

**Comparative Characterisations of Jesus and the Disciples in the Gospel of Mark,
with Special Reference to Ancient Oral Narration**

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ABSTRACT

The different methodological approaches applied to the study of the characterisation of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark have contributed much to our knowledge of Jesus and his disciples. The recent interest in the oral-aural dynamics in the communication of Mark's story has caused us to understand that Mark wrote not to be read silently and privately, but read aloud/performed publicly before a live audience, who were mostly unable to read and belonged to an oral culture (chapter 2). Thus, encompassing the strengths of previous approaches and venturing upon newer frameworks (orality, social/cultural memory, and performance criticism), we develop an eclectic approach, which we term oral-memorial-comparative hermeneutics, to address how an oral narrative, such as Mark's Gospel, would have been composed, communicated, and comprehended in an ancient oral culture (chapter 3). More specifically, such an approach helps in our inquiry into how the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in Mark's narrative function rhetorically in the context of an ancient oral narration, in relation to following Jesus and belonging to his community.

This approach considers how both the author and the target audience would have exploited their socio-historical context for the composition and comprehension of the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. Thus, this thesis analyses Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the context of an ancient narration, particularly in first-century Palestine. Through the lens of orality, social memory, and performance criticism, Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples would have shown how one should follow Jesus and belong to his group. We conclude that if Mark's target audience appreciated the association of Jesus and his disciples over against other groups (chapter 4) and if they were convinced of Mark's ideological thrust represented by the character of Jesus over against his disciples and other characters (chapter 5), then it is more likely than not that they were moved to act upon following Jesus in faithful discipleship and belonging to his group (chapter 6). Thus, our findings support the thesis of this research that Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples (in relation to other characters and set in an ancient oral narration) dramatizes an ideological clash (between the way of domination and the way of Jesus—service and sacrifice), which would have aided in the identity formation of Mark's community.

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in the Gospel of Mark, with Special Reference to
Ancient Oral Narration

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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STATEMENT ONE

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed  Laurence Gatawa (Candidate)

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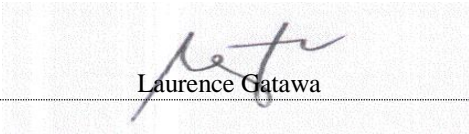
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Bible quotes in this thesis are generally based on the New International Version (NIV). However, there are instances that I opted for my own translation or the English Standard Version (ESV) and put ESV after the quote.

This thesis also made use of SBL format/style modified to fit the British style especially in the use of single and double quotation marks.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
<u>ABR</u>	<u>Australian Biblical Review</u>
<u>AJT</u>	<u>American Journal of Theology</u>
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
<u>ANRW</u>	<u>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</u>
BAGD	Bauer, Walter, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker. <u>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</u>
<u>BBR</u>	<u>Bulletin for Biblical Research</u>
<u>BJRL</u>	<u>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</u>
<u>BT</u>	<u>The Bible Translator</u>
<u>BTB</u>	<u>Biblical Theology Bulletin</u>
<u>CBQ</u>	<u>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</u>
<u>CQ</u>	<u>Classical Quarterly</u>
<u>CTJ</u>	<u>Calvin Theological Journal</u>
<u>ExAud</u>	<u>Ex auditu</u>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<u>HTR</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<u>HvTSt</u>	<u>Hervormde Theologiese Studies</u>
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
<u>JETS</u>	<u>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</u>
<u>JR</u>	<u>Journal of Religion</u>
<u>JTS</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
<u>JSNT</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</u>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
<u>JSOT</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</u>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
NCB	New Century Bible
<u>Notes</u>	<u>Notes on Translation</u>
<u>NovT</u>	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
<u>NTS</u>	<u>New Testament Studies</u>
ÖTKNT	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<u>RBL</u>	<u>Review of Biblical Literature</u>
<u>RelS</u>	<u>Religious Studies</u>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testaments
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SBM	Suttgarter biblische Monographien
SemeiaST	Semeia Studies
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<u>STRev</u>	<u>Sewanee Theological Review</u>
<u>TDNT</u>	<u>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</u>
<u>ThTo</u>	<u>Theology Today</u>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<u>WTJ</u>	<u>Westminster Theological Journal</u>
<u>ZKT</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</u>
<u>ZNW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</u>
<u>ZTK</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</u>

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the whole thesis. It states the main research problem with its scope of study and introduces its methodological approach. It outlines its organization into chapters and ends with a brief retrospect and prospect.

1.1. Scope of the Problem and Methodology of Study

The primary issue being addressed in this thesis is about comparative characterisation of Jesus and his disciples in Mark's narrative. We argue that Mark's characterisation of Jesus compared with his disciples (in view of other characters) dramatizes an ideological clash which would have helped persuade Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his group (which was then represented by Mark's community). Although this has a semblance to Weeden's contention that Mark is using the disciples to oppose a divine man Christology with a theology of the cross,¹ the thesis of this study is different in emphasis and details. First, we are proposing that the characterisations of Jesus (in relation to his disciples and other characters) should be understood as counter-ideology against the way of domination (notable among the characters embodying them), in contrast to the way of Jesus (Mark 1:2-3): the way of service and sacrifice (Mark 10:45).

Second, while Weeden uses redaction criticism to achieve his conclusion, this study will employ insights from orality studies, performance criticism and social memory theory in conjunction with comparative characterisation (which we term as oral-memorial-comparative approach), as is adumbrated in section 1.2 below and will be explained more thoroughly in the chapters that follow. This is in response to the

¹ Theodore Weeden J. 'The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel', in The Interpretation of Mark (ed. W. Telford; London: SPCK, 1985), 64.

challenge of Dewey ‘to take the dynamics of orality much more seriously in interpreting’ the Gospel of Mark, and thus, ‘reconstructing early Christian history’.² As observed by Nina Livesey, the contemporary ‘studies in the fields of orality and oral performance reveal that the recognition of oral features within texts can clarify vexing issues of interpretation and lead the interpreter to a more complete understanding of authorial intent’.³

Thus, the present approach aids us in understanding the dynamics of ancient oral performance in relation to how a comparative characterisation of Jesus and his disciples relates to following Jesus at that time and the construction of a community’s social identity. In other words, the way Mark characterised Jesus and his disciples, when set in an ancient oral-memorial narration, would have invited comparison and contrast with other characters in the narrative and in Mark’s socio-political context, including his audience who were invited to follow Jesus and belong to his community. So aside from our main argument above, a key contribution of this thesis is not so much on the argument that Mark intended X and his audience would have heard X, but on the way such X has been communicated and received in an oral context, which aided community and identity formation. Such a stress upon dialogue, which is appropriate in an oral performance, restraints us to choose from which side we are approaching—either from the side of the author or the audience. It is because the Gospel of Mark and other gospels ‘would have been composed in interaction with the traditions that enveloped them’.⁴ At the same time they would have been also received by Mark’s target audience in interaction with the same traditions, in view of John Miles Foley’s theory of

² Joanna Dewey, ‘Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark’, Interpretation 43 (89): 42.

³ Nina E. Livesey, ‘Sounding Out the Heirs of Abraham (Rom 4:9-12)’, Oral Tradition 27.1 (2012): 273.

⁴ Eric Eve, Writing the Gospels: Composition and Memory (London: SPCK, 2016), 44.

metonymic referencing (in oral and oral-derived texts),⁵ where a part stands in place of the whole. Such theory might be applied to the way a text like Mark interacts with Israelite traditions as Horsley argues in his *text-context-tradition* paradigm.⁶ It is only when ‘we as modern readers make the connection between text and metonymically signalled references to Israelite tradition’ that we can ‘construe the text within the range of possibilities it implies’.⁷ This is clarified further in chapter 3.

Of course Mark’s target audience heard the whole narrative of Mark from the start to end, but we will not order this thesis in such a chronological order. Instead, we focus on Mark’s characterisation of Jesus and his disciples showing (1) how such a group was heard in comparison with other groups, (2) how such characters and their ways (in comparison with other characters and their ways) dramatize an ideological clash, and (3) how such characterisation of Jesus and his disciples invites the audience to identify themselves with the disciples as they were invited to participate in the narrative and belong to the group. Especially point number two is the most innovative contribution of this thesis to current Markan scholarship, in addition to the approach of comparative characterisation in relation to orality, social memory, and performance criticism. It is advancing earlier claims of the different levels or the multi-valence Mark was operating.⁸

To verify that there is a gap in scholarship which this study seeks to fill, preliminary readings were done and many of the works reviewed are recorded in

⁵ John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 5.

⁶ Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 63-70.

⁷ Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 70.

⁸ See for instance Robert Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (Chino, CA: Scholars Press, 1981); Nils Dahl, ‘The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel’ in *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 56; Donald Juel, *An Introduction to New Testament Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 176-96.

chapter 2. First, I did not encounter a work that emphasises how Mark and his target audience (mostly hearers) would have applied ‘comparative characterisation’ in the composition and comprehension of Mark’s narrative, as I did in this thesis. Second, there are attempts to demonstrate (as I did in this thesis) oral-memorial narrative hermeneutics (elaborated in chapter 3), but not specifically applied to the characterisation of Jesus and his disciples as I did in this thesis. Third, the more episodic feature of an oral narrative in contrast to a ‘Freytag’s pyramid’ feature of a literary narrative is noted in this thesis, especially in the area of the role or function of characters and characterisation in the whole narrative. Fourth, we look at the narrative both from the perspective of the author and audience as Tannehill did, but we differ in a way because Tannehill worked purely from the stance of narrative criticism while we work from the side of an oral narrative approach. Last, as noted above, we differ with Weeden in presenting the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples as dramatizing an ideological clash.

Currently, there is a growing interest among scholars in the oral nature of Mark’s narrative which has resulted in the recognition that Mark’s narrative has been composed to be performed or read publicly. Thus, a major emphasis of this research is to demonstrate an approach of how Mark’s narrative (particularly his characterisations of Jesus and his disciples) would have been heard and understood by Mark’s target audience in a first-century oral context. This will not only help how to understand an ancient oral narrative, but also to demonstrate how the framework of orality (in connection with social memory and performance criticism) contributes to the better appreciation of an ancient oral narrative text. This study also expects that such a demonstration of oral hermeneutics in the Gospel of Mark will help emphasize Mark’s oral narrative artistry rather than his crude writing style, given Mark’s historical,

affective, ideological, and practical purposes—aimed for an audience in first-century Palestine.

The interest in oral hermeneutics in this study has implications for the narrative oral approach to sharing the gospel in mission evangelism today among semi-literate or pre-literate communities, particularly in my home country, the Philippines. But although I have an interest in making sense to my community the intent of Mark in characterising Jesus and his disciples (in relation to other characters in the narrative and his socio-historical setting), the attempt is not intended to force Mark to speak also for today as he did in the First Century CE. To make Mark speak for today is a valid attempt for many biblical scholars, and especially contextual theologians, but this is not within the scope of this study. Instead, by attempting to listen to Mark, as one listening to an old cassette tape, and have a feel for the author and his listeners, one may realize and recognize that, in one way or another, we have a share of the spirit of the first-century hearers of Mark, which may warrant us to make concluding reflections and suggestions specifically geared for future research endeavours, especially directed to my community in my country.

The main research question of this study is stated as follows: How were Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples understood in an ancient oral narration, in view of dramatizing an ideological clash which would have helped persuade Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his community? In order to answer the research question, the following sub-questions are explored: (1) How might Mark's target audience have received the model of discipleship presented by Mark in his Gospel in the context of other contemporary models in relation to community formation and identity? (2) How might Mark's target audience have heard and understood the function of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples (in relation to other

characters) in view of Mark's ideological thrust and in relation to the construction of social identity? (3) How might Mark's target audience have heard and understood Mark's characterizations of Jesus and his disciples in view of their calling to follow Jesus in faithful discipleship and to belong to his community? The first sub-question asks what the new group of characters (Jesus and his disciples) look like. The second sub-question inquires about the message behind the characters. And the third sub-question is about the current embodiment of the characters, particularly the disciples.

The assertions in support of the main thesis of this work are as follows: Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples, when performed or read publicly, invite the following responses from his target audience: (1) The audience would have received the model of discipleship (between Jesus and his disciples) presented in Mark's narrative in the context of other contemporary models in first-century Palestine, with Jesus' group similar to other groups but also distinct. (2) The audience would have understood Mark's message through a dramatization of an ideological clash between Jesus and his disciples (in view of other characters in the narrative and their socio-historical context). (3) The audience (as they compared themselves with the disciples in the narrative) would have been moved to participate in the story, whereby the disciples in Mark's story become the new disciples in Mark's community.

In order to investigate our questions and advance our assertions, we use the Gospel of Mark as the main primary source, which requires exegetical skills including inter-textual and contextual (both literary and historical) analyses, in conjunction with our main method: oral-memorial-comparative hermeneutics. Thus, some books of the OT (and some other Jewish texts) and other books of the NT are also given due treatment, closely but cautiously. This is because the way Mark's target audience would have heard and understood their tradition is through the knowledge they have had,

which was deposited not in the written texts of the OT but in their social memory (although some may be based on the OT), which we (following Scott and Horsley) shall refer to as the ‘little (or popular) tradition’.⁹ The problem is that we have no access to this knowledge because those who possessed it are all dead. However, when used with care, the OT can be used as an indication of what the little tradition is likely to have contained.¹⁰ Likewise, when other NT passages are used with caution in relation to passages in the Gospel of Mark, the traditions that found their way into the other Gospels and other books of the NT help in a better understanding of the traditions we find in Mark’s narrative. So although inter-textuality appears in this work, the text being quoted in relation to the Gospel of Mark should be understood as the counterpart of that text in the form of popular tradition.

The other primary sources in this research include the works of Josephus, Philo and, to a lesser extent, a few other ancient texts. These works are important because we are setting the production and reception of the Gospel of Mark in a first-century Palestinian context which requires a reading of and engagement with other sources, both earlier than and contemporary with Mark’s Gospel. We can then better understand how Mark uses events and characters to stimulate the imagination of his audience (based on what they already know in their socio-historical context) in the reception of his message. The primary texts will be read in critical engagement with secondary sources, especially those works commenting on the Gospel of Mark in their ancient socio-historical context, to strengthen the findings and conclusions of this work. Engaging with contemporary and secondary sources makes it more important because the

⁹ James C. Scott, ‘Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition’, Society and Theory 4 (1977): 8; Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 61-63.

¹⁰ See Richard A. Horsley, Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 129-31. See also ch. 3, n.25 in Horsley, Jesus and Empire.

theoretical and methodological frameworks of this work are relatively new, with little or no consensus yet reached on how they should be applied.

1.2. Organisation of the Study

After stating the main problem with its scope, introducing the approach, and presenting the organisation of the study in chapter 1, the different methods employed in the study of the characterisation of Jesus and the disciples are surveyed in chapter 2. The survey unravels, with a great deal of appreciation, how scholars employed some working methodologies in understanding Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples. Nonetheless, I have not yet encountered another presentation like I have about the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples as dramatizing an ideological clash which is found particularly in chapter 5.

The oral/aural features of Mark's narrative are examined in chapter 3, elucidating the theoretical framework in understanding Mark's characterisation of Jesus and the disciples as set in an ancient oral context. The framework includes discussions of narrative, orality, social memory studies, and performance criticism. Among the different appropriate ways of hearing and understanding the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples, we highlight only three, which are typical in a narrative designed for oral performance (without rejecting the possibility of these being employed in written narratives).¹¹ One is that Mark's target audience would have heard the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples by means of comparison and contrast or by the medium of 'like and unlike', especially illustrated in chapter four (although noted here and there in chapter five and six also). Another is by means of a character embodying a message or ideology: the man is the message, as shown in chapter five. The last way is by means of

¹¹ See Pieter Botha, *Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2012). 10.

immediate audience participation and identification with the characters in the story, which is demonstrated in chapter six.

While demonstrating our methodological approach in chapters 4 to 6, we advance our contention that the way Mark characterises Jesus and disciples is a dramatization of an ideological clash which would have helped persuade Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his group. Our contention focuses on Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples as an invitation for his target audience to respond according to the context and constraints of a first-century oral narration—an invitation to compare and contrast Jesus and his disciples with other characters in the story and in Mark's socio-historical context, even among Mark's target audience who were invited to follow Jesus and belong to his community.

In chapter 4, the association of Jesus and his disciples is compared and contrasted to other similar groups in its first-century Jewish context through the medium of 'like and unlike', a basic feature of an oral narrative composition. In such a medium the sound of a word or phrase brings back memory of the tradition in one's socio-historical context (social memory), which aids in the audience's 'community identification', as they were invited to belong to Jesus' group. Thus, while the socio-historical context of Jesus' association is uncovered, the distinctiveness of their group (in relation to master-disciple relationship) is also pursued as to how they would have been perceived and appreciated by Mark's target audience. Since the audience were invited to follow Jesus and belong to his group, which was then represented by Mark's community, it is expected that they would have understood Jesus' group in comparison and contrast with other existing groups in Palestine at that time by virtue of the principle of association ('like' and 'unlike'). The groups being compared to would have been less likely to be recalled by the audience if they were located in Rome, as traditionally

maintained by a number of scholars. But since we are postulating a Palestinian location for Mark's target audience, the discussion in this chapter is necessary and illuminating for our discussion.

In chapter 5, although the venture is still about how the characters of Jesus and his disciples would have been compared and contrasted (in relation with other characters) in the narrative and in their socio-historical context by virtue of social memory, the focus is the ideological stance of the narrative as would have been intended by Mark and understood by his audience. That is, since characters and characterisation (rather than presenting abstract propositions)¹² in an oral narrative are basic means of delivering a theme/message in an oral culture, this chapter presents Mark's characterisation of Jesus and the disciples as dramatizing an ideological clash. Here, the character of Jesus (or the way he is portrayed in the narrative) carries the message of service and sacrifice being appreciated by Mark's target audience, in contrast to the message of domination represented by the disciples and other characters in the story and their socio-historical context. Such is an invitation for the audience to embrace and embody in their community the message or significance of Jesus.

In chapter 6, the discussion is about the immediate impact that the characterisations have had upon Mark's target audience, as they were invited to participate in the unfolding of the narrative, which have a bearing upon the audience's past, present and future endeavours as followers of Jesus and members of his community. In an oral performance of an episodic (rather than Freytag) oral narrative, the feeling and action rather than thinking and reflection are evoked and aimed for

¹² A concrete rather than an abstract mode of thinking is among the distinctive features characterising an oral standpoint as noted by Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (New York: Methuen, 1982), 31-77.

community formation and identification. This will be demonstrated with the aid of social memory and speech-act theory (in conjunction with a literary-rhetorical analysis).

The final chapter (7) ties together the previous chapters to answer the problem undertaken and to confirm the argument of this study that the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples (in view of other characters) in Mark's narrative dramatizes an ideological clash which would have helped persuade Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his group (which was then represented by Mark's community). This chapter also confirms that Mark's oral context (including signs of oral performance discernable in the text) provides a hint of how Mark's target audience would have heard and understood Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in relation to following Jesus and belonging to his community. That is, the different portrayals of Jesus and his disciples in view of other characters would have been heard and understood in the following ways: First, while the group of Jesus and his disciples would have been heard in relation to other master-disciple relations in their socio-historical context, the distinctiveness of their association would have been observed and appreciated. Second, that the way Jesus and his disciples are characterised is a dramatization of an ideological clash, with the way of Jesus to be emulated by Mark's target audience. That is, Jesus embodies the way of service and service while the disciples, just like the other characters (Jewish authorities, Roman rulers, Satanic forces) embody the way of domination. Third, that the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples (in contrasting ways) were meant to invite the target audience to participate in the unfolding of the narrative and guide them as they become the current disciples of Jesus. Simply put, if the audience appreciated the group of Jesus over against others and if they were convinced of Mark's ideological thrust represented by the character of

Jesus over against his disciples and other characters, then it is more likely than not that they were moved to follow Jesus and belong to his community as faithful disciples.

1.3. Retrospect and Prospect

As noted above, this study proposes an oral-memorial-comparative approach and argues that Mark's characterisation of Jesus compared to his disciples (in view of other characters) dramatizes an ideological clash which would have helped persuade Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his group. In the next chapter, we will survey earlier approaches to the characterisation of Jesus and his disciples and the growing field of orality, social memory theory, and performance criticism in relation to our present study.

CHAPTER 2: JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES IN MARKAN STUDIES: CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS OF PREVIOUS APPROACHES

2.1. Introduction

Interpretations tend to shift from one approach to another depending upon the whims of the time,¹ so that the question vis-à-vis the characters of Jesus and his disciples as presented by Mark are viewed in diverse perspectives. What do these diverse perspectives imply? Stephen Evans answers:

they do not imply that the scholars involved in the disputes are never justified in holding their views. Some of them may well have good reasons for their views, and indeed, if we reject classical foundationalist type epistemologies, some of the disputed views may even amount to knowledge.... Disagreements in philosophy are pervasive, but I would not myself take this to imply that no philosopher has good grounds for philosophical beliefs or ever knows any philosophical claim to be true.²

This chapter surveys these disagreements in interpretations with the following question being pursued: Who were Jesus and his disciples in Mark's characterisation as understood by scholars; and how were they related or associated? Such a survey is necessary because the method of this research encompasses the strengths of the previous methods. Moreover, since this research illustrates a relatively new method, it should be shown how it will augment the limitations of the previous ones applied to the study of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the Gospel of Mark.

¹ See an outline of the different approaches to biblical interpretation that arose from one period to another in Robert Grant and David Tracy, A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). See also Moisés Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible? (Leicester: Apollos, 1989); Jaroslav Pelikan, Whose Bible Is It? A History of the Bible through the Ages (New York: Viking, 2005); John Sandys-Wunsch, What Have They Done to the Bible? A History of Modern Biblical Interpretation (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005); James Barr, History and Ideology in the Old Testament: Biblical Studies at the End of the Millennium (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Chapter 2 in William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., Introduction to Biblical Interpretation (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993).

² Stephen Evans, The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 325.

It will be useful to begin by enquiring why Markan scholars differ in their understanding of who Jesus and the disciples were in Mark, with the philosophy of the fusion of two horizons as an initial explanation. The fusion of two horizons³—one’s horizon (Markan scholars) and that of a text (Gospel of Mark)—invites an interpreter to see that understanding the meaning of an ancient text is complex. Understanding happens when there is the interplay of the objective meaning imbedded in the text and the subjective meaning brought about by the reader himself, given his/her own personal history and context. This perception of understanding was brought into focus after some philosophical, sociological, and psychological studies resulted in the awareness that one cannot really objectively read a text devoid of one’s own subjective context and personality.⁴ The presupposition, therefore, as applied to reading Mark is that one’s interpretation is being influenced by one’s cultural and social backgrounds and that one type of personality tends to model its interpretation from existing paradigms and that another type tends to be more independent to develop new understanding of a text.⁵ Thus, on the one hand, this gives a license to follow after the findings of Markan scholars in their attempt to understand the characterisation of Jesus and his disciples in the Gospel of Mark. On the other hand, this encourages us to find other ways of looking at Mark’s narrative, somehow, to offer a new perspective in the ongoing debates regarding the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark, especially emphasising how Mark’s narrative would have been heard publicly by Mark’s target audience.

³ See Anthony Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading (London: Harper Collins, 1992).

⁴ See Hans-Georg Gadamer Truth and Method (rev. ed.; trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall; New York: Crossroad, 1989); Cedric Johnson, Psychology of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983).

⁵ Johnson, Psychology of Biblical Interpretation, 72.

It is not difficult, therefore, to admit that in our study of the function of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the Gospel of Mark, our understanding is limited to our vantage point,⁶ and that the understanding can be a reduction, a reaction, a repetition or a development of what has been thought of. This also means that the understandings of those scholars who have gone before in trying to understand the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark have been shaped by the time and space they were in. The theory of the fusion of two horizons and the sociology and psychology of interpretations, indeed, explain why scholars in different contexts brought about different ways of understanding the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark.

In addition to the above explanation, the contribution of Postmodernism to Markan interpretation is its recognition that different understandings happen because of different methodologies of trying to perceive things and ideas. This results in the rejection of the notion of ‘the method’ in favour of ‘methods’ of Markan interpretation.⁷ In this way, Postmodernism becomes more tolerant and accommodating in the varying perception of ideas because of varying methodologies, but this does not mean that anything can just be said without any justifiable criterion. This adds another justification to the different results we get when we apply different methodologies in trying to understand an ancient text (like the Gospel of Mark).

However, we are encouraged to present another perspective in looking at the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the Gospel of Mark using an oral-memorial-comparative approach because of the current understanding that the Gospel of

⁶ There is no single valid methodology in constructing or arriving at knowledge, as asserted by constructivists in M. R. Matthews, ed., Constructivism in Science Education: A Philosophical Examination (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998). See also E. Goffman, Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gathering (New York: Free Press, 1963).

⁷ See Silva, Has the Church Misread the Bible?

Mark has been written primarily to be heard rather than read silently. The perspective that we offer in this study is not a debunking of previous work done by biblical scholars, although debating with them is unavoidable; but in fact this perspective arises from and builds upon their findings. Until then, this perspective is only another way, somehow, of offering an alternative—a new possibility, in our quest to understand how and why Mark wrote in a manner that puzzles even the most erudite NT scholar, being mindful of the caution of John Nolland:

New methods bring new possibilities of insight and ... allow for answering of questions thrown up in new ways by an ever-developing context of culture and intellectual life, against the background of which explorations necessarily and properly takes place. But the kind of cleverness that 'proves' all previous understandings wrong is itself almost certainly wrong.⁸

Now that some satisfactory warrants are given for the possibility of different understandings of the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in Mark, let us move to the next discussion of how different scholars, with varied methodologies and imaginations, perceive the characterisations of the Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. Then building from their ideas, we will present another perspective of Jesus and the disciples in Mark which could be just as satisfying as their presentations, and can be helpful for our quest for the function of such characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. Scholarly interpretations of our selected passages vary in interest: (a) focus in what lies behind the text (historical criticism), (b) interest within the text (literary criticism), and (c) attention in front of the text (e.g. contextual and theological hermeneutics).⁹ In the words of D.A. Carson, the interest ranges from 'theoretical hermeneutics' to 'applied hermeneutics.'¹⁰ But we shall order our

⁸ John Nolland, 'The Purpose and Value of Commentaries', *JSNT* 29.3 (March 2007): 309.

⁹ A work that explores the historical, literary, and contemporary worlds of the Bible is by Christian Hauer and William A. Young, *An Introduction to the Bible: A Journey Into Three Worlds* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2005).

¹⁰ D.A. Carson, ed., *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1984), 7.

discussion as follows: first, in the interest of interpreters within the text in view of their own contemporary context; next, in the interest of interpreters to use the text to get behind the text (historical criticism); and in the interest of interpreters only within the text (literary criticism); and then, in the attempt to wed historical criticism with literary criticism (particularly narrative criticism); last, in our attempt to integrate comparative characterisation, social memory studies, and orality—towards an oral-memorial-comparative hermeneutics.

2.2. In Front of the Text: ‘Let the Reader Understand’ Today

There are some possibilities if an interpreter opts for the emphasis ‘in front’ of the text of Mark as shown below, but the work of Fernando Belo on the Gospel of Mark will be emphasised in this section.

2.2.1. Meaningful Hermeneutics for the Reader

A naïve reading of the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in Mark with one’s context in view without delving into the historical situation of the text as exegetes often do may produce an understanding that is meaningful to the reader but scandalous to historical-critical scholars. But it might be interesting to hear from ordinary real readers or hearers of the 21st century, without training in hermeneutics, how they make sense of and appropriate Mark’s narrative with regards to the characters of Jesus and the disciples. This is in view of the fact that even ordinary people are potential contributors to the on-going dialogue in hermeneutics,¹¹ but this is not the track of this current research. However, an assumption may arise that various meanings, even contradictory

¹¹ An example of the contributions of ordinary readers to the hermeneutical dialogue of the Scripture is a project done by Ernesto Cardenal, The Gospel in Solentiname (4 volumes; New York: Orbis Books, 1979).

ones, may result which necessitates that the interpretative community as a whole enter the dialogue; for although ordinary real readers (or audience) are valued in the interpretative process, interpretation is acceptable if done in a proper theological framework of an interpretative community.¹²

Another possibility for understanding an ancient text from the point of view of the readers/audience, aside from utilizing ordinary real readers, is to look at the environment for some clues to understanding the text under study. Especially in the Middle East and other parts of the Mediterranean world where the events of the Bible happened, there might still be some cultural ideas and practices similar to, if not the same as, the thoughts and practices narrated in Scripture. This method is sometimes called intercultural hermeneutics.¹³ A more common way to weave the text and one's context or to relate the passage with the reader/audience is through contextual hermeneutics. This method sparkles bright so that a strong fire is burning in the hearts of enthusiasts especially from the non-western part of the world. There are now numerous volumes of works from Asia, Africa, and Latin America which attempt to make the gospel messages meaningful to their context. This method is not actually new since it has its roots in indigenization, adaptation and acculturation.

The legitimacy of the interplay between text and contemporary context in interpretation should be accepted on the assumption that the ancient text of Scripture is still relevant today. Its relevance does not reside in its utility alone but in the undying meaning inherent in the text which is transcontextual. Thus, the text has a life of its

¹² See Stanley Fish, 'Is There a Text in This Class?': The Authority of Interpretative Communities (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980); Brevard Childs, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

¹³ See, for instance, Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole, 'The New Testament and Intercultural Exegesis in Africa,' JSNT 30.1 (2007); and Triple Heritage: Gospels in Intercultural Mediations (Kinshasa: CERIL, Pretoria: Sapientia Publishers, 2005).

own—even going beyond the intent of the human author, but of course always linked to an interpretative community.¹⁴ Norman Peterson notes that such assumption arises from literary critics who recognise the autonomy of the text. He quotes Murray Krieger in support of his argument:

the meaning of a work of art is not exhausted by, or even equivalent to, its intention [understood as a cause]. As a system of values, it leads an independent life [i.e., it constitutes a “world” separate from the real world in which it was produced]. The total meaning of a work of art cannot be defined merely in terms of its meaning for the author and his contemporaries.¹⁵

But the challenge of how to weave the text and context resides in the skill of the interpreter who may find models in the texts or from the guidance of the proponents of such an approach. A number of examples can be noted among feminist, liberation,¹⁶ and postcolonial works.¹⁷ But the work of Fernando Belo may serve as an example, to which we devote now our attention.

2.2.2. Fernando Belo’s Reading of Mark

Taking side with radical interpreters and inspired by Latin American liberation theologians, Belo looks upon the characters of Jesus and his disciples in Mark with Marxist and Christian eyes altogether; in his words ‘to read Mark with the help of Marx.’¹⁸ He uses historical materialism as an approach in his struggle to find social relevance—with a socialist understanding—of the gospel texts, exegetically done in their socio-cultural setting. Historical materialism owes its formulation to Karl Marx,

¹⁴Johnson, Psychology of Biblical Interpretation, 89.

¹⁵ Norman Peterson, Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 28; Murray Krieger, A Window to Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 3.

¹⁶ A kind of liberationist hermeneutics developed in South Korea termed as minjung hermeneutics. See for instance Hiheon Kim, Minjung and Process: Minjung Theology in Dialogue with Process Thought (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009).

¹⁷ See for instance S. Sugirtharajah, ed, The Postcolonial Biblical Reader (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

¹⁸ Fernando Belo, A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark (trans. Matthew J. O’Connel; New York: Orbis Books, 1981), 6.

though it was Marx's followers who coined the term. It refers to how society evolves and changes, given its economics, politics, and ideologies. In using such a method for reading biblical accounts, it has three objectives. First, it aims to show that the Bible 'has the poor for its real subject'. Second, it also aims to rescue 'the Bible from those who have wrongfully appropriated it and put it in chains'. Third, it aims to read the Bible so that 'our political practice will receive a new clarification, while at the same time this practice and its clarification will help us find in the writings of the Old and New Testaments hitherto undiscovered paradigms of a subversive practice'.¹⁹

Belo, himself, comments on his exegesis as situated 'within the text', as he applies literary structuralism, though actually many of his materials are located external to the text, such as the socio-economic and political situations of first-century Palestine, which he brought into his discussion as he wrestles with his contemporary context, with the hope that the 'gospel could help us in the Revolution.'²⁰ With this in mind, he presents the disciples in Mark's narrative as Jesus' companions in his messianic revolutionary journey. Jesus was a political revolutionist and the disciples joined his circle by way of conversion. This necessitated a break with the social code of the time and a taking over of Jesus' 'practice of service and salvation' which is 'the liberation of the bodies' as one becomes one of the poor by sharing their bread.²¹ This is a criticism of the political domination of the elite at that time and an offering of a new order which centres on discipleship with Jesus as the leader—a new 'political confederacy' (Mark 3:13-19) as an alternative in contrast to the old order. This criticism of the elite will be

¹⁹ Kuno Füsser, 'The Materialist Reading of the Bible', in The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics (rev. ed.; ed. Norman K. Gottwald and Richard A. Horsley; New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 122.

²⁰ Belo, A Materialist Reading, xiii.

²¹ Belo, A Materialist Reading, 247, 250, 252.

advanced further in chapter 5, with the argument that what Mark really criticises is the spirit of domination, which is in contrast to Jesus' way of service and sacrifice.

According to Belo, the revolution for service and salvation involves a negation of the established values of the social code like money, state-temple, Caesar and the god of dead men. It also involves the 'practice of saving lives and bodies' and especially the 'practice of feeding the poor by sharing bread with them'.²² He comments further in connection to Nietzsche's philosophy:

[Jesus'] practice effects the opening of a space of salvation, a space of liberated bread, liberated bodies, and the word that is liberated by the action of reading. This triple liberation can be correlated with the Nietzschean trinity: charity leads to play as the liberation of labor power, hope leads to the dance as the liberation of autonomies, and faith to laughter as the liberation of inscriptive forces.²³

The framework of Nietzschean trinity of charity, hope, and faith would have been based on Paul's discussion in 1 Cor. 13. Such Nietzschean trinity comes into play in Belo's analysis of Jesus' messianic practice in relation to his disciples—in the *economic, political, and ideological* levels. These disciples were blessed to have experienced from Jesus a part of the utopian longing of the crowds for the satisfaction of their bodies at the *economic level* (Mark 2:13-17; 14:17-26a), but the experience is extended to the entire crowd (Mark 6:32-45), and consequently to the entire world—to loving and feeding the poor which does not exclude the poor pagan neighbour. According to Belo, this practice of economic love is called *charity*.²⁴

At the *political or geographical* level, the disciples were called to be with Jesus and to be sent by him (Mark 3:13-19) to the 'horizons of the pagans' (Mark 6:6-13). There is the establishment of a 'space of the disciples', of a *basileic* circle,²⁵ which centres initially on the body of Jesus, but which later would be with 'limitless extension

²² Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 250-51, 273.

²³ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 273.

²⁴ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 245.

²⁵ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 247.

throughout the space of the entire world' with the 'exclusion of all domination, even that of Jews over pagans'.²⁶ This political level which 'aimed at a worldwide table at which the poor are filled' is named *hope*.²⁷

The *ideological level* is portrayed in Mark's narrative when the disciples, at an earlier stage failed to understand, but later—having the eyes of faith—in the character of Peter, were able to understand that Jesus is the Messiah (8:27-30). Belo explains that Peter was able to harmonize the practice of a 'poor man followed by the poor' (i.e. Jesus was followed by fishermen, tax collectors, and sinners) with the 'eschatological narrative' symbolized by 'a mustard seed' which is the 'smallest of all the seeds on earth', but which shall 'lead to the manifestation of the Son of man and his glorious power', bigger than other plants and having big branches that invites all the birds of the air to find shelter upon its shade.²⁸

As the disciples were directed by Jesus to do their revolutionary mission aimed at the 'liberation of bodies (hands, feet, eyes)' by their *kerygma*, they had to maintain their being poor, in contrast to the social system as practiced by the merchants and other pilgrims.²⁹ Their *kerygmatic* proclamation of the messiahship of Jesus as 'Son of man', according to Belo, corresponds to 'a *communist ecclesiality*: to the gathering in the ... [community kingdom] of poor people without any accompanying rich people, servants without masters, disciples without scribes, young people without adults, brothers without fathers, or, in a word, sons of man outside any relation of domination and

²⁶ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 248.

²⁷ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 249.

²⁸ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 251-52.

²⁹ See Belo's comments on Mark 6:6b-13. Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 134-35.

kinship’.³⁰ In other words the *kerymatic* message, when analyzed, ‘is addressed to the readers as to *chosen* people’ where ‘Mark’/‘leaders’ replaces Jesus/disciples and where the promised *basileia* is *already-there* in the *ekklesia*.³¹

The method that Jesus used in his revolutionary attempt, as displayed before his followers, is non-revolutionary—different from the method of the zealots. The zealots tried to attain their goal through a struggle to overthrow the Romans and the Jewish ruling classes that were collaborating with the Romans. But, according to Belo, these are just two revolts but not revolution at all because the zealots were not aiming at a transformation of the dominant mode of production and of the social formation, and so they failed as they led their followers ‘to commit suicide in the Jewish War of 66-70’. In the case of Jesus, his goal and method have the markings of a ‘radically communist’ and non-revolutionary strategy.³²

When Belo tries to apply the non-revolutionary strategy of Jesus for his followers in contemporary life, he asks, ‘Does this mean that “Christians” must systematically adopt a strategy of the kind called “non-violence” in our time?’ His answer seems a negation: ‘To draw such a conclusion would be to deduce from the Gethsemani [sic] narrative a “moral principle” that would theologize and nullify in advance the play of narratives’. He elaborates his implication:

Today, in the context of a quite different social formation—one in which the play of determinations resulting from technological transformations of the productive forces can perhaps make a communist revolution possible—the question ... to have recourse to weapons is a matter of concrete strategic choices ... that cannot be nullified in advance. For example, who will deny that power was being used against ... the Nazi occupation? Or in the struggle of North Vietnam against the crushing military superiority of American imperialism?³³

³⁰ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 261-62.

³¹ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 273-74.

³² Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 260-63

³³ Belo, *A Materialist Reading*, 264.

Such an application made by Belo shows his interest in using the Bible not only for political reflection but action. This can be based on the Marxist assertion that if the biblical message is a *kerygma* (a proclamation) ‘which is given in order to put in motion certain actions and to produce certain situations, then God is not the *content* of the message but the *wherfrom* and the *whereto*, the originator and the impulse of this course of action and these conditions’. It follows then that ‘*hearing* the message can mean no other than becoming involved in this action and this creation of conditions and situations’.³⁴ Such has close relevance to chapter 6 of this study where we argue how Mark’s target audience become participants in the narrative, not only spectators. Furthermore, the hearing aspect will be elaborated further throughout the discussion because of the current recognition by many scholars that Mark’s narrative would have been heard by Mark’s target audience rather than read silently and privately.

Even though we may disagree to a certain degree with Belo on some of his assumptions about Jesus and the disciples, the heartbeat of his message can be felt—the relevance of the gospel in today’s world—similar to contextual and some postcolonial interpreters. Such interest challenges us to look upon the practical significance of the current research regarding the comparative characterisation of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. However, the attempt is not to force Mark to speak today, but instead to enter into his world and time and listen to him. Somehow, we may hear Mark’s message as it was first heard by his target audience in a first-century oral context.

³⁴ José Míguez Bonino, ‘Marxist Critical Tools: Are They Helpful in Breaking the Stranglehold of Idealist Hermeneutics?’ in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993), 112.

2.3. In the World of Mark and His Audience: Historical Criticism

A contrast with those Markan scholars who start with the text but interest themselves more in front of the text are those who look at the text as window to the world behind the text; they are called social or historical exegetes. There are different meanings implied in the term ‘historical’, namely: (1) The historical, social, and cultural context of the author of the Gospel of Mark and his target audience. This is basically the sense emphasized in this research, especially what Rafael Rodriguez terms as the ‘contextual approach’ with reference to the oral-aural context of the Gospel of Mark.³⁵ (2) The notion that Mark intended his narrative to refer in some way to figures who actually existed in history, as opposed to writing a purely fictitious story; in other words the thesis that Mark intended his narrative to have some kind of historical referent. (3) The notion that Mark's narrative is historical in the sense of revealing the meaning of what Jesus and his disciples did (through his emplotment of events and the like). (4) The notion that Mark's narrative is historically true in the sense of being factually accurate, or, even more strongly, that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the events in Mark's narrative and what actually happened. This nineteenth century positivism is and in any case one has to be cautious about assuming that what the ancients might have meant is what we mean by history today, let alone what Leopold von Ranke and Wilhem Humboldt meant by history as it actually happened.³⁶

A common-sense rationale for such an historical approach is that since the Gospel of Mark is an ancient historical text which was produced in a historical space

³⁵ Rafael Rodriguez, Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed (London: T&T Clark, 2014), 52.

³⁶ L. von Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke (vol. 33; Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1874), vii.

and time, it should be studied with the methodology of historical criticism.³⁷ Historical critics focus their questions on the meaning of the text as intended by the real historical author for his/her original historical audience. We will present the works of Otto Betz and Hengel related to, but different from, the characterisation of Jesus and the disciples in Mark as examples of doing historical criticism. Let us look first at the perspective of Betz.

2.3.1. Otto Betz

The interest of Betz is to return to the socio-historical situation of Mark, i.e., to the 'Jesus tradition' and to the Markan 'community tradition'.³⁸ He presents Jesus as an itinerant teacher and the disciples as his pupils and companions. This does not necessarily indicate that Jesus was a wandering rabbi but that he seems to be like them in some ways and different in other ways. Betz sets his discussion against the Jewish background, particularly the OT, Qumran, and some later documents like Josephus' Jewish Antiquities, and sees the relationship of Jesus with the disciples as rooted in the relationship of a teacher/master of the torah to his pupil in first-century Palestine.³⁹

Betz elaborates his position by employing some exemplars from Jewish backgrounds. For instance, he tells of an Essene named Judas who appeared as a prophet-teacher surrounded by disciples who were learning from him the art of prophecy. He also mentions the pupils of a rabbinic teacher who sat at his feet to learn

³⁷ A handbook that outlines the method of historical criticism is by Werner G. Kümmel, Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook (trans. E. V. N. Goetchius; New York: Seabury Press, 1967). On the history of the development of such a method, see Grant and Tracy, A Short History; Edgar Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); and Werner G. Kümmel, The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems (trans. S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972).

³⁸ Otto Betz, What do We Know About Jesus (trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM Press, 1968).

³⁹ Betz, What do We Know About Jesus, 10, 20.

from his wisdom and adopt his way of life; ‘they imitated him, served him and shared his scanty meals’.⁴⁰ Such practices, according to Betz, can be noticed in the community life of Jesus and the disciples; however there is also difference: ‘the community life which turns the pupil into the disciple and the teacher into lord and master is most clearly distinguishable’ in the association of Jesus and his disciples.⁴¹

Betz also talks about the association of Jesus and the disciples being similar to that of the monks or holy men of the Qumran community who ‘had left father and mother, wife and children’ and had turned over all they had to the ‘steward of the order’s property and thus given to the community—indeed put at the disposal of God himself’.⁴² He recognizes how the disciples were united with Jesus in a similar manner to the practice of the Qumran community who presented themselves as living sacrifices, consecrating their money, bodies and mental strengths to service in the community which also would support and care for them. Then as a community, they ate together at the common table and prayed and consulted together with their brethren.⁴³ However, Betz is quick to point out what ‘distinguishes the fellowship of Jesus’ disciples from the community fostered in Qumran’: (1) the ‘joy which emanates from Jesus’ message and from the victory over Satan’ and (2) the ‘freedom and open-mindedness towards worldly order and towards worldly goods’; there was ‘no compulsion; the rules of discipleship were not, as it were, turned into a general and essential law’.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Betz, What do We Know About Jesus, 71.

⁴¹ Betz, What do We Know About Jesus, 71-72.

⁴² Betz, What do We Know About Jesus, 72. See Qumran Community Rule 1.11-13; 5.1-3

⁴³ See Qumran Community Rule 6.2-3; Josephus, J.W. 2.124-33.

⁴⁴ Betz, What do We Know About Jesus?, 74.

Betz also looks at the OT as his background in his discussion about the following of Jesus by the disciples. He sees the story of Elisha, being called away from his plough by Elijah, as similar to Jesus' call of the disciples. He even connects the motif of following in the OT with the gods of the heathen or God himself (Deut. 13:4). He explains that 'following of God is tested by service' to one's neighbour and to 'follow God means to follow his behaviour towards men'. This demand of following God, Betz asserts, became a problem among the rabbis that emerges from the 'Babylonian Talmud, *Sota* 14a, which sheds light on the New Testament in other respects as well'. But in relation to Jesus, the evidence shows the authority Jesus claimed for himself: 'he is the one to be followed, he himself receives the good done to the least of the brethren, and it is a man's attitude to him that determines the measure of the heavenly reward'.⁴⁵

Betz's discussion is helpful in situating Jesus' call of the disciples against the background of the OT, Qumran, and other later Jewish documents. However, my methodological and theoretical frameworks (as explained in chapter 3) assume that Mark's audience's knowledge of the OT, Qumran, and other traditions is through their social memory rather than through the written texts. Nevertheless, Betz's discussion helps in pondering the significance of Jesus in a first-century oral context of Palestine and the larger Greco-Roman world, as it will establish the distinctiveness of the relationship of Jesus and the disciples in comparison with other master-disciples relationships at their time. This will be discussed in chapter 4.

⁴⁵ Betz, *What do We Know About Jesus*, 75-76.

2.3.2. Martin Hengel

Martin Hengel does the same task of going back to ‘Jesus tradition’, as Betz does, and argues that the ‘central feature of Synoptic research must continue to be the attempt to get back to Jesus himself’.⁴⁶ However, as stated by Deines, this proposed attempt is in consideration of Hengel’s demand upon NT scholars ‘not to limit’ themselves to the ‘New Testament alone’ but also to include in their work ‘the times, areas and sources before and after it’ which Hengel himself tried to do.⁴⁷ The reason for such a demand, as attested by Hengel, is that ‘the history of culture, thought and religion of Palestine from the time of Alexander until far into Christian late antiquity cannot be understood apart from the deep influence of Hellenism upon all areas of life’.⁴⁸ Thus in his book, The Charismatic Leader and His Followers, Hengel follows after *Redaktionsgeschichte* and *Formgeschichte*, and uses *Religionsgeschichte* to find enlightenment with regards to the relationship of Jesus and disciples, particularly in Jesus’ call of the disciples to follow him in the context of first-century Palestine. Though most of his colleagues at Tübingen who used *Religionsgeschichte* were ‘drunk with sweet wine from Marburg’ which was served by Rudolf Bultmann,⁴⁹ he differs from their perspective of Christianity as a ‘syncretistic Hellenistic religion’ with mystery religions and a pre-Christian Gnosis in it. To Hengel, Christianity is a product of Judaism since Jesus, Paul and other early Christians were Jews, though Hengel views

⁴⁶ Martin Hengel, The Charismatic Leader and His Followers (trans. J. Greig; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 84.

⁴⁷ Roland Deines, ‘Martin Hengel: A Life in the Service of Christology’, Tyndale Bulletin 58.1 (2007): 27.

⁴⁸ Hengel, Charismatic Leader, 29.

⁴⁹ Deines, ‘Martin Hengel’, 26.

early Christianity and rabbinic Judaism as siblings that developed from earlier Judaism which was influenced by Hellenism, thus can be called ‘Hellenistic Judaism’.⁵⁰

Comparing the Markan tradition with the Q source⁵¹ and with the OT and other Jewish-Hellenistic texts, and setting his discussions in the context of first-century Palestine, Hengel rejects Betz’s notion that Jesus resembles in some ways the rabbis and the disciples his pupils, although acknowledging that Jesus also teaches as the rabbis did. For Hengel, Betz’s idea is an ‘unexamined axiom’ because ‘it ignores the fact that there is no bridge for the rabbinate to following Jesus’.⁵² Hengel, then, places Jesus and the disciples closer to the Zealots with Jesus as the leader. Perhaps this idea is brought into fruition by his doctoral thesis about the Zealots in first-century Palestine, whose ‘messianic expectations served to clarify further the particular and unique form of expression that Jesus gave to the messianic expectation’.⁵³

The problem with Hengel is that he mixes together things Josephus says about quite different people and conjures a continuing ‘Zealot’ party out of them, even though according to what Josephus actually says, the Zealots only emerge as a party after the outbreak of the Jewish revolt. Nevertheless, Hengel recognizes that Jesus and the disciples differed from the Zealots and the relationship that Jesus had with his disciples is unique and finds its origin in Jesus himself and his followers. Someone in want of

⁵⁰ See details on the Hellenization of Judaism in Martin Hengel, The ‘Hellenization’ of Judaea in the First Century after Christ (London: SCM Press, 1989).

⁵¹ Contrary to what earlier scholars supposed, that Q source is a written document, recent scholars are hypothesising that it might have been an oral piece of work which was never written but was passed on orally in the early church. See for instance Richard Horsley and Jonathan Draper, Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999). See also Eric Eve, ‘Reconstructing Mark: A Thought Experiment’ in Questioning Q: A Multidimensional Critique (eds. Mark S. Goodacre and Nicholas Perrin; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 89-114.

⁵² Hengel, Charismatic Leader, 85-86.

