Jesus refuted the Scribes' accusation that He was using the power of Beelzebul in His exorcisms. We were given a picture of how the demons behaved in the presence of Jesus, defeated but in one case, with difficulty. We emphasised that Jesus, in exorcising the demons was establishing the Kingdom of God.

The underlying question we will be discussing in this chapter in relation to Mark's world-view is whether all evil and suffering is caused by demons or by other causes of affliction? Were the diseases, which Jesus healed, caused by demons? How do we interpret the exorcistic features in some of the healing narratives? Are they indications that Mark really sees them as exorcisms or metaphors for physical healing? Our thesis is that even though these diseases were evil, in Mark's view, apart from one instance, Mark does not portray them as having been caused by demons. They have physical causes. In the previous chapter, we dealt with cases of spirit possession, but in this chapter, we will focus on whether demons can cause diseases.

Jesus, portrayed as an exorcist in the stories discussed in the previous section, was also seen as a healer who heals diseases. In this chapter: we will discuss the contemporary understanding of diseases in general. The focus will be on diseases in the Graeco-Roman world and the Old Testament view of diseases. This will be followed by a detailed treatment of specific ailments in Mark. We will wrestle with the interpretations given to the diseases healed by Jesus- as to whether they are healings or exorcisms. We will analyse the motifs and the forms of the narratives. We will carry out a critical study of how Mark presents Jesus in these passages and the sense in which these healings form part of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. There will be a review of how Ghanaian readers in London, whose world-view approximates quite closely to that of the Mediterranean world in the first Century, interpret these readings during discussions.

## 4.2 CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF DISEASES

### 4.2.1 GENERAL VIEW OF DISEASES: GRAECO-ROMAN WORLD

D.B. Martin<sup>1</sup> uses a first century Latin compendium by Celsus to cite different views of the causes of diseases: Disease is caused by an imbalance or disruption of the elements in the body; blockage in the pores of the body, inflammation, breath, humours (made of bile, phlegm, blood and water) and an excess or deficiency among the four elements namely fire, water, air and earth. For the 'Methodists'<sup>2</sup> disease is caused by a disruption of the normal tension of the body, 'it is either too restricted or too lax or some mixture of the two.'<sup>3</sup> The ancient theories disagree on 'what...to be kept in balance and what causes the balance to be disrupted.'<sup>4</sup> In Platonic thought, pains result from the 'sudden imbalance of the particles or organs in the body.'<sup>5</sup>

Ancient theories acknowledged that plagues spread through the population due to contamination. Doctors attributed plagues to polluted air. Astronomers could forecast plagues by observing changes in the sky.<sup>6</sup> Philo and Galen also attributed the plague to an unhealthy atmosphere.<sup>7</sup> The basic assumption of the above views has more in common with the imbalance than with the invasion etiology<sup>8</sup>.

In antiquity people also believed that disease was the result of attack by the gods or daimones. The magical papyri provided one interesting source of invasion etiology of disease in Graeco-Roman culture giving evidence that such beliefs existed<sup>9</sup>. The people had belief in capricious gods surrounding them. Magicians also believed in the gods. As Hans Dieter Betz writes, '... the gods are portrayed not as Hellenistic and aristocratic, as

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<sup>1</sup> For scholars associated with these views see D.B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) p.147

<sup>2</sup> The Methodists were a school of medical theorists and physicians in the first and second centuries.

<sup>3</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p.148

<sup>4</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p.148

<sup>5</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p.152

<sup>6</sup> See Sextus Empiricus Against the Professors 5.2 cited by Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 279n44

<sup>7</sup> See Philo on the Giants, 10; Galene Hygiene 1.4; 1.11 cited by Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 279n45

<sup>8</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p.151

<sup>9</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p.158

in literature, but as capricious, demonic and even dangerous, as in Greek folklore<sup>10</sup>. There are two basic views regarding disease in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century – the imbalance theory and the invasion theory.

#### 4.2.2 THE OLD TESTAMENT VIEW OF DISEASES

Our emphasis is to outline the causes of diseases and discuss views on leprosy, flow of blood, blindness and fever, as portrayed in the Old Testament - where the causes of some diseases were not known (Lev. 13:1ff., 1 Kings 17:17; 2 Kings 5:1ff.). Diseases could be attributed to sin (Numbers 12; cf. 2 Kings 5: 20-27, Numbers 16: 41-50, 2 Samuel 12:15-18, Deuteronomy 28: 22, 27-28, 35; 59-61). Sin could be interpreted in two ways<sup>11</sup> -the individual's sin (Genesis 12:17, Proverbs 23; 29-32), or that of the parents (2 Samuel 12: 14-15). The cause of the disease was a penalty for wrong doing and this penalty could be sent by God directly<sup>12</sup> (Exodus 4:11). The disease could be sent by God permissively<sup>13</sup> by means of others (Job 2:7). Satan was permitted to afflict Job with boils from the top of his head to his toes. In some instances there are no simple explanation for diseases (Job 34: 19-20).

Diseases could also be caused by alteration<sup>14</sup> in the bile (cf. Job 16:13; Lamentation 2:11), acute emotional disturbances<sup>15</sup> (e.g. the dryness of throat in Psalm 69:3) and sudden haemorrhage<sup>16</sup> affecting part of the brain causing the sudden drying up of Jeroboam's hand (1Kings 13:4). There are instances of temporary aphasia<sup>17</sup> arising from sudden emotion e.g. Ezekiel (Ezekiel 24:12-27) and Daniel (Daniel 10: 15).

<sup>10</sup> H.D. Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in translation; including the Demonic Spells*. Vol.1 Texts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) xlv cited by Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 281n85

<sup>11</sup> H. Lockyer, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986) p. 302

<sup>12</sup> A.W.F. Blunt and F.F. Bruce, 'Medicine' in *Dictionary of the Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, James Hastings (Edinburgh; T and T Clark, 1963) p. 637

<sup>13</sup> Blunt and Bruce, 'Medicine,' p.637

<sup>14</sup> Blunt and Bruce, 'Medicine,' p.638

<sup>15</sup> Blunt and Bruce, 'Medicine,' p.638

<sup>16</sup> Blunt and Bruce, 'Medicine,' p.638

<sup>17</sup> Blunt and Bruce, 'Medicine,' p.838

### *i. Leprosy*

The meaning of the Hebrew word *sara'at* is uncertain.<sup>18</sup> One theory conveys the idea of smitten,<sup>19</sup> implying those with the disease bore the mark of God's anger, were under a taboo and could be ostracised. This view is disputed, and a more likely derivation is from the word *sir'a* meaning a wasp or hornet, suggesting that the sufferers looked as 'they had been stung by hornets.'

The term *sara'at* represented a 'religious syndrome,'<sup>20</sup> visited on those who arrogantly broke God's law. Gehazi was cursed with it (2 Kings 5). *Sara'at* broke out on King Uzziah's forehead (2 Ch. 26: 16-21 cf. 2 Kings 15:5) and Miriam was also cursed with it (Num 12: 10-15, Deut. 24; 8-9). The suddenness of the changes in Miriam make it unlikely that it was the result of a structural change in the skin. M. Sussman<sup>21</sup> cites Davis who opines that the balancing was due to changes consequent upon rapid shallow breathing (hyperventilation) associated with the shock of the dramatic events of the appearance of the divinity at the entrance of the sanctuary. This view is far-fetched.<sup>22</sup> The heredity of leprosy was generally believed in.<sup>23</sup> It is referred to in the curse of Jacob (2 Sam. 3:29) and in the punishment of Gehazi. Leprosy was inflicted on people who disobeyed God's laws.

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<sup>18</sup> J.K. Howard, *Disease and Healing in the New Testament. An Analysis and Interpretation* (Oxford: University Press of America Inc., 2001) p. 68

<sup>19</sup> Howard, *Disease and Healing*, p. 68

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion see S.G.Browne, *Leprosy in the Bible* (London: Christian Medical Fellowship, 1970) p.8

<sup>21</sup> M. Sussman, 'Sickness and Disease,' in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. VI, pp. 6-15 esp. p. 12

<sup>22</sup> Sussman, 'Disease', 12vi

<sup>23</sup> A. Macalister, 'Leprosy,' in *The Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. J. Hastings, vol.3 (Edinburgh: T and T Clarke, 1900) p. 97



## *ii Flow Of Blood*

An emission or secretion of blood from genitals was ritually impure.<sup>24</sup> We have normal discharges<sup>25</sup> and abnormal discharges. The Hebrew word for menstruation and abnormal discharges is 'zwb' which means to flow, to have a discharge, and the noun zob 'discharge', 'flux.'<sup>26</sup>

Menstruation was severer than emission (Leviticus 15: 19-24). A menstruant had to suffer a 'communicable impurity' for seven days. When people or objects touched her, they became impure for one day. Menstruants were treated with abhorrence (Ezek. 36:17 cf. Gen. 31:35). If any man had intercourse with a menstruant, that action was considered sinful (Lev. 18:19; 20:18; Ezek. 18:6; 22:10; 2 Sam. 11: 4-5). The woman had to bathe and launder on the seventh day and waited until evening (cf. 2 Sam. 11:4). Menstruants were not required to offer sacrifices. Lochial discharge in a woman after birth was severer than menstruation. It was not the birth itself, but the discharge, which was polluting. Leviticus 12 identifies two stages of impurity after childbirth. Seven days if the child is male and fourteen days if the child is female.

The purification of a puerperal woman is in stages. At the end of her initial stage, the woman launders her clothes and bathes. In the evening she enters into her second stage of impurity. During the last day she launders and bathes and at nightfall she is both pure 'to the profane sphere and to the holy sphere.'<sup>27</sup> On the last day the woman offers sacrifice.<sup>28</sup>

A woman with an abnormal menstrual flow, refers to a woman bleeding outside the normal menorrhoeal period (Lev.15: 25-30). The Hebrew word for the woman in this category is 'zaba.' The causes for this condition include parasitism, malnutrition and

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<sup>24</sup> D.P. Wright and R.N. Jones, 'Discharge' in the *ABD*, vol.2, p. 204. An emission or secretion of semen or pus was also considered ritually unclean.

<sup>25</sup> Wright and Jones, 'Discharge,' p. 204. The normal discharges are seminal emissions, and lochial discharge after birth.

<sup>26</sup> Wright and Jones, 'Discharge,' p.204

<sup>27</sup> Wright and Jones, 'Discharge,' p.205

<sup>28</sup> A lamb is offered as burnt offering, and a bird is offered for the purgation offering, and the purification process for the woman becomes confirmed and complete (See Leviticus 12:6-8)

anaemia.<sup>29</sup> Some apparently normal women menstruate irregularly with some unpredictability of flow.<sup>30</sup>

Why was the flow of blood impure? Anthropologists explain these in biological, ecological and social terms.<sup>31</sup> The Old Testament<sup>32</sup> scholars have also posited other rationales for considering the flow of blood as impure. Discharges (including the flow of blood) were impure because they were considered demonic; they arose from the Hebrew feeling of sexual shame; they were unhealthy and they were connected with sin. G. Wenham<sup>33</sup> has also added other rationales for considering discharge as impure. The polarities of holiness/purity and impurity were to be explained by issues and conditions of life and death respectively. Menstruation is normal but sometimes involves the loss of liquids, and rites associated with death. Thus, it becomes the focus of many pollution rules with the abnormal discharges, which were more associated with the idea of death.

### **iii Blindness**

Blindness was common in Palestine. It was often understood to be a punishment for evil doing (Gen. 19:11; 2 Kings 6: 18). Two<sup>34</sup> main forms of blindness appear to have been recognised: (i) trachoma and (ii) optic atrophy found in old people like Isaac (Gen. 27:1), Eli (1 Sam 3:2), and Ahijah (1 Kings 14:4). Other causes of blindness were due to physical trauma (Judges 16:21), and a variety of infections. Blindness was regarded as a curse that God could bring on the disobedient (Deut.28: 29), and also as a visitation from God (Ex.4: 11).

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<sup>29</sup> Wright and Jones, 'Discharge,' p.206

<sup>30</sup> See G.Y. El-Kholi et al 'Menstrual Patterns in Upper Egypt,' in *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association* 54 (1971) pp.650-658

<sup>31</sup> See M.M. Balzer, 'Rituals of Gender Ethnicity: Markers of Siberian Khanty Ethnicity; Status and Belief in *American Anthropologist* 83 (1981) pp. 850-867 and R.E. Montgomery, 'Cross Cultural Study of Menstruation, Menstrual taboo and Related Social Variables,' in *Ethos* 2 (1974) pp. 137-170

<sup>32</sup> See Wright and Jones, 'Discharge,' p. 207

<sup>33</sup> G.J. Wenham, 'Why does sexual intercourse defile (Lev. 15:18)?' in *ZAW* 95 (1983) pp. 432-434

<sup>34</sup> Blunt and Bruce, 'Medicine,' p. 638

#### *iv Fever*

M.L.Rigato cites Lev. 26:16 and Deut. 28:22 and affirms that in the ancient world fever was viewed as a demonic phenomenon.<sup>35</sup> The God of Israel could send fever in certain circumstances. Deut 28:22 LXX mentions fever ( *πυρετός* for חֲקָק )<sup>36</sup> that God will send to those who disobey His command. In Lev. 26:16, the same Hebrew word for fever is used but is translated by the LXX as jaundice ( *ἰκτερον* ). Philo comments on Deut. 28:22 in Exs. 143 in a list of curses from God sent upon lawbreakers including various aspects of fever.<sup>37</sup>

What are our findings regarding the Old Testament view of diseases? Diseases were inflicted on people as a result of sin. At times God allowed other agencies to attack people with diseases. The causes of some diseases were not known and in other instances the diseases were caused by malfunction of the body. Leprosy was seen as a form of punishment. Blindness was regarded as a curse and punishment from God, or caused by infection or virus, while fever was caused by demons or was interpreted as punishment from God. We will now have a detailed examination of specific ailments in Mark's Gospel.

### **4.3 DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FOUR SPECIFIC AILMENTS IN MARK'S GOSPEL**

#### **4.3.1 FEVER: (MARK 1: 29-31)**

What did the people at the time attribute fever to? The four<sup>38</sup> causes of fever were – medical, astrological, divine and demonic.

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<sup>35</sup> M.L. Rigato, 'Tradizione e Redazione in Mc. 1, 29-31 (e paralleli). La Guarigione della Suocera di Simone Petro,' *Riv. B* 17 (1969) 159

<sup>36</sup> K. Weiss, 'πυρετός' in *TDNT* 6 (ed.) G.Friedrich (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968) pp. 956-959 esp. p. 957. Weiss notes that these are the only occurrences of fever in the LXX with the addition of *πυρετός* in Deut. 28:22. He also discusses 'fever as punishment' in Judaism.

<sup>37</sup> Philo could also identify medical causes of fever as in De Opificio 125 in a context in which he mentions Hippocrates.

<sup>38</sup> J.G.Cook, 'In Defence of Ambiguity: Is there a hidden demon in Mark 1:29-31? in *NTS* vol.43 (1997) pp. 184-208 esp. p.184

### *i Medical Cause Of Fever*

Fever was classified as a nervous phenomenon<sup>39</sup> healed by auto- suggestion. Physicians and natural philosophers were interested in the phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> Amateurs hypothesised and discussed its natural causes, symptoms and its treatment. A fragment of Chrysippus (in Clement of Alexandria *Strom* 8.9) contains a discussion of the relationship of splenic condition and a fever. For Plutarch, chilling of the extremities drives bodily heat inside and was a threatening symptom of fever.<sup>41</sup>

Some of the Greek medical tradition about fever might have been available to Mark and his audience. Hellenistic culture could identify a wide range of possible causes of fever.<sup>42</sup> Mark and his audience would have viewed the fever resulting from something in nature. Peter's mother in law would then have caught the fever due to any of these causes. The impression created was 'a human being subjected to the mysterious and nearly uncontrollable forces of nature.'<sup>43</sup> Mark and his community might not have been able to identify the particular natural cause associated with the woman's fever, bearing in mind the causes above. However, we can affirm that Jesus exhibited His power over the forces of nature<sup>44</sup> in healing the woman.

### *ii Astrological Cause Of Fever*

The astrological theory identified the causes of fever as located in the heavens. Mark had no interest in astrology, but some of his audience would have been aware of the old tradition in Graeco-Roman culture which identified astrological causes of disease. There were authors with an interest in astrology that identified planetary or stellar causes for fever. Homer refers to the star called the Dog of Orion who 'brings much fever upon wretched mortals.'<sup>45</sup> Vettius Valens describes a person born under the influence of the

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<sup>39</sup> J. Weiss, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments...Erster Band...*(ed.) J. Weiss; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1907) 83

<sup>40</sup> See Cook, 'Defence,' 188n16 for scholars who were interested in that phenomenon

<sup>41</sup> See Cook, 'Defence,' 190n21. Plutarch. *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 123a.

<sup>42</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p.190. The causes included eating green figs at midday, a pestilential summer, a splenic affliction, the chilling of extremities, earth, air, fire water or certain winds.

<sup>43</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p. 190

<sup>44</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p.190

<sup>45</sup> ET from A.C.Murray, Homer, *The Iliad with an English translation* (LCL) (London: Heinemann,

planet Mars, which includes attacks of fever.<sup>46</sup> It is unlikely that Mark himself shared their view. Certain Christians might have oriented themselves with this theory regarding the text in Mark and a lack of interest in astrology among the authors of the Gospels would not make Mark hold an astrological view of fever.<sup>47</sup> The readers with astrological theory would attribute Peter's mother in law's fever to the star Sirius, the planet Mars or to one of the heavenly bodies.<sup>48</sup> Based on the astrological theory, Jesus' healing would then be categorised as His power over celestial powers.<sup>49</sup>

### *iii The Divine Cause Of Fever*

Rigato intimated that fever in Mark 1: 29-31 'could be punishment from God.' God of Israel could send fever in certain circumstances. J. Calvin identified fever as an instrument for God's punishment.<sup>50</sup> The gods of the Graeco-Roman pantheon could also send fevers upon hapless mortals. An example was the goddess of fever (Dea ferbis) in Rome. There were texts associated with graves mentioning fever (among other ills) that gods would bring on defilers of the grave.<sup>51</sup> Parallels can be drawn between the above texts and other texts which seek underworld powers and fate to bring fever on a given individual.

These texts show how the gods of the Graeco-Roman pantheon sent fever to people as punishment. This implies Mark and those with Jewish backgrounds in his audience would have seen Peter's mother-in-law as a person who had broken one of God's laws and who was consequently paying a severe price; and that the woman whom God has judged because of her sins is then healed by Jesus.

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1925) 22.30-31 cited by Cook, 'Defence,' 191n28

<sup>46</sup> Vettius Valens, *Anthologiae* (ed.) Pingree: Leipzig: Teubner, 1986) 1.1; p.3, line 4. Compare Anth. 2.41; p.122 line 7. Many other references (with varying astrological causes of fever) can be found in Pingree's index.

<sup>47</sup> See Cook, 'Defence,' 192n32. Cook opines that the Magi in Matt. 2:2 are an exception.

<sup>48</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p. 192

<sup>49</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p.192

<sup>50</sup> Ioannis Calvini, Opera (CR 73; 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1555; rep. 1964; Braunschweig: Schwetscheke, 1891) 155 cited by Cook, 'Defence,' 192n33

<sup>51</sup> Dittenberger, Syll 3 1239 (ca. IICE). In Dittenberger, Syll 3 1240 there is a list of ills including fever that is repeated from Deut. 28:22; but the divinities cited by Cook, are God, the furies, Grace and Hygeia; cited by Cook, 'Defence,' 194n42

#### *iv The Demonic and Angelic Causes Of Fever*

The fever in Mark could be interpreted as a demonic phenomenon. The texts from Hellenistic culture affirm fever was attributed to demonic forces.<sup>52</sup> The fever in Simon's house obeyed Jesus' powerful word, as did the demon in the synagogue.<sup>53</sup> O Böcher opines that all fever is demonic in the New Testament. His assessment is based on a text in Richard Reitzenstein, in which an angel controls fever and he further appeals to Pliny's Natural History (8.32, 50; 22.14; 10.28, 16.66) to support his stance. Böcher's references to Pliny's Natural History as the cause of fever is faulty, since Pliny does not mention demonic causes, but indicates a variety of magical treatments of fever.<sup>54</sup>

However in the Greek-speaking ancient world fever could be seen as demonic (angelic phenomenon). For example, Lucian's narrator in *The Love of Lilies* (Philops 9) mentions drawing off fevers and snakes and mentions healings. In Jewish magic (Aramaic Speaking) fever could also be considered to be a demonic phenomenon. One amulet (Oxyrhynchus) is for exorcism of a spirit, called fever and shivering from the body of a woman named Miriam<sup>55</sup>. The date of the texts for demonic causes of fever is later than the text of Mark, and on that basis it is clear that the demonic explanation for fever came to be popular in late antiquity. Jewish members of Mark's audience could see the woman suffering from a demon-fever that Jesus drove out. If there were such Aramaic amulets in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, a person aware of them could compare Jesus' power to that of the magic

<sup>52</sup> E. Bickermann claimed (in reference to Mark 1:31) that 'Fieber ist auch eine Besessenheit, wie nicht nur aus Luc. Philops. 9, Confess. Cypr. 7 einem Text bei R. Reitzenstein, Poimandres, 18, Anm. 8, sondern auch aus der Parallelstelle Lk. 4:39 folgt.' *Das Messiasgeheimnis und die Komposition des Markusevangeliums*, ZNW 22 {1923} 132n3

<sup>53</sup> R. Pesch, *Neuere Exegese Verlust Oder Gewinn?* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1968) 172, 174. Pesch claims, with no reference to primary literature, that fever in Mark is 'conceived demonically.' (*Das Markusevangelium* 1. Teil (HTKN; Freiburg/etc: Herder, 1976) 130

<sup>54</sup> O. Böcher, *Das Neue Testament und die dämonischen Mächte* (SBS 58; Stuttgart KBW, 1972) 19-20. The Pliny references in the Teubner ed. are: H.N. 8.32 (50) 112-119; 22.14 (16) 37-8; 28.16(66) 228-9. *Dämonenfurcht und Dämonenabwehr. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte der Christlichen Taufe* (BWANT series 5 vol.10; Stuttgart et al.; Kohlhammer, 1970) 153. E. Yamauchi objects to Böcher's 'pan-demonological' view of sickness (*Magic or Miracle? Diseases, Demons and Exorcisms*, *Gospel Perspectives. The Miracles of Jesus* Vol.6; (ed.) David Wenham and Craig Blomberg; (Sheffield; JSOT, 1986) p. 142

<sup>55</sup> Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 9.1-2 (82-83). There is also an amulet in which the angels are appointed over fever (Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 3.21-22950-51) and other Aramaic amulets against fever 4.29 (560-710, 14.2 (102-103) and Geniza 5.1 (224-225)

recipe<sup>56</sup>. Mark's audience who were aware of angelically or demonically controlled fevers would see Jesus' power as being superior to that of the angel or demon.

There were the medical, the astrological, the divine and the demonic causes. The different options for interpreting Mark 1:29-31 were surely due in part to the 'ambiguous nature of the fever.'<sup>57</sup> People could resort to any of the theories or options because Mark does not exclude any of them.<sup>58</sup> The ambiguity Mark leaves in the text regarding the nature of the fever, allows the reader to interpret the text in any one or all of the four ways. However, Mark's audience could have entertained all the four causes.

#### **4.3.2 LEPROSY MARK 1: 40-45**

J. M. Baumgarten<sup>59</sup> has reconstructed a portion of the 'Damascus Document' from the Dead Sea Scrolls that deals with skin disease and in part offers an etiology for the disease. The disease is limited to the presence of ru'ah, a Hebrew word normally translated, as spirit<sup>60</sup> that appears to be equivalent to the Greek pneuma. In the Qumran texts ru'ah is sometimes linked to the punishment of sinners by diseases leading Baumgarten to admit, 'it is thus possible to attribute scale diseases to the ru'ah in our text as involving the intrusion of evil or demonic influences'<sup>61</sup>. Leprosy was seen as punishment, and it was attributed to demons.

#### **4.3.3 DROPSY (PARALYSIS AND WITHERED HAND)**

Dropsy is a broad term embracing paralysis (Mark 2:1-12) and the withered hand (Mark 3: 1-6). Dropsy occurs when a person continues in illness for a long time in an unclean state<sup>62</sup>. The tissues become corrupted, melt and turn into water. The belly becomes filled with water, the feet and legs below the knees swell up, and the shoulders,

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<sup>56</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p.198. For work on demonological interpretation of fever and Christian magic, and the interpretation of fever in Patristic Literature, see pp. 198-206 of Cook's article.

<sup>57</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p. 207

<sup>58</sup> Cook, 'Defence,' p. 207

<sup>59</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p. 166

<sup>60</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p. 166

<sup>61</sup> J.M.Baumgarten, 'The 4Q Zadokite fragments on Skin Disease,' 162 cited by Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p. 166

<sup>62</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p. 149

regions about the collarbones, chest and thighs melt away. In these cases the uncleanness is attributed 'to the putrefaction or corruption of the normal elements of a body which for some reason has been prevented from fulfilling its natural self-cleansing activities (such as proper evacuation).'<sup>63</sup>

#### 4.3.4 BLINDNESS

The disabilities<sup>64</sup> that disqualified priests from service in the sanctuary (Lev. 21:20) included gibēn translated as 'crook or hump-backed', daq ('dwarf') and tebalul ('blemished in the eyes'). In the Rabbinic tradition each of these terms was categorised as an abnormality of the eyes<sup>65</sup>. In the Mishnah (Bek. 7:2) gibēn was either the absence of the eyebrows or presence of only one eyebrow. The Mishnah (Bek. 6:2) regarded daq as a membrane covering the pupil of the eye, probably cataract, and tebalul (cf. the verb bālal, 'mingle, confuse') was regarded as an abnormality in which the black of the pupil extended into the iris (or vice versa). The Babylonian Talmud warned of the danger of flies and their association with eye disease.

#### 4.3.5 DEAFNESS

Congenital deafness was frequently of a genetic etiology.<sup>66</sup> In addition to the various environmental causes<sup>67</sup> there were a multitude of genetic syndromes that also accounted for hearing loss.

What are our findings so far? There were four causes of fever-medical, astrological, divine and demonic/angelic. Leprosy was caused by demons, malfunction of the body and punishment from God. Blindness was caused by malfunction of the body while deafness was attributed to bodily malfunction and environmental causes. We will find out the differences between exorcisms and healings because Mark portrays Jesus as engaged in both methods.

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<sup>63</sup> Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, p. 150

<sup>64</sup> Sussman, 'Disease,' vi.12

<sup>65</sup> Sussman, 'Disease,' vi.12

<sup>66</sup> H.R.Heirs, *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979) p. 51

<sup>67</sup> Heirs, *Genetic Disorders*, p. 51



#### 4.4 THE NATURE OF THE NARRATIVES: HEALINGS OR EXORCISMS?

##### 4.4.1 EXORCISMS AND HEALINGS – THE DIFFERENCES

There are conflicts between exorcists and demons. In exorcisms both characters use attack and defence, and the person who is possessed becomes ‘the battle field.’<sup>68</sup> In healings, there is no attack or defence. There is sometimes the transference of power affected through touch. The laying of hands has no threatening character, and it is seen in the context of giving help<sup>69</sup>. The effect of laying on of hands in exorcisms is ‘the exercise of coercive force,’<sup>70</sup> the mark of laying on of hands in healings is ‘the helping hand while that of exorcism is iron hand.’<sup>71</sup> Power can also be transferred through healing substances. The two belong together; medicaments are δυνάμεις and the hands of God<sup>72</sup>. Whereas in healings spittle is medicament, in exorcisms it is as a sign of contempt<sup>73</sup>.

One can find exorcism motifs in healings. The motifs are of two kinds – demonological aetiologies of illness and techniques of healing which use exorcisms<sup>74</sup>. However, when we speak of demonological aetiologies and possession (which involve exorcism), it is easy to draw a line of demarcation between them. In possession, the demon inhabits the victim, while in demonological aetiologies, the demon is the cause of the disease. In healings there are signs or symptoms which can be explained as demonological. These symptoms can be ascribed to the actions of a demon.

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<sup>68</sup> G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1983) p.89

<sup>69</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, 92n29. Theissen cites J. Behm, *Die Handauflegung im Urchristentum in religions-geschichtlichem Zusammenhang untersucht* (Leipzig :Naumburg a.S. : G.Pätz, 1911) p.156 who regards the laying on of hands as ‘the imparting of sacred life-force’ as a transmission of power in a real, physical sense.’

<sup>70</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.92. Theissen cites Cyprian’s description of exorcisms in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century.

<sup>71</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p. 92

<sup>72</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.93. Theissen cites a reference from *Plut. Quaest. Conv. Iv,1,3*

<sup>73</sup> Thraede, ‘Exorzismus,’ 52; O.Böcher, *Dämonenfurcht und Dämonenabwehr* BWANT 90 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970) pp. 218-220. The two references are cited by Theissen, *Stories*, p.93

<sup>74</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.86

From the above, one can find differences between exorcisms and healings. In exorcisms the action of the miracle worker is aggressive, exhibiting the dark repelling side of his 'numinous power,'<sup>75</sup> while in healings the miracle worker reveals the gracious and interesting side of the gifts, and it is beneficent power, which is so revealing. We have identified the differences between exorcisms and healings. Our next task is to examine the narratives in Mark with the focus on distinguishing between exorcism and the healing narratives.

#### 4.5. HEALINGS OR EXORCISMS ?

##### 4.5.1 *Mark 1: 29-31*

The way Mark describes the instantaneous nature of healings has a parallel with the way the unclean spirit departs from the demoniac in 1:26<sup>76</sup>, creating the impression that we have a case of exorcism. The fact is 1:26 deals with the expulsion of unclean spirit while our passage deals with the healing of a bodily ailment. One theory affirms that though Mark does not go to the extent of equating healing with exorcism, he links them together<sup>77</sup>. There is nothing to show that Mark links healing with exorcism. The two descriptions appearing in the passage or in a line, are there for distinction. One theory affirms that the service the woman renders after the healing reminds us of the service rendered to Jesus in 1:13. In 1:13 we have the same tense of the verb used to describe the service the angels gave to Jesus during His struggle with Satan in the wilderness.<sup>78</sup> We are dealing with different contexts. The latter deals with Jesus' struggle with Satan and the former with Jesus' cure of a physical disease.

If the narrative is not exorcism, then what is it? It has the 'superficial features of exorcism,'<sup>79</sup> because no mention is made of the departure of a demon. Therefore, it can only be a physical disease, not exorcism.

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<sup>75</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.94

<sup>76</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.199

<sup>77</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 199

<sup>78</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.199

<sup>79</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p. 87

#### 4.5.2 Mark 1:40-45

This passage is said to be an exorcism narrative<sup>80</sup>, because the words ἑμβριμάομαι and ἐθούς appear in it. It has pronounced exorcistic features<sup>81</sup>, which may be Markan. Yet they are rather strange in the context of a healing story, but fit into exorcistic theme of this section of the Gospel.<sup>82</sup> Jesus' rage is directed at the demonic forces responsible for his affliction<sup>83</sup>, but Mark does not state that. This statement was made after the healing, implying two stages of healing, but we are not given that impression. It is a 'repetitive style of Mark'<sup>84</sup>. Moreover 'there is no evidence that leprosy was attributed to demon possession.'<sup>85</sup> But in 'b Ketub 61b scale disease is ascribed to an evil spirit and also in 4Q272.<sup>86</sup> The text contains no clear evidence that the affliction was perceived as possession, indeed no synoptic account of healing from leprosy mentions 'the expulsion of a spirit.'<sup>87</sup> Moreover, while possession and leprosy are analogous in that both involve uncleanness, Jesus' response is 'different in each case.'<sup>88</sup> The unclean spirit is driven out and remains unclean and still exists; but the leprosy disappears and the unclean person is made whole.

Even though the term ἐκβάλλειν used in 1:34, 39 can be interpreted in the light of ejection of demon in 1:40 it is to be explained as a metaphor in the light of the 'negative emotions of Jesus'<sup>89</sup>. The ἐκβάλλειν was not addressed to a demon but to the man. This sounds strange if the passage is classified as exorcism. Even though Marcus,<sup>90</sup> has intimated that there are close parallels between our passage and the exorcisms in 1:21-28 this is not a guarantee that the phenomenon should be categorised as exorcistic. They are

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<sup>80</sup> See E. Bevan, 'Notes on 1:41 and John 11:33,38 in *JTS* 38 (1932) pp. 186-188 and Robinson, *Problem*, p. 40.

<sup>81</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 207. the exorcistic features are the anger of Jesus in 1:41 and 43, the departure of the disease from the man in 1:42 and the expulsion of the man in 1:43

<sup>82</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 208

<sup>83</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p. 85

<sup>84</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.145

<sup>85</sup> R.T.France, *The Gospel of Mark. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2002) p. 119

<sup>86</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 209

<sup>87</sup> K.Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ in African Perspective: A Study of Demonology and Redemption in the African Context* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1992) p. 222

<sup>88</sup> Best, *Temptation*, pp. 34-35

<sup>89</sup> Meier, *Marginal Jew*, II, p. 107

<sup>90</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 209

there to show that Jesus exorcises and at the same time heals. They are often set side by side in statements about 'the activity of Jesus.'<sup>91</sup> Moreover, while exorcism was linked with Jesus' teaching in 1:21-28, healing is linked with 'forgiveness.'<sup>92</sup> The healing is linked to a forensic view of things.

The passage deals with the healing of a leper. Jesus' anger is directed at the disease. He touches the leper and by saying the word, the leprosy leaves the man. The exorcistic features in the passage, are to be interpreted metaphorically. To interpret the passage as exorcistic is reading into the text, but there is evidence of Mark attempting to bring his own cosmologies together.

#### **4.5.3 Mark 2:1-12**

The narrative is viewed as exorcism because of the way the paralytic was brought to Jesus. The paralytic has to be taken through the roof in order to conceal the building's main entry from the demon responsible for his illness.<sup>93</sup> Yet there is nothing in the pericope reflecting signs of exorcistic influences.<sup>94</sup> Moreover if the cause of the disease was demonic, the demon could have attacked the paralytic even when he was on the roof. The healing of the paralytic was instantaneous, but there is no mention of a demon. As such, this passage is a healing narrative. Jesus also deals with sin in this narrative. Mark falls back here on the old view that disease is a punishment from God. The man has sinned. God has chastised him with sickness, therefore he must 'first be forgiven and then be healed.'<sup>95</sup> Herein lies a link with forensic eschatology.

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<sup>91</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 35

<sup>92</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p. 85. See Best *Temptation*, p. 35. Best affirms much Jewish thought linked leprosy to sin, regarding it as a punishment.

<sup>93</sup> See R. Guelich, Mark 1- 8:26, WBC 34. (Dallas: Word, 1989) p. 83. Guelich lists scholars who hold such views

<sup>94</sup> K. Kertelge, *Die Wunder Jesu im Markusevangelium. Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*. SAN 23. Munich : Kosel 1970 pp. 77 cited by Guelich, Mark 1-8:26, p.83

<sup>95</sup> Best, *Temptation*, p. 35

#### 4.5.4 Mark 3:1-6

Jesus asks the man with the withered hand to stretch out his hand. He stretched the hand out and he was healed. There is nothing in the text to show the disease is demonic. The problem is with the opponents of Jesus who hardened their hearts to kill him. But what is the cause of their hardness of heart? It could be attributed to God (cf. 4:10-12), to their wilful disobedience, or it could be they were serving as agents of Satan. Mark does not tell us the cause. Jesus is battling with evil in the hearts of the Jewish authorities, again a forensic eschatology. In Mark 8:15, Jesus talks of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. The term 'leaven' is a common Jewish metaphor for the evil inclination; that impulse within the hearts of human beings which causes them to sin.

#### 4.5.5 Mark 5:25-34

D.E. Aune describes the phenomenon as magical.<sup>96</sup> Aune's view is untenable because the phenomenon is an 'act of sovereign will of God with the view of honouring the woman's faith,'<sup>97</sup> a 'theological interpretation of the phenomenon.'<sup>98</sup> There is no mention of a demon or violence. The healing is not auto-suggestion,<sup>99</sup> hypnotism<sup>100</sup> or shock healing.<sup>101</sup>

(Ἐγνώ τῷ σώματι) describes the woman's 'physical sensation of well-being,'<sup>102</sup> while (ἐπιγνοὺς ἐν ἑωτῇ τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δύναμιν ἐξεληθοῦσαν) suggests that this healing perceptibly 'took something out of Jesus in a way not paralleled in other Gospel healing narratives'<sup>103</sup>. The sequence might create the impression of a mechanical sense of

<sup>96</sup> See D.E.Aune, 'Magic in Early Christianity,' in *ANRW* (eds.) H. Temporini and W. Haase. Part II 23/2 (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980) pp. 1507-1557 esp. p. 1536

<sup>97</sup> See Lane, *Mark*, p. 193

<sup>98</sup> J.P.Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus* Vol. II (New York: Doubleday, 1994) p. 709

<sup>99</sup> J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth. His Life, Times and Teaching*. Translated by H. Danby, Third Edition (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1925/1974) p. 2701; J. Mackinnon, *The Historic Jesus* (London: Longmans, 1931) p.344 and D. Weatherhead, *Psychology, Religion and Healing* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1951) p. 56

<sup>100</sup> See Micklem, *Miracles*, p.122. Micklem affirms the influence of hypnosis on menstruation

<sup>101</sup> C.F. Von Ammon, *Die Geschichte des Lebens Jesu, mit steter Rücksicht auf die Vornhandenen Quellen* (Leipzig, 1842) p. 416

<sup>102</sup> France, *Mark*, p.237

<sup>103</sup> France, *Mark*, p.237

physical transfer of (δύναμις)<sup>104</sup> from one body to other. Mark is very careful to oppose this impression by affirming it was not mere physical contact that mattered and that the basis of the healing is in faith (πίστις) v.34. The woman was suffering from the flow of blood, and was considered impure. It had no connection with demonic powers and Mark does not create that impression. Jesus heals a woman who has been suffering from the flow of blood for twelve years. It was a physical healing.

#### 4.5.6 Mark 7:31-37

Let us consider the views of scholars who interpret this passage as exorcism. Jesus puts His fingers into the man's ears. The finger in the Gospel describes the everyday use of the literal finger<sup>105</sup>, but in other biblical contexts the finger can represent the symbol of God's power<sup>106</sup> connected with magic and exorcism. The finger of God used in this case to 'open a man's speech,'<sup>107</sup> seems to be typical of magical exorcism,<sup>108</sup> an evidence of casting out devils by the finger of God. Jesus thrusts His fingers into the man's ears<sup>109</sup> and this can be understood in the light of exorcism<sup>110</sup>. The evil spirit leaves the body, through an extremity or an orifice. The 'binding of the tongue' is a phrase taken from the technical vocabulary of magic.<sup>111</sup> In the cursing tablets, where the expression 'to bind' is so common, parts of the body are usually listed very exactly and in detail. The miracle in Mark 7:37 mentions parts of the body. G. A. Deissmann concludes that the evangelist affirms that a dumb man was made to speak and a demonic chain broken. Thus implying one of the works of Satan was destroyed<sup>112</sup>. The view that (ὁ δεσμὸς τῆς γλώσσης) can be interpreted technically points to the ancient idea that a human being can

<sup>104</sup> The δύναμις is a constitutive element in the biblical concept of the personal God. Cf. W. Grundmann, *Der Begriff der Kraft in der neutestamentlichen Gedankenwelt* (Stuttgart: 1932) idem 'δύναμις' in *TDNT* I (ed.) G. Kittel (Grand Rapids., Michigan; Wm.B Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 1964) pp. 284-317 esp. pp. 230-310 cited by Lane, *Mark*, 192n48.

<sup>105</sup> See Matthew 23:4; Luke 16:24; John 8:6; 20:27

<sup>106</sup> See Psalm 8:3

<sup>107</sup> J.M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM Press Limited, 1974) p.82

<sup>108</sup> Hull, *Magic*, p. 83

<sup>109</sup> That is if the full force of εἰς is retained. Swete suggests that the ears are bound. Cited by Hull, *Magic*, 160n4

<sup>110</sup> Hull, *Magic*, p. 83

<sup>111</sup> Hull, *Magic*, p. 81

<sup>112</sup> G.A. Deissmann, *New Light on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T and T Clarke, 1907) p.88

be bound by demonic influence<sup>113</sup>. Jesus sighs and groans. Is it a form of sympathetic magic<sup>114</sup> or Jesus struggling with a demon?<sup>115</sup> If it were the former it would then imply that Jesus imitated both the hoped for restoration of speech and the ejection of indwelling demon. But there is no mention of a demon in our passage.

Is Jesus then struggling with a demon? Marcus quotes T. Sol. 5:12-13 of a demon sighing when wrestling with an exorcist, and on that note argues that if Jesus sighs then He is struggling with a demon. Contextually, it is irrelevant to this context, because there is no mention of a demon in the passage and it was the demon who sighed in T. Sol. 5: 12-13.