⁵³ Deines, ‘Martin Hengel’, 35-36.

further instruction about ‘following and imitating Jesus Christ’, according to Hengel, would ‘be grateful for illumination on how the idea of “following” came to be developed by Jesus or by those who came after him’.⁵⁴

Though Hengel does not limit his research to the NT alone, he does limit the idea of borrowing terms and ideas from first-century Palestinian Judaism and Hellenism. Thus, Hengel firmly believes that even though there were Jewish rabbis and their pupils, Zealots and their leaders, and cynic philosophers and their students in first-century Palestine, they had no influence upon the relationship Jesus had with his followers, which started with only two and then four (Mark 1:16-20) and later increased to twelve (Mark 3:13-19). But he believes that the ‘call narratives’ in the OT have a bearing upon Jesus’ call of his disciples. In his analysis of the passages about Jesus’ call of the disciples, setting them against the background of the OT, Hengel claims that the call narratives in Mark, similar to the Q source, have clear parallels in form and content to the call of Elisha by Elijah in I Kings 19:19ff.⁵⁵ Even the question on the origins of the title ‘apostle’ which is a prototype for the call of the disciples appears as the call of the OT prophet where the verb ἀποστέλλειν in LXX ‘plays a fundamental role’.⁵⁶

However, Hengel acknowledges some similarities that the ‘Jesus tradition’ and the ‘early Christian community’ had with first-century Judaism and Hellenism, with regards to the phenomena of ‘following’, ‘discipleship’, of being ‘called’, and ‘freedom from ties’. For instance, having compared Mark with Q and setting his discussion in first-century Palestine, Hengel states the possibility that when Mark wrote to the Gentile Christians, he gave more emphasis to the merits of radical renunciation of property for

⁵⁴ Hengel, Charismatic Leader, 85.

⁵⁵ Hengel, Charismatic Leader, 5.

⁵⁶ Hengel, Charismatic Leader, 82-83.

the reason that his Hellenistic circle of readers were already familiar with this, as such demands were also being made by wandering Cynic or Stoic preachers.⁵⁷ He also explains that the Q source, in contrast with Mark, might have ‘placed greater emphasis on the breaking of family-ties which certainly was a particular stumbling-block in Palestine—as throughout the Orient—but which in Palestine was nevertheless in the forefront of men’s minds through the apocalyptic tradition of an eschatological dissolution of family-ties, and because of the “call to follow”, issued by apocalyptic prophets and zealot leaders’.⁵⁸

In Mark’s narrative, the calling of the disciples to follow Jesus and to be sent by him is a call for the early Christian community to continue what Jesus has been doing in the proclamation of the ‘good news’. This is a major concern in chapter 6 of this thesis where we argue that the disciples in Mark’s narrative world become the new disciples in Mark’s social world. Hengel expresses this notion in the following:

[The] fact that there is an almost inseparable fusion of the ‘Jesus tradition’ and ‘community formations’ ... of the sending out of the disciples may ... imply that there was ... a conscious awareness ... of the ‘continuity’ between Jesus’ activity and the later activities of the community. Thus we must not always understand the diagnostic terms ‘community formation’ ... to imply a great gap from the historical Jesus. The community’s freedom under the guidance of the prophetic spirit is something which ... could also be an expression of the fact that the community was aware of being particularly close to the historical Jesus in action, which was the starting point for its own missionary proclamation.⁵⁹

It is interesting to reflect, after noting Betz’s and Hengel’s comments on the relationship of Jesus and the disciples, particularly in Jesus’ call of his disciples, that even though they use the same method of socio-historical criticism, they differ in one way or another in perceiving the relationship Jesus had with his disciples. Even though it is far from clear that the office of rabbi existed in Jesus’ day and that Mark does not

⁵⁷ Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 33. I take the view that Mark’s target audience would have been both Jews and Gentiles, members and non-members of Mark’s community. This will be elaborated in chapter 3.

⁵⁸ Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 33.

⁵⁹ Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 83.

make Jesus look at all as rabbi-like as Matthew does, Betz's perception that Jesus is a rabbi to a certain degree (as will be clarified in chapter 4) and the disciples his pupils is more explicit and text-based (Mark 9:5; 14:45). This is a contrast to the perception of Hengel about Jesus as a Zealot leader implied by the fact that one of his followers was a Zealot, which will be discussed further in chapter 4 on the issue of the meaning of the word 'Zealot' attached to one of the disciples of Jesus. This is because the Zealots, in the works of Josephus, only appear during the Great Judeo-Roman War (64-66 CE). Anyhow, Hengel's method maximises the use of the background of the text and minimises the use of the text itself, which is different from the oral-memorial-comparative approach of this study: to balance the use of the text in critical engagement with its socio-historical background and contemporary scholarship in relation to my avowed methodology. However, Hengel's recognition of the distinctiveness of Jesus, compared with the rabbis and Zealot leaders, is commendable and is pursued in this research, particularly in chapter 4.

2.4. Within the Text of Mark: Literary Criticism

The quest for the historical Jesus, as exemplified by Betz and Hengel, has been a long on-going research. Even earlier, Albert Schweitzer wrote a historical inquiry starting from Wrede up to his time.⁶⁰ There were attempts to reconstruct the historical Jesus, doing away with the *kerygmatic* Jesus of the early church and the gospel writers. But the problem and difficulty of going back to the historical Jesus⁶¹ prompted some scholars to focus only on the canonized text, to the literary text—to that 'within the text'—'the most radical challenge to traditional hermeneutical models which has yet

⁶⁰ Albert Schweitzer, Quest of the Historical Jesus (London: SCM Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Krentz, Historical-Critical Method, 55-88; James Robinson and Helmut Koester, Trajectories Through Early Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

arisen'.⁶² Norman Peterson identifies literary criticism as the revolt against historical criticism when 'the spirit of the culture became the primary perspective from which its products could be construed' and that as 'the understanding of texts became a matter of understanding the culture that produced them, the critic increasingly worked from the cultural context to the text rather than vice versa'. Because of this, 'a number of academic disciplines, including the biblical and the literary, revolted against historicism, and not infrequently against the historical method with which it had become identified'.⁶³

In contrast to historical criticism (which asks 'What does the text mean?'), the main question in literary criticism is 'How does the text mean?'⁶⁴ In the case of Mark, it focuses in the literary piece as a unified and understandable whole and explores the meaning/s and artistic elements within the text of Mark. It includes questions of structure and use of language as in rhetoric and storytelling. There are many literary scholars who prefer not to mention any historical background in their literary work. But in this study, we shall include historical backgrounds following after other scholars who do.⁶⁵ The focus 'within the text' in our discussion will be exemplified by two literary critics (Augustine Stock and Robert Tannehill) as they attempt to understand the characterisation of Jesus and the disciples in Mark's narrative.

⁶² Thiselton, New Horizons in Hermeneutics, 473.

⁶³ Peterson, Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics, 25-26. For more discussion on the practice of literary criticism in the NT, see William A. Beardslee, Literary Criticism of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970). On the development of literary criticism, see Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York: Knopf, 1957).

⁶⁴ Elizabeth S. Malbon, In the Company of Jesus (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2000), 1-2.

⁶⁵ See for instance Petersen, Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics; T. Longman III, Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); J.L. Bailey and L.D. Vander Broek, Literary Forms in the New Testament (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); Stephen Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels (New Haven: Yale University, 1989).

2.4.1. Augustine Stock

Like Betz, Stock likens the relationship of Jesus and the Twelve to that of the rabbis and their students. But he quotes E. Schweizer to explain the difference: ‘A disciple of a rabbi might dream of some day becoming better, if possible, than his master; but a disciple of Jesus could never expect that someday he himself might be the Son of Man’.⁶⁶ Moreover, ‘Jesus never debates with his disciples as a rabbi would have done’.⁶⁷ Rabbinic argument frequently turned on scriptural exegesis and engagement with the rabbinic tradition; Jesus’ arguments with the Pharisees occasionally appeal to the former, but never to the latter, and his preaching to the crowds or the disciples does neither. However, Stock delves more into the literary text using literary criticism rather than historical criticism—different from that of Betz and Hengel, and portrays a new picture of Jesus and the Twelve in the context of ancient Greek literary narrative.

Literary critics want to stay ‘within the text’. They recognize an authorship of the Gospel of Mark and view the Gospel as a literary whole. Stock wants to look at ‘the function of the text concerned in the gospel as a whole’.⁶⁸ He sees this approach as a moving away from distinguishing tradition and redaction since the author of Mark is now recognized not just as a collector of stories, but as a composer of his narrative using whatever materials he had. Stock expresses his favour and hope in this method in the study of Mark’s literary work:

Such a study is necessary and valid however one views pre-Markan tradition and its use; it is valid even if the gospel has undergone successive stages of redaction. In this way a number of problems in the narrative may be solved ... without recourse to hypothetical source reconstruction This approach takes seriously the possibility that ... the final redactor of the story ... be credited with the ability to tell a coherent story.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Augustine Stock, Call to Discipleship: A Literary Study of Mark’s Gospel (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982), 47.

⁶⁷ Stock, Call to Discipleship, 47.

⁶⁸ Stock, Call to Discipleship, 12.

⁶⁹ Stock, Call to Discipleship, 45.

Using such an approach, Stock was able to compare the narrative of Mark with the dramatic comedy and tragedy of Greco-Roman literature, and perceives Jesus as a hero and the disciples as insiders—those within the group of Jesus, as opposed to the outsiders like the crowd, the Pharisees, chief priests, and scribes. Stock asserts that Mark wrote using the ‘gospel traditions that had come down to him’, modelling his work on this Greek dramatic tragedy which is ‘the most influential and enduring aesthetic form’ upon which one can ‘portray the great dilemmas of existence, and the torments brought upon mortals by their mysterious passions’. Stock’s assertion is founded upon Aristotle’s division of a narrative drama, having a beginning (arche), a middle (mesa), and an ending (telos). These are noted in his study when he breaks Mark into two halves making 8:27-30 the middle of the narrative. In the first half, the reader is ‘taken up largely with Jesus’ miracles’ where followers are attracted but the Pharisees, his adversaries, are in ‘bitter opposition’. In the latter half, Jesus taught and emphasized the necessity of his suffering and death, even in front of the chief priests and the elders and scribes who were his adversaries at that time; then ‘Jesus is progressively deserted by his followers so that in the end he is in a state of almost total abandonment’. Stock comments on the ending of Mark that since comedy ‘grew out of tragedy’, then we are justified in seeing Mark’s ending (16:8) as a ‘comic happy ending’—a comedy afterthought or completion.⁷⁰ The issue and implication regarding Mark’s ending will be mentioned again in chapter 6 of this thesis.

The followers of Jesus in Mark’s literary whole function as insiders and outsiders. The specially called twelve disciples belong to the insiders, who received from Jesus the ‘Mystery of the Kingdom’. Only these insiders are ‘granted full access’

⁷⁰ Stock, *Call to Discipleship*, 27, 28, 31.

into Jesus' message when they were initiated 'into the hidden meaning' of his instructions (Mark 4:10-20). In this way, Jesus functions as an 'authoritative teacher who brings men to an understanding of the truth'; however, Stock quickly clarifies: 'he is not just a Gnostic revealer who gives insight to the initiated'. Even then, though these insiders were initiated into a hidden meaning, at many times, they could hardly understand. It takes Jesus to open their eyes 'to the full dimensions of his messiahship' as 'the Christ', 'the Son of man', 'the Son of God', and 'the rejected Messiah'.⁷¹

Stock also explains that Jesus' call is unto discipleship. The disciples were called to follow Jesus. This means that the way of Jesus is their way, and their 'discipleship consists in walking the way of Jesus'.⁷² The word 'follow' in Mark conveys a 'new sound when Jesus said it, a sound which it has nowhere else' except in the OT 'which declare[s] that one must follow either Baal or Yahweh (1 Kings 18:21; cf. the idea in Prov. 7:22)'. As 'Jesus receives a commission from God' as 'Son of Man', 'Messiah', 'Son of God', so the disciples also 'receive a commission from Jesus', i.e., to follow in 'discipleship'—'a new manner of acting and thinking which is sustained by the event of grace'.⁷³ Stock reflects further with regards to Jesus' call of his disciples,

Those who are called have had no specific preparation, nor have they even necessarily been among those who heard Jesus' preaching. Jesus does not encounter men in some special religious sphere, but in the midst of everyday life where they really live. Men are made disciples by the call of Jesus, which is as powerful as the creative word of God and whatever those who are called may become will be the work of Jesus.⁷⁴

Thus, Mark was conveying to his readers the proper significance of discipleship.

According to Stock, Mark was not writing with an evangelistic purpose in mind; but

⁷¹ Stock, Call to Discipleship, 35, 64, 97, 113, 142.

⁷² Stock, Call to Discipleship, 146.

⁷³ Stock, Call to Discipleship, 154.

⁷⁴ Stock, Call to Discipleship, 243.

quoting from Robert Tannehill, Stock states that the aim of Mark ‘was not merely to present certain ideas about Jesus or to warn his readers against some group distinct from themselves but to lead his readers through a particular story in which they could discover themselves and thereby change. If this is true, the tension between Jesus and the disciples, internal to the story, mirrors an external tension between the church as the author perceives it and the discipleship to which it is called’.⁷⁵ However, this present research (which will be discussed in the following chapters) supposes a multi-purpose of Mark in writing his narrative for both members and non-members of his community.

2.4.2. Robert Tannehill

Tannehill made his position even clearer in his article ‘The Disciples in Mark: The Function of A Narrative Role’, namely that the author of Mark ‘has a view of his readers and anticipates how they will respond to his story’.⁷⁶ Since this will be reiterated in chapter 6, when Tannehill’s theory of identification and repulsion will be used as a jumping-off point in arguing for the effect of Mark’s characterisation of Jesus and his disciples upon Mark’s target audience (of how the disciples in Mark’s narrative become the current disciples in Mark’s social world), it is sufficient just to summarise his main argument.

Tannehill explains that ‘the decision of the author to write a Gospel, including the story of the first disciples, rests on the assumption that there are similarities between the situation of these disciples and the situation of the early Church, so that, in telling a story about the past, the author can also speak to his present’.⁷⁷ In other words, the

⁷⁵ Stock, Call to Discipleship, 243.

⁷⁶ Robert Tannehill, ‘The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role’, in The Interpretation of Mark (ed. William Telford; London: SPCK, 1985), 137.

⁷⁷ Tannehill, ‘The Disciples in Mark, 141.

disciples as they relate to Jesus become an object lesson for the audience of Mark as they also relate to Jesus. Tannehill believes that Mark composed his narrative in order ‘to awaken his readers to their failures as disciples and call them to repentance’.⁷⁸ In this way, Tannehill stresses the intention of the author for how the audience should perceive Mark’s characterisations, which is also the emphasis of the present study. However, other theories, such as speech-act and social/cultural memory, will be used in this study in relation to oral hermeneutics to address the constraints of Tannehill’s presentation, which will be noted in chapter 6.

2.5. Eclectic Approaches and Other Contemporary Methods

Stock and Tannehill’s literary methodology brings us closer to the Markan text, which is far better than other approaches that lead us away from the text. Such an approach makes us focus on what is in the text and how a reader/hearer understands the meaning of the text. This present study is influenced by the literary approach; however, the socio-historical background of Mark and of Jesus and his disciples—first-century Palestine and Rome—is also considered as in the works of Betz and Hengel. More specifically, a branch of literary criticism which is narrative criticism greatly influenced the methodology of this study,⁷⁹ along with other approaches, most especially oral hermeneutics, which will be elaborated further below and in the next chapter. A review of some eclectic approaches is appropriate before looking at the more contemporary approaches in relation to my approach.

⁷⁸ Tannehill, ‘The Disciples in Mark’, 141.

⁷⁹ Joseph Campbell, Northrop Frye, Wayne Booth, Roland Barthes, and Mikhail Bakhtin were influential in the development of tools being used for ‘narrative research’. See Stefinee Pinnegar and J. Gary Daynes, ‘Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative’ in Handbook of Narrative Inquiry (ed. D. Jean Clandinin; London: Sage Publications, 2007), 6.

2.5.1 The Wedding of History and Story in Markan Interpretations

As Wrede's historical criticism of the Gospel of Mark anticipated redaction criticism,⁸⁰ so redaction criticism anticipated narrative criticism. Redaction criticism arose when the practice of dismantling the Gospel of Mark by form and tradition critics, notably Rudolf Bultmann and his followers,⁸¹ was reversed by redaction critics such as Willi Marxsen and Theodore Weeden after showing proofs that Mark was not just a collector of traditions but an author, a composer, a deliberate theologian in his own right,⁸² in contrast to the former critics who view Mark only as a collector and transmitter of the ideas and theology of his community.

Weeden focuses his attention more on the study of characters in Mark, highlighting the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples.⁸³ According to Weeden, there are three stages in Mark's characterisation of the disciples as they relate to Jesus. In stage one (1:16-8-26), Mark presents Jesus as a miracle worker and the disciples as having a close relationship with him, which others do not share. Even then, they are unable to perceive who Jesus is and are oblivious of his miraculous power, 'while others swarm to Jesus as a miracle worker'.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Wrede argues that before one can move through the gospels to reconstruct the life of Jesus, one must first understand the Gospel of Mark on its own terms. See Wrede, W., The Messianic Secret (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1971), 5-6.

⁸¹ Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (trans. John Marsh; New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963); Jesus and the Word (trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); Theology of the New Testament (trans. Kendrick Grobel; 2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955); Martin Dibelius' From Tradition to Gospel; H. Gunkel, Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton (trans. K. William Whitney Jr.; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006); The Folktale in the Old Testament (trans. M. D. Rutter; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987).

⁸² Willi Marxsen, Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel (trans. James Boyce, Donald Juel, William Poehmann, and Roy Harrisville; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969); Weeden, Mark, 2-3. See also Joachim Rohde, Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) and Norman Perrin, What is Redaction Criticism? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

⁸³ Weeden, Mark, 2-3, 20.

In stage two (8:27-14:9), Weeden notices the sudden burst of insight from the disciples, represented by Peter (8:30-33); however, ‘while identifying Jesus as the Christ, the disciples do not have the same understanding of the nature of discipleship as Jesus claims for himself’.⁸⁵ The result is a ‘christological conflict that is never resolved’.⁸⁶ For Weeden there are two opposing Christologies in Mark. One is represented by the disciples with their view of a Hellenistic *theios aner* (divine man) Christology, and the other represented by Jesus as presented by Mark—that of a suffering Christology notable in Mark’s *theologia crucis* (theology of the cross).⁸⁷ But it should be noted that such a view is now generally regarded as unacceptable by NT scholars because there is no evidence for the existence of a Hellenistic *theios aner*.

Weeden asserts in stage three (14:10-79/16:8) that the ‘disciples do not just ‘misunderstand Jesus’; ‘they totally reject him’. This stage starts with the plan of Judas to betray Jesus and continues to the denial of Peter which ‘underscores the complete and utter rejection of Jesus and his messiahship’. That the rejection is ‘true of all of the disciples ... is substantiated by the episode in Gethsemane and the incident in the courtyard of the high priest’. Also the disciples cannot be found at the cross (15.22-41), they do not participate in the burial (15.42-47), and they are not there at the empty tomb (16.1-8).⁸⁸ Such a perspective will not be advanced in this work, because the evidence in Mark, which will be elaborated later, shows both negative and positive aspects of Mark’s characterisations of the disciples.

⁸⁴ Weeden, Mark, 28.

⁸⁵ Weeden, Mark, 33.

⁸⁶ Weeden, Mark, 34.

⁸⁷ Theodore Weeden J. ‘The Heresy that Necessitated Mark’s Gospel’, in The Interpretation of Mark (ed. W. Telford; London: SPCK, 1985), 64. This article is based on Weeden’s Ph.D. thesis at Claremont Graduate School and University Center in 1964.

⁸⁸ Weeden, Mark, 38.

A further development in the study of Markan narrative on Jesus and his disciples is seen in the works of narrative critical scholars. Jack D. Kingsbury has looked at the messianic secret from a narrative point of view in The Christology of Mark's Gospel⁸⁹ and supports the conclusion of redaction critics that Mark is a theologian. In his Conflict in Mark, Kingsbury highlights Jesus' conflict with the disciples. In the first place Jesus thinks the things of God while the disciples think the things of humans. In the second place, Jesus rebukes the disciples because 'instead of hearing his summons to be servant and slave of all, the disciples are desirous of status, greatness, the blessings of wealth, positions of power, a secure future, and a life without suffering.'⁹⁰ The present study will pursue these conflicts further in view of an ideological clash, especially in chapter 5, to contrast Jesus and the disciples (and other characters) in the narrative, which is not well treated in Kingsbury's book.

The method of narrative criticism in the work of Kingsbury is questioned by Räisänen: 'Should one be content with interpreting Mark's story world without regard to the real world at all? What is the relationship between these two worlds?'⁹¹ Räisänen's question is valid and this research is an attempt to address the two worlds in Mark—the historical world and the story world, hence utilizing a methodology that combines both historical and literary criticisms. This is despite the fact that 'the literary

⁸⁹ Jack Dean Kingsbury, The Christology of Mark's Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989).

⁹⁰ Jack Dean Kingsbury, Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 116.

⁹¹ Räisänen, Heikki, The 'Messianic Secret' in Mark (trans. Christopher Tucket; Edinburgh: Clark, 1990), 16.

coherence of historical narrative and the type of truth that is conveyed in it' has been ignored by most literary and historical analysts.⁹²

The attempt to mix historical and literary criticisms (as the present study will do), instead of keeping them distinct, is questioned by Andrew Lincoln.⁹³ But to justify the methodology of the current research, the affirmation by Randy Nelson is worth mentioning: 'The combination of a historical and literary approach appears to be the best approach to gospel interpretation, given the nature of the gospels themselves'.⁹⁴

This is also the view of Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard:

[W]e welcome literary methods for they enable us to understand and appreciate the Bible's literary dimensions. But in using literary methods we cannot abandon the texts' historical moorings. We insist that the 'historical' focus provides the best avenue to a legitimate 'literary' reading. We do not want an either-or approach.⁹⁵

To further justify the attempt of combining literary and historical criticisms in the methodological approach of this present work, we may refer to other similar attempts. One is that of Ulrich Luz who, in his narrative criticism on Matthew, perceives the author as a historical figure having both literary and theological purposes as he composed his narrative. He was able to combine both narrative criticism with redaction and form criticisms.⁹⁶ Another attempt is by Stephen Evans in his book, The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History. Evans' attempt is in contrast to the distinction which many theologians of Bultmannian heritage try to draw between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. He explains that 'the

⁹² Donald E. Polkinghorne, Narrative Knowing and Human Sciences (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 64.

⁹³ Via e-mail to me through Damon So.

⁹⁴ Randy Nelson, 'The Challenge of Canonical Criticism to Background Studies', JBS 6.1 (2006):25.

⁹⁵ Klein et al., Introduction, 104.

⁹⁶ See Ulrich Luz, Matthew: A Commentary (trans. James E. Crouch; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew (trans. J. Bradford Robinson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

story of Jesus as told by the church—the story of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God—can be reasonably accepted as historically true’ for the reason that ‘there is no story of the historical Jesus that can be isolated from faith convictions, and this is as true for the stories told by “scientific, critical historians” as it is for the story told by the Church’.⁹⁷ Although such an argument which presupposes that Mark intended to write history is a weak counter to those who view the Gospel of Mark as fiction, Evans’s attempt is an example of combining historical and literary approaches. Throughout his discussion, Evans presents the church’s version of this story as incarnational narrative, among ‘many historical narratives in the Bible that are significant for Christians’.⁹⁸

One more attempt at combining historical and literary approaches is the socio-rhetorical method coined by Vernon Robbins to incorporate the strengths of both socio-historical criticism and literary criticism. It looks into the socio-political setting of the author and audience, and at the same time analyzes the present text to see how the writer conveys his message through words, structures, and literary arts which might have resonated to the ears and minds of the original audience. Robbins popularizes such a way of interpreting the Scripture in reaction against the one-sided emphasis of both historical criticism and literary criticism. Robbins’ proposal is to wed the two, integrating how people live in the world with language.⁹⁹ John Cook comments on Robbins’ method as a ‘synergistic’ approach to biblical studies. He adheres to such an approach where scholars accept ‘new methods in part as a creative addition to the

⁹⁷ Evans, The Historical Christ, vi-vii.

⁹⁸ Evans, The Historical Christ, 2.

⁹⁹ See Vernon Robbins, Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of Mark (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), ‘Divine Dialogue and the Lord’s Prayer: Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Sacred Texts’, Dialogue 28 (1995): 117-46, Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), and The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology (London: Routledge, 1996).

common task of interpretation' rather than displacing one with another'.¹⁰⁰ The most active New Testament scholar using this method, so far, is Ben Witherington III who has commentaries on Matthew, Mark, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, and Hebrews.¹⁰¹

A fourth attempt at marrying historical and literary criticisms is proposed by Francis Watson in his Text and Truth. He asserts that we cannot call the gospel narratives 'Gospel' if we perceive either of the following: first, 'if they merely preserve scattered traces of a historical reality qualitatively different from its narrative rendering'; and second, 'if they merely render an intratextual character whose extratextual existence is a matter of indifference'.¹⁰² What he favours is to call the gospel narratives 'narrated history' though emphasizing that history comes first before the story. He also stresses the 'authorial intention' of a text, 'because the speech-act theory of writing teaches us that a determinate communicative intention is always imbedded in the text'.¹⁰³ This is in accordance, especially, to Jürgen Habermas' speech-

¹⁰⁰ John Cook, The Structure and Persuasive Power of Mark: A Linguistic Approach (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 337. See also positive comment by R. Parrot, 'Conflict and Rhetoric in Mark 2:23-28', Semeia 64 (1993): 117-137. However, there are those who reacted against Robbins' socio-rhetorical method like R. A. Culpepper, 'Mapping the Textures of New Testament Criticism: A Response to Socio-Rhetorical Criticism', JSNT 70 (1998): 71-77. See also M. Ledbetter, 'Telling the Other Story: A Literary Response to Socio-Rhetorical Criticism of the New Testament', Semeia 64 (1993): 289-301.

¹⁰¹ Ben Witherington III, Matthew (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2006); The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2001); The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998); Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004); Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995); Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998); Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2011); The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2007); 1 and 2 Thessalonians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006).

¹⁰² Francis Watson, Text and Truth (Edinburgh: Clark, 1997), 9.

¹⁰³ See the discussion in Samuel Byrskog, Story as History—History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History (Boston: Brill, 2002), 15.

act theory which, according to him, has inherent ‘force’ or ‘purpose’ (telos).¹⁰⁴ Speech-act theory will be incorporated in chapter 6’s discussion of how the audience were challenged to become the new disciples.

A fifth attempt at mixing historical and literary criticisms is the oral history approach by Samuel Byrskog, where ‘story and history are linked in a way which ... is thoroughly reminiscent of what can be seen in several writings of the ancient Greek and Roman historians’. Byrskog argues that the ‘oral history approach holds promise to give a conceptual viewpoint that takes seriously the ancient way of relating to the past, because its theories do not emerge merely out of our concern for methodological sophistication but revives and elaborates ancient practices and convictions’. He explains that ancient oral history merges the ‘two horizons of the past history and the present story, without any of them losing itself entirely in the other’. The eyewitness’ story has a ‘retrospective dimension which is inherent to the story, without being determined by the story, because the eyewitness is a participant in history as well as an interpreter of it, both in one’. In other words, ‘the Christian kerygma was history and history was kerygma in a synthesis which intertwined the two entities in their own right’. In this way, the ‘historians’ grand patterns of interpretation functioned as a bridge between the two worlds, bringing history and story together’. Byrskog presents Mark as an example of an ancient historian, who ‘narrativized his very own existence by presenting history as story’.¹⁰⁵ Even though he combines aspects of historical criticism, narrative criticism,

¹⁰⁴ Jürgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action (trans. Thomas McCarthy; Cambridge: Polity, 1984), 273-328; Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action (trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen; Cambridge: Polity, 1990); On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction: Preliminary Studies in the Theory of Communicative Action (Cambridge: Polity, 2001). See also Paul Hernadi, ‘Literary Theory: A Compass for Critics’, Critical Inquiry 3 (1976): 369-86; Seymour Chatman, ‘The Structure of Narrative Transmission’, in Style and Structure in Literature (ed. Roger Fowler; Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 213-57.

¹⁰⁵ Byrskog, Story as History, 18, 304, 305.

and canonical criticism, Byrskog is selective in his methodology by using contemporary approaches that are appropriate for the biblical text. He explains:

[M]y objective is not to be au courant with the latest approaches to a contemporary fiction that is often nihilistic; my concern is to make a discerning application of those methods that seem helpful for the kind of ancient traditional literature with a strong oral substratum that appears in the Gospels and Acts.¹⁰⁶

The work of Brian Incigneri is also worth mentioning. Noticeable in the title of his book, The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel,¹⁰⁷ is the attempt at combining historical and literary methods. His conclusion on the Roman setting of Mark is not new (and we differ in this matter as argued in the next chapter), but his rhetorical analysis of Markan passages strengthens his arguments with regards to the atmosphere of Rome when Mark wrote his gospel. W. R. Telford comments on the contribution of Incigneri:

What makes it [Incigneri's book] different from its predecessors is that he employs a very close analysis of the text to support what is a remarkably clear-cut historical hypothesis, namely, that 'the climate, the mood and the issues' (p. 57) evinced by this emotionally charged text match the religious, social, and political situation faced by Roman Christians (community tension and the fear of betrayal, arrest, persecution, and death) in the immediate aftermath of the Flavian triumph.¹⁰⁸

Not everyone shares the view that Mark was a Roman Gospel. Mark 13:9 seems to presuppose a target audience in the provinces: 'governors and kings' would not be found in Rome itself. Surely the Flavian triumph would be more troublesome for Roman Jews than Roman Christians; there's no evidence that Vespasian continued Nero's policy of persecuting the Roman church. That Mark may be responding to Vespasian's victory at some level seems to me to be quite plausible, but this may

¹⁰⁶ Byrskog, Story as History, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Brian Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

¹⁰⁸ W. R. Telford, review of Brian Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel, JTS 58.1 (2007): 207.

suggest an eastern (Palestinian) provenance for Mark's Gospel, with the Jewish War supplying the background of suffering and persecution.

Incigneri's interest in the historicity of the Gospel of Mark led him to insist that the Gospel of Mark is a narrative that portrays historical persons and events with rhetorical purposes designed by the real author to address real readers.¹⁰⁹ Hence, the Gospel of Mark is not just a fictitious story but narrativised or emplotted history, i.e., having historical referents. For the interpretation and establishment of the meaning of the text under study, Incigneri asserts the importance of the following in the interpretative process: 'author, his intention, the original social context, and the first readers'.¹¹⁰ This study will also incorporate Incigneri's interpretative process, only that his idea of first readers will be changed into 'target audiences', who were primarily hearers rather than readers. This will be elaborated further in the following chapter.

Notable in Incigneri's discussion is his perspective on Jesus in the Gospel of Mark as Jesus the Martyr and Jesus the Forgiver. He also compares and contrasts Jesus with the Roman Emperor Vespasian and his two sons, Titus and Domitian, although not everyone agrees that this may have been part of Mark's intention. However, comparing Jesus with Vespasian will also be done in this work, especially in chapter 4 and 5. Incigneri also discusses Mark's harsh treatment of Jesus' disciples in the Gospel of Mark as negatively portrayed, aimed polemically 'against the backdrop of the community's experience of apostasy under persecution, together with their knowledge of Peter's denial but subsequent martyrdom'.¹¹¹ The negative characterisation of the

¹⁰⁹ Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans, 19, 25.

¹¹⁰ Telford, review of Incigneri, 210.

¹¹¹ Telford, review of Incigneri, 208; c.f. Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans, 366.

disciples will also be noted in this study, but along with their positive estimation by Mark.

There are other eclectic attempts at integrating historical criticism to narrative criticism as we do in this study.¹¹² The reasons why such an approach is preferred in this study are the following: First, we recognize the limitations of a purely text-centred narrative criticism; second, we cannot undermine the necessity and value of historical criticism; and third, a hybrid of both historical and narrative may complement and complete one another, rather than compete with one another, which may result in a richer understanding of the biblical passage under study. Nevertheless, even though ‘there is robustness’ in such an eclectic method¹¹³ applied in this study, we are not trying to set this approach over against other approaches; but the approach is incorporated in this work because through this we can better address the issues raised in this study.

Hence in this study, the Markan narrative is viewed as connected with the real persons, events, and settings it presents and describes, and with the author’s intention. Both the events reported and how it is emplotted by Mark to cohere in his Gospel narrative are noted. This includes how Mark might have wanted his audience to recognise and understand his message through the plotting of the events in his narrative, especially how he characterises the characters of his story, particularly Jesus and his disciples. This concern considers the communication model of sender-message-receiver

¹¹² There abound in non-biblical studies attempts to combine the power of a narrative and the factual truth of history, especially in the recent development of narrative nonfiction works. See the works of the pioneer of creative nonfiction, Lee Gutkind, *The Best of Creative Nonfiction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2005); *The Art of Creative Nonfiction* (New York: Wiley, 1997); *Keep It Real: Everything You Need to Know About Researching and Writing Creative Nonfiction* (ed. Lee Gutkind; New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2008); Barbara Lounsberry, *The Art of Fact: Contemporary Artists of Nonfiction* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990); Chris Anderson, *Literary Nonfiction: Theory, Criticism, Pedagogy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989); E. L. Johnson and Tom Wolfe, *The New Journalism* (London: Pan Books, 1975).

¹¹³ Nolland, ‘The Purpose and Value of Commentaries’, 307.

where the ‘ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE’,¹¹⁴ or in literary criticism particularly narrative criticism, the framework of author-text-reader.¹¹⁵

But in this work we revise the framework as author-text-audience (hearers), for as elaborated in the next chapter, the Gospel of Mark was meant to be heard by an audience, rather than read silently and privately. And the way the ‘object’ was sent by the ‘sender’ to the ‘audience’ was through a ‘public reader’ or ‘performer’. Our interest in this research is in the authorial intent, in the content of the text, and in the audience or hearers of the Gospel of Mark. However, many narrative critics try to run away from authorial intent and audience unlike redaction or historical critics. Instead, they create out of the text an implied author/narrator who narrates the story to the implied reader, also discernable in the text. Seymour Chatman presents the flow of communication in a narrative story that starts from the real author, to the text which involves the implied author, the narrator, the narratee, and the implied reader, then to the real readers.¹¹⁶

The implied author is the construct or the image of the real author discernible in the narrative text. He or she is necessary for the narrative to be told or written. The same is true with the implied reader, also discernible in the text and would be necessary for the narrative to be heard or read.¹¹⁷ He is ‘the one who performs all the mental moves required to enter the narrative world and respond to it as the implied author intends’.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Roman Jakobson, ‘Linguistics and Poetics’, in Style in Language (ed. Thomas A. Sebeok; Cambridge, Mass.: Technology Press, 1960), 353.

¹¹⁵ Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 4. See also A. J. Greimas, ‘Elements of a Narrative Grammar’, in Twentieth Century Literary Theory (ed. Vassilis Lambropoulos and David Neal Miller; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 304-30.

¹¹⁶ Amplified in chapter 4 in Chatman, Story and Discourse.

¹¹⁷ Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 7.

¹¹⁸ R. Alan Culpepper, Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 7. See more discussion on the implied reader in Wolfgang Iser, The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974).

Some narrative critics would content themselves only with the implied author and reader of the text under study. For them, there is no need to know any cultural or biographical information about the real author and reader, or at least regard it as impossible to really know the situation or time of the real author and reader, especially for ancient literature like the Gospel of Mark, for the simple reason that the author is already dead and one cannot reach him; however, the implied author still communicates and readers can still have access to him. Such an approach may have been influenced by, or, in the words of Kindt and Müller, may have ‘complied with the anti-contextualism of the New Criticism’ where a text is interpreted without a context, and ‘allows us to speak of author-functions that stem from the real author without actually referring to the latter in the process’.¹¹⁹

But we assume in this study that the implied author and the implied audience of the Gospel of Mark share certain first-century cultural settings. They are also knowledgeable of Greek and the Septuagint or its oral counterpart, being processed in their social memory. They may also be knowledgeable about a Palestinian or Roman setting. Hence, we are warranted in this study to get into socio-historical and intertextual research to determine the supposed cultural setting of the implied author and the implied audience. This is especially true in trying to understand the association of Jesus and the disciples in Mark’s background. This would also be true when we ask what impact the comparison between Jesus and his disciples had for the original target audience (projected in the text), since we would try to match up the implied author and implied readers with the real author and real audience in particular first-century settings. This would be in response to the question being posed on the effect of Markan

¹¹⁹ Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy (Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 8-10.

characterisations of Jesus and the disciples on his original audience.¹²⁰ This would also be in consideration of the fact that first-century people never knew the narrator or author ‘as a feature of the text’. Instead, the ‘narrator was always the flesh and blood performer; and the narratee was always a flesh and blood communal audience’.¹²¹

However, the present study focuses primarily on what is in the Gospel of Mark with regards to how Jesus and the disciples were characterised and how these characterisations function in Mark’s Gospel narrative and among his target audience. We have looked into the narrative text to see how Mark skilfully designed his presentations; thereby, establishing in this study that there are similarities and contrasts between the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in relation to other characters. The relationship may well have been more than just a rabbi-student relationship (contra Betz), and more than just a zealot-follower relationship (contra Hengel). Much more, we may not view Jesus as a mere political revolutionary with followers (as did Belo), but the embodiment of Yahweh (a divine hero, closer to Stock’s estimation)—the ‘Lord’, the ‘Son of Man’, the ‘Son of God’, the ‘Messiah’—embodying a revolutionary message. Every time, therefore, that Mark presents the disciples in a negative light, it is in a way putting them down to uplift the main figure in his narrative, Jesus Christ.

2.5.2 Jesus and His Disciples in Relation to Narrative Approach, Social Memory, Orality and Performance

There are a number of works I encountered in the process of doing this research that resemble the current research project. I have come across the work of Paul Danove presenting the characterisations of God the Father, Jesus and disciples. However, his

¹²⁰ Examples of how an implication or message conveyed to a character in the story may also be directed to the audience of the narrator, see Gary Yamasaki, Watching a Biblical Narrative: Point of View in Biblical Exegesis (London: T&T Clark), 2007.

¹²¹ David Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies—Part II’, BTB 36 (2006): 166.

approach is different from the present research in the sense of comparing and contrasting Jesus and his disciples in Mark in relation to other characters in the context of an ancient oral narration. The work of Danove treats the characters of God, Jesus, and the disciples independently and looks for the problematized pre-existing beliefs of Mark's audience about the said characters and also points out the cultivated right beliefs about the characters that according to Danove will invite 'the narrative audience to experience and affectively respond to particular situations and events' which would result in 'the corresponding elements of the authorial audience's pre-existing beliefs and experience' being 'portrayed as either deficient (sophisticating repetition) or erroneous (deconstructive repetition) from the perspective of the narrative audience's cultivated beliefs'. Then 'in the process of cultivating beliefs and relating them in specific ways, the narrative rhetoric imposes relationships on the corresponding problematized pre-existing beliefs. These related problematized beliefs constitute for the narrative audience the exigency which the narrative rhetoric seems designed to address and remedy'.¹²²

Such interesting work by Danove, encompassing both the author and the audience of Mark (which is also our interest) is done purely through narrative criticism, but we do more. We also look into the socio-historical situation of Mark's target audience and how they would have understood Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples. Even though Danove employed his rhetoric of characterisation mainly 'within' the text of Mark without delving into its socio-historical setting, he comments on the possibility of using a socio-historical method. Firstly, he believes that his study shows an 'indication' that Mark 'constitutes a narrative communication' with the intent

¹²² Paul Danove, The Rhetoric of the Characterization of God, Jesus, and Jesus' Disciples in the Gospel of Mark, JSNTSup 290 (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 26.

of inviting ‘a response of faith from the real audience’. Secondly, he notes on the ‘common language of its day’, the ‘definition of particular words’, and ‘explanation of specific conception and practices’ which shows that ‘the real author (whether a person or group) of Mark attempted to ensure the intelligibility of the narration by developing a model of the original real audience and then crafting the narrative rhetoric to address this audience’. Finally, he explains that both the ‘repetition of vocabulary, context, and structures’ about ‘particular beliefs’ and the ‘coordination of rhetorical strategies’ about ‘the experience of narrated situations and events’ were ‘designed to guide the original real audience’ or their ‘interpretation of the narrative content in a way that permits’ them ‘to experience the narration as an invitation to respond according to the cultivated beliefs’ of the implied audience in the narrative.¹²³

There are also quite a few studies on Mark as oral-performed narrative, at least some of which touch on Jesus and his disciples. The study by David Smith on the effect of orality upon a Markan reading-event¹²⁴ is more similar to the present work. However, in my thesis, we have narrowed the discussion to Mark’s characterisation of Jesus and his disciples (in view of other characters), wherein Smith’s work is done in a more general presentation of different subjects or themes. But Smith has sections on ‘The Reader, Jesus, and the Audience’ and ‘The Reader, the Disciples, and the Audience’, which illustrate the movement from ‘the story world into the real life of the audience’,¹²⁵ wherein Mark’s text would have been heard as a direct address by the reader (or narrator) to the audience. In many cases, the disciples are presented as ignorant of Jesus’ teaching, ‘often casting it aside with surprising ease’ and their

¹²³ Danove, *Rhetoric of the Characterization*, 160.

¹²⁴ David Smith, ‘Can We Hear What They Heard? The Effect of Orality upon a Markan Reading-Event’ (Ph.D. thesis, Durham University, 2003).

¹²⁵ Smith, ‘Can We Hear What They Heard?’, 197.

ignorance made them become ‘the ironist’s unwitting victims’. The ‘profound reading-effect is that the audience is not far behind’.¹²⁶

We will pursue more on the reading-effect upon Mark’s target audience regarding Mark’s characterisation of Jesus and his disciples in the context of an oral narration, especially in chapter 6. But what is especially emphasised in the present work, which is not highlighted in Smith’s thesis, is the role of social memory in the production and reception of Mark’s narrative, although memory per se is mentioned in his work. Such an aspect of remembering past traditions in relation to or provoked by the reading and hearing of Mark’s narrative runs throughout the present work. This demonstrates the interplay between author and audience in the understanding of an ancient text and shows a common denominator (social memory) between them which makes possible the communication and comprehension of Mark’s message in an oral context.

Brandon Walker did a similar study entitled ‘Memory, Mission, and Identity: Orality and the Apostolic Miracle Tradition’.¹²⁷ Although his focus is not exactly on Mark’s narrative, he touches on Jesus and the disciples generally in the Gospels. Mixing form criticism with orality, social memory, and performance criticism, he examines the miracle tradition related to the apostles Peter and Paul in the second century, and concluded that this tradition provides a glimpse of what it meant to follow Jesus at that time. But prior to his main discussion, he briefly discusses Jesus and his twelve disciples. He explains that the variations of names recorded in the different Gospels would have been an indication of oral tradition. Moreover, the disciples have eschatological significance for the mission of Jesus as they are to sit on the thrones and

¹²⁶ Smith, ‘Can We Hear What They Heard?’, 200-201.

¹²⁷ Brandon Walker, ‘Memory, Mission, and Identity: Orality and the Apostolic Miracle Tradition’ (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Nottingham, 2014).

judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, because of their significance they were retained in memory belonging to the past, the present and the future. This aspect of social memory in relation to past, present, and future will also be noted in this present study, especially in chapter 6.

Walker carried on his discussion in his article 'Performing Miracles: Discipleship and the Miracle Tradition of Jesus'. He notes how orality, social memory, and performance criticism helped illuminate the Jesus tradition and place it in the 'memories of those he impacted such as his disciples as well as those he healed and taught'.¹²⁸ He examines 'the role of identity construction as it relates to discipleship and oral performance', based on the understanding that part of 'group formation and identity construction is based on common memory and recounting of these memories'. He then places 'early Christian discipleship within the Greco-Roman and rabbinic settings and suggests 'that Jesus extended his mission and tacitly taught his disciples to work miracles'. Such would have encouraged the 'Twelve and other disciples to view miracles as part of their ministries' in Israel and beyond.¹²⁹ We will also set Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples in their Jewish context and within the socio-political context of Palestine and the wider Mediterranean world. At the same time, we will also set this study in the context of orality, social memory, and performance criticism.

Richard Horsley has also done similar work to mine. He goes against depoliticizing methods of interpretation and the separation of religion from the political-economic system of life. He calls his method a relational-contextual approach, which

¹²⁸ Brandon Walker, 'Performing Miracles: Discipleship and the Miracle Tradition of Jesus', Transformation (2015): 1.

¹²⁹ Walker, 'Performing Miracles', 2.

takes Mark's Gospel as whole,¹³⁰ and develops the *text-context-tradition* framework following after Foley's theory of metonymic referencing. We have adapted this framework as mentioned in the previous chapter and elaborated in the following chapter, but we differ in emphasis. He talks in general terms about an 'exodus script' in relation to this kind of framework, but he has not applied this to the characterization of the Markan disciples, which we do in this thesis. Moreover, we follow after Schwarz's model of social memory as a dialogue between past and present (making use of the concepts of 'keying' and 'framing') as it relates to the construction of social identity. Our methodological approach enables us to talk about Mark's story of the Twelve being keyed to the account of the twelve tribes in the Exodus.

Although we still view 'the Gospel of Mark as a paradigmatic story of Christian discipleship', which is criticized by Horsley as 'Western individualism',¹³¹ this does not contradict Mark's revolutionary message which we also advance just like Horsley does. He views Jesus' conflict with his disciples as a subplot to Mark's overall plot, which is primarily the conflict with the Pharisees, scribes, and high priests in Jerusalem and their representatives in Galilee. Such an overall plot, according to Horsley, should be understood in connection '(a) with Jesus' constitution of the Twelve, clearly as the representatives of the people of Israel; (b) with Jesus' sea crossings and feedings in the wilderness and further healings, clearly as the new Moses and Elijah; and (c) with his insistence on the basic commandments of God in clear appeal to the Mosaic covenant, in opposition to the scribes and Pharisees' "traditions of the elders" In such an understanding, 'Mark's story portrays Jesus carrying out a renewal of Israel over against

¹³⁰ See Richard Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001).

¹³¹ Richard Horsley, Jesus and the Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 72.

(and in condemnation of) the rulers of Israel and their Roman patrons.’¹³² We also advance such an understanding, but focus more on Jesus and his disciples (in relation to other characters) and how they were characterised to critique the way of domination through Jesus’ way of service and sacrifice.

More and more studies are being conducted in relation to the oral-aural nature of Mark’s narrative, composed to be performed or read publicly.¹³³ A major emphasis of this present research is to demonstrate how Mark’s characterisations of Jesus and his disciples would have been received in a first-century oral context. This will help in understanding an ancient oral narrative, and demonstrate how the framework of orality, in relation to social memory studies, contributes to the better appreciation of an ancient oral narrative text, such as the Gospel of Mark. More specifically, our methodological approach will set into the first-century oral context Mark’s characterisation of Jesus and his disciples as dramatizing an ideological clash. Such would have helped to persuade Mark’s target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his community.

2.6. Conclusion: Towards an Oral-Memorial Narrative Hermeneutics

The methodological approach of this research encompasses the strengths of earlier methods, especially narrative criticism (as applied in the study of the characterisation of Jesus and his disciples in Mark’s narrative), addressing historical, literary, theological/ideological and practical concerns. This is important because, as Werner Kelber asserts, ‘orality-scribality studies ought to engage what narrative criticism has assumed to be literary patterns, lest we jump from one critical method to

¹³² Horsley, Jesus and the Empire, 73-74.

¹³³ Others even advocate ‘composition in performance’ such as Antoinette Clark Wire, The Case for Mark Composed in Performance (Eugene: Cascade, 2011); and Pieter Botha. Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity (Eugene: Cascade, 2012).

another without any sense of coherence in the history of scholarship'.¹³⁴ Besides, since one of the main thrusts of this work is to illustrate a relatively new method, the explorative survey discloses the constraints of the earlier approaches, which are supplemented by the present endeavour, especially that we are now oriented by the fact that Mark's narrative was not meant to be read individually and silently, but read orally or performed publicly before a live audience. Thus, this thesis incorporates narrative characterisation (more specifically comparative characterisation), social memory theory, oral hermeneutics, and performance criticism. The following chapter elaborates how an oral narrative, such as Mark's Gospel, would have been composed, communicated, and comprehended in an ancient oral culture.

¹³⁴ Werner Kelber, Bulletin, 'Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity', BTB 44.3 (20014): 144-55.

CHAPTER 3: MARK'S JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ANCIENT ORAL SOCIETY: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1. Introduction

The oral functioning and authority of many sacred texts have been recognized by religious devotees both in ancient and more recent times.¹ This is indicated by the practice of memorizing, verbalizing and even chanting portions or the whole of a sacred text.² This is also because many sacred texts first took shape in cultures where speech rather than writing was the primary mode of communication. However, in older research in biblical studies (as surveyed in the preceding chapter) only the textuality³ of a sacred text has been much examined at the expense of its orality, which is 'the experience of words (and speech) in the habitat of sound'.⁴ This is most probably due to the influence of modern print culture.⁵ But over the past two decades, biblical scholars have become increasingly interested in the oral dimension of a written sacred text⁶ and

¹ See William A. Graham, Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

² See David Carr, Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); H. Coward, Sacred Word and Sacred Text: Scripture in World Religions (New York: Orbis, 1988).

³ I use 'text', 'textuality', 'scribality', and 'literacy' to refer exclusively to writing.