How do scholars interpret (Εφφαθα): Be opened? Foreign words are a very familiar feature of magic spells with examples in the papyri. The practice was to summon a god or demon by the tongue he was 'believed to understand or which stood in some relationship to that god'<sup>116</sup>. Jesus a Jewish wonder worker operating with the power of a great Hebrew God, should utter his commands in a Jewish language. Aramaic was used instead of Hebrew, because Aramaic, the spoken tongue, would tend to creep into stories as they were told repeatedly.

But in Mark's narrative, the barbaric word is translated. Might that not expose the secret and destroy its magic power? The opposite may well be the case. For the magician usually needed to know the meaning of what he was controlling<sup>117</sup>. The foreign expressions were sometimes translated into Greek for the professional use of the healers and exorcists. The translation of the powerful word therefore must not be thought inconsistent with its magical provenance.

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<sup>113</sup> G.A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East. The New Testament illustrated by recently discovered texts of the Graeco-Roman world*. Translated by L.R.M. Strachan (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910) pp 304-307. For a general view on binding, see R.H. Heirs, 'Binding and Loosing, The Matthean authorizations' in *JBL* 10 (1985) pp. 230-250

<sup>114</sup> Hull, *Magic*, p. 84

<sup>115</sup> Marcus, Mark 1-8, p. 474

<sup>116</sup> See Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 222f

<sup>117</sup> See Hull, *Magic*, 160n52. Practice varied considerably. Names were retained in the original (Hopfner I, p. 724) and instructions, commands and prayers translated. In Test. Sol. 13.6 (P), however, the agent's name is interpreted.

How do we react to the above issues? Jesus putting His fingers into the ears of the sufferer should not be interpreted as a way of opening an ‘exit for the demon.’ The idea is that the deaf and dumb refused to reveal his identity or hear an exorcistic command. Jesus, by putting His fingers in the ears of the sufferer made an exit for the demon ensuring that the ears are opened to hearing.<sup>118</sup> We would have expected screaming and violence if the demon was making its way through the ears; and Mark would have identified them. To infer exorcism from this passage is to read into the text.

The term ‘loosing’ has exorcistic connotations. References to binding and loosing the tongue in the papyri and in the Hellenistic magical spells deal with physical maladies and demons. This cannot be applied to our context because: there is no mention of a demon or of violence or resistance – acts which typify vigorous departure of a demon. The phrase (ὁ δεσμὸς τῆς γλώσσης) is a figurative description of the cure. How do we interpret Jesus’ sighing? ‘He sighs deeply, denoting the act to be imitated by the patient of forcing up a blast of air from the lungs into the ear –tubes and the mouth, as if to clear away any obstruction which may exist there ... the sigh soon came to be taken as a sigh of emotion, though what emotion, no one can of course say.’<sup>119</sup>

What do we make of (Εφφαθα) spoken by Jesus? This is an Aramaic word<sup>120</sup>. It is not a secret word, nor a magic word, like the elaborate abracadabra<sup>121</sup>, nor a foreign word of magic<sup>122</sup>. It is easily understood and usually translated into a regularly spoken language because Jesus spoke Aramaic regularly. The Jews and the many Gentiles in the Syrian

<sup>118</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, p. 383

<sup>119</sup> Menzies, *Gospel*, p.159

<sup>120</sup> There has been a debate among scholars as to whether Εφφαθα is an Aramaic or Hebrew word. See M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) p.234; J. Emerton, ‘MARANATHA AND EPHPHATHA’ in *JTS* N.S.18 (1967) pp. 427-431; Gundry, *Mark*, p.384; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 252 and Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 474. Marcus opines that Black’s Aramaic ephphatha is closer to Mark than Rabinowitz’s hippatah.

<sup>121</sup> H.C.Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in the New Testament Times*. SNTSMS 559 Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) pp. 95-121 cited by Gundry, *Mark*, p. 384. These elaborate and many ‘abracadabras were found in Hellenistic and Roman incantations.’

<sup>122</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, p. 384. The word Εφφαθα does not refer to Jesus commanding the heaven to be opened as intimated by Waetjan. See H.C. Waetjan, *Recording of Power* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989) p. 136.



Decapolis region spoke Aramaic. Contextually, there is nothing unusual about Jesus' use of that language. Verse 34 reveals both, citing the Aramaic word and translating it into Greek. Why maintain the Aramaic word? Mark's audience speak Greek and Mark writes in Greek. How do we account for the Aramaic word? For Mark's audience, the Aramaic word has with it power,<sup>123</sup> which is reflected in the way the sentence is constructed. The verb (λέγει) is in the present tense. The word Εφφαθα is translated with a Greek verb strengthened by a perfective preposition<sup>124</sup> (διανοίχθητι) 'be completely opened.' This Aramaic word, ( and the associated translation into Greek), sets a stage for the curative word for the man's deaf ears to 'complement the curative saliva applied to his mute tongue.'<sup>125</sup>

How does Jesus use saliva? There are three ways<sup>126</sup> of looking at the situation. (i) It is because of the contempt that Jesus has for the evil spirit afflicting the man that is why Jesus had to spit. But Jesus does not spit on the ground, and the ground is not mentioned in the passage. (ii) Jesus should spit directly into the mouth of the man. Mark does not mention this. (iii) Jesus spits on His fingers and with the spittle on His fingers, He then touches the tongue of the man. This is confirmed by (ἡψατο)<sup>127</sup>. Since only the fingers of Jesus are mentioned, we accept this as the method employed in using the saliva. Jesus' looking up into heaven can be interpreted as a form of prayer. There is no instance of demonic activity in the narrative.

<sup>123</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 475. Mark retains the Aramaic word here because of the popular belief in the belief in the power of Jesus' original words.

<sup>124</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, p.384

<sup>125</sup> Gundry, *Mark*, p. 265

<sup>126</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.473. For a discussion on the use of spittle(saliva) see J. Preuss, *Biblische Talmudische Medizin: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur überhaupt* (Berlin; 1911) pp. 85-86, 277, 531; A. Jirku, *Materialen zur Volksreligion Israels* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1924) pp. 61-65; L.Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants, England: Gregg International, 1970) p. 162; S. Eitrem, *Some Notes on Demonology in the New Testament* (Symbolae Osloenses Fasc. Supplet XII Osloae, 1950) pp. 51-60; E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956) pp. 171-172; Yamauchi, *Gospel Perspectives* 6, 1986, pp. 136-140; R.K.Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*. Studies in Oriental Civilization 54 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1993) pp. 78-80; Gundry, *Mark*, p.389

<sup>127</sup> France, *Mark*, p.303

It is difficult to ascertain whether this is a healing narrative or exorcism. But evidence provided by Mark can be used to inform us. It is possible to have exorcistic features in a healing narrative. The way in which exorcistic features are used in the passage, especially the reference to the release of the tongue, suggest that the healing is exorcistic.

#### **4.5.7 Mark 8:22-26**

This is a miracle story. Initially, as a healing gesture, Jesus uses saliva by spitting on the man's eyes and laying His hands upon him. There is no healing command. Jesus asks a question which gives the man the occasion to attest a partial cure thereby preparing for the second stage of the cure. Jesus lays His hands on the man's eyes again. The man's sight is restored - the text gives evidence of a complete cure. There are two meanings to the word seeing<sup>128</sup> in this passage - physical vision and inner understanding, both of which are symbolic.

#### **4.5.8 Mark 10: 46-52**

This is the last healing story in the Gospel of Mark. It is climactic<sup>129</sup> as it brings to light, for its readers, his goal of the Gospel. We are dealing with an extraordinary cure and therefore a miracle story. We have a problem, blindness, (vv. 46-51) and a solution (Jesus' word, 'Your faith has made you well,' (v52a). There is also evidence of cure (receiving sight and following Jesus (v. 52b). Bartimaeus gives us a vivid case study of faith. The genuineness of the faith is shown in following Jesus on the way after receiving his sight. Our findings so far, show that, apart from Mark 7:31-37, the remaining narratives are healing passages.

### **4.6. MOTIFS**

Preparations precede the miracles involving change of place-a house (1:29) or in public view (7:33;8;23). Jesus' healing is not restricted to a particular place. The associated motifs are 'a variety of features associated with mystery: in order to keep the matter secret'<sup>130</sup> (7: 36; 8;26). The miracle worker approaches the scene (1:29). The sick

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<sup>128</sup> L. Williamson, Jr. *Mark, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary For Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1983) p. 147

<sup>129</sup> Williamson, *Mark*, p. 196

approach Him (1:40; 5:25; and 10:49) or are brought to Him (2:1ff; 7:32). In some instances, the sick encounter obstacles before approaching Him; the paralytic had to be lowered down through the roof to Jesus because of the crowd (2: 4). In the midst of these obstacles, the sick exhibit faith. The obstacles and faith are associated motifs.<sup>131</sup> Faith in miracles overcoming obstacles.<sup>132</sup> The sick make efforts to reach Jesus. He sees faith on their part, and in dismissing them, He acknowledges their faith.

The sick man (1:40) falls on his knees before Jesus for two<sup>133</sup> reasons: to attract attention and to express confidence. He also makes a plea by crying for help (10:48; 1:40) and declaring trust (1:40), attracting the attention of the miracle worker and ensuring he gets his healing. He responds positively in exhorting them—a sign that He wants to heal them.

While the miracle worker has the intention of healing the sick, the opponents criticise Him showing their scepticism and resignation.<sup>134</sup> They doubt His healing, they suspect the source of His power and they are sceptical whether He has power to forgive sins, and they show their resignation by affirming that He breaks the Sabbath law (3:1). These criticisms (implying Jesus is a sinner and He breaks laws of the Sabbath), are followed by the miracle. The context is the apophthegmatic miracle stories, ‘because they centre on the breaking of rules.’<sup>135</sup>

His reactions to the plight of the sick, as reflected in His emotional responses to the situation, are described by the words *σπλαγχνισθεὶς* (1:41), *εμβριμησάμενος* (1:43) and *συλλυπούμενος* (3:5). Jesus’ emotions are directed at the disease and are seen in the context of healings and not exorcisms. He builds confidence in the sick by assuring them that all will be well (5:34). This does not imply that the healing does not take place until after the utterance.<sup>136</sup> Rather the sick had already been healed, and He provides further

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<sup>130</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.61

<sup>131</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.53

<sup>132</sup> J. Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesu* (1970), 160n198 appositely observes ‘that Jesus’ stories dealing with faith often attract the motif of resistance,’ cited by Theissen, *Stories*, 53n6

<sup>133</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.53

<sup>134</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.56

<sup>135</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p. 57

assurances to buttress the faith of the sick. Jesus in this context, is playing the role of a physician. The expression ‘My son, your sins are forgiven,’ meant Jesus was saying, God has forgiven the sins of the man: a statement of encouragement.<sup>137</sup> This can also be an assurance which is integral to the healing narrative<sup>138</sup>.

How does the miracle worker overcome the affliction? (i) By touch which ‘strengthens someone suffering from physical or mental weakness,<sup>139</sup> thus implying it has nothing to do with exorcism. The touching cures fever (1:31), haemorrhage (5:27) and blindness (8:23). It takes the form of laying on of hands; a miraculous gesture which is familiar and in this form, it is sought after.<sup>140</sup> There is no command and no casting out of any demon, showing that these diseases are not demonic.

(ii) By the use of the word in a command, threat or invocation. Words of power occur also in healings. The effect of the word of power is increased by the aura of mystery which may be spoken in a foreign language (εφφαθα 7:34). The command ‘Be Open,’ according to scholars show that Jesus was addressing a demonic disease. Healing force<sup>141</sup> can radiate from material substances. The use of spittle in the healing (8:22-23) does not imply the disease was demonic because there is no mention of a demon, there is no command, and there is no violence seen in how the demon leaves the victim. This is a particular instance of healing. In some instances the healing takes place by degrees (only in 8:24f). In other passages there is the sudden disappearance of the diseases indicating that Jesus had power. There is nothing to show that they are demonic. Those who are healed perform activities showing they are completely healed - the paralytic carried his bed after healing.

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Theissen, *Stories*, p. 59

<sup>137</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 86

<sup>138</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, pp. 50-51. Loos, *Miracles*, 443n3; R.H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) pp. 50-51; E. Schweizer *Lordship and Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1960) p.61

<sup>139</sup> H. Waagenvoorts, s.v. ‘Contactus,’ RACIII, 405; cited by Theissen, *Stories*, 62n17

<sup>140</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.62

<sup>141</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p. 63

There is the motif of wonder in the form of astonishment and amazement. The acclamation uttered in a chorus takes the form of praise, rebuke, and demand. Sometimes there is a direct rejection (3:6)<sup>142</sup>. The miracle worker dismisses the person after the healing. The person who is cured is sent away to give thanks and to spread the good news (1:44). In one instance the cured person is told not to go to his village. The miracle worker actually heals but in some cases the healing is preceded by teaching in which Jesus shows that He has power to forgive sins (2:1-12). Mark describes the duration of the disease and the futile attempts to treat it; yet Jesus heals the disease showing His power.

We can draw the following conclusions. Our analysis of findings to date, highlight the following: preparations precede healing. The miracle worker enters the scene and the sick are brought to Him. He reacts to the sick with emotions showing concern for the sick. He uses various techniques in healing the sick, with the crowd reacting to the healing. He exorcises demons and heals physical diseases.

#### **4.7. THE FORM OF THE NARRATIVES**

This section will dwell on how Mark deals with the stories. (i) Does Mark edit, preserve or introduce his own ideas into these stories? (ii) Why does Mark adopt these strategies? (iii) How does Mark portray Jesus?

##### **4.7.1 Mark 1: 29-31**

This narrative is pre-Markan tradition with verse 29 tightly linked<sup>143</sup> with the previous unit. The words 'with James and John' are added by Mark<sup>144</sup> to link the passage with '1:16-20'<sup>145</sup>. M. Dibelius lists four<sup>146</sup> characteristics of the Paradigms- rounding off, brevity, emphasis in the sayings of Jesus and the sermon conclusion. In 1:29-31 there is

<sup>142</sup> T. Klausner, s.v. 'Akklamation,' in *RAC* 1216-33

<sup>143</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 198. See also E.K. Broadhead, *Teaching with Authority: Miracles and Christology in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNT Supplement Series 74 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) p. 62

<sup>144</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.198

<sup>145</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 61. This view tallies with the view that the narrative has been edited under the influence of Mark 1;16-20. See Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 212.

<sup>146</sup> M Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (London: I.Nicholson and Watson Limited, 1934) pp. 45-48

no saying of Jesus, and yet Dibelius discusses the story among the Paradigms<sup>147</sup>. A Paradigm exists in isolation and independent life must be noticeable in it. The story within it is narrated by Mark in the context of the description of a day's work, and it is rounded off neither at the beginning nor at the end. Moreover, there is no saying of Jesus. This is a miracle story showing demonstration of an acquired power.<sup>148</sup>

#### 4.7.2 *Mark 1:40-45*

This is an originally independent story, because of the abrupt way in which the sufferer is introduced<sup>149</sup>. Verses 40-42 present a miracle story in a standard form.<sup>150</sup> As the sufferer enters the scene, Jesus' anger comes to the fore. He lets fly at the man (ἐμβριμησάμενος) and drives him away (ἐξέβαλεν). The negative tone of the verse is very surprising<sup>151</sup>.

Jesus' attack (and His driving the man out) must be connected with the command to silence in v.44a, not fitting in with the order to go to the priest<sup>152</sup> (v.44b). Verse 43 is Markan. In v.44 Jesus commands the healed man to be silent, but commands him to show himself to the priest and to offer sacrifice prescribed in the Law. This command is part of the old story<sup>153</sup>. It is quite unthinkable that Mark should have had an interest in the fulfilment of the Old Testament purity laws.<sup>154</sup> Originally the story emphasised that fact and Jesus did not want to question the 'authority of the Old Testament Torah in His healing',<sup>155</sup>. Though v.44b is redactional, Mark has inserted the demand for silence<sup>156</sup> into Jesus' command. This theory is uncertain since v.44a is different from the other injunctions in the Gospel. We have the imperative ὁρᾶ, and the command is given in direct speech, a 'provisional, temporary injunction',<sup>157</sup>. The command does not break the

<sup>147</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.82

<sup>148</sup> Theissen, *Stories*, p.62

<sup>149</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 208

<sup>150</sup> H. Räisänen, *The Messianic Secret in Mark* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1990) p. 144. The sick person approaches Jesus and asks for help. Jesus' gesture and words are recorded in the act of healing.

<sup>151</sup> For a discussion, see Kertelge, *Wunder*, 67f. cited by Räisänen, *Secret* 144n2

<sup>152</sup> Gnllka, *Marcus* 1,90

<sup>153</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p.146

<sup>154</sup> Luz, 'Secrecy Motif,' p. 79; Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 212; Fridrischen, *Problem*, p.116

<sup>155</sup> See Schweizer, *Mark*, p. 58; Burkill, *Revelation*, Theissen, *Stories*, p. 146

<sup>156</sup> See Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 212

<sup>157</sup> The injunction to silence in 1:44a is only intended to remain in force until the task given in 44b has

connection. It would have been quite possible to obey it. V.44a may be traditional<sup>158</sup> with v. 43 ascribed to the tradition<sup>159</sup>.

The healed man begins to proclaim, openly and vigorously, (πολλὰ) about what has happened. In v.45 he does not obey Mosaic Law or Jesus' command. Mark was not interested in the validity of the Law. 'This points to Hellenistic milieu.'<sup>160</sup> The silencing command in v. 44a is regarded differently by the redactor than it was in the original story. He has not taken it seriously, allowing the healed man to disobey it. A different picture is painted compared with the previous verse. In v.45 the news about Jesus spreads like wild fire, ascribed to Mark<sup>161</sup>. It contains many expressions typical of the evangelist.<sup>162</sup> However διαφημίζειν is a hapax<sup>163</sup>. This is not a guarantee for building up a theory of a traditional final remark which still shows through in v.45.<sup>164</sup> The temporary silencing command is a given element in the story turned into a command by Mark which is disobeyed. Mark has stressed the consequences of this disobedience, the news of Jesus spreading far and wide. The man helps to create the framework for the preaching of the Gospel. (2:1f). Mark stresses disobeying of the silencing command rather than in the command itself.<sup>165</sup> The story follows the typical outline of the healing story – request for healing with granting of request implied (1:40), healing gesture and word (1:41) accomplishment of cure and demonstration of cure (1:43-45).

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been completed. See Theissen, *Stories*, p. 146; Gnllka, 1.91

<sup>158</sup> See Dibelius, *Tradition*, p. 74; Burkill, *Revelation*, pp. 39 and 83; Tagawa, *Miracles* pp. 165f; Theissen, *Stories*, p.146

<sup>159</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p.147

<sup>160</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p. 148

<sup>161</sup> See Dibelius, *Tradition*, p. 74; E. Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn im äthiopischen Henochbuch* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1946) p. 159

<sup>162</sup> Luz, 'Secrecy Motif,' p. 78

<sup>163</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p. 148

<sup>164</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, 148n18. Räisänen opines that it is not advisable to deduce on the basis of Matthew 9:30f. and Mark 1:43-45 the existence of a common pre-Markan tradition which already contained the motif of an injunction to silence which was disobeyed.

<sup>165</sup> Contra Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, pp. 192f

#### 4.7.3 Mark 2:1-12

The story follows the scheme of a miracle story.<sup>166</sup> Should vv. 5b-10 be considered a separate piece of tradition or an addition?<sup>167</sup> This question is based on the tensions<sup>168</sup> in the account such as, a break in the narrative in 10b; the expression λέγει τῷ παραλυτικῷ repeated in vv.5 and 10b; the repetition of the expression in vv.9 and 11; ἔγειρε ἄρον τὸν κράββατόν σου; the idea that ‘all’ in v.12 supposedly cannot also refer to the Scribes introduced in v.6, and the supposition that v.12 in its totality refers to the healing, but not to the controversy. The accusation of blasphemy in v.7 seems to be odd in a unified pericope, since nothing said is strictly speaking blasphemous. The impression is the transition to v. 6 is rough, since there is no self evident reason why the Scribes should be introduced at this point. The supposed form of miracle story in vv. 3-5 and 11-12, the disappearance of τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν in 5a from vv. 6-10, the later title of Son of Man which could be used generically, the absence of the supposed blasphemy of v.7 at Jesus’ trial, and the fact that a supposed apologetic interest in legitimating the practice of the church’s forgiving sins is served by vv. 5b-10. These are the reasons why vv.5b-10 is seen as a separate piece of tradition or an addition. This would mean Mark included /inserted it here.

The above views have been criticised. Unexpected developments in a pericope must not be seen as having their only explanation in differing pieces of tradition, and that one must not overestimate the needs of the early community in the formation of the pericope. The community formed vv. 5b-10 as a basis for granting forgiveness of sins.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, one can argue against a division of the pericope on the grounds of a ‘common three part

<sup>166</sup> See Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, I, pp. 152-153. There is the appearance of the miracle worker, an encounter with a sick person, a difficulty to overcome, healing, the establishment of healing, demonstration of healing, wonder and Chorschluss (12b). Cited by Dwyer, *Wonder*, p.100

<sup>167</sup> For those who subscribe to that view see: J. Gnllka, ‘Das Elend vor dem Menschensohn,’ in *Jesus und der Menschensohn, Für Anton Vogtle* (ed.) R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg (Freiburg:Herder, 1975) p.200; Gnllka, *Evangelium*, I p. 96; Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 14-16, Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 191-192; D. J. Doughty, ‘The Authority of the Son of Man (Mark 2: 1-3:6) in *ZNW* 74 (1983) p 10; M.d. Tillesse, *Le Secret messianique dans L’Evangile de Marc* (Paris: Cerf, 1968) pp. 116-117

<sup>168</sup> See Dwyer, *Wonder*, pp. 100-101

<sup>169</sup> See H. Simonsen, ‘Zur-Frage der Grundlegenden Problematik in form-und redaktions geschichtlicher Evangelienforschung,’ in *St* 26(1972) pp. 1-23 esp. p.6; cited by T. Dwyer, *Wonder*, p. 101



scheme-revolutionary action, protest and silencing of remonstrants.’<sup>170</sup> Those who divide the pericope into sources do not recognise the ‘real and close connection between the healing of sickness and the forgiveness of sins.’<sup>171</sup> Since the Old Testament eschatological expectation included both forgiveness of sins (Isaiah 42: 25, 44:22) and healing (Isaiah 35:5-6) they could have been joined in the pericope or in the ministry of the historical Jesus in the context of the Kingdom proclamation.<sup>172</sup> In Jewish Deuteronomistic thought there is a connection between sickness and sin,<sup>173</sup> and this ought not have been joint only at the level of composition. Moreover, miracle stories do not always have an exact ‘pure’ form, but there is almost unlimited variability of the compositional elements.<sup>174</sup> Son of Man need not be a later title for Jesus,<sup>175</sup> and there seems to be a true continuity between v.9 and v.11.

Though 2:12 is traditional, stylistic at the end of a miracle story,<sup>176</sup> one can find Markan redaction here: the use of ὥστε with the infinitive.<sup>177</sup> The expression ‘we have never seen anything like this adds an eschatological and Christological colouring’<sup>178</sup> to the passage as a whole. Moreover, onlookers are amazed at both the healing and the forgiveness<sup>179</sup>. The onlookers are all (πάντας) amazed and since this interesting usage occurs (in contrast to the possible (ὁ ὄχλος)) it may well be that πάντας includes even the

<sup>170</sup> D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1956) pp. 172-174

<sup>171</sup> Cranfield, *Gospel*, p.96. See also J.Dewey, ‘The Literary structure of the Controversy Stories of Mark 2: 1-3:6,’ in *JBL* 92 (1973) pp. 397-401; and R.T. Mead, ‘The Healing of the Paralytic –A Unit?’ in *JBL* 80 (1961) pp. 348-352 esp. pp. 350-352. See also I. Maisch, *Die Heilung des Gelähmten; Eine exegetisch-geschichtliche Untersuchung zu Mk. 2: 1-12.* (SBS 52: Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1971) pp. 22-24. Maisch assigns twenty four reasons why 5b-10 is part of the message.

<sup>172</sup> Dwyer, *Wonder*, p.102

<sup>173</sup> See 2 Kings 6:20-27; 15:1-5; 2Chr., 7:14; Ps. 103:3; Isaiah 19:22; 38:17; 57:18-19

<sup>174</sup> See H. D. Betz, ‘The Early Christian Miracle stories: Some Observations on the Form-critical Problem,’ in *Semeia* II (1978) p.71

<sup>175</sup> G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973) pp. 188-189

<sup>176</sup> See Pesch, *Markusevangelium* I, p. 175; J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus I* (Zurich: Benziger, 1978) pp. 101-102

<sup>177</sup> See D.B. Peabody, *Mark as Composer New Gospel Studies*, I; (Marcon G. A Mercer: University Press, 1987) pp. 45 and 165 and E.J. Pryke, *Redactional Style in the Markan Gospel: A Study of Syntax and Vocabulary as Guides to redaction in Mark* SNTSMS 33 (Cambridge: University Press, 1978) p.115

<sup>178</sup> Tillesse, *Secret*, pp. 120-121

<sup>179</sup> See A.Pohl, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Wuppertaler Bibel Studien, Ergänzungsband; Wuppertal : R. Broachaus, 1986) p.124

Scribes.<sup>180</sup> Mark does not limit arrangement to those sympathetic to Jesus in the rest of the Gospel<sup>181</sup>. The obvious problem with this is that the Scribes would seem to be included in the latter part of v.12 (glorifying God) only with difficulty. Perhaps πάντας is ambiguous here. Though v.12 may have come from the tradition<sup>182</sup>; there is Markan colouring and possible recounting in the verse.<sup>183</sup> There is neither approval nor disapproval in the amazement in 2:12. Although there is approval by the narrator and Jesus at the faith of those who brought the paralytic, and disapproval of the scepticism of the Scribes, the amazement is related without specific approval or disapproval<sup>184</sup>.

The pericope relates the eschatological authority of Jesus. The onlookers are struck 'out of themselves' at the new actions of forgiveness and healing. It is likely Mark has again coloured the reaction of wonder to emphasise the novelty and power which God (δοξάζειν τὸν θεόν) has activated in the ministry of Jesus, stressing the theme of forgiveness of sins suggesting a non-demonic understanding of disease here attested.

#### 4.7.4 THE POSITIONING OF VARIOUS UNITS IN MARK CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO

The first two chapters of Mark reveal a lot of healing passages: the exorcism narrative in 1:21-28; the healing of Peter's mother in law in 1:29-31, the healing and casting out of demons in 1:32-34; the healing of the leper in 1:40-45 and the healing of the paralytic in 2:1-12. One has to question why this is so? Mark has a purpose in assembling these healings here. He presents Jesus as a charismatic<sup>185</sup> figure, and the community need to accept Him and realise that, through this charismatic figure, God still heals the sick. Mark wants to show the community that Jesus can do more than expected. Now that they have been attracted to this charismatic figure they have to learn and to tread the full road of discipleship, which is described as the way to the cross.

<sup>180</sup> See C.A. Bryan, *A Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in its Literary and Cultural Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 90

<sup>181</sup> It is an interesting feature of Mark that even opponents of Jesus can be amazed, as in 12:17 and 15:5 show

<sup>182</sup> E. Best, *Disciples and Discipleship: Studies in the Gospel According to Mark* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1986) p. 118

<sup>183</sup> Dwyer, *Wonder*, p. 101

<sup>184</sup> N.R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics (Guides to Biblical Scholarship)* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978) p. 100

<sup>185</sup> E. Best, *The Gospel as Story*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1983) p. 60

#### 4.7.5 *Mark 3: 1-6*

This pericope concludes the series of conflict stories from 2:1-3:6. It fails to fit neatly into any of the form critical categories.<sup>186</sup> Both v5 and v6 are 'Markan redaction.'<sup>187</sup> because they are formal, stylistic, and thematic.<sup>188</sup> These arguments are not convincing.<sup>189</sup> Structurally, this story consists of a controversy (3:1a, 2,4-5a, 6) interwoven with a healing story (3:1b, 3, 5b). The healing story could stand alone (3:1, 3, 5b) but the controversy depends on the miracle story for the issue (3:2) and the response (3:4-5). The controversy element provides the focus of the pericope as indicated by the controversial tone (3:6)

Placing 3:1-6 in its present context, what are the implications? Jesus' authority underlying the pericope, comes into conflict here regarding the use of the Sabbath, an issue with God's prerogatives alone. The punishment implicit in the charge of blasphemy in 2:7 becomes explicit in the counsel to destroy Jesus in 3:6. The note of conflict goes to Jesus' claim of authority. For Mark, that claim of authority throughout 1:16-3:6 had its ultimate note in the beginning<sup>190</sup> of 1:1-15, the announcement of the time of fulfilment. Consequently, Jesus' authority represents a fundamental challenge to the Jewish religious authorities. But what is important, is Jesus' authority over and against the Pharisees and the Herodians and not the devil.

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<sup>186</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 131. The story contains a mixture of controversy (3:2,4), healing (3:1,3,5) and biographical narratives (3:5a,6)

<sup>187</sup> See Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 52; Gnllka, 1:126

<sup>188</sup> See Guelich, *Mark, 1-8:26*, p. 132.

<sup>189</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 132. (i) Since this pericope fails to fit neatly into any formal category, it precludes the use of form critical to grounds for eliminating 3:6. (ii) Mark favours the use of *καὶ ἐξέρχεται* but this does not provide sufficient evidence for concluding that the verse is redactional.

<sup>190</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 133

#### 4.7.6 Mark 5:25-34

The above passage is found within 5:21-43. These passages differ extensively in their formal characteristics.<sup>191</sup> The complexity results in the combination of two originally independent stories.<sup>192</sup> The stylistic differences in the two stories, the integrity of each story as a unit in itself, and the apparent influence of 5:25-34 on the setting of 5:22-24, 35-43 through the introduction of the crowds, which otherwise play no role in Jesus' Story, support this conclusion.<sup>193</sup> The stories are assigned to the same pre-Markan collection of the miracle stories as 4:35-5:20.<sup>194</sup> Whether Mark found these stories as presently inter-related<sup>195</sup> or Mark<sup>196</sup> inserted 5:24-34 into the Jesus story from the same source or elsewhere is debatable<sup>197</sup>. The setting of these miracles in conjunction with those of 4:35-5:20 exhibits several points of connection. Motifs within this story correspond with motifs from the previous story.<sup>198</sup> This story shows Jesus' power to heal an incurable illness.

#### 4.7.7 Mark 7: 31-37

The passage has parallels with 8:22-26,<sup>199</sup> leading to the theory that the two passages originally belonged together<sup>200</sup>. What they describe corresponds to Isaiah 35:5-6. Mark may have split the two stories apart because he wanted to make them serve two different functions within his narrative.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> See Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, pp. 291-292 for the differences in setting and the miracle.

<sup>192</sup> Schmidt, *Mark*, p.148; Taylor, *Mark*, p. 288

<sup>193</sup> P. Achtemeier, 'Toward the Isolation of Pre-Markan Miracle Catenae,' in *JBL* 89(1970) pp. 265-291 esp. p. 277; Kertelge, *Wunder*, p.111

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 196-197: Gnllka, 1:223, 273-74

<sup>195</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 292. Those supporting a pre-Markan miracle collection view the combination to have occurred at some point in the Pre-Markan tradition, 'perhaps at the time of collection. This view finds support in that , thematically 5:21 connects these stories with what has preceded and also sets the stage with the introduction of the crowds for the healing of the woman rather than Jesus' request.

<sup>196</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 292. Several scholars have assigned the insertion to Mark on the basis of Mark's tendency to use intercalation to fill time lapse. Others assign 5:21 to Mark based on 'Markan' stylistic (genitive absolute) and lexical ( διαπερὼν πλοῖον πάλιν ὄχλος πολλὸς εἰς τὴν πύλιν ) considerations.

<sup>197</sup> See Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 192 for views supporting the idea that the combination as Markan insertion is disputable.

<sup>198</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 292

<sup>199</sup> See Taylor, *Mark*, pp. 368-369

<sup>200</sup> Gnllka, 1:296

<sup>201</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 477.

The traditional story consists of vv. 32-35, 37, presenting a Hellenistic miracle story in standard form with an act of healing in secret and a chorus conclusion.<sup>202</sup> V.36 stems from Mark,<sup>203</sup> presupposing the presence of αὐτοί, and clashes with v.33a (Jesus takes the sick man), (κατ'ἰδίαν).<sup>204</sup> Because v.37 clashes with v.33a – although Jesus has taken the sick man on one side, unspecified eye-witnesses are present and break into praise,<sup>205</sup> leading to the theory that Mark has brought the final verse here from another context.<sup>206</sup> Yet τῶν κωφῶν καὶ ἀλάλων in v.37 clearly links with κωφὸν καὶ μογιλάλον in v.32. The far-reaching structural agreement<sup>207</sup> of the story of the blind man (8:22-26), suggests that the two stories were once 'a pair of turns.' It has also been suggested that 7:37 was originally the common ending of both stories when 8:22-26 came first.<sup>208</sup> Yet it does not negate the clash with v.33a. We have not considered whether v.37 is of Markan origin<sup>209</sup>. But ὑπερπερισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσοντο λέγοντες (with following direct speech) is comparable to 10:26; οὐδὲ περισσῶς is not isolated from περισσῶς and ἐκπερισσῶς. The word can be seen as Markan.<sup>210</sup> In the sequence περισσότερον (v.36) – ὑπερπερισσῶς (v.37) we again have an example of Markan duality.<sup>211</sup>

In v.37 Mark portrays the great impression of the miracle on the people, emphasising Jesus' open success without noting the problem of where these astonished people come from and who they are. The disobeying of the command leads to the confession. 'He has done all things well, He even makes the deaf hear and dumb speak.' The explanation that

<sup>202</sup> W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, ThHK2 (Berlin:1977) 200f; Bultmann, *Tradition*, p. 213; Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 249; Sjöberg, *Menschensohn*, 154f; Schweizer, *Mark*, p. 154

<sup>203</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p. 150; Luz, 'Secrecy Motif,' p. 179

<sup>204</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, 150n24

<sup>205</sup> See Räisänen, *Secret*, 150n26

<sup>206</sup> See Dibelius, *Tradition*, p. 76. Verse 37 was 'originally 'the conclusion of a number of stories'; similarly Nineham, *Mark*, p. 202; Martin, *Mark*, p. 170

<sup>207</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p. 151; Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 275; Gnllka, 1:296

<sup>208</sup> Luz, 'Secrecy Motif,' 91n33 claims incorrectly that Markan linguistic characteristics are missing. Räisänen claims that the Markan origin of the verse was suggested to him by J. Kiilnen in a conversation.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. P. Dschulnigg, *Sprache, Redaktion und Intention des Markusevangeliums und ihre Bedeutung für die Redaktionskritik* (SBS, 1984) 646n176

<sup>210</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p.151. The beginning of a sentence with καὶ ποίηκεν ἄλλος (the traditional μογιλάλος stemming from Is. 35:6LXX, which occurs in 7:32 does not occur in v.37), and the combination of ἄλλος and κωφός

<sup>211</sup> Cf. F. Neirynck, *Duality in Mark. Contribution to the Study of Markan Redaction*, BETLK 31(Lenven 1972) p. 82

it is a matter here only of comprehending wonder<sup>212</sup> – is not justified by the contents of these words; and should be seen as an expression of faith.<sup>213</sup> Ἐξεπλήσσοντο refers to a deep inner emotion in view of the revelation event,<sup>214</sup> a question of a real epiphany, not of a secret one. The command to silence has no independent significance. It is disobeyed and the news is spread abroad.<sup>215</sup> The story falls into these categories: the transitional scene-setting in 7:31; the request for healing in 7:32; the cure itself in 7:35; and the reaction to the cured in 7:36-37, with much emphasis on Jesus' method of healing and reaction of the crowd.

#### 4.7.8 Mark 8:22-26

The healing story differs from the other healing miracles because of its thaumaturgical elements. The blind man is removed from the scene, and is healed in stages through touch by Jesus. Jesus questions what the man sees. The story ends with a dismissal (8:26a) and an order not to return to the village (8:26b). There is no acclamation or response.

There are similarities between 7:32-37 and 8:22-26, hence the passage is seen as a doublet or variant<sup>216</sup>. This opinion finds the differences too great to account for the stories in this manner<sup>217</sup>. The unusual similarities suggest that Mark found the two paired in the tradition.<sup>218</sup> Such a close association accounts for the assimilation of language and

<sup>212</sup> Sjöberg, *Menschensohn*, 159; T.J. Weeden, *Mark-Traditions in Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1979) 155n23; Schweizer, *Mark*, p.155, asserts, Mark wants to show here that God's revelation break through with power and cannot be stopped, but nothing whatever is achieved either by sensation caused by the miracle or by the astonishment over it.'The first half of the sentence is an appropriate commentary, but the second half has no basis in the text.

<sup>213</sup> Lohmeyer, *Markus*, 151 'a joyful believing'; Grundmann, *Markus*, 202; Tillesse, *Secret*, 62 speaks of credo.

<sup>214</sup> Zizemer, *Verhältniss*, 177

<sup>215</sup> Conversely Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, p. 272; the stress lies wholly on the silencing command; v.36 is regarded as a purely pragmatic note which thereby creates a rational compromise between the tradition which is before him (Mark) and his redaction. Schenke ascribes v. 37 to the tradition, v.36a he interprets in terms of the Theology of the cross. See Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, p.279

<sup>216</sup> See E. Wendling, *Die Entstehung des Markus-Evangeliums: Philologische Untersuchungen* (Tübingen: J.C. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1908) 77; Bultmann, *Tradition*, p.213

<sup>217</sup> Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 253; Kertelge, *Wunder*, 161; Gnlika, 1:312-313

<sup>218</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 429

structure,<sup>219</sup> while the similarities suggest composition by the same author or community.<sup>220</sup> The combination of these two stories, around the theme of Isaiah 35:5, provide the choral response for stories (in reverse order), to make sense. The location and the silence command (8:26b) are Markan. If the evangelist found 8:22-26 in combination with 7:32-37, the present location and order would also reflect his redactional handling of the tradition.<sup>221</sup>

The narrator tells the story by setting the stage for the arrival of Jesus and the disciples and for the approach of an unnamed group asking Jesus to heal a blind man by touching him (8:22). Jesus removes the man from the scene, spits in his eyes and lays His hands on him (8:23a); a brief dialogue ensues with Jesus asking the man what he sees. His answer indicates his healing was only partial (8:23b-24). Jesus lays His hands on his eyes again and the man's sight is fully restored (8:25). The story ends with the narrator affirming Jesus dismissing the healed man to his house but forbidding him from going into the village.

Jesus' questioning of the result of His work and the healing in steps raises the question whether they simply belong to the unusual details of the story or whether the evangelist intended them to have spread symbolical significance for his readers. The location of the story holds the key to its significance. Does it come as an epilogue,<sup>222</sup> or as a prelude?<sup>223</sup> The preference has been for the latter. If it is a prelude, then a prelude for what?<sup>224</sup> Verses 22-26 can hardly serve as a prelude for either 8:27-10:52 or even 8:27-16:8. It does, however, give a hint to what Mark's readers doubtless know, namely that the disciples gain their full sight, but only after Easter. Only then did they fully comprehend who Jesus was and the significance of His ministry. The only two<sup>225</sup> Marcan accounts of Jesus restoring sight to the blind are 8:22 and 10:46-52. Each is transitional between major

<sup>219</sup> S.E. Johnson, 'Mark VII. 22-26: The Blind Man from Bethsaida,' in *NTS* 25 (1978-79) pp. 370-383 esp. p.374

<sup>220</sup> Grundmann, 211

<sup>221</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 429

<sup>222</sup> Klostermann, 77; Koch, *Wundererzählungen*, 71-72 cf. Roloff, *Kerygma*, 131

<sup>223</sup> Lightfoot, *History*, pp. 90-91; Best, *Disciples*, p.3; Gnlika, 1:315; Ernst, 228, Grundmann, 211

<sup>224</sup> See Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 430 for the three schools of thought on this issue.

<sup>225</sup> Williamson, *Mark*, p. 197

sections of the Gospel. Both mark the limits of part four of the Gospel. Both interpret the meaning of discipleship and see<sup>226</sup> symbolic and literal functions in both passages.

Originally Mark 7:32-35 and 8:22-26 were connected together. Mark separated them to give a special purpose<sup>227</sup> to the healing of the blind man. There is an injunction to silence in 8:26 hinting (albeit symbolically), at the secret of Jesus' identity.<sup>228</sup> The command is obeyed implying the miracle reveals too much about Jesus and must be kept secret, whereas the command in 7:36 deals with only the healing miracle.

#### **4.7.9 Mark 10: 46-52**

The passage forms a transition between the section on discipleship (chapters 8-10) and the section on Jesus' confrontation with the religious authorities in Jerusalem (chapters 11-13). As a transitional passage, Mark 10:46-52 points back to a section with the focus on discipleship and points ahead to one whose focus is Christology. Both discipleship and Christology appear in the present passage.<sup>229</sup> The story points out that the healed beggar who became a follower, (10:52) was among those who followed and cried out Hosanna (11:9).

What are our findings so far? We opined that originally Mark 1:29-31 was a pre-Markan tradition, yet Mark narrates the story in such a way that it is seen in the context of a description of Jesus' daily work where He heals. Originally Mark 1:40-45 was an independent story. Mark skilfully adds v. 45 to the text where the fame of Jesus as a healer spreads widely, creating the impression that the story is a healing story. In Mark 2:1-12, Mark's redaction is seen in v.12 which creates the impression that we are dealing with a miracle story where onlookers comment on what is happening. Mark 3:1-6 is a conflict story interwoven with a healing story (3:1b, 3,5b) with the man taking up his bed, walking with exclamation from the crowd. Mark specifically places the story here to show Jesus as a healer. In Mark 5:25-34 the motif of healing comes to the fore. Originally

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<sup>226</sup> Williamson, *Mark*, p. 197

<sup>227</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p. 165

<sup>228</sup> Räisänen, *Secret*, p. 166

<sup>229</sup> Williamson, *Mark*, p. 197



Mark 7:31-37 and 8:22-26 belonged together but Mark split the two passages because he wanted each passage to serve a different purpose. In Mark 7:37 Mark's redaction is seen where the onlookers exclaim what Jesus has done. Mark 8:22 is traditional material but Mark has turned it into a healing story. In Mark 10:46-52 the impression created by Mark is that Bartimaeus is healed of his blindness. In all these narratives, Mark has succeeded in portraying them as healing stories.

#### **4.8. THE WAY MARK PRESENTS JESUS IN THE HEALING STORIES**

##### **4.8.1 Mark 1:29-31**

Jesus demonstrates His power over diseases. He heals through physical contact by grasping the patient's hand and lifting her up. She waited on Jesus and the disciples as proof of her recovery; the fever left her, and she regained her strength.

##### **4.8.2 Mark 1:40-45**

The way Mark treated this story together with the amazement aroused by the time indicates that he understands the man to have been suffering from a form of disease regarded as incurable<sup>230</sup>. Jesus' command, 'Be clean', deals with the root of the problem: the disease itself. The leprosy left him straightaway and he was clean. Though Mark uses his favourite phrase *καὶ εὐθὺς* a cure from leprosy could scarcely be so immediate. The power of leprosy left the man at that moment.<sup>231</sup> Jesus drives the man away. Why? Perhaps Mark is indicating the urgency with which Jesus sends him to fulfil the regulations of the Law.<sup>232</sup> He is to go straight to the priest. There are two Greek words introduced in v.43, *ἐμβριμῶμενος*, and *ἐξέβαλεν*. These words occur at the 'wrong point in the story,'<sup>233</sup> after the man has been healed. If this is so, then Mark's editing has been very clumsy. Whether they have been taken over by Mark or originated with him, Mark himself understood that Jesus' anger and emotion was caused by the forces of evil and diseases He is in conflict with.

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<sup>230</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.78

<sup>231</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.78

<sup>232</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.81

<sup>233</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.81

#### 4.8.3 Mark 2:1-12

Mark has gathered this story together, showing how the authority of Jesus was regarded by the Jewish authorities.<sup>234</sup> Besides introducing the theme of conflict, this story is also linked by its topic to the preceding healing narrative. The leper was excluded from society, the paralytic was shut off from life in another way. In both cases Jesus deals with the root of the complaint, and this shows an authority superior to that of the priests who could pronounce a man clean or forgiven only when the cure has been effected and the proper sacrifices have been made.<sup>235</sup> Just as exorcism was linked with Jesus' teaching in 1:21-28, so now healing is linked with forgiveness. For Mark, 'healing and forgiveness belong together,'<sup>236</sup> the verb *ἐγείρε* (get up) repeated in vv.11 and 12 is used in 16:6 of Jesus' resurrection. Mark's readers may well have been aware of this implication suggesting that he is 'being offered new life.'<sup>237</sup> The title 'Son of Man' is introduced into the story by Mark. The title denotes power. For Mark and his readers, the authority of Jesus to forgive sins was an important part of their Christian experience and it was 'an authority He exercised now on earth, not simply at the Parousia.'<sup>238</sup> Since Mark has recorded previous healings in Capernaum, perhaps he intends us to understand that this cure – linked as it is with forgiveness – was particularly impressive'<sup>239</sup>.

#### 4.8.4 Mark 3:1-6

For Mark the real issue is how the Sabbath should be kept, depicting Jesus as one who adheres to Jewish religious practices<sup>240</sup>. Jesus cures the man by command alone. This is very significant, since Jewish scholars argue that to heal by word alone was not contrary to the Torah, and that Jesus was therefore blameless<sup>241</sup>. While Jesus saves life on the Sabbath, they plot to kill.<sup>242</sup> The alliance between the Pharisees and the Herodians is extraordinary. If they were to fight a common danger, this indicates

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<sup>234</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.83

<sup>235</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.83

<sup>236</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.85

<sup>237</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.86

<sup>238</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.88

<sup>239</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.88

<sup>240</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.107

<sup>241</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p.25

<sup>242</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.108

the strength of the hostility to Jesus. Mark presents a picture of Jesus opposed both by religious authorities and by supporters of the secular power.<sup>243</sup> Mark, by placing the conflict stories in the early stage of his Gospel is emphasising the implacable opposition of official Judaism to Jesus and explains, at human level, His final rejection. However, there are some scholars who regard these religious authorities as agents of Satan.

#### **4.8.5 Mark 5:25-34**

Mark gives a dramatic description of the patient's ailment. Her complaint was presumably vaginal bleeding, making her unclean (Lev. 15:25-30) and an outcast from society. Jesus in addressing the woman, 'daughter', acknowledges her faith, and the incident is removed from the realm of magic into that of a personal relationship with Jesus<sup>244</sup>. For Mark, it is the faith of the woman which has saved her. Mark uses the verb σῴζω, three times in this section. It implies more than physical healing; she has been restored not only to health but to society. The final command, be free of your affliction, implies that the woman has gained salvation and health. The woman is ceremonially clean. For Mark, Jesus' own power is greater than that of the defiling forces He comes into contact with.

#### **4.8.6 Mark 7:31-37**

This is the first case of deafness in Mark. Jesus takes the man apart from the crowd creating the idea of withdrawal.<sup>245</sup> Both the deaf mute and the blind man (8:23) are taken away from the crowd. This detail perhaps reflects Mark's 'symbolic understanding of the stories.'<sup>246</sup> Mark apparently regards this miracle as highly remarkable. Jesus is able to restore the faculties of hearing and speech to one who is deaf and dumb, and is therefore seen to have done everything well.

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<sup>243</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.108

<sup>244</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.149

<sup>245</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.186

<sup>246</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.186

#### 4.8.7 *Mark 8:22-26*

One can find another parallel to this narrative in the story of the healing of the blind man, Bartimaeus in 10:46-52. In this story, the theme of faith and discipleship is close to the surface. Some commentators therefore divide the Gospel at 8:22, on the grounds that these two healings of the blind men form an 'inclusion' marking the beginning and end of the section about the way of the Cross and the meaning of discipleship.

There is a remarkable parallel between this story and the deaf mute in Mark 7:32-37. The two accounts are close, suggesting that they are doublets referring to the same incident. This is improbable, since the complainants healed are different. Mark has deliberately used two stories as parallels, and the similarities between them may well be the result of his editing. One can find similarities in the request for Jesus to touch the victim; Jesus' response to the request; the taking aside and the request for secrecy.

Parallels with other narratives point to Mark's intention that the reader should understand them, not only as cures, but also as 'edited parallels'<sup>247</sup> of the miracle of faith. The story of the deaf man follows closely after a section where Jesus calls on human beings to hear and understand His teaching. The story of the blind man in Chapter 8 follows a section where Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and the disciples for failing to see and understand the miracles. When the deaf man and the blind man are taken aside by Jesus, they receive hearing and sight. They stand symbolically for those to whom understanding is to be given. But the significance of what has taken place remains hidden from those who are still deaf and blind to the truth.

Mark indicates that Jesus heals in two stages. Does this mean that it was a difficult situation showing the amazing power of Jesus who can heal even such difficult cases? Or is the gradual recovery of sight to be interpreted as symbolic of the disciples' poor progress in grasping the significance of Jesus? If the latter is the case, then Mark is implying either the story of Caesarea Philippi which follows is parallel to the full

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<sup>247</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.198

recovery of sight<sup>248</sup> or that the disciples, even after Caesarea Philippi, are men who comprehend only half the truth.<sup>249</sup> The instruction to say nothing could certainly be Markan, for this is in keeping with commands for secrecy and, like them, it would be impossible to carry out.

#### 4.8.8 *Mark 10:46-52*

The account is set in the context of the final journey to Jerusalem and the imminent passion. The casting away of the beggar's cloak was a symbolic act of pointing to the renunciation of the old life and the relinquishing of all forms of security except that found in Christ. This is an essential part of the Markan theology of commitment and thus a narrative device representing the old order that Bartimaeus had left behind.<sup>250</sup> The underlying message of this sermon is 'the faith that confidently persists in seeking and following Jesus, even to the Cross.'<sup>251</sup> Mark stresses that it is a blind man who recognises Jesus as the promised Messiah (Son of David) when those who can see are blind to His person. The story is completely theological and is centred on the need for saving faith in the person of Jesus which moves on to a life of discipleship. In the words of Best, 'Mark's Gospel is the Gospel of The Way. It is a way in which Jesus, the Lord, goes and it is a way to which He calls His followers.'<sup>252</sup> Best sees the arrangement of this central section of the Gospel, sandwiched between two healings of blind men, a symbolic reference to the gradual enlightenment of the disciples as they learn the cost of discipleship. The emphasis of this story, however, is entirely theological, sight being a metaphor for spiritual understanding. It is also a passage dealing with physical healing, an anti Robinson / Marcus view.

<sup>248</sup> See Lightfoot, *History*, pp. 90f.

<sup>249</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.198

<sup>250</sup> R.A. Culpepper, 'Mark 10:50: Why mention the garments?', in *JBL* (1982) pp. 131-132 esp. p.132

<sup>251</sup> See S.G.Sinclair, 'The healing of Bartimaeus and the gaps in Mark's Messianic secret,' in *St.Luke's Journal of Theology* 303 (1990) pp. 249-259. See also V.K.Robbins, 'The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus-Mark 10:46-52,' in *JBL* 92 (1973) pp.224-243

<sup>252</sup> E.Best, 'Discipleship in Mark 8:22-10:52,' in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970) pp. 323-327 esp. p.237; E.Best, *Following Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981) pp. 134-145

In conclusion, according to Mark, Jesus is the one who heals through physical contact, raising and lifting up the sick. He is the one who becomes emotionally disturbed when He comes into contact with the sick. His anger and His emotions indicate that He has compassion for the sick. He identifies those whose sicknesses are caused by sin, and forgives them and sets them free. He teaches that there is nothing wrong with healing and saving a soul from death on Sabbath. Even though Jesus heals those who are ceremonially unclean, these defiling forces have no effect on Him. He restores the faculties of hearing and speech, and His healing is described by onlookers as beyond explanation.

#### **4.9 HEALING AND THE KINGDOM**

How do we relate the healings to the establishment of the Kingdom of God? The fever and the leprosy are personal forces which must be expelled if the victims are to be cured. These forces are hostile to God, their overthrow involves the establishment of God's Kingdom.<sup>253</sup> Jesus' healings are an incursion into the Kingdom of hostile and evil forces, or a demonstration of His power over hostile and evil forces which stand opposed to the rule of God. When Mark speaks of a fetter which binds a man's tongue, (7:35), he probably sees this as another example of Satan's handiwork.<sup>254</sup> The release of human beings from bondage of any kind as part of the salvation promised in the Old Testament is now experienced in Jesus. Mark may well have had in mind the description of Isaiah 61 of one who is anointed with the Spirit of God in order to announce good tidings, the news of liberty for captives and release for those who are bound. However, Mark himself makes the explicit link with Satanic binding.

Another Old Testament promise that is being fulfilled in Mark's Gospel is Isaiah 35- the salvation which awaits God's people. Mark may well have had this passage too in mind as he spelt out the way in which Jesus restored men and women to health. The unusual word for dumb (*μωγῶλον*) that he uses in 7:32 is found also in this passage, but nowhere else in the Greek Bible. In the healing miracles of Jesus, we see the saving activity of

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<sup>253</sup> Hooker, *Message*, p.12

<sup>254</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.42

God Himself, and Mark underlies this by using the verb ‘to save’ – a verb which is usually used in the Old Testament of God’s salvation of His people – in the stories of the woman with the flow of blood and the blind Bartimaeus. The miracles of restoration, no less than the exorcisms, demonstrate what is in the Prologue – ‘the time of salvation has arrived in the person of Jesus in whom the renewing, creative spirit of God is at work.’<sup>255</sup> For any disease which attacks a man or woman or child destroys the wholeness of life intended by God at the creation. The ears and eyes and lips which do not function, the withered hand and paralysed limbs, the feeble body of the woman from whom life is draining away, belong to a world where nature itself has gone astray. Such things must give way before the power of God and His Kingdom. Thus Jesus in healing these diseases was establishing the Kingdom of God.

#### **4.10 OUTSTANDING TASKS**

We have examined the views of Western scholars on the narratives and identified those who see them as healings and those who see them as exorcisms, though our position is that, the only passage that shows physical disease is Mark 7:31-37. What the scholars do not consider is Mark’s thoughts about: why people are possessed by demons; how they are possessed; how to resist them; how they cope with demons; the causes of diseases and diseases can be checked.

#### **4.11 GENERAL CONCLUSION**

Our interest was in finding out what Mark might have thought about these diseases. Our stance is that even though the diseases in Mark were evil, Mark would have thought demons or evil spirits did not cause them, apart from the one instance. We began by identifying the causes attributed to diseases in the Graeco-Roman world: bodily malfunction, environmental factors and demonic. We then examined the causes of diseases in the Old Testament, where we see bodily malfunction as a cause of disease. Although the only difference between the cause of disease in the Graeco-Roman world and that of the Old Testament was that, while in the former demons could cause diseases, in the latter there was no mention of demons causing diseases. Diseases, such as leprosy,

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<sup>255</sup> Hooker, *Mark*, p.43

blindness and fever could be caused by God, and in such circumstances were seen as punishment for sin.

We have examined the causes of diseases as recorded by Mark. With regards to fever, the causes were medical, astrological, divine, demonic and angelic. Leprosy was attributed to God as a form of punishment and it was also caused by demons. Dropsy and blindness were caused by bodily malfunction while deafness was caused by environmental factors. We distinguished between exorcisms and healings. The idea behind this distinction was that Jesus was not only able to exorcise demons but He was also able to heal physical diseases. One main distinguishing factor between exorcisms and healings is that, in exorcisms a command is given whereas the laying of hands is the key during healing. The key point to note here is that with the exception of Mark 7:31-37 (a passage dealing with exorcism), all the other passages are healing narratives. The exorcistic features in these narratives are metaphorical. Jesus exorcises evil spirits and heals physical diseases.

We then explored the motifs in the narratives. In this section of the chapter we discussed the advanced preparations made before the healing. The preparation included people bringing the sick to the miracle worker (Jesus). Jesus healed in many places and the impression created was that He did not confine His healing to a specific place. It could be in a house, in the open or privately. Sometimes those who were healed encountered difficulties but they are able to surmount the difficulties. Blind Bartimaeus had to shout even though his shout was suppressed by the crowd. The woman with the flow of blood had to make her way through the thick crowd to touch Jesus. The sick came to Jesus because of the faith they had in him.

The posture of the sick is another motif. It takes the form of kneeling, or crying and the reason is to draw Jesus' attention. The miracle worker is very alert to these gestures, an indication that Jesus is prepared to heal them. He responds by healing and by giving assurance to those He heals. The miracle worker is opposed by His critics. The criticisms take the form of scepticism, resignation and suspicion with the aim of casting doubt on the source of His healing power. The techniques of the healing vary. They range from



touching the sick to the use of command and sputum. Sometimes the healing is sudden and at other times the healing is gradual. The touch indicates that the healing is dealing with healing cases and it is a way of strengthening the sick from physical or mental weakness. By touching the sick Jesus is transferring His healing power to the sick. By using sputum in healing, it shows that Jesus uses what is ordinary in healing. There is astonishment from the crowd indicating that they are fully convinced that healing has taken place.

Examination of the narratives show that they are made up of traditional, independent, and conflicting stories. The narratives were originally joined together but split by Mark. Mark shows his skill in using the narratives to his advantage as a redactor. By inserting his views, editing some of the narrative and maintaining some of the tradition, Mark is trying to give an image of Jesus and to give his own understanding of how he sees Jesus as a healer. The question is how does Mark present Jesus in the healing stories?

Jesus is the one who heals through physical contact and this takes the form of raising and lifting up the sick. He is the one who becomes emotionally disturbed when He comes into contact with the sick, an indication that He has a compassion for the sick. He forgives sins and sets people free. He gives new interpretation to the Sabbath by affirming that saving a soul from death on Sabbath is far better than allowing the person to die. Even though Jesus heals those who are ceremonially unclean, these defiling forces have no effect on Jesus. Jesus restores the faculties of hearing and speech and His healing is described by onlookers as par excellence. Even though the diseases are physical, some can be interpreted as having symbolic meaning. Jesus is opposed by religious authorities and secular powers in His healing, an indication that He is dealing with evil in the hearts of human beings.

The diseases are hostile and need to be cured. In healing the diseases Jesus is establishing the Kingdom. The diseases were opposed to the rule of God, and Jesus is liberating the sick from these diseases. In the Prologue we find Jesus renewing creation. The Prologue is linked with Jesus' healing. Jesus has come to bring life to people. Healing is part of

the salvation Jesus offers to humanity. Jesus heals physical diseases and exorcises evil spirits. Western scholars who see the narratives as exorcisms do not address the causes of possession and how to resist the demons that cause possession. Those scholars who regard the narratives as describing physical healing do not give the causes of the diseases and the practical ways of avoiding these diseases. These are questions which (almost certainly) would have interested Mark's readers but which (because of their own world-view) are not even posed by Western Scholars. Interestingly, however, they do not seem to have concerned Mark very much either. These questions will be explored in the chapter on Contemporary African readings on Mark and we will deal with evil in African Traditional Religion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5 EVIL IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

#### 5.1.1 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION/RELIGIONS?

The current debate among scholars is whether one ought to use the term African Traditional Religion in its singular ('Religion') or plural form ('Religions'). The protagonist who speaks of African Traditional Religions is J.S.Mbiti<sup>1</sup>. He argues that, Africans are notoriously religious, and among the different ethnic groups there are variations in their religious beliefs, traditional and socio-cultural and political organizations. There are many ethnic groups with their different cultural setups, and on that basis one can speak of traditional religions in Africa.

Mbiti affirms further that African Traditional Religions are tribal religions. There is no conversion from one traditional religion to another. There are no set of dogmas being formulated. There are no founders and no reformers so that beliefs among the different communities differ greatly, especially since each group would incorporate its national heroes. Moreover African Traditional Religions are not 'Book' religions. There is no evidence to show that African Traditional Religions have a common origin or are of one historic movement. Rather one can see the influence of different historic and environmental experiences. For example, farmers who depend on the soil would place emphasis on fertility cults like the veneration of the earth divinities, while the nomads would cherish the veneration of the sky deities<sup>2</sup>. Mbiti, in the preface of the second edition of his book, accepts the use of African Traditional Religion in the singular. He writes, "in the first edition I spoke about 'African Religions' in the plural to keep alive the diversity of African religiosity... I now use the singular, 'African Religion,' more than the plural expression. Other scholars also employ the singular form."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.S.Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990) pp. 1-2. Cited by F.N. Oborji, 'In Dialogue with African Traditional Religion: New Horizons,' in *IAMS* Vol. XIX-1, 39, 2002 pp. 13-35 esp. p.14

<sup>2</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, pp. 1-3

<sup>3</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. xiii

The protagonist for those who argue for African Traditional Religion in the singular is B. Idowu. He places emphasis on the common racial origin of Africans and the similarities of the major characteristics of their culture and religious beliefs. On the common racial origin of Africans, Idowu argues that presumably Black Africans come from one common stock and retain similar cultural and religious beliefs and practices as well as common traits. On major characteristics of the cultural and religious beliefs, Idowu affirms that the concept of God and the names given to God are not only common over the entire continent, but that one finds that God is given the same name or similar names throughout Africa. Moreover, many translations of the African names for God suggest that God is the Creator. Since the real cohesive factor in religion is the living God, and without this factor all things would fall to pieces, 'it is on this identical factor that we can speak of African Traditional Religion in the singular.'<sup>4</sup> Within closed tribal communities, organised practice of traditional African beliefs still takes place. But that does not mean that one cannot speak of African Traditional Religion in the singular. A. Shorter has argued for the use of African Traditional Religion in the singular:

Although they (African religious systems) were separate and self-contained systems, they interact with one another and influenced one another in different degrees. This justifies our using the term African Traditional Religion in the singular to refer to the whole African religious phenomena even if we are, in fact, dealing with multiplicity of theologies<sup>5</sup>.

However, African Traditional Religions may be used in a pluralistic sense since there are no officially accepted common grounds of doctrine as in religions with historical founders and dogmas.<sup>6</sup> We must also bear in mind that there is a common denominator of beliefs and practices among the Africans to justify the use of African Traditional Religion in the singular.<sup>7</sup> From this discussion we can intimate that the debate over the use of the expression African Traditional Religion in the singular or

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<sup>4</sup> B. Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973) p. 104. See also B. Idowu, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* (London: SCM Press, 1969) See Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia, 'African Traditional Religion (ATR). A Proposal for Academic Reflection,' in *ATJ* Vol.25 (2002) No. 1 pp. 83-105 esp. pp. 88-90 for similar views.

<sup>5</sup> A. Shorter, *African Christian Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997) p. 1

<sup>6</sup> Oborji, 'In Dialogue,' p.15

<sup>7</sup> J.B. Ballong-Wen-Mewuda and Z. Baxla, 'Traditional Religion(s),' in *Following Christ in Mission. A Foundational Course in Missiology* (Bombay: The Pauline Sisters Bombay Society, 1995) pp. 287-298, esp. p. 289

African Traditional Religions in the plural is 'primarily an academic one which has little practical significance'.<sup>8</sup>

### 5.1.2 COMMON TRADITIONAL AFRICAN BELIEFS

There are some traditional African beliefs and values which are common<sup>9</sup> to all societies in Africa south of the Sahara. These beliefs include belief in God (or the Supreme Being) and the divine origin of the Universe. There is the belief that human beings are appointed by God, as stewards of creation and that there is communion between the living, the dead and those yet to be born. There is a sense of the supernatural and a belief in a holistic attitude to life, covenant making, the power of evil and rites of passage. There is the belief in the existence of benevolent and malevolent spirits.<sup>10</sup> Calamities like hunger, drought, sickness, infant mortality, sterility, etc., are great misfortunes to be warded off by means of expiatory and purificatory rites by intermediaries, diviners, healers and magicians.<sup>11</sup> A human being is seen as the creature of God, and every human being is made up of four components.<sup>12</sup> Every human being is a unit and a life-force in vital relationship with other life-forces in the universe.

African belief is that God is ontologically linked to human beings through the guardian spirit the spark or emanation of God in each person.<sup>13</sup> This spirit of God in human beings guards, guides, advises and administers one's destiny<sup>14</sup>. African thought tends to define a person in terms of a group to which the person belongs. A person is thought of first of all as a member of a particular community for it is the community that defines who a person is and what the person can become. In traditional society a human being experiences life through the family, the lineage, the

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<sup>8</sup> Oborji, 'In Dialogue,' p. 15

<sup>9</sup> M. A. Oduyoye, 'The value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices for Christian Theology,' in *African Theology en Route*, eds. K. Appiah-Kubi and S. Torres, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979) pp. 109-116 esp. pp. 110-113

<sup>10</sup> Ballong-Wen Mewuda and Baxla, 'Traditional Religion(s)', p. 292.

<sup>11</sup> Ballong-Wen Mewuda and Baxla, 'Traditional Religion(s)', p. 294

<sup>12</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions* (Onitsha: IMICO Publishers, 1987) pp. 172-177. Among the Bantus, a human being is made up of the body, the shadow, breath and the self. Among the Lugbara, a human being consists of the body, breath, the shadow, and the guardian Spirit and the personality. The Igbo distinguish four constituent principles in a human being-breath, shadow, the destiny Spirit and the Ancestral Guardian Spirit. The Akan of Ghana believe that a human being is made up of Okra (the destiny Spirit), the Suman or (breath), the Ntoro (the father's Spirit-force) and Mogya (the mother's blood).

<sup>13</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, p. 178

<sup>14</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, p. 178

clan and the tribe.<sup>15</sup> There is the belief that at death, a person becomes a living-dead, and joins other members of his/her household who have preceded him/her in the spirit world.<sup>16</sup>

### 5.1.3 DIFFERENCES IN BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AMONG TRIBES IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

Throughout Africa, south of the Sahara, the Earth is regarded as a Spirit. Among the Akan in Ghana she ranks second after God and is the second deity to be offered drink at libations. Among the Asante and other Akan areas, the Earth is called Asase Yaa<sup>17</sup> and among the Fantes she is called Asase Efua<sup>18</sup>. Special days are set aside for the Earth and on those days there is no tilling of the land. Among the Asante and other Akans where the Earth is called Asase Yaa, the day of rest is Thursday. Conversely, while in areas where she is called Asase Efua, it is observed on Fridays. It is believed that anyone who ventures into the forest on these special days will encounter the most unpleasant things imaginable and may not even survive to tell his/her experience.<sup>19</sup> The Spirit of the Earth is offered a sacrifice when a grave is about to be dug. It is believed that all human beings have emerged from the bowels of the Earth and death is a return to it. Before a grave is dug, libation is poured to ask for permission for a hole to be dug so that a child of Asase Yaa/Asase Efua may be buried in her womb. The Akans divide themselves into twelve<sup>20</sup> patrilineal groups based on their ntoro. Each ntoro has a specific day linked to it and each has a set of totems and taboos associated with it. For example, those with Bosomptra ntoro have Tuesday as their day, their totem is the water buffalo, and it is a taboo for them to eat the meat of a tortoise. The members of each ntoro also use the same response to greetings.

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<sup>15</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, p. 181

<sup>16</sup> J.S.Mbiti, *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 133

<sup>17</sup> Yaa is the name given to a girl born on Thursday by the Akans.

<sup>18</sup> Afua is the name given to a girl born on Friday by the Akans. The Fantes use the word Efua /Efia instead of Afua.

<sup>19</sup> Kofi Asare Opoku, *African Traditional Religion* (Jurong: FEP International Private Limited, 1978) p. 55

<sup>20</sup> See J.B.Danquah, *Okanniba Abotafowa* (London: University of London Press, 1954) p. 55. See also A.A.Opoku, *Obi Kyere* (Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 19783) pp. 20-23. Cited by Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p.98

Even though in the Ghanaian traditional society there is the belief in spirits, the Akan of Ghana believe in spirits that assume personalities called the Mmoatia or 'little people'.<sup>21</sup> These spirits live in the forest. They are very short with curved noses and yellowish skins, while their feet point in the opposite direction. They are about thirteen metres high. These spirits have a phenomenal knowledge of medicines which they give to herbalists or medicine men. The Mmoatia tutor these herbalists on the cures for some unusual diseases.

## 5.2 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters we examined the power and fate of Satan and demons in Mark. We used concepts like God, Jesus, Satan, Beelzebul, Holy Spirit angels, sin, unclean spirits and demons, from the point of view of Western scholarship. Since this chapter deals with African Traditional Religion which is different from the Christian religion, we will explain how concepts like God, the devil, spirits and witches are used and interpreted throughout the chapter.

In African Traditional Religion there is an idea of a monotheistic God (Supreme Being), believed to have created the universe, and having attributes similar to those of God in Christian religion. The use of the word God in this chapter would mean the same God in Christian religion. The word Satan comes from the Hebrew word Satan and the Greek word Σατανᾶς which means adversary,<sup>22</sup> and in the Christian religion Satan is seen as the prince of evil. He is hostile to God and God's people. Originally he was an angel but because of his disobedience he fell. In African Traditional Religion there is no angelic concept and there is no Satan. But there is an idea of the devil who operates like Satan but we do not have the devil working directly against God. In this part of the thesis, the devil will be used to mean a power like that of Satan.

The Hebrew word for evil is *raʿ* and the Greek word is *κακός, πονηρός* or *φάυλος*. The word evil is a term with a broad meaning.<sup>23</sup> We have physical evil (expressed in pain, suffering or disaster) and moral evil which arises from the sinful inclinations of

<sup>21</sup> K. Asare Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p. 73

<sup>22</sup> L.L. Morris, 'Satan,' in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (eds. I.H. Marshall, A.R. Millard, J.I. Parker, D.J. Wiseman), (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996) p. 1064

<sup>23</sup> M.R. Gordon, 'Evil,' in *New Bible Dictionary*, p. 348

a human being. In Christian religion evil is sin, in African Traditional Religion we do not have sin but we have wrong doing.<sup>24</sup> If sin is taken to be an attitude, action or omission that separates a person from God, it would appear that African Traditional Religion does have the concept of sin. Even so, a qualification would be necessary, for the supernatural power that would be offended by the sinful conduct, attitude or omission would include a supreme god, nature gods, spirits, and ancestors.

However, the connotation of the word 'sin' is too closely tied to Christian religion and theology to be applicable to African Traditional Religion. For example, Genesis assigns sin to human culpability, in the sense that sin is congenital or genetic. We find echoes of this in the New Testament, where we read: for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). There is no such thing as inherited or congenital sin in African Traditional Religion. Again, Christian religion, but not African Traditional Religion, recognises mortal sin, in contrast to venial sin, the former rendering the sinner liable to eternal punishment, a sin that can only be forgiven by the sacrament of penance, whereas venial sin is more easily forgiven.

The foregoing two examples (and there are more) suggest that sin is not an idea in African Traditional Religion, or it can only apply with substantial qualification. In African Traditional Religion, what comes close to sin is wilful wrongdoing, but the scope of wilful wrongdoing is both religious and moral. The sources of wrong doing are many. The fact that evil in African Traditional Religion is not sin but wrong doing implies it may be done out of mistake, intentionally, or through an action of an evil spirit.

In Christian religion we have the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ. Every human being has God's Spirit in him or her and this makes a person alive. The Christian conception of a person is one composed of body and Spirit. Spirit is the power that animates the body. But from Christian perspective it is a spark of God's Spirit, the element of the divine in a human being. In African Traditional Religion there are two dimensions to humanity or the human body. Various local African religions have their respective concepts of spirits, but basically the African concept of personality is of an

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<sup>24</sup> I am grateful to Dr.Kofi Ackah, a lecturer at the Department of Classics, University of Ghana now on sabbatical at the University of Glasgow for pointing this out during a conversation.



entity made of body and animator called the Spirit. The Spirit is not only local to individuals, it has a cosmic dimension and so there is a cosmic world and other spiritual powers, the greatest of which is God, intermediated by other spirits as ancestral spirits and divinities.

In African Traditional Religion spirits are those apparitional entities<sup>25</sup> which form a separate category of beings. However, they are regarded as powers which are almost abstract; as shades or vapours which take on human shape. They are immaterial and incorporeal beings. There is a difference<sup>26</sup> in the identity of the spirits. Some may be called spirits of nature, or personifications of natural forces, while others may be glorified heroes of the past. The ancestral spirits are spirits of the dead. Their habitat<sup>27</sup> is essentially local and they move around where their living successors dwell: houses, compounds and family places. They are the link between human beings and the supernatural world. The divinities are believed to have been brought into being by God (Supreme Being),<sup>28</sup> but they remain essentially spirits.<sup>29</sup> The divinities range<sup>30</sup> from tribal gods to personal deities. There are certain spirits which are said to be specifically evil,<sup>31</sup> because they are hostile towards human beings and can cause untold misery. Yet, when their assistance is sought against enemies, they can come to the aid of human beings. One human spirit<sup>32</sup> to be reckoned with painfully in Africa is the spirit of witches. There is the belief that the spirits of living human beings can be sent out of the body on errands of doing havoc to other persons in body, mind or estate; that witches have guilds or operate singly and that the spirits sent out of the human body in this way can act either invisibly or through a lower creature - an animal or a bird.

We have examined the debate between Best and Robinson focusing on the power and fate of Satan and demons. These scholars affirm that Satan is strong and was engaged in a struggle with Jesus in the temptation. Best maintains that Satan was bound in the

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<sup>25</sup> Idowu, *Traditional Religion* pp.173- 174

<sup>26</sup> Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p.55

<sup>27</sup> J.O. Kayode, *Understanding African Traditional Religion* (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press Limited, 1984) p. 19

<sup>28</sup> Kayode, *Traditional Religion*, p.4

<sup>29</sup> Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p.54

<sup>30</sup> Kayode, *Traditional Religion*, p.27

<sup>31</sup> Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p.70

<sup>32</sup> Idowu, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 175-176

temptation and that, the exorcisms were mopping-up operations whilst Best presents a demon-free world. Robinson argues that Satan was not defeated decisively in the temptation but on the Cross. Robinson maintains that because Jesus was locked up in a struggle with Satan in the temptation, the exorcisms are real struggles between Jesus and the demons. He presents a world of struggle with Satan and demonic forces. The scholars give an indication of the power relationship between Jesus, Satan and the demons. But they do not give any hints about why people are possessed, how they are possessed and the type of people who are possessed. They do not give us any information on the lifestyles that easily lead people to be possessed by demons, and they do not show us how to resist these demons nor how to cope with them.

We examined the way Mark presented Jesus, Satan and demons in his Gospel. Although Jesus and Satan were engaged in a struggle in the temptation, he provided no answers to the outcome. Mark presents Jesus putting up a defence regarding the source of his power, the Holy Spirit, in His exorcisms. Mark presents a world where on the one hand Satan is powerful, and on the other hand Satan is bound. He gives a comprehensive account about the nature and the activities of the demons, stressing their impact on their victims and the way these demons submit to Jesus when they meet Him even though Jesus had difficulty in defeating one demon. In Mark, demons are the only source of spiritual affliction. He outlines ways of resisting demons through prayer, and having faith in Jesus. We have outlined the views of Western scholars and Mark on Satan and demons. What views do practitioners of African Traditional Religion have regarding the devil, demons and spiritual powers in relation to evil? Is the devil bound or powerful? If the devil is not bound, when is he going to be bound? Are there other sources of spiritual affliction in African Traditional Religion apart from the devil and demons? What measures are taken to ward off spiritual and physical affliction in African Traditional Religion?

This chapter is a description of the beliefs and practices of the people of Africa. It does not attempt to give a psychological or sociological interpretation. It deals with the beliefs and practices of people who are closer to the world-view of the Markan community. This chapter, which gives the roots of African beliefs about evil, will attempt to construct traditional forms of beliefs which provide the background for the next chapter. It will provide links to the Ghanaian readings in the next chapter by

exploring the beliefs we expect them to have. It will also give us an insight into how far these beliefs among Ghanaian readers in London have been modified or set alongside beliefs in Western medicine.

This chapter has limitations. There is the difficulty of obtaining the relevant literature, especially scholarly views (pertaining to the African milieu) on sorcery, evil eye, curses, spirit possession and moral evil. We do not have many African scholars writing on some of the issues raised in this chapter. There is therefore the tendency to depend on a few scholars on spirit possession.<sup>33</sup> Because of these limitations, this chapter will be different from one based on field-work, where many people with varied experiences will have the opportunity to express their thoughts on the issues raised. Given these limitations, we will attempt to discuss the existence of evil in African Traditional Religion.

The existence of evil is a problem for all religions and African Traditional Religion is no exception. We have two notions of evil – physical and moral evil. The former comes upon an individual or a community while the latter is any voluntary anti-social behaviour or any infringement of the decrees of God, the deities (divinities, gods) or the ancestors. What factors or agencies are responsible for evil from the point of view of African Traditional Religion? Are these evils caused by spirit beings? Are there other agencies responsible for evil? What explanations do we give to moral evil? How is evil warded off? These are some of the questions confronting adherents of African Traditional Religion. We will examine the relationship between spirit beings and evil; the human agents of evil; moral evil and the warding off evil. We will compare and contrast the world-view of Mark and that of African Traditional Religion.

### **5.3 THE SPIRIT WORLD**

#### **5.3.1 SPIRIT BEINGS AND EVIL**

The basic question is whether in African Traditional Religion evil can be associated with spirit beings. In this essay the term African Traditional Religion refers to the traditional religious practices and beliefs of the people south of the Sahara- a vast area

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<sup>33</sup> When examining spirit possession in the Ghanaian society, there is the tendency to rely on the work of G.Bannerman-Richter, *The Practice of witchcraft in Ghana* (California: Gabari Publishing Company, 1982)

with different people. People within this area have different religious beliefs and practices. But taking the whole region as a unit, one can still speak of African Traditional Religion because of the principal themes that are reflected in the religions of the people throughout the area.<sup>34</sup> The spirit beings in this context are the Supreme Being, the divinities and the ancestors. The question is relevant because of the belief of the African. Evil in African Traditional Religion has to be put in the context of people's world-view,<sup>35</sup> 'a world-view with many mystical agencies who may be suspected to be behind any unusual event.'<sup>36</sup> We will discuss these spirit beings and find out how they are connected with evil.

### 5.3.2 GOD AND EVIL

#### *i African Myths*

There are myths in African Traditional Religion showing how evil came into the world. In these myths humanity is responsible for the separation of God from this world.<sup>37</sup> M. Kirven cites a myth that deals with the existence of original fault<sup>38</sup> causing the separation between God and humanity. In the myth, a man, in the heat of an argument with another man, shot an arrow into the heavens, drawing blood and the heavens moved further away from the earth. As a result of this action, death became

<sup>34</sup> See Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ*, p. 11; cf. H.W. Turner, 'Geoffrey Parrinder's Contributions to Studies of Religions in Africa, *Religion* 10 (1980) pp. 156-164 esp. pp. 159-160. See Mbiti, *African Religions*, pp. 1-2; D. Zahan, *The Religion, Spirituality and Thought of Traditional Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979) pp. 4-5; Emefie Ikenga-Metuh, 'Religious Concepts in West Africa Cosmologies,' in *Journal Of Religion in Africa* XIII, 1 (1982) pp. 11-24 esp. p.23

<sup>35</sup> For an explanation of the people's world-view especially in relation to Africa, see K.A. Busia, 'The African Worldview' in J. Drachler (ed.) *African Heritage* ( New York: The Cromwell-Collier Press, 1963) pp. 146-151; J.S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: The Parthenon Press, 1979) pp. 43-52; O. Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* ( Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1983) pp. 47-66; Emefie Ikenga Metuh: *God and Man in African Religion – A Case Study of the Igbo of Nigeria* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981) pp 48-49. Metuh defines a people's world-view as 'the complex of their beliefs and attitudes concerning the origin, nature, structure of the universe and the interaction of its being-with particular reference to human beings.' It is against this world-view as background that major problems of human beings are conceived, assessed and solutions sought. Metuh stresses the point that a people's traditional view is by no means static. It is constantly being re-interpreted and reformulated in the light of new experience within the community, and stimuli from external contacts.

<sup>36</sup> Ikenga -Metuh. *African Religions*, p.150; Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ*, p.1. Ferdinando affirms that a 'striking' aspect of the traditional African world-view is the belief that an invisible domain of spirits and occult forces exist impinging on the world of humanity and everyday reality and which can be influenced and manipulated by human beings. See also S.S. Farrow, *Faith, Fancies and Fetish* (London: S.P.C.K. 1924) p.116

<sup>37</sup> G. Lienhardt, 'Morality and Happiness among the Dinka' in G. Outka and J P Reeder, *Religion and Morality: A Collection of Essays* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973) p.109.

<sup>38</sup> Michael C. Kirwen, *The Missionary and the Diviner: Contending Theologies of Christian and African Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987) p. 4

the lot of humankind.<sup>39</sup> It is because of human disobedience that God is now far removed from the earth and that human beings experience pain and want.<sup>40</sup> In some or many of these myths the catastrophes came as punishment for evil doings of humanity.<sup>41</sup> There is nothing in African myths associating evil with God.

## *ii The Attributes of God*

God, the creator of the world, is kind and provides for the needs of His children. He is powerful and involved with the preservation of the world. He is just, knows everything and He is everywhere.

What we cannot dispute is God's power to punish,<sup>42</sup> as a result of human behaviour. 'Although it would be held in general that it is God who punishes ... offences', Lienbhardt writes, 'Dinka [as is generally the case with all other ethnic groups] also recognises that the mystery of guilt and anxiety is intrinsic to them.'<sup>43</sup> Even though human beings and spirits may be the immediate causes of these disasters, God has the final say in what does or does not happen.