⁴ Pieter Botha, Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity (Eugene: Cascade, 2012).

⁵ Werner Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), xxii; and 'Oral Tradition in Bible and New Testament Studies', Oral Tradition 18.1 (2003): 40.

⁶ See for instance Bernard Brandon Scott and Margaret Dean, 'A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount' in Treasures New and Old: Contribution to Matthean Studies (ed., David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 311-78; Bridget Upton, Hearing Mark's Ending: Listening to Ancient Popular Texts through Speech Act Theory (Leiden: Brill, 2006); H. Wansbrough, ed., Jesus and the Oral Gospel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); J.A. Loubser, 'Reconciling Rhetorical Criticism with Its Oral Roots', Neotestamentica 35 (2001): 95-110; Werner Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel; Lourens De Vries, 'Bible Translations and Primary Orality', BT 51 (2000): 101-14;

this research is another endeavour in line with that tendency, wherein the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Markan narrative will be set in the context of an ancient oral society with high residual orality and will be founded upon the theories of orality, social memory, and ancient narrative performance.

Hence, this chapter sets out the theoretical and conceptual framework of the whole thesis. That is, oral-memorial narrative hermeneutics (in conjunction with comparative characterisation) will be utilised in this thesis, given the increasing appreciation among NT scholars of the centrality of oral performance in an ancient context. The contemporary performance of a text or narrative, although helpful in the interpretation of a passage, is still deemed anachronistic if we aim at the composition and reception of Mark's narrative in a first-century setting.⁷ In a way, we are trying to identify some sort of 'oral register'⁸ in the text. Examples of such, being emphasised in this study, are as follows: Foley's theory of how tradition is referenced, Ong's concrete rather than abstract oral standpoint, and his participatory and empathetic viewpoint,⁹ which we use as basis for our emotional indicators notable in the text. Much more, we

Margaret Dean, 'The Grammar of Sound in Greek Texts: Towards a Method of Mapping the Echoes of Speech in Writing', *ABR* 44 (1996): 53-70; Pieter Botha, 'The Verbal Art of the Pauline Letters: Rhetoric, Performance and Presence' in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. S. Porter and T.H. Olbricht; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 409-28; Richard Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Story* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001); S.S. Elliot, 'The Word in Text, Sound and Image: The American Bible Society's New Media Bible and the Research Center for Scripture and Media', *Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* 30 (2001): 65-67; Joanna Dewey, 'Oral Methods of Structuring Narrative in Mark', *Interpretation* 43 (1989): 32-44; Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, *Jesus Death in Early Christian Memory: The Poetics of the Passion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); Paul Borgman, *The Way According to Luke: Hearing the Whole Story of Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006); Thomas Winger, 'Orality as the Key to Understanding Apostolic Proclamation in the Epistles' (Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 1997).

⁷ The study of the composition and reception of the NT in its first-century oral setting is encouraged by Rafael Rodriguez, *Structuring Early Christian Memory: Jesus in Tradition, Performance and Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 88-102.

⁸ Larry Hurtado, 'Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies? "Orality", "Performance" and Reading Texts in Early Christianity', *NTS* 60.3 (2014): 335.

⁹ See Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982), 45-46.

try to find out how such oral register generates meaning in the oral context where it was produced and received.¹⁰ Thus, we may discern the ‘multisensory, multilayered, totalizing social context that enabled the early Christians to interpret and respond to their written texts’.¹¹

Thus, given the context of an oral narrative, this chapter will pursue the following question: How were the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Markan narrative composed and how did they become comprehensible to an oral mindset? Mainly, the question calls for a discussion of the following: the interfaces of orality and writing of an ancient text, the nature and features of an ancient oral narrative, the rhetorical function of ancient characterisations (in relation to social memory) of an oral narrative such as the Gospel of Mark, and the historical situation of the author of Mark’s narrative and his target audience in a predominantly oral culture.

3.2. Orality and Writing in the Gospel of Mark

Considering the oral dimension of a written text, can a polarity between orality and writing be enforced in the study of the Gospel of Mark, as earlier done by Werner Kelber,¹² or is it safe just to recognize the interfaces of orality and writing in the Gospel narrative? Kelber polarized the two to defend his thesis that Mark wanted to undermine oral tradition by undermining the disciples in favour of the written text.¹³ Although we

¹⁰ Rafael Rodriguez, Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed (London: T&T Clark, 2014), 70.

¹¹ Rodriguez, Oral Tradition and the New Testament, 79.

¹² As in Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel. Nevertheless, Kelber’s ideas have continued to develop since he wrote The Oral and the Written Gospel.

¹³ Werner Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, xxv.

will not follow Kelber's thesis which has been under fire,¹⁴ we recognise, as he does,¹⁵ the two shades of media production in the Gospel of Mark: orality and writing will be distinguished herein, but their interfaces in the Markan narrative are affirmed.¹⁶

However, orality is not some uniform phenomenon that works in the same way in all times and all places. It is not also like some monolithic entity that can be set against literacy, given the current debates regarding the complexity of the nature of the interactions between speech and writing. So what follows is an attempt to pull together a number of threads from previous scholarly discussion to outline a model for how the Gospel of Mark is likely to have been received in the context of a first-century oral performance.

3.2.1. Orality and the Gospel of Mark

The focus on the written word in the study of an ancient text or language like Koine Greek is 'inevitable', according to W.S. Allen. However, Allen notes the importance, if not the primacy, of the oral dimension of the text: 'it is well to remember that writing is secondary to speech, and, however much it may deviate from it, has speech as its ultimate basis'.¹⁷ Such is also the belief of Walter Ong: 'in all the

¹⁴ See for instance, Roy A. Harrisville, 'A Critique of Current Biblical Criticism', Word and World 15, no. 2 (1995): 210-12; John Halverson, 'Oral and Written Gospel: A Critique of Werner Kelber', NTS 40 (1994): 180-19; Larry Hurtado, 'Greco-Roman Textuality and the Gospel of Mark: Critical Assessment of Werner Kelber's Oral and Written Gospel', BBR 7 (1997): 91-106; Thomas E. Boomershine, 'Peter's Denial as Polemic or Confession: The Implications of Media Criticism for Biblical Hermeneutics', Semeia 39 (1987): 47-68.

¹⁵ Werner Kelber, 'Orality, Scribality, and Oral-Scribal Interfaces; Jesus-Tradition-Gospels, Review and Present State of Research' (paper presented at the SNTS Conference, Halle, Germany, 2005).

¹⁶ Other scholars who discuss the complex interfaces between orality and textuality include R. Goode, 'Orality and Function of Written Texts in the World of the New Testament' (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, 2004); Jack Goody, The Interface Between the Written and the Oral (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ruth Finnegan, Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication (New York: Blackwell, 1988).

¹⁷ Quoted in Dean, 'The Grammar of Sound in Greek Texts', 53 n. 2; Quoted from W. S. Allen, Vox Graeca: A Guide to the Pronunciation of Classical Greek (3rd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 8.

wonderful worlds that writing opens, the spoken word still resides and lives. Written texts all have to be related ... to the world of sound, the natural habitat of language, to yield their meanings'.¹⁸

Most manuscripts in the ancient world were meant to be delivered aloud to audiences and were meant to be 'processed in memory'.¹⁹ In view of this, 'a text's substantial and multifaceted investment in tradition does not suggest intertextuality in the sense of scanning through multiple, physically accessible scrolls' but, more probably through a shared social memory,²⁰ which will be elaborated below. However, this does not deny the likelihood of a written text being based on another written text or the combination of both written and oral. This might have been done by Matthew and Luke when they composed their narratives with the Gospel of Mark (and some OT texts) in front of them and with the aid of their memory and imagination (Luke 1:1-4).²¹ What is being asserted is that in the ancient world 'manuscripts functioned in an oral contextuality', i.e., 'by way of compositional dictation, recitation, and auditory reception, they were closely allied with the oral-aural medium'.²² This means that the ancient church experienced their traditions as part of their oral world.²³

Orality was recognized as an important factor in the composition of Mark by Rudolph Bultmann. However, Bultmann's work on orality was focused on the pre-

¹⁸ Ong, Orality and Literacy, 8.

¹⁹ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxii.

²⁰ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxiii. Kelber elaborates the concept of cultural memory in 'The Case of the Gospels: Memory's Desire and the Limits of Historical Criticism', Oral Tradition 17.1 (2002): 55-86.

²¹ See a more thorough discussion in Eric Eve, Writing the Gospels (London: SPCK, 2016), 39, 46-47, 103-123.

²² Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxii

²³ David Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies—Part I', BTB 36 (2006): 6.

gospel oral traditions, not the gospels themselves which are meant for oral performance. Other earlier scholars who recognised the orality of the Bible are Erhardt Güttgemanns,²⁴ Martin Buber and F. Rosenzweig.²⁵ However, many scholars at that time tended to move in the direction of Markan textuality rather than its orality. The reason why there was a move to textuality rather than orality is probably because orality studies may pose a ‘considerable threat’ to biblical scholarship as it affirms the sacredness of the written text.²⁶ But the ‘main reason’, according to Kelber, ‘is the tendency among biblical scholars to think predominantly, or even exclusively, in literary, linear, and visual terms’.²⁷

However, such a way of thinking Kelber claims to be predominant among other biblical scholars can be refuted with the argument that since the Gospel of Mark and other NT writings were written in Greek uncials without spaces between words (*scriptio continua*) and without (or with little) punctuation marks, they were not meant *primarily* for silent visual reading as in modern times (although silent visual reading wasn’t totally unknown) but for auditory purpose—to be heard through performance or public reading. Public readers are noted in the NT, such as Jesus reading in a synagogue worship (Luke 4:16-20), Paul wrote letters to be read in churches (Col. 4:16, Eph. 3:4; 1 Thes. 5:27), Timothy should continue doing public reading of scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13), and a reader

²⁴ See Erhardt Güttgemanns, Candid Questions Concerning Gospel Form Criticism: A Methodological Sketch of the Fundamental Problematics of Form and Redaction Criticism (trans. William G. Doty; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1997).

²⁵ Martin Buber and F. Rosenzweig, Scripture and Translation (trans. L. Rosenwald and E. Fox; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

²⁶ Richard Horsley, ‘Oral Tradition in New Testament Studies’, Oral Tradition 18.1 (2003): 34.

²⁷ Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, 2.

is mentioned in Rev. 1:3.²⁸ Of course there is a place for private reading in antiquity as asserted above, but reserved to a few who were trained in the art of reading letters without spaces and punctuation marks.²⁹ Moreover, manuscripts were not nearly so plentiful as printed texts are today.

3.2.2. Writing and the Markan Narrative

The natural tendency in the study of an ancient text is to begin with the written text as we are normally conditioned with modern print concepts of textuality. Printing, according to Kelber, is the ‘high tech of the fifteenth and sixteenth century’³⁰ and has ruled biblical scholarship and many of the human sciences.³¹ An example of the dominance of the print media in the interpretation of the Gospel of Mark is the practice of redaction criticism wherein one understands tradition as an ‘intertextual buildup of successive redactional layers and Mark’s working with tradition as a direct and supremely analytic encounter with texts’.³² According to Kelber, this ‘represents a procedure strikingly reminiscent of the analytical school in Homeric studies, which flourished in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries’³³ and emphasizes ‘direct

²⁸ Other evidence of the existence of public readers can be noted in the Shepherd of Hermas and Justin Martyr’s Apology 1:6. Reader’s aids, especially for public reading, are noted in Larry Hurtado, The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006).

²⁹ See A.K. Gavrilov, ‘Techniques of Reading in Classical Antiquity’, CQ 47 (1997): 56-73; M.F. Burnyeat, ‘Postscript on Silent Reading’, CQ 47 (1997): 74-76.

³⁰ Kelber, ‘Oral Tradition in Bible and New Testament Studies’, 40-42. Other media developments both ancient and recent are summarised in John Miles Foley, How to Read an Oral Poem (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 23-25. See also Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Eric Havelock, The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

³¹ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxii.

³² Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxii. Layers of traditions were also emphasised by earlier form critics.

³³ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxii;

text-to-text relations'.³⁴ Thus in biblical scholarship, the critic projects 'modernity's communications culture upon the ancient media world'.³⁵ Perhaps such media anachronism is the result of a misunderstanding of the function of literacy in the ancient world and the assumption that a majority of the ancient population could read and write.³⁶

What is appropriate, to avoid anachronism, is that as one engages in the comprehension of an ancient text like the Gospel of Mark, one should be aware of the social function of writing in the ancient world, i.e., asking the question: Why they wrote? In the ancient civilization of the Mediterranean world and nearby places, writing existed as a medium not only 'for the purpose of recording the people's stories and history' but also to serve in the 'self-legitimizing interests of religious-political powers'.³⁷ This is also the view advanced by William V. Harris.³⁸ But Sam Tsang goes against this popular view and presents another scenario in antiquity: 'some societies granted little or no elevated status to the literate' and 'even slaves were sometimes taught to read and write in order to perform certain duties'.³⁹

³⁴ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxii.

³⁵ Kelber, 'Oral Tradition in Bible and New Testament Studies', 40. Examples are the methods of source and form criticism.

³⁶ The term 'media anachronism' is borrowed from the discussion in Thomas Boomershine, 'Biblical Megatrends: Towards the Paradigm for the Interpretation of the Bible in the Electronic Age' in SBL Seminar Papers (ed. Kent Richards; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 144-57.

³⁷ Werner Kelber, 'Roman Imperialism and Early Christian Scribality', In Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in Antiquity (ed. Jonathan A. Draper; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004), 135. See also A.K. Bowman and G. Woolf, eds., Literacy and Power in the Ancient World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); K. Haines-Eitzen, Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Robert Morstein-Marx, Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

³⁸ William V. Harris, Ancient Literacy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

³⁹ Sam Tsang, 'Are We "Misreading" Paul?: Oral Phenomena and Their Implications for the Exegesis of Paul's Letters', Oral Tradition 24.1 (2009): 208.

The early Christians did not belong to the highly literate and elite group of writers. However, although some were sceptical of the written word,⁴⁰ they appropriated ‘the scribal medium as an instrument of identity formation’. They wrote their traditions to solidify collective memory and construct a sense of history.⁴¹ We pursue, therefore, Mark’s interest in solidifying his community’s identification or relationship with Jesus and his disciples by characterising them the way he did. This is highlighted in our interpretation of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in Mark’s narrative, wherein the construction of social identity is linked to Mark and his audience’s shared collective memories and their common socio-historical context, including their hopes and aspirations. (The concept of collective or social memory will be further clarified in the following section).

Another function of Mark’s written text would have been to enhance oral authority given the fact that Christianity contributed to the spread of literacy and manuscripts, where ‘writings gained authority’.⁴² This is what Pieter Botha articulates as ‘the written word’ exercising ‘religious power’⁴³ since in a society in which few were literate writing often took on a kind of magical or supernatural authority simply by virtue of being writing (and dealing with a religious matter). Still another function of writing might have been to aid in oral performances, to be read out in the non-appearance of the sender, to aid in the dissemination of traditions from one place to

⁴⁰ See Loveday Alexander, ‘The Living Voice: Skepticism Towards the Written Word in Early Christian and in Graeco-Roman Texts’ in The Bible in Three Dimensions (ed. D.A. Clines; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 221-47.

⁴¹ Kelber, ‘Roman Imperialism and Early Christian Scribality’, 152.

⁴² Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part I’, 5. See also Loveday Alexander, ‘Ancient Book Production and the Circulation of the Gospels’ in The Gospels for All Christians (ed. R. Bauckham; Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 71-111; Harry Gamble, Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts (New Haven,: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁴³ Pieter J. J. Botha, ‘Greco-Roman Literacy as Setting for New Testament Writings’, Neotestamentica 26 (1992): 209.

another, and to aid memory especially when memory fades away.⁴⁴ This is one of the drawbacks of orality wherein there is the possibility that shared cultural memory may fade away. In a tradition of the Israelites, only when the book of the law was discovered (2 Kings 22-23) could the Israelites solidify their cultural memory and ascertain their sense of history—for another time.

The reason for the above function of writing (which is to aid in oral performances) could be the fact that most Christians then did not have direct access to Christian texts to read; they could only hear from someone reading publicly or performing. So generally in such a case, the text was written ‘in the service of orality’.⁴⁵ However, this does not undermine a further use of text in antiquity which is for private reading and study. There are ancient poetic texts designed for the eyes ‘in the shape of eggs or wings, in which one has to read inward (first verse, then last, then second, then second to last, etc.).⁴⁶ We note also the *μυμβράναι* (parchment codices) mentioned by Paul in 2 Tim. 4:13 which would have been used for his private reading and study, and the eunuch in Acts 8:26-35 would read aloud for himself a passage in Isaiah. However, such ability to read privately was not the common use of written texts we know about (and was doubtless rarer than it is today) and is limited to a few who were trained to read, whether they come from elite, sub-elite, or even slaves.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part I’, 5. See also Pieter Botha, ‘Letter Writing and Oral Communication in Antiquity: Suggested Implications for the Interpretation of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians’, *Scriptura* 42 (1992): 17-34.

⁴⁵ David Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies—Part II’, *BTB* 36 (2006): 164.

⁴⁶ See H.N. Parker, ‘Books and Reading Latin Poetry’ in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (ed. W.A. Johnson and H.N. Parker; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 192.

⁴⁷ The private use of text in antiquity is elaborated in Hurtado, ‘Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies?’, 336-37.

A further function of writing would have been to counter Roman imperial ideology. Downing notes that ‘Mark quite explicitly had the Roman imperial propaganda in view’ upon writing his narrative.⁴⁸ Eve also shows this counter-ideology purpose in his article, ‘Spit in Your Eye: The Blind Man of Bethsaida and the Blind Man of Alexandria’.⁴⁹ This countering of Rome’s imperial ideology is especially developed and demonstrated in chapter 5 of this work, wherein Mark’s characterisation of Jesus and his disciples (in view of other characters including Roman authorities) dramatizes an ideological clash in an oral performance.

3.2.3. Oral-Scribal Interfaces in the Gospel of Mark

Now, after establishing both the orality and textuality of the Gospel of Mark, we join contemporary scholars in rejecting the great divide theory.⁵⁰ That is, we do not affirm the earlier idea of Milman Parry and Albert Lord that ‘oral and literate were taken as a fundamental dichotomy inherent in human culture: people, verbal art, even whole societies were confidently labelled with one or the other term, and, crucially, never with both’.⁵¹ Instead, both textuality and orality in the Gospel of Mark are

⁴⁸ Francis Gerald Downing, Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century (JSNTSup 200; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000; repr. London: T&T Clark, 2004), 150.

⁴⁹ Eric Eve, ‘Spit in Your Eye: The Blind Man of Bethsaida and the Blind Man of Alexandria’, NTS 54 (2008): 1–17.

⁵⁰ See the rejection of the Great Divide theory in contemporary NT scholarship in Horsley, ‘Oral Tradition in New Testament Studies’, 34. See also Joyce Irene Middleton, ‘Echoes From the Past: Learning How to Listen, Again’ in The SAGE Handbook of Rhetorical Studies (ed. Andrea A. Lunsford, Kirt H. Wilson, and Rosa A. Eberly; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009).

⁵¹ John Miles Foley, ‘Introduction: What’s in a Sign’, in Signs of Orality: The Oral Tradition and Its Influence in the Greek and Roman World (ed. E. Anne Mackay; Boston: Brill, 1999), 2. See also Adam Parry, ed., The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Albert Lord, The Singer of Tales (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). See more discussions about the debate on the dichotomy of literacy and orality in Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962) and Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: American Library, 1964); Jack Goody, The Domestication of the Savage Mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); David Olson, ‘From Utterance to Text’, Harvard Educational Review 47 (1977): 257–81; David Olson and Nancy Torrance, eds., Literacy and Orality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Sylvia

recognised, and they are not set in opposition to each other as done by Kelber.⁵² Rather, they are observably present as distinct but interconnected facets of media captured in the written text.⁵³ In the expression of James Maxey, there is a ‘fusion’ of the written and the oral media.⁵⁴ Such is understandable ‘in a manuscript culture with high residual orality’ wherein ‘there is a considerable overlap between orality and textuality’. It is, therefore, assumed that there were ‘oral techniques’ of the composition of the Gospel of Mark although what is at hand is a written composition.⁵⁵ These oral techniques are noted below in the discussion of the oral hints in the Gospel of Mark.

Susan Niditch’s oral-literate continuum may explain the two media dimensions in the biblical texts, stressing that the written texts were influenced by orality. In her study of ancient Israelite literature she notes that the ‘Israelites lived in an essentially oral world’⁵⁶ which may have bearing upon their written literature. She observes the

Scribner and Michael Cole, The Psychology of Literacy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); E.R. Leach, ‘Ritualization in Man in Relation to Conceptual and Social Development’, Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London 251 (1966): 403-408; Brian Street, Literacy in Theory and Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵² Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel.

⁵³ The relationship between the written and oral language in a ‘rhetorical culture’ is expressed clearly by Vernon Robbins in his ‘Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach’ in The Synoptic Gospels (ed. Camille Focant; Leuven University Press, 1993), 111-47; ‘Oral, Rhetorical, Literary Cultures: A Response’, Semeia 65 (1995): 75-91; ‘Interfaces of Orality and Literature in the Gospel of Mark’ in Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory and Mark (eds. Richard Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 125-46. For discussions on the distinctions of written and oral language, see Deborah Tannen, ed., Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy (New Jersey: Ablex, 1982); M.A.K. Halliday, Spoken and Written Language, (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Holly Hearon, The Mary Magdalene Tradition: Witness and Counter-Witness in Early Christian Communities (Collegeville, Minn.: Michael Glazier, 2004).

⁵⁴ James Maxey, From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 116.

⁵⁵ Dewey, ‘Oral Methods’, 33.

⁵⁶ Susan Niditch, Oral World and Written World: Ancient Israelite Literature (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 44. See also the oral-scribal dynamics in Jewish history, especially in the formation of two Torahs: ‘one by mouth and one in script’, in Martin Jaffee, Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE—400 CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 90. See also Jaffee’s ‘Oral Tradition in the Writings of Rabbinic Oral Torah: On Theorizing Rabbinic Orality’, Oral Tradition 14.1 (1999): 3-32; Jacob Neusner’s The Oral Torah (New

complex interaction between the ‘written word’ and the ‘oral world’ and claims that ‘the Bible derives much of its force and effect from the dynamics of this oral-literate interplay’.⁵⁷ In other words, pure ‘oral tradition, uncontaminated by scribality, is as much in doubt as direct intertextuality devoid of oral-performative mediation’.⁵⁸

In the case of Mark’s Gospel, it has been recognised as a narrative text in the late 20th century, but its orality and its relation to social memory has been discussed only in the past few decades.⁵⁹ It was Kelber who brought the discussion of orality to the forefront of Markan studies⁶⁰ which interested many contemporary biblical scholars.⁶¹ Part of Kelber’s insistence is to study the Gospel of Mark not with the narrative method developed for contemporary literature but one that considers the

York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986); and The Memorized Torah: The Mnemonic System of the Torah (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985). Another writer that discusses the role of memory in Jewish oral ancient world is Doron Mendels, Memory in Jewish, Pagan, and Christian Societies of the Greco-Roman World: Fragmented Memory—Comprehensive Memory—Collective Memory (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

⁵⁷ Noted in Werner H. Kelber, ‘Orality and Biblical Studies’, 9.

⁵⁸ Kelber, ‘Orality and Biblical Studies’, 15. The interfaces between orality and textuality are also well discussed in Ong, Orality and Literacy; D. Tannen, ed., Spoken and Written Language; and Havelock, The Muse Learns to Write.

⁵⁹ Richard A. Horsley, ‘Introduction’, in Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark (ed. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper and John Miles Foley; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

⁶⁰ See Werner H. Kelber’s Mark’s Story of Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); The Oral and Written Gospel; ‘The Two-Source Hypothesis: Oral Performance, the Poetics of Gospel Narrativity, and Memorial Arbitration’ (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, 2003), 21.

⁶¹ See Dewey’s ‘Oral Methods’, 32-44; ‘The Gospel of Mark as Oral/Aural Event: Implications for Interpretation’, in The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament (JSNTSup 109; ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 145-61; ‘The Survival of Mark’s Gospel: A Good Story?’, JBL 123 (2004): 495-507. See also Pieter J. J. Botha’s ‘Mark’s Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of Some Traditions about Jesus’, HvTSt 47 (1991): 304-31; ‘The Historical Setting of Mark’s Gospel: Problems and Possibilities’, JSNT 51 (1993): 27-55. See also Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story; Whitney Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003). For a broader subject other than Mark, see Antoinette Clark Wire, Holy Lives, Holy Deaths: A Close Hearing of Early Jewish Storytellers (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2002); Hearon, The Mary Magdalene Tradition; Martin S. Jaffee, Torah in the Mouth.

distinct features of the Gospels as an ancient narrative with their ‘distinctive social-cultural worlds that require historical as well as literary sensitivity’.⁶²

Hence, Kelber is right to think that the modern scientific way of interpreting an ancient oral text like the Gospel of Mark is insufficient because it is conditioned by the modern text as ‘it acquired its formative methodological habits in modern print medium’.⁶³ This made him strongly oppose the form criticism of Bultmann and his followers who ‘assumed that oral tradition evolved in a linear way, propelled by its own momentum, into a Gospel’.⁶⁴ He then considers the role of social memory in antiquity in the production of an ancient text which is important in our oral hermeneutics.⁶⁵ John Miles Foley is very influential in the development of oral hermeneutics, especially when he founded the academic journal Oral Tradition and the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition.⁶⁶ His idea of metonymic referencing, which is defined as a particular saying standing in the place of a broader tradition (like the Israelite tradition in the case of Mark), is particularly considered in this thesis.⁶⁷ Metonymic referencing in relation to social memory and orality will be elaborated below in relation to Horsley’s model.

⁶² Horsley, ‘Introduction’, ix.

⁶³ Kelber, ‘Jesus and Tradition’, 140.

⁶⁴ Horsley, ‘Introduction’, xi. Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, 2-8

⁶⁵ Oral hermeneutics is also termed as ‘oral biblical criticism’ by C.W. Davis, Oral Biblical Criticism: The Influence of the Principles of Orality on the Literary Structures of Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians (JSNTSup 172; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

⁶⁶ See also John Miles Foley, The Theory of Oral Composition: History and Methodology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); and Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: An Introduction and Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985).

⁶⁷ John Miles Foley, Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 5.

3.3. Oral Remains in the Gospel of Mark: A Case of Ancient Narrative Composition

The compositional technique of Mark is considered in this section in relation to ancient orality and narrativity. We will first discuss the theoretical and philosophical bases of Mark's composition of his narrative noting especially Walter Ong's oral theory and Paul Ricoeur's idea of a historical narrative. Then we will identify the nature and features of an oral narrative, discernible in the written text of the Gospel of Mark.

3.3.1. Narrativity and Emplotment

Narrating involves the 'connections of characters and plot, of persons, motives and the web of events in which lives are lived'.⁶⁸ The tendency to narrate and arrange lives' experiences 'in terms of plots' are common to humanity.⁶⁹ It is by means of such that one may know what it means to be human.⁷⁰ Narrative is even more prevalent in what Walter Ong classifies as 'primary oral culture' where 'knowledge cannot be managed in elaborate, more or less scientifically abstract categories' but by the use of stories 'to store, organize, and communicate much of what they know'.⁷¹ These stories

⁶⁸ Quintilian as quoted in John O'Banion, 'Narration and Argumentation: Quintilian on *Narratio* as the Heart of Rhetorical Thinking', *Rhetorica* 5 (1987): 335; Phillip Sipiora, 'Ethical Narration in My Old Man' in *Hemingway's Neglected Short Fiction: New Perspectives* (ed. Susan F. Beegel; Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 1992, 49).

⁶⁹ Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps, 'Narrating the Self', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 26. Cognitive psychologists attest to this as noted in J. Astington, 'Narrative and the Child's Theory of Mind' in *Narrative Thought and Narrative Language* (ed. B.K. Britton and A.D. Pellegrini; New Jersey: Erlbaum, 1990), 151-72; R.A. Berman and D.I. Slobin, eds., *Relating Events in Narrative: A Crosslinguistic Developmental Study* (New Jersey: Erlbaum). See also J. Bruner's, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); *Acts of Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); 'The Narrative Construction of Reality', *Critical Inquiry* 18 (1991): 1-21.

⁷⁰ Ochs and Capps, 'Narrating the Self', 31.

⁷¹ Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 137. Ong's assertions are based on Eric A. Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice: From Its Shadow in Homer to Its Substance in Plato* (London: Harvard University Press, 1978).

may include real events, but such oral narratives are ‘not greatly concerned with exact sequential parallelism between the sequence in the narrative and the sequence in extra-narrative referents’.⁷² This is probably the case of the narrative of Mark.

It is true that there is history in the story of Mark, but it is also clear that when compared with the other Gospels the historical time and sequential order of their narratives differ.⁷³ This means that the gospel writers did not intend to write history as we define it today, although they may have based their stories upon historical events, characters, and setting. Particularly in the case of the Markan narrative, the author wove disconnected events together to form a coherent whole story with a beginning, middle, and end. It is by this act of ‘interweaving’ that the plot ‘turns a sequence of events into a story or a history’.⁷⁴ This is what Ricoeur terms as configurational dimension which ‘construes significant wholes out of scattered events’.⁷⁵ He borrowed the term from Louis O. Mink who understands it as ‘grasping together’.⁷⁶ This is elaborated by Douglas McGaughey when he emphasises how configuration ‘transforms the succession of events into one meaningful whole’, ‘imposes the ‘sense of an ending’ on the indefinite succession of incidents’, and ‘serves as an alternative to the representation of time as chronological’.⁷⁷

⁷² Ong, Orality and Literacy, 144.

⁷³ Compare, for example, the difference of sequence in Mark 11:20-26 to Matthew 21:12-23.

⁷⁴ Ochs and Capps, ‘Narrating the Self’, 26. See also N. Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); V. Prop, The Morphology of the Folktale (trans. T. Scott; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968); M.J. Toolan, Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction (New York: Routledge, 1988).

⁷⁵ P. Ricoeur, ‘Narrative Time’, Critical Inquiry 7.1 (1980): 178. Quoted in Ochs and Capps, 26.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Ricoeur, ‘Narrative Time’, 178. See Louis O. Mink, ‘Interpretation and Narrative Understanding’, The Journal of Philosophy 69.9 (1972): 735-37.

⁷⁷ Douglas R. McGaughey, ‘Ricoeur’s Metaphor and Narrative Theories as a Foundation for a Theory of Symbol’, RelS 24.4 (1988): 430.

According to Ricoeur, prior to the configurational dimension (*mimesis*²) is prefiguration (*mimesis*¹). Applied to the Gospel of Mark, *Mimesis*¹ is the set of disconnected events or, in the words of Connerty, the ‘pretextual reality’⁷⁸ which the author configured in his narrative by plotting them. When Mark’s audience received ‘the emplotted reality’⁷⁹ or tried to understand or apply what was presented to them, that is refiguration (*mimesis*³), ‘the intersection’ of the world of the text and the world of recipient.⁸⁰ Configuration, therefore, ‘mediates between the prefiguration of the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work’.⁸¹

Now, as we try to refigure what has been configured by Mark to form his narrative, we have to use a ‘well-informed historical imagination’⁸² of the scenario where Mark might have composed his piece and performed orally before his audience who were primarily hearers rather than readers. This puts our refiguration of the Markan text in the context of an ancient oral narrative designed to be heard rather than read silently. This gives due respect to what Susan Niditch calls as ‘the aural qualities of the text’.⁸³

3.3.2. Nature and features of Oral Narratives

When Mark composed his narrative out of scattered events in the lives of Jesus and other characters, being told and retold out of the reservoir of his community’s social

⁷⁸ J.P. Connerty, ‘History’s Many Cunning Passages: Paul Ricoeur’s Time and Narrative’, Poetics Today 11.2 (1990): 393.

⁷⁹ I got the expression from Connerty, ‘History’s Many Cunning Passages’, 393.

⁸⁰ Connerty, ‘History’s Many Cunning Passages’, 393.

⁸¹ Paul Ricoeur, Time and Narrative, 1:53.

⁸² I borrow the expression from James D.G. Dunn, A New Perspective on Jesus (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 53.

⁸³ Susan Niditch, ‘Oral Tradition and Biblical Scholarship’, Oral Tradition 18.1 (2003): 44.

memory, he may well have followed the conventional way of writing a historical narrative, especially following after those of Jewish historiography in the OT. But how is a narrative composed and comprehended in an oral mindset? Is it the same with modern narratives? The answer will aid us to situate Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the first-century oral culture.

Usually, narrative in modern development follows the characteristics of the 'Freytag's pyramid' with an 'upward slope' followed by a 'downward slope', i.e., 'an ascending action builds tension, rising to a climactic point, which consists often of a recognition or other incident bringing about a *peripeteia* or reversal of action, and which is followed by a *dénouement* or untying'.⁸⁴ These are not the characteristics of an ancient oral narrative of the kind Mark probably envisaged. Instead, it is a kind that is characterised by action,⁸⁵ conflicts⁸⁶ and thematic episodes. It usually starts in the middle of things and focuses on the hero or heroic stories.⁸⁷ The characters are simple (black and white), one dimensional and not developing.⁸⁸ These are observable in ancient Jewish (e.g. Old Testament) oral narratives (which may well have been oral in origin although what is observable now is their written residue) and would have influenced Mark in the production of his narrative. The characteristics are also observable in Greek oral narratives⁸⁹ and Mark may well have been acquainted with

⁸⁴ Ong, Orality and Literacy, 139.

⁸⁵ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, 55, 65-70.

⁸⁶ Examples of 'conflicts' are the 'polarization stories' in Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, 52.

⁸⁷ See Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, 45.

⁸⁸ Expressly noted in Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, 68-69.

⁸⁹ This does not include Greek dramas since according to Ong Greek dramas did exhibit the Freytag pyramid. He states that Greek drama was 'the first western verbal art form to be fully controlled by writing. It was the first—and for centuries the only—genre to have typically a tight, Freytag pyramid structure' (Ong, Orality and Literacy, 145).

them since during his time ‘Greek culture penetrated to all parts of the Mediterranean world’ and dramatic narratives had been well-blended with rhetorical and historical genres wherein ‘orators and historians were striving to be dramatic, and dramatists were using rhetorical devices and incorporating contemporary events into play’.⁹⁰ This is supported by Michael Vines’ study suggesting that ‘the Gospel of Mark supports a connection with Jewish novelistic literature of the Hellenistic period’.⁹¹

Different scholars observe the nature and features of oral narratives being considered in this study. Susan Niditch presents the features showing oral register in biblical literature, particularly the OT: First, there is repetition in one passage, most especially in a narrative form although found in other literary forms. She explains that repetition unified the work and reiterated messages or themes being emphasised by the author and which seemed to find importance in the larger tradition. We will note this feature of repetition in our analysis of Mark’s text. However, it cannot be denied that repetition also exists in modern narratives especially for the purpose of emphasis. Second, ‘formulas and formula patterns are used to express similar ideas or images throughout the tradition’. Such patterns ‘bring with them a meaning beyond the immediate content of the literary context, enriching the passage with the larger implications of the tradition and with essential denotators of a culture’s worldviews’.⁹² Third, the ‘use of conventionalised patterns of content’ or ‘literary forms’ reappears right through the tradition.⁹³ Here, ‘the skilled biblical author at home in the oral world

⁹⁰ Augustine Stock, Call to Discipleship: A Literary Study of Mark’s Gospel (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982), 26, 46. A similar perspective is presented in Dennis Ronald MacDonald, The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁹¹ See Michael Vines, The Problem of Markan Genre: The Gospel of Mark and the Jewish Novel (Boston: Brill, 2002), 161.

⁹² Susan Niditch, ‘Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto: Towards a Biblical Poetic’, Oral Tradition 10.2 (1995): 394.

⁹³ Niditch, ‘Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto’, 390. These features are also elaborated in John Miles Foley, Immanent Art.

and aware of his audience's expectations within the tradition can quite consciously invoke traditional patterns to manipulate them in recognizably less than traditional ways in order to shock and to make those who receive his message take notice'.⁹⁴ Especially traditions in the OT will be noted (in accordance with the second and third points above) in our investigation of Mark's characterizations of Jesus and his disciples.

Some aural signposts include shift in geography or location, as noted by Mary Ann Tolbert.⁹⁵ Werner Kelber gives consideration to the 'sequential structure' of the narrative 'through the use of connective devices, the extensive use of doublets and triads, and use of the reiteration of "words, clauses and themes" to allow "the reader to return to and link up with what was said before"'.⁹⁶ Walter Ong also observes that oral narratives usually function in episodic patterning 'because the experience of real life is more like a string of episodes than it is like a Freytag pyramid'.⁹⁷ However, Ong's notion of an oral standpoint that capitalises on the concrete rather than the abstract is taken into consideration in this thesis especially in chapter 5.⁹⁸

Two narrative scholars, Ochs and Capps, observe that oral narratives tend 'to shift into present tense, called the historical present, in referring to past events'. This is what Karl Buhler calls 'transposition',⁹⁹ in which 'narrators move the deictic locus of a story from there and then to here and now'. This makes 'narrated events vivid and

⁹⁴ Niditch, 'Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto', 403. There is more discussion on this in John Miles Foley, The Singer of Tales in Performance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 39-40.

⁹⁵ Mary Ann Tolbert, Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-historical perspective (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 107.

⁹⁶ Kelber, The Oral and the Written Gospel, 67.

⁹⁷ Ong, Orality and Literacy, 145.

⁹⁸ Ong, Orality and Literacy, 31-77.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Ochs and Capps, 'Narrating the Self', 25. See K. Buhler, Sprachtheorie: Die Darstellungsfunktion der Sprache (Jena: Fischer, 1934).

captivating’ and ‘may indicate a continuing preoccupation’, i.e., ‘the events are not contained in the past but rather continue to invade the narrator’s current consciousness’. This shows that ‘the telling of past events is intricately linked to tellers’ and listeners’ concerns about their present and their future lives’ which may include their ‘current worries, complaints, and conflicts’.¹⁰⁰

3.3.3. Oral Hints in the Markan Narrative

What Ochs and Capps note about a feature of an oral narrative which tends to transpose a past event into the present in the telling of a story is observable in the Gospel of Mark. Because of the usual practice by Mark of using the historical present to refer to the past,¹⁰¹ some scholars ridicule him as clumsy in his literary compositional skill. But it is now recognised that such practice was acceptable in an oral narrative designed for performance.¹⁰² Of course, it cannot be denied that Mark is not as good as most other ancient Greek writers (whose works survive) because of his over use of parataxis, and his use of the historic present is not consistent by alternating randomly between past and present. But one has to ask whether the historic present is really an indicator of a crude Greek style, for we cannot criticise the great ancient Greek historian, Thucydides, as poor in Greek by his use of historical presents.¹⁰³ This is because oral narrative invites the hearers to participate in the event itself; it is showing

¹⁰⁰ Ochs and Capps, ‘Narrating Self’, 25. See also M.H. Goodwin, He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Martin Heidegger, Being and Time (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); E. Ochs, ‘Stories that Step into the Future’ in Perspectives on Register: Situating Register Variation within Sociolinguistics (eds. D. Finegan and F. Biber; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 106-35.

¹⁰¹ The historical presents in Mark are noted in The New American Standard Bible (NASB) by the use of asterisks.

¹⁰² Dewey, ‘Survival of Mark’s Gospel’, 497-500; Foley, Singer of Tales, 60-98.

¹⁰³ Jean Lallot et al., eds., The Historical Presents in Thucydides (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Jeffrey S. Rusten, Thucydides (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

that the event is not only in the past but that it continues to break into the present and future lives of the listeners. Moreover, since oral narrative performance has a rhetorical function, the historic present connects the past events directly to the present audience persuading them to become or to believe according to the narrator's intent. Mark's use of the historic present will be discussed further in chapter 6 about the flow of the communication of the story, of how Jesus' disciples in Mark's story world become Jesus' disciples in Mark's social world.

Joanna Dewey notes several features of Mark's oral method of composition: 'variation within the same; acoustic principle of echo; ring composition (inclusion)—Marcan "sandwiches"; balanced patterns ("acoustic responses"); and chaining method'.¹⁰⁴ She also 'observes characteristics of oral narrative and plotting' in the Gospel of Mark which she terms 'oral composition' but 'shows some indication of writing':¹⁰⁵ connecting teaching to events, the use of visible imagery, an additive, aggressive style, use of parallels and chiasms to create echo systems, and repetition of similar episodes.¹⁰⁶ She emphasises that the plot of the Markan narrative is developed not along chronological lines but 'sequentially, relying on the use of mnemonic structures to assist the hearer in recalling what has gone before. These devices point to the fundamentally aural nature of the text, a text intended to be heard, not read'.¹⁰⁷ She affirms Kelber and Ong's assertion about the episodic nature of an oral narrative.

¹⁰⁴ Maxey, From Orality to Orality, 118. See Dewey, 'Oral Methods', 38-40.

¹⁰⁵ Joanna Dewey, 'Mark as Aural Narrative: Structures as Clues to Understanding', STRev 36 (1992): 47.

¹⁰⁶ Dewey, 'Mark as Aural Narrative', 47-49. Chiasms are also certainly written techniques.

¹⁰⁷ As quoted in Hearon, 'The Implications of Orality', 6. See also Joanna Dewey, 'Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience', CBQ 53 (1991): 221-31.

According to Pieter Botha, ‘Mark employs a compositional process similar to that described by the oral formulaic theory’. He points to examples of ‘recurring, at times almost rhythmical, wording, stereotyped names, patterns of repetition that seem to function as formulaic introductions to narrative units or expressions, and repetitive phrases that can be heard as refrains’. Botha also observes evidence of thematic composition, noting in particular how in several instances Mark adopts a ‘well-known, general motif’ (evidenced in biblical as well as Greco-Roman literature) and transforms it into an ‘internalized narrative grammar’.¹⁰⁸ This is considered in this study of how Jesus and his disciples were characterised in the Gospel of Mark in relation to the use of titles and nicknames. It is also pursued whether or not Mark might have adopted the motifs or epithets that relate to Jesus and the disciples’ persons and titles, already popular in his community, into his narrative. It is further pursued whether or not he incorporated some OT or Greco-Roman themes or epithets, preserved in his community’s memory, to drive home his points. These titles or motifs would have resonated meaning beyond their semantic formulations when heard by first-century audience. In Niditch’s words, the epithets bring to a story ‘a full range of a character’s personality in the tradition, qualities beyond those emphasized in the context at hand’.¹⁰⁹

However, Rafael Rodriguez is wary of what he calls a ‘morphological approach’ that attempts to detect oral sources behind a written text on the basis of its style. He stresses that we ‘should not think of oral tradition as a source lying behind oral-derived texts. Instead, oral tradition in this model provides the context in which oral-derived

¹⁰⁸ Hearon, ‘The Implications of Orality’, 6-7. See Pieter Botha, ‘Mark’s Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of Some Traditions about Jesus’, *HvTSt* 47 (1991): 318-24. For a study of the influences of OT Traditions on the Synoptic Gospels, see Willard Swartley, *Israel’s Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels* (Peabody: Henrickson Publishers, 1994).

¹⁰⁹ Niditch, ‘Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto’, 396.

texts develop and were experienced by their readers and/or audiences'.¹¹⁰ He is critical of those who applied the 'morphological approach' such as Joanna Dewey, James Dunn, Terrence Mournet, Casey Davis, Stephen Young and Egbert Bakker. What Rodriguez prefers is what he calls the 'contextual approach' which 'identifies oral tradition as the context within which oral-derived (written) texts become meaningful vehicles of communication'.¹¹¹ While agreeing with Rodriguez, Larry Hurtado concedes that Mark's 'oral register' reflects 'some of the syntactical traits of spoken Koine Greek'.¹¹² So, we do not necessarily contrast the two approaches as done by Rodriguez, but we can apply them both to a better appreciation of Mark's narrative, which was produced and received in an oral context. Thus, we can say that Mark is more oral than both Luke and Matthew while Luke and Matthew are more literary, if we are to have differences in the degree of orality and textuality.

3.4. The Rhetorical Function of Markan Characterisations of Jesus and the Disciples in an Oral-Memorial Narrative Performance

The oral residue observable in the Markan narrative has led many contemporary scholars to assert with Dewey that the Gospel of Mark should 'be studied with an oral hermeneutic whereby Mark's composition is analyzed with an ear to its strategy of interwoven development'.¹¹³ Scott and Dean are pleased with this development of paying serious attention to the 'sound of the language' because for a long time NT

¹¹⁰ Rafael Rodriguez, Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed (London: T&T Clark, 2014), 76.

¹¹¹ Rodriguez, Oral Tradition and the New Testament, 52. See more discussion on the 'morphological approach' vs. the 'contextual approach' in chapter 4 and 5.

¹¹² Hurtado, 'Oral Fixation and New Testament Studies?', 335.

¹¹³ As noted by Maxey, From Orality to Orality, 119 with reference to Dewey, 'Mark as Interwoven Tapestry', 234-36.

studies did not pay much attention to this ‘most basic level of textual reception’.¹¹⁴ They propose ‘sound analysis’ as the first step in the study of the NT.¹¹⁵ The way we apply such sound analysis in this thesis is in relation to social memory and echo of traditions in one’s socio-historical context.

Related to the sound of language and oral hermeneutics are the ancient act of performance and rhetoric. For instance, how did the first-century hearers understand the following proverbial sayings in the Gospel of Mark being performed publicly?: He who has ears (ὄτα) to hear (ἀκούειν) let him hear (ἀκουέτω) (Mark 4:9), and they may ever be seeing (βλέποντες βλέπωσιν) but never perceiving (καὶ μὴ ἴδωσιν), and ever hearing (καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσιν) and never understanding (καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν) (4:12)? What impact might these sayings have had on the first-century hearers? How did the audience feel upon hearing such? What were they thinking? How were they supposed to behave after hearing? Were they affected by the speaker’s tone, volume, pace, gestures and other body movements? These questions presume that the first-century audience would have witnessed the performance of Mark’s Gospel as a direct communication to them. What was spoken by the character of Jesus to other characters, particularly to his disciples, in the narrative was also spoken to the hearers of Mark when they watched the performance. This is a kind of hermeneutic that is ‘deeply rooted in biblical language that proclaims words as an act inviting participation’; it is founded upon the ‘epistemological principle of orality that to know actuality is to participate in it’.¹¹⁶ Kelber explains further that ‘in oral hermeneutics words have no existence apart from

¹¹⁴ Scott and Dean, ‘A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount’, 718.

¹¹⁵ Scott and Dean, ‘A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount’, 717.

¹¹⁶ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xvi, 150.

persons, participation in the message is inseparable from imitation of the speaker'.¹¹⁷ That is to say, Mark's audience were invited to participate in the performance and were challenged to believe what they ought to believe and to do what they ought to do on the basis of the narrative. Such was the trend in ancient rhetoric and performance elaborated below.

3.4.1. Rhetorical Narrative and the Art of Ancient Rhetoric

According to G. Kennedy, there was the 'tendency' in the ancient world to shift focus from using persuasive speech to narration. That is to say, there was an 'evolution from "primary" to "secondary" rhetoric postulating a shift from the adoption of rhetorical techniques in speeches for specific (juridical, political, or epideictic) purposes to their adoption in secondary environment, such as literature, to serve the author's (or character's) ideological and/or narrative agenda'.¹¹⁸ In other words, there was a growth and development of 'rhetorical narratives'. According to Quintilian, rhetorical narratives present a 'linear sequence of plot development with the logical conclusion or proof that persuades a particular audience within the context of the particular circumstances of the situation'.¹¹⁹

The rhetorical element in ancient narratives is apparent, of course, in NT narratives of which the Gospel of Mark is singled out in this study. However, the rise of rhetorical analysis in biblical studies demonstrates that not only narratives but all

¹¹⁷ Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, 151. See this assertion exemplified in the words of Paul in 1 Thes. 2:8-9.

¹¹⁸ G. A. Kennedy, Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 3. Quoted in Koen De Temmerman, 'Ancient Rhetoric as a Hermeneutical Tool for the Analysis of Characterization in Narrative Literature', Rhetorica 28.1 (2010): 23.

¹¹⁹ Sipiora, 'Ethical Narration in My Old Man', 50.

writings of the NT were intended to convince their audience,¹²⁰ not merely to entertain them. Scott and Dean propose that rhetorical analysis should be the next step after ‘sound analysis’.¹²¹ Similarly, Tsang locates rhetorical analysis under the methodological umbrella of orality ‘where the audience’s first hearing dictates the meaning and interpretation’¹²² of a given piece of NT writing. This sound aspect and oral dynamics of rhetoric (noted by Scott, Dean and Tsang and others)¹²³ will be emphasized in the present study. However, the more popular oral rhetoric in antiquity rather than the elite form will be considered in relation to our study of Mark’s rhetorical narrative.

Although the more popular rhetoric was evident throughout antiquity in different societies of the world, the study of rhetoric was much prized in the ancient Greco-Roman culture.¹²⁴ This culture was able to develop a more formal and elite form of rhetoric that became influential on the educational and other social structures of Greco-Roman society. There were the Sophists of the ancient Greece (e.g. Protagoras and Gorgias) who incorporated in their medium of instruction the power of oral

¹²⁰ See for instance Burton Mack, Rhetoric and the New Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Karl Ludwig Bauer, Rhetorica Paullina (2 vols.; Halae: Impensis Orphanotropei, 1982); Clifton Black, ‘The Rhetorical Form of the Hellenistic Jewish and Early Christian Sermon: A Response to Lawrence Wills’, HTR 8.1 (1988): 1-18; Forrester Church, ‘Rhetorical Structure and Design in Paul’s Letter to Philemon’, HTR 7.1-2, 17-33; Christopher Forbes, ‘Paul’s Boasting and Hellenistic Rhetoric’, NTS 32 (1986): 1-30; Amos Wilder, Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); Robert Jewett, The Thessalonian Correspondence: Pauline Rhetoric and Millenarian Piety (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); George Kennedy, New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); James Kinneavy, Greek Rhetorical Origins of Christian Faith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Burton Mack and Vernon Robbins, Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels (Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1989); Vernon Robbins, ‘Pronouncement Stories and Jesus’ Blessing of the Children: A Rhetorical Approach’, Semeia 29 (1983): 43-74.

¹²¹ Scott and Dean, ‘A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount’, 717.

¹²² Sam Tsang, ‘Are We “Misreading” Paul?’, 207.

¹²³ See for instance Botha, ‘The Verbal Art of the Pauline Letters’; Loubser, ‘Reconciling Rhetorical Criticism with Its Oral Roots’.

¹²⁴ Tolbert, Sowing the Gospel, 81.

communication. There were also orators of ancient Rome, like Cicero¹²⁵ and Quintilian¹²⁶ who made the most of their rhetorical eloquence. As a result the study of rhetoric became favoured by the elites who expected to make a career in politics, law, and the like. Many of these Roman orators would have been indebted to Aristotle's five major parts of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory¹²⁷ and delivery.¹²⁸ Also, they would have utilized Aristotle's rhetoric modes: *ethos* which is 'the use of character' for credibility,¹²⁹ *pathos* which is the excitation of desired emotions in the audience', and *logos* which is the 'proof or apparent proof' of the argument.¹³⁰

While the elites in the cities and other urban places developed their own form of rhetoric, persons operating in a primarily oral culture, the vast mass of ordinary people who had little or no access to any formal education, would have developed their own kind of rhetoric. This is so for the reason that in such an ancient society knowledge was 'useless without verbal eloquence because people respected and trusted spoken words'.¹³¹ Not only so in an oral culture, but since 'words have no existence apart from

¹²⁵ See his popular work: Cicero, Orator (ed. H. M. Hubbell ; London and Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹²⁶ Quintilian is known for his Institutio Oratoria translated in English as The Institutio Oratio of Quintilian (trans. H. E. Butler, 4 vols.; Harvard University Press, 1958).

¹²⁷ More discussion regarding memory and reminiscence (*De Memoria et Reminiscentia*) in Aristotle, Parva Naturalia (trans. W. S. Hett; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹²⁸ Aristotle, The 'Art' of Rhetoric (trans. John Henry Freese; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926). The five major parts of rhetoric are also noted in Edward Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). There are other works by Aristotle that have been prized in the study of rhetoric in antiquity like his Poetics (trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1946), and Topica (trans. E. S. Forster; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

¹²⁹ According to Rhoads, the 'performer was always an integral dimension of the composition'; hence, it was 'important that the audience trust the performer'. See Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part I', 11.

¹³⁰ Richard McKeon, ed. Introduction to Aristotle (New York: Random House, 1947).

¹³¹ Tsang, 'Are We "Misreading" Paul?', 209.

speaker and hearers’, there was the ‘tendency’ for ‘oral words to actualize their meaning in the performance of oral delivery’¹³² (*pronuntiatio*).

In the case of Mark, his style resembles the more popular style of rhetoric which was ‘for those with less or no formal education’ rather than ‘the classical rhetoric in the education of the elites’.¹³³ A case has been made by Etienne Trocmé that Mark’s stories, particularly the healing stories, can be attributed to the more popular style of Galilean storytellers rather than from the ‘organized Christian community’ of Jerusalem.¹³⁴ Gerd Theissen makes a similar case.¹³⁵ However, we really do not know enough about popular storytelling in first-century Galilee to be able to attribute a particular kind of story to it with any confidence. There’s also a danger of creating a false dichotomy between sophisticate urban elite rhetoric and popular rural storytelling, for there were poor people living in cities and presumably a tradition of popular urban storytelling to go with them!

What we can possibly infer, nevertheless, is that Mark’s stories are of a kind that is directed more to the common populace rather than to the educated elite. In addition, Mark’s rhetorical irony may well have been a common style among the common populace, although a more refined one had been developed by the elites. In this case, the more learned rhetoric, to a certain extent, might have been a formalization of rhetorical techniques that everyone in that culture naturally employed. Conversely, there may well have been a trickle-down of elite rhetorical techniques into popular culture. There’s the

¹³² Kelber, *The Oral and Written Gospel*, 91.

¹³³ Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part II’, 167.

¹³⁴ Etienne Trocmé, *The Formation of the Gospel According to Mark* (trans. Pamela Gaugham; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), 52.

¹³⁵ Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 1992), 97-112.

probability that some uneducated people would be familiar with hearing educated orators speak, and so (albeit unconsciously) pick up some of their rhetorical techniques (although this would be more likely to happen in an urban than a rural setting).

There are differences between the two types of rhetoric but there are also similarities between them which may show some continuity between the two, with elite rhetoric being to some extent a sophisticated form of the more popular rhetoric or vice versa. For instance, the involvement of memory¹³⁶ is given emphasis in both elite and ancient popular rhetoric. Rote memorization became common in antiquity for the sake of free reading or performing on stage (just as orators were advised to speak from memory rather than notes). This is not only common in the Greco-Roman period but also within the Jewish background of Mark (Josh. 1:8; Prov. 1:1-7; 3:1; 7:1ff.; 31:1-9; Ecc. 1:1ff.). In Rajak's study of Josephus,¹³⁷ he observes the possibility that Josephus might have memorized a great portion of the OT which was common to Jews. Because of this Tsang hypothesized that Paul might have done the same thing which explains why at times his quotations of the OT were not that exact.¹³⁸ However, it is unclear that rote memorization of large amounts of material penetrated very far down the social scale. Such large scale rote memorization seems generally to have been associated with literacy, so it can't be assumed that the illiterate masses committed substantial amounts of material to memory in the same way. It is, of course, true that everyone would have relied on their memories far more than we do today, since checking written records was

¹³⁶ Memory is the often neglected aspect in the study of rhetoric but it is now being emphasised in the study of ancient orality. See for instance J. Hall and R. Bond, 'Performative Elements in Cicero's Orations: An Experimental Approach', *Prudentia* 37 (2002): 187-228; Thomas Olbricht, 'Delivery and Memory' in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period: 330 B.C. to A.D. 400* (ed. Stanley Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2001); William D. Shiell, *Reading Acts: The Lector and the Early Christian Audience* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*.

¹³⁷ Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (London: Duckworth, 1983).

¹³⁸ Tsang, 'Are We "Misreading" Paul?', 211.

either impossible or hugely inconvenient for virtually everyone. The earlier assertion that Mark's target audience would have relied on their social memory is discussed below.

Both elite rhetoric and the more popular one in antiquity gave importance to oral delivery (*pronuntiatio*). Delivery governs the rules for control of the voice and the use of gestures suitable for the occasion. Whitney Shiner notes some ancient gestures and body movements in delivery: shouting, whispering, tearing the hair, beating the breast, crying, laughing, and gesticulating in various ways.¹³⁹ These are difficult to retrieve in the case of the Markan narrative, or any ancient text, for what we have is only the written document, although such features probably formed an important part of all ancient performances. We cannot be sure of how the narrative was verbalised with all the bodily movements and gestures. We cannot also be sure of how all these impacted the first-century communal audience of Mark—how they were moved emotionally and persuaded. However, there are attempts to try to recover the sounds and gestures as performed in the ancient world through performance criticism as discussed below. However, before discussing performance criticism, it is appropriate to discuss more the concept of social memory which is related to ancient oral performance.

3.4.2 Social Memory in the Present Study

Since we are talking about the composition and comprehension of Mark's narrative in its socio-historical setting, the study of social memory plays an important role in the methodology of this work. However, social memory is not a well-defined concept on which all scholars are agreed, but an area of ongoing research. Thus, in what follows I attempt to summarize a number of discussions from earlier debates and sketch my own conceptual model for how Mark's narrative (particularly the characterisation of

¹³⁹ As noted in Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part II', 168. See Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*.

Jesus and his disciples in view of other characters) would have been received in first-century Palestine.

Social memory was originally termed as ‘collective memory’ by French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) who pioneered the notion of ‘social memory’ as something constructed by communities rather than a record of what actually happened in history. He asserts that ‘it is in society that people normally acquire their memories’ and it is also ‘in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories’.¹⁴⁰ One way of distinguishing the terms is to use ‘social memory’ to refer to the impacts of the common social frameworks on individual memories and ‘collective memory’ to refer to the public expression of memory in rituals, ceremonies, monuments, oral traditions, written texts and the like.

‘Collective memory’ in reference to smaller social units is sometimes called ‘social memory’, whereas, in reference to larger social units (or whole cultures), it tends to be called ‘cultural memory’.¹⁴¹ Kelber uses the term ‘cultural memory’ and Thatcher explains it as ‘the broader set of frameworks that guide the composition of both oral and written texts that refer to the past’.¹⁴² Following after Halbwachs, Barry Schwartz understands social memory as ‘the *distribution* throughout society of what individuals

¹⁴⁰ Maurice Halbwachs, On Collective Memory (trans. Lewis A. Coser; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38. See more discussions in David C. Rubin, Memory in Oral Traditions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); A. Kirk and T. Thatcher, eds., Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005); Janet Coleman, Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in The Reconstruction of The Past (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Birger Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998); Frances Yates, The Art of Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Jan Assman, Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen (Munich: Beck, 1992).

¹⁴¹ Dennis Duling, ‘Social Memory and Biblical Studies: Theory, Method, and Application’, BTB 36 (2006): 2. See also Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins, ‘Social Memory Studies: From Collective Memory to the Historical Theology of Mnemonic Practices’, Annual Review of Sociology 24 (1998):106.

¹⁴² Kelber, The Oral and Written Gospel, xxiii; Tom Thatcher, ‘Beyond Texts and Traditions’ in Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond Oral and the Written Gospel (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 10.

believe, know, and feel about the *past*, how they judge the *past* morally, how closely they identify with it, and how they commemorate it'.¹⁴³ As clarified by Eric Eve, it is not 'to denote objective knowledge of what exactly happened in the past; it is instead used to mean beliefs about the past, ways of talking about and interpreting the past, and ways of using the past in the interests of the present (and in particular, of a group's identity and self-understanding, of creating a world of shared meanings)'.¹⁴⁴

Although it is common sense that (in the aspect of human memory) it is the individual who remembers events and experiences (individual memory), studies in memory also show that the individual remembers in relation to his social group in the society. Thus, the term 'social memory' arises 'as a representation of the past in service of present realities and needs'.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, social memory in this work relates to the way a group remember their tradition creatively together or where the audience's cultural tradition resonates while hearing the performance of Mark's narrative.¹⁴⁶ This is what Keith and Thatcher term as 'keying' the events or experiences 'to other events and themes in their established heritage stories, creating new narratives on the basis of cherished values'.¹⁴⁷ The term 'keying' is borrowed from the works of Barry Schwartz.¹⁴⁸ In the case of Mark's audience, themes and events in their popular Israelite

¹⁴³ Barry Schwartz, 'Where There's Smoke, There's Fire: Memory and History' in Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz (SBL Semeia Studies 78; ed. G. O. West; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 10.

¹⁴⁴ Eve, Writing the Gospels, 107-108.

¹⁴⁵ Chris Keith and Tom Thatcher, 'The Scar of the Cross: The Violence Ratio and the Earliest Christian Memories of Jesus' in Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 206.

¹⁴⁶ See Richard Horsley, Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 63-70.

¹⁴⁷ Keith and Thatcher, 'The Scar of the Cross', 206.

¹⁴⁸ Barry Schwartz, 'Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II', American Sociological Review 61 (1996): 911; 'Collective Memory and Social Change: The Democratization of

tradition (also found in the OT) would have resonated through association in their hearing of Mark's narrative, particularly Mark's characterisations of Jesus and the disciples. Such is expected in understanding a new group which is identified with a past tradition.

Generally, social memory theorists are not that interested in the transmission of any specific body of content about Jesus.¹⁴⁹ Some scholars, especially in the constructionist camp, go so far as to conclude that memory is more wrong than right (based on studies in psychology and social memory that show how frail memory is). It is because the past and its traditions are just being invented for the present use.¹⁵⁰ Dale Allison is an example of those who are a bit pessimistic about finding something historical behind the Gospels. The title of his book, Constructing Jesus, shows his view of how the early church constructed narratives based very little on distorted 'eye witness' accounts and more on addressing their present hope, expectations, assumptions, and needs. He mixed up studies in psychology and social memory and constructed an interesting view of the production of the Gospels and early reception of the life of Jesus and his followers.¹⁵¹ However, Allison's work is a bit orientated towards a disappointing conclusion of using memory studies, although he ends up asserting quite a bit about the historical Jesus.

George Washington', American Sociological Review 56 (1991): 226-28; Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 226.

¹⁴⁹ Keith and Thatcher, 'The Scar of the Cross', 206

¹⁵⁰ Barry Schwartz, 'Christian Origins: Historical Truth and Social Memory' in Kirk and Thatcher, Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity (A. Kirk and Thatcher, eds.; SBL Semeia Studies 52; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 43-56; Alan Kirk, 'Social and Cultural Memory' in Memory, Tradition, and Text, 1-24.

¹⁵¹ Dale Allison, Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

It should be noted, however, that memory cannot all be faulted as being always wrong, without retaining any sort of history (at least in the form of being a historical referent) as evidenced by the relics of the past. While memory tends to be selective, even adding and subtracting details, scholars in the other camp are more optimistic in finding history behind the story, although not in the sense of the older historicists who tried to dichotomize what is real history and mere narrative additions. Jens Schröter, for instance, suggests that scholars should maintain the integrality of both history and narrative in one's historical reconstruction of whatever the Gospel writers are presenting. That is, a scholar's perspective of the 'early Jesus tradition' is valid 'only insofar as it is integrated into a perspective on the Gospels as consciously composed literary and theological Jesus stories'.¹⁵² In a way, there is a sense of continuity between whatever happened behind the Gospels and those constructed in the Gospels. Moreover, the Gospels tell not only what happened behind but also about those who remembered and recorded the narrative—the metaphor of both window and mirror. Chris Keith, indebted to social memory and orality theorists, emphasizes that the Gospel narratives tell about the historical Jesus, in so far as it is the 'interpreted past of Jesus' and there is no such thing as 'un-interpreted Jesus traditions that one can separate from the interpretations'.¹⁵³

Memory, therefore, is formed by cultural or social factors and is the selective process of the community to retain past events beneficial for or in the service of their present existence, especially in the area of values or beliefs formation and community identity. This is what we are advancing in this thesis, following after the notion of Barry

¹⁵² Jens Schröter, 'The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony? A Critical Examination of Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*', *JSNT* 31.2 (2008): 208.

¹⁵³ Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 61.

Schwartz that social memory ‘sees the past as a social construction shaped by the concerns and needs of the present’.¹⁵⁴ In other words, the current social needs cause changes in remembering and understanding salient aspects of the past.¹⁵⁵

Such a way of resurrecting the past and integrating it in the present is termed by Werner Kelber as ‘hot memory’ in contra distinction from what he calls ‘cold memory’ referring to the ‘repetitive’ and ‘preservative’ aspect of memory.¹⁵⁶ Applying this to the Markan narrative, Kelber views it as a hot (rather than cold) memory that transmits the past into the present ‘for the benefit of solidifying present group identity’.¹⁵⁷ Such will be demonstrated in the chapters 4 to 6, wherein the target audience’s memory of their traditions and history in relation to their present situation aids in the formation of their community as present followers of Jesus.

For James D.G. Dunn, ‘the *creative* rather than the *retentive* character of memory’ is emphasised,¹⁵⁸ although in the continuity view of social memory, there is something historical that is retained and imbedded in the narrative. Through telling and retelling over time, the tradition is fixed and becomes stable, although allowing some variations or flexibility.¹⁵⁹ However, the way remembering functions is not like

¹⁵⁴ Barry Schwartz, ‘Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington’, *American Sociological Review* 56.2 (1991): 221.

¹⁵⁵ See Barry Schwartz, ‘The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory’, *Social Forces* 61.2 (1982), 375.

¹⁵⁶ Werner Kelber, ‘The Case of the Gospels: Memory’s Desire and the Limits of Historical Criticism’, *Oral Tradition* 17 (2002): 61; ‘The Works of Memory: Christian Origins and Mnemo-history—A Response’ in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (eds. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005), 228-29, 232. See also Thatcher, ‘Beyond Texts and Traditions’, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Kelber, ‘Works of Memory’, 244.

¹⁵⁸ James D.G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus*, 44.

¹⁵⁹ See Tom Thatcher, ed., *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014); See Kirk and Thatcher, *Memory, Tradition, and Text*, especially the section by Barry Schwartz ‘Christian Origins: Historical Truth and Social Memory’. Schwartz is a sociologist who has taken a particular interest in the application of social memory theory to NT studies.

retrieving what a camera or video recorder has stored, but involves reconstruction of the past.¹⁶⁰ Crossan thus insists on the aspect of selectivity in reconstructing the past, especially when applied to NT studies.¹⁶¹ Bauckham, although in strong opposition to Crossan in defending ‘eyewitness memory’, still recognizes a certain degree of reconstruction when one remembers the past.¹⁶² Such a perspective of reconstructing the past when one remembers is strongly supported by psychologists.¹⁶³ Thus, based on psychological literature, Eve states that remembering ‘involves our (unconsciously) filling in at least some details of the remembered event from our general understanding of how things were (or are or should have been) ... to make sense of what is recalled for present purposes’.¹⁶⁴ In a way, the present needs and environment affect the way one remembers, which may demand some sort of reinterpretation and reinvention of what actually happened. Thus, what is recollected is not the pure or brute historical data but a mixture of what happened and the subjective interpretation of the one doing the remembering.

3.4.3 Performance and Public Reading in the Ancient World

Hurtado’s corrective essay with regards to performance criticism is a welcome development in the discussion of Mark’s oral narrative in relation to his target

¹⁶⁰ Scholars in this line of thought include Alan Baddeley et al., Memory (Hove and New York: Psychology Press, 2009), 180-81; F.C. Bartlett, Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology (Cambridge: Cambridge Unity Press, 1995), 199-214; Daniel L. Schacter, Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past (New York: Basic Books), 1996, 69-97. For Fentress and Wickham, memory can even be distorted and inaccurate. See James Fentress and Chris Wickham, Social Memory (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), xi.

¹⁶¹ See John Dominic Crossan, The Birth of Christianity (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1998), 59-84.

¹⁶² Bauckham, Jesus and the Eyewitnesses, 319-57.

¹⁶³ See for instance Baddeley, et al., Memory, 180-81; Bartlett, Remembering, 199-214.

¹⁶⁴ Eric Eve, Behind the Gospels (London: SPCK, 2013), 89.

audience.¹⁶⁵ Hurtado insists that Mark would have been publicly read aloud rather than performed as in oratory or theatrical acting. However, his evidence may not stretch back to the earliest performances of Mark's narrative; and, thus, may not apply to what Mark intended. There would have been early narrating of the traditions about Jesus and his disciples, and these would have influenced the way Mark's narrative would have been narrated. Moreover, since Hurtado acknowledges that there 'would have been a concern to read text as skilfully as possible', would not that skill have developed into a performance when the reading was set in an informal gathering (e.g. house or village storytelling) rather in a corporate worship assembly? So to limit Mark's narrative to have been privately and publicly read only ignores the flexibility and dynamism of storytelling when done in different settings. So it is not proper to impose a contemporary analytic and precise mind-set into antiquity with a more fluid and oral mind-set. Moreover, to disregard the variety of oral performances overlooks the fact that texts were written in different genres and for different purposes. We cannot infer that because such a text is viewed as sacred text (although we cannot assume that Mark's Gospel would have been regarded as a sacred text from the very beginning), it can only be read in a worship gathering and not orally performed in a small village social affair.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, we will acknowledge in this research the probability that Mark's narrative was both read aloud publicly and performed orally. And we have to define 'performance' in this study to include what Hurtado terms as 'skilful reading' or expressive reading with the reader's articulation and gestures, but at the same time it could extend to memorised or even theatrical-like deliverance.

¹⁶⁵ Hurtado, 'Oral Fixation', 321-340.

¹⁶⁶ See Downing, Doing Things with Words, 21-40.

Such an acknowledgment is in consideration of the fact that the general population in the ancient Mediterranean world lived in an oral cultural milieu. The meaning of literacy in a pre-print culture differs from our time. It may just simply mean the ability to write one's own name and read basic business documents such as list of goods or the ability to read and write the kind of materials prized by the elites. As estimated by some scholars, only about two to three percent of the population in first-century Israel were literate in reading and writing.¹⁶⁷ In the wider Roman world, about five to eight percent were literate. The largest differential was likely to be between the cities and the countryside, with perhaps fifteen percent or more of the urban population being literate and scarcely anyone in the countryside. There were also more literate men than women.¹⁶⁸

This may explain the estimate of some scholars that about ninety-five percent of the Christians in the first-century received the Christian message in their own socio-historical context by means of oral performance.¹⁶⁹ They formed an audience for oral performers who acted out the Christian message publicly. The integrity of the performer was needed for the effectiveness of the message, as Paul said, 'Follow me as I follow Christ' (1 Cor. 11:1). Most probably the early Christians who first witnessed the early Markan narrative performance came from a lowly village of Palestine as maybe reflected in Mark's choice of including many agricultural stories in his narrative, although such may also reflect the traditions about the ministry of Jesus in rural Galilee

¹⁶⁷ That there were indeed very few literates among the Jews in Roman antiquity is the conclusion by Catherine Hezser, Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

¹⁶⁸ See Meir Bar-Ilan, 'Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.' in Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society (vol. 2; ed. Simcha Fishbane; Stuart Schoenfeld, and Alain Goldschläger; New Jersey: KTAV, 1992), 56; Richard Rohrbaugh, 'The Social Location of the Marcan Audience', BTB 23 (1993): 115; Hezser, Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine; Harris, Ancient Literacy, 267.

¹⁶⁹ See for instance David Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part I', 1, 4.

and the surrounding vicinity. Such an assertion is also guaranteed by the best current estimates of ancient literacy rates and by the popular oral style of Mark which would surely have been disdained by the literate elite. If this is so, the social location of Mark's target audience belonged to a first-century primary oral culture and they were largely illiterate.

What would have happened in ancient performance, especially among the early Christians, was that a performer knew by heart his or her piece. The performer may well have mastered (even memorised portions of) the manuscript with or without freedom to change words depending on the context of performance. In this way, the performer might or might not have carried with him/her a scroll.¹⁷⁰ In the case where there might have been a scroll at the hands of a performer, he or she might not have looked at it while performing, but only carried it to show 'authenticity' or 'authority'.¹⁷¹ This is because straight reading in public during performance 'would have been somewhat awkward and not very effective rhetorically'.¹⁷² Also, given the nature of an uncial Greek manuscript it would have been quite difficult to have given an effective public rendering of a written text with which one was not already reasonably familiar in advance. Of course performers are adequately trained to read comfortably the uncials without space and punctuations, but mastery of one's piece would still have been considered necessary as it is today.

¹⁷⁰ Scrolls were usually made of parchments and papyrus, but parchments were more popular and durable. Other portable writing materials then were wax tablets, wooden tablets and potsherds. See further discussions on writing materials in antiquity in Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*; Harris, *Ancient Literacy*; and Rosalind Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁷¹ This is well noted in Shiell, *Reading Acts: The Lector and the Early Christian Audience*.

¹⁷² Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part I', 6.

Crediting authority to a sacred text would have been inherited by the early Christians from Jewish tradition. However, the practice of performing without reading a text would have been a gradual break away from the Jewish reading of scripture from a scroll especially in synagogue worship. It is because, generally, in a Jewish synagogue the reader was expected to read from a scroll, not to recite from memory (presumably as a sign of the authority of the text); although in practice the reader may have been reading a passage he already knew by heart.¹⁷³

Recognising the orality of the NT and its transcriptions for performance, has led some scholars to formulate a new method of biblical exegesis called ‘performance criticism’. This may be a sub-discipline of other methodologies including oral hermeneutics.¹⁷⁴ The rise of performance criticism is also prompted by what is missing in other approaches of biblical criticism. Rhoads defines ‘performance in the broadest sense as any oral telling/retelling of a brief or lengthy tradition—from saying to gospel—in a formal or informal context of a gathered community by trained or untrained performers—on the assumption that every telling was a lively recounting of that tradition’.¹⁷⁵ Rhoads further describes the performance event as ‘the whole complex dynamics of a performance in the ancient (and contemporary) world, including the following components: the act of performing; the “composition-in-performance”; the performer; the audience; the social location of performer and audience; the material context; the cultural/historical circumstances; and the rhetorical impact upon the

¹⁷³ Examples of public reading in synagogue worship found in the NT include Luke 4:16, Acts 13:15, 27; 15:21, 31. Other examples of public reading in the NT are found in Acts 15:31; 1 Tim. 4:16; and Rev. 1:3.

¹⁷⁴ Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part II’, 165.

¹⁷⁵ Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part I’, 2.

audience'.¹⁷⁶ However, we do not accept Rhoads' 'composition-in-performance' account of the composition of Mark's Gospel,¹⁷⁷ since, among other things, this model does not adequately address the literary and memory issues in the Synoptic problem.¹⁷⁸

In performance criticism, 'meaning is not words on a page as understood by a reader' but 'in the whole event at the site of performance—sounds, sights, storytelling/speech, audience reaction, shared cultural beliefs and values, social location, and historical circumstances'.¹⁷⁹ The importance of performance in interpretation of biblical texts is recognised by Marie Maclean¹⁸⁰ and advanced by Rhoads, insisting that oral performance should be placed at the centre of NT interpretation. It is because the 'performance event' is 'the place where interpretations are expressed, interpretations are tested, and interpretations are critiqued'.¹⁸¹ Here is Rhoads' assertion:

I wish to argue for a focus on ancient performance as an object of study and for contemporary performing as a method of research into the meaning and rhetoric of the Second Testament writings. How might we rethink early Christianity with performance as an integral part of communal life in an oral culture? How might the experience of contemporary performances inform our interpretation of texts?¹⁸²

There are two contentions identifiable in Rhoads' assertion above. The first one is the necessity of 'ancient performance as an object of study' and the second one is 'the

¹⁷⁶ Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part I', 9.

¹⁷⁷ Other scholars who view Mark's narrative as composed-in-performance include Pieter Botha, Orality and Literacy; and Antoinette Clark Wire, The Case for Mark Composed in Performance (Eugene: Cascade, 2011).

¹⁷⁸ See Eve, Writing the Gospels, 83, 125-46.

¹⁷⁹ Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part I', 9. See also W. Doan and T. Giles, Prophets, Performance, and Power: Performance Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (London: T&T Clark, 2005). See a website designed for discussion about Performance Criticism: www.biblicalperformancecriticism.org.

¹⁸⁰ Marie Maclean, Narrative as Performance: The Baudelairean Experiment (New York: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁸¹ Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part I', 2.

¹⁸² Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part I', 2.

experience of contemporary performance' informing 'our interpretation of the texts'. Based on Rhoads's first contention, the following questions are pursued in this study: How do the oral features of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples rhetorically function in an oral mind-set? Does it make any difference to the way Mark's characterisations of Jesus and the disciples should be understood that his target audiences would have heard his Gospel performed orally, not sat reading it silently to themselves? These questions are in consideration of the fact that for the first-century Christians the Gospel of Mark was not a text per se but an oral performance and an event.¹⁸³ The questions are also raised in consideration of Dean's statement: 'If New Testament literature in its first-century rhetorical context was publicly spoken and heard rather than privately written and silently read, each composition's public, oral delivery and auditory reception is essential to its full and faithful interpretation'.¹⁸⁴

We do not, however, attempt to pursue Rhoads's second contention about contemporary performances informing our interpretation of texts. Although we acknowledge the validity of Rhoads's second contention, this is not within the scope of the current study. We have no intention of doing an actual performance and recording the meaning based on the impact of the performance on the contemporary audience. This is because we cannot really recreate the conditions of a first-century performance and find a modern audience sufficiently fluent in Koine Greek. And even if we did find such an audience they wouldn't share the same cultural assumptions as an ancient one; they wouldn't possess the social memory and traditions Mark presupposed in his target audience. Besides, if we use contemporary experiences in determining the meaning of an ancient text, this may open up greater potential for anachronism, contrary to the aim

¹⁸³ Rhoads, 'Performance Criticism—Part II', 165. See also Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus*, 46.

¹⁸⁴ Margaret E. Dean, 'Textured Criticism', *JSNT* 70 (1998): 90.

of this research. We still wish to hear and understand Mark himself as he had spoken to his first-century audience, but we may just be contented in focusing ‘on those distinctly “oral” traces of the composition’¹⁸⁵ rather than trying to retrieve those innumerable oral performances in the ancient church, which is close to impossible.

3.4.4 Characterisations of Jesus and the Disciples in Mark’s Rhetorical Performance

Early manuscripts of Mark’s Gospel, in common with other Greek manuscripts, would have lacked all but the most rudimentary punctuation, such as division into paragraphs. In any case an oral narrative text such as Mark’s Gospel should be thought of not as divided into paragraphs but into lines. This is the contention of Hymes¹⁸⁶ which Maxey expands: ‘Lines form verses, verses stanzas, stanzas scenes, scenes acts, and acts compose the narrative’.¹⁸⁷

Considering the above, what we do in this research is, first, to consider social memory in relation to both performer and hearers since memory is linked to oral performance. This is looking, for example, at how the Israelites’ traditions resonated in the hearing of both performers and audiences. That is, investigating the extent to which Mark exploited the shared social memory of his audience, given the fact that an audience in a traditional society would hear a narrative in the light of its other cultural traditions (for example, so that the roles of Jesus and the disciples in Mark’s text might be understood in the light of cultural norms and expectations and typical roles in the

¹⁸⁵ Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part I’, 10.

¹⁸⁶ Dell Hymes, *Now I Know Only So Far: Essays in Ethnopoetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), viii. Hymes’ assertions have been founded upon the works of Edward Sapir, ‘The Status of Linguistics as a Science’ in *E. Sapir (1958): Culture, Language, and Personality* (ed. D.G. Mandelbaum; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929), 160-66; and Franz Boas: See George Stocking, Jr., ed., *The Shaping of American Anthropology 1883-1911: A Franz Boas Reader* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

¹⁸⁷ Maxey, *From Orality to Orality*, 87.

tradition). This would have aided, on the part of the audience, in better receiving and understanding the message, and on the part of Mark, in persuading the audience of the message that he was trying to present. This is using what is familiar to drive one's agenda, like borrowing words, stories, and ideas from one's predecessors to persuade or make an impact on one's audience. For instance, Mark could have patterned his stories about Jesus after the models of great OT figures like Moses and Elijah in order to evoke and exploit the shared social memory of his target audience.

Second, we will follow Botha's assertion about themes emplotted in the narrative. This relates to what Scott and Dean label as 'ideological analysis'.¹⁸⁸ In the case of Jesus, how Mark was able to employ the then known titles or identities of Jesus as Lord, Son of Man, Son of God, and Messiah to drive his ideological point of view. This is important in the purpose of Mark because his audience have to know how to perceive and relate to the person of Jesus. In the case of the disciples, what significance are titles μαθηταί (students), δώδεκα (twelve), ἀπόστολοι (ones sent), etc. in relation to their negative portrayal by Mark? What ideological truth has been implied by Mark with regards to discipleship through his characterisation of Jesus and his disciples? Are there any ideological clashes or critique in Mark's dramatization of Jesus and his disciples in view of other characters?

Third, performing an ancient oral narrative like the Gospel of Mark created a rhetorical impact upon the audience. Hence, we figure out (based on Mark's narrative and the historical conventions of the time) how Mark would have wished his first-century hearers to grasp and respond to his message and performance—a historical imaginary reading of Mark's narrative. That is asking how Mark's presentation calls for

¹⁸⁸ Scott and Dean, 'A Sound Map of the Sermon on the Mount', 717.

‘personal and social transformation’.¹⁸⁹ In the words of Rhoads, how it ‘seeks to change the world’, ‘shape communities’, ‘generate something new’, and ‘evoke the power of the Spirit’. Such transformation ‘takes place not only in the immediate responses of the audience during the performance, but also in the attitudinal, behavioural, and relational changes that may have taken place subsequently in the community as a result of the performance’. This involves ‘the impact of a performance in terms of persuasion—subversion of cultural values, transformation of worldview, impulse to action, change of behavior, emotional effect, ethical commitment, intellectual insight, political perspective, re-formation of community, the generation of a new world’. In other words, ‘what does a story or a letter lead the audience to become—such that they are different people in the course of and as a result of experiencing the performance?’¹⁹⁰ In this way, the ‘performer needed to embody the values, beliefs, and actions enjoined by the story/text being performed, because the performer was seeking to have the values and beliefs of the story embodied in turn in the actions and dynamics in the communal life of the audience’.¹⁹¹ In this study, we emphasise the rhetorical hints for action, the authorial motivation to transform the audience or to move them to participate in doing what ought be done. Specifically, we try to note how characters, particularly Jesus and the disciples, perform acts and say words to each other, which may have immediate or emphatic effects on the audience. That is asking the following questions: Why has Mark characterised the disciples as they are in his Gospel narrative? Who among the characters are reliable and not reliable? Who among them function as a model for

¹⁸⁹ This is further elaborated in Richard Bauman, ‘Performance’ in Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments: A Communications-centered Handbook (ed. Richard Bauman; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 47; and Maxey, From Orality to Orality, 85.

¹⁹⁰ Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part I’, 13-14.

¹⁹¹ Rhoads, ‘Performance Criticism—Part I’, 11.

virtues to be followed or to be identified with and who function as model for vices who should not be emulated but to be distanced with? Who among the characters could the audience relate with?

3.4.5 The Emphasis on Characterisation in the Present Study

Characterisation is the ‘depicting ... of clear images of a person, his actions and manners of thought and life. A man’s nature, environment, habits, emotions, desires, instincts: all these go to make people what they are, and the skilful writer makes his important people clear to us through a portrayal of these elements’.¹⁹² While narrative depends on a temporal aspect and characterisation suggests something more static (identified over time), they are inter-related in this thesis, for it is through characterisation that the ‘narrator brings characters to life in a narrative’.¹⁹³ So in this study, what we try to determine are the characters in the context of the story, being transmitted through oral performance.

Comparative characterisation, in relation to the methodological approach of this study, compares and contrasts the characters or group of characters among themselves in the narrative story, and in the socio-historical context of Mark which includes the character of the audience. Such a focus on characters is warranted by the fact that characters are an essential aspect in the narrative story. According to Willem Weststeijn, however, such an interest in the study of characters received less attention a few

¹⁹² As quoted in Chatman, Story and Discourse, 107. ‘Character’ and ‘characterisation’ are defined in William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), 79-82.

¹⁹³ Rhoads, David and Donald Michie, Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 101.

decades ago.¹⁹⁴ He goes with the observations of Seymour Chatman, Patrick O’Neill, and John Frow. Chatman states, ‘It is remarkable how little has been said about the theory of character in literary history and criticism’.¹⁹⁵ O’Neill remarks, ‘The multifarious ways in which characters emerge from the words on the page, in which story-world actors acquire a personality, is one of the most fascinating and least systematically explored aspects of narrative theory and narrative practice’.¹⁹⁶ Frow asserts, ‘The concept of character is perhaps the most problematic and the most undertheorized of the basic categories of narrative theory’.¹⁹⁷

But recently, the importance of characterisation is being recognized by scholars. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, for instance, states that ‘central to the working of a story is the interaction and interrelation of its characters’ and that no ‘character derives meaning in isolation from other characters’. She further states:

As any reader or hearer of stories knows, characters—whether human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate—are essential to stories. Thus characterization is an essential element of any critical theory of narrative, and as any reader of Markan scholarship knows, certain aspects of characterization have received particular attention in Markan studies.¹⁹⁸

Indeed, previous Markan scholars such as Theodore Weeden made mention of the importance of characterisation. Weeden asserts that ‘the only way to interpret the Gospel as the author intended it is to read his work with the analytical eyes of a first-century reader’ and this would be ‘to learn the way they were taught to read’ which is about the study of characters like Jesus, the disciples, the crowds, John the Baptist,

¹⁹⁴ Willem G. Weststeijn, ‘Towards a Cognitive Theory of Character’, *AJCN* 4 (2007): n.p. Cited 17 December 2008.

¹⁹⁵ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 107. See also his work on ‘Characters and Narrators: Filter, Center, Slant and Interest- Focus’, *Poetics Today* 7.2 (1986): 189-204.

¹⁹⁶ Patrick O’Neill P., *Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 49.

¹⁹⁷ John Frow, ‘Spectacle Binding: On Character’, *Poetics Today* 7.2 (1986): 227.

¹⁹⁸ Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus*, ix-x, 131.

Pilate, and the Galilean women. He states further, ‘If the key to Mark’s intent lies in his characterization, then these major characters offer the most likely place to find that key’.¹⁹⁹

The elements of a narrative include the characters (who), the setting (where and when), the plot (what and why), and the rhetoric in the text (how).²⁰⁰ These elements are noted in this research, but the focus is much more on the characters in the Gospel of Mark, particularly the major characters (Jesus and the disciples), although other minor characters are also noted. Even though ‘characters are integrally related to the plot’ especially as it relates to the action of characters in the plot, ‘characters are memorable apart from the plot and deserved to be dealt with separately’.²⁰¹ Hence, this research pursues how the characters were characterised in the telling of the narrative of the Gospel of Mark, particularly in relation to how Jesus and his disciples would have been understood by Mark’s target audience.

There are two views of characterisation that are considered in this study. One is to view the functional role of characters (e.g. in the service of the plot) and the other is to view characters as personalities who undergo development as the story develops—either positive or negative development.²⁰² Ancient and modern ideas on characterisation differ substantially (though they might have in common the technique of showing character through speech and action). The modern novel tends to see

¹⁹⁹ Theodore Weeden, Mark—Tradition in Conflict (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 20.

²⁰⁰ See further discussion on the elements of a narrative in Malbon, In the Company of Jesus, 17.

²⁰¹ Rhoads and Michie, Mark as Story, 101.

²⁰² See the debate in Jeannine K. Brown, The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2002), 49-53. Earlier in modern Markan research, W. Wrede rejected the idea of some of his contemporary scholars who adhered to the development of the revealing to Jesus of his messiahship or to the positive development of the knowledge or understanding of the disciples of Jesus’ messiahship. See Wrede, Messianic Secret, 16, 24, 107-108.

character as something that develops through time, whereas antiquity tended to regard characters as fixed essences (which might become revealed through time). Ancient narrative writers may present a character as the main hero in their story, and then select another character (or other characters) either to compare or contrast with the main character. In this way, ‘the heroes and villains of the ancient works served as models for human virtues and vices’,²⁰³ a view which tends to work in favour of seeing characters as fixed essences and against the notion of character development. In the case of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is the main hero and the disciples (along with other characters) are selected for comparison and contrast as the story progresses. The disciples may be considered as the ‘foil characters’ to increase the brilliancy of Jesus, the main character. However, their own association may also be compared and contrasted with other groups in the narrative, e.g. that of the Pharisees. The other groups would be noted to highlight the probable distinctiveness of the group of Jesus and the disciples.

Mark often presents the characters in the narrative, either positively or negatively by showing rather than telling directly. This is typical of ancient narrative technique, e.g. in ancient *bioi*. The characters are characterised by what they ‘say or do’ or what others ‘do or say’ about them. Burnett calls this the indirect way of ancient characterisation.²⁰⁴ This is especially true in the Markan narrative where the ‘narrator reveals characters by evoking pictures, suggesting images’ to the audience, so that ‘as the story unfolds and the characters are gradually revealed, the audience has the initial impressions confirmed or adjusted or overturned’.²⁰⁵ But, of course, there are instances

²⁰³ Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus*, 133.

²⁰⁴ Fred W. Burnett, ‘Characterization and Reader Construction in the Gospels’, *Semeia* (1993): 20.

²⁰⁵ Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 101.

where the narrator of the Gospel of Mark directly characterises ‘who’ Jesus and the disciples or other characters are in the narrative.

3.5 Mark and His Narrative before an Ancient Oral Mind-set: Historical Plausibility

Before applying what we plan to do in this research, it is helpful to describe briefly the historical setting of Mark, his audience, and his narrative. This will guide us in situating our analysis of Mark’s narrative in the context of an ancient oral culture.

3.5.1 Historical, Ideological, and Practical Aspects in Mark’s Narrative

It seems safe to assume that Jesus and the disciples are real historical figures in first-century Palestine.²⁰⁶ However, it does not follow that all of Mark's accounts of the words and deeds of Jesus and his disciples were historically accurate, at least in accordance with how we view historical accuracy in our time—a relic of the 19th century historical positivism influenced by humanistic, naturalistic and deistic

²⁰⁶ This is because of the overwhelming view of scholars. Aside from the existence of the NT records, there are extra-biblical documents and findings that attest to the existence of Jesus and his early followers such as Josephus, Ant. 18:3:3; Suetonius, Life of Claudius 25:4; Tacitus, Annales 15:44; Pliny, Letters to Trajan 10:96; Lucian, Perigrinus 11-13; Galen, De pulsuum differentiis 2-3; the Nag Hammadi library (e.g. the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of the Ebionites, the Gospel of the Nazareans, Exegesis on the Soul, Second Treatise of the Great Seth, Testimony of Truth, A Valentinian Exposition, Pistis Sophia). However, I am aware of a small minority view rejecting the historicity of Jesus and his disciples. See for instance the idea of Bruno Bauer recorded by F. Engels in his article ‘Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity’ in K. Marx and F. Engels, On Religion (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975). See also Robert Price, ‘Jesus at the Vanishing Point’ in The Historical Jesus: Five Views (eds. James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 55, 56; Earl Doherty, The Jesus Puzzle: Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Christ? Challenging the Existence of an Historical Jesus (Ottawa: Age of Reason Press, 2005); George Albert Wells, The Jesus Myth (Chicago: Open Court, 1999). But against Robert Price’s position on the non-existence of an historical Jesus of the Gospels, John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, James D.G. Dunn, and Darrel L. Bock set forth evidence on the historicity of Jesus and others of his Jewish contemporaries in The Historical Jesus: Five Views. See also Graham Stanton, The Gospels and Jesus (Oxford University Press, 2002), 145; R. Burridge and G. Gould, Jesus Now and Then (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004), 34; Robert E. Van Voorst, Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 16; James H. Charlesworth, ed., Jesus and Archaeology (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2006), xxiii.

worldviews. In Ernst Käsemann's view, the NT (including Mark's narrative) is a 'historicization' or 'historicising presentation'²⁰⁷ and sometimes a 'historification of the unhistorical',²⁰⁸ not exactly a historical production of what really came to pass. This is because in an ancient society people understood history differently from our 21st century perception as explained by Edward Schillebeeckx:

History there is a constant contemporizing, a handing down of stories that live on among human kind. The factuality of history—whether this or that actually occurred in precisely such and such a way—is there of less importance.... What matters is the truth of the story itself, that is, whether it turns on, strikes home and makes us the active subject of a new story. The sort of story-telling or narrative history that was usual in antiquity has to do with taking action, with a challenge or appeal or summons to a particular attitude'.²⁰⁹

Such a way of viewing history is ascertained in social memory studies of how such social memory sheds light on the recounting of the accounts of Jesus' life as well as those of the other characters in Mark's narrative. Thus, the ideological and practical purposes of the author have coloured any historical element of his narrative. This is especially true in viewing history in a more nearly purely oral context, such as that in which Mark may have been operating. Since accounts in the form of stories are passed on by memory from one person to another and from one generation to another, they are susceptible to change. Nevertheless, in the case of the Jesus tradition, there are not that many generations between Jesus and Mark, and the stories about Jesus were not simply passed on from one individual to another in a chain of private communications, but

²⁰⁷ Käsemann, New Testament Questions of Today (London: SCM Press, 1969), 49, 62, 63.

²⁰⁸ Käsemann, Essays on New Testament Themes (London: SCM Press, 1964), 25-26.

²⁰⁹ See Edward Schillebeeckx, Jesus: An Experiment in Christology (trans. Hubert Hoskins; New York: Crossroad, 1981), 77. The validity of such an historical writing was attested by Titus Livy (59 BC to AD 17), a Roman historian. Although I agree with Schillebeeckx on his perspective of viewing ancient history as different from our contemporary view, I do not go so far to agree with him in his conclusion about many things especially on his denial of the actual bodily resurrection of Jesus in Jesus: An Experiment in Christology, 399-544. But I understand his view because it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove the bodily resurrection of Jesus if we follow the contemporary view of doing historical methodology.

most likely transmitted in some kind of social setting that would have provided additional controls.

Three points can be said of Mark's narrative, in connection with the above: (1) that the core truth and core message remain imbedded in the oral historical telling, (2) Mark's narrative remains a *kerygma*, (3) and there is for sure a configuration of the scattered historical events in the lives of Jesus and his disciples into a coherent story, although it does not follow that the flow of events in the narrative was exactly what actually happened.²¹⁰ This is because Mark may have been to some extent constrained by the traditions at his disposal²¹¹ and was not free to make up whatever story he liked. In this case, what we may know of conditions in first-century Galilee and Jerusalem could shed light on the meaning of Mark's narrative.

This study, therefore, treats Mark's Gospel as a literary piece meant for oral narration and overlaid with the theological/ideological assumptions of Mark and his community.²¹² But it affirms that Mark's narrative has adequate information and memories about the words and works of Jesus, and particularly how he related to his early disciples. Especially as perceived by the target audience of Mark given their oral culture and tradition, they probably would not have questioned the historicity of what Mark was saying because of his authority as an elder. This is in accordance with Jan

²¹⁰ As opposed to Reimarus, D.F. Strauss, and William Wrede, who view Mark's materials as fictitious. The Gospel of Mark and the other Gospels 'are now viewed as useful, if not essentially reliable, historical sources. Gone is the extreme scepticism that for so many years dominated Gospel research', as pronounced by Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 8-9. That it is not a mistake to look at Mark and other Gospels 'for serious information about Jesus who lived within first-century Judaism' is attested by N.T. Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), 96. See further discussion regarding the historical reliability of the Gospel accounts in the 'Introduction' part of Eric Eve's *The Healer from Nazareth: Jesus' Miracles in Historical Context* (London: SPCK, 2009), xiii-xxi.

²¹¹ See Ernest Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* (Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1981), 10; and *Mark: Gospel as Story*, (rev. ed; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 16-20.

²¹² Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (London: SCM Press, 1977).

Vansina's explanation of the notions of historical truth in such a culture being that which is passed on by elders who are regarded as having the appropriate authority²¹³—a very different notion from that of Leopold Von Ranke's 19th century historical positivism.²¹⁴ This justifies the discussion in the next chapter of the parallels to the relationship of Jesus and his disciples and on how Mark's audience brought their understanding of other relationships (whether past or contemporary) to the appreciation of Mark's narrative.

3.5.2 Between Mark, His Text, and His Audience

Although Mark could have been a teacher-evangelist just like anyone else in first-century Palestine, he would not have been among the elite writers in the more sophisticated and advanced cities such as Jerusalem and Rome, given the non-standard written narrative of Mark that we have (with an over use of parataxis). Nevertheless, based on the text of Mark, he was knowledgeable in Aramaic and a little Latin, but not as good as others, although was knowledgeable of some forms of oral and written narration and rhetoric (e.g. using historic present most often). He would have been of Jewish background (but with a working knowledge of Koine Greek) who conveyed (from Aramaic into Greek) the 'Jesus tradition, ethical teaching, and so on to missionaries, and perhaps to potential converts'.²¹⁵ Addressing two types of audiences was conventional in first-century Mediterranean and Greco-Roman world. That Mark

²¹³ Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition as History (trans. H. M. Wright; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 102-103.

²¹⁴ See Leopold Von Ranke, Sämmtliche Werke (vol. 33; Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1874), vii; The Theory and Practice of History (ed. Georg G. Iggers; Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

²¹⁵ Mary Ann Beavis, Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4.11-12 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 170.

has a double audience (first-century church leaders and non-leaders) is also argued by Ian H. Henderson.²¹⁶

In the case of the geographical location of Mark's target audience, the majority of scholars opt for Rome,²¹⁷ but a growing view is to locate Mark's audience in Palestine. However, opting for a Palestinian audience of Mark is more probable given the more provincial and agricultural setting that we see in Mark's narrative (Mark 1:4, 12, 16, 35; 2:13, 22; 3:7, 13; 4:1-20, 26-29, 30-32, 35; 5:1-19, 21; 6:32-44, 47; 8.1-13, 23; 9:2; 12:1-11) in contrast to the city of Rome. Nevertheless, the setting of Mark is not an automatic index of its target audience or place of writing, for it could simply reflect the inherited tradition that Mark worked with.²¹⁸ However, the peasant environment that we can note in Mark's narrative may reveal the kind of audience Mark hoped to reach—those from the lower social strata rather than those from the elite group.²¹⁹ Moreover, scribal literacy was more prevalent in cities like Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome and Jerusalem with their 'great tradition' than in the more oral Judean and Galilean communities with their 'little tradition' (or popular tradition). This may set the place of the composition of the Gospel of Mark given its oral nature

²¹⁶ Ian H. Henderson, 'Reconstructing Mark's Double Audience' in Between Author & Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation (ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 6-26.