To associate God with anything that is not good is ridiculous.<sup>44</sup> People know that misfortune does happen, but believe that it is always with the permission or knowledge of God. God is never blamed for this instead the ultimate source is to be found in the created order.<sup>45</sup> As to why an essentially good God permits misfortune, we cannot explain. Our investigation shows that there is nothing in the attributes affirming that God can be associated with evil.

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<sup>39</sup> Kirwen, *The Diviner* p.4

<sup>40</sup> L Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997) p.44

<sup>41</sup> H. Baumann, *Schöpfung und Urzeit des Menschen im Mythos der africanischen Völker*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edn. (Berlin: 1964) Cited by J. S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London S.P.C.K, 1970) p.85

<sup>42</sup> H. Sawyerr, *Creative Evangelism; Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa* (London: Lutterworth Press 1968) p. 15. See Mbiti, *God in Africa*, pp. 81- 84 for examples of God's way of punishing people in some traditional societies in Africa. Mbiti, (Mbiti, *God in Africa*) p.84. See E. K. Twesigye, *African Religion, Philosophy and Christianity in Logos-Christ* (New York : Peter Lang Publishing Inc. 1996) p.285. Twesigye classifies God's action as God's righteous anger and punishment at work because of human sin. There are parallels in Mark 1:40-45 and 2:1-12.

<sup>43</sup> Lienhardt, 'Morality and Happiness', p.115

<sup>44</sup> Magesa, *African Religion*, p.41

<sup>45</sup> Metuh, *God and Man*, p.43

### 5.3.3 DIVINITIES AND EVIL

Africans recognise lesser categories of spiritual forces that respond to the needs of human beings in their secular and religious lives. These divinities are regarded as ‘the children/messengers of God, or His agents,’<sup>46</sup> and they fulfil some specific functions. They may be good or evil and may have their abode in the environment yet they are distinguishable from the habitats. They have unlimited mobility and can move anywhere and as such are not confined to the physical objects in which they reside. When they are evil, they are able to cause mischief.

Divinities have been in existence for a long time. In other respects, they are closer to human beings than God, in that they are constantly experienced in the physical life of human beings. Some divinities can bring epidemics, drought, poverty and in some cases death, when people offend them. The evil that come upon people are there to correct, purify and at the same time draw them closely to the divinities. What about the ancestors?

### 5.3.4 ANCESTORS AND EVIL

The ancestors are people who were living on earth but have died and now belong to the ancestral world. Not everybody who dies becomes an ancestor. For somebody to be an ancestor the person must have reached an old age, and must have left some descendants. They have the power to fend off evils that affect the whole living community. They are the owners of the land, and it is under their guidance that humanity strives to keep in step with harmony and order of creation. The ancestors ensure the proper order of the social world and call on humankind to account for their wickedness through various punishments.<sup>47</sup> In that capacity they act on behalf of the Supreme Being.

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<sup>46</sup> K. K. Anti, ‘Women in African Traditional Religions’. A Paper presented at Women’s Center, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington, May 1996; p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Kirwen, *The Diviner* p.35. Luo ancestors are believed to cause a wide range of diseases, from tuberculosis to hallucinations, as punishments for breaches of taboo or neglect of sacrifice. See M. G. Whisson, ‘Some Aspects of Functional Disorders among the Kenya Luo’, in A. Kiev (ed), *Magic, Faith and Healing* (New York: The Free Press, 1964) p.206. see R. J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe: Kesho Publications, 1989) p.150.

We have discussed how spirit beings bring calamities upon the people in African traditional societies. These spirit beings are not associated with moral evil. They do not commit morally evil deeds, nor do they incite people to commit them. This is because they cannot act against the interests of men and society. By nature they are supposed to foster the interests of men and society. The divinities and the ancestors are the cause of misfortunes. Like the Supreme Being, they can confer benefits in areas over which they have control by offering protection and punishing people. They use their punitive powers more frequently and more harshly than God. Some of them are associated with one form of misfortune or the other, yet they are not intrinsically evil. They are seen as agents employed by God to execute his punitive measures to recalcitrant offenders.

### 5.3.5 EVIL SPIRITS

Evil spirits are sometimes called wandering spirits. Because they were not able to reach the spirit land after their death they wander, are restless and dissatisfied. They are always on the move in the world, making life unbearable for their surviving relations.<sup>48</sup> These spirits are believed to be inherently evil.<sup>49</sup> They can be grouped in categories - disincarnate human spirits, non-human spirits, anonymous spirits who may attack individuals, families or communities and those with the status of a deity. Many evil spirits move in groups and launch their attacks on human beings. Some are conceived as forest monsters, or 'little people,' like the Akan 'sasabonsam and mmoatia'.<sup>50</sup>

Among the Gikuyu, a group of evil spirits launched an attack on groups within a community. They caused epidemics and illness, which even the medicine men had no cure. For in such circumstances, upon the instruction of seers, all the people embarked

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<sup>48</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, *God and Man*, p. 76

<sup>49</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, p.155. See S. N. Ezeanya, 'God, Spirits and the Spirit World' in K. A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth (eds.) *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1969) pp. 30-46 esp. p.44. See E. Ikenga-Metuh, 'Incarnating Christianity in African world-views' in E. Ikenga-Metuh, (ed) *African Inculturation Theology: Africanizing Christianity* (Onitsa: Imico Books, 1996) pp.72-88 esp. p.83. In a few African world-views, there are beliefs in a 'Great Evil Spirit', parallel to the Christian concept of the Devil. Examples are Rwuba of the Urundi, and Wele Gumali of the Vugusu of Kenya. In Christianity we have the Devil, a supreme power of evil at strife with the Supreme power of good. This view of the Devil is generally absent in African Traditional Religion. See Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies*, p.166

<sup>50</sup> Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p.2

on physical attacks. When the war horns were sounded, the whole village rushed out with clubs and sticks and began to beat down the bushes on both sides of the paths that led to the stream in an attempt to drive the evil spirits down the stream. At the stream, the war horn was sounded again and the people threw their sticks into the stream and shouted:

‘Evil spirits and your illness we have crushed you. We now sink you in the river. Let the water drive you away from us. You will go forever and never return.’<sup>51</sup>

Our discussion shows that evil can be associated with evil spirits. This evil takes the form of diseases.

## **5.4 HUMAN AGENTS OF EVIL**

In African Traditional Religion, evil can be linked with human agents such as witches, sorcerers and sorceresses, evil eye and curses. A study of such agents follows.

### **5.4.1 Witchcraft**

#### ***i African Society and Witchcraft***

In traditional African cosmology, this figure, the witch resembles the biblical portrayal of Satan. It is not a supernatural being, but a very human one. Most discussions of witchcraft spend some time explaining away<sup>52</sup> the phenomenon of witchcraft. Whether people conceive of it as factually true or not, it is a psychological reality<sup>53</sup> in African societies. It certainly exercises hypnotic power on those who believe themselves to be bewitched. Often they lose the will to survive. The view that increased education and Western medical facilities have significantly changed attitudes to witchcraft cannot be sustained,<sup>54</sup> and some modern changes may actually increase the perceived incidence of witchcraft, as in the case of the Gusii and Baskin.<sup>55</sup> For those for whom witchcraft is a reality, there is therefore greater

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<sup>51</sup> Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961) p. 262

<sup>52</sup> J. S. Pobee, ‘Aspects of Traditional African Religion’, in *Sociological Analysis – A Journal in the Sociology of Religion* Vol.37, No. 1 Spring 1976 pp. 1-18 esp. p.13

<sup>53</sup> Pobee, *African Theology* p.100

<sup>54</sup> For example, see Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ*, 41n118 for a confession from a witch.

<sup>55</sup> See H. Hill, ‘Witchcraft and the Gospel: Insights from Africa’, in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXIV. No. 3. July 1996, pp.323-344 esp. p.324. Hill affirms that witchcraft



insecurity. The problem still exists, - even today African society is oppressed by witchcraft.<sup>56</sup> As far as traditional African society is concerned, 'a denial of the presence of witchcraft is a denial of the existence of the activities of evil.'<sup>57</sup> How, then, can one become a witch?

## **ii A Witch And Becoming A Witch**

A witch can be described as a person/an individual with 'special psychic qualities which allow their spirit to leave the body whilst sleeping to afflict injuries on others.'<sup>58</sup> In many parts of Africa there is the belief that the spirits leave the bodies of witches in the form of particular kind of birds, with the aim of reaking havoc on other human beings. The attack can be described as operation of spirits upon spirits, that is, 'it is the ethereal bodies of the victims that are attacked, extracted and devoured; and this is what is meant when it is said that witches have sucked the blood of the victim.'<sup>59</sup> Once one is possessed by the power of witchcraft<sup>60</sup> one can use it to harm others and bring untold suffering to members of the community. The sole purpose of a witch is to injure other people.

There are several possibilities<sup>61</sup> of becoming a witch. One may be born a witch; the power of witchcraft may be inherited and people who have money can buy witchcraft.<sup>62</sup> Witchcraft power may be inadvertently acquired through swallowing

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permeates Ivorian societies and it is number one problem for Zairians.

<sup>56</sup> Pobee, 'Aspects of Religion' p.12. For the reality of the fear of witchcraft among the educated, see Masamba Ma Mpolo, 'Sorcery and Pastoral Care and Counselling' in *African Theological Journal* Vol. 19, 1 (1990) pp.38-52. Mpolo affirms that 'even African students in European universities ascribe their maladies to bewitchment'.

<sup>57</sup> A. I. Berglund, *Zulu Thought Patterns and Symbolism*, (London: C. Hurst, 1976) p.269

<sup>58</sup> Ikenga-Metuh, *God and Man* p.100. See Middleton, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in Lugbara,' p. 262-263 for discussion on male witches (who work at night). A night-witch can cause sickness or even death to others. He goes to his victim's compound at night, often in the guise of certain animals: a toad, a snake, a lizard, a water frog, a jackal, a leopard, a bat, a type of monkey which screeches at night, an owl. If a man dreams of one of these creatures, his soul is seeing a night-witch. His victim may be frightened but he cannot be harmed if awake; but if asleep the victim wakes up the following morning with pains in the bones. A man who eats alone or sits alone a great deal is thought to be a witch, hiding resentment in his heart. A man who wanders about without obvious reason, without working, may be thought to be a witch.

<sup>59</sup> Idowu, *Traditional Religion*, p.176

<sup>60</sup> Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p.144

<sup>61</sup> K. A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984) 62n4. See H. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana* (Kumasi: Presbyterian Book Depot, 1959) pp. 57-59; E.E.Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976 [1937]) p. 62. See Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, pp. 143-144. See also Akin Omoya, *Witches?* (Ibadan, Daystar Press, 1971) cited by Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, 144n7.

<sup>62</sup> For the processes involved in buying witchcraft, why people buy witchcraft and the type of people

food mixed with witchcraft substances; or deliberately acquired from a lesser god – ardent devotees may be given witchcraft as a reward for service and devotion. Witchcraft can also be acquired from another witch who after guiding the aspirant through rituals will put her fingers on the devotee's eyes for her to 'see properly'.<sup>63</sup> A person may become a witch by exchanging saliva with a witch. The victim acquires the powers of a wandering soul with the added urge to hurt others but she does not begin to exercise the unnatural urge until she commits herself to joining a witch club.

The other means by which one can acquire witchcraft is by willing<sup>64</sup> it. Some people have within themselves the power to desire something so intensely that they can make it to happen. They allow themselves to be completely taken over by any force – physical, mental or spiritual –enabling them to achieve their objective. By the sheer force of desires, a person unleashes spiritual forces in the astral world, which are sympathetic to their desires, and such forces goad her on to facilitate her goals. These spirits, evil in nature, attach themselves to her, and in her dreams she meets and talks to them and they promise to help her achieve her goals.

### ***iii The Motives And Mode Of Attack***

Witches consciously try to injure their neighbours because of jealousy, envy, hatred and bad feelings.<sup>65</sup> They attack their victims in several<sup>66</sup> ways through diseases which prove difficult to cure, involuntary abortion and death. Witches may carry the soul of a person to be shared at their nocturnal meetings. The victim wakes up weak and sick and dies as soon as they eat his soul. Witches may also cause material losses, such as when the victims lose their property or wealth. Witches may decide not to kill but to punish an enemy by inflicting serious injuries on the person. They may cause blindness by spitting into the victim's eyes. Witches may destroy crops or property.

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who buy witchcraft, see Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, pp 38-40

<sup>63</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, 64n41

<sup>64</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.42

<sup>65</sup> Kirwen, *The Diviner*, p.31

<sup>66</sup> For a bibliography on the attack of the witches, see the following: J. Middleton, *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) pp. 262-263; W. MacGaffey, *Religion and Society in Central Africa* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) p.162; T.O. Beidelman, 'Witchcraft in Ukaguru', in J. Middleton and E.H. Winter (eds.) *Witchcraft and Sorcery in East Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) pp.64-65; B. Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963) pp 25, 44-46; A. W. Southall, *Alur Society* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1953) p.142;

A witch never attacks an outsider. The victim must be a close relation, a friend or a neighbour. The belief is that (i) before a witch takes away a person's soul, she enters into spiritual communication with it, so it is only those whom she knows well enough to communicate with that can be victims and (ii) a witch is sometimes forced to sacrifice her own children, her relations or even part of herself to the ghoulis feast of the witch club when she cannot find other victims. Hence, witches are rarely healthy or happy and can easily be detected by relatives and neighbours. What are the social implications of witchcraft?

#### *iv The Social Implications of witchcraft*

Witches are noted for attacking and destroying people in society. This explains why they are feared and their activities often decried.<sup>67</sup> Some people (lonely women and people with physical or mental abnormalities, especially gifted or progressive individuals), are unable to escape the attacks of witches. Concerning the Pondo, 'people fear to be conspicuously successful, lest, exciting envy, they bring upon themselves the attack of a witch.'<sup>68</sup>

When witches are unable to, or choose not to, attack or destroy (physically or mentally) a person supernaturally, they can use other means to ruin him. One way of doing this is to 'remove from his life the ingredient of luck or good fortune, or the attribute of honour from the victim's fate or destiny.'<sup>69</sup> Witches may also do good at times to benefit people - controlling malevolent people or enabling people to succeed in life. But the evil they do in the society is very horrifying. Many witches confess their evil deeds spontaneously or under torture or ordeal. Diviners or oracles can identify others.

Barrenness<sup>70</sup> is one of the chief afflictions, which witches who have been arrested by other supernatural forces confess to inflicting on their victims. Confessing witches claim to wreak impotency on men. In African traditional society, to be impotent can be more than ego-defeating and downright deadly. Men have been known to commit

<sup>67</sup> Dickson, *Theology in Africa*, p.63

<sup>68</sup> cf. Berglund, *Zulu thought Patterns*, p. 272

<sup>69</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p. 98

<sup>70</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.101. See Opoku, *Traditional Religion*, p. 145. According to Opoku witches can turn the wombs of women upside down. They can remove the reproductive glands in men making them impotent.

suicide over their impotency.<sup>71</sup> Witches confess to dispossessing men of their virility claiming that the men incurred their retaliation because they wronged them. For example, a girl who is a witch may claim that she rendered a man impotent on moral grounds: she seized the victim's genitals because he tried to rape her. Witches are forced to confess their crimes on their deathbed. Witches are not given funeral rites; their bodies are thrown into the bush. The power of witchcraft in African society is not to be under-estimated. It is a reality that is feared. Our next task is to examine sorcery in African Traditional Religion.

#### **5.4.2 SORCERY**

Sorcerers and Sorceresses are individuals who consciously and deliberately employ magic against other people by means of medicines, rituals or spells. They are feared in African society. They make medicine to hurt others. People take care to avoid them and are careful not to eat or drink anything in their homes. Their presence at public meetings makes everybody uneasy. A brief exchange of words with them may make them begin to plan how to use their nefarious art on their opponent(s).

They deliberately try to harm their enemies or those clients who have paid them, by evil, magical means. They may use suggestive magic only, or true poison; harmful ingredients may be put in a cooking pot or drinking gourd; magical preparations secretly in a person's house; or lay a trail of powder round the hut. When people see such powder, they will die. The soul of the enemy may be pinned down with pegs, or a clay image made of his/her body and thorns stuck in the vital organs. The enemy will then feel pain in those spots and may die. They may utter spells and curses against their foe, or even threaten the person openly in a quarrel. As a result of the above characteristics, people are careful not to offend one who is suspected of possessing evil powers. All manner of evil can be attributed to their work.

Sorcerers and Sorceresses have the power of changing themselves into animal form at will.<sup>72</sup> They may send animal agents against their foes. They can call down lightning upon their victim, or may claim to rise up in the air and come down disguised as lightning. Their power lies in two things: medicines and the bad consciences of the

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<sup>71</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.102

<sup>72</sup> E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, (London: Sheldon Press, 1974) p.118

people they want to hurt.<sup>73</sup> They have little impact on those who do not fear them. They can only harm people who also deserve evil; whose emotional stabilities are impaired, or who have already harmed others through sorcery. They represent the evil in people. They rarely harm another person without justifiable anger. In most cases they are known but for fear of revenge they are not expelled from the community. They are avoided if possible, and kept at a distance. From our study we can intimate that evil can be associated with sorcery.

Is there any relation between witchcraft and sorcery? Witches, sorcerers/sorceresses bring trouble and (evil) chronic illness, mental disorder and death.<sup>74</sup> into the community. Fears about witchcraft and sorcery create tension and stress in the local community.<sup>75</sup> Generally their motive is considered to be envy and jealousy.<sup>76</sup> Witchcraft and sorcery accusations follow the same lines of social cleavage that lineage segmentation does, proceeding in both cases from intra-family tensions that tend to ramify with successive generations.<sup>77</sup> In the Gusii community, the selection of individuals blamed for witchcraft and sorcery was seen to have its roots in (i) the changing political-military role of Gusii communities, (ii) the structure of the patriarchal, polygynous extended family, into which the individual is socialized, and (iii) the position of married women as foreigners from an enemy camp.<sup>78</sup> Even though there are various means of dealing with witches, sorcerers and sorceresses when their activities are suspected, the common process for identifying them is by divination. Among the people of Lugbara, the belief is that oracles do not 'know words' of witchcraft and sorcery: the rubbing stick oracle may state that sickness is due to witchcraft or sorcery but will not confirm the identity of the practitioner. This identification may usually be given by a diviner.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Theo Sundermeier, *The Individual and Community in African Traditional Religions*, (Hamburg: LIT, 1998) p.194. For details on sorcery in other traditional societies in Africa, see, Ferdinando, *The Triumph of Christ* pp. 103-107.

<sup>74</sup> LeVine, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in a Gusii Community,' p. 225

<sup>75</sup> Middleton, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in Lugbara,' p. 272

<sup>76</sup> Middleton, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in Lugbara,' p. 261

<sup>77</sup> LeVine, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in a Gusii Community,' p. 254

<sup>78</sup> LeVine, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in a Gusii Community,' pp. 254-255

<sup>79</sup> Middleton, 'Witchcraft and Sorcery in Lugbara,' p. 265

### 5.4.3 EVIL EYE

The evil eye (a belief in many parts of the world) is used to explain when ‘someone can project harm by looking at another’s property or person.’<sup>80</sup> The evil eye has ‘seven’<sup>81</sup> such features. (a) Power comes out from the eye and strikes some object or person. (b) The object that has been struck is of value, and the form of the destruction or injury is sudden. (c) The one casting the evil eye may not be aware that he/she has the power. (d) The one who has been struck may not be able to identify the source of the power. (e) The evil eye can be deflected or its effects modified or cured by particular devices, in the form of rituals and symbols. (f) The belief helps to explain or rationalise sickness, misfortune or loss of possessions such as animals or crops, and (g) in at least some functioning of the belief everywhere, envy is the factor.

The Amhara of Ethiopia call people who have the evil eye the buda.<sup>82</sup> They simply gaze at their victims and they slowly die. This mode of attack is the most common in other parts of Africa. A person with the evil eye may even have distinguishing physical characteristics. Among the Lugbara of Sudan, they are identified ‘by a squint or by red eyes, and by a shifting and ill-natural glance.’<sup>83</sup> They are usually greedy and grumpy. The Kipsigis of Kenya understand them as inherently envious or jealous. Even if they want to be good, the Kipsigis say, ‘people with the evil eye cannot.’<sup>84</sup> They inherit their power through the maternal side. Because it destroys life, the evil eye is understood in Africa as a type of witchcraft.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> C. Maloney, ‘Introduction’ in C. Maloney (ed) *The Evil Eye* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976) p.v. See B.J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981) p. 120. Evil eye belief refers to the conviction that certain individuals, animals, demons or gods have the power to cause some negative effect on any object, animate or inanimate, on which they may look. Evil eye works voluntarily or involuntarily. The negative effects it can cause are injuries to the life or health of others, to damage an individual means of sustenance and livelihood, or to their honour and personal fortune. For a discussion on how the effects of the evil eye correlate with envy, a quality of the heart, see, Malina, *The New Testament World*, pp. 120-123.

<sup>81</sup> Maloney, *Evil Eye*, pp vii-viii

<sup>82</sup> R. A. Reminick, ‘The Evil Eye Belief Among the Amhara, in C. Maloney (ed) *The Evil Eye*, pp. 87-91.

<sup>83</sup> J. Middleton, *Lugbara Religion: Ritual and Authority Among an East African People*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960) p.241. See also J. Middleton, ‘The Concept of Bewitching in Lugbara’, in J. Middleton (ed) *Magic, Witchcraft and Cursing* (Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1967) p.60.

<sup>84</sup> Magesi, *African Religion*, p.166

<sup>85</sup> Magesi, *African Religion*, p.166

The Akamba have an evil eye, detected when the eyes are usually red, sometimes with white secretion flowing from the eyes.<sup>86</sup> The person with an evil eye does not need to say anything. A mere stare can unintentionally cause sickness or death. As such the mother will shield the smaller children from the glare of people suspected of having an evil eye. When taking infants on a journey, the mothers would cover the child with fat from an animal which allegedly neutralises the powers of an evil eye,<sup>87</sup> in order to protect the child from the unintentional evil defects of the glare. The evil eye is an evil power and it cannot originate with God.<sup>88</sup>

The Kikuyu in Central Kenya call the evil eye “Kita, ‘saliva’, in Swahili it is called Kijicho, little eye.”<sup>89</sup> A person born with it is unable to remove the harmful effect from his/her eyes, and it is believed to run in some families.<sup>90</sup> If a person looks at a fine cow, the owner will insist that this evil influence is removed, lest the cow falls ill and dies. This is done as follows: The owner of the evil eye rubs some of his saliva into the mouth of the cow with his finger; this will neutralise the evil.<sup>91</sup> Only the owner of the evil eye can remove the spell, not even a medicine man has that power. If an evil eye falls on a pregnant woman, she will abort or the breasts will become inflamed so that the owner of the eye has to rub saliva on them. If this eye falls on a spear, it will break, if it falls on a neighbour’s corn, the rats will eat it. We have discussed the concept of evil eye in Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya. Our finding is that in all these countries the evil eye is seen as a major form of evil. Among the people of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world, to avoid the evil eye, they used a number of gestures and objects. They had to hide or deny their good fortune, offered conciliatory bribes and practised true sharing.<sup>92</sup> Malina argues that evil was primarily linked with envy in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world in a limited good environment. However, Malina affirms that envy works differently in individualistic societies compared to collective

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<sup>86</sup> Gehman, *Traditional Religion*, p.300

<sup>87</sup> Gehman, *Traditional Religion*, p.300

<sup>88</sup> Gehman, *Traditional Religion*, p.300

<sup>89</sup> J. Knappert, *The Aquarian Guide to African Mythology*. (Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press, 1990) p.84

<sup>90</sup> Knappert, *African Mythology*, p.84

<sup>91</sup> Knappert, *African Mythology*, p.84

<sup>92</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, p. 131. For detailed description of the means of protecting oneself against evil eye in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world, see Malina, *The New Testament World*, pp. 123-124.

ones<sup>93</sup>. What we also need to bear in mind is that it is very likely that the factors that caused envy among the people in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world might not be the same factors causing envy in the traditional African societies.

#### 5.4.4 CURSES

In the traditional world-view, words pronounced deliberately with intention take upon themselves a reality of their own which can bring about the desires of the speaker.<sup>94</sup> The most negative purpose for which speech can be employed is cursing. It is very widespread even in modern and recent Africa.<sup>95</sup> The effectiveness of the curse is dependent upon several factors:<sup>96</sup> the intensity of the desire of the wish, the manner of its expression and the personality of the curser. Behind the spoken words is the speaker, and the greater the personality of the speaker, the greater will be the effectiveness of the speech. A god or his devotee uttering a curse will be more effective. Because of that calling upon the name of a deity often strengthens a curse. The relationship of the curser to the cursed is an important factor in the effectiveness of the curse. Belief in the power of the curse is strong. The curse of a father or a senior relative is universally dreaded.<sup>97</sup> In some cases, the victim will roam about and die miserably unless he returns and pleads for pardon. If a person refuses to pay compensation, the prospect of curse by the elders may loom sufficiently large to make better counsels prevail.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Malina, *The New Testament World*, p.109

<sup>94</sup> D. Burnett, *World of the Spirits: A Christian Perspective on Traditional and Folk Religions* (London; Monarch Books, 2000) p. 146. See J.A. Motyer, 'Curse,' in *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd Edition (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2003) pp. 248-249 esp. p.248. In the old Testament a person may utter a curse craving for another's hurt ( Job 31:30; Gen. 12:3) or in confirmation of his own promise (Gen. 24:41; 26:28; Neh. 10:29) or as an undertaking for the truth of his testimony in law (1Kings 8:31). When God pronounces a curse, it is a condemnation of sin (Num. 5:21, 23; Dt. 29:19-20), his judgement on sin (Num. 5:22, 24, 27; Is. 24:6) and the person who is suffering the consequences of sin by the judgement of God is called a curse (Num. 5:21, 27; Jer. 29:18). For the Hebrew, just as a word was not a mere sound on the lips but an agent sent forth, so the spoken curse was an active agent for hurt. Behind the word stands the soul that created it. Thus, a word which is backed by no spiritual capacity of an accomplishment is a mere 'word on the lip' (2 Kings 18:20), but when the soul is powerful then the word is clothed in that power (Ec. 8:4, 1Chr. 21:4). In Zech. 5: 1-4, the curse, representing the law of God, itself flies through the land, discerns sinners and purges them out.

<sup>95</sup> A. Kriel, *Roots of African Thought I* (Cape Town: A A Balkema, 1984) p.67

<sup>96</sup> Burnett, *World of Spirits*, p. 146

<sup>97</sup> I. Schapera, *A Handbook of Tswana Law of Custom* (London: Oxford University Press for International African Institute, 1938) p.181

<sup>98</sup> C. W. Hobley, *Bantu Beliefs and Magic* (London: Witherby, 1922) p.226



When a young person behaves badly, an older one may curse him to live in a tree like a bird.<sup>99</sup> If a young woman despises an old one, on account of her smell, the latter may cast a curse of death on her.<sup>100</sup> There is a special danger in the curse of a dying man, undoubtedly aggravated by the circumstances that he may not afterwards be prevailed upon to repeal it.<sup>101</sup> Little ones may send up an effective prayer for vengeance. If people despise a little sister she may call on God with the result that your wife may have an abortion.<sup>102</sup>

Even descendants may suffer from a curse. There are tribes who refuse to have intercourse with one another because their ancestors were brothers, one of whom was cursed.<sup>103</sup> A person may curse himself/herself. If one of twin girls is wooed, the other may curse herself and die.<sup>104</sup>

A woman who is jealous of her neighbour and her child, curses a big and small manioc root, the roots rot whilst the woman and her child pine away.<sup>105</sup> A person may raise a 'Zombie' (an evil component of the personality which persists after death) by means of a curse and send it to kill someone against whom he bears a grudge.

One African sage attempted a more detailed exposition of the mechanics of evil words. According to Ogotemmêli, the germ of life in the woman which awaits the male sperm, may be destroyed by bad words thus making the woman unable to procreate for a while.<sup>106</sup> Judging from the universal fear in which men and women of all ages hold the curse, there are undoubtedly other waters as well which it can disturb. Our study shows that curse is a major form of evil. Having examined witchcraft, sorcery, evil eye and curse, our findings show that they are all associated with evil.

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<sup>99</sup> B. Gutman, *Die Stammeslehren der Dschagga* vol. II (Beck, Munich) p.252

<sup>100</sup> B. Gutman, *Die Stammeslehren der Dschagga*, vol. I (Beck, Munich) p.188

<sup>101</sup> Hobley, *Bantu Beliefs*, pp. 103, 145

<sup>102</sup> Gutman, *Die Stammeslehren*, vol. II.p.603

<sup>103</sup> N. Van Everbroeck, *Ekond'e Mputela* (Musee Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuran) p.127

<sup>104</sup> M. H.Wilson, *Communal Rites of the Nyakyusa* (Oxford University Press for International African Institute,1959) p.165

<sup>105</sup> L. Theuws, *De Luba-Mens* (Koumklige Meseum voor Midden-Afrika, Tervuren, 1962) p.285

<sup>106</sup> G.Marcel, *Conversations with Ogotemmêli* (Oxford University Press for International African Institute, 1965) p.142

## **5.5 SPIRIT POSSESSION**

Spirit possession - What is it? What is its purpose? Why are some people prone to possession? and what are the types of possession?

### **5.5.1 WHAT IS SPIRIT POSSESSION**

What happens when one is possessed by a spirit? At the height of spirit possession, the one who is possessed loses his/her own personality and acts in the context of the personality<sup>107</sup> of the spirit possessing him/her.

### **5.5.2 THE PURPOSES OF SPIRIT POSSESSION**

The purposes of spirit possession are three-fold:

- (a) Those associated with rituals, which may be divinatory with the aim of finding out hidden events or hidden causes of misfortune.
- (b) Religious purpose aims to honour the spirit or spirits, appease the spirit and invite the spirit(s) protection.
- (c ) Finally, spirit possession removes an affliction or misfortune, and this takes the form of persuading the spirits to depart or to keep their distance. It is believed that a solution is found by establishing a harmonious relationship with the spirits.

### **5.5.3 THE TYPE OF PEOPLE POSSESSED**

Why is it that some people in African traditional society are easily possessed? Even though we might not be able to give the conditions that make some people liable to possession, Richter is of the view that it is reasonable to assume that people who can be possessed by spirits are not spiritually strong people.<sup>108</sup> They are not firmly in control of their physical bodies. A person is spiritually weak if the body can be forcibly taken over by an alien entity. This implies that Africans are more easily spirit possessed because they are spiritually weak. This argument is untenable.

The second reason, according to Richter, is philosophical.<sup>109</sup> The philosophical reason is related to the law of karma which includes the laws of retribution, cause and effect,

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<sup>107</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, p. 81

<sup>108</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.50

<sup>109</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.51

and reciprocity. The law of karma governs all implying that a person whose body has been controlled by a disembodied spirit must have performed an action in a previous or present life, the result of which renders his body possessable by an evil spirit.<sup>110</sup> If merely performing an act in a previous existence makes one possessible, then the question is why are all persons not possessible? Our position is that we do not know why people are possessed and suggest that this requires further research.

#### **5.5.4 TYPES OF POSSESSION**

There are two ways in which a spirit can take over a person's body in spirit possession: (i) forcibly and (ii) by invitation.

##### ***i Forcible Possession***

The possessed person is taken over unawares in this instance. The person may be possessed in the market place and go into a trance. Traditional doctors are invited to perform rituals to find out the identity of the spirit and the purpose of its visit to the physical world. The ritual is called 'mouth cleaning',<sup>111</sup> in Ghana. Through this process the human vehicle is prepared for the spirit to express itself through the one being possessed. The entranced person is given a chicken's egg, which he/she eats raw and chases down with liquor and then begins to talk. Before the ritual the victim remains mute. If the traditional doctors detect the entity is 'a low and negative spirit',<sup>112</sup> they exorcise it.

But if the entity identifies itself as a spirit, which might be useful to the community,<sup>113</sup> it is encouraged to adopt the body of the possessed person and re-enter it from time to time in order to render service to the community. This positive possession could have some relationship with Charismatic experiences of early Christianity including the 'Markan Community.' The evangelists were themselves almost Charismatic figures, having visions of Jesus.<sup>114</sup> When the medium regains consciousness, he/she becomes an apprentice to a master of traditional medicine and is trained to be a priest/priestess of the spirit, which possessed him/her. After

<sup>110</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.51

<sup>111</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.45

<sup>112</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.45

<sup>113</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.45

<sup>114</sup> See L. Hurtado, 'Religious Experience and Religious Innovation in the New Testament,' in *Journal Of Religion* 80 (2000) pp. 183-205.

initiation, the priestess becomes the regular medium of the spirit, and she acquires a fetish, usually a human effigy in clay. This effigy becomes the home of the spirit until such time that it wishes to possess its medium, warning the community of the impending danger, and this is done either forcibly or by initiation.

## **ii Invitation**

During the beating of the drums and dancing, many spiritual entities may take turns to possess the medium and each of them may identify themselves by signs as they take over the medium's body. An entity may identify itself as the mother of twins in the spirit world 'by grabbing two objects, such as sticks, and carrying one in her arms and the other on her back in the manner in which Ghanaian mothers carry their babies.'<sup>115</sup> Among the Akamba, the places where people are most likely to be possessed are the dancing grounds.<sup>116</sup> Certain kinds of songs make people become possessed by certain kinds of ancestors. Such songs had distinctive beats, which induce the ancestral spirits to come and heal the sick. When possessed these women can foretell the future, interpret the cause of sickness and give instructions on how to cure illness. They may foretell the coming of rain, and what should be planted. The Akamba also have another type of spirit dance known as Ngoma. The purpose of the song is to deal with the stillborn spirit, which has possessed someone. This dance is arranged on the advice of the medicine man while the main concern is the sick person, an indication that these spirits can cause diseases.<sup>117</sup> Other people may become possessed during the Ngoma dance.

When the sick person is possessed, the ancestor usually identifies himself by giving his name. The medicine man requires the name of the spirit and his demands.

When the demands are met, the medicine man asks the spirit to leave the victim in peace. The medicine man pulls the middle finger of the victim and each other finger

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<sup>115</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.47

<sup>116</sup> Gehman, *Traditional Religion*, p.160

<sup>117</sup> There are instances where illness or disease is ascribed to spirit possession. See I.M. Lewis, 'Spirit Possession in Northern Somaliland' in J. Beattie and J. Middleton(eds.) *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969) pp. 189-219 esp. p. 190; Gerrie Trer Harr and Stephen Ellis, 'Spirit Possession and Healing in Modern Zambia: An Analysis of letters to Archbishop Millingo' in African Affairs, *The Journal of Royal African Society* vol. 87, No. 347, April 1988, pp. 185-206 esp. p.197 and E. Colson, 'Spirit Possession among the Tonga in Zambia in J. Beattie and J. Middleton (eds.) *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* ( London: Routledge and Kegasn Paul, 1969) pp. 69-101 esp. p. 71

at least once. He then smacks the face of the person, blows his breath on the person and calls her by name. When she answers, it is an indication that she has returned to normality.

### **5.5.5 POSSESSION ON SOME SPECIAL OCCASIONS**

#### ***i Possession in Times Of Sorrow***

A kind of possession, which does not involve specialists often occurs in time of deep sorrow.<sup>118</sup> The medium is a person who is in deep mourning. The trance takes place unexpectedly and quite frequently at a funeral gathering. The family pour libation requesting the possessing spirit(s) to identify themselves. They may be identified and usually they declare that they are the recent ancestors of the possessed person. The spirit of the deceased, who is being mourned, may also enter the medium's body and reveal the spiritual cause of his death and reassure the relatives that all is well with him in the spirit world and that there is no cause for sorrow. The medium is unaware of what happens, and becomes comforted when she comes out of the trance and others tell her what happened.

#### ***ii Possession On Specific Occasions***

Some people can be possessed on specific occasions, like during a cleansing or purification ceremony. Ghanaian traditional society believes that 'atonement can be made for an individual as well as for 'national indiscretions,' through the process of scape goating.'<sup>119</sup> At festivals the traditional doctors make animal sacrifices to the gods (divinities) and various spirits of the community. Part of this ritual involves young maidens carrying trays containing the shrines of the state and other magical preparations on their heads. Drums are beaten and the spirits of the national gods take over the bodies of the carriers who then run helter-skelter in the streets without spilling or dropping their loads. The magical preparations are eventually dumped into the sea or some fast flowing river, and the water carries the substances, which symbolise the impurities of the state. After the ceremony, the mediums regain their normal composure.

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<sup>118</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.47

<sup>119</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.47

### ***(iii) Possession By Individuals With Spiritual Allies***

It is believed that certain individuals have spiritual allies by virtue of the order in which they are born.<sup>120</sup> For example, twins, seventh or tenthborn children, and then successive male or female siblings. These people have spirit allies who often possess them. This kind of possession is very private in nature and often takes place only when someone in the family is seriously ill or when the family is endangered in some way.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

We have explained what happens when one is possessed by a spirit. We have also identified the purpose of spirit possession. We analysed the views of Bannerman-Richter on why some people are possessed by spirits and found his views untenable and intimated that we do not know why some people are possessed by spirits and that this is an area for further research. We then examined the types of possession. We discussed possession on other occasions. Possession has positive value. The possessed serve the people in the community by warning them of dangers ahead and also predicting events that are likely to be in their favour in future. The negative aspect of possession includes diseases and afflictions which are treated.

## **5.7 MORAL EVIL**

When people commit moral evil in the traditional African society, how is it to be explained? Is God involved in the act? Is it another agent at work? Is the victim responsible for his or her action? What is the relation between moral evil and spirit possession?

From the African perspective, a human being is the creature of God. Every human being has what is called conscience.<sup>121</sup> It is this conscience, which enables one to see the difference between good and evil. 'A human being is not a beast to fail to distinguish between good and evil.'<sup>122</sup> The comparison between a human being and

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<sup>120</sup> Bannerman-Richter, *Witchcraft*, p.46

<sup>121</sup> Literally in Akan, conscience is called tiboá (see J.G.Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fanti Language called Tshi (Twi)* (Basel:Printed for the Basel Missionary Society,1933) p.513, cited by Pobee, *African Theology*, p.103 . Conscience guides, warns and alerts people as to what to do and what not to do. See E.B. Idowu, *Olodumare. God in Yoruba Belief* (London: Longmans, 1962) p. 154.

<sup>122</sup> K. Gyekye, *The Problem of Evil: An Akan Perspective in African Philosophy – An Anthology*,

beast is intended to distinguish between moral and immoral sense on the one hand, and rationality (intelligence) and irrationality (non-intelligence) on the other hand. This implies that it is only irrational beasts that cannot distinguish between good and evil. Since according to the traditional thinker having a conscience enables (or should enable) us to think morally, evil stems from our inability to exercise the moral sense.<sup>123</sup> This argument is not persuasive.<sup>124</sup> The fact that one has the ability to do correct moral thinker, or to distinguish between good and evil does not necessarily imply possession of the 'moral will to carry out the implications of the distinction.'<sup>125</sup> The traditional man assumes this but the assumption is mistaken.<sup>126</sup> How then should we take the statement, evil comes from man's conscience. It means that 'evil stems from our inability to exercise either moral sense or moral will.'<sup>127</sup>

The other source of moral evil is the concept destiny.<sup>128</sup> On the whole the nature of destiny allows for the concept of human freedom, and therefore a choice, and that within the context of human actions –these are not to be classified as events – the concept of determinism cannot be applied.

The above argument has with it some difficulties, which can be formulated in the form of questions.<sup>129</sup> Why did God, if He is omnipotent and wholly good, not make human beings such that they always choose the good and avoid the evil? Having endowed them with freedom of will, why does God not intervene when He sees them using this freedom to choose the wrong thing which will cause evil? Is God unable to control human will? Is He unable to control what He has created? And if He is able to, why does He not do so? Can the argument that evil results from the exercise of human free will really be sustained?

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edited by E. Chukwun di Eze, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Limited, 1998) pp.468-471 esp. p.470. The statement is a response from a traditional thinker to a question posed by the author during an interview.

<sup>123</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.470

<sup>124</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.470

<sup>125</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.470

<sup>126</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.470

<sup>127</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.470

<sup>128</sup> K. Gyekye, 'The Unitive elements in African Philosophies and Theologies' in *Towards a Global Congress of World Religions*, edited by Warren Lewis (Printed in the United States of America, Unification Theological Seminary, Barrington, 1976), pp 216-223 esp. p.232. There are many other things that are not included in destiny, and this would be the basis for the exercise of choice and free will.