²¹⁷ Interpreters favouring Roman origin include Jennifer Wilkinson, 'Mark and His Gentile Audience: A Traditio-Historical and Socio-Cultural Investigation of Mk 4:35-9:29 and its Interface with Gentile Polytheism in the Roman Near East' (PhD thesis, Durham University, 2012); Adam Winn, The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Christian Response to Roman Propaganda (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 76-91; Martin Hengel, Studies in the Gospel of Mark (trans. J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 1-30; Brian J. Incigneri, The Gospel to the Romans: Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel (Leiden: Brill, 223), 59-108, 156-202; Raymond E. Brown and J.P. Meier, Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 191-97; Morna Hooker, 'Trial and Tribulation in Mark XIII', BJRULM 65 (1982): 78-99; William Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1974), 24-25.

²¹⁸ See Eve, Writing the Gospels, 72; Richard Bauckham, 'For Whom Were Gospels Written?' in The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences (ed. Richard Bauckham; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 9-48.

²¹⁹ Rohrbach, 'The Social Location', 380-95; Eve, Writing the Gospels, 72.

and its performative narrative structure. It could be argued that Mark's narrative would also have been re-contextualised for a Roman audience, in view of the fact that Christian movements then were networks of communities.

Another reason why a Palestinian audience is preferred rather than a Roman audience is that governors and kings (Mark 13:9) are not appropriate in Rome. Furthermore, the Judeo-Roman war which would have affected Northern Galilee, Southern Syria and the neighbouring villages would have been the background of Mark 13:19: 'because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equalled again' (cf. Dan. 12:1; Mark 13:14).

Now, if a Palestinian origin of Mark's is asserted, two places are suggested by scholars: Northern Galilee and Southern Syria.²²⁰ The preference of some scholars for a Galilean audience is based on the prominence of Galilee in Mark's narrative.²²¹ Jesus came from Galilee (Mark 1:9), started preaching there (1:14, 39), and gathered his first disciples there (1:16). Towards the end of the story, he commanded his disciples to meet him there (16:7). The weakness of this argument lies in Mark's use of the Greek language, which points better to a Syrian audience. However, even Richard Horsley who opts for a Syrian provenance cannot disavow a Galilean audience of Mark:

As suggested by its references to tradition, Mark is not a scribal text, but focused on a popular prophet leading a movement of ordinary people. The people involved in the story, and evidently its audience as well, are located in the villages of Galilee and surrounding territories in Syria (villages of Tyre, Caesarea Philippi, and the Decapolis), not Jerusalem, from which scribes and Pharisees 'come down' to oppose Jesus.... After Jesus' confrontation with the high priests and

²²⁰ See the discussion of such options in Joel Marcus, 'The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark', *JBL* 3 (1992): 441-62; Weeden, *Mark*; Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

²²¹ For an interpretation that advances Galilean origin, see H.N. Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in Its Historical and Social Context* (NTS 114; Leiden: Brill, 2004); Edward Earl Ellis, 'Date and Provenance of Mark's Gospel' in *The Four Gospels 1992* (ed. F. Van Segroeck; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 810-15.

scribes and his Roman execution in Jerusalem, the audience is directed back to rural Galilee (Mark 14:28; 16:7). This open ending signals where the story continues among its audience.²²²

Whether one takes the view that Mark's narrative has a Galilean or Syrian provenance, there is not much difference in implication because what is being demonstrated in this research is how Mark's narrative, particularly his characterisation of Jesus and his disciples, would have been composed and comprehended in an oral setting by an oral mind-set within ancient Palestine. But what we are proposing is not to exclude one from the other. Instead we view Mark's target audience as ethnically mixed (Jewish and Greek-speaking people) within the border which includes Southern Syria, the Transjordan or Northern Galilee and were affected by the Great Judeo-Roman War (Mark 13:14). This is because there is a lack of maps available of the first-century Palestine and the exact borders of the Roman Empire during that time are not clear, so we cannot really be accurate of the exact geographical location of Mark's target audience within ancient Palestine. However, what is being asserted is that the audience would have known a lot of the materials (by virtue of social memory) used by Mark which became the basis for them to understand the narrative according to Mark's intent and their socio-historical setting. Hence, Mark's narrative finds its significance in the relationship between the author, text, and audience.

Usually reader-response critics understand 'reader' in 'let the reader understand' to mean Mark's target audience. But Mark's audience were not that literate and were not in possession of scrolls; they were expected only to hear rather than read privately, given their oral context. The reader would have been a performer deployed to read and act on behalf of the author, just like Paul commissioning people to read his letters to different churches (Col. 4:16, Eph. 3:4; 1 Thes. 5:27). So as Mark summons his public

²²² Richard Horsley, 'Oral and Written Aspects of the Emergence of the Gospel of Mark as Scripture', *Oral Tradition* 25.1 (2010): 100.

reader in an oral performance to understand his emphasis (Mark 13:14), the audience were also expected to understand his message. However, they did not understand in a vacuum but through their presuppositions and socio-historical background. And a good performance depends on a good understanding about Jesus and other characters on the part of the performer.

Through the performer, Mark would have utilised his Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions to relay his message and persuade his audience, while at the same time the audience would have understood Mark's message through their Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts. So it is proper to describe further the audience in relation to the way they would have understood Mark's narrative. This is what Bauckham asserts as the 'hermeneutical relevance' of an author's social community (his target audience).²²³ However, Bauckham applies his assertion only to letters such as Paul's but not to the Gospels, with which I disagree because some Gospels clearly present specific purposes (e.g. John 20:31) and particular communities (e.g. John 21:24). So it is better to know and describe who Mark's audience were and their socio-historical context for better accuracy in understanding (1) the details of the narrative through which Mark relayed his message and (2) the way his audience received the message.

First, as noted above, the way Mark presents his narrative implies that Mark also had in mind non-Jewish Greek-speaking audience residing in a less urban setting (e.g. explaining Jewish traditions, Mark 7:1-4; 14:12; 15:42). Many of the places in Galilee and nearby vicinities were named in Greek or Latin (e.g. Decapolis, Neapolis, Caesarea Maritima, Caesarea Philippi, Tiberias). Later, Greek became the lingua franca of the whole of Palestine. However, it could be that a major part of Mark's target audience comprises those village folks of Palestine of Jewish roots, knowledgeable about their

²²³ See Bauckham, 'For Whom Were Gospels Written?', 44-45.

Jewish traditions, who flocked to nearby sub-urban and even urban places to find jobs or do other businesses. Doubtless some peasants migrated to cities in search of work, but it's less likely that peasants commuted into cities on a regular basis while continuing to live in the countryside (though the reverse might be possible, some city-dwellers farming the immediately surrounding fields).

The contention that there was no evidence of Christian presence and persecutions in first-century Galilee, thereby arguing that Mark's target audience were not from Galilee (or Palestine),²²⁴ jumps over the Markan text itself. It is improbable that in such a place where Jesus did much of his ministry (the place which was given importance by Mark) that he had no followers. It is also improbable that in the place where Jesus was opposed that his followers were not also opposed (Mark 13:9). Moreover, the study of Roskam focusing on the 'false christs' in Mark 13 with reference to false messianic claimants of Palestine gives strong support to a Palestinian origin of Mark's narrative.²²⁵ This is especially so if one thinks Mark is talking about the kinds of would-be kings Josephus talks about (which may well be the case), though another possibility is that he's responding to Flavian propaganda making quasi-messianic claims about Vespasian.²²⁶ However, this does not rule out the probability that Mark's narrative 'underwent a process of development'²²⁷ and was later re-contextualised for a Roman audience or a more urban setting, given the number of Latin words used in the narrative such as centurion, legion, Caesar, denarius, praetorium, census, etc. Such Latinisms are likely to have been spread by Roman military presence

²²⁴ Adam Winn, The Purpose of Mark's Gospel, 34.

²²⁵ Roskam, The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark, 94-114.

²²⁶ See Eve, 'Spit in Your Eye', 1-17.

²²⁷ Richard Horsley, 'Oral Tradition in New Testament Studies', Oral Tradition 18/1 (2003), 35.

in Palestine in the first-century, but would have been highlighted when re-contextualised in a Roman context.

Second, Mark's quotations of scripture, not only present the authoritativeness of Mark's Gospel, but also show the rise and use of a more popular version among his community other than the scribal form cultivated by the scribes and Pharisees that was centred in Jerusalem. Recent study points such a trend to the medium of social memory where the community's knowledge is stocked and could be retrieved for any contemporary use. It is the community's collective way of remembering and re-creating its past (i.e., cultural heritage) in a creative way in the light of the present shared cultural experiences.²²⁸ In the case of Mark's narrative, there are printed texts available to modern scholars to check OT quotations (which redaction and inter-textual critics often practice) in contrast to Mark's use of memory. For instance, Mark 1:2-3 has two quotations from the OT prophets which are bundled and attributed only to Isaiah to support Mark's contention about Jesus and his 'way': Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3.²²⁹ Such practice of having chains of quotations and attributing to only one source is common in the first-century oral culture²³⁰ for some probable reasons. One, this first-century Jewish exegetical style (*gezerah shewa*)²³¹ would have been developed for a smooth oral communication because the mention of all the names was evidently awkward in an oral performance.

²²⁸ See Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, eds., Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity (SemeiaSt 52; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005); Pernille Carstens, Trine Hasselbalch, and Niels Peter Lemche, eds., Cultural Memory in Biblical Exegesis (New Jersey: Georgias Press, 2012).

²²⁹ Or four quotes if Exo. 23:20 and Mal. 4:5 are included.

²³⁰ See another NT example quoting both Jeremiah and Zechariah but attributing only to Jeremiah: Matt. 27:9-10.

²³¹ Craig Keener, A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 329.

Another reason is that authors would have utilized their own memory, which is related in some manner to the social memory of the group to which he or she belongs. Such memory is based on oral popular traditions rather than based on an accurate use of a written manuscript, especially those who were writing from the side of the ‘little tradition’ (as popularized by Horsley) of which Mark is obviously an example. A third reason is that the authors would have expected their audience not to check manuscripts since they were illiterate and they did not have manuscripts. Still another reason, the only name being mentioned is for emphasis wherein the author was inviting his audience to understand the other quotations in the light of the main messages of the one mentioned,²³² which is usually the more popular name in their socio-historical context.

Moreover, the way Mark mixes the Septuagint and Hebrew paraphrase shows how he and his audience would have known the OT by popular social memory rather than through the exact written source.²³³ This belongs to what Richard Horsley termed as the ‘little tradition’,²³⁴ those popular culture and traditions cultivated orally in Judean and Galilean villages that highlighted accounts of liberation from oppressive rule: like popular kingship/messianic movements where people anointed a king/messiah to lead them in resisting oppressive regimes,²³⁵ popular prophetic leaders such as Elijah, and Mosaic covenantal tradition/ideals of justice.²³⁶ Such is in contrast to the great tradition

²³² Douglas R. A. Hare, Mark (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1996), 14.

²³³ See P.J. Achtemeier, ‘*Omne Verbum Sonat*: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity’, JBL 109 (1990): 21, 26-27.

²³⁴ Richard Horsley borrowed the term from anthropologists. See Richard Horsley, ‘Oral and Written Aspects of the Emergence of the Gospel of Mark as Scripture’, Oral Tradition 25.1 (2010): 100. See also James C. Scott, ‘Profanation and Protest: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition’, Theory and Society 4 (1997): 1-38 and 211-46.

²³⁵ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 49.

²³⁶ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 39.

of history (e.g. imperial kingship of Solomon)²³⁷ and literature (e.g. scrolls kept in the temple) that was centred in Jerusalem and propagated by the elite ruling class (scribes and Pharisees).²³⁸

So although redaction and inter-textual criticisms are valuable, there is a need to incorporate social memory to aid in situating Mark in its historical context and understand the way his narrative was composed and received in a first-century Palestinian context. This includes memories of (1) their forefathers' resistance and rebellion against dominating foreign forces such as Rome and their local allies: kings and high priests, and (2) their forefathers' earlier success in revolting against the Seleucid emperor Antiochus Epiphanes which 'brought the Israelite tradition of resistance to oppressive foreign rulers to the forefront of the people's memory'.²³⁹ Such are warranted by the fact that recitation of the text in an oral performance echoes within the listeners their common heritage such as popular messianic and prophetic movements.²⁴⁰

Third, Mark's mention of Gentile rulers lording over their subjects (Mark 10:42) shows the politico-historical context in which Mark's narrative was created and received. The occupation by Rome of Palestine and other nations was surely referred to here, given the imperialistic and dominating spirit of Rome which provoked revolts from among the subjects (especially among the Judeans and Galileans),²⁴¹ where some

²³⁷ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 49.

²³⁸ Horsley, 'Oral Tradition in New Testament Studies', 35. See also Richard Horsley, Jesus in Context: Power, People, and Performance (Minneapolis: Fortress 2008), 146-68; Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 38.

²³⁹ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 37.

²⁴⁰ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 62, 64.

²⁴¹ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 35. Horsley tackles the different forms of revolts and resistance in his two books: Jesus and Empire and Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs. In fact such revolts seem to have been rather rare; the Jewish Revolt being an exception rather than the norm.

of the audience would have been among those tempted to wage war against Rome. Such Gentile rulers in the occupation of Palestine include the rule of Vespasian, although he started from a humble beginning and remained relatively humble when he rose to power and dominance. It is because his campaign in Palestine was destructive of both Jews and Christians. His rise to power happened after the defeat of Jewish rebels in the great Judeo-Roman War (66-70 CE) (which could have aggravated pain and suffering on the part of Mark's audience) and after the chaotic Roman civil war. The popularity of his 'good news' of triumph and his propaganda to the east (as the quasi-Jewish messiah) and ruler of the world (in addition to some Jewish claimants) would have been both repulsive and convincing on the part of the audience. Vespasian seems to have allowed Josephus to suggest such a claim on his behalf, and other propagandists to make claims about him that may have sounded quasi-messianic to Jewish ears:

But now, what did most elevate them in undertaking this war was an ambiguous oracle that was found in their sacred writings, how "about that time, one from their country should become governor of the habitable earth." The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular; and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now, this oracle certainly denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed emperor in Judea.²⁴²

This would have aided in motivating Mark to write his version of good news about the Messiah Jesus in contrast to that of Vespasian.²⁴³ Thus, Mark's target audience would have heard Mark's narrative in the context of revolution, like other revolutionary movements, shaded with an ideological make-up, as advanced in chapter five. However, the manner in which Mark presents Jesus' way of revolution and resistance is generally different from other revolutionaries in first-century Palestine, although a few took the form of non-violent means just like Jesus' way.

²⁴² Josephus, *J.W.* 6:5:4 (Whiston).

²⁴³ This is emphasized in the title of Winn, *The Purpose of Mark's Gospel*.

Fourth, Mark's audience would have experienced some sort of suffering in connection with the great Judeo-Roman War (66-70 AD). They would have witnessed or have been among those who experienced the flight (Mark 13:14) because of the war.²⁴⁴ Some of them might have prophesied the imminent end of the world (as in Mark 13). Thus, the most plausible date of the writing of the Gospel of Mark is immediately prior to or just after the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple in 70 CE (Mark 13:1-2),²⁴⁵ a significant event that was widely heard about in Palestine,²⁴⁶ where the narrator and audience of Mark would have resided.

3.6. Conclusion: Towards a Conceptual Framework for the Study of the Characterisations of Jesus and His Disciples in Mark's Narrative

In the attempt to avoid anachronism, it is proper to apply a hermeneutical framework that recognises the Gospel of Mark as an ancient narrative set in the context of the first-century Mediterranean oral culture. We term our methodology as 'oral-memorial-comparative hermeneutics' to inquire how the written characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the Markan narrative became comprehensible to an oral mind-set. This is a response to the insistence of Rodriguez for NT scholars to consider not only the Gospel's composition but its reception as well in its oral context.²⁴⁷ First, this requires the recognition that there are interfaces of orality and textuality in the written text of Mark.

²⁴⁴ See the flight to Pella in the Transjordan (north-east of Jerusalem) in Eusebius, *Ecccl. Hist.* III.v.2-3; Epiphanius, *Panarion* XIX.7.7-8 and *Adv. Haer.* XXIX.7.

²⁴⁵ Scholars usually read 13:2 and 13:14 in support of the dating.

²⁴⁶ See Horsley, 'Oral and Written Aspects of the Emergence of the Gospel of Mark as Scripture', 100. Horsley mentions the slaughters of the Galileans by the Romans in the Great Judeo-Roman War which would have coloured the way Mark's audience heard Mark's narrative in *Hearing the Whole Story*, 34-35; 86-98.

²⁴⁷ See such a discussion in Rodriguez, *Structuring*, 88-102.

Second, characterising Jesus and the disciples in an oral setting is somewhat different from characterising them in the manner of a modern narrative conditioned by print media. Since the Gospel of Mark is an orally performed narrative, what appear to be indeterminacies in Mark's written text may have been made clear by non-linguistic aspects of the oral-aural performance and also by the traditions (or social memory) familiar to its target audience. Mark's text (in common with other texts close to orality) could well be a 'high context' text, meaning one that relies on its context (in tradition and social memory) for a proper understanding, that is on a target audience who will fill in the indeterminacies in the way expected by the author since they share the author's assumptions. But since we don't have direct access to a first-century performance tradition of Mark, how do we know how such indeterminacies are to be resolved? How do we know that Mark's audience would think, feel, or act in such-and-such a way? Looking for oral-aural features/hints in the Markan text, which would have influenced the audience, will be helpful in this case. This leads to the third point (which is the conceptual framework of this thesis) of how the written characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the Markan narrative became comprehensible to an oral mind-set.

According to Foley, in the interpretation of oral-derived texts in the absence of any live tradition of oral performances, the traditional background should be recreated by looking into the text to collect phrases and themes (e.g. in the Markan text) and then compare them to their narrative context (OT Israelite tradition). By collecting and comparing, we may discern a span of tradition lying behind each phrase or theme collected. This may help us to appreciate how the author introduced materials from a wider tradition and how the text resonates with a wider tradition in the hearing of the audience.²⁴⁸ This is because the wider tradition is so deep-rooted in the mind and heart

²⁴⁸ Foley, Immanent Art, 247-52; 161-62.

of the audience so that a mere mention of a part of it is sufficient enough for the whole tradition to be remembered. Foley termed such a way of understanding ‘metonymic referencing’ of traditions.²⁴⁹ Horsley adopts Foley’s interpretative methodology and developed his text-context-tradition paradigm, which is espoused in this thesis:

The performer recites a *text*, the performance takes place in a *context* (a place, group, occasion, historical circumstance), and the recitation of the ‘text’ resonates with/in the hearers by referencing the *tradition* in which they (and the performer) are rooted. Meaning, in oral performance, is not a ‘what’, some meaning-in-itself to be discerned through detached reflection, but a significant relationship that happens between recited *text* and audience in a *context* and the cultural *tradition* in which they are embedded.²⁵⁰

Drawing from various approaches to orality and social memory theory, and particularly following after Richard Horsley’s text-context-tradition (and Foley’s metonymic referentiality) in connection with Barry Swartz’s social memory theory, the conceptual framework of this thesis for interpreting Mark’s narrative is as follows: the narrative (*text*) was composed by Mark to be performed to an audience operating in an oral culture (*context*) of Palestine. Thus, both Mark and his audience exploited their popular *tradition* and socio-historical milieu through comparative characterisation and by virtue of social memory for the composition and comprehension of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in the Gospel of Mark, which would have aided in the identity formation of Mark’s Community.

With such a framework, this thesis demonstrates how orality, social memory, and performance criticism, being applied to Mark’s characterisations of Jesus and his disciples, aid us in understanding how the audience: (1) would have heard the association of Jesus and his disciples—to which the audience were invited to belong—in comparison with other groups; (2) would have understood Mark’s characterisation of Jesus and his disciples (in view of other characters) as dramatizing an ideological clash,

²⁴⁹ Foley, *Immanent Art*, 5.

²⁵⁰ This is elaborated in Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 63-70.

being the way of Jesus as the way for Mark's community to adhere to; and (3) would have experienced the immediate effect to participate in the narrative (associating and identifying themselves with the disciples in the narrative) and belong to Jesus' current disciples—the Markan community. Point three (3) will be elaborated and demonstrated with an additional theory, speech-act theory, which will be explained in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4: THE ASSOCIATION OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES IN MARK'S FIRST-CENTURY JEWISH CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

The main question addressed in this chapter is as follows: How might Mark's target audience have received the model of discipleship presented by Mark in his Gospel in the context of other contemporary models and in relation to a community's identity formation? This necessitates looking at different types of master-disciple (or leader-follower) relationships that were likely to have been known to Mark's target audience, and comparing each of these with the master-disciple relationship (of Jesus and his disciples) depicted in Mark's Gospel. This is because an author writes with 'assumptions about his audience's beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions'.¹ It will then be argued that the way Mark characterises Jesus and his disciples is Mark's publicity aimed at inviting people to belong, not to other groups, but to Jesus' group, which is now represented by Mark's current community. This is warranted because narrative aids in dictating 'identity in a temporal location within a larger society' and in determining 'who we are within groups as well as designat[ing] boundaries in relation to other groups'.²

As people in the ancient world were more communal and preferred to live in associations rather than being individualistic, many associations were formed not only for philosophical and educational purposes but also to meet current social and religious

¹ Peter Rabinowitz, 'Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences', *Critical Inquiry* 4.1 (1977): 126.

² Brandon Tenison Walker, 'Memory, Mission, and Identity: Orality and the Apostolic Miracle Tradition' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Nottingham, 2014), 23.

needs. Moreover, the conquest of Alexander the Great³ and later the Roman occupation of Palestine resulted in the influx of social and religious groups from one area to another. It also resulted in social unrest and in the formation of some groups either for the purpose of revolution or for the purpose of preserving their heritage, which was threatened by the new political and cultural pressures. First-century Judaism was both unified and diverse, which explains the different associations within Judaism itself. The fact that the association of Jesus and his disciples is often likened to the different associations common at their time shows that their group had characteristics like that of those other groups and was just one among the many associations flourishing in first-century Palestine and the wider Greco-Roman world.

Mark's audience probably was not all that literate but, as noted in the previous chapter (3.5.2), they would have been conversant with a popular form of Israelite tradition (the little tradition) as well as what was going on in the situation of its own day. However, we do not have direct access to these popular traditions, but we can deduce something about them from the OT taken in conjunction with reports from Josephus and other ancient writers, following after the text-context-tradition paradigm of Horsley. Thus, in what follows, we shall assume that Mark's target audience would hear Mark's presentation of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples against the background of popular traditions about comparable master-follower relations either from the epic traditions of Israel (represented in the OT) or from their own contemporary cultural situation. Together these would have provided the ambient tradition features of Mark's narrative (elaborated below) that might be used to shape their understanding and reception of Mark's presentation of the group of Jesus and the disciples.

³ See Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period (London: SCM Press, 1974).

Since Mark's narrative was written for the ear (and can be classified as an oral-derived text), we shall employ Foley's method of interpreting oral-derived texts, which includes being alert to the way in which they reference ambient tradition (metonymic referencing). What Foley calls ambient tradition is closely related to what other scholars called social, collective or cultural memory. An aspect of social memory theory that is analogous to Foley's theory of metonymic referencing is Schwarz's account of keying and framing, whereby a more recent figure or event (such as Jesus or his deeds) is keyed to some previous salient figure or event in the tradition (such as the OT or Israelite tradition) which in turn provides the frame for interpreting the new figure or event. Although we shall call attention to particular cases of keying and framing in the detailed discussion that follows, we shall refrain from repeating in every case that the target audience's collective memory/ambient tradition is being referenced, since this should be assumed throughout the discussion.

Moreover, social memory studies (by Barry Schwartz and like-minded scholars) claim that commemorations of the past are relevant to the needs of the present, placing the present in continuity with a salient aspect in the past. So this chapter will maintain that the group of Jesus and his disciples would have been understood, not only as an association in their socio-historical context but also as a group in continuity with Judaism. Thus, this research tries to comply with the general expectation of contemporary NT scholarship which sets Jesus and his disciples in their Jewish and Palestinian context.⁴ This is particularly so because Mark's target audience inherited

⁴ Some works that are strong in the social background of Palestine and the Mediterranean world in connection to the Jewishness of Jesus include the following: Eric Eve, Jewish Context of Jesus' Miracles (JSNTSup 231; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); John P. Meier, A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus (vol. 1; New York: Doubleday, 1991); Emil Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (ed. Geza Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: Clark, 1973); James H. Charlesworth, Jesus within Judaism (New York: Doubleday, 1988); John Dominic Crossan, The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant (San Francisco: Harper, 1991); Ben F. Meyer, The Aims of Jesus (Princeton Theological Monograph Series 48; San Jose, CA: Pickwick

from Judaism their stories and traditions, which helped shape the understanding of Mark's narrative of Jesus and his disciples. Especially so, the discussion below on John the Baptist and the OT will be more relevant and understandable for the audience if we view Mark's target audience as being located among the first-century lowly people of Palestine rather than Roman (Gentile) Christians or those belonging to the imperial elite.

4.2 The Association of John and His Disciples

This section explores how knowledge of the traditions about the group associated with John the Baptist would have shaped the Markan audience's understanding of the kind of relationship Jesus had with his disciples. That Mark's target audience would have been familiar with this group is suggested by Mark's notice that one of the (erroneous) opinions people held about Jesus during his earthly life is that he was John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-16; 8:28). This suggests that there was a perceived resemblance between Jesus and John and, consequently, between groups associated with them. However, Mark's narrative tells us very little about what kind of group might have followed John the Baptist, or what kind of relation he might have had with them.

But although Mark says little about a group of disciples around John, his target audience may well have known of such a group, in which case they would probably have compared what Mark had to say about Jesus' group with what they knew about John's. Here, Josephus' works will be used to deduce a kind of Israelite popular tradition and to supplement Mark's narrative, with the assumption that if Josephus knew of John and his group, then traditions about them would have been freely circulating at

Publications, 2002); Anthony E. Harvey, Jesus and the Constraints of History (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982); and Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God (London: SPCK, 1996)

the time of Mark's composition. The other Gospels will also be used, but it should be clarified that Mark's audience could not be assumed to be familiar with the other Gospels, which had not been written yet, but they would have been familiar with some of the traditions that later found their way into the other Gospels since a number of them would have heard the traditions from John and Jesus themselves (about forty years before) or from other speakers before they heard from Mark.

At least three comparisons between Jesus' group and John's are notable. The first one relates to baptism. John is portrayed by Josephus as 'a good man' who 'exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practise justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing to join baptism'.⁵ Although Josephus had his own agenda, his portrayal of John supports the tradition in the Gospel of Mark wherein people were baptised (ἐβαπτίζοντο) by John (Mark 1:4-8). There are also traditions (not found in the Gospel of Mark) that present Jesus baptising more disciples than John (John 3: 21-26; 4:1-3), but we cannot be sure whether Mark's audience were familiar with these traditions that were included in John's Gospel. At first glance, Mark's audience would have been left with the impression that Jesus did not baptise his disciples, since this is nowhere explicitly stated in any of Mark's call stories or elsewhere, and in context, 'these things' refers to Jesus' recent actions in the temple.

However, Mark's audience were expected to hear the contrast between Jesus and John. Jesus, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit, is more powerful than John, who baptized only with water (Mark 1:7-8). Moreover, Mark set the expectation that if the 'whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem' went to be baptised by John (Mark 1:5), how much more would happen when the one who is mightier than John came (Mark 1:7). This raises the estimation of Jesus higher than John, and consequently

⁵ Josephus, Ant. 18.5.2.

of Jesus' group higher than John's. This seems to be Mark's intention because even if his audience knew of a tradition that Jesus had been John's disciple, Mark appears to make no concession to such a tradition. It is possible that Mark was trying to undermine it, not presuppose it, since he presents John as the forerunner of Jesus (Mark 1:1-8). He might have tried to correct the idea that John was more important than Jesus.

A second notable comparison between the group of Jesus and that of John concerns people crowding around their leaders to hear their teachings. The gathering of disciples around Jesus and Jesus' subsequently teaching them (Mark 1:16-20; 2:13; 3:13-19) invite the audience to make a comparison with what John was doing. What is noticeable is that although crowds gathered around both Jesus and John, only a select few hung around them as close disciples. Josephus describes John's following as those 'others' who 'joined the crowds about him'. This connotes that aside from a group around John, there were already some people near him. The reason they crowded around John is that they 'were aroused to the highest degree by his sermons'. Because of this, Josephus says that John had a great influence over the people, 'for it looked as if they would be guided by John in everything that they did'.⁶

In the case of Jesus, other people besides his disciples also crowded around him, not only because of his words but also because of his miraculous deeds (Mark 3:7-12, 20; 4:1-9; 5:21-31; 6:30-56; 7:14-20; 31-37; 8:1-10; 9:14-26; 10:1; 12:12, 13). Thus, Jesus' group witnessed not only one like Elijah but one who surpassed him. Moreover, in the context of Mark's narrative, they were following the Messiah (Mark 8:29) and feasting with him (Mark 2:19);⁷ whereas, the disciples of John were following Jesus'

⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.5.2.

⁷ Cf. Matt 9:15; Luke 5:34.

forerunner and practising regular fasts just like the Pharisees were doing (Mark 2:18).⁸ Thus, the distinctiveness of Jesus' group of association from that of John's would have dawned upon Mark's audience, although such differences may not have been seen as fundamental differences in the master-disciple relationship. However, Jesus' identity as Messiah and his miraculous deeds which surpass John would have been Mark's publicity to invite Mark's target audience to become followers of Jesus and belong to his group, which was then currently represented by Mark's community.

The third point of comparison between the group of Jesus and that of John relates to the similarity of their leaders' death due to conflict with authorities. Jesus made it clear that a time of fasting would also come for his disciples. It is when 'the bridegroom', referring to himself, would be taken away (ἀπαρθῆ) from them (Mark 2:20). Such separation from their leader happened to John's disciples after their leader was put into prison, and later put to death, because of his conflict with Herod and Herodias (Mark 6:14-30). A similar separation would also be experienced by Jesus' disciples at the time when he would be taken away. Just as it happened to the leader of John's group, so would it happen to the leader of Jesus' group. Just as the authorities did anything they wished to John, so they would also do the same to Jesus. Thus, because of the disbelief of the Jerusalem authorities (Mark 9:11-13) and with the involvement of Herod, the two great leaders suffered martyrdom, one beheaded and the other crucified. But a difference is also very clear. John's disciples took his body and laid it in a tomb, thereby showing the respect due in a master-discipleship relationship of that time. By contrast, Jesus' disciples abandoned him and fled, leaving the collection and entombment of his body to Joseph of Arimathea, who was not one of them. This is not usual in a master-discipleship relationship at that time. Thus, the audience would

⁸ Cf. Matt 11:18; Luke 7:33; Matt 9:14; Luke 5:33.

have been provoked to feel bad about Jesus' disciples. But at the same time they would have esteemed Jesus more because such desertion by his disciples added intensity and degree of suffering that Jesus underwent in comparison with that of John.

4.3 The Company of Prophets and the Followers of Yahweh in Jewish Tradition

This section tries to find out how knowledge by Mark's target audience of some other Jewish figures and their followers could have helped shape their perception of the nature of the relationship Jesus had with his disciples. This is warranted because popular Israelite traditions that found their way into the OT have greatly influenced the composition of the Gospel of Mark,⁹ so that Mark could exploit his target audience's knowledge of these traditions to compare the association of Jesus with some other associations in Palestine. One probable tendency for Mark's audience may well have been to think of the association of Jesus and his disciples as a resurgence of the Spirit-inspired prophets of old (Mic. 3:8), like Elijah and Elisha. This is in contrast to the belief of some of their contemporary Jews that the Holy Spirit departed from Israel after the death of the later prophets,¹⁰ which Mark would have tried to correct.

Although the existence of prophets in the Ancient Near East was common, the 'emergence of individual persons who speak with an authority beyond their own' is 'an odd, inexplicable' occurrence in Israel.¹¹ Such an individual is called *nābî'*, *rō'eh*, *hōzeh*, or *'iš ʿlōhîm* in the Hebrew OT and *προφήτης* in the LXX and Greek New

⁹ Willard Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels* (Peabody: Henrickson Publishers, 1994). Martin Kähler, *Jesus und das Alte Testament* (2d ed.; Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1896).

¹⁰ *b. San.* 11a. Although the final redaction of this teaching is of later date, it could have been the atmosphere among some Jews prior to the public ministry of Jesus.

¹¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 622.

Testament (from which we get the English word ‘prophet’). Usually, whether itinerant or localised, prophets in Israel were called by God to speak for him, either before individuals (e.g. kings) or before the entire populace. Sometimes prophets like Moses, Elijah, and Elisha were given the ability to perform wonders and signs. Some of them were within the social structure of the society while others were outside, calling the people back to the covenant traditions from which they departed.¹² But this ‘does not mean that they explicitly or intentionally mouth such traditions and perspectives. Rather they have learned over time to perceive and experience the world through a particular prism of memory and interpretation’. For example ‘Hosea and Jeremiah appear to be nurtured in the traditions of the Levitical-Deuteronomic covenantalism’.¹³

There are a number of probabilities that Jesus and his disciples would have been compared to these prophets of old. In this case, a specific aspect of social memory theory (as advanced by Schwartz), namely the notion of keying and framing (the miracles of these OT prophets would provide the frame to which the Markan audience’s understanding of Jesus would be keyed—which corresponds to typology in more traditional biblical scholarship parlance). First, it seems that Mark’s audience (familiar with Israelite tradition) were expected to consider the company of Elijah and Elisha as the most descriptive of the nature of relationship Jesus had with his disciples. This is suggested in Mark’s narrative where some people opined that Jesus was the Prophet Elijah (Mark 6:15), although they were considered wrong by Mark (Mark 9:11-13). Thus, Mark’s audience were invited to see the formation of Jesus’ group as resembling the way Elijah called Elisha from the plough to become his disciple (1 Kgs 19:19-21). Moreover, the audience were also provoked to consider how the group of Jesus

¹² G.F. Hawthorne, ‘Prophets, Prophecy’, Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (eds. J.B. Green and S. McKnight; Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 636.

¹³ Brueggemann, Theology, 623.

performed wonders, not only taught, just like Elijah and Elisha in their popular tradition when they parted the Jordan River (cf. 2 Kgs 2:8, 14). For instance, when Jesus raised to life Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-43), it would have invited comparison with how Elijah raised to life a widow's son (cf. 1 Kgs 17:7-24). In another instance, when Jesus fed the multitude (Mark 6:34-45; 8:1-9), it would have reminded the audience of how Elisha fed many people (cf. 2 Kgs 4:42-44). More so, when Jesus cursed the fig tree which later dried up (Mark 11:12-21) (which may well have been understood as a symbolic action related to the coming disaster upon Jerusalem and the temple),¹⁴ it could have reminded the audience of how Elisha cursed 42 Hebrew children which resulted to their ruin (cf. 2 Kgs 2:23-25). Now, since Mark's audience would be likely to perceive a correspondence between Jesus and OT prophets like Elijah, they might also be led to expect a correspondence between the relationship Jesus had with his disciples and that the OT prophets had with theirs.

Second, Mark's audience would have likened Jesus' group to the OT group of prophets (such as in 1 Sam 19:18-24 where Samuel led other prophets in prophesying). The reasons are as follows: Jesus (in the company of his disciples) was thought to be one of the prophets of long ago (Mark 6:15; 8:28), and he insinuated that he was a prophet (προφήτης) in Mark 6:4. A similar company of prophets also existed in 2 Kings 2:1-18 which shows that such a grouping of prophets was common in the collective memory of Mark's target audience. Josephus also tells of the existence of a group of prophets in first-century Palestine.¹⁵ Moreover, the existence of the Isaianic corpus and other prophetic books in Mark's narrative reasonably suggests the existences of prophetic circles that cultivated the tradition of major prophets' teachings, such as the

¹⁴ Graham N. Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 183.

¹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 6.5.2.

idea of Yahweh's 'disciples' in Isa. 8:16 which would have included the prophets of old. This warrants us to assert that it was not unlikely for Mark's target audience to think of Jesus and his disciples as a group of prophets in the model of the OT associations of prophets, although the disciples in Mark are not presented as behaving very prophet-like manner.

Third, when Jesus prophesied the coming catastrophes in Mark 13 while in the company of his disciples, Mark's audience are expected to think of him being like the prophets of old who predicted calamities and foretold the distant future. For instance, the prophecy of Daniel (9:27; 11:31; 12:11) about the abomination of desolation (βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) is noted in Mark 13:14. In another instance, the prophecies of Isaiah (13:10; 34:4) and Joel (2:10) are quoted in Mark 13:24. As for Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and Judea in Mark 13, it was a common prediction among other Jewish prophets in first-century Palestine.¹⁶ Other predictions of Jesus include Peter's denial of him (Mark 14:27-31), his being rejected by religious leaders, his own suffering (Mark 8:31) and the suffering of his disciples (Mark 13:9-11). Such acts of foretelling the future are not uncommon in first-century Palestine among the Jews,¹⁷ which shows the lingering effect of their OT prophetic heritage. However, none of the prophets of old predicted their own resurrection on the third day of their death as Jesus did, although such a prediction could have brought out the memory of Jonah who was three days and three nights in the belly of a big fish (Jonah 1:17) before being vomited onto dry land (Jonah 2:10). Such remembrance of Jonah may well have been not difficult (although among the Gospels, only Matthew makes this connection

¹⁶ See Josephus, J.W. 4.6.3; 6.5.4.

¹⁷ See Josephus, J.W. 6.5.3; Josephus, J.W. 4.6.3.

explicit) especially if Mark's target audience are from Galilee or nearby since Jonah himself was from Galilee (2 Kings 14:25) as Jesus was.

Fourth, since Jesus and his disciples were preaching and correcting the people (e.g. Mark 3:4; 3:13-4:25; 6:12; 9:14), Mark's audience would have likened them to the preaching prophets of old who reinforced the Mosaic covenant and preached against idolatry, corruption and social injustice in the land. In the case of Jesus (the group's leader), when he went up on a mountainside (Mark 3:13), he would have been likened to Moses who received the law of God on Mt. Sinai. Although this is more apparent in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, such tradition would have been popular to bear in the way Mark's target audience would have heard Mark's narration of Jesus going up on the mountain. This is especially because Jesus' teachings were a strengthening of some basic OT Mosaic and prophetic themes. For instance, when Jesus argued against the Pharisees (Mark 7:1-13), he quoted Moses and Isaiah (Isa 29:13; Exo 20:12; Deut 5:16; Exo 21:17; and Lev 20:9). In another instance, when Jesus reprovved the people for desecrating the temple (Mark 11:17), he quoted Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Thus, Mark's audience would have remembered how Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah taught and reprovved their own people when they turned away from God. Moreover, Jesus' preaching about the good news of the coming kingdom of God (Mark 1:15; 2:17; 3:26-34) would have reminded Mark's audience of traditional hopes for a future time of peace and righteousness of a kind we find expressed in passages like Isa 11:1-10. Similarly, Mark's use of the phrase 'the son of man' would have brought to mind popular speculation of a future kingdom as expressed in Daniel 7. However, there is newness in the teachings of Jesus especially when he gave new meanings and interpretations to some Mosaic laws (e.g. Mark 7:14-23; 10:1-12). There is also newness in his prophetic authority: instead of saying 'Thus said the Lord' as the

prophets of old were supposed to say, Jesus said ‘Truly, I tell you’ (Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν; Mark 3:28). Jesus’ approach encompasses the older practice of the prophets, but the force of authority is directly coming from him, unlike the older prophets’ way of invoking Yahweh’s authority.

Fifth, when Mark’s audience heard of Jesus and his disciples performing wonders, they are expected to liken them to the other first-century wonder-working (sign) prophets. However, it has been clarified that ‘sign prophets were all leaders of relatively large bands who followed them from one place to another’, unlike popular prophets (like Jesus) who were ‘followed from one place to another only by a small band of disciples’, even though Jesus also attracted large crowds ‘in any one place’ during his public ministry.¹⁸ Although the sign prophets noted by Josephus were influenced by Jesus (as argued by Barnett),¹⁹ it is expected (as argued by Eric Eve) ‘that the popular mood reflected in these movements was already current at the time Jesus ministered’,²⁰ and would have been much more so when Mark wrote his narrative. It was common then for would-be sign prophets to key or frame their action to Moses and other prophets after him who prophesied and performed wonders. For instance, Josephus mentions a certain Theudas who ‘persuaded the majority of the masses’ to ‘follow him to the Jordan River’ where ‘at his command the river would be parted and would provide them an easy passage’.²¹ He would have been understood by his followers as a prophet in the model of Moses, Elijah or Elisha. Josephus also narrates

¹⁸ Eve, Jewish Context of Jesus’ Miracles, 311. See also Gray, Prophetic Figures, 234.

¹⁹ Paul W. Barnett, ‘Jewish Sign Prophets—A.D. 40-70—Their Intentions and Origins’, NTS 27 (1980-81): 679-97.

²⁰ Eve, Jewish Context of Jesus’ Miracles, 324. See also Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985), 146-87.

²¹ Josephus, Ant. 20.5.1.

how an Egyptian false prophet led thousands round about the wilderness (seemingly modelled after Moses leading the Israelites en route the desert) towards Jerusalem, and that by his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall (which seems to be in the model of Joshua's conquest of Jericho). Josephus also tells of some impostors and deceivers who tried to lead their followers in the desert to show them wonders and signs (like Moses).²²

It is not clear whether Mark's audience knew Theudas, the Egyptian false prophet, the impostors, and deceivers noted by Josephus. But since these sign prophets tried to lead their followers in the model of Moses, Joshua, Elijah or Elisha, it is probable that stories like these freely circulated during the time of Mark's composition, and his audience would have thought of them when they heard Jesus leading his followers and performing wonders and signs in the models of Moses, Elijah and Elisha. So when Jesus calmed the storm (Mark 4:35-41), the audience would have perceived an allusion to a similar tradition of old (e.g. Moses who divided the Red Sea, Exo 13-14 and Elijah or Elisha who parted the Jordan River, 2 Kgs 2:8, 14). However, in contrast to Jesus, no first-century sign prophet succeeded in re-enacting any of these signs, however popular they maybe.

While there are similarities between the group of Jesus and that of the other prophets, Mark's audience were expected to notice differences between them. The difference lies in the distinctiveness of the leader of the group, Jesus himself. The greatest of the prophets, Elijah and Moses, appeared only as witnesses to a voice from the cloud calling Jesus 'my beloved Son' (ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός; Mark 9:7). Much more, the sign prophets in the first century, mentioned by Josephus, promised signs and wonders but failed to deliver them, unlike Jesus who performed many healings and

²² J.W. 2.13.4-5; Ant. 20.8.6,10.

miracles in Mark's account. Above all, in contrast to Elijah who killed his enemies (1 Kgs 18:16-40; 2 Kgs 1:9-13) and to Elisha who cursed his mockers (2 Kgs 2:23-25), Jesus bore his enemies' ridicule and refused to retaliate (Mark 14:43-15:32), even at the point of death. Such a high estimation of Jesus (in relation to his disciples) in comparison with other prophets, not only set the Jewish heritage of Jesus' group, but would have aided in persuading Mark's target audience to belong to Jesus' newly found community, currently represented by Mark's community.

4.4 The Rabbis and Their Students

This section inquires what Mark's audience would have got from Mark's story when they heard Jesus' disciples and other followers addressing him as 'Ραββί ('Rabbi'; Mark 9:5; 10:51; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45).²³ Was Jesus one of the Jewish rabbis who gathered a number of students or disciples? The problem if we answer in the affirmative is that Rabbinic Jews, although they traced their traditions to Moses, officially started giving the 'Rabbi' title only after 70 CE (though they presumably had some pre-70 CE forbears). So Mark's depiction of Jesus' association was too early to be connected to official Rabbinic Judaism (post-70 CE). The first use of 'Rabbi' as title was given to the disciples of Johanan ben Zakkai while he himself and his successors were called Rabbon (our master). Although Jesus lived several decades earlier, according to Mark he was addressed as Rabbi; but such an address by his disciples was at that time a common 'expression of respect used in addressing an older or more learned person, the equivalent of our "sir"²⁴ or 'master'. Such an address was also applicable to scribes (who were interpreters and teachers of the law), Pharisees (Matt 23:7), and sages. It was

²³ Cf. Matt 8:19; 22:23-32; Luke 3:12; 22:10-11; John 1:35-38; 3:2; 6:24-25; 13:12-14.

²⁴ Bernard J. Bamberger, The Story of Judaism (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1957), 107.

also applied by his disciples to John the Baptist (John 3:26). Most probably, it was in this way that Mark's audience would have heard and understood when Jesus' disciples addressed him as 'Rabbi'.

However, what we do in this section is to compare the group of Jesus with his disciples with the pre-70 CE proto-rabbinic predecessors and their students. We do not have any existing document from those pre-70 proto-rabbinic predecessors, but we can use the accounts of pre-70 CE Rabbinic Judaism (of course with considerable caution) found in much later rabbinic literature. This is with the assumption that many rabbinic practices on record can be traced back to pre-70 Rabbinic Judaism. In the Babylonian Talmud, for instance, we read how rabbis debate and ask questions: 'Similarly you read'²⁵ or 'How would you read this verse?'²⁶ Mark's audience who were knowledgeable of such practice would have compared such to how Jesus argued and asked questions (e.g. 'Have you never read...?', Mark 2:25; 'But what about you?', Mark 8:29; etc.).

However, Mark's audience were expected to take note that even though Jesus' relationship with his disciples was akin to the rabbinic teacher-student relationship of their days, they were also different in various areas. For one thing, Jesus is portrayed in Mark 6:3 as an artisan (τέκτων), not as someone with formal education. This, for sure, brought Jesus closer to Mark's target audience who were within the lower social strata of Palestine. For another, Mark's narrative portrays Jesus' method of teaching his disciples as informal, unlike the formal repetition or rote memorization in the manner the rabbis employed to teach their disciples. On the other hand, Gerhardson notes that the rabbis formulated a number of rules on 'how to retain memorized tradition in

²⁵ Examples: b. Shab. 97a; b. Ket. 111a, 111b.

²⁶ Examples: b. Ket. 81b; b. Qid. 22a, 40a, 81b.

memory’, which includes ‘the principle “first learn then understand”’; terseness; abridgment of material into short, pregnant texts; poetic artifices; rhythm; cantillation; mnemonic devices; use of written notes; diligent repetition, and so on’. These were especially applied to the study of the oral Torah which ‘rests on the principle of oral repetition’.²⁷ Such ‘culture cultivated a strong oral-performative tradition, as attested by countless instances in which disciples and masters are represented in Rabbinic literature as engaging in discourse over a publicly recited text’.²⁸ The way Jesus and the rabbis taught are thus similar in shaping material for memorization, and one could certainly make the case that much of the sayings material in the Gospel of Mark is so shaped.

Jesus is also presented as having his own authority (Mark 1:22, 27) and wisdom (Mark 6:1-3), and is primarily interested in proclaiming the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15). He is not portrayed as teaching his disciples some received oral traditions about the Torah and its interpretation, or about other halakoth. It is contested whether or not pre-70 rabbis passed on to their disciples the memorized Torah (also called Torah in the mouth). Those who argue in favour of it assume that aside from the written Torah (which necessitates fixed-text transmission), pre-70 rabbis advocated the oral Torah which must remain oral and must also be transmitted orally and aurally by memory (free-text transmission). They traced the origin of the Torah from Moses and they claimed to derive their authority from Moses himself. The distinction between fixed-text transmission for memorized documents and free-text transmission for the more fluid

²⁷ Birger Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), xi, xii., 28. See also Martin Jaffee, Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE—400 CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Jacob Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions About the Pharisees Before 70 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

²⁸ Martin Jaffee, ‘Oral Tradition in the Writings of Rabbinic Oral Torah: On Theorizing Rabbinic Orality’, Oral Tradition 14.1 (1999): 23-24.

oral-performative aspects is noted by Martin Jaffee.²⁹ However, there are questions about how far the notion of an ‘oral Torah’ predates the destruction of the temple. Jaffee argues that the rabbis consolidated the ‘oral Torah’ (written in the third century) from both oral tradition and written Scriptures to legitimize the institution of the rabbinic discipleship, which emphasizes face-to-face relationship rather than mediated by a written text. Thus, he asserts that the notion of ‘oral Torah’ was a later (post first-century) ideological construct, never exactly reflecting media reality and not applicable to the pre-70 situation.

Another area of difference between the group of Jesus and that of pre-70 CE Rabbinic teacher-student relationship concerns the posture of their disciples while studying with their teachers. Rabbinic Judaism tells of Hillel saying to his disciples, ‘Sit down and I will tell you something’³⁰ which has the connotation in Rabbinic literature that ‘sitting before him’ is equivalent to ‘studying as a student-disciple with him’.³¹ There are also instances in Mark’s narrative of student-disciples ‘sitting around’ (ἐκάθητο περὶ) Jesus (Mark 3:32, 34) but not ‘before him’ in the ‘standard’ Rabbinic manner.³² The disciples also were told by Jesus to ‘sit down’ (Καθίσατε) but not in order to teach them but to wait for him while he prays (Mark 14:32). Usually in Mark’s narrative, Jesus taught his disciples while walking along with him, although there are four records in the narrative that Jesus sat while teaching his disciples (Mark 4:1; 9:35; 12:41; 13:3).³³

²⁹ Jaffee, ‘Oral Tradition in the Writings of Rabbinic Oral Torah’, 24.

³⁰ J. Goldin, The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 78-82. See Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, 332. See also Robbins, Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 104-105.

³¹ b. Pes. 3b; b. shab. 17a; Neusner, Development of a Legend, 171-72; Robbins, Jesus the Teacher, 104.

³² Robbins, Jesus the Teacher, 104.

³³ See further explanation in Robbins, Jesus the Teacher, 101-105.

Moreover, pre-70 CE Rabbinic teachers did not search for students or disciples to teach as Jesus did. It was the student-disciples who select a master and join his group upon the approval of the master. Vernon Robbins elaborates the contrast between the relationship of Jesus with his disciples and that of a Rabbinic teacher-student relationship:

The stories that characterize the beginning of a teacher/disciple relationship ... receive their plot from the struggle of a young man to gain acceptance by a rabbi rather than the action and summons of a rabbi to attain a response from a person whom he wants as a disciple-companion. The stories tend to feature student-disciples who later become well-known rabbis themselves'.³⁴

Traditions on the relationship Shammai and Hillel had with their disciples and other applicants are examples in the model of pre-70 Rabbinic teacher-student relationship, and especially of how a student tried to find a rabbi who was willing to mentor him. In one instance, when Hillel was young, he struggled to get the attention of Shema'iah and Abtalion so that they might teach him the Torah. At the beginning, he had money to pay for his learning but when there were no available funds, he was not permitted entry and so the story becomes dramatic:

He climbed up and sat upon the window, to hear the words of the living God from the mouth of Shema'iah and Abtalion.... That day was the eve of the Sabbath in the winter solstice, and snow fell down upon him from heaven. When the dawn rose, Shema'iah ... [and Abtalion] ... looked up and saw the figure of a man in the window. They went up and found him covered by three cubits of snow. They removed him, bathed and anointed him, and placed him opposite the fire, and they said, 'This man is worthy that the Sabbath be profaned on his behalf'.³⁵

When Hillel became a rabbi himself, students went to study under him and he became a rival of another known rabbi, Shammai. In the Rabbinic tradition, some heathens approached these two famous rabbis because they wanted to become their proselytes. This shows how students at that time searched for their teachers in contrast to the practice of Jesus who went out to search for his students. In one account a heathen

³⁴ Robbins, Jesus the Teacher, 101.

³⁵ b. yom 35b. The quoted one is from The Babylonian Talmud (trans. L. Jung; ed. I. Epstein; London: Soncino, 1938). See J. Neusner, The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees Before 70 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999) 258-59.

approached Shammai to become his proselyte and teach him the Torah but was rejected. When he approached Hillel on the same purpose, he was accepted and became a proselyte. Another heathen came to Shammai to learn the whole Torah while standing on one foot but was again rejected while later was accepted and converted by Hillel. On another occasion, still another heathen wanted to become a proselyte but earlier rejected by Shammai and accepted by Hillel.³⁶

In the above occasions, there were no hints that Shammai and Hillel were going around like Jesus to call and convert disciples. Instead, people initiated the act of approaching them to become their student-disciples. So when Mark's target audience heard Jesus' call of his disciples, they felt no need to apply and fear rejection by someone like Shammai and Hillel, for as discussed in chapter 6, the audience took for themselves Jesus' call and they would just respond to follow Jesus and belong to his group, which was then represented by Mark's community.

4.5 Followers of Zealous Revolutionaries and Messianic Claimants

This section risks being like comparing the students of a university teacher with the followers of a revolutionary leader fighting for their country. However, since some scholars perceive Jesus and his followers as political revolutionaries like the Zealots and hold that Jesus appears more likely to be a political revolutionary than a schoolmaster,³⁷ there is a need to clarify how revolutionary the group of Jesus were in comparison with some political and religious revolutionaries in first-century Palestine. There is also a need to clarify whether it was in this kind of relationship that the target audience of Mark could have heard and understood the association of Jesus and his disciples,

³⁶ Shab. 30b-31a; See also Neusner, Rabbinic Traditions, 322-23.

³⁷ Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 172.

especially that one of Jesus' disciples is called Simon 'the Zealot' as translated in the NIV and other English versions, although a more literal translation should be Simon 'the Cananaean' (Mark 3:18).

It cannot be denied that there were nationalist revolutionaries among the Jewish people when they were under the rule of the Roman Empire. That is quite obvious in a nation where freedom is suppressed. For example, the Zealots were known revolutionaries recorded by Josephus as another sect in Judaism whose advocacy was the expulsion of the Romans in their land by military force. However, Zealots are only clearly mentioned by Josephus as having appeared during the great Judeo-Roman war in 66-70 CE. The idea that Judas of Galilee founded the Zealots in 6 CE is anachronistic and is being questioned, although there is the possibility of such because Judas' son, Menahem, was one of the Zealot leaders who were assassinated. But it is safe to mention 'Zealot-like revolutionaries' during the time of Jesus like the group founded by Judas of Galilee.³⁸

If the above contention that the Zealots appeared only during the Judeo-Roman war in 66-70 CE is true, then Hengel's assertion that the association of Jesus and his disciples resembles the association of the Zealots should be rejected on account of anachronism. Although Hengel made it clear that Jesus' group is unique and distinct from the Zealots especially in the area of calling followers, to equate their kind of association is not accurate because, as stated earlier, the Zealots are specified by Josephus to have appeared only during the great Judeo-Roman war in 66-70 CE. Even the NIV translation of the Gospel of Mark wherein Simon is called a Zealot (Mark 3:18) is anachronistic and mistranslated because Simon is described in the original Greek text as τὸν Καναναῖον (the Cananaean) rather than τὸν Ζηλωτὴν (the Zealot). But if we try

³⁸ Josephus, Ant. 18.1.1, 6; Josephus, J.W. 2.8.1.

to reconcile Luke's description of Simon as 'the Zealot', then we have to understand the word 'zealot' in a broad sense or in a pre-66 CE understanding. Meier enumerates a number of possible meanings: (a) any Jew 'who was intensely zealous for the practice of the Mosaic Law', (b) any Jew 'who insisted that his fellow Jews strictly observe the Law as a means of separating Israel from the idolatrous and immoral Gentiles round about', and (c) any Jew 'who, in some cases, might use harassment, violence, or even murder to force his fellow Jews to practice strict separation from the Gentiles and their way of living'.³⁹

Prior to the rise of the Zealots, there were tendencies to revolt and zealotry (understood broadly as zealousness) in Palestine. For instance, two centuries earlier, the Maccabees led by Mattathias and his sons revolted against the Greeks (1 Macc 2:17-29) and the Hasideans later joined them in their armed resistance (1 Macc. 2:42-44; cf. 2 Macc. 14:6).⁴⁰ There was also a certain Jewish priest by the name of 'the Zealot' (τὸν Ζηλωτὴν) Phinehas who was ready to implement violence if by this means Israel will be separated from the Gentiles (4 Macc. 18:12). Philo also mentions a number of Jews who were 'zealots for and keepers of the national laws, of rigid justice, prompt to stone such a criminal, and visiting without pity all such as work wickedness'.⁴¹ Towards 28-30 CE and even after that, Palestine witnessed more than enough of bandits and social unrest; however, 'as far as the historical record permits us to judge, there were no organized, armed groups of Jewish revolutionaries active during Jesus' public ministry'.⁴² Were Mark's target audience encouraged to understand that Jesus and his disciples were

³⁹ John P. Meier, Marginal Jew (vol. 3; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 565-66.

⁴⁰ See also Elias J. Bickerman, The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979).

⁴¹ Philo, Spec. 2.253.

⁴² Meier, Marginal Jew, 3:567.

among the loosely scattered first-century nationalistic political revolutionaries? Most probably not, because Jesus is nowhere portrayed in Mark's narrative as carrying out any kind of military preparations or attempting to encourage his followers for a military battle; they are not being portrayed as behaving in such a violent manner as that of the bandits (Mark 14:48-49).

But Mark notes the story of David and his companions as eating forbidden food in the Temple, a kind of rebellion against established laws that favoured only the priests (Mk. 2:25-26). Interestingly, Jesus used David and his men's unlawful acts to defend his disciples' violation of or rebellion against the established Jewish Sabbath traditions, as if comparing his disciples with that of David and his companions. This was the time David was not yet king but a leader of a band of brigands (1 Sam. 21-30). But when David became king, he turned out to be the messianic archetype—the Lord's anointed one. It became an expectation, then, that the promised messiah was the royal son of David and would be called God's son (2 Sam 7:11-16). Could it be that what happened to David became an inspiration for many revolutionary leaders to declare themselves as anointed rulers or kings and fight with their followers for the liberation of their people against Roman authorities and their Jewish allies? It is not certain, but it is probable because of the general expectation of the Jews of the coming messianic ruler and the restoration of Israel. It is also because there were messianic pretenders and royal claimants who led their followers against Rome and its Jewish allies.

In Josephus' description of the time, there was great 'disorder' in various districts of the country, 'and the opportunity induced a number of persons to aspire to sovereignty' (or kingship, βασιλειᾶν).⁴³ 'Anyone might make himself king [βασιλεύς]

⁴³ Josephus, *J.W.* 2.4.1.

as the head of a band of rebels whom he fell in with'.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, they were either killed or they surrendered in battle. For instance, there was a certain Judas (of Sepphoris, Galilee), son of Ezekias (Hezekias), who gathered a number of followers and attacked the palace. He 'became an object of terror to all men by plundering those he came across in his desire for great possessions and his ambition for royal rank' (βασιλείου τιμῆς).⁴⁵ There was also a certain Simon of Perea, who, according to Josephus, 'was bold enough to place a diadem on his head, and having got together a body of men, he was himself also proclaimed king [βασιλεύς] by them in their madness, and he rated himself worthy of this beyond anyone else'.⁴⁶ Tacitus also notes how Simon seized the title king after Herod's death.⁴⁷ Another leader of numerous followers who claimed to be king was Athronges (Athrongeus), a shepherd of Judea. According to Josephus, he was bold enough 'to aspire to the kingship' (βασιλεία), 'put on the diadem' on his head, claimed the title 'king' (βασιλεῖ),⁴⁸ and acted in the likeness of a 'king' (βασιλεύς).⁴⁹

Such messianic movements, in the words of Richard Horsley, 'were following distinctively Israelite "scripts" based on memories of God's original acts of deliverance'. As noted above, an example of these 'scripts' is the story of David as the people's 'messiah', which was alive in the memories of those 'in villager communities,

⁴⁴ Josephus, Ant. 17.10.8.

⁴⁵ Josephus, Ant. 17.10.5; See also Josephus, J.W. 2.4.1.

⁴⁶ Josephus, Ant. 17.10.6. See also Josephus, J.W. 2.4.2.

⁴⁷ Tacitus, Hist. 5.9.

⁴⁸ Josephus, Ant. 17.10.7.

⁴⁹ Josephus, J.W. 2.4.3.

ready to inform the people's collective action in circumstances of social crisis'.⁵⁰ Thus, upon hearing such examples of messianic aspirations enumerated above, Mark's target audience would have compared Jesus and his disciples with the messianic/royal claimants and their followers for the following reasons: First, the tradition of Israel wherein a king was considered as God's son (Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13; Ps. 89:26) has echoes in Mark's narrative: Jesus is noted as 'king of the Jews' (Mark 15:2, 9, 12, 18, 32) and 'God's Son' (Mark 1:1, 11; 9:7; 15:39). Second, Josephus,⁵¹ Tacitus⁵² and Suetonius⁵³ record a widespread expectation of the Jewish people that a ruler would rise from them (Num. 24:17), and Mark's audience could have thought of Jesus to be this ruler because of his words and deeds relating to the coming kingdom of God, which could have been understood to include the general Jewish expectation of the defeat of Rome and the restoration of Israel. Such an expectation is clearer in a tradition that found its way into John's narrative, wherein people expected him to be the one they were waiting for because of his miraculous signs and intended to make him king by force (John 6:14-15). Third, when Jesus accepted the title Christ—the Messiah—the anointed one, he warned his disciples not to tell anyone about it and foretold how he would suffer and then be killed, which Peter could hardly accept (Mark 8:27-32).⁵⁴ Mark's audience might have been expected to remember the plight and deaths of the earlier freedom fighters and messianic/royal claimants.

⁵⁰ Richard Horsley, 'Early Christian movements: Jesus movements and the renewal of Israel', *HTS* 62.4 (2006): 1205. See also Richard Horsley (1984), 'Popular messianic movements around the time of Jesus', *CBQ* 46 (1984): 471-493.

⁵¹ Josephus, *J.W.* 6.5.4.

⁵² Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13.

⁵³ Suetonius, *Vesp.* 4.5.

⁵⁴ See also Mark 14:61-62.

Probably Peter and the other disciples in the narrative were thinking of a militaristic revolution against Rome, especially when they recognised that Jesus was the Messiah they were awaiting. Their expectation is that Jesus would lead them to battle where God would fight for them, and they would win and be rulers with Jesus afterwards (Mark 10:34-42). However, Mark's audience were encouraged to understand that Jesus' revolution was not against the political occupation of Judea by Rome, unlike the militant political revolutionaries and royal claimants (as elaborated in the next chapter). Thus, there is an expectation that Mark's audience would have appreciated Jesus' non-violent and non-militant method unlike the revolutionaries' use of arms. Much more, they were summoned to favour Jesus' 'emphasis on mercy and forgiveness, his rejection of retaliation, and his exhortation to love even one's enemies' which 'lay at the opposite end of the Palestinian-Jewish spectrum from violence-prone zealotry'.⁵⁵

However, there is a probability that Mark's audience were encouraged to understand that Jesus' association was a political revolutionary party in a distinct and different way. It is because Jesus confronted the power-structure of Israel by situating himself and the Twelve 'in a new and highly paradoxical position of alternative political "power"—which turned out to redefine the meaning of both politics and power'.⁵⁶ Then Jesus redefined the meaning of Israel and her true enemies;⁵⁷ thereby, rejecting the militaristic political agenda of both Rome and the Zealot-like revolutionaries (including the royal claimants), and 'radically redefined the battle that had to be fought'.⁵⁸ The real enemy now was not Rome but Satan who took residence not only among the pagans but

⁵⁵ Meier, Marginal Jew, 3:566.

⁵⁶ Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 166.

⁵⁷ Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 173.

⁵⁸ Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 448.

also among the chosen people, Israel.⁵⁹ If this is so, Mark's audience were invited to esteem Jesus and his disciples (over and against any revolutionary group at their time), who have been battling against the powers of darkness as demonstrated in their works of exorcism (Mark 1:21-28; 3:11, 22; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-32; 3:13-15; 6:7-13; 9:14-27)⁶⁰ and healing (Mark 1:29-34; 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 5:21-34; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 10:46-52), and in Jesus' teaching to his followers of the way of victory: the radical yet profound wisdom of taking up one's cross (Mark 8:34), which he took upon himself (Mark 8:31; 14:48-49; 15:21-39) to win the battle, not only in martial but cosmic warfare. This would have aided in convincing Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his group, which was then currently represented by Mark's community.

4.6 The Separatist Essenes and/or the Qumran Community

This section concerns how Mark's audience's probable knowledge of Essene/Qumran practices may have affected the way they understood Mark's depiction of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The plausibility that Mark and his audience knew of the Essenes/Qumran community and their practices is asserted by James Charlesworth, who asks that if Josephus knew so much about them, 'is it likely that his contemporaries, the authors of Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, could not have known something about the theology of the Essenes?'⁶¹ He argues further that because there were some novitiates who later 'rejected, or were rejected by the Essenes', we cannot 'be certain they never divulged what had been learned'.⁶²

⁵⁹ Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 446.

⁶⁰ Mark 3:20-30 can be included if Jesus is referred to as the one who can bind the strong man which may refer to Satan.

⁶¹ Charlesworth, Jesus within Judaism, 60.

⁶² Charlesworth, Jesus within Judaism, 60.

According to Philo and Josephus, many of Essenes lived in the towns and villages while others preferred to live in the desert.⁶³ Since they were not all hidden, Jesus would have met and talked with some of them during his itineraries. They would have ‘discussed common values and the need for full dedication to God and his covenant’⁶⁴ and that Jesus ‘could well have been influenced’ by them.⁶⁵ This is supported by John Meier who thinks that there is ‘always the possibility’ that, in his journeys around Palestine, Jesus was ‘influenced indirectly’ by the Essenes, even if he ‘never interacted directly’ with them.⁶⁶

However, since Mark never mentioned the Essenes/Qumran Community, we cannot be sure if Mark and his audience knew of them. We are also not sure if the Essenes were the same group as that of the Qumran community of the Dead Sea Scrolls because the community suggested by the Dead Sea Scrolls is not identical with that suggested by Josephus’ account of the Essenes (although Josephus may have had his own reasons for presenting the Essenes in a particular way). Some scholars (e.g. Martin Goodman) are sceptical of equating the Essenes with the Qumran community while others treat the Essenes as responsible for the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran since 1947 because Pliny the Elder stated that the Essenes lived to the west of the Dead Sea.⁶⁷

⁶³ Philo, Prob. 12.75-76; Philo, Hypoth. 11.1. Philo’s Hypothetica was lost but some of its contents are recorded by Eusebius.

⁶⁴ Charlesworth, Jesus within Judaism, 61.

⁶⁵ Charlesworth, Jesus within Judaism, 64. For the negative and positive influences enumerated by Charlesworth, see pages 65-71.

⁶⁶ John P. Meier, Marginal Jew, 3:489.

⁶⁷ See Pliny the Elder, Nat. 5.18.73. See also Geza Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1982), 127. For the evidence from archaeology connecting the community at Qumran with that of the Essenes, see for instance R. de Vaux, Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1-45. For a translation and commentary of the Essenes at Qumran, see M. Knibb, The Qumran Community (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

Philo's description of some Essenes living in the deserts and some in towns made some scholars argue for different Essene groups.

Although the tide of contemporary scholarship still holds that the Essenes were the same as that of the Qumran community because of their many common perspectives and practices, the existence of similarities between them is not enough by itself to equate them. It may be that they are tapping into a stock of common ideas shared by a number of Israelite groups. A probable scenario could be that there may well have been many more groups within first-century Judaism than Josephus' simple three-fold schema by which he was trying to persuade his Greco-Roman audience that the Jews had philosophical schools analogous to the Greek ones.

In this section, the inquiry concerns the similarities and differences between the Essenes/Qumran community and Jesus' group that the target audience of Mark could have picked up on and how these could have shaped their understanding, if indeed they ever knew such a group. This necessitates looking at primary sources such as the Qumran writers, Philo (25 BC-41 CE), Josephus (37/38-100 CE), and Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE) to see how they described the association of the Essenes/Qumran community; thereby, we may assess how far Mark's depiction of the association of Jesus and his disciples could have been similar with or distinct from these groups. Although Philo, Josephus, and Pliny had their own philosophical biases and their limited historical information which coloured their presentation of events and data, generally they are considered by historians to have written reliable historical information which we can use as evidence and historical resources. The Essenes will be first compared and contrasted with the group of Jesus and then the Qumran community will also be compared and contrasted with the group of Jesus.

In case of the Essenes, Philo and Josephus narrate that they were over four thousands among the Jews of Palestine and Syria.⁶⁸ Although this number is generally taken as the population of all the Essenes, some scholars prefer to see this number to refer only to the male celibate members rather than to the whole Essene population. According to Pliny the Elder, these Essenes lived in the western shores of the Dead Sea.⁶⁹ The word Essene, as explained by Philo, is related to holiness, which was the aim of this group in getting away from the towns and cities to live in villages,⁷⁰ although some remained in the towns of Judea.⁷¹ If Mark's audience were knowledgeable of them, they would have likened the group of Jesus to those who were not ascetics and preferred to live in towns and cities even though they also emphasise holiness in the discussion on what were clean and unclean (Mark 7:1-23). Like the association of Jesus and his disciples, the Essenes did not hoard goods and they held everything in common while they lived a communal life in brotherhoods and emphasised the love of God, the love of virtue and the love of men.⁷² Other similarities between the Essenes and Jesus' group are as follows: both groups preferred other virtues than sacrifices⁷³ (although the group of Jesus celebrated the Passover meal, Mark 14:12-26); the practice of Jesus wherein he revealed some of his teachings to his disciples while concealing them from others (Mark 4:34)⁷⁴ is akin to the Essenic practice of revealing their teachings to other

⁶⁸ Philo, Prob. 12.75; Josephus, Ant. 18.1:5, 20-21.

⁶⁹ Pliny the Elder, Nat. 5.18.73.

⁷⁰ Philo, Prob. 12.75-76.

⁷¹ Philo, Hypoth. 11.1.

⁷² For the Essenes, see Philo, Prob. 12.77, 83, 85; Josephus, J.W. 2.8.3. For Jesus and his disciples, see for instance Mark 10:21-22; cf. Matt 19:21, 24 Luke 6:24; 18:22-24; John 15:9-17; 13:35; 14:21.

⁷³ Mark 12:33-34 and Josephus, Ant. 18.1.5.

⁷⁴ Outside Mark 4, Mark does not consistently portray Jesus as teaching in this fashion.

members while withholding from those of non-members;⁷⁵ the practice of Jesus' group of not carrying provisions in one of their missionary trips (Mark 6:8) is similar to the practice of the Essenes when they visited other members of their group without carrying provisions because their colleagues in the other place would provide for them.⁷⁶

In the case of the Qumran community, their love of men was directed only towards the members of their group while others were to be hated.⁷⁷ This is a contrast to the wider ambient Jesus' tradition, particularly that of loving one's enemies,⁷⁸ which would have resonated in Mark's audience's collective memory. The Qumran community also believed that salvation was only for them, whom they considered as the 'elected' few, while Jesus preached the message of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15) to different sorts of people, including sinners (Mark 2:17). When someone wanted to join the Qumran community and become a follower of their teachings and lifestyle, he applied to the guardian of the community surrendering all he had and lived together with them.⁷⁹ This is different from those who were disciples of Jesus who were personally called by Jesus one by one to be with him in his community and to be sent out by him (Mark 3:13-15). Moreover, there might be a parallel insofar as both Jesus and the Qumran community disapproved of the people currently running the temple, but their reasons for doing so were probably very different as elaborated by Meier:

For Qumran, the present temple is not to be entered or used because it is defiled; only after a future purification and renewal will a utopian or an eschatological temple be used by the Qumranites to offer fitting worship. For Jesus, the present temple, whatever its failings, is the temple willed by God for the supreme acts of worship by all Jews. It is, however, an institution that belongs to and is doomed to disappear with this present age. Apparently the full coming of

⁷⁵ Josephus, J.W. 2.8.7.

⁷⁶ Josephus, J.W. 2.8.4.

⁷⁷ 1QS 9.21ff.

⁷⁸ Not found in Mark but in Matt. 5:44

⁷⁹ 4QD^a 13.11-13; 1QS 1.11-13; 5.1-3; 6.2-3; This is also evident in Josephus, J.W. 2.124-33.

the kingdom of God in power would do away with the temple Jesus and his contemporaries used.⁸⁰

Other differences between the group of Jesus and that of the Qumran community are as follows: Jesus and his group mingled even with lepers (Mark 1:40-45; 14:3) while the Qumran community rejected such people (e.g. the maimed and mutilated, the mentally and physically disabled) in order to observe their purity rules and other standards, especially in their eschatological banquet;⁸¹ Jesus and his disciples did not follow the Qumran community's strict observation of the Sabbath and purification rites (Mark 2:27);⁸² Jesus used parables in his teaching (Mark 4:10-12) while the Qumran community set down endless laws, as found in the scrolls discovered at Qumran. Mark's presentation of Jesus is anti-rebellion (Mark 14:47-48) and especially the whole passion narrative shows Jesus giving no sign of hate for those persecuting him, while the Qumran community taught their followers to be ready for an apocalyptic war in which their association, the sons of light, would destroy all their enemies—the sons of darkness.⁸³

A reconstructed history based on the writings excavated at Qumran shows that, like the association of Jesus and his disciples, the Qumran community had a leader called 'Teacher of Righteousness' who led a group of followers in protest against the establishment of what he perceived as a false priesthood to establish what he believed to be the legitimate priesthood. Some scholars believe that the Teacher of Righteousness could have been a Zadokite and that he reacted against the priesthood of one who belonged to the Hasmonean group who, in the eyes of the Qumran community, was

⁸⁰ Meier, Marginal Jew, 3:501.

⁸¹ Edwin Yamauchi, 'Sectarian Parallels: Qumran and Colosse', Bibliotheca Sacra 121:482 (April 1964): 144.

⁸² Cf. Luke 6; Matt 2:27. For the Qumran Community's practice, see CD 11.13-14.

⁸³ This is the main theme of the War Scroll (1QM).

illegitimate.⁸⁴ He might also have protested against the lunar calendar used by those priests in control of the Jerusalem temple because he and his followers thought it best to use the older solar calendar.⁸⁵ Because of his protest he was persecuted with his followers, so they fled to the desert (in Qumran).⁸⁶ Although Jesus did not concern himself about which religious calendar one should observe (and hence, differed with the Teacher of Righteousness in this area), he has similarity of teachings and emphasis with that of the Teacher of Righteousness, especially in the way he viewed the imminent end of the world. However, it is not on a strictly regulated interpretation of Torah, which seems to have prevailed at Qumran. The Markan Jesus seems to sit relatively lightly to the Torah (e.g. Mark 7:1-23). Furthermore, like Jesus, the Teacher of Righteousness suffered⁸⁷ but was confident of his deliverance and victory.⁸⁸

However, the social location of the two groups appears to be very different: The Qumran community seem to have been priestly in origin (and thus relatively upper class) while Jesus' followers seem to have been mainly peasants and artisans (and thus a lower class movement). This would have assisted in persuading ordinary village folks to join Jesus' group, presently embodied by Mark's community. Moreover, when Jesus and his group mingled with other people, the audience were expected to view Jesus and his followers not as ascetics, in contrast to the Teacher of Righteousness and his followers who lived in the wilderness. There are other differences between the leaders of each group which the audience would presumably notice. Jesus is esteemed as a

⁸⁴ See Meier, Marginal Jew, 3:498.

⁸⁵ Meier, Marginal Jew, 3:529.

⁸⁶ 4QD^a 4.2-3; 4QD^a 6.5. See Frank Moore Cross, Jr., 'The Righteous Teacher and Essene Origins' in The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 88-120.

⁸⁷ 1QH1^a 4.8-9, 23; 5.5, 22-25; 8.27-28.

⁸⁸ 1QH1^a 7.7-8, 23-25; 9.24-26.

miracle worker in Mark's narrative, but there are no miracles done by the Teacher of Righteousness recorded in the Qumran literature. There is also no mention that the Qumran community's Teacher of Righteousness died for the sake of others, while in Mark's narrative Jesus' death is central and sacrificial—for the sake of many (Mark 10:45; 14:25), which the audience may well have appreciated in favour of Jesus than the Teacher of Righteousness.

4.7 Conclusions for the Characterisations of Jesus and the Disciples in Mark's Narrative

Although one cannot be certain how a first-century audience actually heard a particular oral narrative, it was demonstrated in this chapter that Mark's audience most probably would have perceived the characterization of Jesus and his disciples in relation to their Israelite popular tradition and their socio-political context, which would have aided in the construction of Mark's community's social identity. We based our findings on existing documents (coupled with informed historical imagination) and on how oral hermeneutics (with social memory theory) normally works to guide the interpretation of a narrative by helping to fill in what would otherwise be its indeterminacies, which would have been clear to both author and audience (given their common historical context) but are only implied in Mark's narrative.

As a result, the hearers of Mark's narrative would have been invited to recount the group of Jesus in relation to group traditions related to the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, our exploration supports the Jewishness of the social context of the association of Jesus and his disciples; and the way Mark's target audience understood the kind of relationship Jesus had with his disciples would have been both like and unlike other Jewish associations mentioned above. This is partly because Mark was able to exploit his audience's shared social memory especially with regards to the different

associations known by his audience to drive his point on the kind of relationship Jesus had with his disciples. Conversely, Mark's target audience would have brought knowledge of some stories, traditions, materials or concepts available in their socio-historical context to bear in the way they understood and appreciated the kind of relationship Jesus and the disciples had. This does not mean that all of Mark's target audience heard the association of Jesus and his disciples in the same way. It is because some would have brought in only a small amount of knowledge about the stories available in their socio-historical background to compare and contrast with the association of Jesus and his disciples, while others would have brought in more due to their extensive knowledge of the stories.

But although we have explored a number of leader-follower models that might have acted as a frame for the Markan audience's reception of the Jesus-disciple relationship in Mark, none of them was found to be a fully adequate fit to the disciple relationship depicted by Mark. Nevertheless, the Elijah-Elisha relationship was found to be the closest depiction of the nature of relationship Jesus had with his disciples, especially in the similarity of their itinerant work. The pre-70 CE proto-rabbinic predecessors and their students also closely resemble the nature of the association of Jesus and his disciples, particularly in the area of a master teaching his disciples. But the Zealot-like revolutionaries would have helped shaped the audience's understanding of Jesus as revolutionary, although not in a militaristic way. For Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples would have been understood by his target audience as a dramatization of an ideological clash, and this will be probed further in the next chapter. Might Jesus be an embodiment of a deeper message Mark wanted to communicate to his target audience? Since characters embody Mark's message, might the audience have been persuaded of Mark's ideological point of view represented by the character of

Jesus in contrast to the disciples and other characters at that time? Let us hear Mark himself on this issue as we compare and contrast Jesus with his disciples, especially the Twelve, in relation to other characters, to drive his ideological point of view.

CHAPTER 5: MARK'S CHARACTERISATIONS OF JESUS OVER AGAINST HIS DISCIPLES (IN VIEW OF OTHER CHARACTERS) AS DRAMATISATION OF AN IDEOLOGICAL CLASH

5.1 Introduction

As noted earlier, Jesus and his disciples are historical figures of their time, but they are emplotted by Mark to function within the context of the whole story in relation to other narrative elements like actions and events to drive his message. Accordingly, their group was understood by Mark's target audience not only as a historical assembly in comparison with other groups (as noted in the previous chapter), but as a representation of a deeper message (ideology) Mark wanted to convey by the way he characterised them.¹ Ideology here is understood in the broad sense as a set of ideas, beliefs or values, 'to which a community or social group ordinarily resort in situations of a certain kind',² but it also includes the narrow meaning within socio-political ideology which refers to how one may justify one's operations or actions. In Chatman's terms, it is someone's 'conceptual system' in contradistinction from someone's perception and interest.³ In other words, it is 'a particular way of construing reality; a system of attitudes, beliefs, values, and norms'.⁴

¹ See James Phelan, Reading People, Reading Plots: Character, Progression and the Interpretation of Narrative (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

² See John Plamenatz, Ideology: Key Concepts in Political Science (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970), 76.

³ Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 151-58.

⁴ Jack Dean Kingsbury, The Christology of Mark's Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, 47). See also Boris Uspensky, A Poetics of Composition The Structure of the Artistic Text and the Typology of a Compositional Form (trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 8-16; Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961), 73-74.

The main argument of this chapter concerns the movement from the understanding of Mark's audience about Jesus and his disciples in Mark's oral narrative as mere story, to grasping the ideological message embodied in the plotting of characters. This is because a message, especially in an oral context, is not presented in abstract formulations but is usually related to concrete forms and realities (e.g. personalities in a narrative).⁵ So it is essential to examine how Mark depicts Jesus and his disciples in relation to other characters and in connection with plots in order to understand his contention. It is also helpful to note how Mark adopted popular motifs, titles, and nicknames current in his community's memory (e.g. OT traditions and the Greco-Romans titles/epithets) and emplotted them within his narrative to make his points. Such items would have resonated with meaning beyond their semantic formulations when heard by Mark's first-century audience.⁶ The portrayal of the characters in the story in relation to other characters shows Mark's rhetoric in the use of traditions current in his community's cultural memory,⁷ so that his target audience would have been persuaded by his ideological thrust as they heard his narrative. In a way, the characters embody the message that Mark wanted to convey to his audience.

Thus, the rhetorical effect of Mark's narrative in the area of persuading his audience of his belief-system is central in this chapter, in accordance with the purpose

⁵ See Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 31-77.

⁶ See Holly H. Hearon, 'The Implications of Orality for the Studies of the Biblical Text' in Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory and Mark (eds. Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 6-7; Pieter Botha, 'Mark's Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of Some Traditions about Jesus', HvTSt 47 (1991): 318-24; Susan Niditch, 'Oral Register in the Biblical Libretto: Towards a Biblical Poetic', Oral Tradition 10 (1995): 396. For a study of the influences of the OT Traditions on the Synoptic Gospels, see Willard Swartley, Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels (Peabody: Henrickson Publishers, 1994).

⁷ As I have also my bias in reading Mark's narrative, for every reading will always be biased. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus (trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 309; George Aichele, Jesus Framed (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

of ancient rhetoric which is to speak or narrate persuasively to overcome hearers' resistance. Also, the centrality of Jesus is emphasised in relation to his disciples and other characters (given their politico-historical context—mainly the Roman occupation of first-century Palestine and their Israelite cultural heritage) for the purpose of identity formation by Mark's community. Hence, following Barry Schwartz's social memory theory and Richard Horsley's framework: *text-context-tradition* (greatly influenced by Foley's metonymic referencing of tradition as elaborated in chapter 3),⁸ this chapter pursues the question: How might Mark's target audience have heard and understood the function of the characterisations of Jesus over against his disciples (in relation to other characters) in view of Mark's ideological thrust and in relation to the construction of social identity? This is in concurrence with Weeden's assertion that presenting characters is a means by which an ancient author 'dramatizes' his central argument or message;⁹ thereby, the audience would have understood the central focus of the narrative through the portrayal of characters and through the events in which they are involved.¹⁰

Therefore, we need to look for oral/aural hints in the text of how Jesus and his disciples were characterised which would have aided in the reception of the ideological message of Mark, that is, whether the way Mark characterised them would have brought to mind some common cultural traditions. This is in accordance with Horsley's assertion of how a 'performer or "reader" recites a particular *message*, in a particular context, which resonates with an audience out of their common cultural tradition'.¹¹

⁸ See Richard Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 64.

⁹ Theodore Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 14 n. 18.

¹⁰Weeden, *Mark*, 17.

¹¹ Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 65.

Next, we need to observe how the characters of Jesus (the protagonist) and the Twelve (companions in the journey) relate to each other and to other characters: the authorities (opponents or antagonists), the minor characters (such as the other followers of Jesus), the crowd, the Gentile rulers, and the unseen beings, including God. This will be done through the eyes of Mark and through the ears of his target audience as Mark portrays his characters in his narrative—even while using helpful politico-cultural background information, gleaned from the previous chapter, to understand the characters better. We need to look at what ideologies Mark’s audience would have gleaned through trying to understand the way Mark portrays his characters. There would have been a move from the story level of the narrative to its rhetoric because that is the way the language of the narrative would influence an audience.¹²

In trying to persuade his audience, Mark presents Jesus as the only fully reliable character in his narrative. Thus, Jesus’ point of view becomes normative for Mark’s narrative¹³ and, thus, Christology (that is, the way Mark presents the significance of Jesus) becomes an ideological option for the audience. We may often be tempted to think of Christology only in terms of theological reflections (e.g. high and low Christology). But such a way of approaching Mark’s Christology is limited because it does not bring out the person of Jesus as would have been understood in Mark’s socio-historical context. While I disagree with Richard Horsley when he overdoes his detheologising and asserts that whatever theological doctrine found in Mark is the creation of theologians (as if it were wrong to call Mark a theologian),¹⁴ I go along with

¹² Robert Fowler, Let the Reader Understand (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 2.

¹³ Joel Williams, Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 91.

¹⁴ See Richard Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2001), x. I think it is not wrong to call Mark a theologian as in Ralph

him in understanding Christology more broadly in accordance with the way it would have been relayed and received in a first-century Palestinian context. It is because Mark's narrative, as understood then and there, 'is about politics and economics as inseparable from religion'¹⁵ rather than theological formulations or creed. Horsley explains, in accordance with his research and study of ancient Palestine under the Roman empire, that Mark's story 'portrays a cast of characters in ominous power-relations, with the chief priests and Pilate wielding death-dealing political-economic power and the haemorrhaging woman and the poor widow in desperate economic circumstances' so that 'Jesus' exorcisms of "unclean spirits" turn out to be battles in a wider political struggle'.¹⁶

Horsley's position goes against scholars who claim that Mark's narrative is de-politicised and non-revolutionary (presenting Jesus as pro-Roman rather than a messianic traitor), or that it was a redirected attack upon the Jewish authorities and not against Rome.¹⁷ Scholars in this line of thought argue that in an attempt to protect his community from Roman authorities, Mark was trying to distance his community from the Jewish community, where nationalistic rebels came from. However, the evidence behind such argument is proven unlikely by Adam Winn,¹⁸ so the audience would have heard Mark's message as being not only in conflict with Jewish authorities but also with

Martin, Mark: Evangelist and Theologian (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972); Marie Noonan Sabin, Reopening the Word: Reading Mark as Theology in the Context of Early Judaism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Wilfrid J. Harrington, Mark: Realistic Theologian (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story, x.

¹⁶ Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story, x.

¹⁷ See S.G.F. Brandon, The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church: A Study of the Effects of the Jewish Overthrow of A. D. 70 on Christianity (London: SPCK, 1951), 185-205; H.N. Roskam, The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in Its Historical and Social Context (NTS 114; Leiden: Brill, 2004).

¹⁸ See Winn, The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 2008.

Rome, since ‘opposition to Roman oppression regularly marked the immediate context of Jesus’ mission’.¹⁹ Therefore, I favour Horsley’s presentation of a political and revolutionary Jesus, although I disagree with many of his readings of the Markan texts as will be shown below.

Thus, this chapter inquires more specifically: Could it be that Mark and his audience understood the significance of Jesus even more broadly and profoundly than Horsley suggests? Is their interest more than just ‘independence from Roman imperial rule so that the people can again be empowered to renew their traditional way of life under the rule of God’?²⁰ That is, were the characterisations of Jesus (over against his disciples and other characters) understood as counter-ideology to include the following nuance of ideological revolution: (1) Jesus (representing the little tradition) against Israel’s great tradition centred in Jerusalem and represented by Jewish authorities (e.g. Priests and Pharisees)?, (2) Jesus against the Gentile rulers’ [i.e. Rome’s] ideology of imperial domination?, (3) Jesus against the mistaken point of view and behaviour of the twelve disciples, just like other rebels?, and (4) Jesus against the domination of Satan and demonic forces? If these items seem a little too all-encompassing, what is being observed is specifically related to the way of dominance and power in contrast to the way of Jesus (Mark 1:2-3), which is the way of service and sacrifice (Mark 10:45). These core values Jesus was promoting and his significance as one promoting them will be emphasized in the following discussion.

Such a comparative characterisation of Jesus and over against his disciples (in view of other characters) in Mark’s narrative as dramatizing an ideological clash is

¹⁹ Christopher Bryan, Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.

²⁰ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 104.

sensible, because ‘dramatization’ is an indicator of an oral narrative.²¹ Besides, tying one’s message to character/s is typical in oral context (especially in the ancient world): the man is the message. This is especially so in OT biblical narratives meant for public reading, which can be taken as the background to Mark’s narrative. Examples of OT contrasting characters meant to portray positive or negative messages include Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Abraham and Lot, David and Goliath, David and Saul, Nabal and Abigail, Job and his friends, Elijah and Jezebel, the Israelites and the Egyptians (and other nations).

Moreover, the different parables of Jesus (including acted parables, e.g. when Jesus washes the disciples’ feet, John 13:1-17) are examples of dramatizing abstract ideas by the use of characters and events. Furthermore, there is an expectation that the audience will hear more than the surface of the story. After hearing the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-9), Jesus’ disciples inquired about its meaning (Mark 4: 10). But the expectation is for them to understand not only the flow of the story but the message behind the story, as notable in Jesus’ questions: ‘Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?’ (Mark 4:13). Thus, in Mark’s narrative, the characters and characterisations are presented not for their own sake, but to embody messages or ideologies which Mark wished to convey to his audience. Conversely, the messages are not mere abstract ideas but are tied to characters (especially the person of Jesus) and characterisations.

²¹ R.A. Horsley and J.A. Draper, Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 183-84.

5.2 Jesus against Israel's Great Tradition Centred in Jerusalem (Mark 2-3; 5:22-43; 11:12-22; 12:38-44; 10:1-12)

Looking at the first ideological conflict, the characterisation of Jesus (and thus, the significance of Jesus) would also have been understood by Mark's target audience as revolution against the current priestly establishment centred in Jerusalem, the Pharisaic movements, which are in connivance with Rome's installed leadership, and Herod and his loyalists (the Herodians, a party promoting the interests of Herod's dynasty; Mark 3:6; 8:15). Here, Jesus represents the little tradition in contrast to Israel's great tradition centred in Jerusalem. While there were a number of Pharisees and priests who revolted against and died under Roman domination, those who connived with the Herodians most likely accepted the necessity of Roman domination at that time. Ḥanina, the deputy high priest (prefect of the priests), is credited with the admonition: 'Pray for the peace of the empire (*mal' kūt*), since if it were not for fear of it men would devour each other alive'. Another Jewish leader, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, 'counselled submission to Rome at the time of the greater revolt sixty years later and acknowledged Vespasian in advance as world-ruler and Temple-destroyer'.²²

While Jesus and his companions are presented by Mark as a kind of politico-religious revolutionaries marching forth from Galilee to Jerusalem, the geographical prominence of Galilee and Jerusalem in the narrative would have been intentionally contrasted by Mark: Galilee as the place of Jesus' origin (representing the little tradition) and Jerusalem as the centre of Jewish authorities and great 'tradition of the elders' (Mark 7:1-5).²³ That is why, on their way, Jesus and his disciples encountered

²² F.F. Bruce, 'Render to Caesar' in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 250-51.

²³ See further discussion in Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 149-176.

Jewish religious leaders, which made conflicts inevitable, for the ways and ideologies of Jesus and his disciples were oftentimes in opposition to the ways and ideologies of the Jewish authorities.

There are instances in the narrative which place the significance of Jesus in opposition to Jewish ideology, and the way they are presented would have affected the audience's reception as they were invited to accept Jesus and his ideology. Using our methodological approach to demonstrate this point, we will expound Mark 2-3, placing it in its oral-performative context in first-century Palestine. We will identify tangible oral/aural hints (oral register) of how it was supposedly relayed and received. We will also move from one episode to another since that is the way an ancient oral narrative is designed, unlike modern literary narratives which are designed in a 'Freytag pyramid' as discussed in chapter 3. In addition, we will demonstrate the evocation of the feeling of anger against the Jewish leaders on the parts of the audience which Mark would have intended as his narrative was performed. In this way, we will show that Mark not only used argument to persuade his audience, but exploited his audience's emotions (such as anger and sympathy) for his cause, which is common in rhetoric, particularly in an oral performance.²⁴ We shall also show how Mark's narrative would have engaged with the social memory of his audience for the establishment of their communal identity. The relevant aspects of social memory employed herein will include framing, keying, parallelism, and repetition, although parallelism and repetition are also aspects of an oral register.²⁵

²⁴ Werner Kelber, review of Pieter Botha, Orality and Literacy in Early Christianity, Biblical Theology Bulletin 44.3 (2014):153.

²⁵ Repetition or redundancy is one of the characteristics of oral communication according to Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 31-77.

In the healing of a paralytic (Mark 2:1-12), we may envisage the performer acting like Jesus and saying to an imaginary paralytic: ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’ (Mark 2:5). Such direct (rather than indirect) address is more appropriate in an oral performance before a live audience.²⁶ So when the dramatic act of Jesus healing the sick happened and the man ‘walked out in full view of them’ (Mark 2:12), the man and his friends are meant to be understood as models of those who believed (Mark 9:2) and experienced Jesus, in contrast to the teachers of the law who did not believe in Jesus but opposed him because they could not understand his identity (Mark 2:6-7).

In an oral performance, there is an expectation for the performer to dramatize skilfully the performance of the scene in the story.²⁷ Thus, he/she would be expected to relay the anger of Jesus directed against the teachers of the law who accused him as a blasphemer after saying to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’ (Mark 2:5). Then the audience were expected to feel the intensity of Jesus’ anger when the performer raised his voice: ‘Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say to the paralytic ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, “Get up, take your mat and walk”? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....’ He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home’ (Mark 2:8-11).

An issue arises of how Mark’s audience would have understood the statement of Jesus: ‘Your sins are forgiven’. One option is as follows: Mark seems to present Jesus as proclaiming divine forgiveness as notable in the divine passive Ἀφίενταί σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι. If so, his offence would be claiming to speak on behalf of God (with full authority, Mark 2:10) in this manner and thus exercising a function the priestly authorities in the Temple regarded as their prerogative. The problem with this

²⁶ See W. Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 68, 127.

²⁷ See Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel, 68, 127.

understanding is that the controversy extends to the scribes' accusation of Jesus as 'blaspheming' because he is usurping the prerogative only God has—to forgive sins (Mark 2:7; cf. Exo. 34:6-7; Isa. 43:25; 44:22).

Thus, a second option is more compelling in the context of Mark's narrative in a first-century oral context where a character represents a message: Jesus is presented as the embodiment of Yahweh with a deeper message; he is the new agent of God who walks among men with full authority from God (Mark 2:10) for the cleansing and renewal of Israel.²⁸ This would have been repulsive to the holders of the great tradition of the Jerusalem Temple (Mark 2:7), but the audience were directed to side with Jesus (who is on the side of God), which is the whole thrust of the narrative. They were invited, not to be critical of Jesus as the scribes were, but to be amazed and praise God, in just the way those who witnessed how the paralytic was healed were amazed in the narrative (Mark 2:12). This depends on the performer understanding Mark's view of the identity and character of Jesus so as to be able to offer a good oral performance that presents the authority of Jesus. The amazement of the crowd serves as a hint or an emotional indicator for the oral performance of Mark's narrative and the audience's participation in the oral performance, since audience response is an indicator of an oral performance.²⁹

While the episode above is a conflict between Jesus and the teachers of the law with reference to forgiving sins, the next episode (Mark 2:13-17) presents their conflict with reference to eating with sinners. The special attention Jesus gave to tax-collectors and sinners would have been a provocation to Jewish leadership.³⁰ It started with a

²⁸ See N.T. Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 645-51.

²⁹ See indicators of an oral performance in Horsley and Draper, Whoever Hears You Hears Me, 183-84.

³⁰ See Helmut Merkel, 'The Opposition between Jesus and Judaism' in Jesus and the Politics of His Day (ed. Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 135.

crowd coming to Jesus, then the calling of a tax collector by the name of Levi. Later, Jesus and his disciples were having dinner with Levi including many tax collectors and sinners. Here, tax collectors were categorised with sinners, most probably because of the following: (1) they were known for their dishonesty, (2) they were usually ceremonially unclean because of their contacts with Gentiles, and (3) they support Roman tyranny through collection of heavy taxes. But Levi was not the only one who followed Jesus in this incident. There is also a group that followed Jesus (Mark 2:15) described as πολλοί (many). But who are these πολλοί? One option is to understand them as the ‘many’ tax collectors and sinners who joined the meal. But the placement of the second πολλοί in the sentence is just after the words τοῖς μαθηταῖς (his disciples), making us view πολλοί as referring to those disciples a better option. This means that Jesus was already gathering a number of followers out from the crowd other than the first disciples he called in Mark 1:16-21.

The meal fellowship Jesus had with ‘tax collectors’ and ‘sinners’ should not only be understood as the acceptance by Jesus of Levi’s hospitality, but a signal for the audience to take note if they were to understand Mark’s emphasis in verse 17: ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners’. This is because while the teachers of the law (who were scribes of the Pharisees) were intentionally voicing how much they looked down upon others as sinners (which in turn put themselves up as righteous), Jesus makes himself available for the sinners just like a doctor for the sick. Thus, Mark’s statement ‘καὶ ἀκούσαζ’ (which is emphatic in the text) would have been emphasised by the performer for the audience to take heed of Jesus’ critique against the scribes and in favour of those who cannot reach the purity standards of the Pharisees (e.g. Mark 7:1-13), for Jesus was able

to accept those who were considered morally unfit and spiritually needy. Among the audience, perhaps, were those rejected by religious leaders of their days as morally unfit, and they could find the compassion they needed not from the leaders of Judaism who looked down upon them, but from Jesus who was willing to serve them through healing and forgiveness. In this case, the compassionate and forgiving heart of Jesus is connected to his forgiving act in the preceding episode. This will be reiterated further in the next chapter when we emphasize the practical effect of such in the area of calling the audience to belong to Jesus' group.

Let us skip the episode with regards to how Jesus was questioned about fasting (Mark 2:18-22), as this has been discussed in the previous chapter (4.2). We now move to the episode when Jesus asserted himself as Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28). In this incident, Jesus would have been understood by Mark's target audience as rebelling against the Jewish authorities' interpretation of what it was lawful to do on the Sabbath, an issue that could reasonably be debated in the Judaism of the time. Jesus made use of David and his men's unlawful acts to defend his disciples picking 'some heads of grain' against the accusation of the Pharisees that such act was unlawful on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-24). This would have evoked the audience's collective memory of a particular Israelite tradition, rather than necessarily their recollection of the written text of 1 Sam. 21:1-6, not least because Mark confuses the name of the high priest (Abiathar instead of Ahimelech; Mark 2:26). This then shows that Jesus is the true interpreter of the Sabbath as he is 'Lord even of the Sabbath' (Mark 2:28). So the audience would have understood that as David ate the consecrated bread which is lawful only for priests to eat, Jesus was in conflict with the current priestly tradition—the tradition of the elders which become oppressive to ordinary citizens, since the purpose of the Sabbath was to make life less burdensome, not more so. The implication for the audience would have

been to find freedom from oppressive traditions through Jesus' interpretation of the Sabbath, which serves humanity: 'Sabbath is created for the service of humanity, not humans for the Sabbath' (Mark 2:27; my translation).