<sup>129</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.470

If God is omnipotent, then He could have created human beings in a way that they always choose the good and avoid the evil, that He could also intervene in the event of human freedom to avoid doing evil, and in that way control human will. But if God had done all this, humans would act in a wholly determined way<sup>130</sup> without any choice whatsoever. This situation would run counter to the general nature of the concept of destiny and the notion of human action as held by Akan thinkers. It would also have led to the subversion of rationality, which not only distinguishes human beings from beasts, but also enables human beings generally to judge before acting. The argument that God should have made humans such that they always choose the good would then mean that God should have made them non-rational and thus less human, wholly without the ability to choose. Thus the subversion of rationality, together with its concomitants of choice, deliberation, judgement etc, constitutes ‘a reductio ad absurdum’<sup>131</sup> of the view that the wholly good God should have created humans so that they always choose the good. Akan thinkers would prefer humankind imbued with rationality and conscience than to have them behave like an animal.

Another source of evil, according to Akan thought is the human will.<sup>132</sup> There is the belief in Akan that evil comes from man’s character. Thus, from this premise, it can be affirmed that it is impossible for evil to come from God because God is good and that our character, from which evil proceeds, is of our own making. Whatever our character is, or will be, is the person’s responsibility not God’s. But is it not possible to postulate the question: ‘is it not God who created the world and the people including all that we are?’<sup>133</sup> By that, the implication would be that if God made us what we are, then He created ‘along with everything else, evil too.’<sup>134</sup> But this assertion can be criticised on the grounds that ‘it is not God who tells or forces a person to go and rape, steal or kill. It is the person’s own desires and mind.’<sup>135</sup> The concept of human source of moral evil cannot be disputed. ‘God did not create evil,

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<sup>130</sup> Gyekye, ‘Evil’, p.470

<sup>131</sup> Gyekye, ‘Evil’, p.470

<sup>132</sup> Gyekye, ‘Evil’, p.469. See Pobee, *African Theology*, p.110. Pobee affirms that human will is disobedient and hostile in act, word and intention to the imperative divine will.

<sup>133</sup> Gyekye, ‘Evil’, p.469. This is a question that a traditional thinker posed to the author.

<sup>134</sup> Gyekye, ‘Evil’, p.469. This is the analogy that the traditional thinker drew from his question.

<sup>135</sup> Gyekye, ‘Evil’, p.469. This criticism was levelled by one of the traditional thinkers as a response to his fellow thinker.



evil comes from man's own actions.'<sup>136</sup> God is not the cause of evil, but our own thinking and deliberation. We have argued how generally the Akan thinker conceives of moral evil. God, to the Akan, does not like evil, and hence He did not create it. Evil, that is, moral evil, comes from man's character, conscience, desires, and thoughts, all of which point to the Akan conceptual system that evil stems from the exercise of free will. God's provision of rationality and freedom of the will and of choice is justified. If humans debase this provision, knowing that this would bring evil in its wake, then they, not God, should be held responsible.<sup>137</sup>

Is it not possible that evil spirits can influence a person to commit moral evil? If these evil spirits act independently of the spirit beings, and their function is to create disorder and confusion in the society, is it not possible that a human being can fall victim to their power and therefore commit moral evil? In that situation, is the blame to be put on the victim or on the evil spirits? Can we not, in this particular incident, attribute the cause of moral evil to evil spirits since they cause mischief in the society? If a person asserts that the witches or evil spirits or mystical forces have made him/her a drunkard, is there any justification in that assertion, especially bearing in mind the African world-view which affirms many mystical powers or forces impinging on human beings? M.J. Field tells of an alcoholic in Ghana who affirmed 'My house is full of witches and they have made me a drunkard.'<sup>138</sup> His drinking was not attributed to his own weakness, but to the malignant interference of others.

Is there any relationship between moral evil and spirit possession? In traditional African society women who are unfaithful to their husbands are possessed by spirits especially when they are about to deliver children. They encounter difficulties in delivery until they confess and they are able to deliver safely. Sometimes people who steal are possessed and when they confess they are released. Men who go after other men's wives endure hardship in the form of long standing diseases and other calamities. They can confess and be set free by performing certain rites or sometimes through divination they are able to identify the cause of the disease or calamity and they are asked to compensate those they have offended. Because of the tendency for

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<sup>136</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.469. This is a response from one of the traditional thinkers.

<sup>137</sup> Gyekye, 'Evil', p.470

<sup>138</sup> See M.J.Field, *Search for Security: An Ethno-Psychiatric study of Rural Ghana*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1960) p. 109

some people to be identified for indecent behaviour through possession, people try as much as possible to establish good relationships among themselves. We have examined moral evil in African Traditional Religion. How is evil warded off?

## **5.8 WARDING OFF EVIL**

### **5.8.1 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION VERSUS WESTERN MEDICINE**

In this modern age, what is the attitude of adherents of African Traditional Religion to hospitals? Do they reject Western medicine or accept it alongside traditional medicine?

Adherents of African Traditional Religion go to hospitals for cure of common and natural ailments. They are examined and the appropriate therapy eventually brings relief.<sup>139</sup> Diseases in this category heal in a few days provided that the patients follow the prescriptions given by the physician. Modern or Western modes of healing have developed with enviable pace and progress.<sup>140</sup>

However, when the power of a witch is involved in any of the natural ailments, no relief can be guaranteed through modern or Western diagnosis or therapy.<sup>141</sup> Unless the Western doctor is either a witch, a sorcerer or sorceress 'the patient who is being tormented by witchcraft or sorcery cannot be cured.'<sup>142</sup> The rich experiences of the Roman Catholic Archbishop Milingo, formerly of Lusaka 'indicate instructively that certain illnesses among Africans defy pathological diagnosis.'<sup>143</sup> This is because healing does not only apply to the sickness of the body but also affects the person's spiritual and emotional life.<sup>144</sup> It is therefore no wonder that scientific medication

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<sup>139</sup> E. Dada Adelowu, 'Divination as an aspect of healing process in the major religions of Nigeria' in *Africa Theological Journal* 16 (1) 1987, pp. 70-95, esp. p. 86

<sup>140</sup> Adelowu, 'Divination', p. 86

<sup>141</sup> Adelowu, 'Divination', p.87. Adelowu maintains that diagnosis may take the form of X-ray, radiotherapy, radiology and radiotherapy but it will not bring any desired result. A good number of natural cases in modern hospitals in Nigeria were sent home because Western or modern therapy could not bring a relief. It is not only in Nigeria where such cases happen, they happen throughout Africa south of the Sahara. See Hill, 'Witchcraft', p.232 and Kirven, *The Diviner*, p. 31

<sup>142</sup> Adewolo, 'Divination', p.87

<sup>143</sup> Chris Ukachukwu Manus 'Divine Men: their Role in the Nigeria Church and Society', in *African Journal of Theology*, 3(2) 1989 pp. 658-669 esp. p.666

<sup>144</sup> Manus, 'Divine Men', p.666

alone cannot provide answers to the societal health problems<sup>145</sup> in African traditional societies.

### 5.8.2 AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND NATURAL CALAMITIES

In African Traditional Religion, when natural calamities strike, behind these calamities is the idea that the people in that particular community have offended the spirit beings and they have to perform rituals and these rituals take the form of sacrifices, prayers and offerings. In some instances God may be held responsible for epidemics. Let us cite instances from some communities from Africa. A case in point is the flu episode.<sup>146</sup> It was an epidemic which plundered Nigeria some years back. Many Nigerians regarded this flu as caused by sin, thereby incurring the displeasure of God. In some traditional societies, individuals or the people or the chief may offend God. Among the Barundi, it is believed that God gets angry when a person commits adultery.<sup>147</sup> Among the Bavenda, God punishes all the people with locusts, flood or other calamities when the chief offends God.<sup>148</sup> Among the Bachwa, there is the belief that those who steal, neglect old parents, murder or commit adultery are punished by God.<sup>149</sup>

In a particular year that the rain failed<sup>150</sup> the elders of a town gathered at the Mirari River where they sacrificed a goat to the ancestors and prayed that they would look kindly upon them and give them rain. They did not doubt that this evil had happened because the ancestors were withdrawing their protecting power and punishing the living for their immorality.

They prayed,

You grandfathers – don't be angry. Our evils are many in the land where you have brought us. Forgive us. Take them away from us – bring peace and

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<sup>145</sup> See Manus, 'Divine Men' p.666

<sup>146</sup> Adewolo, 'Divination', p.87

<sup>147</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, p.206

<sup>148</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, p.206

<sup>149</sup> Mbiti, *African Religions*, p.206

<sup>150</sup> Kirwen, *The Diviner*, p.33

blessing. Give us rain. May all the children grow up, the cattle be fertile, the boys and girls be well – bless us.<sup>151</sup>

All departed, convinced that they had attained their purpose of appeasing the ancestors. It rained and the harvest was sufficient to last until the next planting season.

In times of trouble, famine, war, persistence or lack of rain, animals are sacrificed to the unseen spirits, beseeching their help in controlling these forces of evil. The elders, as representatives of the community<sup>152</sup>, perform these sacrifices. Sometimes they are directed to Iryba and Myamhanya (the Sun and the moon), sometimes to the ancestors and once a while to God. These sacrifices are attempts to reunite humankind with the spirit beings who are punishing them for their misdeeds.

Humanity's world is a world full of human things good and bad, joyful and painful. Relations with the ancestors ward off the dangers from the evil spirits and the perverted men and women called witches. The ancestors intercede for the living and keep them in abundance and peace. However, behind the ancestors, stands the Creator God, who is pleased with creation and watching over it. God is given different names by various communities in Africa south of the Sahara.

### **5.8.3 MISFORTUNE AT INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY LEVEL**

In this section we will examine the interpretation one puts on misfortune that occurs in one's life and discuss where the victim goes for help and assign reasons why the person goes there. There will be a discussion on divination followed by a discussion on the various methods used to ensure that the victim is healed.

#### ***(i) Interpreting misfortune***

When someone is struck by misfortune or someone falls sick, the victim has ways<sup>153</sup> of interpreting it. To the African, the main question that comes to mind is 'who has

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<sup>151</sup> Kirwen, *The Diviner*, p.33

<sup>152</sup> Kirwen, *The Diviner*, p.6

<sup>153</sup> See Turner, *African Independent Church II. The Life and Faith of the Church of the Lord* (Aladura). (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) p.143. Among the Yoruba, sickness can be analysed from three perspectives – physical due to natural causes of illness or accident; physical in relation

caused it'? For the African, the who<sup>154</sup> question is very crucial for the victim. If the primary cause was established other things would be done – (i) it would not be difficult to find out the secondary cause which might be bad words, curses, magic, sorcery or witchcraft and (ii) the right medicine would be applied to get rid of the misfortune. Where does the African go for help and why does he go there when misfortune strikes?

### ***(ii) The need for help***

The victim approaches the medicine man (traditional doctor) for help because the victim wants 'satisfactory answers',<sup>155</sup> to the questions that are on his/her mind. The questions include: (i) who caused victim to be sick? (ii) why did person cause the victim to be sick? (iii) how can the patient and the relatives be sure that the agent responsible for the sickness will not attack the victim again? and (v) How can the victim prevent the attack from recurring even if it is directed against him/her again? It is obvious from these questions that the victim is concerned with his/her total wholeness and goes to the medicine man to look for and find such wholeness.

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to the life or conduct of the sufferer and 'pneumatic' due to the activities of enemies, sorcerers, witches or spirits. See also K. Appiah-Kubi, 'The Church's Healing Ministry in Africa', in *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 July 1975, pp. 230-239 esp. p. 235. See the causality of disease in humans by D. Westerlund, *Pluralism and Change: A Comparative and Historical Approach to African Disease Etiologies* (Stockholm: Universitet Stockholm, 1989) p. 179. There is the 'religious (suprahuman)' causality a belief that human beings in different ways are influenced by or dependent on suprahuman or or spiritual powers such as God and spirits of nature; the 'social (human)' causality-referring to relations between living human beings entailing a supranormal component. There is the natural (mainly physical) causation referring to entities of nature, that is, the effects of, for instance, insects, germs, natural substances, forces or conditions such as certain food, the weather, or lack of equilibrium of some basic elements in the body. Cited by Magesa, *African Religion*, pp. 172-173. However, Magesa affirms that in the African thought, the religious, social and natural causes of affliction 'cannot be seen as entirely separate and unconnected.' (Magesa, *African Religion*, p. 173). An analysis and understanding of affliction begins the natural explanation of causation. If a particular affliction does not grow in seriousness the natural explanation is sufficient. If the situation worsens, one has to resort to the 'second and third clusters of causality' (Magesa, *African Religion*, p. 174)

<sup>154</sup> J. Mbiti, 'African Traditional Medicine and Its Relevance for Christian Work' in *So sende ich euch* Otto Waack, et al, eds. Stuttgart, (Germany: Evangelische Missionsverlag, 1973) pp.310-318 esp. p.313. See S. Bjerke, *Religion and Misfortune: The Bacwezi Complex and other Spirit Cults of the Zinza of North western Tanzania* (Oslo: Universitets forlaget, 1981) p.114.

<sup>155</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.313

### ***(iii) Forms of Divination***

When the victim goes to the medicine man, the medicine man usually uses divination. Through this means, the diviner is able to affirm the agent responsible for the misfortune (sickness) of the patient. In some cases if the medicine man cannot do the divination, he consults or sends the victim to consult a diviner.

The methods of divination in Africa vary considerably from place to place, and the skills involved also vary from diviner to diviner. However, the methods used include the following<sup>156</sup>: the use of cowry shells, water in a pot or gourd, reading the palms, tossing divination objects, throwing pebbles or seeds on the floor and then interpreting the meanings of the shapes and figures they form; interpreting the combination of divination numbers, performing rituals like cutting off the head of a chicken and watching the behaviour of its body as it wriggles to death.

### ***iv The Use Of Ordeals In Divination***

A diviner may claim that some people are witches. Those suspected of being witches have to go through ordeals to prove their innocence or guilt. There is the 'poison-ordeal' in which the suspect drinks a potion. If the suspect is innocent he will vomit, if he does not vomit, it is an indication that he is guilty. Among the Shona, the whole community goes through that ordeal. In some cases both the accuser and the accused have to drink the potion, and if the accuser does not vomit, he is also accused of witchcraft himself. If one takes the poison and vomits, it is recognised as 'a proof of guilt'. In some cases the suspect's chicken is given the poison and if the chicken dies it is an indication that the suspect is guilty. At times, the way through which 'the chicken falls,' is an indication that the suspect is guilty.

There are specialists called witch smellers. If somebody believes he/she is the target of witchcraft, the person consults with the Gusii witch smeller. The witch smeller has to go through divination. He will then do a search of the client's house to find witchcraft substance, and finally protective medicine is administered to the client by 'incisions in the skin.'

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<sup>156</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.314

Among the Thonga, the inhabitants of a village will be allowed to drink a concoction made from a plant in intoxicating quantities, those who lose control of themselves are identified as witches.

J. S. Mbiti affirms that the practice of divination deals with areas which Western medicine is unable to handle. It touches on the depths of the African 'sense of security',<sup>157</sup> since it is the means by which the real causes of people's troubles, misfortunes and ills are detected. Yet W. Berends discusses 'problems',<sup>158</sup> associated with divination. The practice of divination supports the world-view in which people live in constant fear of witchcraft and evil spirits. The diviners depend on familiar spirits and some deities to effect their divination, supporting the world-view and keeping people in bondage to spirits. Divination often leads to a fatalistic acceptance of a bad situation. Children born with malfunctions or other peculiarities are left to die in the belief that the water spirits will come and claim them. An incorrect diagnosis may also prevent one from seeking an alternative method of healing which might meet with more success. The services of a diviner tend to be very expensive. In spite of the above negative aspects, divination is very useful.<sup>159</sup>

Through divination, the medicine man will find out what the victim is suffering from. Usually there are 'three' possible causes for illness or misfortunes. It could be one of the following: (i) The misfortune might be caused by magic or sorcery which had been used against the victim by a close relative, a neighbour or a colleague at work. (ii) The victim might have broken a taboo or mishandled a taboo. (iii) A particular spirit of the departed might have caused the trouble. Among the Luo, it is believed that the ancestors can cause tuberculosis.<sup>160</sup> When people act against the wishes of the ancestors, the ancestors can inflict this disease on them. The diviner can affirm that it is because the ancestors have been offended by breaking or mishandling a taboo that a victim is suffering from tuberculosis.

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<sup>157</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.315

<sup>158</sup> W. Berends, 'African Traditional Healing Practices and the Christian Community', in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, July 1993: pages 275-288 esp. pp. 283-284

<sup>159</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.316

<sup>160</sup> Whisson, 'Functional Disorders, p. 206

We have discussed how evil spirits cause diseases including tuberculosis. We have already intimated that evil spirits can cause epilepsy.<sup>161</sup> The diviner can affirm that evil spirits or ancestors have inflicted the epilepsy on the victim. The diviner tells the victim how he/she can come out of this malady by prescribing medicine for him/her and assuring the victim that the malady would be removed.

The cause of the misfortune can be identified through dreams. Witchcraft generally takes place in the night, whereby a witch attacks the soul of her victim, and it presupposes that the incident would be experienced in dreams. Even though the posture (particularly the face of the witch) would not be identified, the way the dream is recorded and what happens later shows that a witchcraft attack has taken place. For example, among the Nyakyusa when someone dreams of being chased, beaten or having one's home burnt, it is an indication of mystical aggression. But an ordinary person cannot recognise the attacker. It is the defenders who see witches fight them in their dreams and subsequently report to their neighbours.

Once primary and secondary causes have been established, the medicine man proceeds to apply medicine through some or all of the following procedures, depending on the nature of the misfortune.

## 5.9 METHODS FOR HEALING

### *i Treatment*

This involves the use of herbs and medical mixtures.<sup>162</sup> The victim goes through rituals and abstains from various foods and acts and the observance of various

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<sup>161</sup> Lewis, 'Possession in Northern Somaliland', p. 190.

<sup>162</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.314. See IARC Working Group on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans, *Some Traditional Herbal Medicines, Some Mycotoxins, Naphthalene and Styrene* (Lyon, France: IARC Press, 2002) pp. 43-44. The majority of the population in developing countries rely on traditional practitioners and their armamentarium of medicinal plants in meeting health care needs. Although modern medicine may exist side-by-side with such traditional practice, for historical and cultural reasons, herbal medicines have often maintained their popularity. Such products have become more widely available commercially, especially in developed countries. In the U.S.A. most herbal products in the market place are marketed and regulated as dietary supplements.

The desire to capture the wisdom of traditional healing systems has led to the growth of interest in herbal medicine, particularly in Europe and North America. In these areas, herbal products have been incorporated into so called 'alternative,' 'complementary,' 'holistic,' or 'integrative,' medical systems. During the latter part of the twentieth Century, increasing interest in self-care resulted in an enormous growth in popularity of traditional healing modalities, including the use of herbal remedies, particularly in the U.S.A. Consumers have reported positive attitudes towards these



instructions, as the medicine man may prescribe. The victim may drink or rub into the skin or inhale or apply onto the body, herbs and medicinal mixtures. This may be done once, over several days, or weeks as the case might be.

### ***ii Protection***

The medicine man protects the victim and ensures that the patient does not suffer again, or he can counteract the powers that caused the illness or misfortune. The patient is given medicines in bundles or objects that can be carried about, buried in the house or home compound, placed on the roof, or otherwise employed 'according to instructions from the medicine man.'<sup>163</sup> The medicine is aimed at neutralising and counteracting any powers which human or spirit agents may use against the patient or the patient's relatives again. These measures are also taken to protect other members of the family. If the agents responsible for 'causing' sickness act against the patient again it will not work and may even turn against the agent themselves to do them the type of harm intended against their victim.

### ***iii Prevention***

Since people believe that mystical powers of sorcery, witchcraft and magic are employed to cause ills, preventive medicines are applied to neutralise these powers.<sup>164</sup> Patients will continue to fear that mystical powers will strike again, no matter what physical precautions are taken, as such these forces are neutralised.

### ***iv Purification***

This medicine takes away impurities<sup>165</sup> resulting from broken taboos, miscarriage, ritual offences, certain misfortunes, moral offences (like incest, striking one's parents and various types of thefts) practising magic and sorcery, performing certain duties (like funeral rites) etc. This type of medicine is administered together with performing appropriate rituals. It cleanses ritually and mystically, making the victim free and at peace within himself/herself and with other people. Once the victim is purified, the

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products, in large part because they believe them to be of 'natural' rather than 'synthetic' origin. They believe that such products are more likely to be safe than drugs. They are recognised as part of a healthy lifestyle, which can help to avoid unnecessary contact with conventional 'Western' medicine.

<sup>163</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.314

<sup>164</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.311

<sup>165</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.311

victim gains his/her respect, and socially, morally and spiritually the victim becomes whole and accepted again. If this was not done, people would fear to be associated with the individual in question.

#### ***v Punitive Purposes***

It is believed that human ills are caused by people who use mystical (or physical) powers. The same mystical powers (in the form of medicine) are employed in revenge against those agents thought to be responsible for bringing about diseases, ills and misfortune. This happens among close relatives when someone believes that a relative is responsible for causing a particular sickness in the family. The person, in turn, tries to obtain punitive medicine against the alleged criminal. These counter-accusations go on in a vicious circle and form one of the most painful aspects of African life in the villages.<sup>166</sup>

#### ***vi Exorcism***

Spirits are held to be responsible for human ills and they are dealt with by exorcism.<sup>167</sup> The spirits manifest themselves through spirit possessions, dreams and strange diseases (like mental derangement and epilepsy). The diviner or medicine man establishes first which spirit, if any, is responsible for which ills. Appropriate medicine, often with rituals and incantations, is then applied to drive out, or entice away the spirit from the individual concerned, or from the house or village, which it is using as its dwelling place. Among the Shona,<sup>168</sup> a common means of exorcism transfers the spirit from the patient to an animal such as a sheep or a fowl. The animal is then driven into the woods, taking with it the spirit which has caused the disease.

#### ***vii Eradication Of Witchcraft***

Medicine is also used for getting rid of witchcraft, sorcery and magic. When several members of the same family or community are affected the same procedure is applied, that is, by using medicine.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.312

<sup>167</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.312

<sup>168</sup> Burnett, *World of Spirits*, p.164

<sup>169</sup> Mbiti, 'African Medicine', p.312

### ***viii Direct And Aggressive Measures***

In some societies direct and aggressive measures are taken against possible mystical attack. Among the Nupe, the men fight against the female witches. They wear masks containing mystical power. Through masked dances, the villages are cleared of witchcraft, and the suspects are dragged into the bush and killed unless they pay a fine. The Zulu witch finders assemble the inhabitants of a village to sing and they would be able to identify the witches by 'smelling their breath.'

### ***ix Retaliatory Medicine***

This is another means used in dealing with mystical aggression. In theory, this system works in a similar way to the sorcerer's or sorceresse's own medicine. Among the Azande, an unknown guilty witch was killed by bagbuduna, magic of vengeance, the most destructive and the most honourable of all Zande medicines. It is regarded as a judge, seeking out the person responsible for the death. There is also the use of kaliloze gun. Traditionally this is made from human thighbone but in modern times it is made from metal piping. This kaliloze gun is charged with powder and loaded with 'medicated' shot. The belief is that the smoke must reach the witch but others point it at the sun and fire. 'Sorcery' may also be used against a witch, a sorcerer or a sorceress.

### ***x Physical Retribution***

Some people resort to physical retribution if the measures described above do not prove adequate. Traditionally the punishment given to witches, sorcerers or sorceresses involves gruesome death. Among the Lugbara, a sorceress was executed by cutting off her limbs, burning or spearing. The witches of Thonga were hanged and sorcerers burnt, impaled, or drowned. Among the Zulus, witches were burned, impaled or hanged. In some circumstances, the punishment was not very severe.

### ***xi Resettlement***

Among the Nyakyusa, witches are not killed but are resettled in another village and categorised as potential defenders.

### ***xii The Dead Suspected Of Being Witches***

What happens to the dead who are suspected of being witches? If someone dies and she is suspected of being a witch, the dead body is sometimes thought to ‘furnish relevant evidence.’ Among the Gas of Ghana, pallbearers around the village carry the dead, and the deceased’s spirit allegedly directs them to the witch’s home. In some cases the people carry out an autopsy of their dead with the aim of looking for signs of witch attack. The Nyakyusa look for scars on the stomach and the Gusiis for swelling on the visceral organs. Among the Azande, the presence of mangu in the dead body is an indication that the person while living was a witch.

### **5.10 SUMMARY ON MISFORTUNE AND HOW IT IS HANDLED**

We have dealt with how misfortune is handled in African Traditional Religion. Adherents of African Traditional Religion go to hospitals for treatment of diseases. In some instances, the diseases are cured through medication. In other instances, especially in cases where the diseases are caused by evil spirits, the victims have to be sent to the diviner. There are instances when the spirit beings inflict punishments on the people because they have offended them. These punishments could take the form of epidemics and other afflictions. The spirit beings are pacified through sacrifices, offerings and prayers. Through these sacrifices, the people are drawn closer to the spirit beings. If the misfortune is from the spirit beings and involves the community, sacrifices, prayers and offerings are offered to appease them. At the individual level, or family level, the people consult a diviner or medicine man that identifies the agent responsible for the misfortune. The victim is treated, assured of protection, rituals are performed and the agent who caused the misfortune is punished. If an evil spirit possesses the victim, the spirit is exorcised. Punitive measures are taken against witches, in some cases they are killed or ostracised from the community.

### **5.11 COMPARING AND CONTRASTING THE WORLD-VIEW OF MARK AND THAT OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION**

We will now compare and contrast the world-view of Mark with that of African Traditional Religion. Let us first examine the similarities. In both world-views, there is the belief in demons who can torment, attack and possess people making their lives miserable. These demons can take absolute control of their victims forcing them to act against their will. The spirit beings in both Mark and in African Traditional Religion

are God, and demons. God is the creator of this world. By his nature He is kind but He can inflict punishment on humanity and this punishment can take the form of diseases. Humanity is surrounded by temptations which come from demons, human desires and the will of human beings.

There are differences in both world-views. In Mark the spirit beings are Beelzebul and the angels. Beelzebul acts on behalf of Satan and Satan is seen as competing with God while the angels give support to Jesus in His temptation. These angels are not fallen angels. Mark gives a one sided view of spirits that is the demons. Mark does not tell us why people are possessed by demons, how they are possessed and how to cope with these demons. He also gives a negative view of spirit possession. These demons possess people and possession is seen as only a disease. In African Traditional Religion spirits like demons and witches possess people and inflict pain on them. However in some cases some spirits possess people and those possessed are able to give information regarding the future which can be in the form of warning and exhortation. We do not have Jesus and angels in African Traditional Religion. Instead, we have the divinities and ancestors who act on behalf of God but are not associated with evil. Apart from these spirit beings, in African Traditional Religion we have what we call human agents of evil. These are witches, sorcerers and sorceresses, evil eyes and curses. They are inherently evil. They work for the devil and they are seen as his agents. Their aim is to destroy. Witches can change people into other creatures and they can curse their victims. Witches have evil motives.

Mark does not mention why people are bewitched, the type of people who are bewitched, and how they are bewitched, whether those who are bewitched are turned into other creatures like reptiles, or other beasts. What comes out of this discussion is that the African cosmology is very complex. The complexity is to be seen in the forces (both spiritual and physical) working against humanity while in Markan cosmology, Mark lays emphasis only on Satan and demons. These demons are seen as undermining the work of Jesus, trying to fight against Jesus by mentioning His titles. This view of the devil and demons trying to undermine the work of Jesus cannot be found in African Traditional Religion. Even though the African cosmology is complex, in terms of powers that inflict pain, agony and misery on people, there are hosts of agents who are there to redeem humanity any time disaster strikes. These

agents are diviners and traditional healers. These people are seen as agents who save people in time of misfortune. Mark on the other hand mentions Jesus as the only Saviour. Mark does not mention magicians, and traditional healers. Mark affirms Satan is strong and is engaged in a struggle with Jesus in the temptation. He intimates that Satan is bound even though he does not specifically state when Satan is bound. In African Traditional Religion, we do not have a picture of the devil engaged in a struggle with Jesus, and we are not given any clue regarding when the devil will be bound. The devil has been in existence for a very long time, yet in terms of power, God is more powerful than the devil. Because the devil is not bound in African Traditional Religion, demons, witches and sorcerers who serve as his agents, are not bound. They are active and they inflict pain and injury on their victims.

## **5.12 GENERAL CONCLUSION**

We explained the interpretations that should be put on the key concepts that will be used in this chapter since we are dealing with African Traditional Religion which is different from the Christian and the Jewish religions. These concepts include God, wrong doing and spirits. We intimated that in African Traditional religion there is no concept of Satan, but the word that is used is the devil, and the devil operates like Satan but in African Traditional Religion the Devil does not work directly against God. We then reviewed the salient features in Best-Robinson debate concerning the power and fate of Satan and Jesus' struggle with evil in Mark and later on highlighted Mark's presentation of Jesus, Satan and demons in his Gospel. We then raised an issue which is so central in every religion including African Traditional religion. The central issue is the existence of evil. Our main objectives in treating this topic are to find (i) the agents responsible for evil; (ii) the extent and the nature of the evil that these agents cause in the traditional society and (iii) the means of warding off evil.

In summary African Traditional Religion can be characterised as having spirit beings. These spirit beings are God, the ancestors and the divinities. These are beings that cannot be seen because they do not appear in human form. They are spirits and the belief is that they exist in the spiritual realm and yet their influence is felt in traditional society. They guide and protect the people in traditional society. They protect people from evil and people depend on them for their sustenance. Because they are spiritual and intrinsically good, evil cannot be associated with them. They

inflict punishment on humanity and their punishment is to correct, discipline and to purify their adherents. Because the punishment is severe, people are bound to ensure that they have the right relationship with these spirit beings. They obey them and the more they obey these spirit beings, the more they receive their blessings and these blessings take the form of bounty harvest, protection from diseases, victory in wars and success in life.

We then opined that in African Traditional Religion there are evil spirits. Unlike the spirit beings, these spirits are intrinsically evil. These spirits are sometimes called wandering spirits. Their main aim is to inflict harm, injury and pain on their victims.

A focus on human agents of evil shows the ways through which people can become witches, their motives, their modus operandi and the social implications of witchcraft in the traditional society. We intimated that witches with evil motives, can cause barrenness and many other physical and spiritual attacks. However in some cases they can cause people to be rich. Sorcerers and Sorceresses, with their influence in the traditional society, are feared because of the mischief they cause. We indicated how the eye can be used in destroying life and the potency in the word-in the form of a curse and its effect in the traditional society.

We affirmed that spirit possession is the process whereby individual(s) can be taken over completely by spirit(s) and these victims behave under the control of these spirits. Those who are possessed by spirit(s) are able to foretell the future, taking the form of warning or exhorting the people. Those who are possessed by these spirits are sometimes afflicted through spiritual attacks, indicating that there is a religious reason why people are possessed by these spirits. The reason for being possessed is to honour the spirit(s) and to seek their protection. The question is- 'why are people possessed by these spirits?' An assessment of the views of Richter –Bannerman were found to be unconvincing and therefore would be an area that needed to be studied more closely in order to find out why people are possessed by spirits. We expounded on moral evil maintaining that, human beings in traditional society, are responsible for their moral actions and argued that spirit possession can be linked with moral evil. Furthermore, unfaithful women can be possessed and find difficulty in delivering children; and when they confess their sins they are able to deliver their children

safely. Men who go after the wives of other men are struck down with long standing diseases until they confess and compensate those they have offended.

We argued that, even though we are in the world of technology with improved knowledge about combating diseases, there are some diseases that cannot be treated by Western medicine<sup>170</sup> because the causes of such diseases are spiritual. These diseases are cured by diviners and traditional healers. The point has been made that in the traditional society when evil strikes, steps are taken to ward off that evil. If it is at community level where the whole community suffers because they have offended the spirit beings, sacrifices, offerings and prayers are offered to the spirit beings; and through these processes the people get closer to the spirit beings. If it is at the individual level, the first step to be taken by the individual is to see a diviner or

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<sup>170</sup> For the history of holism in the medical profession in Europe and America, see, T.M. Brown, 'George Candy Robinson and "The Patient as a Person,"' in *Greater than the Parts, Holism in Biomedicine, 1920-1950* (eds.) C. Lawrence and G. Weisz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 135-160. Brown gives the history of holism in the medical profession in Europe and America and from pp. 137-154. Brown shows G.C. Robinson's research promoted positive responses to medical holism in America. Our interest is in the history of holism in Europe and America outlined by Brown which is summarised in this section of the thesis.

In the period between the two world wars, physicians in many European countries became worried regarding modern tendency toward the depersonalisation and dehumanization of medical care. Their stance resulted in voicing intense and recurrent anxieties regarding the intrusions of the laboratory into bedside practice... and the shortsightedness of naive, machine-like reductionism, which left out the patient as biological organism and unique individual. To counteract this problem, these clinicians urged a variety of medical alternatives including concentration on the patient as a 'whole.' The alternatives had in common a general distancing from biomedical science and a consistently integrative orientation that denied narrow reductionism while taking into account mind-body interactions.

Many of these European tendencies were evident in American interwar medicine. C.P. Emerson for example, insisted that medical students be shown how to deal with sick persons rather than with 'diseases', 'tests', and plates, and claimed that laboratory-based scientists had the 'moral defect' of regarding each patient as a 'laboratory animal.' That perspective was 'zoocentric,' whereas clinical care should properly be 'anthropocentric.' I.S. Cutter was also worried that 'too little do we teach that the patient is not made up alone of tissue structures but is a personality functioning in a given environment.

L.F Barker was of the view that the time had come to study patients as 'wholes'; the psyches of patients needed close attention because disturbances in one domain readily cause disturbances in the other. He emphasised that in dealing with a such person we must 'consider carefully...the personality of the patient and the way in which it reacts to the illness.' Other medical professionals expressed concern on the reductionist tendencies of modern scientific medicine, with the focus on training physicians appreciative of the 'intellectual cultural background' of the profession.

Few medical statesmen in America were involved in experiments which could be described as holistic care and training with the aim of fostering humanism, social sensibility and psychological awareness into medical training. The most well advertised of all the American efforts to engineer the 'patient as a whole' back into the curriculum was undertaken by George Camby Robinson at Johns Hopkins. With the help from the Rockefeller Foundation he launched a project to explore the social and psychological factors that were present but not adequately applied by medical staff in their dealings with hospital patients. This attracted many people and the concept of holistic approach in medicine was given serious attention.



traditional healer to find out why such an evil has befallen him/her and the steps that could be taken to ward off that evil. Through divination the cause of the evil is identified and it is treated.

Whilst outlying the various methods of healing victims who have been attacked by diseases, we noted some people are treated whilst others are given protection against these wicked spirits. The healing can take the form of going through purification rites. In some cases those who inflict the diseases on people are punished. This punishment can take many forms.

We then compared and contrasted the world-view of Mark and that of African Traditional Religion. People in both communities believe in the existence, and the wicked activities, of demons. These activities include spiritual attacks which include spirit possession. The major differences between Mark and African Traditional Religion are that Mark gives a negative view of spirit possession while in African Traditional Religion spirit possession can be seen as both negative and positive. In Mark, Jesus is the only saviour while in African Traditional Religion there are diviners and traditional healers who are seen as saviours. In African Traditional Religion there is nothing indicating that the devil and his cohorts are bound or are going to be bound. The impression created is that the devil and his cohorts are seen to be powerful. In Mark Satan is bound even though we do not know when he was bound. Satan's cohorts presented by Mark are demons while in African Traditional Religion the Devil's cohorts are demons, witches, sorcerers, curses and evil eyes. While Mark presents Satan who is bound, Western scholars also present Satan bound in either the temptation, on the cross or about to be bound in the Parousia. In African Traditional Religion there is nothing indicating that the devil and his cohorts are bound or are going to be bound. While Mark and Western scholars regard Jesus as more powerful than Satan and the demons, in African Traditional Religion, mention is not made of Jesus. But the basic assumption is that God is more powerful than the devil. While Mark and Western scholars give a straightforward view of the world at the time, from the point of view of the adherents of African Traditional Religion, the world-view is complex, with diviners and traditional healers as saviours while Mark and Western scholars present Jesus as the only saviour.

The question is how does this chapter fit into the overall argument of the thesis? Our thesis deals with three important features. Firstly, it examines the picture portrayed by Mark concerning the power and fate of Satan and the demons. Secondly, it examines how Western scholars look at the power and fate of Satan and demons presented by Mark and thirdly it explores how Ghanaian Christians read some of the texts in Mark which centres on what is examined by Western scholars. This will include the questions these readers bring to the text and the new ideas they bring into the thesis which are not explored by Mark and Western scholars. This present chapter presents the beliefs the adherents of African Traditional Religion hold regarding the devil and his agents. We see the Devil and his agents as powerful causing misfortune of all kinds including diseases, and how the activities of witches, sorcerers and sorceresses, evil eye and evil such as curses are warded off. In the next chapter we will see how these traditional beliefs about the devil (who operates like that of Satan but does not work directly against God) and his agents and what they can do are reflected in the readings of the Ghanaian Christians on Mark.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6 CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN READINGS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter five we discussed the African world-view and evil in African Traditional Religion. At the end of that chapter, we compared and contrasted the Markan world-view with that of African Traditional Religion. This chapter, the field research, deals with how Africans (with their world-view and their knowledge of traditional religion behind them) read and interpret some of the healing passages from the Gospel of Mark; through Bible Studies reports. We affirmed elsewhere that Africa is a large continent with many countries but people from these countries have certain common beliefs and practices. Our focus will be on the Ghanaian immigrants in London.

We will explore the socio-economic background of the readers, explaining why we have chosen Ghanaian Christians in London and assign reasons for selecting some passages and structuring questions for the Bible Studies. We will then present the readers' views thematically and examine their understanding of (a) the causes of evil and disease, (b) the power of Satan, (c) the power of Jesus, (d) Jesus' power over Satan, demons and disease (e) the nature of Christian discipleship in relation to evil and disease. We will then analyse (f) the diverse views, among Ghanaian readers, on the causes and cure of diseases and spiritual techniques employed by Jesus in healing different diseases. Finally (g) we will examine the influence of traditional beliefs in their responses, (h) outlining the tensions between Markan cosmology and the African world-views; and (i) review concerns/questions raised in the Ghanaian readings which are not (or hardly) touched on in the Western readings.

We have already indicated that the focus of the contemporary African readings will be on Ghanaian Christians resident in London. These are people who have spent some time in Ghana and are now living in the West. Whilst in Ghana, they would have been exposed to traditional practices, beliefs and the Ghanaian world-view. What is the extent to which these practices, beliefs and world-view influence their interpretation of Mark? Are their interpretations detached from or close to traditional practices, traditional beliefs and the Ghanaian world-view?

These readers now in Britain are exposed to Western culture, values, Western ways of thinking, knowledge of physics, the laws of cause and effect and the Western world-views on modern medicine. But how far have these Western views influenced the way they interpret some of the texts in Mark's Gospel? To what extent do they dissociate themselves or get close to Western views in the way they interpret Mark? What is the extent to which both African and Western world-views are reflected in their interpretation of the texts?

The thesis has three parts; looking at Mark, Western scholars and African Christians with the view of understanding Mark and what African readings of it will offer to Western scholars. We have dealt with Mark's understanding of evil, the struggle between Jesus and Satan, Jesus and the demons and Mark's understanding of the world and the Christian life. We have looked at Western scholars and their views on the concerns raised by Mark. We will look at African readers who believe in the power of spirits and whose world-view is closer to that of Mark and find out how their readings will help us to get a better understanding of what Mark is saying. This will also help us to see what Western scholars and African Christians can learn from each other. The aim is not just to study Mark, Western scholars and African readings, but to get a better understanding of Mark and how one illuminates the other.

## **6.2 THE GHANAIAN CHRISTIANS AND THEIR LEADERS**

### **6.2.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF CHURCH LEADERS AND READERS**

The Ghanaian immigrants in the United Kingdom have a population of approximately one million with the majority of them living in London. They came from Ghana to work or to study in this country. Some have married and established themselves in this country, while some have married other nationals. Because of the historical links between the United Kingdom and Ghana, some have lived in this country for a long time, and worship in churches<sup>1</sup> in this country. Questionnaires<sup>2</sup> were sent to the heads of churches<sup>3</sup> in London requesting their names, their educational and professional background, the type of church, a brief description of the educational experience and

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<sup>1</sup> See Table 1 for the churches that took part in the research.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A

<sup>3</sup> The heads of the churches are Reverend Fathers, Ministers, Pastors and Elders.

the employment of the members of the reading groups, and health professionals (number of nurses, doctors and pharmacists). Summarised responses are in Table 1.