The Sabbath theme is repeated in another incident (Mark 3:1-6), which is not unusual in an oral performance (especially meant for emphasis and connection). While some of those in the synagogue (who were later clarified as the Pharisees in Mark 3:6) were trying to use the sick person as a trap to accuse Jesus (Mark 3:2), Jesus used him as an opportunity to advance his liberating argument and attack his opponents' hardness of heart using a question of two parts (Mark 3:4). The first part concerns the legality of doing good or evil on a Sabbath. The second part concerns the legality of saving life or killing. Jesus' question implies that much good, including the saving of life, has been sacrificed because of the way Jesus' opponents interpreted the Torah, which could have caused evil and even unnecessary deaths. Jesus demonstrated his belief by healing the sick person on a Sabbath to prove his argument that it is not unlawful to do good or save life on a Sabbath. This provoked the Pharisees to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus (Mark 3:6), the very opposite of Jesus' act: to do good and save life.

Why such a plot to kill Jesus? Was he understood as breaking the law? But Jesus' act in Mark 3:1-5 does not actually meet the official definition of 'work', since Jesus merely speaks to the man he heals, and talking didn't count as work for the purposes of Sabbath observance. It's not entirely clear, however, whether the Markan narrative assumes this point, or whether the Markan audience is intended merely to understand Jesus' healing as a clear breach of the official view of the Sabbath. Either way, such a sustained negative portrayal of the Pharisees and the scribes (as villains in the narrative as in the following episode, Mark 3:20-30) would have intensified the feeling of resentment against the Jewish authorities felt by Mark's target audience.

Moreover, how Jesus ‘looked around at them in anger’ (Mark 3:5) would have been an emotional indicator which validated the audience’s anger against Jewish authorities. At the same time, how Jesus was ‘deeply distressed’ (at the ‘stubborn hearts’ of the Pharisees) would have challenged the audience not to be stubborn themselves in understanding and following the way of Jesus. It may also have reinforced the audience’s indignation at the behaviour of the Pharisees and Herodians.

Let us move to another way of making use of the ‘oral register’ in the Markan text to show how it would have aided in the communication and comprehension of Jesus’ perspective against Jewish authorities. What we will do is to demonstrate how sounds of figures in the narrative in relation to the Israelite tradition (social memory) would have affected the hearing and understanding of Mark’s narrative, with special attention to Jesus’ conflict with Jewish authorities. Here we employ the notion of keying or framing a story to an earlier or more salient tradition. For instance, Mark 5:25-34 contains the story of the haemorrhaging woman (suffering for twelve [δώδεκα] years). For Mark’s target audience who were knowledgeable about Levitical laws, the woman would have been understood as both defiled and causing others to be defiled because of her bleeding, which was then considered impure (Lev. 12:1-8; 15:19-30). By his sandwich method or intercalation (a common feature of popular story-telling),³¹ Mark inserted the story of the hemorrhaging woman in between the story of Jairus (president of the synagogue) and his twelve (δώδεκα) year old daughter (Mark 5:21-24; 35-43), showing the connection of the two stories. The word δώδεκα, which will be reiterated below, would have been easily heard by Mark’s audience to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. This is because, according to Foley’s theory of metonymic referentiality, the

³¹ See Gerald Downing, *Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century* (JSNTSup 200; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000; Reprint, T&T Clark, 2004), 118–32.

δώδεκα functions as a metonym for the twelve tribes. This may imply that as the Jewish nation was sick and dying, not even her rulers and leaders could help. As shown in the story, the president of the synagogue accepted his limited authority and recognised Jesus' authority by falling at his feet (Mark 5:22). Thus the stories invite the audience to see that only Jesus was able to revive the sick and dying nation of Israel; it cannot be left to the responsibility of the current Jewish leadership. For even the current Jewish leaders, like Jairus, were not prevented from recognising the authority and ability of Jesus.

In another instance, the temple and fig-tree stories (Mark 11:12-22) are both parabolic and prophetic. They tell about the endangered state of the great tradition of Israel, even its future destruction. There is for sure a close representation of these stories since Mark tied them together by his known sandwich method, which according to Joanna Dewey (as noted in chapter three) is a feature of Mark's oral method of composition. Mark inserted the story of the temple in between the story of the fig tree to illustrate that Israel was not bearing fruit: it looked attractive but bore only leaves. The fig-tree, which usually represents the Jewish nation (as might be suggested by the partial parallel with the parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard),³² could be taken in this context to represent the Temple in Jerusalem, the pride of the Jews because it is one of the wonders in the ancient world and symbolic of God's presence and favour upon them. The Temple was also believed to be God's dwelling place, and was regarded as the holiest place on earth, as well as being the one legitimate place of sacrifice, which was thought of as being essential to maintaining the covenant.

The problem is that the space provided for non-Jewish people in the Temple was turned by Jewish leaders into a market place for selling and buying (Mark 11:15-16).

³² Isa. 34:4; Jer. 5:17; 29:17; Hos. 2:12; 9:10; Joel 1:7; Mic. 7:1-6.

Supposedly, non-Jews were expected to participate in the temple courts. This is implicit in Jesus' quotation of Isa. 56:7: 'my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'. But the business of selling and buying in the Gentile court is robbing the non-Jewish people of their space. That is, the Temple was failing to bear fruit by welcoming non-Jewish. This is one of the injustices that the Jewish leaders did to outsiders, in addition to other injustices done towards other Jewish people themselves (e.g. Mark 12:40 being explained below). The Temple was outwardly attractive because of its magnificence (Mark 13:1) but actually fruitless just like the fig tree (Mark 11:12-13). So Jesus' protest is more than just the act of purifying or cleansing the temple invaded by commercialism, as traditionally understood with the often used title of the story: 'The Cleansing of the Temple'.

Since acted parables were common among the audience's heritage (Hos. 1:1-3; Matt. 13:10-15; John 4:6-11), Jesus' protest at the temple and cursing the fig tree would have been understood as a revolution against the malpractice of Jewish authorities. This is especially so because the Jewish leaders, who were profiting from the trade in the temple, wanted to kill Jesus after witnessing Jesus' act at the temple (Mark 11:18). More specifically, Jesus' protest at the temple would have been seen as an attack on the worship itself, since the buying and selling Jesus attacked was essential to the operation of the sacrificial system that lay at the heart of Temple worship. Moreover, such a demonstration would have been understood as a prophetic action symbolizing the destruction of the Temple, since 'den of robbers' (Mark 11:17) echoes Jeremiah's prophecy of the Temple's destruction (Jer. 7:11). We can note a similar case in Josephus's complaint about the people who had taken over the temple as a base of revolutionary operations during the siege of Jerusalem leading to its ensuing

destruction.³³ That is, since Josephus picks up on the term (‘den of robbers’) may suggest something about its use beyond the people who had direct access to a scroll of Jeremiah, so the ‘den of robbers’ phrase may have acted metonymically as a referent to the Jeremiah-tradition.

In another example, Jesus favoured the poor widow who gave only a fraction of a penny in contrast to the rich people who put large amounts of their money in the treasury (Mark 12:41-44). This story is often used as an example of good giving. It can even be understood as sacrificial giving which prefigures the sacrificial act of Jesus on the cross. But since the story is told after Mark 12:40 where the Jewish leaders are said to have devoured widow’s (χρηῶν) houses, in the ears of the audience the widow could have rhetorically functioned as a rebuttal against Israel’s teachers of the law who took advantage of widows like her, a χήρα. That is, since the word ‘widow’ in Mark 12:40 is mentioned again in another story in Mark 12:41-44, Mark expected the audience to understand the connection of the two stories. Thus, if the audience were knowledgeable of the plight of widows in their politico-economic context—so often abused and impoverished, they would have felt indignation against the oppressive practices of the Jewish leadership in connivance with Rome. Moreover, Mark expected his audience to note the contrast that while the teachers of the law took advantage of widows, Jesus appreciated one of them; thus, making the audience side with Jesus rather than the Jewish leadership.

Also, Jesus’ mention of the Jewish tradition of the creation of humans—male and female—based on Gen. 1:27 (Mark 10:6) to defend his anti-divorce policy would have been understood as a protection against the abuses against women constituted by the ease of sending them away with a divorce certificate (Mark 10:4), which often left

³³ Josephus, J.W. 4.4.3.

them with no protection or means of support. What the Pharisees taught as lawful (based on Deut. 24:1ff.) was understood by Jesus as symptomatic of their hardness of hearts (Mark 10:5). Here, Jesus would have been heard as the new interpreter of the law, rather than the Pharisees or the scribes.

The foregoing stories present the significance of Jesus as a critique against Jewish ideology. It can be added that such stories show Jesus' 'message, actions, and movements as fulfilment of the history and hopes of the people of Israel'.³⁴ They present 'the renewal of Israel under the enabling kingdom of God spearheaded by Jesus'.³⁵ If Mark portrays Jesus' movement as a renewal of Israel, then his hearers would have got 'the sense that the story was "scripted" in Israel's history and cultural tradition'³⁶, or that the characterisation of the disciples was framed in the story of the twelve tribes of Israel. This has previously been articulated by Swartley in his claim that the Synoptic Gospels were shaped by Israel's tradition of journey, conquest, and kingship.³⁷ So while Mark's target audience would have viewed Jesus' group as like and unlike other official and popular groups in the first-century Palestine (as noted in the previous chapter), they would also have understood them as the new people of God wherein Jesus fulfils the hopes and aspirations of Israel,³⁸ which was not being met by the current Jewish leadership. And the implication for the audience would have been to

³⁴ Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story, 231.

³⁵ Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story, 235.

³⁶ Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story, 231.

³⁷ See Swartley, Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels.

³⁸ See Richard A. Horsley, 'Early Christian Movements: Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel', HTS 62.4 (2006): 1201-25; John Fuellenbach, The Kingdom of God (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 138; Carey C. Newman, ed. Jesus and the Restoration of Israel (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

side with Jesus rather than the Jewish leadership; to belong to Jesus' group rather than to any other group.

5.3 Jesus against Rome's Ideology of Imperial Domination (Mark 1:1-15, 4:30-32; 5:1-20; 8:22-26; 10:42-44; 11:10; 12:17; 13:26; 15:39)

We move to the second area of ideological conflict (Jesus against the Gentile rulers' [i.e. Rome's] ideology of imperial domination), set within the socio-political context in which the narrative was composed and received. The mention of particular figures and events would have called to mind figures and events related to the audience's socio-political context and prominent in their collective memory, according to Foley's metonymic theory. Moreover, the way Mark narrates would also have evoked a feeling of sympathy for Jesus and antipathy against Rome. So Mark's target audience would have been invited to view the narrative as a rebuttal of the promise of Rome to serve its constituents, especially if the narrative is written prior to or just after 70 CE (which is being assumed in this work). Mark seems to say that Rome's service should not be imitated because it is not true service but domination and cruelty.

Through our oral-memorial-comparative approach, we will analyse passages in Mark's Gospel which invite the audience to view the narrative as a refutation against the way of Rome in favour of the way of Jesus. For instance, Mark 1:1-15 appears to be a direct attack upon Roman rule. However, the title 'the Son of God' (υιοῦ θεοῦ) in reference to Jesus in Mark 1:1 is problematic as it does not appear in some manuscripts. This was either an expansion or omission by the copyist. Nonetheless, both variants would have existed in an oral performance and such would not have been considered a big problem in an oral culture, where people are more tolerant of different versions as long as the gist or the general sense of the story is there in the performance.

The title of Jesus as ‘Son of God’ brings to mind Daniel’s description of the fourth creature walking with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and described as one ‘like a son of a god’. If Mark intends to associate ‘Son of God’ with ‘like a son of a god’,³⁹ then his target audience would have thought of the ‘embodied saving presence of God’ in the person of Jesus.⁴⁰

So Mark’s opening seems to tell his audience that the way of Jesus is the good news to hear and adhere to. This is in contrast to the good news of the Roman emperor (about a birth of his heir or military conquest), for according to the Priene Calendar Inscription in honour of Augustus Caesar, ‘the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning of the good news for the world’.⁴¹ Such an opening is a direct challenge to the existing authority and a refusal to embrace the ideology of domination exemplified by the rule of Rome.⁴² Craig Evans notes that it is one of Mark’s main purposes to set Jesus’ presentation of good news over that of Caesar’s and his way of imperialism.⁴³ So Mark would have been sympathetic with others who revolted against Rome, especially that some of his audience would have joined or were tempted to join the armed revolution for freedom. Nevertheless, Mark does not endorse the way of armed revolt, but Jesus’ way of nonviolent means of revolution—the way of service, suffering and sacrifice for the sake of many (Mark 10:45). Such was preceded by other nonviolent

³⁹ Although many scholars do not see a connection, a plausible influence that Dan. 7:13 has on Mark’s use of the title of Jesus as ‘Son of Man’ is noted by Winn, *The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel*, 105.

⁴⁰ Richard Hays, ‘Who is the God That Will Deliver You?’ in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (eds. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 310.

⁴¹ Craig Evans, ‘Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel’, *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000): 61-81. See also V. Ehrenberg and A. H. M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (2d ed; Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 82; H. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 3-4; A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (New York: Harper & Row, 1927), 366.

⁴² C.f. Winn, *The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel*, 35.

⁴³ Evans, ‘Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription’, 76-80.

protests, ‘apparently in full awareness that even minimal defiance would almost certainly lead to their torture and brutal execution’.⁴⁴

When John was introduced, Mark 1:2-3 (which primarily speaks about God in the OT) would have been familiar to the audience’s ears in accordance with their popular oral tradition (an allusion to Isa. 40:3). Here, the audience were expected to connect the ‘good news of Jesus’ to that of the OT; it is a continuation of what God has started in history. On top of this, the audience were expected to view Jesus as the embodiment of Yahweh mentioned by the prophets; he is the one who fulfilled popular expectations and not the Roman emperor Vespasian, as was propagated.⁴⁵ Similarly, the next scene at the baptism of Jesus would surely imply a very intimate relationship Jesus had with God, where a voice from heaven says directly to Jesus: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased’ (Mark 1:11). Here, the secret identity of Jesus is established early so that in the following scenes the audience could appreciate ‘the significance of events which are misunderstood’ especially by the twelve disciples.⁴⁶ The audience were, hereby, invited to understand God’s statement of Jesus in relation to their knowledge of royal coronation Psalm (e.g. Psalm 2:7), which establishes this early how Jesus should be known as the Son of God. Jesus’ divine sonship is of a divine origin; he is the true ‘Son of God’ and not the Roman emperors or other messianic claimants.

After baptism, Jesus started preaching in Galilee of the coming βασιλεία of God (Mark 1:14-15), which would have been also revolutionary. While many readers of the Synoptic Gospels have taken ‘the βασιλεία of God’ to be some kind of spiritual, non-

⁴⁴ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 40.

⁴⁵ Josephus, J.W. 6:5:4

⁴⁶ Morna Hooker, The Message of Mark (London: Epworth Press, 1983), 5.

political entity that wasn't at all threatening to Roman rule, the tide of contemporary scholarship is flowing to the contrary. For instance, The Gospel of Matthew in Its Roman Imperial Context, edited by John K. Riches and David C. Sim, presents an anti-imperial stance of Matthew against Rome.⁴⁷ Adam Winn also argues for a political and revolutionary message against Rome in his The Purpose of Mark's Gospel: An Early Response to Roman Imperial Propaganda.⁴⁸ Likewise, in Luke's Jesus in the Roman Empire and the Emperor in the Gospel of Luke, Pyung Soo Seo sees Luke's narrative as having political and anti-Roman imperial overtones, although he qualifies that such a view does not mean aiming to overthrow the Roman empire.⁴⁹ So we view Jesus' preaching of a new kingdom to have been heard as a direct attack upon the kingdom of Rome. Although Jesus is not as violent and militant as many revolutionaries who came from Galilee (as discussed in 4.5 of the previous chapter), his preaching of the βασιλεία of God is revolutionary against existing rulers at that time, specifically Roman rulers. This is because Mark seems to have intentionally juxtaposed a new kingdom and a new 'good news' (proclaimed by Jesus) with that of Rome's kingdom and good news.

Similarly, Jesus' parable of a mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32), which is among the three seed parables in Mark (the other two are in Mark 4:3-20; 4:26-29), appears to present a revolutionary message. It presents the 'kingdom of God' preached about by Jesus to be like a very small mustard seed which yet grew to be the largest of all garden plants. The two questions having the same point, which is to liken (ὁμοιώσωμεν) or describe in parable (ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολῇ θῶμεν) the kingdom of God (Mark 4:30),

⁴⁷ John Riches and David Sim, eds., The Gospel of Matthew in Its Roman Imperial Context (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005).

⁴⁸ Winn, The Purpose of Mark's Gospel.

⁴⁹ Pyung Soo Seo, Luke's Jesus in the Roman Empire and the Emperor in the Gospel of Luke (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2015).

are for emphasis to call the attention of the audience regarding the importance of the story. Also the phrase ὅταν σπαρῆ (when it is sown) is awkwardly repeated in verses 31 and 32, if analysed in its written form. But since it is meant for oral emphasis, the small seed being sown is repeated to contrast its potential growth which is greater (μεῖζον) than all the garden plants. This parable is usually understood as teaching not to despise small beginnings, which is valid in principle, as in the interpretation of D. E. Nineham: ‘The example of the mustard seed should prevent us from judging the significance of results by the size of the beginnings’.⁵⁰

However, the fact that the seed grows to be the largest among the garden plants, would have been heard by Mark’s target audience as a direct attack against Rome’s kingdom of power and domination. This is because the way Mark tells the story echoes the Israelite tradition among the prophets with regards to trees (which is used in Matt. 13:32 and Luke 13:19) representing kingdoms (Ezek. 31 and Dan. 4).⁵¹ And since the plant grows to be a large shrub rather than a great tree (used as a symbol of imperial might in Ezekiel 17:22-24), which does not meet the prevalent expectation of people at that time, might itself have been seen as a critique of imperial forms of domination. Not that Jesus was against power or ruling itself (for Jesus sets God’s powerful rule over against others), but he was against the way Rome understood and implemented it by domination, terrorism and tyranny—by way of ‘crucifixion, mass slaughter and enslavement, massacres of whole towns and annihilation of whole peoples’.⁵² This is a contrast to the ‘rest’ (Mark 4:32) accorded by the kingdom of God being preached by

⁵⁰ D.E. Nineham, *Saint Mark* (Pelican Gospel Commentary; Baltimore: Penguin, 1963), 144.

⁵¹ See Joshua Garroway, ‘The Invasion of a Mustard Seed: Reading of Mark 5:1-20’, *JSNT* 32.1 (2009): 57-75.

⁵² Horsely, *Jesus and Empire*, 27. See also Winn, *The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel*, 40; Tat-siong Benny Liew, ‘Tyranny, Boundary, and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark’s Gospel’, *JSNT* 73 (1999)7-31; Julius Caesar, *Bell. Gall.* 4.19; Pliny, *Ep.* 2.7.2; Polybius 10.15-17; Josephus, *J.W.* 5:7:1-11:2.

Jesus represented by the grown up mustard seed. Such would have invited the audience to favour the way of Jesus and to feel indignation against the way of Rome.

The healing of the demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1-20) is also revolutionary. Ched Myers⁵³ and Richard Horsley⁵⁴ connect the healing of a demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1-20) to Roman occupation of Palestine. Such a connection is sensible given the socio-political context of Mark's target audience, not least given that the Jews understood Gentiles as unclean like swine. If such is the case, then the hearers would have understood Mark's use of the Latin word of a military unit Legion (Λεγιών) to refer not just to mean 'numerous' as implied by the demon-possessed words 'for we are many'.⁵⁵ Instead, Legion would have been heard referring to Roman groups of soldiers numbering a thousand that 'burned the villages around such towns as Magdala and Sepphoris and slaughtered or enslaved thousands of their parents or grandparents'.⁵⁶ It is appropriate, therefore, to connect the destructiveness of the man (similar to the destructiveness of the storm, Mark 4:35-41) to the destructiveness of Roman imperialism.

It is also understandable why the 'Legion' was insistent not be sent out of the country, presumably Palestine. Probably, because of his desire to still dominate the land and its inhabitants. But when, at the command of Jesus, the 'Legion' demon enters a herd of pigs (unclean Gentile animals) who promptly rush into the sea and drown, this image being dramatized by a performer would surely have raised a laugh from an

⁵³ Ched Myers, Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus (New York: Orbis, 1988).

⁵⁴ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 100.

⁵⁵ See Robert Gundry, Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993), 260.

⁵⁶ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 100.

audience who would like to have seen a similar fate befall Roman troops, just like Pharaoh's army was drowned in the Red Sea. Humour of this sort would be well suited to a situation of oral performance, especially in a setting where the performer and audience share a common social memory to frame the presentation and reception of the story. In this case, the drowning of Pharaoh's army becomes the frame of understanding for the audience of the drowning of a herd of pigs. But in the case of Jesus calming the man (as he did the sea), his mercy and service (what the Lord has done, Mark 5:19) are shown for the land of Palestine under the yoke of Rome. The expectation for the audience upon hearing such a story was to be amazed by what Jesus has done, just like those who heard the story of the healed man (Mark 5:20).

There are other scenes in Mark's narrative which favour a new ideology against that of Rome. But what we do in this section is to compress our discussion into a relatively brief summary indicating in general terms how they support my general contention. For instance, Jesus' service did not exclude Jews in leadership roles as shown in the story of Jairus, who is a man of authority but bowed before Jesus. Here, a local official (rather than a member of the ruling class) recognised him whose authority is greater as presented by Mark (that even the winds and waves obey him, Mark 4:41). Even though Jairus' faith wavered, Jesus encouraged him (Mark 5:35) and raised his daughter to life (Mark 5:41-43). The daughter is said to be twelve years old which would have been keyed to or framed in the story of the twelve tribes of Israel in accordance with Foley's metonymic referencing, as mentioned above. However, when Jesus gave strict orders not to spread the news (just like the prohibitions Jesus gave to the leper and the demons), could it be that he wanted people to know him not by his power but by his humble service and sacrifice at the cross? If so, then it is a clear

reversal to Rome's desire to be known by her ideology of power, domination, and tyranny—making their subjects serve them and causing them to suffer and die.

In another instance, Jesus' healing of a blind man at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22-26) highlights the gradualness of the healing (double healing) by the use of spittle. In Mark's literary context, this two-stage healing of a blind man could be related to Peter's Confession of Jesus as the Messiah which could have become clearer to Peter after Easter. However, in Mark's socio-political context, Jesus' healing of a blind man of Bethsaida parallels Vespasian's account of healing a blind man at Alexandria by the use of spittle. To Jewish ears, Mark's account of the blind man makes an allusion to the Vespasian story as a portion of a wider propaganda to contrast Jesus' messiahship with Roman imperial 'messianism'.⁵⁷ That is, Jesus' use of spittle for the healing to take place brings to mind Vespasian's way of healing the blind: 'for the god declared that Vespasian would restore the eyes, if he would spit upon them'.⁵⁸ So if the audience were familiar with the Vespasian story, they would have thought of Jesus' act of healing as a counterattack to that of Vespasian's Messianic claim, showing Jesus to be the real Messiah and the true healer of the blind, not only physically but spiritually.⁵⁹ In this way, Vespasian falls into one of the false messiahs in Mark 13:21-22 who performed signs and wonders.

In Mark 10:42-44, an ideological critique of Roman domination is notable when Jesus called his disciples together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over

⁵⁷ See Eric Eve, 'Spit in Your Eye: The Blind Man of Bethsaida and the Blind Man of Alexandria', *NTS* 54 (2008): 1-17.

⁵⁸ Evans, 'Mark's Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription', 7. See Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus* 7.2-3.

⁵⁹ The two-stage healing of the blind man could have been related to Peter's Confession of Jesus as the Messiah which could have become clearer to Peter after Easter.

them' (Mark 10:42). The Gentiles here would have been understood in the audience's socio-historical context to have referred to Roman authorities, although other rulers in ancient near east might have been also referred to aside from Rome. Since the Roman way is different from Jesus' way, the way of service and sacrifice should be followed by the new community of Jesus (the disciples and would-be disciples), as they would have felt indignation against the way of Rome. Such would have been the message received by Mark's audience, especially when they heard Jesus' emphatic words in Mark 10:43 beginning with a negation: οὐχ οὕτως δέ ἐστιν ἐν ὑμῖν (not so with you). Jesus then describes the characteristic of Jesus' new society: 'whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all' (Mark 10:43-44). This way of life is a contrast to the 'lording' (κατακυριεύουσιν) of Gentile rulers described in Mark 10:42. The word κατακυριεύω literally means 'subdue' or 'gain dominion over'.⁶⁰ It is used with God as its subject in the LXX of Ps. 72:8, but implying a negative sense in Mark 10:42, probably because of the following: (1) there should be no other subject who holds ultimate dominion other than God; (2) when the subject becomes others, the effect will be negative because the lords will make people their servants only to accomplish their whims, even by means of tyranny or cruelty.

In Mark 11:1-12, Jesus sitting on a colt echoes a kind of messianic tradition of kingship which creates true peace rather than the *Pax Romana* offered by Rome, which is not true peace at all, as in Zech. 9:9-10: 'See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.... He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth'.⁶¹ Thus, Mark's presentation of Jesus riding on a colt

⁶⁰ BAGD, 'κατακυριεύω', 412.

⁶¹ See also the Messiah's righteous and peaceful rule in Isa. 9:6; 32:1; 62:11; Jer. 23:5-6; Micah 5:2.

while people shouted the restoration of David's βασιλεία in the triumphal entry to Jerusalem (Mark 11:10) would have been heard as a direct attack on Roman glorious triumphs and sovereignty. The word 'coming kingdom' emphasises that the kingdom is on its way to restoration, so the promised establishment of the kingdom of David's offspring (2 Sam. 7:8-16) is not an undetermined future anymore because it can now be seen as very near.

Traditionally, Jesus' statement: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's' (Mark 12:17) has been understood as indicating that God and Caesar should both be given their due in their respective realms. But it will be argued here that Mark's audience understood Jesus' statement as resistance against Rome. That is, if God is the only Lord and Master and 'if the people of Israel live under the exclusive kingship of God, then all things belong to God' and nothing is left for Caesar.⁶² Although Winn is critical of such an understanding, he concedes that 'in its original context these words of Jesus were a subtle way to speak out against taxation by Caesar'.⁶³ Moreover, since the coin had the image of Tiberius Caesar with the inscription: divine son of Augustus Caesar, and since possession of such a graven image would violate the second commandment of the Decalogue, Jesus challenged his opponents (through his 'words' of giving to Caesar and by his 'act' of not carrying one) about the practice of idolatry represented by the image of Caesar in their coin. However, a more probable scenario is warranted by the text and historical context. Jesus' words are similar to Mattathias' revolutionary words: 'Pay back the Gentiles in full and obey the commands of the law'.⁶⁴ We are not sure if Mark's audience knew Mattathias

⁶² Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 99.

⁶³ Winn, The Purpose of Mark's Gospel, 41.

⁶⁴ 1Mac. 2:68; see Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 504.

words; however, they would have heard Jesus' words to have resonated a popular Israelite tradition of their forefathers' resistance against dominating foreign forces such as Rome, including their earlier success against the Seleucid emperor Antiochus, and the popular messianic and prophetic movements.⁶⁵ So Jesus seems to be affirming the resistance of such zealot-like revolutionaries. But probably this does not include their act of not paying taxes or what was due to Rome.⁶⁶ There is a more profound way in which Jesus paid Caesar and obeyed God's law. That is, by giving his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). That is why just like other Messianic claimants, Jesus suffered and died under Roman crucifixion.

Besides, Jesus' prediction of the 'Son of Man' returning with great power and glory (Mark 13:26) would have been understood against Roman imperial power, especially insofar as 'son of man' in conjunction with 'clouds of heaven' would have metonymically referenced Daniel 7:13-28 in the audience's ambient tradition (according to Foley's theory of metonymic referencing). This is especially so because the victories and triumphs of Roman emperors and generals are well-known and celebrated⁶⁷ and the expectation of Jesus' return (Mark 13:26) would have been a threat to these triumphs and to Rome's promise of a new world order. It would have been heard as a fulfilment of a popular tradition, such as the one recorded in Daniel 7:13-28 when 'one like a son of man' comes with the clouds of heaven and was given authority, glory and power (similar picture in Mark 13:26) to the defeat and destruction of the fourth beast (fourth kingdom), which would have been understood as the kingdom of Rome (4 Ezra 11-13).

⁶⁵ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 62, 64.

⁶⁶ Jesus himself paid tax (Matt. 17: 24-27) and paid Rome by his life.

⁶⁷ See Evans, 'Mark's Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription', 71-72; Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 26.

To illustrate further the ideological clash between Jesus' way versus Roman domination, it will be helpful to treat a little extensively Jesus' death and how Mark reverses the message of the cross. For Rome, it is a picture of power and dominance, and her way of terrifying and intimidating 'subject peoples by publicly torturing their rebel leaders'.⁶⁸ For Jesus, it is a picture of self-sacrifice for the 'ransom for many' (Mark 10:45), a way of service which is the climax of his earlier ministries of teaching, healing, exorcism, and feeding people (Mark 10:45). Thus, Mark's audience would have understood Jesus' mode of execution as a symbol of his program opposing Roman imperial order.⁶⁹ So Mark's audience would have felt sympathy for Jesus and antipathy against Rome.

It is interesting to note that just after Jesus died on the cross, Mark tells of an unnamed Roman centurion who confessed Jesus as 'Son of God' (Mark 15:39). Could it be that Mark employed such a confession as an irony in which a servant of Rome applied to a crucified criminal a title otherwise applied to the Emperor (*divi filius*)? If so, then the audience would have set Jesus against and over the Roman emperors who claimed to be 'son of god' such as Octavian (Augustus), Tiberius and Nero.⁷⁰ More so, they would have understood the scene as a revolt against Roman ideology of power and practice, for the one who died through Roman crucifixion is the legitimate 'Son of God' and true ruler of the world because he ransomed those who were suffering and subjects of Rome by his own suffering and sacrificial death (Mark 10:45). The voice of the Roman centurion in favor of Jesus rather than Rome is a way of showing the victory of

⁶⁸ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 15.

⁶⁹ Horsley, Jesus and Empire, 132.

⁷⁰ See Winn, The Purpose of Mark's Gospel, 100-102; Evans, 'Mark's Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription'; Adela Yarbro Collins and John Collins, King and Messiah as Son of God (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2008).

Jesus and his movement over that of Rome and her imperial domination. This probably works even if the audience were meant to understand the centurion's words as ironic: 'Hey, this man really was the son of a god, wasn't he?', for then Mark would be ironically making the centurion speak the truth even when the centurion was intending irony, just like Pilate's other soldiers who mock Jesus as 'king of the Jews' (Mark 15:18).

However, questions arise if the centurion's confession is sincere or sarcastic, or whether his confession of Jesus as 'Son of God' or simply 'a son of a god' (in a pagan sense). In an oral performance it would make this much clearer than the text from the tone of voice and emphasis employed at that point. It all depends how much knowledge the performer had about Jesus. The characterisation of Jesus in a performance can be faithful or unfaithful, and oral performance of the gospel can be done very differently. But good performance depends on good understanding on the part of the performer, and the understanding and the retelling of story/narrative cannot be separated. This means that the oral performer has to have a correct understanding of the identity of Jesus and his character before he can perform faithfully in re-telling the story of Jesus. Thus, the understanding of the performer is important for the performance. But since we can't go back to observe any early performance of Mark's narrative, we can't know exactly how the centurion's words were actually performed, whether sincerely or sarcastically.

Nevertheless, in the context of Mark's story, the centurion is a contrast to the other Roman soldiers who mocked and rejected Jesus (Mark 15:16-20), and his confession is introduced after Mark mentions the *tearing* (ἔσχίσθη) of the curtain of the temple which would have been emphasised by the performer and reminded the audience of the *tearing* (σχιζομένου) of heaven at Jesus' baptism wherein a voice from heaven was heard: 'You are my son'. Thus, the audience were led to understand the centurion

as one who understood the identity of Jesus (which is in accordance with the voice of God) in contrast to others who did not. Hence, they would have perceived a new ideological option (in the person of Jesus) in contrast to that of Rome, not only for Jewish people but Romans (and other Gentiles) as well. In other words, through the service and sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the doors are open for both Jews and Gentiles to recognise and embrace the rule of God in their lives. In this way, ‘Jesus is not only God’s divinely appointed king who will rule as Israel’s Messiah, but he is also a rival to all world rulers who also claim divine sonship’.⁷¹

5.4 Jesus against the Mistaken Point of View and Behaviour of the Twelve Disciples (Mark 3:13-19; 4:35-41; 6:30-51; 8:1-13; 8:27-33; 9:14-40; 10:13-16, 35-45)

In the third area of ideological conflict, Mark’s audience would have heard and understood Mark’s characterisations of Jesus over against his disciples as counter-ideology against the mistaken point of view and behaviour of the twelve disciples. This is noticeable in the contrasting presentations between Jesus and his way and those of his disciples. The way Mark designed the contrast is framed by or keyed on specific Israelite traditions, so that Mark’s target audience would have related Mark’s presentation to some salient aspects of the past. From the perspective of orality studies and social memory theory (especially the concepts of keying, framing, repetition and parallelism), the audience’s Israelite tradition resonated easily in Jesus’ appointment of the twelve (δώδεκα) disciples on the mountain (Mark 3:13-19; 6:7-13), the woman

⁷¹ Winn, The Purpose of Mark’s Gospel, 102.

suffering for twelve (δώδεκα) years, Jairus' daughter who is twelve (δώδεκα) years old, and in the fig tree and temple stories, which, in the Israelite tradition represent Israel.

Thus, Mark's presentation of Jesus going up to a mountain to appoint the Twelve (Mark 3:13-19) would not just have been understood as a mere historical location for the event, but keyed to an Israelite tradition of mountains as places of divine revelation and encounter, just like when Moses went up to Mount Sinai on the way to the Promised Land to receive the Torah. In relation to this, the Greek word ἐποίησεν (he appointed) can also mean 'he chose' or 'he created' so that Mark's audience were invited to view the selected twelve disciples (in a privileged position) as the newly created twelve tribes of Israel who would fulfil their hopes and aspirations. Likewise, Mark's use of the intensive pronoun αὐτός is emphatic and reflexive (he himself) denoting Jesus' prerogative to the act of choosing, which echoes God's choice of Israel by his own prerogative. It means that even though Jesus' group has similarity with other groups (discussed in chapter 4), the audience were invited to closely connect Jesus' group with that of the twelve tribes of Israel en route to the Promised Land, as Jesus and his disciples were also en route to the promised kingdom of God.

In Mark 4:35-41, Mark presents the disciples as journeying with Jesus from one side of the lake to another. While they are on boat, 'a furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat'. Jesus was asleep so the disciples cried to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' The influence of the Psalm 107:23-32 and the story of Jonah sleeping can be discerned in such a rendering by Mark. However, Mark also may well intend an exodus allusion (Exod. 14), or at least in consideration of Foley's theory (or of social memory theory) what is being referenced is a whole tradition of Yahweh's defeat of the waters of chaos (of which the Red Sea crossing is prominent in the Israelite tradition). So the emphasis on fear and lack of faith in Jesus (Mark 4:40) from the

disciples (in contrast to Jesus' serenity) brings to mind how the Israelites raised their voices against Moses (and consequently against Yahweh), with fear and lack of faith just prior to the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:10-12). Such a tradition would have been easily recalled by Mark's audience especially since Jesus is being portrayed as the embodiment of Yahweh who could command waves for the deliverance of the twelve disciples (Mark 4:41).

Similarly, the occasion when Jesus walked on water while the disciples were afraid (Mark 6:45-51) would also have brought memory of popular traditions regarding Yahweh's power over the waves of the sea (an allusion to traditions in Job 9:8; cf. Ps. 89:9ff.; 93:3ff.). The popular traditions include how the Israelites crossed the sea, whereby God revealed himself and his power through Moses parting the sea (Exo. 14:21-22). That is, if the Israelites were able to cross the sea miraculously, Jesus could have done even more. And if the twelve tribes of Israel were afraid, the twelve disciples were also afraid. So as Moses was highly esteemed in Israel after the miracle, so Jesus was highly esteemed among his disciple-companions: 'they were amazed' (ἐξίσταντο) (Mark 6:51). Such amazement (an indication of feeling) invites the audience to respond similarly—to be astonished or awestruck at the deeds of Jesus. Moreover, what the disciples asked in Mark chapter 4:41: Τίς ἄρα οὗτός ἐστιν, Jesus revealed in another sea story in Mark 6:50: ἐγώ εἰμι.

The two feeding stories in Mark's narrative are emphatic and are meant for the audience to take note, rather than evidence for Mark's clumsiness as earlier asserted.⁷² The feeding of the five thousand men (Mark 6:30-44) and the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:1-13) echo the miraculous feeding of a hundred men by Elisha (2 Kings 4:42-44) and the Exodus tradition of feeding, whereby God fed the Israelites with

⁷² See for instance John Meagher, *Clumsy Construction: A Critique of Form- and Redaktionsgeschichte*, (Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1979).

manna in the desert. There are very close parallels between the Gospel feeding stories and the Elisha story, but the fact that there are two feedings reflects the prominence of multitude feeding traditions in the Israelite tradition being referenced by Mark, of which the Exodus feeding cannot be ignored. Exodus allusions often commented on in the Markan feeding of the 5,000 include the way Jesus organized the crowd into companies when seating them and the reference to green grass; indicating springtime and hence proximity to the celebration of the Passover. This is clearer in John's narrative where Jesus' feeding of the multitude (John 6:1-15) is sandwiched between the argument of Jesus using Moses (John 5:45-47) and his claim as the bread from heaven in connection to the feeding of the Israelites by Moses in the wilderness (John 6:25-59). Moreover, since there are verbal echoes between the Markan feeding stories and the Markan account of the institution of the Eucharist, which is done in the context of the Passover celebration, there is for sure an allusion to the general Exodus tradition by Mark. In addition, the conjunction of a sea-crossing story with feeding story in Mark 6 and 8 also strengthens the connection of both with the Exodus narrative (more than the stories taken individually). Likewise, the drowning of the 'legion' of pigs (Mark 5:1-13) immediately following the stilling of the storm (Mark 4:35-41) strengthens the connection of the former with the crossing of the Red Sea. On top of these, since Mark put the story in the context of the journey of Jesus and his disciples, Mark's audience would have compared the incidents to the feeding of the Israelites with manna as they journeyed towards the Promised Land. Such are illustrations of the tendency of the Jesus tradition to be keyed to the Israelite traditions in relation to Moses, one of the most significant figures in Israel's past.

Interestingly, Mark connected the feeding story in Mark 6: 30-44 to the story of Jesus walking on water (Mark 6:45-52). The response of the disciples after witnessing

how Jesus walked on water and after the stilling of the wind is awkward but purposeful: ‘They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened’ (Mark 6:51b-52). The expected reason for the disciples’ amazement is Jesus walking on water and the stilling of the wind, but Mark connected it to the disciples’ lack of understanding of the loaves and hardening of their hearts in the previous story. Such an awkward connection is often attributed to Mark’s clumsiness. But since we are now oriented towards Mark’s creativity in connecting one story with another, what Mark did is to invite his audience to view the connection of the disciples’ lack of understanding (and hardening of their hearts) and their being afraid. That is, they were afraid because they did not understand who Jesus was (Mark 4:1), which Jesus himself made known later (Mark 6:51). David Smith imagines the relationship of such presentation to Mark’s target audience: ‘the disciples’ hard-heartedness is a lingering problem and the grammar projects the effects into the present moment, perhaps implying culpability in the life of the audience’.⁷³

As shown above, the twelve tribes of Israel became the frame of reference for the audience, where the twelve disciples become representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel or the whole of the Israelite community. So when Mark portrays the twelve disciples as ardent and zealous followers of Jesus who follow the way of God, the hearers were invited to understand how Israel as a whole tried to follow the way of God. But when the audience heard about the failure of the disciples (to understand his teachings, to follow him in faith and faithfulness to the end, and to epitomise Jesus’ selfless love and sacrifice), they would have been led to compare the failure of the disciples to the failure of Israel, given that there’s a reference to the twelve tribes of

⁷³ David Smith, ‘Can We Hear What They Heard? The Effect of Orality Upon a Markan Reading-Event’ (Ph.D. thesis, Durham University, 2003), 206.

Israel and to the notion of following. Given also the possible presence of a ‘new Exodus’ theme in Mark,⁷⁴ they would also have been led to compare the failure of the disciples to the failure of Israel in the wilderness period. But the open-ended ending of Mark’s narrative (Mark 16:8) would have made the audience inquire whether or not the twelve disciples (and so the whole of Israel) really failed totally. They would also have known that in reality many of the disciples were renewed in their faith and understanding of Jesus and even gave their lives for service and sacrifice as Jesus did. The ending also would have challenged the audience to either join the new people of God which is open to both Jews and Gentiles or to remain in the failure of the old people of God. The ending of Mark and its rhetorical effect in view of Mark’s target audience will be treated further in the next chapter.

Now, even though we made it clear that the disciples are not portrayed totally negatively, for there are positive characterisation of them in Mark’s narrative, it is noticeable how they were holding on to the ideology of power and wanted greatness and dominance. The following discussion will be presented in general terms in support to our overall argument in this section wherein Mark’s audience would have perceived Mark’s characterisations of Jesus and his disciples (in view of other characters) as counter-ideology against the disciples’ wrong understanding and inappropriate behaviour.

There was an instance when Mark presents the disciples arguing as to ‘who was greatest’ (Mark 9:33-34). Such pride among Jews is also discernible in a tradition that entered John’s Gospel (8:33). Paul also notes how the Jews brag of the law and their relationship to God which shows how Jewish pride was nurtured by their being God’s elect (Rom. 2:17). So by virtue of Foley’s metonymic referencing it is not unlikely for

⁷⁴ See Rikki Watts, Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997).

the audience to compare the twelve disciples and the twelve tribes of Israel in the way they perceived with pride their privileged position as the elect people of God, looking down upon non-Jews. The response of Jesus is clearly in opposition to the Twelve. First, he states: ‘If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all’ (Mark 9:35). Second, he had a child stand in their midst, someone of no or low status in their socio-historical context, and made him Jesus’ ambassador—‘Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me’ (Mark 9:37).

Similarly, the request of James and John to sit at the right and left of Jesus when he comes to his kingdom (Mark 10:35-45) shows how they want positions of power for themselves. In this way, Mark’s portrayal of the disciples is not only as a critique against the failure of the twelve tribes of Israel in the desert (in view of metonymic referencing), but a critique against the craving for power and dominance among the disciples, a wrong understanding of discipleship. Here, the disciples are a contrast to the other followers of Jesus like Peter’s mother-in-law who immediately served Jesus and the Twelve after her healing (Mark 1:29-31). Much more, they are a contrast to Jesus’ humble service and sacrifice as the suffering Messiah (Mark 10:45).

In another case, although the disciples (in the person of Peter) later understood the Messiahship of Jesus in contrast to the perceptions of others (as John the Baptist, Elijah, and one of the prophets [Mark 8:27-29]), their incomprehension of Jesus’ identity and teachings was earlier displayed (Mark 4:8; 7:18; 8:17). And the understanding of Peter (representing the other disciples) of Jesus’ Messiahship fell short of the criterion of Jesus for he had in mind not ‘the things of God, but the things of men’ (Mark 8:33). It appears that he thought of Jesus as a militaristic political and conquering Messiah who would triumphantly rally into Jerusalem and reward his

followers with positions of honour and power,⁷⁵ not as the one elaborated by Jesus, being the suffering and dying Messiah (Mark 8:31).

Peter's understanding appears to have been common among Jewish people as exemplified by the other messianic claimants and rebels prior to and after the rise of Jesus (See the discussion of messianic claimants in 4.5 of the previous chapter). In this case Peter and the other disciples function to represent the ideology of other political rebels against Rome. Moreover, according to Myers, 'the fact that the parties of the revolt are never mentioned by name in the Gospel may indicate that Mark felt deeply sympathetic to their protest against the social, political, and economic oppression of the Romans'.⁷⁶ Such an argument from silence is weak, but it can be strengthened by the fact that the idea of revolt against the existing ideologies and practices is discernable in Mark in the way he presents the way of Jesus. Nevertheless, Mark disagrees with the method of armed revolt against Rome and thus presents a negation of their militaristic revolution in his negative portrayal of the disciples and another option of revolution in the non-violent and sacrificial service of Jesus. Hence, Mark's target audience would have understood the character of Peter, in this case, as embodying a mistaken point of view with regards to following Jesus and his way. This is according to a distinctive feature characterising an oral narrative: the man is the message.

In the case of James and John, they were willing to suffer and die with Jesus. That is a straightforward statement based on their readiness to share with Jesus his drink and baptism, which is an idiomatic expression of suffering and death (Mark 10:38-39).⁷⁷ This is affirmed by Jesus by virtue of his being a prophet in Mark's narrative who could

⁷⁵ Rhoads, David and Donald Michie, Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 125.

⁷⁶ Myers, Binding the Strong Man, 330.

⁷⁷ Paul also uses such term: 'For I am ready to be poured out as a drink offering' (2 Tim. 4:6).

see the future of James and John. However, the fact that Jesus told them that they did not understand what they asked for (Mark 10:38), shows their incomprehension of the deeper implication of their words. It is because their willingness is coupled with their idea and desire of domination comparable to that of the rulers of the Gentiles and their high officials who lord over their subjects and exercise authority over them, a contrast to Jesus' model of being great by being slave of all (Mark 10:42). Thus, the feeling of indignation by the other disciples against James and John (Mark 10:41) would also have been dramatized by the performer and felt by the audience. But such a feeling would have been directed not only against James and John but against the other disciples who were indignant because they themselves also would have silently craved for power and position. In such a case (including the earlier instances), the disciples function as tempters to lead Jesus astray to follow the way of power and glory rather than humility, service and the cross. This explains Jesus' sharp rebuke to Peter in Mark 8:33: 'Get behind me Satan! ... You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men'. Hence, the disciples would have been heard by Mark's audience to be in contrast to the way of Jesus which is being promoted by Mark.

Moreover, the way the disciples rejected others whom Jesus accepted would have been heard by Mark's audience as an ideological clash between the disciples and Jesus. In one instance, the disciples stopped someone who was casting out demons in Jesus' name because he was not one of them (Mark 9:38-40), as if they were the only exorcists qualified to use Jesus' name. But the words of Jesus (Μὴ κωλύετε αὐτόν) which contradicted the behaviour of disciples, would have been an invitation for the audience to side with the accommodating way of Jesus, rather than with the exclusive and selfish interest of the disciples. There was also an instance wherein, while the disciples rejected children, Jesus said that it was such as they who belonged to God's

kingdom and used them to illustrate the kind of faith needed for someone to enter God's kingdom (Mark 10:13-16), which could have been complete lack of status in contrast to the disciples' concern for status. The way the disciples 'rebuked' (ἐπετίμησαν) the children or the people bringing them (Mark 10:13) would have provoked a feeling of anger from the audience, especially given that Jesus said earlier that whosoever welcomes the children welcomes him (Mark 9:37). Such a feeling would have been sanctioned when Jesus himself felt indignation (an emotional indicator in the text) against the disciples and welcomed the children (Mark 10:14-16).

In another instance, the disciples failed to drive out the evil spirit from the demon-possessed boy (Mark 9:14-32). The reason why they could not cast out is probably because they belong to an 'unbelieving generation' (γενεὰ ἄπιστος; Mark 9:19). So they would have been likened to the boy's father who said: 'I do believe (Πιστεύω); help me overcome my unbelief' (ἄπιστία) (Mark 9:24), wherein the tension of both believing and doubting in Jesus is noticeable. The plea of the boy's father for Jesus' compassion shows how the audience would also have felt for the boy (Mark 9:22). Of course Jesus was able to cast out the spirit, which was the reason for the boy's inability to speak and hear (Mark 9:25-26). And the crowd's earlier reaction upon seeing Jesus—being greatly amazed and running to Jesus with excitement (Mark 9:15)—would have been an emotional indicator showing how the audience should respond upon hearing the wonderful acts of Jesus.

Aside from the tension of believing and doubting among the disciples, they also exhibit the tension of following and failure to follow as explained by Joanna Dewey: The 'narrative uses the disciples to teach the gospel's audience what "following" entails, to emphasize the difficulties of following, and to maintain plot interest as the

disciples do and do not succeed in following'.⁷⁸ This is because in ancient time, 'teaching was often conveyed by examples of how *not* to behave, and audiences may not have interpreted such portrayals as a rejection of the characters in question'.⁷⁹ Thus, such a tension among the disciples would have created tension in the audience's mind as they considered what it means to believe and follow Jesus. The same view is held by Elizabeth Malbon who sees the disciples as 'fallible followers' but not complete failures. This would have been intentionally done by Mark to teach the reality of discipleship that even though the disciples tried their best to follow Jesus, they fell short. More specifically, the audience were told, at the earlier part of the narrative, the identity of Jesus as Son of God,⁸⁰ Son of Man,⁸¹ and Messiah. But in the later part, they were shown how Jesus should be understood: not as one who rules but one who serves and gives his life for the ransom of many at the cross (Mark 10:45).