<b>TABLE I</b>	
<b>NAME OF CHURCH</b>	<b>TYPE OF CHURCH</b>
Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church	Main-Line Church
St. Thomas The Apostle Catholic Church	„
Upper Tooting Methodist Church	„
Camden Town Methodist Church	„
Archway Methodist Church	„
Harlesden Methodist Church	„
Trinity (Methodist/United Reformed) Church	„
St. Andrews United Reformed Church, Ealing	„
Rectory Road United Reformed Church	Main-Line Church
Kensington United Reformed Church	„
Streatham United Reformed Church	Main-Line Church
London Central Ghana SDA Church	Adventist
South East London Ghana SDA Church	„
South West Ghana SDA Church	„
Slough Ghana SDA Church	„
Elim Church of Pentecost (Camberwell Branch)	Pentecostal
Elim Church of Pentecost (Battersea Branch)	„
Calvary Love Evangelical Fellowship (Assemblies of God –UK and Ireland)	„
Musama Disco Christo Church	„
Beneficial Veracious Christ Church	Pentecostal and Charismatic
Triumphant Prayer Ministries	Pentecostal, Charismatic and Ministries

### **6.2.2 THE EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE HEADS OF CHURCHES**

All the head of the churches have basic education ranging from GCE 'O' Level, to 'A' Level, first and second degrees and Ph.D in the Arts and in the Social Sciences. Professionally, their qualifications range from Diploma in Theology to B.A Theology, Masters in Divinity, Masters in Theology, Doctor in Ministry and Ph.D in Theology from renowned institutions in Ghana, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and United States of America.

### **6.2.3 BRIEF EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE READING GROUPS**

Some of the readers were students from Ghana, now pursuing degree courses in the United Kingdom. There are some who had their secondary education in the United Kingdom and are now doing degree courses, and there are some who have already completed degree courses in this country and others pursuing Adult Education courses. Almost all the readers can read English except very few people, (about 5% of all the readers). These are grandparents who are here to visit their families. The passages were read in Akan<sup>4</sup> and the questions translated into the Akan language, resulting in significant contributions being made by this group.

### **6.2.4 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT OF THE READING GROUPS**

The majority of the readers are professional workers such as lawyers, accountants, engineers, business men and women, teachers, secretaries, mechanics, drivers, underground workers, managers, caterers, security workers, prison officers, police men, carers, technicians in hospitals and administrators.

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<sup>4</sup> About 40%-60% of the population of Ghana are Akans. They include all the Twi speaking groups in Ghana.

### 6.2.5 HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN THE READING GROUPS

Table 2 shows the number of health professionals in the reading groups in the churches.

<b>TABLE 2</b>			
<b>NAME OF CHURCH</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
	<b>OF</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>OF</b>
	<b>NURSES</b>	<b>DOCTORS</b>	<b>PHARMACISTS</b>
Corpus Christi Roman Catholic	2	-	-
St. Thomas the Apostle Church	1	-	1
Upper Tooting Methodist Church	10	3	5
Camden Town Methodist Church	2	-	-
Archway Methodist Church	1	1	-
Harlesden Methodist Church	1	-	-
Trinity(Methodist/United Reformed)			
Church (Golders Green)	1	-	-
St. Andrews United Reformed Church	1	1	-
Rectory Road United Reformed Church	4	-	-
Kensington United Reformed Church	1	-	-
Streatham United Reformed Church	2	2	-
London Central Ghana SDA Church	2	2	-
South East London Ghana SDA Church	5	3	3
South West London Ghana SDA Church	4	-	1
Slough Ghana SDA Church	5	-	-
Elim Church of Pentecost			
(Camberwell Branch)	4	-	2
Elim Church of Pentecost			
(Battersea Branch)	3	1	-

Calvary Love Evangelical Fellowship	1	-	1
Musama Disco Christo Church	3	-	-
Beneficial Veracious Christ Church	2	1	2
Triumphant Prayer Ministries	7	1	-

### 6.2.6 REASONS FOR CHOOSING GHANAIAI CHRISTIANS

The world-view of Ghana approximates the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world-view but at the same time, there are differences between these world-views. We would like to find out how, Ghanaians with a background closer to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Mediterranean world-view but who live in Britain, read and interpret texts from Mark's Gospel. What new ideas and questions do these readers bring to the texts which are not addressed by Western scholars? What modes of readings will emerge from these Christians as they interact with these texts in Mark? What leading questions will they bring into their readings? How do they help us to get a better understanding of the reading of Mark?

### 6.3. THE PASSAGES FOR THE READINGS

The passages are the Gerasene Demoniac, Mark 5: 1-20; The Deaf and Dumb, Mark 7: 31-37; The Blind Man, Mark 8: 22-26; The Epileptic Boy, Mark 9: 14-27; Blind Bartimaeus Mark 10: 46-52 and the Beelzebul Controversy Mark 3:22-27. We have treated these passages (among others, see above), and we have seen the different views Western scholars hold on these 'passages'<sup>5</sup>- exorcisms, healings and symbolic interpretations. Jesus is seen as a healer, an exorcist, or a magician. More specifically these scholars are divided on whether Satan is bound or active and the extent of his activeness and when his power will finally be broken. In the exorcism passages, Jesus is either seen as struggling with the demons or picking up the pieces because Satan has been decisively defeated. The passages indicate that they are surrounded by differences in opinion from the point of view of Western scholars.

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<sup>5</sup> See E. Best, *Mark : The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1983) pp. 57-58. Best affirms that apart from the exorcisms, the other healing miracles have nothing in them suggesting they are part of a contest between Jesus and the world of Satan. Cf. J. Kallas, *The Significance of the Synoptic Miracles* (London: SPCK 1961). pp. 63,68 and E. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth Press, 1949) p. 151. Both Kallas and Langton attribute all diseases to demons.



## **6.4 STRUCTURING THE QUESTIONS**

For the structure of the questions, see Appendix B

### **6.4.1 REASONS FOR STRUCTURING THE QUESTIONS**

The first question is a way of collecting unprompted reactions. Question Two assists the process of close, communal reading. In Mark 7:31-37 and 8:22-26, as part of question two, readers are asked to list measures taken by Jesus as part of the healing process. The idea is to encourage the readers to focus on what Jesus does. The third question helps the readers to explore their own reactions to the story. In 7: 31-37 and 8:22-26, part of question three allows the readers to choose one of the measures taken by Jesus and to assign reasons why Jesus took that measure. This is to find out whether the readers have a scientific or traditional view of Jesus' healing. Question Four allows the readers to comment on how Jesus responds to the situation. In both 7: 31-37 and 8:22-26 the idea behind question 4 is to find out how the readers react to these texts. The format for question five for Mark 5: 1-20; 7: 31-37; 9: 14-29 and 10: 46-52 is the same, consisting of three sections. The first section allows the readers to respond to these stories. The second section asks readers to describe the diseases in these texts. This is the same as the first section of question 5 in Mark 8: 22-26. The third section of question 5 is similar to the second section of question 5 in Mark 8: 22-26, and it allows the readers to find out what means they will use in curing these diseases if they are afflicted with them. Concerning Mark 3:22-27, we want readers to give us their views on the extent of Satan's power and what they fear or not fear about him. Their views will determine the kind of world they live in and the nature of the Christian life- a demon-free life or a struggle with spiritual forces.

## **6.5. RESPONSES FROM THE READERS**

We will present the responses given to the causes of the diseases.

### **6.5.1 THE READERS' UNDERSTANDING OF CAUSES OF DISEASES**

We will list the readers' answers given to the causes of diseases without analysing them.

## **i POSSESSION**

The readers were from Archway Methodist Church, Golders Green Methodist/URC<sup>6</sup>, Brixton Hill Catholic Church, MDCC<sup>7</sup>, Brixton, South East London Ghana SDA<sup>8</sup>, CLEF<sup>9</sup> South Wimbledon, and Elim Church of Pentecost, Camberwell.

Participants from Archway Methodist Church were in three groups. One group affirmed that it was mental imbalance. The second group affirmed that it was a demonic disease and in the third group some people affirmed that the man had an unbalanced mind while others intimated that an evil spirit possessed the man. Participants from Golders Green Methodist/URC were in four groups. Group one intimated that it was schizophrenia. Group two affirmed that it was the devil at work. Group three stressed that the man was born with a bad spirit while group four maintained that the man was possessed by an evil mind. At Brixton Hill Catholic Church the participants gave two views. The man was suffering from abnormal behaviour, and the disease was caused by an unclean spirit. Participants at MDCC also expressed the following views: The man gave the chance for these demons to come upon him to be used against himself, an evil spirit was tormenting the man, an evil spirit cursed the man.

The participants in the South East London Ghana SDA Church, with the second highest percentage of health professionals, were divided into four groups. The first group affirmed that the man was suffering from a mental problem. In the second group, there were two views. The disease was either mental illness or a spiritual disease caused by demons. There were three different views in the third group. The disease was caused by (i) witches, called 'African Electronics' in African parlance, (ii) inherited from witches and demons and (iii) it came upon the man because of his disobedience to the spiritual powers including ancestors, witches, etc.

One group from CLEF affirmed that it was schizophrenia. The second group were of the view that it was spiritual madness, while the third group affirmed that it was an attack from the evil spirit. Participants from Elim Church of Pentecost (Camberwell)

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<sup>6</sup> URC will be used for United Reformed Church.

<sup>7</sup> MDCC will be used for Musama Disco Christo Church in Brixton.

<sup>8</sup> SDA will be used for the Seventh Day Adventist Church .

<sup>9</sup> CLEF will be used for Calvary Love Evangelical Fellowship (Assemblies of God, South Wimbledon).

expressed three different views: (i) the disease was an attack from demons which could be a curse, a punishment from the spiritual powers or the gods, indicating the readers' interest in aetiology of 'spiritual' disease; (ii) the disease was physical, (iii) the disease could be both physical and spiritual.

## **ii DEAFNESS AND IMPEDIMENT IN SPEECH**

Participants from Camden Town Methodist came up with three different responses. The deafness was a physical disease, a mental disease, or a spiritual disease caused by spiritual powers. On the impediment of speech there were three different responses: an emotional disease, a mental disease and a physical disease. No one from the church attributed the impediment in speech to spiritual powers. It was purely physical disease caused by the malfunction of the organ concerned.

Participants from the Triumphant Prayer Ministry came out with these responses. Both the deafness and the impediment of speech were spiritual diseases, physical diseases and accidental. At Kensington URC, the readers opined that both the deafness and the impediment in speech could be emotional, physical, mental or spiritual diseases. Other readers from the same church stated that demons and witches caused the spiritual diseases. The participants from CLEF came out with the following responses: The deafness was either an accident, a result of a fight, an infection or it was caused by demons. On the speech impediment some of the readers agreed that the man was speaking but stammering. It was a physical affliction. Other respondents were of the view that speech impediment was spiritual while others maintained it was an infection of both organs affecting the other. Participants from Slough Ghana SDA, affirmed that the deafness and the impediment in speech could be natural, accidental or spiritual diseases. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, maintained that both diseases could be physical or spiritual.

## **iii BLINDNESS**

Participants from South West London Ghana SDA intimated that the blindness was caused by sin, demons, God, deficiency in diet, an accident, hereditary or it was from birth. Participants from Upper Tooting Methodist Church, with the highest percentage of health professionals, affirmed that the disease was the personification of the devil, spiritual blindness (implying the man did not know Jesus), a physical blindness or a

metaphor signifying ignorance. The readers from St. Andrews URC, Ealing, gave the following causes to the blindness: physical blindness, an accident, a virus, infection, old age, deficiency in diet, shock, hereditary, demons or from birth. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, indicated that the disease could be spiritual blindness, meaning the man did not know Jesus, and also be physical blindness, from birth or it could be caused by sin, a generation curse, demons or witches.

#### **iv EPILEPSY**

The readers from Central London Ghana SDA gave the following causes to the epilepsy: grand mal epilepsy, serious epilepsy, the disease was caused by an evil spirit or it was the disease of the mind. The readers from Streatham URC gave these causes: it was epilepsy, it was from the brain affecting the nerves. The readers affirmed that once Jesus said, 'be healed', it was a spiritual disease. The readers from Harlesden Methodist Church affirmed the following: it was brain damage, the man was born with it. It was s a spiritual disease, it used to be a spiritual disease but not now. One reader intimated that generally when we understand the cause of a disease, we say it is a physical disease. But when we do not understand the cause of the disease we term it a spiritual disease. The reader argued further that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between what is physical and what is spiritual; and that all we can affirm is that Jesus heals every disease. The readers from St Andrews URC Ealing, gave medical and demonic explanations to the disease. The readers from St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Nunhead, gave the following responses: This was an attack of the evil spirit. The devil was trying to destroy God's creation and trying to prove himself superior. It was a spiritual disease testing one's faith. It could be hereditary, or a punishment, a curse or a long term suffering without a cure.

#### **v BARTIMAEUS' BLINDNESS**

The readers from Rectory Road URC intimated that the disease could be an acquired disease, an infection, or a complication of diabetes. Other readers affirmed that it was a demonic attack, while the rest of the readers maintained that it was a spiritual blindness, implying the man did not know Jesus. Readers from Beneficial Veracious Christ Church, affirmed that it was a personal injury, conjunctivitis, cataract, or infection. Other readers indicated that the disease was caused by the sin of parents or disobedience against ancestors, or God. Others intimated that it could be a curse

placed upon him, while other readers affirmed that it could be an attack from demons and all related forces of darkness. This was how the readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, described the disease- It could be physical blindness, spiritual blindness of not knowing Jesus; witches, demons and evildoers could cause the disease or it could come from a curse or the sin of the man. The readers from London Central Ghana SDA affirmed that: it was partial blindness caused by infection, a cataract or glaucoma, myopia, river blindness, symbolic for those living in darkness or demonic.

Our findings from the readers' understanding of the causes of diseases are that, all the groups in the churches affirm both physical and spiritual explanations for the diseases, and the groups with a high percentage of medical personnel also show both kinds of explanations.

#### **6.5.2 THE NATURE OF SATAN'S POWER**

The readers from Rectory Road URC argued that Satan's power destroys, confuses, divides and causes problems. For some of the readers in this church, Satan is responsible for every evil in the world. Satan has much authority on earth. The earth is Satan's house. Views expressed at Elim Church of Pentecost, Camberwell, were: Satan's power is limited, Jesus himself perceives that Satan is strong, Satan is powerful, and he is the king of the earth. In Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, the readers affirmed that Satan is strong but when he comes face to face with Jesus, he is inferior. Satan makes people believe that his power is not there, but he exists. Satan is very strong. In South East London Ghana SDA, some of the readers intimated that Satan is powerful and strong. Anybody who has not the Holy Spirit in him can be used by Satan. Some of the readers affirmed that Satan's power is not strong. In Central London Ghana SDA, some of the readers described Satan as a toothless bull dog like a colossus with feet of clay. His power is limited and divided, his power is like a walking shadow and a morning dew. Other readers from this church argued that Satan's power is strong and his power is at work in this world. When Satan helps you to get something, he gives you something evil, later.

In South West London Ghana SDA, some of the readers argued that if Satan is able to bind a person, then it shows that the power of Satan can overshadow humanity. When

Satan came to this earth, he was not deprived of his power. Satan is strong and has his house. He is guiding his house. He knows there is someone who can come to his house and overpower him and take all his goods. Because of that he fears and has no peace. Satan has power but when he meets Jesus he is defeated. In Slough Ghana SDA Church, the readers opined that Satan could cause sickness and troubles and frightens people with his power. All the miseries that come to us are from Satan. Satan could perform miracles. Satan's power however, is inferior to Jesus' power. In Kensington URC, the readers described Satan's power as violent, aggressive, uncontrollable, domineering, destructive, and his power causes division and misunderstanding. For the readers at Ealing URC, Satan's power destroys, deceives and spoils things. Satan's power can take humans by surprise. The readers from MDCC came out with these views. Satan is apparently strong and powerful but he has no real power; that is, whatever Satan uses is derived from God and when God cuts the source Satan cannot do anything. Because Satan is the creature of God, he has corrupted God's power. Satan is powerful but God is more powerful. Satan causes misery in the society, but his power cannot be compared to that of God.

The ideas about the nature of Satan's power given by the readers presuppose that Satan operates in a territory or an area. The readers were asked to comment on Mark 3:23-27. The readers were of the view that in this passage Jesus declares clearly that he has no relationship with Satan, and that the power he uses is not from Satan but from God. The majority of the readers intimated that we have two Kingdoms, the Kingdom of God (Jesus) and the Kingdom of Satan. The Kingdom of God is fighting against the Kingdom of Satan and as Christians we have to put on the whole armour of God. The readers are aware that the house in 3:27 is a metaphor. It refers to the earth or the world; and within it are people who have been enslaved by Satan and his cohorts. The enslavement takes many forms including possession, physical diseases and other forms of spiritual attacks. According to these readers Jesus goes into the house because he is stronger than Satan and his cohorts and he binds them through rebuke or command and he sets the captives free. For these readers there is an ongoing battle between the two Kingdoms and this has two implications: (i) there are some people in this house who need to be set free by the power of Jesus and (ii) those in Jesus' Kingdom who need to continue praying, having faith in Jesus and resisting

Satan and his cohorts when they strike. Let us examine the nature of the powers at war with each other.

### **6.5.3 WHAT THE READERS FEAR ABOUT SATAN**

Because Satan is perceived as powerful, are there things to be feared about him? In every church there were two different views. Those who affirmed that in reality as followers of Jesus we should not fear Satan, and those who affirmed that we should. We will consider the views of those who said they should fear something from Satan. What the participants from Rectory Road URC feared from Satan was Satan drawing them into material gain and love for money. Those from Elim Church of Pentecost, Camberwell, feared backsliding, and deceit from Satan, touching the belongings of Satan including stealing, fornication, gossiping, etc. There is the need to draw away from sin and draw near to God. Satan knows our weaknesses. Satan's power can be viewed from the point of view of hierarchical organisation of spiritual supremacy and there is the need to be watchful. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea affirmed that we should fear the deceit of Satan as Satan can change himself into an angel of light. He works through our conscience in the form of a voice. He is always at war with Christians trying to capture them and win them to his side and there is the need to stand firm in Jesus. Satan is cunning and there is the need to put on the whole armour of God and be aware that the battle is for the Lord. Satan entices people to live in sin.

For the readers from South East London Ghana SDA, what brings the fear is when we tend to be what we are not and truly we do not whole-heartedly follow Jesus and that creates fear. As human beings, we are bound to fall but we must continue to rely on God. The readers from Central London Ghana SDA and South West Ghana SDA, feared Satan's intelligence. For the readers at Slough Ghana SDA, if we are not rooted in Jesus we will fear Satan. Because Satan is powerful he can kill those who are dead in sin and who do not take Jesus as their saviour. He has been on earth for many years. Satan's territory is not a playground of children, but an army ready to fight. We must realise that there is a big fight between the power of God and the power of Satan. For the readers from Kensington URC when we live in the flesh then we will fear Satan. The readers at Ealing URC opined that we should fear the temptation of Satan. If Satan tempted Jesus then we are not his match at all. As

Christians we should live our lives in such a way that we prevent Satan from getting a stronghold in our lives. Satan's temptation is so fierce that we have to be careful. The readers from MDCC intimated that we should fear the dirty tricks of Satan like the desires he puts into us. We have to be aware of what Satan can do. Satan tries to deceive and to kill. Satan is in chains but his agents are around. If these readers have these fears about Satan, how do they regard the demons?

#### **6.5.4 THE POWER OF DEMONS**

The readers from the above churches emphasised the way the evil spirits harassed the victim. The man cried out and was bruising himself with stones. He was chained and the chains were wrenched apart, and according to the readers from Brixton Hill Catholic Church, this was a worrying picture. The readers from Golders Green Methodist /United Reformed Church affirmed that the man was in spiritual bondage and his soul was imprisoned. Some of the readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Camberwell intimated that these demons could lock people to the extent that they lived in chains. However, the readers from Brixton Hill Catholic Church raised a question as to whether the demon was sent or he came to test Jesus? This brought to mind the strategies of the evil spirits. They are sent to perform certain duties one of which is to tempt people. The readers from all the churches were of the view that these demons were wicked, destructive, and they were powerful.

They commented on the wicked attitude or nature of the evil spirit. The evil spirit convulsed the boy, dashed him on the ground and cast him into fire and water. It made the child foam on the mouth and made him grind his teeth and became rigid. The evil spirit made the child helpless. It was tormenting the boy. It was destructive, a killer and caused disgrace.

All the readers affirmed what happened when an evil spirit possessed its victim. It did not leave the victim without leaving a mark on the body. When the demonic spirit was in possession of its victim, it controlled the victim both physically and spiritually. Some of the readers from Harlesden Methodist Church were of the view that if an evil spirit possessed somebody, it did not care what it did to its victim. Readers from Streatham United Reformed Church intimated that the activities of the evil spirit brought fear among the family members and the crowd. The readers from St. Thomas



the Apostle Catholic dilated on the duration of the activities of the evil spirit. For some of the readers, the work of the evil spirit was intermittent or transient, while in the same group other readers affirmed that the work of the evil spirit could be for a long time, and that the epileptic child had been under the attack from infancy. Some of the readers from Harlesden Methodist Church came out with the following descriptions about the evil spirit, destructive, strong, powerful, killer, possessive, controller and challenger.

In almost every church the readers had different views concerning the nature of Satan's power. Some viewed Satan as powerful, others as limited in terms of power while some even affirmed that in reality Satan had no power at all. For some of these readers Satan was powerful. They listed things they feared about Satan. Those who affirmed that Satan was limited in terms of power were conscious of the limited power of Satan while those who affirmed that Satan was not powerful were of the view that they did not fear anything from Satan. Regarding the power of demons the readers commented on the way the demons harassed their victims including possessing them.

#### **6.5.5 THE POWER OF JESUS**

How did the readers regard Jesus' power? Readers from all the churches affirmed that the source of Jesus' power was from God. The power of Jesus lay in His word, followed by an action. Jesus had power to release people from bondage. With this power Jesus could command demons to enter into swine and thus be drowned. When Jesus placed his hands in the ears of the sick, power was transferred to the spot and there was healing. Power was transmitted through saliva to the tongue of the sick and the man could speak. Jesus touched the tongue of the sick man to unlock the tongue so that the man could speak. Jesus was a powerful healer. He had power over Satan and demons. Even though Jesus was seen as powerful, in Mark 9: 14-29, he healed the epileptic boy with some difficulty. He had to touch the blind man (in 8:22-26) twice before the man was able to see clearly.

The readers from the Central London Ghana SDA intimated that Jesus was the remedy of the world's woes and there was the need to have faith in Him even though He was not present in the bodily form. The readers from Streatham URC called for

hope in Jesus and the need to trust in Him because of His power (Mark 9:23-24). The readers from Harlesden Methodist Church, St. Andrews URC and St. Thomas the Apostle church affirmed that Jesus worked wonders (Mark 9:23-24). We can state that the readers emphasised the power of Jesus. This power is seen in His healing, in His lordship over disease and His power over demons. Because of the power of Jesus, there is the need to have faith, hope and to give oneself to Jesus. As Lord, he uses diverse ways in healing. The concept of power in Jesus brings to light the African way of reading the text.

## **6. 6 THE BINDING OF SATAN**

The readers were asked to comment on when was Satan bound or when he was going to be bound. In Central London Ghana SDA, there were two views. Satan was bound after the resurrection and would be bound until the second coming of Jesus. The views of South West London Ghana SDA, were: Satan would be bound when Jesus appeared, Satan was bound before Jesus started his work, Satan's power came to an end on the Cross, and Satan was bound when Jesus said, 'it is finished.' In Slough Ghana SDA, the view was that Satan would be bound during the second coming. In MDCC there were a wide range of views: the binding of Satan took place at the time Jesus cast out a demon from somebody, when Jesus came into the world, when Jesus started his work, on the Cross and Satan had been bound once and for all, but we do not know the exact time. On the whole we can discern four views –Satan has been bound either in Jesus' ministry, on the cross, in the Resurrection or will be bound in the Parousia.. The view of binding among these readers does not imply that Satan is impotent. Satan has been defeated or weakened in his struggle with Jesus and for the followers of Jesus who live in the church and listen to his words and do God's will, when this weakened Satan and his demons attack them, Jesus will defeat these enemies. The other view is that Satan will be bound in the second coming of Jesus. For the readers who hold on to this view, the Christian life is a struggle with Satanic and demonic forces and there is the need to continue depending on Jesus. The readers from MDCC made a slight distinction between demonic forces that possessed people and Satan who was the originator of these demonic forces. Satan was tied up and could not act yet he sent his agents (the demons) to do his work. It was like an army officer who had been imprisoned or chained but that did not mean that those following him were imprisoned or chained. For these readers, the demons were

strong. What did these readers not fear about Satan once they knew that he was or would be bound?

#### **6.6.1 WHAT READERS DO NOT FEAR ABOUT SATAN**

The readers affirmed that in reality as followers of Jesus there was nothing to be feared from Satan. The readers from Rectory Road URC intimated that if Satan strikes, through prayer they will ask God to deliver them and they have to be vigilant. For the readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Camberwell, Christians have the spirit of power and should have no fear of Satan. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, have no fear of Satan because they can put on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:13-18). The readers of South East London Ghana SDA affirmed that by looking to Jesus there is nothing to fear about Satan. The readers from Central London Ghana SDA affirmed that there is nothing to fear about Satan because one day he will be defeated. The readers from South West London Ghana SDA intimated that by going by God's principles there is nothing to fear about Satan. Moreover, the one who protects Christians is greater than Satan, and if we give ourselves to God there is nothing to fear. The readers from Slough Ghana SDA affirmed there is nothing to fear from Satan because Jesus' power is greater than that of Satan and if Jesus is leading us, then he will conquer Satan. If we fear Satan then we have elevated him. God has given us power and with that power we can resist Satan. If we are prayerful, and we do not sin, Satan will fear us. The readers from Kensington URC affirmed that if we fear Satan then it means our faith is shaky and it is an indication that we do not believe in God. The readers from Ealing URC affirmed that we do not have to fear Satan because God is most powerful and has sent an intermediary in the person of Jesus, so we no longer need to fear Satan because if we look to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, he will help us to overcome Satan. Our lack of fear in Satan has to manifest itself in how we lead our lives. The readers from MDCC said in reality there is nothing to fear from Satan, but we must be aware he has power. By reading more about the Bible, we will know how to guard ourselves against Satan.

#### **6.7 JESUS' POWER OVER DEMONS**

Having affirmed that these evil spirits are powerful and their power was reflected in the way they harassed their victim, what happened when these evil spirits met Jesus? The readers from SDA and CLEF affirmed that when the demons saw Jesus they were

gripped with fear. The readers from MDCC, Elim Church of Pentecost and Archway Methodist Church pointed out that these spirits begged Jesus, implying they realised they were powerless and they had to negotiate with Jesus. All the readers were of the view that the evil spirits thought that with their negotiation they could continue to live in that environment, but in the end they were drowned. For all the readers, in this episode there was no contest at all between Jesus and the evil spirits. Even though initially they were in total control of their victim when Jesus came in they were panicking. For all the readers, Jesus was in control of the situation. This shows that there was no struggle between Jesus and the demons, and the demons were not his match at all.

Of Jesus' encounter with the evil spirit in 9:14-29, there were two different opinions. (a) Some members from St. Andrews URC expressed the view that Jesus was fighting with the evil spirit. Some readers from Streatham URC affirmed that the evil spirit was challenging the power of Jesus, because it was not cast out easily; and there was the need for a stronger power to cast the evil spirit out, and Jesus had that power. Moreover Jesus had to pray before healing the child. Some of the readers from Harlesden Methodist Church affirmed that the evil spirit wanted to maintain its supremacy, implying evil spirits were not bound. They were powerful and when Jesus met them, He was able to defeat them because in terms of power, Jesus was more powerful than them (cf. Mark 3; 22-27). (b) Some of the readers from Streatham URC opined that Jesus took control over the whole situation. He rebuked the evil spirit to come out. This shows that Jesus has power over evil spirits. Some of the readers from Harlesden Methodist Church affirmed that Jesus brought the situation under control. He took the centre stage showing his authority. He was able to overcome the evil spirit. Some of the readers from St. Andrews URC Church, St Thomas the Apostle Church and all the readers from SDA maintained that Jesus powerfully defeated the evil spirit. These two views expressed by the readers on the power of the spirits can also be found in Mark 3.

Two views came out prominently in this study. The first view opined that Jesus fought with the evil spirits when he met them. This view was different from the views of the respondents on Mark 5: 1-20. Here the respondents saw no struggle, no contest and no fight between Jesus and the demons. In Mark 9: 14-29, the evil spirit

was a challenge to Him; an indication that Jesus did not have it easy even though eventually He defeated him. This was buttressed by the responses of the readers who opined that life is a struggle between good and evil, and that when one wants to walk with Jesus other forces will attack the person. The belief in forces working against a human being brings to light particularly the African way of reading the text; and in order to resist these forces there is the need to stand firm in Jesus. One reader intimated, 'if I were Jesus, I would ask the disciples to be doing the healing and to see how they could cope with the situation. This would give the disciples some experience.' The maxim, 'experience is the best teacher,' is prominent both in the Western and the African milieu. Through experiences one gains confidence and becomes mature in life. If Jesus had to fight with the demons, his followers must do likewise. Believers are in a continuous battle with demons. This makes Christian life a spiritual struggle. In our struggle with demons, our weapons are prayer, faith in Jesus, fasting, reading the word of God and leading holy lives. The struggle comes during temptation and in times of crises as affirmed by the readers. We go into crisis; we have doubts and fears because there are weaknesses in our human nature. We must watch and pray and never give up. In times of crisis and temptation, there is a Redeemer, and we should look to him for strength. The second view is that when Jesus met the demon he overpowered it. The spirit was helpless when it met Jesus. The cry of the evil spirit before departing from its victim was a sign that the demon is compelled to leave the body on the command of Jesus. What is crucial is not battling with these demons but continually depending on Jesus because these powers have been and will be overpowered by Jesus.

## **6.8 SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS**

We have listed the descriptions given by the readers to the diseases. The next section deals with how Jesus cured the diseases. All the readers affirmed that Jesus had power over diseases. We will list the techniques that Jesus used in healing these diseases.

## **6.9 SPIRITUAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY JESUS IN HEALING DIFFERENT DISEASES**

### **6.9.1 POSSESSION**

What strategy did Jesus use in healing the demoniac? Jesus asked his name. The readers were concerned with why Jesus did this. This was very important for them. They affirmed that Jesus wanted to know the type of spirit possessing him. The man replied 'My name is Legion; for we are many.' The implication is that many demons or spirits were living in this man. The readers from all the churches wanted to know why Jesus had to command the demons to enter into the swine and drown. According to some of the readers from MDCC, (i) Jesus sacrificed two thousand swine to free one man. (ii) Animals have no souls whilst humans do, and it was better to free a man with a soul than to free animals without souls and (iii) human life was greater than that of an animal in the eyes of the Lord.

### **6.9.2 DEAFNESS AND IMPEDIMENT IN SPEECH**

The six steps taken by Jesus in curing the man were examined by the readers.

#### ***i Jesus taking the man aside***

The readers from SDA, Camden Town Methodist Church, Triumphant Prayer Ministry and Kensington URC were of the view that Jesus wanted the man to feel special and he wanted to pray quietly. For these readers the emphasis was on the man given the appropriate attention by Jesus, a man of prayer. Some of the readers from Triumphant Prayer Ministry were of the view that Jesus took the man aside because Jesus did not want to do anything with the men who brought him to Jesus. The readers from Kensington URC affirmed that Jesus took the man aside because Jesus was not sure whether the crowd would react, positively or negatively. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, intimated that Jesus took the man aside because if he had done it publicly some of the multitude might want to imitate Jesus. The readers from CLEF affirmed that Jesus took the man aside, He did not need the crowd to glorify him and did not want the crowd to see the method he was to use.

#### ***ii Jesus putting His fingers into the man's ears***

All the readers affirmed that Jesus had power and by putting the fingers in the ears power could be transmitted to the spot through the hand. The problem was on the

spot and by touching the spot; the power from Jesus would heal the man. Surprisingly, the readers from all the six churches emphasised the power of Jesus. The fingers of Jesus had power and a mere touch on the affected spot brought healing, which was a miracle.

### ***iii Jesus spitting and touching the tongue***

All the readers affirmed that Jesus spat and touched the tongue because Jesus had many ways of healing, it was part of the healing process, the saliva of Jesus had power, and power was transmitted through saliva to the tongue. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost affirmed that Jesus was directed by the Holy Spirit and he had a vision from God.

### ***iv Jesus looking up to heaven***

The readers from Ghana SDA, Kensington United Reformed Church and Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea intimated that (i) Jesus looked for power from above. (ii) It was total dependence on God. (iii) He did that to glorify the Father. The readers from Camden Town Methodist intimated that Jesus looked up to heaven because heaven was associated with God's dwelling. The readers from the Triumphant Prayer Ministry affirmed that Jesus took that action because Jesus wanted to show that the power he was using did not come from him. The readers from CLEF affirmed that Jesus looked up to heaven because that was where his help would come from.

### ***v Jesus sighing***

The readers from SDA assigned the following reasons to Jesus sighing. (i) Jesus was worried about the effect of the sin on the man. (ii) It was a sign that he had received power from heaven. (iii) He was tired. The readers from Camden Town Methodist affirmed that was a sign that Jesus had finished healing the man. For the readers at The Triumphant Prayer Ministry, it was a sign of healing. The readers from Kensington URC intimated that (i) Jesus sighed for healing power. For the readers at Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea (i) it was a sign of compassion. (ii) Jesus was thinking of the solution to the problem because Jesus was in human form. (iii) Jesus was meditating. These were the responses from the readers from CLEF: (i) Jesus was

releasing tension. (ii) It was a means of releasing his healing power. (iii) It shows Jesus' sympathy for the sick man and (iv) it was a sign of intercession for the sick man.

#### *vi Jesus affirming, 'Be Opened'*

The respondents from Ghana SDA and Kensington URC affirmed that (i) Jesus was commanding the ear to open. For the readers of Camden Town Methodist the man had been bound by a demon, he had been chained and Jesus said, 'Be opened', to release the man. For the readers at the Triumphant Prayer Ministry, Jesus knew that the man would be healed, while for the readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, 'Be opened' here referred to the power of Jesus, to heal. The readers from CLEF made the following responses: (i) Jesus wanted to be specific. (ii) He spoke because words give clarity. (iii) It was a command and (iv) He spoke to take control of the situation.

### **6.9.3 BLINDNESS**

Readers were asked to comment on the strategies used by Jesus in healing the blind man. The readers from South West London Ghana SDA, Upper Tooting Methodist Church, Balham, St Andrews URC, Ealing and Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, affirmed that Jesus took the man by the hand because it was a way of reassuring him that he was in safe hands and He did not want the people to know about the healing process, otherwise other people might imitate him wrongly by using dubious means for healing. The readers from St Andrews URC opined that Jesus took the man out of the village because it was possible that the people in the village had no faith or they were evil.

All the readers from the churches indicated that Jesus took the man out of the village because He did not want conflict. The readers affirmed that what Jesus was about to do (the use of spittle in healing) could be questionable, offensive or unacceptable to the Jews, and this would cause other people to underestimate the faith of the man.

The readers were asked to comment on the use of spittle by Jesus. All the readers stated that Jesus knew the spittle could heal him, implying Jesus had foreknowledge of events, one of the attributes of God. Some of the readers from Upper Tooting Methodist Church, Balham, affirmed that may be it was the tradition of the area for



people to use spittle. The readers from these churches claimed that Jesus laid his hand upon the blind man, and with this gesture Jesus was transferring power from him to the man. They also affirmed that Jesus placed His hands on the man as a way of diagnosing the disease. The last strategy used by Jesus was that he laid his hands upon the eyes of the man the second time. The readers affirmed that it was a way of giving the man assurance, an important aspect of any healer. The readers intimated that by laying hands on the eyes, it could encourage the man to continually depend on Jesus, and that Jesus wanted to test the faith of the man.

#### **6.9.4 EPILEPSY**

The readers from Central London Ghana SDA, Streatham URC, Harlesden Methodist Church, St Andrews URC, Ealing and St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Nunhead, affirmed Jesus had a dialogue with the father. A reader from Central London Ghana SDA asked why Jesus delayed his healing (by having a dialogue with the father) instead of expelling the demon outright? There were some responses: (i) The situation did not demand prompt healing. (ii) Jesus was making an experiment. (iii) It was a way of diagnosing the disease. (iv) It would all result in faith healing. (v) Jesus knew the right time to act. For these readers even though the boy was seriously sick, Jesus had a purpose for delaying the healing.

All the readers from the churches indicated that Jesus rekindled the faith of the man by affirming, 'All things are possible to him who believes.' This was one of the characteristics of a healer. The readers from these churches also affirmed that Jesus took centre stage by rebuking the demon. The boy was like a corpse and Jesus lifted him up. The readers stressed the need to be prayerful in dealing with demonic attacks.

#### **6.9.5 BARTIMAEUS' BLINDNESS**

Readers were asked to comment on the healing of blind Bartimaeus. Readers from Beneficial Veracious Christ Church, Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea, Rectorry Road URC and London Central Ghana SDA affirmed that Jesus was compassionate, sympathetic and had time for the blind man. This was reflected in the way he stopped, invited and questioned him. Jesus knew the desire of the man and yet he questioned him about what he wanted. The readers were convinced that Jesus knows our desires

and yet He wants us to ask. Surprisingly the readers from all the churches regarded Jesus' question as a testing of faith. The readers were impressed that in this type of healing, there was no touch, no laying on of hands, but only the spoken word of Jesus and Jesus applauding the faith of the man. They affirmed that it was the faith the man had in Jesus that healed him. All the readers intimated that the man threw away his mantle and followed Jesus and that there was the need for us to throw away all things distracting us from Jesus and to follow him. We have examined the strategies used by Jesus in the light of the readers' responses and identified the extent to which the readers' responses to Jesus' healings reflected their knowledge of traditional healing.

## **6.10 CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP IN RELATION TO EVIL AND DISEASE**

The readers' comments on the disciples were very striking and we would like to see the implications we could draw from them as followers of Jesus in coping with evil. The comments centred on the disciples' inability to cure a boy who was suffering from an attack of epilepsy.

### **6.10.1 *The readers' Views on the Disciples***

The readers were shocked because the disciples could not heal the child in Mark 9:14-29 and they assigned a number of reasons.

- (a) The readers from Streatham URC affirmed that they had a weak faith, they lacked confidence and they did not pray. The concepts of disbelief, lack of confidence, and prayerlessness bring to light barriers for healing.
- (b) The readers from Harlesden Methodist Church agreed that the disciples were not able to cure the child because when they saw the crowd they began panicking, hence their failure to cure the boy, a psychological interpretation. The attitude of the crowd could have an effect on the actions of a performer in the crowd.
- (c) Readers from Harlesden Methodist Church affirmed that the disciples were hypocritical because they did not pray for the boy as they would have expected. Even if the boy was not healed, at least it could be explained that they tried to heal the boy. Prayer is very important in the life of a disciple of Jesus. Some of the readers affirmed that the disciples had faith but they underestimated the disease. Moreover, they tried to rely on their own strength. As disciples we do not have to take things for granted, especially spiritual matters and we need to rely on Jesus rather than on our strength.

- (d) Readers from St Andrews URC, Ealing affirmed that the disciples were exercising some doubt; and as such, they were unable to heal the child.
- (e) All the readers intimated that the disciples had been denied the power to heal. Who denied the disciples that power? Was it Jesus? If it was Jesus, why did he do so? Could it be that they had the power but they failed to exercise it? Could it be attributed to lack of faith, a sin or their disobedience? The idea of a disciple being denied power is very crucial. In order not to be denied power, the disciple of Jesus is supposed to lead a life of holiness.
- (f) All the readers in the churches opined that the disciples did not have one mind, and because of that there was an argument among them and they were not able to heal the boy. The idea of being of one mind in a group is crucial. When a group is of one mind, it can achieve its task. For those readers it was because the disciples were not of one mind that, when the man brought the child to the them, they did not know who should put the hand on the boy. The disciples were confused and were not able to heal the boy. The readers affirmed that, moreover, they could not take any initiative. Being able to take initiative is very crucial.
- (g) For some of the readers, the disciples were being challenged and they rose up to the challenge. Because they were not able to cast the evil spirit out they were murmuring, hence their question. For these readers, it was not always the case that the disciples of Jesus would be able to heal diseases on the spot. There are times when all efforts were put in healing the sick, but the sick might not recover on the spot and this was a lesson we might learn as disciples of Jesus. We can surmise that the readers give a wide range of responses concerning why the disciples were not able to cure the boy. Does it mean the readers had different texts in mind? (See Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6; Mark 11:21-24)

### ***6.10.2 Ways of Coping with Spirits as Disciples***

The picture we get of the world according to these readers is a world filled with spirits. As disciples of Jesus, how do we cope with these spirits? The question of coping with these spirits was answered along four lines by the readers.

#### ***i Avoiding these Spirits***

A quick glance through the readings of these Ghanaians shows that some readers affirmed that there was the need to avoid these spirits operating in their own world.