What would have been difficult for the audience to understand is the role of Jesus as a suffering and dying Messiah, which Mark highlighted to show the difficulty of following Jesus. Here, Mark's puzzling portrayals are meant to show his audience the difficulty of comprehending Jesus and that a follower should learn how to live with such a tension—that there are things that they understand but there are things that they can't understand; there are things that they know but there are things that they don't; sometimes they can follow but sometimes they cannot. In other words, since divine revelation is meant to be hard to understand fully, it is not that easy to understand Jesus (his words, and deeds); much less to follow him. Moreover, God's demands are

⁷⁸ Joanna Dewey, 'The Gospel of Mark as Oral Hermeneutic' in Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel (ed., Tom Thatcher; Baylor University Press, 2008), 75.

⁷⁹ Dewey, 'The Gospel of Mark', 74.

⁸⁰ Assuming these titles at the beginning of Mark are original to Mark's manuscript.

⁸¹ See Mark 2:10

humanly impossible, and can be met only with God's help⁸² as shown in the failures and triumphs of the disciples. There is such a complexity of both Christology and discipleship, but since there are others (e.g. Simon's mother-in-law, Levi, the healed demon-possessed and the haemorrhaging woman, etc.) who followed Jesus, even more faithfully than the twelve disciples, discipleship would have been understood by Mark's audience as possible even though it was difficult.

5.5 Jesus against the Domination of Satan and Demonic Forces (Mark 1:1-34; 5:1-20; 8:31-33)

In the fourth area of ideological conflict, Jesus and his way would have been understood by Mark's target audience as a counter-ideology against the domination of Satan and demonic forces. It is not only that Mark's characterisation of Jesus was understood as being against the ideology of the Israelite great tradition centred in Jerusalem and represented by the Jewish authorities, a revolt against Roman rule, and against the mistaken understanding of the disciples about discipleship, but also against Satan and his demons, who lived not only among the Gentiles (e.g. Roman rulers), but even among the so-called people of God (Israel) and Jesus' disciples. The reality of Satan and demons could be easily denied by some scholars who highlight how language about demonic forces parallels language about political realities. This is simply rationalizing and modernising first-century people to make them share a modern worldview. But we are trying to understand how people perceived them in a first-century unscientific age, particularly in the first-century Palestine and the larger Greco-Roman world. So although many of Horsley's historical observations (and those of

⁸² Mark 10:27.

Ched Myers) are appropriate given the socio-political account of first-century Palestine, Mark's first-century audience also perceived the reality of unseen beings (Satan and demons),⁸³ which were behind the clamour for dominance and power among the Jewish leaders, the Roman lords, and the disciples. It is not just 'a self-protective explanation and mode of understanding of the forces that had subjugated them', and not just a 'mystifying explanation' which 'veiled the real, concrete forces that were oppressing them, the imperial Roman conquests, governors, and troops', as claimed by Horsley.⁸⁴

Instead, Mark's presentation of the significance of Jesus is broader than the understanding that it has been set over and against Roman and Jewish authorities' ideology of domination and power. He presents satanic forces as the real enemy that must be overcome (Mark 1:13; 3:20-27).⁸⁵ This is exemplified, for instance, in Jesus' battle against an evil spirit within the synagogue (Mark 1:21-34; cf. 3:11). Here, Mark's audience would have understood satanic infiltration in the system established by Jewish authorities. For just after the contrast between Jesus and Jewish teachers: 'not as the teachers of law' (Mark 1:22), a demon-possessed man in the synagogue is introduced (Mark 1:23). This has been an opportunity to introduce Jesus in the narrative not only as the new authoritative teacher, different from Jewish teachers, but as a warrior against satanic forces (cf. Mark 1:29-45; 6:7-13). The fact that the demon-possessed inquired if Jesus has come to destroy them, recognised him as the 'Holy One', and obeyed Jesus' command to come out (Mark 1:24-26) shows the superiority and victory of Jesus over evil forces. Moreover, Jesus' identity as the 'Holy One' would have been heard by the

⁸³ See discussions on demons and exorcism in the Greco-Roman world in J.Z. Smith, 'Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity', *ANRW* 2.16.1 (1978): 425-439; Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1993).

⁸⁴ Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 101.

⁸⁵ See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 451-59.

audience echoing a popular designation of Yahweh (Isa. 43:3, 15; Ps. 89:18), although we have other parallels (Ps. 106:16 LXX; 2 Kings 4:9). This shows how Jesus is presented as the embodiment of Yahweh in conflict with satanic forces.

How the audience were expected to respond upon hearing the narrative when Jesus drives out an evil spirit in the synagogue is signalled by the emotional response of the people, which is assumed to have been dramatized by the performer with certainty and conviction. As the people were amazed at the teaching of Jesus because he taught them as one who had authority (Mark 1:22), so the audience would also have been amazed as the performer read with certainty and conviction. As the people were so astonished after Jesus drove out an evil spirit (Mark 1:27), so the audience, especially those who heard of Jesus' words and deeds for the first time, would also have been astonished. Such a response aids in persuading the audience of Mark's ideological stance and, thereby, to belong to Jesus' group. In addition, Jesus' fame, which spread quickly over the region of Galilee (Mark 1:28), would have helped in persuading the audience.

The story of the demon-possessed man named 'Λεγιών' (Mark 5:1-20) sends a strong message of the presence of satanic forces in the ideology and practice of domination by Rome and her armies. After his healing, the man spread the news in the Decapolis (Mark 5:20), which was then under Roman occupation. Ched Myers notes the violent and maddening effect of domination by the Roman legions of armies on her subjects in the first-century CE and Jesus' mission to free them from such an 'occupying spirit' of oppression and imperial domination.⁸⁶ There is for sure a political insinuation in the narrative (as noted above), especially when Jesus sent the demons to the herd of swine and drowned them, bringing to mind the drowning of Pharaoh's army

⁸⁶ See Myers, Binding the Strong Man, 193.

in the OT. Moreover, the word Λεγιών would have been heard by Mark's target audience politically because of its military overtones.⁸⁷ However, Yoo Sang Sub uses the phrase 'Jesus' act of holy war against Satan' in explaining the narrative to clarify the real enemy behind the forces of Rome.⁸⁸ He traces the idea of holy war in both the OT and Second Temple Judaism to establish his point. So it is not only the so-called 'spirit of domination' that Jesus engaged in warfare, but the person of Satan himself and his demons operating in the system of Rome. In the words of N.T. Wright 'the real enemy was satan'.⁸⁹

Such would have been the perception of Mark's oral hearers in first-century Palestine who believed in the existence of unseen beings (such as Satan and demons) and the practice of exorcism. The defeat of demonic forces is also implied by the allusions to Daniel 7 in Mark. Daniel 7 would have resonated in the audience's hearing of the story since Mark clearly alludes to it in two of the 'Son of Man' sayings, where the vision of Daniel 7 is re-imaged in texts like 4 Ezra so that the fourth beast becomes interpreted as the Roman Empire (4 Ezra 11:37-12:1-30). In Daniel each nation has an angelic representative, and Michael, the angel of Israel has to strive against the angels of other nations, being understood as demons in rebellion against God (Dan. 10). Josephus clearly thought that Daniel 2 prophesied the destruction of the Roman Empire, as his eloquent silence about the interpretation of the dream attests.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ The Greek words ἀγγέλι, ἐπέτρεψεν, and ὄρμησεν also have military overtones according to Myers, Binding the Strong Man, 191.

⁸⁸ Sang-sub Yoo, 'Matthew's Concept of Jesus' Holy War against Satan with Special reference to the Gadarene Demoniac story (Matthew 8:28-34)' (Ph.D. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1996).

⁸⁹ Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 451-59

⁹⁰ Josephus, Ant. 10.2.6.

Now, the audience were expected to highly esteem Jesus and despise the evil spirits, just like the people who responded in amazement after hearing the testimony of the healed demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1-20). But it would have been a question for the audience when they heard that those who witnessed the deliverance of the demon-possessed pleaded with Jesus to leave their region (Mark 5:17). The challenge for the target audience then would have been the following: ‘Would you prefer the presence of the compassionate Jesus in your region or the presence of tormenting evil spirits?’ This story, just like the whole narrative of Mark, is inviting the target audience to opt for Jesus and his way.

The audience also heard satanic influence behind Peter in Mark 8:31-33. After Jesus spoke plainly about his suffering, death, and resurrection, he was rebuked by Peter—an unlikely scenario in a master-disciple relationship in their socio-historical context, which would have shocked the audience. In return, Jesus rebuked Peter: ‘Get behind me Satan’ (Mark 8:33). Hooker understands this to mean ‘get out of my sight’⁹¹, while Gundry argues it means get back ‘to his position among the disciples, where he belongs, following after Jesus’.⁹² However, these interpretations seem to soften or suppress a first-century understanding of unseen beings being a person. ‘Satan’ could be understood as ‘adversary’ (opponent) and may directly be applied to Peter for he opposes the way of Jesus or the ‘things of God’. There is no question that this sense is possible, although it is unlikely for Mark’s target audience to have understood Peter as Satan himself. It is because Satan has his own identity or personality (as understood in the first-century Palestine) and is not just a generic idea for ‘adversary’. What is more probable is that the audience would have understood Jesus battling against Satan

⁹¹ M. Hooker, The Gospel According to Mark (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 206-207.

⁹² Gundry, Mark, 433.

himself who was behind Peter's thinking and behaviour, because Peter is doing Satan's work by trying to deflect Jesus from his necessary path of suffering (presumably into an idea of Messiahship that was more militaristic in nature).

The belief in Satan or demons behind a person, like Peter, is common in first-century Palestine. Such belief is notable throughout Mark's narrative. Jesus himself is accused by his opponents of being possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, although such is disproven by Mark (3:20-30). Instead, Jesus is presented as being at war with Satan and his demons. Jesus usually commanded them to be silent when they tried to speak. In the case of Peter, his idea about Jesus being the Messiah was also silenced because he does not set his mind upon τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ('the things of God', Mark 8:33). Although he was right in confessing Jesus as the Messiah, his understanding fell short of Jesus' way—of a suffering and dying Messiah (Mark 8:31). In this case, it could be that Mark invited his hearers to understand that confession of Jesus should be in the light of his service and sacrifice (including his suffering and death), and not in the light of dominance and power.

Thus, Mark's target audience would have, indeed, heard Mark's Christology to be against Satan and his forces which permeated the world of Israel (especially the Jewish authorities), the Gentiles (Rome), and the followers of Jesus (like the twelve disciples). The behaviour/attitude of the Twelve, Jewish leaders, and Roman rulers are only the tip of an iceberg. All throughout the narrative, Satan and his demons remain the real enemy for Jesus to defeat and overcome. N.T. Wright makes this explicit as one of the aims of Jesus in his Jesus and the Victory of God.⁹³ Satanic forces are the ones behind their 'spirit of domination' and they should be overcome by the way of Jesus—the way of service and sacrifice (Mark 10:45).

⁹³ Wright, Jesus and the Victory of God, 451-59.

Now, if Mark 10:45 is taken as a framework for understanding who Jesus was, the first part of the narrative (chapters 1-8) can be understood as Jesus' way of service, and the second half of the narrative (chapters 8-16) as Jesus' way of giving his life as a ransom for many. Moreover, Mark 10:45 can be understood in its narrative context as 'a continuation of Jesus' life of service: Jesus' entire life and death is a model of service.'⁹⁴ However, could Mark's audience also have understood the passage as Jesus' way of defeating Satan and demonic forces? Is the good news being triumphant not only in battling against the powers of darkness as shown in his healing and exorcism but by his own suffering and death? If the answers are in the affirmative, then the conflict between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan is herein noticeable also at the crucifixion, which would have been understood as Jesus' way of overcoming Satan and evil powers.⁹⁵

5.6 Conclusion

We have inquired how might Mark's target audience have heard and understood the function of the characterisations of Jesus over against his disciples (in relation to other characters) in view of Mark's ideological thrust and in relation to the construction of social identity. We observed how the twelve disciples are clearly noted in Mark's narrative as Jesus' follower-companions in his journey to Jerusalem. There are other characters who followed him, including women, children and the crowd. The identity of some of the characters is implied, especially when the narrative is situated in its socio-historical context, for example 'the rulers of the nations' which surely referred to the Roman authorities.

⁹⁴ Dewey, 'The Gospel of Mark as Oral Hermeneutic', 83.

⁹⁵ This 'classic theory' of atonement is advocated in Gustav Aulén, Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

By way of comparative characterisation, noting some ‘oral register’ or hints from the narrative, and exploiting their shared social memory with regards to their common heritage and context, Mark was able to make his audience understand his ideological thrust with regards to who Jesus is and the proper way of following him. Conversely, Mark’s target audience would themselves have brought their knowledge of their traditions and concepts available to them to bear in the way they understood Mark’s ideological thrust. In other words, they would have heard Mark’s message in relation to their socio-historical contexts because, according to Evans, the good news ‘would ring a familiar chord in the ears of both Jews and Gentiles’.⁹⁶

Thus, Mark’s audience would have understood the ideological message embodied in the characterisation of Jesus over against his disciples in Mark’s oral narrative. In particular, they would have been invited to feel and side with Jesus and his way, as they heard the characterisations of Jesus (in relation to his disciples and other characters) as counter-ideology (1) against Israel’s great tradition centred in Jerusalem as represented by Jewish authorities, (2) against the Gentile (Roman) rulers’ ideology of imperial domination, (3) against the mistaken point of view and behaviour of the twelve disciples, and (4) against the domination of Satan and demonic forces. What was observed is specifically the dramatization of the way of domination and power (notable among these items and the figures embodying them), in contrast to the way of Jesus and his core values (Mark 1:2-3)—that of service and sacrifice (Mark 10:45).

While Jesus and his way are highlighted in the narrative, his disciple-companions function as supporting actors (foil) to make Jesus appear brighter as someone who is mysterious and could not be easily confined within the domain of

⁹⁶ Evans, ‘Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription’, 11.

human understanding.⁹⁷ In connection to this, Räisänen understands the disciples as the ‘vehicles for Mark’s own point of view’ rather than embodying Mark’s opponents as earlier advanced by Weeden.⁹⁸ Räisänen goes on to argue the inconsistency of Mark’s portrayal of the disciples because they are made to play more than one role in the narrative.⁹⁹ Thus, we observed in this study that the disciples, at some point in the narrative, are portrayed as ardent and zealous followers of Jesus, just like Israel followed Yahweh in the wilderness. But at times, they are portrayed as following after the ways of Rome and the Jewish authorities, clamouring for status, position, and dominion. They are also portrayed as sharing the interests of other political rebels in expelling Rome from Palestine and establishing the Davidic kingdom with all its power and glory. Moreover, they are portrayed as following after satanic forces. So the audience would have understood the good news in opposition to the world’s craving for power and domination as exemplified by the Roman rulers, Jewish authorities, the disciples themselves, and satanic forces that live among them. Thus, the disciples function as representative of the twelve tribes of Israel who failed in the wilderness, but not totally. They also function symbolically for both the difficulty and possibility of following Jesus in discipleship, because ‘what is impossible with man is possible with God’ (Mark 10:27). This will be probed further in the next chapter of how Mark’s rhetorical narrative would have invited the audience to participate in the narrative as

⁹⁷ See similar observations in Ernest Best, ‘Role of Disciples in Mark’, *NTS* 23 (1977): 385-86; Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, ‘Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers’, *NovT* 28.2 (1986): 121; See a similar perspective in Matthean scholarship in Jeannine Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2002), 98.

⁹⁸ Räisänen, *The ‘Messianic Secret’ in Mark’s Gospel* (trans. Christopher Tucket; Edinburgh: Clark, 1990), 222.

⁹⁹ On the different roles played by the disciples, see Räisänen, *Messianic Secret*, 211-222.

they compare themselves with the disciples in their attempt to follow Jesus and belong to his community, which was then represented by Mark's community.

CHAPTER 6: THE CHARACTERISATION OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES IN THE SERVICE OF MARK'S TARGET AUDIENCE

6.1 Introduction

To appreciate Jesus' group in their socio-historical context (as noted in chapter 4) and to be persuaded of Mark's ideological point of view (chapter 5) are the affective and cognitive functions of Mark's characterizations of Jesus and his disciples. There is a more practical function of Mark's characterization—the immediate rhetorical effect at multiple levels of such characterizations upon Mark's target audience, when the text is orally performed before a live audience. That is, if Mark's audience liked Jesus' group and were persuaded by Mark's message (through an ideological critique), it is more likely than not that they were also stirred to action—to follow Jesus, because an ancient oral narrative is usually designed to call people, not only to feel but to act.¹ So the main question in this chapter is as follows: How might Mark's target audience have heard and understood the characterizations of Jesus and his disciples in view of their calling to belong to Jesus' group and to follow him in a master-disciple relationship? We will pursue this question visualizing how the audience tried to compare and identify themselves with the disciples in Mark's narrative.

The question about the identity of Jesus as one to be followed is central in Mark's narrative, and the need to follow him is presupposed in the way he was followed by different followers in the story. Although this gives clues to the historical reference of the narrative, this also mirrors Mark's historical target audience. However, Mark's preference as to the appropriate way of following Jesus (e.g. Mark 8:34-38 and the

¹ See Kelber, *Written Gospel*, xvi. See also John D. Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 1-2. The cognitive, affective, and practical domains in the teaching-learning process are more of a modern analytical construct and divisions, but are still discernible in Mark's narrative.

practice of some minor disciples) is an invitation for his audience to compare themselves with the disciples with regards to the practice of following Jesus on his way—towards the cross (Mk 10:45; 10:52) and towards the promised kingdom of God (Mk 1:15). Such a response from the audience of an oral narrative is what would be expected according to the following theories: the narrative theory of identification, speech-act theory, and social memory theory. These theories in relation to an ancient oral narration will be used in this chapter to demonstrate the movement in the communication of the story, wherein the disciples in Mark's story world became the new disciples in Mark's community. As a start, it is helpful to recount Robert Tannehill's 'The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role',² especially his assertion that the situation of Mark's target audience is similar to the situation of the disciples in Mark's narrative.

6.2 Between the Disciples' Situation in the Narrative and that of Mark's Target Audience

Since Tannehill's presentation of the principles of identification and repulsion supports the contention of this chapter that the communication movement of Mark's story has progressed to encompass Mark's social world, it is proper to reiterate his main arguments.³ According to him, Mark composed his narrative in view of his readers and their response to his story.⁴ He assumes a similarity of situations between the disciples in Mark and the disciples in his community, so that by telling the story of the disciples

² Robert Tannehill, 'The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role' in The Interpretation of Mark (ed. William Telford; London: SPCK, 1985).

³ See Tannehill's perspective in my survey of methods applied to the study of Mark's Gospel in chapter 2.

⁴ Tannehill, 'Disciples in Mark', 137.

in the narrative he was speaking a message for his own community.⁵ Here, the characterisation of the disciples in relation to Jesus and other characters mirrors the characters of Mark's intended readers/audience.⁶ Accordingly, Mark first portrays some positive characteristics of the disciples, thereby inviting the readers to identify with them. But as the narrative progresses, the negative characteristics of the disciples are highlighted making the readers distance themselves from the disciples.⁷ Such a tension between identification and repulsion can lead the attentive reader to self-criticism and repentance because of their own failures, just like the failures of Jesus' disciples in the narrative.⁸

A limitation of Tannehill's presentation is his notion of Mark's audience as readers. For sure, we cannot discount the possibility that a few trained readers would have read privately. But as noted earlier, what was usual then for the audience was not to read a piece of text silently as we normally do today, but hear a public performance (elaborated in chapter 3). Besides, Tannehill's contention about the ultimate failures of the disciples, provoking his readers to self-criticism and repentance, does not do justice to Jesus' prediction of the restoration of the disciples (Mark 13:9-37; 14:28; 16:7) which was recorded in the other Gospels and would presumably have been known by Mark's target audience. It would have been unlikely for the earliest members of the Markan community to have not known the leadership of the apostles, especially Peter, and of how they were restored to faith. The earlier writings of Paul already affirm Peter's

⁵ Tannehill, 'Disciples in Mark', 141.

⁶ See such emphasis in Robert Tannehill, *A Mirror for Disciples: Following the Disciples Through Mark* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1977).

⁷ Tannehill, 'The Disciples in Mark', 140. Such distancing is also emphasised by David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 123. See also Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1961), 243-271.

⁸ Tannehill, 'Disciples in Mark', 140.

leadership (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:21; Gal. 2:11-14). So the negative portrayal of the disciples does not hinder the audience in an oral performance to identify with the disciples because it was conventional to portray the followers of a hero as relatively fallible (as foils) by comparison, so as to highlight whatever characteristic traits the main character has.

Moreover, since Tannehill was primarily interested in the narrative text, he did not delve into the more concrete situation of Mark's community in the early church which we do in this work. Nevertheless, Tannehill's emphasis on the intention of the author and how the audience would have responded supports the argument of this chapter that while Mark speaks of Jesus' disciples, he was also speaking to the current disciples of his community, so that Jesus' disciples became object lessons for the new disciples. However, we take Mark's target audience to include Mark's community, as well as others in first-century Palestine who would have heard his narrative publicly performed. There is now a move from telling about Jesus' disciples in the narrative to an expected participation of Mark's target audience, who were then the current or potential followers of Jesus.

To remedy the limitations of Tannehill's presentation, we have situated the production and early reception of Mark's narrative in a first-century oral context in a chaotic atmosphere in connection to the Great Judeo-Roman War in 66-70 CE. That is, Mark's narrative would have been heard in first-century Palestine in the context of war, struggle, persecution, and suffering. As noted in the previous chapters, the early recipients of Mark's narrative would not have been Roman Christians under persecution, although Mark's narrative would have been later heard differently in a Roman setting. The suffering among Mark's community would have been due to the Roman attack on Galilee during the beginning of the Great Judeo-Roman War (66-70 C.E.), killing

thousands of the inhabitants.⁹ Galilee was then predominantly Jewish and many nationalists would have been hostile to other Jews who did not support their endeavours. Consequently, Christians in Mark's community (both Jews and Gentiles) would have felt the unpleasantness of the place. This would have augmented the interest of Mark's community to reach out to other Gentiles (Mark 13:10), even as they responded to Jesus' call (Mark 1:17) and as they hoped for his return (Mark 13:26; 14:62).

Furthermore, the following discussion in relation to speech-act theory and social memory theories (in conjunction with a literary-rhetorical analysis) will address the limitations of Tannehill's narrative theory of identification and repulsion as this chapter will show how the disciples in Mark's narrative became the new disciples in Mark's community.

6.3 Mark's Target Audience as the New Disciples of Jesus

Speech-act theory is concerned, *inter alia*, with the 'illocutionary force' of an utterance (in the words of J.L. Austin). J.L. Austin uses the term 'illocutionary acts' to refer to 'the minimal complete unit of human linguistic communication' so that every time 'we talk or write to each other, we are performing illocutionary acts'.¹⁰ One expects the narrative to 'effect something' in action in one's historical context. J.L. Austin also speaks of 'perlocutionary acts'. This refers to the 'effect that the illocutionary act has on a hearer'.¹¹ Hence the oral force of a public performance of Mark's narrative in a first-century oral context would have produced 'the effect' of

⁹ Josephus, J.W., 3.4.1-4.3.2.

¹⁰ See John Searle, Mind, Language and Society: Philosophy in the Real World (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 136.

¹¹ Searle, Mind, Language and Society, 137.

moving the audience to action in a given situation, as they compared or identified themselves with the disciples in the narrative. This is in accordance with one of Walter Ong's characteristics of oral communication wherein sounded word becomes power and action.¹² Here, whatever was spoken by Jesus to his disciples in the narrative would have been understood by Mark's audience to be Jesus' direct words to them. This is especially so if, as Tannehill asserts, there are similarities between the situation of the disciples in the narrative and that of Mark's target audience.¹³ But this also necessitates a correct knowledge by the performer about Jesus and his disciples to be able to render a faithful and effective oral performance.

As Joanna Dewey argues, 'Jesus is made present to audiences. The hearers of the gospel experience being directly addressed by Jesus.... Thus, Mark does not reject Jesus as speaker; rather, he allows him to speak and thus to be present to the listening community'.¹⁴ That is, through the performer imitating Jesus as one with authority (Mark 1:22), his words would have been imbued with a real sense of authority, making the hearers get a better sense of the identity and significance of Jesus. So when Jesus called his disciples to follow him, it would have been heard as Jesus' call of Mark's audience. This is because one of the functions of an oral narrative is to 'invite the hearer to enter into the narrative, shaping identity through identification with the story'.¹⁵ Thus, the group around Jesus expands to include the audience of the story, who were not only spectators but participants, as they were also challenged to follow Jesus on his

¹² See the differences between sound words and seen words in Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 31-77.

¹³ See Tannehill, 'Disciples in Mark', 141.

¹⁴ See Joanna Dewey, 'The Gospel of Mark as Oral Hermeneutic' in Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and Written Gospel (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 78.

¹⁵ Holly Hearon, 'Storytelling in Oral and Written Media Contexts' in Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and Written Gospel (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 92.

way. This is especially so if Mark's target audience were composed of believers in Jesus listening to an effective rendering of an oral performance.

R.P. Meye argues that 'one must suppose that had Mark set out to establish for the first time the authoritative place of the Twelve for the later Church, or to undermine a position they already held, a less ambiguous picture would have resulted'.¹⁶ Hence, according to him, 'in view of the Messianic appointment of the Twelve and in view of the central place occupied by the Twelve in every phase of the Messianic ministry, it is simply impossible to believe that the Markan Church did or could have loved the Messiah and hated the Twelve'.¹⁷ Instead, 'it was to his chosen disciples that Jesus revealed himself and ... it is through them that he now reveals himself to the Markan church'.¹⁸ In other words, Mark's target audience becomes the new disciples who must receive the revelation of Jesus. But the performer has to have a correct view of Jesus and his disciples in order to produce an effective oral performance.

The point I want to establish is that while Mark's audience expected the narrative to be about Jesus, his disciples, and other characters in the story, the audience themselves were also included in the story and were expected to participate in the unfolding of the narrative as they were invited to immediately follow Jesus. Such audience inclusion in the oral narrative performance is well-known in the First Century CE and to all oral and highly residual oral cultures in general.¹⁹ This is especially so, as

¹⁶ Robert Paul Meye, Jesus and the Disciples: Discipleship and Revelation in Mark's Gospel (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1968), 181-82.

¹⁷ Meye, Jesus and the Disciples, 224.

¹⁸ Meye, Jesus and the Disciples, 134.

¹⁹ Whitney Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 172; Thomas E. Boomershine, 'Audience Address and Purpose in the Performance of Mark' in Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect (eds. Kelly R. Iverson, Christopher V. Skinner; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 139; Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, 'Audience Inclusion and Exclusion as Rhetorical Technique in the Gospel of Mark', JBL 129.4 (2010): 717-35.

the performer talks to the audience through storytelling and where members of the audience personify the character/s being told in the story. Thomas Boomershine calls this ‘rhetoric of implication’²⁰ and Shiner describes this as ‘blurring the boundary between the narrative and performance worlds’.²¹ Thus we can imagine how the performer intentionally involves the audience with the aim not only to entertain but to persuade them of his line of thought, and specifically in this case, to invite them to belong to his community. We can also imagine the emotional effects of wonder, amazement, laughter, confusion, anxiety, etc. upon the audience,²² as they were caught up in the story, even as they make interjections in relation to their socio-historical contexts, which would have been common in an oral performance.

There are indications in the narrative that Mark intended his audience to participate in the story as a means of inviting them to belong to his community. These indications may well indicate how the audience would have received for themselves what was stated for the characters in the story. For instance, the historic (dramatic) present, which was used by Mark over 150 times, attests to the fact that he was presenting a story involving the audience in their present time, or that Mark was making past realities appropriate for the present needs and context of the audience. As noted in chapter three, such is due to the fact that oral narrative asks the audience to play a part in the oral performance. In addition, since there is a rhetorical function of an oral narrative performance, the historic present links the past events to the present hearers urging them to become or to believe according to the narrator’s purpose. This is so

²⁰ Thomas Boomershine, ‘Biblical Storytelling and Biblical Scholarship’, paper presented at the NBS Seminar, Summer 2010.

²¹ Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel, 173.

²² See Jouette Bassler, ‘The Parable of the Loaves’. Journal of Religion (1986), 166. This is also emphasized in Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel; Richard Horsley, Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Story (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001).

because ‘the goal of narrative according to the rhetorical handbooks is to make the audience feel present at the actual event’.²³ It is also to portray the event vividly especially in an oral narrative performance.²⁴ Thus, the ‘historic present’ in Mark’s narrative is an indication of ‘oral register’ or a hint showing how Mark’s narrative would have been orally performed. Mark’s use of the historic present is more commonly taken to be an example of his crude Greek style, but as noted in chapter 3, such an accusation against Mark is based on a critique of his narrative text without consideration of Mark’s intent in relation to the purposes and constraints of an orally performed narrative. Mark’s use of the historical present would have been a feature of an informal, oral storytelling style in the first-century Greco-Roman world, meant for a more casual narration. Both Luke and Matthew tend to eliminate Mark’s historic presents yet both intended their Gospels to be read aloud and presumably wanted them to be rhetorically effective, just like Mark’s narrative. However, their works reflect the textual development of an oral narrative as their works were based on Mark’s narrative, which preserves more the oral features of an oral narrative.

There is another indication that Mark invited audience participation in his narrative: by the use of all-inclusive (or audience inclusive) indefinite pronouns. Arguing from a first-century convention audience, Beavis asserts that ‘the primary audience of the parable chapter is not the historical disciples but the readers/listeners of the Gospel’.²⁵ In the parable of the sower, since the disciples seem not to be getting

²³ Whitney Shiner, ‘Sounding the Eschatological Alarm: Chapter Thirteen in the Performance of Mark’ (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, Georgia, 23 November 2003), 8.

²⁴ Daniel Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 526.

²⁵ Mary Ann Beavis, Mark’s Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4:11-12 (JSNTSup, 33; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 153. From a more narrative stance, see Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, ‘Mysterious Explanations: Mark 4 and the Reversal of Audience Expectation’ in Between Author & Audience: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation (ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 64-79.

Jesus' message, the invitation is given generally to anyone who 'has ears to hear' (ἔχει ὄτια ἀκούειν), which definitely includes the audience (Mark 4:9; 4:23). Also, the words of Jesus in Mark 7:14 would have been addressed by a performer to the audience: 'Listen to me, everyone' (Ἀκούσατέ μου πάντες). Similarly, 'whoever' (ὅς ἄν/ἐάν) (in Mark 3:29; 3:35; 8:35, 38; 9:37; 9:41-42; 10:11, 15; 11:23) encompasses the hearing audience just like other generic statements of Jesus mentioning any ἄνθρωπος or τις (Mark 7:15, 18, 20, 23; 9:35; 8:34). A similar case can be argued for the generic words of Jesus (Mark 2:17, 10:29-31) which certainly include the audience. More precisely, as argued by Timothy Geddert, the address to 'all' (πᾶσιν) in Mark 13:37 'is designed to focus on the transition [from the disciples] to yet others as they begin their turn in the race [i.e., the pursuit of faithful discipleship]'.²⁶ And 'others' here encompasses the hearing audience. Thus, the audience would have immediately felt and received for themselves the challenges posted for the characters in the story, depending on the way the performer raised his/her voice and acted in an oral performance.

Moreover, repetition indicates an 'oral register' according to Susan Niditch as noted in chapter three. It also shows audience participation in the performance. Of course, there are repetitions acceptable in a written narrative aimed at silent reading, but these are unlike the repetition of the conjunction 'καί' in Mark 15:16-20 (and throughout the whole narrative). Such repetition (one of the aural signposts) is not generally common and appropriate in a written narrative, but acceptable in an oral narrative:

καὶ συγκαλοῦσιν ὅλην τὴν σπεῖραν.
καὶ ἐνδιδύσκουσιν αὐτὸν πορφύραν
καὶ περιτιθέασιν αὐτῷ πλέξαντες ἀκάνθινον στέφανον·
καὶ ἤρξαντο ἀσπάζεσθαι αὐτόν· Χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων·
καὶ ἔτυπτον αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν καλὰ μῶ

²⁶ Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 196.

καὶ ἐνέπτυσεν αὐτῷ,
καὶ τιθέντες τὰ γόνατα προσεκύνουν αὐτῷ.
καὶ ὅτε ἐνέπαιξαν αὐτῷ, ἐξέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὴν πορφύραν
καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ ἱμάτια τὰ ἴδια.
καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα σταυρώσωσιν αὐτόν.

In the case of Mark 14:7, David Smith observes that repetition supports the contention about the involvement of the audience in remembering the story: ‘The repetition of the second person pronouns invites the audience to participate in the difficult decision. Moreover, the two-fold repetition of the adverb πάντοτε moves the story out of the story world into the real world of the audience’.²⁷ Thus, the audience would have been compelled to respond as participants in the story. The context of Jesus’ word is within the story of the anointing of Jesus by a woman at Bethany (Mark 14:3-9). The indignant feeling of some of Simon’s guests (which might be skilfully dramatized by the performer) is an emotional indicator of how some of the audience would have felt when the woman broke the alabaster jar and poured the costly ointment on Jesus’ head. But such a feeling is corrected when Jesus affirms the woman’s act as ‘good work’ (καλὸν ἔργον), which would have invited the hearers to understand that what was done for Jesus was not wasted. It is better than helping the poor. Thus, in Mark 14:9, Jesus said of the woman that wherever the gospel (εὐαγγέλιον) is preached, she will be remembered. The word λαληθήσεται (will be told) would have been heard by the audience as being told in their present time, and they were invited into remembering her (εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς) and her sacrifice for Jesus, which was not wasted.

In the case of the women at the tomb, Mark’s emphases also show how an oral performance would have invited audience’s participation. One emphasis is on how the women were alarmed because the very large stone was rolled back and a young man

²⁷ David F. Smith, ‘Can We Hear What They Heard? The Effect of Orality upon a Markan Reading-event’ (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2002), 224.

was there (Mark 16:4-5). The word ‘alarmed’ may show how the public performer dramatized the response of the women. It also shows how the audience would have been also alarmed, but were later encouraged not to ‘be alarmed’ because of the affirmation of the young man of Jesus’ resurrection (Mark 16:6). Another emphasis is the expression (awkward in written form): ‘And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large’ (Mark 16:4, ESV). Placing the phrase ‘for it was very large’ (ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα) at the end of the sentence for emphasis is more appropriate in an oral performance than in written form. The point is to present the difficulty of moving the stone which the women could not have done (Mark 16:3). One more emphasis by Mark is the women’s failure to tell about the resurrection, using a double negative οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν (literally, ‘to no one nothing they said’; Mark 16:8), (which is similar to the double negative he uses at Mark 1:44). Such emphasis would have recalled the failure of the disciples in the narrative (Mark 14:50), but would also have been an invitation for Mark’s audience to proclaim what the women failed to in the narrative, as if asking them: ‘Will you also fail or not?’

Moreover, the theme of reversion shows how Mark intended the involvement of some of the audience, who were outsiders to the story, to become part of the story of Mark’s community. Examples from Mark’s narrative are noted below wherein the outsiders (such as some minor characters) became insiders. These minor characters come from different groups, status and situations: children, women, blind men, demon-possessed, sick, crowd, authorities, etc. Although they are generally called minor characters in this work, they stand out as ‘major figures’,²⁸ serving as foils for the

²⁸Joel F. Williams, Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters as Major Figures in Mark’s Gospel (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

disciples in Mark's narrative.²⁹ However, they are not only there for contrast but also to match up with the disciples, in their attempts to follow Jesus. As an example, Jesus is said to have been eating with tax collectors and sinners at Levi's house (Mark 2:15-17); and Levi was one of the ones chosen by Jesus, although not one of the twelve disciples (Mark 1:16-20; 3:13-19). He was heard as among πολλοὶ τελῶναι καὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ (many tax collectors and sinners), but then was one of those whom Jesus came to call (καλέσαι). This may well have been taken by those potential disciples of Jesus as an invitation for them to belong to Jesus' group, which was then represented by Mark's community. For if an outsider like Levi could come to belong to Jesus' group, so could they. This is based on our historical imaginary reading of Mark's text (set within an oral performance) and how usually such a performance calls for personal and social change (as elaborated in chapter three).

There is another minor character interpolated within the raising of the dead girl: the haemorrhaging and ceremonially unclean woman, who would also have heard of the stories about Jesus' ability to heal. In comparison to Jairus, she would have been one of the ordinary poor people. Her approach to Jesus is in secret unlike Jairus who openly approached Jesus. But she had also strong faith in Jesus: 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed' (Mark 5:28). And she was healed. Such was confirmed by Jesus when he spoke: 'Daughter, your faith has healed you' (Mark 5:34). If the performer pointed his/her finger to the audience (which is not uncommon in an oral performance) while saying 'ἡ πίστις σου', they would have understood Jesus' requirement for his followers: faith, which is a common element found in the master-disciple relationship in their time, as noted in chapter 4. Such a faith is needed by those among the audience who were in

²⁹ See J.D. Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authority, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 25-27; Rhoads, Dewey and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 129-35; Tannehill, 'Disciples in Mark', 134-57.

need of Jesus' healing and wanted to follow Jesus. So this story (and other healing stories) would have been taken as a motivation for the audience to believe in Jesus and belong to his community.

Such minor characters serve as models for following Jesus, and open up the possibility for outsiders (including the audience) to become faithful followers of Jesus. For in Jesus' group, even enemies can become friends and (fictive) family members. However, can it be consistently argued that the audience were both made to identify with the disciples by the oral dynamic of the performance, and at the same time made to identify with the outsiders who become insiders (i.e. people other than the disciples)? Most probably so, if these features of the narratives are meant to involve different groups in the target audience (e.g. church members and outsiders). So we are espousing a multi-purpose intention of Mark (for both church members and non-members) rather than just opting for an either-or.

Furthermore, the direct statements in Mark's narrative (usually in the present tense) also point towards the involvement of the audience in the story.³⁰ It is because such direct statements addressed to characters could also be addressed by a performer to the listening audience, so that both the performer and the audience become participants in the story in various ways. This is assuming the performer would have done a good rendering of the text of Mark, for a weak reading would have been less effective. So for instance, the preaching of Jesus (rightly dramatized) to 'repent and believe the good news' (Mark 1:15) is an invitation for the audience to consider their state in relation to Jesus' preaching. Jesus' call of the early disciples (Simon, Andrew, James, John, and Levi) to follow him (Mark 1:16-20; 2:14) is also an invitation for the audience to do the

³⁰ See Smith, 'Can We Hear What They Heard?' 175-83; Jeannine K. Brown, 'Direct Engagement of the Reader in Matthew's Discourses: Rhetorical Techniques and Scholarly Consensus', *NTS* 51 (2005): 19-35.

same. Any among the audience who has faith in him are invited to hear Jesus' words as applying to themselves: 'your sins are forgiven' (Mark 2:5). Those wavering in faith, most probably affected by suffering and persecution of the Judeo-Roman War (66-70 C.E.), are also invited to relate with the 'you' statement of Jesus in Mark 4:40: 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?', while those who experienced Jesus in their lives hear Jesus' words for themselves: 'Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you' (Mark 5:19). There are other direct 'you' statements which were most probably addressed by a performer to the audience (Mark 4:21; 4:24; 8:17-21; 8:33; 9:1, 43-50; 10:15, 18-21, 29, 36-45, 51-52; 11:24-25). Likewise, the question of Jesus to his disciples in Mark 8: 29 would have been received by Mark's audience for themselves: 'But what about you? ... Who do you say I am?' Thus, the audience become participants rather than mere spectators, doing what was supposedly done by the disciples in the narrative. And it is by this means that the audience were invited by Mark to be identified with his community, as belonging to Jesus' group. Also, the whole chapter of Mark 13, which is a prophetic discourse by Jesus, would have been directly addressed by the performer to the listening audience—as if he were Jesus addressing his disciples.

To illustrate further, let's look at the significance of the 'you' in Mark 4:10-12, which is placed within the context of Jesus' teaching (Mark 4:1-2) and the audience's listening (Mark 4:3, 9, 12). We base our discussion on the rhetorical impact of an oral performance (as discussed in chapter three). Mark 4:10-13 is keyed to the Israelite traditions so that Mark's target audience were invited to understand the privileged position of the twelve disciples who received the 'secret of the kingdom of God', just like the twelve tribes of Israel who were also privileged to receive God's revelation. This is suggested by Mark's use of the divine passive (δέδοται) which points to God as

giver of the gift and the disciples as receivers (Mark 4:11). This is especially so where the 'you' is contrasted to the outsiders. That is, while parables are told to the whole crowd (Mark 1-2), the 'secret of the kingdom' are given only for the 'you' and not for the outsiders. In the story world, the 'you' is understood as the disciples around Jesus at the time the story was being told. But in an oral performance, the 'you' is addressed to the audience as receivers of God's gift of revelation. They were privileged as the disciples of listening to the meaning of the stories about the kingdom of God. However, only the parable of the sower is given clear interpretation which the audience could understand. And Mark's mention of Isa. 6:9-10 describing the outsiders who see but 'not perceive' (μὴ ἴδωσιν) and who hear but 'not understand' (μὴ συνιῶσιν) (Mark 4:12) would have been understood as a caution for the possibility of failure among the audience, comparable to the failure of some of the Israelites and that of the twelve disciples who could hardly understand the parable (Mark 4:13). This directs the audience to ponder deeper if they could still understand other messages of Jesus' words and actions. Or, they will be like the disciples who could hardly understand and proved lacking in faith. This then becomes an invitation for the audience that if they want to understand more, they need to get closer to Jesus and really belong to his group, which was then represented by Mark's community.

Another notion of audience participation is related to the audience's applause or other forms of affirmation from the hearers being provoked by the narrative performance.³¹ Since dramatic suspense (which is a feature of an oral narrative) is well knitted into Mark's narrative ('as the elements of the plot are woven together into a

³¹ See discussion of how audience applause invokes audience participation in Shiner, Proclaiming the Gospel, 154-67.

gradually approaching climax’),³² we show the element of suspense and reversal of expectation that would have been designed to evoke response from the audience. This may not be applicable in sombre settings (e.g. formal worship) because such a vocal audience response might be inappropriate. But in an oral performance in an informal house gathering or less formal worship, there is more freedom for applause and other forms of affirmations.

We may demonstrate audience applause using the passion narrative, especially as the scene progresses to the climax of the confession of the centurion in Mark 15:39: ‘Surely this man was the Son of God’ (Ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν). The prophecy and expectation about Jesus’ suffering and death has been presented gradually (Mark 3:6; 8:31-32; 10:38, 45; 14:10-25), provoking a feeling of pity and anger on the part of the audience. In Mark 14:1, it is very clear that the ‘chief priests and the teachers of law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him’. In Mark 14:11, Judas is said to be participating with the chief priests for the plot to kill Jesus. This is later termed by Jesus at the ‘Lord’s Supper’ as betraying him (Mark 14:18). In between is a woman’s act of pouring perfume on Jesus’ head (Mark 14:3), which was interpreted by Jesus as a preparation for his burial (Mark 14:8). In his agony in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus states ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death’ (Mark 14:34). The emotional indicator Περίλυπος (overwhelmed with sorrow or deeply grieved) would have been acted out by the oral performer, which would have also been felt by Mark’s audience. Then comes the actual betrayal by one of the disciples predicted earlier, which progressed to Jesus’ arrest (Mark 14:43-50). Mark clarifies that Judas was one of the Twelve but at this time one with the enemy, which would have added frustration on the part of the audience.

³² R. T. France, The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 10.

However, when one of disciples drew his sword and cut somebody's ear (Mark 14:47), the audience would have been provoked to cheer for the disciples who displayed courage in defending their master, which would have been common in a master-disciple relationship. But Jesus' response (Mark 14:48-49) would have helped the audience understand that Jesus was not a military revolutionist. And the disciples' response of fleeing again (Mark 14:50) would have frustrated the audience. Moreover, Jesus' condemnation to death by the Jewish council (known to be enemies of Jesus in Mark's narrative) and their abusive treatment of him, such as spitting upon him (Mark 14:53-65), along with Peter's denial (Mark 14:66-72), the deliverance of Jesus to be crucified by Pilate (Mark 15:1-15), the mockery by the soldiers (Mark 15:16-20), the ridicule by those who passed by (Mark 15:29), and by another crucified person (Mark 15:32)—all of these built up to generate an intense feeling of sympathy, anger and frustration on the part of the audience.

Especially so, the emotion of pity and shocking defeat became more intense when the audience heard the skilful dramatization of the cry of Jesus with regards to God's desertion of him: *'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'* (Mark 15:34). Those who understood Aramaic and who were familiar with the Psalms would have heard such a cry in connection with Psalm 22. Of course Greek-speaking audience also understood the wordings because it was translated in Greek as Ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?). This is in contrast to those standing near the cross who thought Jesus was calling Elijah (Mark 15:35-36). But then, suddenly and unexpectedly, a centurion (who was supposed to be the chief executioner because he is the commander of those soldiers who mocked Jesus) raised his voice at the death scene to acclaim the identity of Jesus as the 'Son of God' (Mark 15:39).

As noted in the previous chapter (pp. 195-96), the oral performance could easily have revealed whether or not the centurion's statement of Jesus as υἱὸς θεοῦ meant mockery as in 'son of a god' or appreciation 'Son of God'. This means that the performer's understanding of the identity of Jesus is crucial in the performance of the text. But Mark would have meant the latter because the centurion is meant to be contrasted to those who misunderstood Jesus as calling Elijah and to the soldiers who mocked him. In addition, Mark seems to highlight the mission of Jesus to both Jews and Gentiles and his identity as the true 'Son of God', a title the emperor claimed. Thus, the audience were challenged to either understand who Jesus was, like the centurion, or misunderstand him like those others near the cross.

Such a sudden twist of events usually provokes the response of awe, applause, standing ovation, or some other sort of affirmation. And probably this is what the narrative demands—the affirmation of Jesus' victory and that of the community of faith, where the audience belonged or were invited to belong. So the audience were being prepared as they looked forward to a happy ending. The problem is that this expectation was frustrated when the resurrected Jesus was not there to meet the disciples and the women were silenced and afraid (οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ; Mark 16:8). At this time, there is nothing to applaud, but the show must go on in the characters of the audience who must step in to continue the story as faithful disciples, if there is to be a happy ending to applaud—the telling of resurrection, the meeting of the resurrected Jesus in Galilee (Mark 16:7), and waiting for the return of Jesus who will send his angels to gather his 'chosen ones' (ἐκλεκτοῦς) (Mark 13:26-27), which include Mark's community.

Basically, Mark's narrative has moved from Jesus' call of his disciples to his call of Mark's hearers, which involved cognition, emotion, and action on the part of the

audience. The participation of the audience in an oral performance is generally expected. The expectation is not only about what the text is all about, but what the text does in an oral performance before a live audience. In the words of Balabanski, the narrative is 'no longer experienced as "objective" history to be observed from the outside, but rather as a reality into which one enters'.³³ There is a move from being mere spectators to active participants in the story, from laughing at the disciples to being ashamed of them and to being ashamed of one's own self, the move from being frustrated at the failures of the disciples to having hope amidst their failures, from judging the disciples to judging oneself.

In conclusion, this section demonstrates that Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples evoked the audience's participation in the unfolding of the narrative by virtue of speech-act theory and the rhetoric of an ancient oral narration. Whatever was spoken by Jesus to the disciples in the narrative was also spoken by Mark through the performer to the listening audience; and there are indications in the text of how Mark's target audience would have received for themselves Jesus' words, thereby being challenged to follow him. The following section will show the vital role of remembering the past in the attempt to understand Jesus' challenge to follow him. It will also show how remembering the past made sense for the audience's present context and future aspirations as they attempted or continued to follow Jesus.

³³ Vicky Balabanski, Eschatology in the Making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 69.

6.4 Jesus' Call of Disciples, the Elect at Jesus' Return, and Mark's Target Audience

Mark's narrative gives some clues as to what basically happened in historical space and time, and that what we have now as the Gospel of Mark is not based on mere fiction. But such a claim is only proper in so far as what was remembered or why it was remembered and how it was remembered (through narrative emplotment) are concerned, not as a one-to-one correspondence to actual happenings, or to Jesus' words which would have been uttered in different places and forms at various times. This is because, according to Keith and Thatcher, social memory theory 'would be less interested in the transmission and mutation of a specific body of content about Jesus than in the reasons why different Christians at different times and in different locations thought about him in different ways'.³⁴

Thus, social memory theory will be considered in this section to help put the remembering aspect of Jesus and his disciples in proper perspective, particularly in the context of an oral performance. This is especially in relation to the present situation of Mark's audience, as the present situation aids in the way one remembers salient aspects of the past.³⁵ Here, the present 'interests of the hearers are engaged in the context of their own past'.³⁶ For as argued by Eve, it would have been strange 'if the people who performed the Jesus tradition, and those who heard them, made no attempt to interpret

³⁴ Chris Keith and Tom