They could attack us, cause us misery and even kill. They could not rest until they inhabited a body. Many spirits could dwell in a human being if given the chance (Mark 5:1-20). The readers affirmed that if we were unclean, we were open to demonic attacks implying we have to apportion our lives in such a way that we might not invite these demons into our lives. These spirits wanted to get hold of us, and if we led loose lives, they would attack us. Anyone who gives the spirits a chance becomes a habitat for these spirits, as they move on the earth looking for someone to inhabit or destroy. The readers bring a challenge into the thesis – the need to be holy and not to live in sin. If we lead holy lives, these spirits will not be able to attack us. This is buttressed by the fact that in their readings they affirm that if these spirits recognise that Jesus is living in us, they will fear and if we have faith in Jesus, we will not be attacked by them. Thus emphasising the need to stand firm in Jesus.

### ***ii Looking To Jesus***

At another level the readers affirmed that these spirits were around, but we did not have to worry about them at all because whenever they met Jesus they were overpowered. What we have to do is to give our lives to Jesus. If we do that, anytime these spirits attack us, they engage in battle with Jesus and we will have our freedom. This interpretation does not mean that Satan and the demons have been bound. The idea is that anytime these spirits attack (because they are strong) Jesus will fight for us. We have to use the name of Jesus (because of our relationship with him) in binding these demons. These readers emphasised the power of Jesus, which was reflected in His healing. Because Jesus is powerful, there is the need to put our trust and confidence in him. The power of Jesus is able to transform life, and there is the need to have faith in Jesus so that our lives can be transformed. This is a challenge that these readers bring to the thesis.

### ***iii The Spirits Are Strong***

The readers intimated that these spirits are strong and alive. Whenever Jesus meets the demons He has to fight with them. They really challenge Jesus and even though in the end Jesus defeats them, Jesus does not have it easy. The sigh of Jesus is interpreted as a sign of tiredness, showing the struggle involved. If Jesus did not have it easy, then it follows that his followers will not have it easy. Satan and demons tempt the followers of Jesus. They can lock us up to the extent that we live in chains.

They also attack the followers of Jesus to ensure that they fall by the wayside. The Christian life is a spiritual struggle with spiritual forces. If one wants to follow Jesus, there are forces that he is bound to reckon with. Those who follow Jesus have to constantly engage in a battle with these demons. The solution lies in having faith in Jesus, resisting these demons, leading holy lives, praying and fasting.

#### ***iv Bringing The Sick To Jesus.***

The fourth factor, was to do with the practical ways of helping one another. We affirmed that these readers were challenged by people bringing the sick to Jesus. The sick could not go to Jesus on their own. They had to be supported by their neighbours, they had to take risks and eventually they led the sick to Jesus. This communal living or 'we-feeling attitude,' very central to the African milieu, is what we should aim at. As Christians with one faith, one Lord and one baptism, we need to show concern for one another by helping one another. It is in the church that we should carry each other's burden. We are told that the people had information about Jesus before they sent the sick to him. The church should be a place where we have information that will help people to grow in the Christian faith, resisting spiritual powers, living consistent Christian life and supporting one another spiritually, financially, emotionally and psychologically. With this communal feeling the church can be a witnessing church to the world.

#### ***v The Concept of We Feeling***<sup>10</sup>

In Mark 7:31-37 and 8: 22-26 we are told that people brought the sick to Jesus. To avoid repetition we will concentrate on Mark 7: 31-37. The readers gave these people names like helpers, family members, friends, neighbours, bearers and good Samaritans indicating the relationship existing between the sick and the people who brought him to Jesus. The readers intimated that the people who brought the sick to Jesus had faith in him. They wanted to share their faith with the sick by bringing the sick to Jesus for healing. This was faith in action. All the readers came out with the following views: they were kind, helpful, sympathetic, compassionate, friendly and

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<sup>10</sup> For a discussion on the concept of we feeling, see Oduyoye, 'African Religious Beliefs,' pp. 110-111. Africans recognise life as life-in- community. The ethnic group, the village and the locality are crucial in one's estimation of oneself as compared to individual success or failure which is seen as secondary. Our nature as beings-in- relation is a two-way relation: with God and with our fellow human beings. When the communal ideology of clans and ethnic groups is expanded to nations, one sees a societal system in which none is left out in want of basic needs.

had to take a risk. In conclusion, we need help generally from one another and we should be caring and supportive. The above views reflect the African world-view with the focus on communal living. This is a type of spirituality termed communitarian. These views do not come as a surprise to these readers because in their cultural milieu, when one suffers, the community suffer. For these readers the people who brought the man to Jesus, played their role as concerned members of the community.<sup>11</sup>

### **6.10.3 THE READERS' RESPONSES (AS DISCIPLES) TO THE CURING OF DISEASES IF THEY WERE AFFLICTED WITH THEM**

Disciples of Jesus go through afflictions. As followers of Jesus, the readers were asked to state what they would do if they were afflicted with these diseases. The aims were to find out whether (i) their responses would reflect traditional or the Western way of curing diseases and (ii) whether they would continue to have faith in Jesus with intensified prayers or whether they are gripped with fear. How were these people able to know whether these diseases were physical or spiritual? If they were attacked by the disease, they would go to a hospital. If the disease was treated, then it was assumed that it was a physical disease. If visits to the hospital do not bring any cure, and the disease still persisted then one was inclined to think that the disease was spiritual. On the other hand, if they were attacked by the disease and they consulted their pastors, prophets and other Christians, through prayers they could discern that a particular disease is either physical or spiritual.

#### **i POSSESSION**

The readers came out with the following responses as means of curing the disease. All the readers agreed that if they were afflicted with this disease they would go to Jesus for healing. For the readers who saw this disease as psychological, they indicated that if they were afflicted with this disease they would go to a Mental Hospital even though they would be praying. There were the readers who affirmed that this particular disease could not be treated in a hospital, and would pray and then would go to their pastors for prayers and deliverance. There were those who would

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<sup>11</sup> On Collectivist Outlook and Ancestors, see, M.I. Aguilar, 'Time, Communion and Ancestry in African Biblical Interpretation: A Contextual Note on 1 Macc 2:49-70,' in *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32 (2003) pp. 129-144

first admit that they were sick and needed help, and that they would go to people who understood the spirit world; people who saw things spiritually- pastors, prophets, and ministers of God. There were other readers who believed that when such a disease attacked them, they would go to the Herbalists.

### ***ii* DEAFNESS AND IMPEDIMENT IN SPEECH**

The readers made these responses as means of curing such diseases. If the deafness was mental, emotional or accidental, they had to go to the hospital but in all these instances, they would be praying. If the deafness was a spiritual disease, they had to pray, fast and ask other brethren and pastors to pray with them. But they had to have faith in Jesus trusting that they would be healed. If the impediment was a physical disease, they would go to hospital.

### ***iii* BLINDNESS**

The readers indicated that if the disease was physical or natural, there was the need for medical attention and prayer. If it was an acute form of cataract affecting the tissues, there was the need for medical intervention. Other readers would go to herbalists and pray. If the blindness was caused by sin, there was the need for prayer. If spiritual powers-demons, wizards and witches, evil spirits and generation curse caused the blindness, there was the need to pray to Jesus for healing. If the blindness was spiritual blindness, in the sense of the sufferer not knowing Jesus, there was the need for that person to come to Jesus, to know Him by having intimate relationship with him. If the blindness was caused by God, then for His name to be glorified there was the need to pray to God.

### ***iv* EPILEPSY**

The readers from three groups suggested the following responses as means for curing the disease. The first group suggested that if the disease was physical/natural disease, precautions should be taken followed by treatment. There was s the need to take medication regularly. There was s the need to pray before taking the drugs. If the drugs did not control it, one could go through E.E.G. There was also electro electrical impulse. If the disease was hereditary, there was is the need to go to hospital for tests and medication.

The second group affirmed that if the diseases were a result of punishment from God, there was the need to pray for repentance. If demons or spiritual forces caused the disease, there should be prayer, fasting and exercising faith in Jesus. For spiritual disease there was still the need to go to hospital and for prayer, fasting, retreats and reading the word of God.

The third group indicated that If an evil spirit caused the disease, there was the need to exercise faith in Jesus and to fast and pray. If the disease was caused by a curse, there was the need for deliverance and to see a herbalist who would prescribe herbs.

#### **v BARTIMAEUS' BLINDNESS**

The readers gave these responses as means of curing the disease. (i) If it was a physical disease, there was the need to go to the hospital. However, there were some readers who were of the view that if it was a physical disease, caused by infection, there was the need to consult a herbalist. (ii) If it was caused by a curse, sin or disobedience against the ancestors, there was the need to pray. (iii) If the disease was caused by demons, witches and evildoers, there was the need to seek deliverance. (iv) If the disease was symbolic for those living in darkness, there was the need to pray, and to read the Bible.

### **6.11 THE (A) CAUSES AND (B) CURE OF DISEASES AND (c) SPIRITUAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY JESUS. AN ANALYSIS OF THE VARIED VIEWS OF READERS**

From these readings, one can find differences of opinion among readers from the same church on the causes and cure of the diseases and on the spiritual techniques employed by Jesus. What factors have led to the divergent views among the readers? A glance at the educational and professional experiences of the readers shows that almost all the readers have been exposed to Western education particularly Western physics. They depend on motor vehicles and aeroplanes, they do encounter things which provide strong accounts of causality, and they have scientific ways of explaining things. Belief in scientific explanations does a lot of work in trying to make sense of what happens to people in their daily lives. This includes belief in causality. Why do some of these people who have spent their lives in an environment that rejects belief in demons, witches and a host of spiritual powers still believe in



these things and still hold on to their traditional beliefs? What is the power of these traditional beliefs? The answer can be found in the past experiences of the readers and how they were treated when they had similar diseases. They were either treated medically (which shows the extent to which these readers have been influenced by western scientific way of thinking), traditionally or they resorted to both methods for treatment. The other factor that may have caused divergent views among the readers is the knowledge of African culture and tradition which is tied to the African world-view or rather the joining of this with Western world-view. The African world-view has been considered fully in chapter five.

## **A. ANALYSIS OF READERS' RESPONSES ON THE CAUSES OF DISEASES**

### ***i* POSSESSION**

One group from Golders Green Methodist/URC affirmed that the man was possessed by an evil mind. How do we understand the concept of being possessed by an evil mind? Is it an action of the demon or it has got to do with the will of the man? The will in this context refers to that will which is not strong enough to resist evil. If it has got to do with the will of the man, then does that make it a physical or spiritual disease? If it has got to do with the will, the other question is whether the man was born with it? Is it in the genes or has he acquired it? While some of the readers from Golders Green Methodist/URC stressed that the man was born with a bad spirit, some of the readers from MDCC indicated that the evil spirit was struggling with the man's good nature. What can we make of these conflicting opinions regarding different understandings of sin/evil? It is believed among Africans (Ghanaians) that a member of a family can be cursed as a result of an evil action, or that the curse can be in the family for a generation. This is what we call generation curse. Man, ancestors, witches or evil powers, could cause this curse. For these readers the man was not able to resist the demons and they seized the opportunity and used him implying we can refuse to give ourselves to these demons by resisting them because of the power that Jesus has given to us as believers. The readers from MDCC made mention of being 'spiritually strong' as a way of resisting these evil spirits. The term 'spiritually strong' is used by adherents of African Traditional Religion, who have to make sure that they fortify themselves against these spirits by wearing amulets, and making incisions on some parts of the body. The readers also intimated that there are beings that can curse

people. The curse can be reversed or checked traditionally by consulting diviners and traditional healers.<sup>12</sup> From the Christian perspective, the curse can be checked by rejecting it in the name of Jesus. The responses from MDCC appear to be interesting with a great number of them distinguishing between those possessed, tormented and cursed by demons.

These readers gave the following analysis as to what they mean by a person possessed by the demons. They used the words demons and devil interchangeably. When the devil possesses anyone, the devil stamps his authority on that person and controls him or her. If the devil possesses anyone, the person does what the devil wants. The devil's spirit has come to stay in the person and has taken possession of that person. The spirit of the devil grows in the one who is possessed, and the actions of the possessed are motivated by the devil, and if the possessed is not redeemed by the power of Christ, the soul of the possessed will go to hell. According to these readers, to torment, means to torture. Those who are tormented act against their will. The devil can torment somebody in his grips if the person refuses to do what he or she has been asked to do. Even when those in his grips do what the Devil tells them to do, the Devil will still torment them because he does not want any good thing from his victims. According to these readers, the man in the graveyard was tormented in the sense that it was as if the devil was sitting on the spirit of God in the one being tormented and when the Spirit of God wanted to rise then the devil became violent. If one is cursed by demons, it is like the person is doomed and nothing good can come from that person. To be cursed by demons is to be deprived of real joy because the one who is cursed by demons is fed by bad thoughts by the devil and the victim is always sad. To be cursed by demons means one is condemned to hell. The man was cursed by the devil and there was no way the man could free himself. It was like the devil could overpower him and asked him to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit. The madness was the curse because it made him behave like an animal. If you see people who confess that they are witches, it is obvious that their lives are miserable. The devil wants everyone to suffer like himself because he is cursed.

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<sup>12</sup> We need to explain the terms traditional healers and traditionalists in this chapter. Traditional healers refers to the healers who use herbs, roots and bark of trees in preparing medicine for treating diseases without demanding sacrifices to gods, ancestors or spirits. The word traditionalists refers to adherents of African Traditional Religion.

The mention of disobedience to the spiritual powers indicates that these readers have knowledge about traditional practices. Within the African milieu, the people ensure that they establish harmony between them and the spirit beings; for if they do not do that and they offend them, they might incur their displeasure. The displeasure can come in the form of drought, epidemics, etc. but if people maintain good relationship with the spirit beings, they enjoy their fellowship and blessings. The readers from CLEF mentioned spiritual madness implying we have two types of madness- madness which has nothing to do with spiritual powers and madness caused by spiritual powers. The mention of gods brings to mind the readers' knowledge about traditional thought. Who are the 'gods'<sup>13</sup>? They are spirits that move around even though the belief is that they reside in specific places or objects. Such objects are the contact point with the spirit which is not confined therein. The gods are tutelary deities of a town, or family and their significance can be seen locally. The gods can be state gods, clan or lineage gods, patron gods of crafts and business whose speciality lies in providing women with children. In the traditional society, if a pregnant woman brings forth twins, the belief is that the children are from a particular god. These gods protect people against misfortunes and witches.

## **ii DEAFNESS AND IMPEDIMENT IN SPEECH**

For the readers from Kensington URC man is made up of the mind, body and the spirit. When a person is sick, all these faculties are affected and a break up in these faculties affects the whole body. For some of the readers from CLEF if the person were to be a child, then it would mean there was something under the tongue that prevented the child from speaking. Nobody would take the child to hospital, but by divine intervention the child could speak.

## **iii BLINDNESS**

For some of the readers from South West London Ghana SDA, God was not punishing the man, but He had allowed the man to suffer from the disease so that His name will be glorified. Some of the readers from Upper Tooting Methodist Church affirmed that the blindness was a metaphor for ignorance. Who caused the ignorance?

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<sup>13</sup> The section on who the gods and their activities are a summary from Pobee, 'Aspects of African Religion,' pp.10-11

Was it Satan, God, the man himself, witches or the demons? The mention of shock and infection by some readers from St. Andrews URC brings to light their knowledge of modern medicine. The mention of generation curse, demons and witches by the readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea shows that these readers draw on traditional African beliefs.

#### **iv EPILEPSY**

Some of the readers from Central London Ghana SDA intimated that epilepsy was a disease of the mind. How do we explain it? Is it a physical or spiritual disease? The view that Jesus said, 'be healed', therefore it is a spiritual disease as affirmed by some readers from Streatham URC is very interesting. Mark uses the Greek word σώζειν which means both 'save' and 'heal' in a number of healing stories especially in the interlocking stories of the woman with the issues of blood and Jairus' daughter. In Mark 5:23 it has a link with the word 'life'. In Mark 5:34 and 10:52 it is affirmed that 'faith' has saved or healed a person. In Mark 6:56 the sick person touches the clothes of Jesus and is healed or saved (cf. 5:28). The close association of these three 'key'<sup>14</sup> words-'save,' 'faith' and 'life,' which for the early Church were of soteriological significance imply that Mark sees these texts as physical healings. At the end of the story dealing with Jairus' daughter, Jesus raises the girl. Jesus is the resurrection and life and new life comes through him. In this context, what the readers are affirming is that the disease goes beyond physical healing. Some of the readers from St Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church, Nunhead, affirmed that the disease could be a punishment or a curse. The punishment could come from the evil one because it could be that the father had a previous alliance with evil spirits and then the man broke the alliance. It could be a curse in the family. They dilated on curse and the father of the child who had a previous alliance with evil spirits. When one dabbles in these spirits and leaves them, there is the need to break ties with them completely by finding security in Jesus otherwise these powers will be following you all the time, frustrating your plans and wrestling with you always. Some of the readers from this church were of the opinion that this disease has no cure but according to them, in this day and age, this disease is treatable.

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<sup>14</sup> Best, *Story*, pp. 60-61

## **ν BARTIMAEUS' BLINDNESS**

The readers from Beneficial Veracious Christ Church, East Acton affirmed that the disease was caused by the sin of the parents. The new idea the readers bring into this thesis is the sins of parents causing a disease to their son. The impression being created is that, as parents, we need to be cautious about the type of life we lead. If we live in sin, the effect will be upon our children. There is therefore the need for parents to lead holy lives. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost, Battersea affirmed that the disease could be attributed to the sin of the man, implying if we live in sin, we can suffer and one way of suffering is being inflicted with disease. Readers from London Central Ghana SDA classified it as symbolic for those living in darkness. All the readers from the four churches were concerned with the spiritual cause of the disease in the sense of not knowing Jesus. For these readers, having a personal relationship with Jesus is very important.

## **B. ANALYSIS OF READERS' VARIED RESPONSES ON THE CURE OF DISEASES**

The readers' responses to the cure of diseases if they were afflicted by them also have varied responses. There were some readers who would treat the diseases medically but would still be pray. Why would they treat the disease medically? They gave natural causes to the disease – germ, parasite, infection, ageing, poor diet, unhealthy environment, lack of rest, over-eating, bodily malfunction etc. If these were the causes of the diseases, then obviously the treatment would take the form of diagnosis and medication. Why would they still be praying even though they would go in for medical treatment? Their prayers would ask God to guide the doctors/nurses to treat them and give them the right medicine. It could be that the doctors/nurses were not in the right frame of mind – either being annoyed at home, depressed, worried etc, and their prayers could change the negative moods of the doctors. Moreover, when they were given medicine they had to pray to God to bless the tablets. According to these readers, if God did not bless the tablets, they would not be effective in healing the diseases. Moreover, if they did not pray for the pharmacists who would dispense the drugs, they could give the wrong medicine or wrong dosage. Similarly, with Xrays, or laboratory tests, there could be technical faults with equipment etc. Praying to God would go a long way to bringing positive results. These instances showed that the readers had firm belief in prayer.

There were some readers who would treat the disease spiritually. These people would not go to hospital. Why? For such people, the cause of the disease was spiritual. Their reason was based on their belief in God (Jesus). They believed that spiritual forces caused disease and because of that they should use spiritual means in treating them. These people believed in the power of prayer. For these readers when they prayed they had the faith that they would be healed. They would go to prayer meetings, deliverance services and they would fast, etc.,.

There were others who would treat these diseases traditionally. We need to explain the term traditional healing. There are two categories of traditional healing. There are those who have been endowed with the gift of using herbs, roots and bark of trees who use them in treating diseases. There are also those who would resort to sacrifices, divination and other methods, which are in conflict with their Christian beliefs. It is the former that these people would go to, for they believed that roots, herbs, and bark of trees are gifts given to humanity by God.

There were other readers who would opt for both medical and traditional treatment. There are varied reasons why some of the readers would combine the two methods. (i) For some Africans, modern medicine 'tackles the manifestations of the disease but not its cause'.<sup>15</sup> For this reason they have to search for people who will be able to attack or uproot the cause of the disease. In other words, these people go to the traditional healers to supplement the help they get from orthodox Western Medicine. (ii) The traditional healers seek the patients' well being, 'as well as their spiritual and psychological fulfilment'.<sup>16</sup> This is supported by the response from some of the readers from Kensington United Reformed Church who affirmed that when one is sick, then one suffers mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. For the African the belief is that when one is ill, 'the whole person is ill'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> H. B. M. Murphy, 'The Traditional Healer: Colleague or Quack?' Postgraduate Doctor, *Africa*, vol. 6, No. 5 (May 1984) p.146. cited by Udobata Onunwa, 'The Biblical Basis for Some Healing Methods in African Traditional Society', pp. 188-195 esp. p. 188

<sup>16</sup> Udobata Onunwa, 'Healing Methods', p.190

<sup>17</sup> M. Hegba, 'Healing in Africa', translated by J. Bowden, pp.60-71 esp. p.71

The following patterns emerge from the readers' responses to how they would cure diseases. (i) through prayer, (ii) through the use of medical treatment (iii) through spiritual means (iv) through more traditional means and (v) through the use of both medical and traditional treatment.

What came out clearly from both groups with high percentage and low percentage of health professionals was that they offered both physical and spiritual causes and cure of the diseases. The question that arises is whether there is any identifiable correlation between beliefs about the nature and causes of diseases and type of church and educational and professional background? A closer look at Table 2 clearly shows that in the Main-Line and Adventist churches there are more health professionals- people who have been exposed to Western medicine. But what is interesting is that if one looks at the responses given by these respondents as to the causes of the diseases, the impression one gets is that though they saw these diseases as caused by physical factors, they were open to the suggestion that these diseases could also have spiritual causes. On the other hand if one looks at the responses from the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches where members tend to believe in the spiritual causes of diseases, because of their background, the impression one gets is that they are open to the suggestion that these diseases could also have physical causes. What can be deduced from the responses of these respondents is that their views are not heavily weighted to one side (that is either spiritual or physical causes) but they are balanced in their views. In the responses to the cure of diseases, what emerges is that respondents from the Main-Line /Adventist churches and Pentecostal/Charismatic churches resort to both medical and traditional treatment. But there is one underlying factor common to all, which is that they see the need for prayer in treating every disease.

### **C. ANALYSIS OF THE READERS' VIEWS ON SPIRITUAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY JESUS IN HEALING DIFFERENT DISEASES**

The readers wanted to know the type of spirit possessing the man. For the African, spirits have got distinctive ways of possessing people. There are spirits which act like snakes with hissing sounds and the wagging of tails when they possess people while other spirits behave like animals by their movements. The idea of many demons taking hold of the man does not come as a surprise to the readers at all, because in

their traditional context, many demons can take possession of a person. Spirits of gods and divinities can take hold of people and possess them against their will. Some respondents from Musama Disco Christo Church affirmed that (i) our capacity to contain evil was so great and one could take too much and be overburdened. From this affirmation, we can infer that this is a pathetic situation showing the feeble nature of man. For the African, a person can be possessed by many demons, and their activities can be manifested in the person. These forces cause havoc and they harass human beings.

The traditionalists will go to diviners and traditional healers for protection against these demonic spirits. For the African Christians, even though they believe that demons exist, they also believe the power of Jesus is able to crush them. Once they are in Christ, they are secured. They can resist these demons, because of their relationship with Jesus. They have the power within them to resist these demonic powers. They lead holy lives, they read their Bible, and they are always trusting in the power of Jesus. When they go to the traditional healers, they go there because these healers are experts who use herbs, roots and bark of trees in preparing medicine for people. People who go to these herbalists often quote Isaiah. All the readers were of the view that Jesus defeated the demons.

The readers from all the churches added something which was not stated but which reflects an aspect of African healers. The readers affirmed that Jesus did not ask for anything in the form of present or money from the man. Some African healers are noted for charging exorbitant fees from those who consult them for healing. The readers also indicated that Jesus asked the man who has been healed to go and witness about what the Lord had done for him and that Jesus in his healing did not give glory to himself as opposed to some African and contemporary healers who want to be advertised for the healings that they do.

Some of the readers from MDCC affirmed that Jesus sacrificed the swine for the man. The mention of sacrifice is very important particularly to some Africans. There are reasons why sacrifices are made. Depending upon the area, cows, sheep, goats or fowls are sacrificed to the gods for prosperity, bumper harvest, protection, atoning for sins committed, and for calamities that come upon the people and appeasing them. An



earthquake is explained as the anger of some spirit-being at some wrongdoing, hidden or not, in the society. An unsuccessful or difficult delivery is attributed to the violation of family taboo or to the infidelity of the expectant mother; and in these instances sacrifices must be made to appease the spirit powers. The idea of sacrifice means that these readers are reading the text from their traditional background. The animals that are sacrificed have no souls, and yet they are sacrificed with the view that people who have souls will live and enjoy life, because from their traditional milieu human life is greater or more valuable than that of an animal. For these readers, it was better for Jesus to sacrifice the pigs and redeem a living soul, just as in the traditional context it is better to sacrifice to the gods so that human life can continue. In traditional religion blood sacrifice is of great significance, implying the shedding of life and by 'taking the essence of the animal'<sup>18</sup> thereby establishing a bond with the god. There is the belief that 'the life (or soul) of the flesh is in the blood.'<sup>19</sup> In most of the cases, the blood is poured out to the god and the flesh is eaten by those around. The readers from Kensington URC viewed Jesus taking the man outside as both positive (the people would praise Him) and negative (Jesus could be criticised on the grounds of the method used).

The readers from CLEF opined that Jesus did not want the people to see the method he was going to use. This shows clearly that their background is influencing their reading. In some traditional societies some herbalists choose to go far away to get herbs for healing their patients even though some might be around their compounds. This is an attempt to make sure that people do not get easy access to these herbs, and also for them to realise the difficulty involved in searching for the herbs. For some of the readers even though the people brought the sick man to Jesus, Jesus took the man aside because He did not want to do anything with them. For some Africans there is a proverb which can be translated, 'Fear a kinsman', the idea being that it is likely that some of those who brought the sick man were the cause of the disease, and that Jesus did not want to have anything at all to do with them. There was also the view that before healing Jesus would pray, and that Jesus wanted to pray on the quiet before healing the man. The idea of prayer is very important to the African, especially in times of sickness or calamity. The readers also emphasised that Jesus did not want

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<sup>18</sup> G. Parrinder, *West African Religion* (London: Epworth Press, 1949) p.71

<sup>19</sup> Parrinder, *Religion*, p.71

any glory from the crowd. These days there is the tendency for some healers to be popular.

These readers emphasised the power of the Holy Spirit as liberation from Satan who held human beings captive. The readers from CLEF opined that Jesus spat and touched the tongue because Jesus had a vision from God. In African societies, dreams/visions are still taken seriously as ‘medium of revelation’<sup>20</sup> to warn, threaten and guide the living. Priests and other religious leaders and medicine men are called by dreams and visions. The interest in dreams and visions reflects the traditional world-view, in which ‘the visible and invisible worlds interlock at many points.’<sup>21</sup> One thing about dreams is that they have a supernatural significance. The same can be said about visions, and moreover many ordinary everyday experiences are also seen to have supernatural or mystical slant. Dreams serve as bridges between ‘the sacred and the secular worlds.’<sup>22</sup> We can surmise that the readers regarded Jesus as a powerful healer whose sputum contained the power of healing. In the African milieu, a healer is powerful. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost and CLEF dilated on the direction of the Holy Spirit and vision from God. These Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches lay stress on the activities of the Holy Spirit and visions.

The readers brought to the fore the view that God was with Jesus in the healing process. It showed the strong relationship that Jesus had with God, and because of this relationship Jesus was able to heal. There was also the stress on power. For the African, power in healing is very significant. The impression created is that their understanding of heaven, God’s abode. To the African, God is in heaven, and there is an African proverb which says, ‘No one teaches the child, God,’ implying God is known by every African. Whenever an African swears and he mentions the name of God, he points to heaven with his fingers.

The idea that the sigh of Jesus reflects Jesus’ worry about the effect of the sin of the man brings to mind the African understanding of disease. For some Africans, sin can cause disease. The impression one gets from these readings is that Jesus did not have

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<sup>20</sup> J.S.Pobee, ‘I will lift up my eyes to Mozano,’ in *International Review of Missions*, vol. XXV. No. 298, April 1986 pp. 123-127 esp. p. 125

<sup>21</sup> Pobee, ‘Mozano’, p. 125

<sup>22</sup> Pobee, ‘Mozano,’ p. 125

it easy – he was tired, reflecting on the task ahead, thinking of a solution to the problem and he was releasing tension. All these indicate what Jesus went through because of his human nature. In spite of the above there is no wonder that Jesus had power.

The readers affirmed that Jesus commanded the ear to open. We can infer from these readers that Jesus had power; and it was reflected in his command. Some of the readers saw the disease as demonic. The demon had chained or bound the man and Jesus' command (which had power) was able to break the chains binding the man. The fact that the man had been chained by the demon implied that the demon had not been bound.

The readers from St Andrews URC opined that Jesus took the man outside the village to avoid evil men. The idea of the people being evil raises an interesting and important issue. For the African, whenever there is a crowd there are demons and those with evil eyes. There are even villages and cities in Africa noted for evil eyes and demonic activities. According to the readers, Jesus had to take the man out of the village because even though Jesus would eventually heal the man (because he was powerful), yet the presence of demons and evil eyes would create problems during the process of healing which would mean that it would take a longer time for the healing to take place.

All the readers commented on the spittle used by Jesus. For these readers, if someone spat on anybody, it was an insult. Spittle is dirty and using the dirt as a means of healing would mean the man had faith. The impression one got was that the readers were apprehensive about the spittle, but because Jesus was holy, the spittle was given a different interpretation – 'holy spittle', which was able to cure the man. Power is very important especially when one talks of the healing power of Jesus in relation to the casting out of demons.

Some of the readers from Upper Tooting Methodist Church affirmed that Jesus used spittle to heal because possibly it was the tradition of the people to do that. The concept of tradition is an awareness of the different traditions people bring with them

in reading the text. Some readers from the same church indicated that the spittle signified water for cleansing, and if there was something on the eyes you used water to wash. To them, it was like using the spittle to clean the eyes. This idea of symbolism is very interesting.

All the readers from the churches affirmed that Jesus was not a one-way Jesus. The use of spittle was one of Jesus' ways of healing. This was what the Spirit showed him to do. The impression one got was that Jesus did not act out of his own volition, but was directed by the Spirit, and that sometimes the activities of the Spirit could be in conflict with our way of thinking and they cautioned that in order not to talk against the Spirit, we need to keep quiet.

We can surmise that for these readers, Jesus was playing the role of a healer. As a healer, he had to diagnose the disease by placing the hand on the affected area and releasing power there. However, some of the readers from Upper Tooting Methodist Church affirmed that the laying on of hands upon the blind man could signify a battle or war between two people. In this instance, it is a war between Jesus and Satan so there should be contact before the healing. The readers from these churches indicated that Jesus by questioning the man was testing his faith. For these readers, faith is very important especially in healing.

All the readers raised concerns about Jesus giving the man instructions after healing him. They were expecting instructions like take care of yourself, avoid this or that (typical of traditional healers and doctors). But they were surprised that Jesus being the Son of God, warned the man not to broadcast the news. They were expecting Jesus to have instructed the man to declare the healing to others. For all the readers, the story showed that a miracle had taken place. It is a story that builds up one's faith. Other readers raised concerns about why Jesus (the Son of God) had to perform a second miracle instead of healing him by the first touch. Some Africans are particular about instantaneous healing in all cases.

## 6.12 THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN THE READERS' VIEWS

We have intimated that these readers read the text within the context of their traditional beliefs. They linked spiritual causes of diseases to demons, witches, evil eye, etc, which operated as described in the traditional world-view. They also resorted to traditional treatment of diseases. What is the attitude of these churches to African religious beliefs and practices? To what extent do these churches officially (or unofficially) accept that their members should participate in or refrain from African traditional practices? Which practices will they accept or reject?

The churches allow their members to go to the traditional healers who use herbs, roots and bark of trees for healing because these are gifts from God that can be used for the well-being of humanity. During festivals, Christians are allowed to go to their towns and villages. These festivals have sociological implications – reunion and solving disputes among family members, transacting business and marriages. Christians are allowed to use African instruments for worship and to dance to the tune of traditional music.

There are other practices within African Traditional Religion, which are not acceptable to Christian principles, and because of that Christians are not supposed to indulge in them. Adherents of Traditional Religion practise polygamy. Polygamists who go to church are not given Holy Communion, and are not given responsibility in the churches. Christians go in for traditional marriage before the blessing. In traditional marriage the families of the bride will ask for traditional drink (that is palm wine) or schnapps. Some can compromise by paying money. Elders of the family will use the schnapps or palm wine in praying to ancestors for prosperous marriage. Sacrifices to the gods (which are common in African Traditional Religion) are not encouraged by the churches. Christians are not allowed to communicate with the dead. Chiefs and traditional elders can go to church, but they are not allowed to take part in 'Holy Communion'<sup>23</sup>. There is an on-going discussion as to whether

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<sup>23</sup> Chiefs are people who sit on stools that are purified on every fortieth day. In purifying the stools, libation is poured to the gods and sacrifices are also made to them. The traditional elders are people who pour libation to the ancestors and the gods on every fortieth day. The view is that people who sit on such stools and those involved in praying to the ancestors and the gods are allowed to worship in the church, but they are not allowed to take part in Holy Communion.

polygamists, chiefs and traditional elders who go to church should be allowed to take part in Holy Communion.

Officially the church's position is that Christians should not pour libation. This applies to all churches. But where this stance is flouted, a clash between the Christian and the traditional world-views is created. There are some Christians who will leave the scene when libation is poured because this is a way of communicating with the gods for support, protection, etc. There are others who are of the view that it is an African way of praying to God and accept it. Christians pray through Jesus, while the adherents of African Traditional Religion pray through the gods. There is a clash here. Is it Jesus or the gods who must play the intermediary role? Because of this clash of views, at outdoorings<sup>24</sup>, transaction of marriages and funerals, prayers are offered to the gods. Some leave the scene, while others watch on. As to whether those watching on, share in what is going on, or reject in an indirect way what goes on, is a matter to be decided by them.

At festivals, when the traditional foods are prepared, elders pray to the gods and sprinkle the food (mashed yam and eggs) on the streets before people begin to eat the food. There are two reactions to this tradition. (1) There are some Christians who will attend these festivals and will not eat the food because they have been offered to the gods. (2) There are Christians who feel there is nothing wrong with eating such food if they pray over it. This is like the idol meat issue in Corinth.<sup>25</sup> This is a dilemma which needs to be addressed.

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<sup>24</sup> Among Ghanaians there is the belief that when a child is born he still belongs to the ancestral world, and can return to the ancestral world. The baby is kept in a room until the eighth day when he is brought outside. This process of bringing the baby outside amidst feasting and merry making is called outdoorings. It is on the eighth day that the baby is given a name and he becomes a living member of the community.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the social ethos conveyed by Paul's instruction on idol meat issue in Corinth, see, D. Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1996) pp. 142-150

### 6.13 CONSONANCE AND DISSONANCE BETWEEN THE AFRICAN VIEWS AND MARK

We will now look briefly at the points of consonance and dissonance between the African views and the views underlying Mark's text. For both the Ghanaian readers and the Markan Community, the message is good news. Both readers affirmed Jesus' victory over demonic powers. They emphasised the importance of faith in Jesus and in God. For these readers, the earth was in subjection to cosmic forces of evil, and what came out clearly was that human beings were helpless in the sense that they could not fight with these forces by their own efforts. The only hope for them was an 'eschatological act of God,'<sup>26</sup> that would bring a complete change in the conditions that were currently presently prevailing, thereby defeating the oppressive powers. For these readers, salvation could not be achieved by human effort but only by Jesus. It was salvation that dealt with how humanity could be redeemed from these powers that oppressed people.

For the Markan Community and the Ghanaian readers, the presence of Jesus and the Spirit were with them. They affirmed the close relationship between Jesus and God. Both communities saw Jesus as the one who brought life and who made life meaningful. Jesus integrated lives that were physically, psychologically and spiritually shattered. For the 'Markan Community' and the Ghanaian readers, the God-given wholeness and peace was restored only through Jesus. For Mark, Jesus did not exist primarily as a lonely individual, but as one living in the Community. It implied then that to live the Christian life means 'being with him'.<sup>27</sup> The portrayal of a life of discipleship as a communion with Jesus resonates with the experience of the 'Markan Community'. This is also reflected in the African communities.

The 'Markan Community' see Jesus as prayerful. For Mark, Jesus went up the mountain to pray (Mark 6:46b cf. Mark 1:35). The Ghanaian readers see Jesus as also prayerful and it is through prayer that He received power. Jesus' looking into heaven was interpreted by some of the readers as Jesus praying. Other readers intimated that before Jesus healed the epileptic boy, he had to pray. The implication from the responses of both communities is that if Jesus is prayerful, then the followers of Jesus

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<sup>26</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.72

<sup>27</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 267

must also be prayerful; and if we pray, Jesus will ultimately save us from danger and also provide for our needs.

One can also glean differences between the two communities. Both communities were expecting the end of the world. But the 'Markan Community' were expecting it sooner. 'The Markan Community' were apocalyptic. The type of tribulation that the 'Markan Community' were going through (Mark 13:14) cannot be compared to the tribulation that the African (Ghanaian) Christians are going through presently. Some members of the 'Markan Community' seemed to be hated by the whole world (13:13). The pressure from outside was matched by 'delusion, dissolution and apostasy on the inside'<sup>28</sup> (Mark 13:6, 9-13, 22).

Among the Christians in the West, the message is good news. Salvation is achieved through the grace of God. The Westerners affirm close relationship between Jesus and God, and without Jesus it is impossible to lead the Christian life. Discipleship is also emphasised by the Westerners. They see Jesus as prayerful and as followers of Jesus they believe that when they pray, Jesus will provide their needs and save them from danger. The westerners are also expecting the end of the world.

#### **6.14 QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE READERS WHICH ARE NOT TOUCHED BY MARK OR IN THE WESTERN READINGS**

Mark and Western scholars do not provide us with any information on some important issues which will be addressed in this section of the thesis.

##### **i POSSESSION OF VICTIMS**

The readers from Archway Methodist Church affirmed that (a) the unclean spirits requested to enter the swine and this showed the spirits saw the swine as unclean implying if you are unclean, you are liable to be attacked or possessed by these demons. Groups from Golders Green United Reformed Church/Methodist affirmed that the swine were open for demonic spirits because they were unholy. They affirmed that if we are not holy we are open to demonic attack implying if we lead holy lives,

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<sup>28</sup> Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p.288



evil spirits or demons will not attack us. Being unholy involves dabbling in witchcraft and having alliances with spiritual powers.

Within MDCC, the readers maintained that (a) if you lead a 'loose' life evil spirits can enter into you. (b) Demonic spirits go to places that are weak to settle there. (c) When these evil spirits find a home, they don't want to leave. From these statements, we can surmise that people can be possessed or attacked by demonic powers if they are careless about the way they live; and the only antidote can be found in living a holy life. The group further affirmed that people could be possessed and attacked by demonic spirits if they meddled with unknown spirits. According to these readers, we find in Scripture several spirits in the world which can be categorised into good spirits and bad spirits. Some spirits originate from the devil; these are evil spirits. One can find accounts in Scripture of demonstrations of the activities of evil spirits. These include magic, necromancy, divination, fortune telling, witchcraft and wizardry. Meddling in spirits is a reference to taking part in the activities of the spirits mentioned above. Some of the readers from this church asked the question: 'How could a child of God be in such a horrible situation? This question raises an important issue. Can a Christian be attacked by these evil powers? If a Christian does not live a life consistent with the Scripture, that person is liable to be attacked by evil spirits. These evil spirits can make the life of a carnal Christian a misery. Christians should not have the idea that they can take the grace in vain and lead a reckless life, hoping that all will be well with them. Rather, a Christian should hold fast unto Jesus, and will be protected from these evil spirits.

The readers from London South East Ghana SDA intimated that anyone who allowed himself/herself to be taken by evil spirits would become a habitat for the demonic spirits as they walked on the earth looking for people to inhabit or destroy. Some of the readers from Brixton Hill Catholic Church intimated that spirits (a) move from one body to another (b) put fear into people and (c) at times make one to lose faith and hope. In one of the groups at Brixton Hill Catholic church, discussion centred around death through accident. These were the responses: it could be the driver's fault, natural death, destiny, the nature of the road or demons or witches. Some of the people maintained that even when an old person dies there is this feeling among some Africans that the death is caused by demons and witches, implying these spirits could

even kill people. This creates tension and fear and the need to ensure that one is protected. Life in traditional society is one long tale of seeking protection against witches and witchcraft. Such protection is sought at the relatively modern anti-witchcraft shrines. Others wear charms. Some of the traditionalists who do not go to church will find security in going to the diviners and the traditional healers. Traditional society claims that developing one's spirit was the best antidote against witches. Those who go to church will find their consolation in depending on Jesus, reading the word of God, praying and fasting. The readers from Elim Church of Pentecost stated that evil spirits could dwell in a human being if given the chance, implying people can fall victim to these demonic powers. They opined that, 'a human being needed to be very careful,' and that carefulness lay in the person's lifestyle, making sure that the person did not fall prey or victim to demonic spirits.

The group from CLEF came out with the following views: We could be victims of these demonic powers through our attitudes which pave way for spirits to enter through pride, exposing ourselves to bad company, engaging in witchcraft, idol worship, consulting powers for childbirth, fortune, marriage partners, etc. They affirmed that one could be attacked through food, drink, gifts and presents, direct spiritual attacks and at times these powers could cause hardships in our lives to draw people to them. Readers from Harlesden Methodist Church maintained that demons attacked and possessed people who did not have faith, implying that people who had strong faith in Jesus could not be attacked by demons but those who did not have faith could easily be attacked by demons.

These readers are aware of spirits and demons, yet they do not fear them because they have nothing to do with them. However, because there is the idea that these spirits are hovering around to inhabit people as vessels and also to attack people to the extent that they can lose their faith, readers made every effort to resist these forces when they attacked. Through the study of the Bible they are able to lead lives that will liberate them from these powers.

## ***ii* WAYS OF COPING WITH THESE SPIRITS**

Ghanaian readers have to find ways of coping with evil spirits by avoiding them, by leading holy lives, and having faith in Jesus. This was expressed by some readers that whenever Jesus met these demons, He defeated them, and that whenever these demons attacked us, Jesus would defeat them and this gave consolation to the readers. For some of the readers, the demons had to struggle with Jesus even though eventually Jesus defeated them. This means the followers of Jesus are engaged in a spiritual battle, with attacks from all sides. A further way of coping with these spirits is by living as a Christian Community, helping, supporting and encouraging one another and building one another in the Christian faith. This is a collective model as opposed to Western Individualism. Through this practical way of coping with life, the church can be a witnessing church to the world.

Just as from the readers' perspective, people had to bring the sick to Jesus for healing, thereby demonstrating their care and concern, the church as a community can help those who are suffering by giving them the spiritual, emotional, and financial support when the need arises. This type of support goes beyond bringing the sick to Jesus to be healed. It involves sharing in personal and family events such as the naming of a newborn child, marriage, sickness and bereavement. Funerals, for example, should be the responsibility of the whole church, the whole community of God, and not just of the family (kin-group) as in Western Society.

## ***iii* CAUSES OF DISEASES**

The readers provided a wide range of causes of diseases- emotional, psychological, physical, mental and physiological. They also suggested spiritual causes of diseases- witches and ancestors. In traditional society, witches are the primary cause of evil. Apart from the witches and the ancestors, the readers also made mention of evil eyes. The readers intimated that Jesus had to take the blind man outside because there were a lot of evil eyes. Even though Jesus had power to heal them, the readers affirmed that their presence could have delayed the healing process. Those with evil eyes could cast their eyes on babies and children and caused convulsion attacks. These readers also mentioned curse as a cause of diseases. Ancestors, witches, evil doers and the spiritual powers could bring a curse on people. Within traditional society, this curse can be

removed by consulting diviners and traditional healers. But among Christians this curse can be destroyed by rejecting it in the name of Jesus.

#### ***iv* CURE OF DISEASES**

Ghanaian readers brought into the thesis a broad view about the cure of disease. They affirmed that if they were afflicted by a disease caused by the malfunction of the body, they would go to Jesus (that is, pray) as well as to the hospital for treatment. They also affirmed that if the disease was caused by a spiritual power or force, they would pray. They stressed the significance of prayer as a means of treating these spiritual diseases. They would also fast and read their Bibles. They would solicit the help of their pastors, fellow Christians and they would also go to deliverance services to be healed. They also intimated that they would go to people who really knew the spirit world- pastors and prophets to find out whether the disease was caused by an ancestor, a curse, an evil eye or a witch so that the necessary steps could be taken to ensure healing. Others were of the view that they would go to herbalists who would use herbs for healing and to treat infection.

#### ***v* TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY JESUS**

Most of the readers were interested in the healing techniques of Jesus. For example, Jesus sent the swine into the sea. On the other hand some of the readers expressed shock, whilst others were puzzled because Jesus used sputum in healing the person. This is because, from their cultural context, sputum is of low negative significance. This shows how Christians read the text within the context of their cultural and traditional values. They actually contextualise the text. Some expressed interest in the straight healing of Jesus where people were healed instantaneously showing the miraculous power of Jesus. Perhaps this is why Matthew plays down 'techniques' in healing narratives and makes them more instantaneous. There were others who expressed concern about the two stages of the healing. For such readers, it was not always the case that when people were attacked by diseases, they were healed instantaneously. Healing was a gradual process, and by the time the person was healed, he/she might have learnt something spiritual e.g. patience, tolerance, long suffering which are hallmarks of African culture. What comes out clearly is that these responses are rooted in African culture, and it shows how these readers approach the Bible with their African background.

## **vi GRAVEYARDS**

The readers from MDCC in Brixton posed the following questions: (i) Why did Jesus pass through the graveyard? (ii) What was Jesus doing in that area? (iii) Did Jesus go there with a view of searching for the Legion for a contest? Many people passed through the area without any confrontation but when the evil spirits saw Jesus, they asked, 'did you come here to destroy us?' These questions are very important. For the African, the graveyard is the place inhabited by ghosts and evil forces. In traditional religion, during certain times of the year the adherents go to the graveyard and offer food and drink to the departed. The belief is that they will come and eat the food and take the drink. The readers opined that Jesus passed through the graveyard because he knew there was somebody to be released from bondage. This statement raises a number of concerns: (i) what type of people are vulnerable to these spirits? (ii) why are they vulnerable? and (iii) how can they be liberated? To the African, these demons have influence or power over a certain class of people. (i) those who fear them and (ii) those who have an alliance with them through pact, seal and other dealings. For some traditionalists, even though these powers are there, they do not fear them. They have traditionally maintained an intimate relationship with them. They communicate with them, honour them with offerings and depend upon them for guidance. For those people who are in bondage to those spirits to be released, they consult diviners and traditional healers for protection and for treatment. For the African Christian, liberty or liberation comes from Jesus.

## **vii THE DISCIPLES' INABILITY TO CURE THE EPILEPTIC BOY**

Some of the readers assigned reasons why the disciples were not able to heal the boy in Mark 9:14-29. Among other reasons, these readers reaffirmed that the disciples were denied that power. The cause of the denial of power according to these readers could be attributed to sin. The more one gets involved in sin, the more this power becomes corrupted, adulterated and ineffective; and a healer who continues to live in sin sooner or later finds out that he becomes ineffective. The new idea which these readers bring to the thesis relates to the fact that a healer can lose his healing power if he resorts to loose living; and in order for the healer to maintain his healing gift, he has to lead a certain kind of life, a consistent holy life. As individuals, we can be denied that power if we live in sin.

## 6.15 CONCLUSION

What are our findings so far? Firstly, this chapter provides conflicting views of the readers on the concerns raised, their understanding of the causes of evil and diseases like possession, deafness and impediment of speech, blindness, epilepsy and the blindness of Bartimaeus. They had conflicting views on physical, spiritual, and both physical and spiritual causes. There were varied views in their understanding of physical and spiritual causes. There were conflicting views among these readers on the power of Satan and demons and because of these views they ended up on what to fear and what not to fear about Satan and demons. On the binding of Satan there were conflicting views. For some of the readers Satan had already been bound and even regarding when he was bound these readers gave conflicting views. For some of the readers, Satan will be bound in the Parousia while some intimated that Satan had been bound once but they do not know the period. Even though for these readers Satan had been bound or will be bound, it did not mean that Satan was immobile.

There are two views on what happened when Jesus met demons. The first is that Jesus cleared the demons. The other is that even though Jesus defeated the demons, He did that with difficulty. Again, conflicting views can be found here. There were conflicting views among the readers on why the disciples were not able to cure the epileptic boy, the spiritual techniques employed by Jesus in his healings and in their responses as disciples the means of curing these diseases if they were afflicted by them. On the latter they range from medical, spiritual, traditional to medical and spiritual and medical and traditional. What factors have led to these conflicting views? There are three factors-Western values including education, traditional and past experiences regarding what they did when they went through certain experiences and traditional practices and beliefs.

Apart from these conflicting views, there were some consensus on some of the concerns they raised. They all agreed that there was a spiritual warfare between the two Kingdoms headed by Jesus and by Satan. They all agreed that the house in 3:27 referred to the territory of Satan and that Jesus went in to set those in the house free from the clutches of Satan. The readers agreed that Jesus had power over Satan.

One could find consonance and dissonance between African views and Mark. For both Ghanaian readers and the Markan community, human beings on earth are in subjection to evil forces creating a situation whereby they find themselves vulnerable to these cosmic forces and there is the need to rely on Jesus for survival. Both communities emphasise the importance of faith in Jesus, but the Ghanaian readers pushed the idea of faith too far when they gave their views on the Gerasene Demoniac. The impression one gets is that they had other texts in mind (such as Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6; Mark 11:22-24) when they were reading the Gerasene Demoniac. One can find differences between both communities. The Markan community was expecting the end of the world soon. For the Ghanaian community even though they were expecting the end of the world, they were not expecting it to be soon.

These readers bring into the thesis valuable concerns that are not raised by either Mark or the Western scholars. These concerns are why people are possessed by spirits and ways of coping with these spirits; causes and cure of diseases, spiritual techniques employed by Jesus in his healings, the significance of graveyards and the denial of power in discipleship.

One can see from this chapter the extent to which science, tradition and past experiences have influenced the readers in reading Mark. Because these readers have been influenced by traditional practices and beliefs we discussed areas where the church approves of traditional practices and areas where these traditional practices and beliefs are forbidden. Even though these readers are in the Western world, there are certain areas where they are influenced by traditional practices and beliefs and this is reflected in some of their responses.

We have looked at Mark, Western scholars reconstructions of Markan cosmology and now Ghanaian readers' views. What emerges when we put all this together? It is clear that Ghanaian readers are interested in learning from Mark how to live in a world which is dangerous and where disease and moral temptations can prove disastrous. The accounts they give of such dangers (spiritual and physical) vary considerably, but there is obviously widespread belief that demonic agencies are actively producing problems. So they want to know how to counter them; as they also want to know how

serious these dangers are in the light of what Mark says about the struggle between Jesus and Satan.

What is interesting in the Ghanaian readings is the great variety of views they derived from their reading of Mark. They offered psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual causes of various ills and afflictions. They had shown the extent of the power of Satan, demons and other hosts of spiritual powers and Jesus' power over these spiritual forces. They had informed knowledge about how to counter or avoid these Satanic attacks. The knowledge included realising the existence of these forces, trusting Jesus Christ and having faith in Him, resisting these forces in the name of Jesus Christ, leading holy lives, reading the Bible, praying and fasting. This variety of views from the Ghanaian readings should suggest interesting new lines of enquiry for scholars concerned to construct Mark's cosmology and that of his early readers. How would they have thought about these issues in the light of their reading of Mark? The Ghanaian readings certainly suggest that Mark's readers might well have had divergent views (like Western scholars) about the continuing power of Satan and that such contradictions/differences of view were normal in religious communities. Such divergence seemed to be encouraged rather than discouraged by Mark's narrative.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **7**

## **CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter we will discuss the concerns raised by Mark in his Gospel: the nature of evil and affliction, the power of Satan and demons, Jesus' struggle with Satan and demons and the type of life that one is supposed to lead in such a world- a demon-free life or a life of struggle with demonic powers. We will then consider how some of the concerns raised by Mark differ from those in the Graeco-Roman and the Jewish worlds. This will be followed by a review of how Western scholars make sense of the concerns raised by Mark and how Ghanaian readers in London interact with some of the texts in Mark. We will be looking at the strengths and the unanswered questions of Mark, Western scholars and the Ghanaian readers, followed by identification of ambiguities in the views of Mark, Western scholars and Ghanaian readers. Following some general observations by the author, final recommendations will be made.

### **7.2 THE VIEWS OF MARK.**

#### **7.2.1 THE NATURE OF EVIL AND AFFLICTION**

Mark's views on the causes of evil are reflected in his narrative. The causes are Satan, desires (human inclinations), God, bodily malfunction and sin. Mark tells stories of afflictions, about how people are possessed by demons and attacked by diseases like fever, blindness, paralysis, deafness and dumbness. These stories seem to be like those written by Graeco-Roman writers. He explains some (e.g. the possession cases), but others (the diseases), he does not explain the causes even though they might be attributed to physical causes. This creates an ambiguity in Mark. The impression one gets from Mark is that all the diseases are caused by demons. For Mark, the means of coping with these demons are having faith in Jesus, doing God's will and belonging to the household of God (the church).

### **7.2.2 THE POWER OF SATAN AND JESUS' STRUGGLE WITH SATAN AND DEMONS**

Mark tells us of the power struggle between Jesus and Satan in the wilderness. In the Beelzebul Controversy Mark gives two views about Satan. On the one hand Satan is bound by Jesus and on the other hand Satan is alive and well, thus creating an ambiguity in Mark. The former view creates a world where Christian life has nothing to do with the struggle with spiritual powers because Satan is bound. The latter view creates a situation where Christian life is seen as a struggle with demonic powers. In the exorcisms, Jesus defeats the demons in 1:21-28 and 5:1-20 but in 9:14-29 even though Jesus defeats the demon, He does so with difficulty. This creates an ambiguity in Mark.

### **7.3 THE CONTEMPORARY VIEWS ON DISEASE IN GENERAL**

In the Graeco-Roman world at the time there were many causes of diseases. Diseases could be attributed to excess or deficiency among the four elements-fire, water, air and earth. Diseases could be caused by humours, breath, inflammation or tension in the body, contamination or polluted air. The gods or daimones could also cause diseases. The Jews at the time also had ways of identifying causes of diseases. The causes of some diseases were not known. In some cases the diseases could be attributed to the sin of the sufferer, or the sins of the victim's parents. An alteration in the bile could also cause a disease. Among the Jews at the time leprosy was caused by a curse and it could also be caused by hereditary factors. Blindness could be caused by physical trauma, a curse or seen as a result of a punishment. Fever could be caused by demons; as punishment from God or as a result of a curse.

#### ***7.3.1 Markan Views on diseases and those of his Contemporaries***

For Mark, Jesus heals people possessed by demons and attacked by fever, leprosy, paralysis, withered hand, blindness and deafness. Mark seems to create the impression that all these diseases are caused by demons. The contemporaries at the time advanced five causes of fever. The first cause was medical. Medically it had a natural cause and it could be caused by heat in the body or something in nature. Among the Greeks fever could be caused (among other things) by a splenetic affliction and the chilling of

extremities, earth, air, water or certain winds. The second cause of fever was astrological. The stars, planets or any of the heavenly bodies could inflict fever on their victims. Fever could be caused by God which was seen as a punishment from Him. The gods in the Graeco-Roman world could also inflict fever on people. The fever could also be caused by demons. Leprosy could be seen as a form of punishment and it could also be caused by demons. Paralysis and withered hands (which fall under the category of dropsy) were caused by uncleanness. The tissues of the body become corrupted, melt and turn into water. Blindness can be caused by an abnormality where the black of the pupil extends into the iris or vice-versa. Blindness can also be caused by flies. Deafness can be caused by genetic and environmental factors.

#### **7.4 THE VIEWS OF WESTERN SCHOLARS**

There are two different views concerning the power of Jesus. On the one hand Jesus has defeated Satan and the demons and He is able to drive out demons from people who are possessed. Because Jesus has power over Satan and demons, what is of supreme importance is the struggle of the human heart. The Christian life is no more a struggle with Satan and demonic powers. On the other hand there are those who see Jesus resisting Satan in the wilderness bringing to the fore the power of Satan. For these scholars Jesus struggled with demons even though eventually they were defeated. The implication being that the followers of Jesus are constantly engaged in a struggle with these demons.

#### **7.5 THE VIEWS OF GHANAIAI CHRISTIANS**

What views do the Ghanaian readers have on some of the concerns raised in their readings on Mark?

##### **7.5.1 THE READERS' VIEWS ABOUT THE NATURE OF EVIL AND AFFLICTION**

The readers gave comprehensive views about the nature of evil and affliction, citing the host of spiritual powers and human desire as causes of evil. Broadly they gave two causes of affliction-spiritual affliction and physical affliction. Spiritual affliction was caused by

Satan, witches, demons, gods, curse, evil eye, and sorcery while physical affliction could be physiological, psychological and emotional. The mention of ancestors and the gods implied that these readers had knowledge of traditional practice.

### **7.5.2 SPIRIT POSSESSION**

The readers assigned reasons why people were possessed by spirits. If we had no faith in Jesus and we were unclean, we were likely to be attacked by these spirits. Uncleaness includes living in sin, leading a careless life, dabbling in witchcraft, having alliances with spiritual powers and meddling with unknown spirits. These spirits could also take hold of areas in their lives and use them to their advantage. Other reasons they gave were that food, drink, and gifts were sometimes used to attack either directly or indirectly.

### **7.5.3 THE NATURE OF SATAN'S POWER**

There were different views regarding the nature of Satan's power. For some of the readers, every evil in the world was caused by Satan. For others Satan was powerful. Some maintained that even Jesus Himself recognised that Satan was powerful; while others suggested that Satan existed but, 'when he comes face to face with Jesus, he is inferior'. The rest of the readers affirmed that Satan had limited

### **7.5.4 THE NATURE OF JESUS' POWER**

The readers intimated that Jesus had power over demons. They affirmed that even though demons were powerful in terms of the way they possessed and harassed their victims, their attitude in the presence of Jesus changed. In Mark 1:21-28, Jesus was able to exorcise the evil spirit from the man. In Mark 5:1-20 the evil spirits were afraid when they met Jesus. They had to beg Jesus, because they realised they were powerless. In this story there is no struggle at all between Jesus and the demons. Jesus drove them into the sea. When the evil spirit meets Jesus in Mark 9:14-29, two pictures are painted by the readers. In this passage Jesus is engaged in a fight with the evil spirit, even though in the end the evil spirit was cast out. For the readers who took this view, life is a struggle between good and evil and when one wants to walk with Jesus other forces will attack that person. Our weapon can be found in faith in Jesus, prayer, reading the word of God

and leading holy lives. The other group opined that in this passage the evil spirit was no match at all for Jesus. The evil spirit was overpowered by Jesus and what is crucial is not battling with these demons but continually depending on Jesus because these powers have been and will be overpowered by Jesus.

#### **7.5.5 SPIRITUAL TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED BY JESUS**

For these readers the spittle used by Jesus was either the holy spittle, or it was used because it was the tradition of the area for people to use spittle or it signified water for cleansing. All these readers affirmed that Jesus used saliva in healing the man because of the power in His saliva and also Jesus was directed either by the Holy Spirit or He had a vision from God. Perhaps this can be better linked with Luke's 'Satan falling like lightning.' Vision plays a very significant role in African Traditional Religion especially in the call of priests. This shows how tradition is reflected in the responses of these readers. The command 'be opened' according to the readers was a command for the evil spirit attacking and binding the man to come out. Jesus said, 'be opened,' to release him. Jesus took the sick man out of the crowd by the hand. It is either a way of reassuring him that he was in safe hands or a way of taking him out of the sight of those with evil eyes and evil spirits who could cause difficulty in the cure of the disease. The laying on of hands by Jesus was a means of transferring power from Him to the sick. The second touch was a way of giving assurance to the man, encouraging him to depend on Jesus. The readers gave interpretations to the techniques employed by Jesus in His healing and these techniques reflected the traditional way of healing, an indication that these people read the text with their tradition in the background.

#### **7.5.6 THE BINDING OF SATAN**

The readers have a wide range of views regarding the binding of Satan. 'Satan was bound before Jesus started His ministry'. 'Satan was bound at the time when Jesus cast out a demon from somebody'. 'Satan was bound when Jesus came into the world. Satan was bound when Jesus started His work'. 'Satan was bound on the cross'. 'Satan was bound after the resurrection'. 'Satan had been bound once and for all but we do not know the exact time'. 'Satan will be bound at the second coming of Jesus'. Thus for these

Christians, Satan has been bound either before or during Jesus' ministry, on the cross, after the resurrection or he will be bound during the Parousia.

#### **7.5.7 THINGS NOT TO FEAR AND TO FEAR ABOUT SATAN**

All the readers affirmed that in reality as followers of Jesus we should not fear Satan because, as Christians, we have the power to resist him. We have the whole armour of God to put on. There is protection from God, and if we look to Jesus He will defeat Satan. There were others who affirmed that we should fear Satan for these reasons: Satan can draw people into material gain and love for money. Satan can cause people to backslide and to touch his belongings including fornication. We should fear Satan's intelligence, his tricks and cunning ways, and the ways he pampers people. If Satan tempted Jesus then we are not his match at all and we have to rely on Jesus and be wary of what Satan can do.

#### **7.5.8 COPING WITH SPIRITS**

From these readers we get a picture of the world peopled by spirits, and how we cope with these spirits. They can be avoided by looking to Jesus for strength and realising that these spirits are strong. There is also the practical way of showing concern for one another by caring for the needs of others. Mark mentions belonging to the inner circle or the family of Jesus because those in this family are set free from the attack of Satan. They do God's will and have faith in Jesus and these virtues are ways of coping with these demons. Mark outlines the means of coping with spirits but they were not as exhaustive as those presented by the Ghanaian readers.

#### **7.5.9 THE DISCIPLES**

The readers assigned a variety of reasons to why the disciples could not heal the boy in Mark 9:14-29- lack of faith, lack of prayer, denial of power and lack of unity. They also stressed the need to be prayerful and to depend on Jesus in order to attack the spirits as a church.

## **7.6 THE STRENGTHS AND THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS OF MARK, THE WESTERN SCHOLARS AND THE GHANAIA N READERS**

We will now discuss the strengths and the unanswered questions of the views of Mark, the Western scholars and the Ghanaian readers.

### **7.6.1 THE STRENGTHS OF MARK**

Mark helps us to understand the causes of evil which are Satan, desires (human inclinations), God and sin. For Mark diseases- possession, fever, blindness, paralysis, deafness and dumbness are forms of afflictions caused by demons. The ways of coping with evil are to have faith in Jesus, do God's will and to be in the house of God. Mark tells us about the source of Jesus' power (the Holy Spirit) with which He struggles with Satan in the temptation narrative. Even though the demons harass their victims, when they meet Jesus, He is able to defeat them. By curing the diseases, Jesus ushered those He healed into God's Kingdom. This Kingdom has been inaugurated by Jesus and will be consummated at the Parousia.

### **7.6.2 THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS OF MARK**

Mark does not tell us the nature and the outcome of the struggle between Jesus and Satan in the temptation narrative. In Jesus' defence against the charges levelled against Him by the Scribes (that he casts out demons in Beelzebul's name), Mark gives two accounts of Satan. On the one hand Satan is strong and on the other hand he is bound. Mark does not tell us when Satan is bound nor does he give any indication regarding the nature of the binding. Is it literal, spiritual or metaphoric binding? He does not give us any indication whether Satan is untied later on. Rather, he gives two divergent parables/metaphors.

Mark wrote his Gospel in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD. The world-view at the time embraced belief in Satan, demons, witches, magic, gods, astrology, luck, fatalism, curses, and in a host of spiritual powers. However, Mark presents demons as the only cause of possession. He does not tell us why and how people are possessed by demons, nor what happens to the demons that are exorcised- do they come back to attack their victims or are they destroyed forever? He does not mention witches at all let alone how and why

witches attack their victims. Mark does not seem to be interested in the need for herbalists, traditional healers and diviners and has no place for people who go to healers for causes of diseases and their cure. Mark does not raise questions about causes of diseases and disorders. He does not give any indications of coping with these spirits and he does not suggest ways of strengthening communities to cope with these spirits. Mark presents Jesus as the only healer/saviour even though there might have been other healers/saviours at the time. Mark's world-views are not consistent especially when one looks at Mark 3:27; 5:1-20 and 9:14-29. In Mark 3:27 we have Satan who is strong and at the same time bound. In 5:1-20 Jesus is able to command two thousand demons to be drowned in the sea while in 9:14-29 Jesus casts out an evil spirit but with difficulty. Mark emphasises having faith in Jesus, doing His will and in being in the circle of Jesus as the only means of coping with these demons. The overall picture painted by Mark in his Gospel seems to suggest that people from communities where there is the belief in the existence and the power of demons and other spiritual powers might find some issues not addressed by Mark. This is because he does not mention other spiritual powers (like witches, evil eye, sorcerers, etc.) and other means (e.g. traditional) for dealing with these forces. Moreover he does not give exhaustive ways of coping with these forces.

### **7.6.3 THE STRENGTHS OF THE WESTERN SCHOLARS**

#### ***i The Temptation of Jesus***

Western scholars are of the view that the temptation is a real struggle between Jesus and Satan. This affirmation implies that for these scholars both Jesus and Satan are strong. They bring to light when Satan is bound, though they have conflicting views regarding when Satan was bound. According to Best, Satan is bound in the temptation. Garrett and Smith affirm that if there is any binding of Satan at all, it is a partial binding. Robinson is of the view that Satan is bound on the Cross while Marcus intimates that Satan will be bound in the Parousia.



## ***ii Jesus' Encounter with the Demons***

Best contends that because Satan is defeated decisively in the temptation narrative, the exorcisms are just mopping-up operations. When the demon convulses the boy in Mark 9:14-29, Best intimates that that action on the part of the demon shows the confused state of the demon. Robinson argues that because Satan is not defeated in the temptation narrative, the exorcisms can be seen as struggles between Jesus and Satan. The demons are active and in Mark 9:14-29, Jesus appears to defeat the demon but with difficulty. These scholars throw light on the titles given to Jesus by the demons. Best is of the view that the titles the demons used in addressing Jesus during the exorcisms show the lordship of Jesus over the demons. On the other hand Robinson affirms that the titles used by the demons in addressing Jesus can be seen as attempts by the demons to overcome Jesus. For these scholars, Jesus has power over the demons. These views enlighten us on Jesus' encounter with Satan and demons.

## **7.6.4 THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS OF THE WESTERN SCHOLARS**

### ***i No remark on concerns not raised by Mark***

The scholars cited in this thesis do not question why, how or when people are possessed nor how to resist demons. They discuss the healing narratives in Mark and regard the passages as passages dealing with physical diseases but they do not tell us the cause of the diseases; how to prevent them and when people are attacked by them. Those scholars who regard the narratives as exorcisms do not throw light on the type of life we should lead in order not to be attacked by demons, nor why people are possessed or how to resist these demons when they attack. This is because for scholars like Best, Satan has been defeated decisively in the temptation, so any time Jesus meets the demons they are no match at all for Him. For these scholars there is no need to fear these demons. What is important is the struggle for the human heart. If Jesus really resisted Satan in the wilderness as envisaged by some of these scholars, and was seen to be powerful (as powerful as the demons), what kind of ethos does this generate? What fears and anxieties are created in the communities that believe in the existence and power of demons and how can these fears be dealt with? These scholars do not address the fears, tensions and anxieties that are generated nor do they combat them.

## ***ii Narrow View of Satan's Power***

The scholars focus on identifying Mark's cosmology and largely disregard the kind of ethos which would be generated by such stories. They do not provide enough on how Mark's readers would have read these texts. There is no mention of magic, witchcraft and sorcery. The questions on how to protect ourselves from spirits, how to ensure we are not possessed and how to help people who are possessed are not discussed at all by the scholars.

## **7.6.5 THE STRENGTHS OF THE GHANAIAI READERS**

### ***i Satan***

The Ghanaian readers, like the Western scholars, shared a wide range of views regarding the binding of Satan. According to these readers, Satan had been bound before Jesus' ministry, during Jesus' ministry, on the cross, after the resurrection or would be bound during the Parousia. These readers told us that we, as followers of Jesus, should not fear Satan. As Christians, we can resist Satan, because of the power given to us by God. They also brought to light the strategies of Satan: the deceit, tricks he used to entice people to backslide and eventually fall.

### ***ii Jesus' Power***

For these readers Jesus had power over the demons. In 5:1-20 the demons begged Jesus, but the readers had two different views on 9:14-29. On the one hand Jesus defeated the demon with ease while on the other hand even though Jesus defeated the demon, He did that with difficulty. They threw light on the spiritual techniques employed by Jesus. Jesus used spittle which was holy and powerful. Jesus laid His hands on the sick, and power was transmitted to the spot and there was healing.

### ***iii Disease***

The readers gave the causes of the diseases in the texts. They were physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual. Apart from demons they also mentioned witches, gods and other spiritual powers that could cause diseases; and the mention of ancestors and the

gods brought to the fore how traditional practices influenced their way of interpreting these texts.

#### *iv Spiritual attacks and Ways of Coping With These Spirits*

The readers explained why people were possessed by spirits. The causes included living in sin and having alliances with spiritual powers and the antidote was to be found in leading holy lives. They also provided ways of coping with these spirits: avoiding spirits; looking to Jesus for strength; not underestimating the power of these spirits; having faith in Jesus; leading holy lives and having concern for one another. These powerful views were what the Ghanaian readers brought to the thesis.

The overall picture we get from the Ghanaian readers is that they know how to cope with spirits. They can supplement Mark's Gospel concerning the causes of diseases and disorders, how to cope with these spirits and ways of strengthening communities to cope with these spirits.

### **7.6.6 THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS OF THE GHANAIA N READERS**

#### *i Change in World-View*

The readers do not recognise the fact that the world-view of Mark was changing and that affected his understanding of the issues he raised. These readers also do not recognise the significant differences between the world-view of Mark and that of African Traditional Religion. For example, in the world-view of Mark, Satan is seen as competing with God while that view of the devil is absent in African Traditional Religion. We have Jesus and angels acting on behalf of God in Mark's world-view while divinities, and ancestors work on behalf of God in African Traditional Religion. African cosmology is very complex, as is reflected in the hosts of spiritual and physical forces working against humanity while Mark lays emphasis on Satan and demons. Whilst in African cosmology there are hosts of agents that redeem humanity when disaster strikes, in the cosmology of Mark, Jesus is the only saviour. Finally, whilst for Mark, Satan is bound (though he does not specifically mention the period of the binding), in African cosmology we do not know when the devil is going to be bound.

## **7.7 AMBIGUITIES IN ALL THE READINGS**

We can identify ambiguities in all the readings on the binding of Satan. Mark does not tell us when Satan was bound or would be bound and he does not give us any details on the nature of the binding as to whether it is literal, spiritual or metaphoric. Western scholars are divided on the issue of the binding of Satan. Best affirms that Satan is bound in the temptation narrative. Garrett and Smith opine that it is partial binding. Robinson indicates that Satan is bound on the cross while Marcus intimates that Satan will be bound in the Parousia. Among the Ghanaian readers, Satan was bound before Jesus started his ministry, the binding took place when Jesus cast out a demon from somebody, Satan was bound on the cross, after the resurrection or he will be bound at the second coming of Jesus. For the readers Satan had been bound either before or during Jesus' ministry, on the cross after the resurrection and would be bound during the Parousia. Thus Mark, the Western scholars and the Ghanaian readers are ambiguous on the binding of Satan; and these ambiguities or differences are normal in religious communities. Such divergence seems to be encouraged (rather than discouraged) by Mark's narrative.

## **7.8 GENERAL OBSERVATION**

We have looked at the different topics treated by Mark, interpreted by Western scholars and Ghanaian Christians. In the light of this how coherent an account of evil does Mark give? How far are people able to construct a coherent view of the world for themselves on the basis of these facts? The account given by Mark on evil is not coherent. Satan, who is seen as one of the sources of evil is bound and at the same time alive. This creates a problem for people in the world regarding the nature and the extent of the power of Satan and demons in the world. How useful is Mark to those who believe in spirits and live in the spirit world? How is Mark helping people to cope with such a world? What we see in Mark is that he is all the time offering different, not compatible, views on the binding of Satan, the causes of diseases and Jesus' struggle with demons. This raises an anxiety in the communities and he does not show how these anxieties can be combated.

## 7.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) From the point of view of Western scholars, there is a need to look at anthropological explanations and understanding of demonic activities. If Western scholars were to pay attention to anthropologists, then they would learn much about how societies (that believe in spirits) cope with those fears and anxieties, and they would also come to understand better the hopes and expectations of these societies. They need anthropological study of societies where belief in Satanic powers play an important role. (ii) Western scholars need to be aware of the diverse views in Mark and be cautious not to over interpret and force one cosmology on Mark. They need also to be much more aware of how African readers read this text, and the ethos these texts might generate for those readers who believe in the power of demons. (iii) African scholars need to look at the differences of world-views between African Traditional Religion and Mark. If African scholars are going to engage in the concerns raised by the Ghanaian readers they need to be aware of the differences in the African world-view and the world-view of Mark. Most importantly, Western scholars need to know that while for Mark Satan was bound (even though we do not know the period he was bound), in African Traditional Religion the devil is a permanent part of the cosmos because there is nothing indicating that the devil is bound. As such, the devil and his allies- witches, sorcerers and sorceresses and evil eyes-are all active in traditional societies. (iv) African readers complement the unanswered issues that are not raised by Mark. These include the hosts of evil powers in African cosmology that can also be found in Markan cosmology, and the traditional methods of healing diseases that are spiritual and physical. However, these readers might overlook the fact that Mark sees the spirit world as destined to be destroyed. They need to be aware that, for Mark, fallen angels and Satan were destined to be destroyed. What is implied is that if Western and African scholars take on board these recommendations, they will not only be helped to get a better understanding of Mark but they will also be stimulated to do further research on concerns raised by some of the Ghanaian readers. One of these concerns-implications of living in a world where there is a belief in the existence of demons/spirits-is shared by communities outside Ghana.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Name of Parish/Church
2. The Educational Background of the Reverend  
Father/Minister/Pastor/Presiding Elder
3. Where did you get your training?
4. How would you describe your Parish/Church? Please tick
  - ☐ Main-Line Church
  - ☐ Adventist
  - ☐ Pentecostal
  - ☐ Charismatic
  - ☐ Ministries
  - ☐ Independent African Church
  - ☐ Other – Please specify
5. Give a brief description of the educational experience of the reading group.
6. Give a brief description of the type of employment of the reading group.
7. Give the number of health professionals in the reading group.
  - Number of Nurses
  - Number of Doctors
  - Number of Pharmacists

## APPENDIX B

### MARK 5: 1-20

<sup>1</sup> They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. <sup>2</sup> And when he had come out of the boat, there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>3</sup> who lived among the tombs; and no one could bind him any more, even with a chain; <sup>4</sup> for he had often been bound with fetters and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the fetters he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. <sup>5</sup> Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out, and bruising himself with stones. <sup>6</sup> And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshipped him; <sup>7</sup> and crying with a loud voice, he said, 'What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High god? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.' <sup>8</sup> For he said to him 'Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!' <sup>9</sup> And Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' He replied, 'My name is Legion; for we are many.' <sup>10</sup> And he begged him eagerly not to send them out of the country. <sup>11</sup> Now a great herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside; <sup>12</sup> and they begged him, 'Send us to the swine, let us enter them.' <sup>13</sup> So he gave them leave. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea. <sup>14</sup> The herdsmen fled, and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. <sup>15</sup> And they came to Jesus, and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the man who had had the legion, and they were afraid. <sup>16</sup> And those who had seen it told what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine. <sup>17</sup> And they began to beg Jesus to depart from the neighbourhood. <sup>18</sup> And he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. <sup>19</sup> But he refused, and said to him 'Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and now he has had mercy on you.' <sup>20</sup> And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and all men marvelled.

### QUESTIONS

1. What strikes you about the text you have just read?
2.
  - (a) List all the characters in the text.
  - (b) List the actions in the text.
3.
  - (a) Apart from Jesus choose a character and tell us about what you learn about the character in the text.
  - (b) What do you learn about the actions of the character?
  - (c) How do you understand them?
4. How does Jesus respond to the situation?
5.
  - (a) How do you respond to the story?
  - (b) What sort of explanations do you give for the disease described in the text?
  - (c) What will you do if you are afflicted with this disease?

### **MARK 7: 31-37**

<sup>31</sup> Then he returned to the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, through the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they besought him to lay his hand upon him. <sup>33</sup> And taking him aside from the multitude privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue; <sup>34</sup> and looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, ‘Eph’phatha,’ that is, ‘Be opened.’ <sup>35</sup> And his ears were opened, his tongue released, and he spoke plainly. <sup>36</sup> And he charged them to tell no one; but the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. <sup>37</sup> And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak.’

### **QUESTIONS**

1. What strikes you about the text you have just read?
2.
  - (a) List all the characters in the story.
  - (b) List the actions in the text.
  - (c) As part of the healing process, Jesus took some measures. List these measures.
3.
  - (a) Apart from Jesus choose a character and tell us about what you learn about the character in the text. What do you learn about the actions of the character? How do you understand those actions?
  - (b) As part of the healing process, Jesus took some measures. Choose one of the measures taken by Jesus. Why did Jesus take that measure?
4. How do you explain what eventually happened to the man?
5.
  - (a) How do you respond to the story?
  - (b) In what ways can you describe the diseases in the text?
  - (c) What will you do if you are afflicted with these diseases?

### **MARK 8: 22-26**

<sup>22</sup> And they came to Beth-sa’ida. And some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. <sup>23</sup> And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, ‘Do you see anything?’ <sup>24</sup> And he looked up and said, ‘I see men; but they look like trees, walking.’ <sup>25</sup> Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup> And he sent him away to his home saying, ‘Do not even enter the village.’

## QUESTIONS

1. What strikes you about the text you have just read?
2.
  - (a) List all the characters in the text.
  - (b) List the actions in the text.
  - (c) As part of the healing process, Jesus took some measures. List these measures.
3.
  - (a) As a group, apart from Jesus, choose a character and tell us about what you learn about the character in the text. What do you learn about the actions of the character? How do you understand them?
  - (b) Choose one of the measures taken by Jesus. Why did Jesus take this measure?
4.
  - (a) How does Jesus respond to the story?
  - (b) How will you describe the disease in the story?
5. What will you do if you are afflicted with this disease?

### **MARK 9: 14-29**

<sup>14</sup> And they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd about them, and scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and ran up to him and greeted him. <sup>16</sup> And he asked them, 'What are you discussing with them?' <sup>17</sup> And one of the crowd answered him, 'Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; <sup>18</sup> and whenever it seizes him, it dashes down him; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.' <sup>19</sup> And he answered them, 'O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bar with you? Bring him to me.' <sup>20</sup> And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming in the mouth. <sup>21</sup> And Jesus asked his father, 'How long has he had this?' And he said, 'From childhood. <sup>22</sup> And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us and help us.' <sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to him, 'If you can! All things are possible to him who believes.' <sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, 'I believe, help my unbelief.' <sup>25</sup> And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit saying to it, 'You dumb and deaf spirit, I commend you, come out of him, and never enter him again.' <sup>26</sup> And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said 'He is dead.' <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted up, and he arose. <sup>28</sup> And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' <sup>29</sup> And he said to them. 'This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.'

## QUESTIONS

1. What strikes you about the text you have just read?
2.
  - (a) List all the characters in the text.
  - (b) List the actions in the text.
3.
  - (a) Apart from Jesus choose a character and tell us about what you learn about the character in the text.
  - (b) What do you learn about the actions of the character?
  - (c) How do you understand them?
4. How does Jesus deal with the situation?
5.
  - (a) How do you respond to the story?
  - (b) What explanations can you give to the disease in the text?
  - (c) What will you do if the disease in the text afflicts you?

### **MARK 10: 46-52**

<sup>46</sup> And they came to Jericho; and as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great multitude, Bartimae'us, a blind beggar, the son of Timae'us, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup> And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' <sup>48</sup> And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' <sup>49</sup> And Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; rise, he is calling you.' <sup>50</sup> And throwing off his mantle he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup> And Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And the blind man said to him, 'Master, let me receive my sight.' <sup>52</sup> And Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

## QUESTIONS

1. What strikes you about the text you have just read?
2.
  - (a) List all the characters in the text.
  - (b) List the actions in the text.
3. As a group, (a) apart from Jesus, choose a character and tell us about what you learn about the character in the text. (b) What do you learn about the actions of the character? (c) How do you understand them?
4. How does Jesus deal with the situation?
5.
  - (a) How does Jesus respond to the story?
  - (b) What explanations can you give to the disease described in the text?
  - (c) What will you do if you are afflicted with the disease described in the text?

### **MARK 3: 22-27**

<sup>22</sup> And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He is possessed by Beel'zebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out demons.' <sup>23</sup> And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, 'How can Satan cast out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. <sup>27</sup> But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house.

#### **QUESTION**

1. What strikes you about the text you have just read?
2. What is Jesus saying in verses 23-26?
3. What is Jesus saying in verse 27?
4. What does this passage tell us about the nature of Satan's power?
5. As followers of Jesus what do we have to fear from Satan?

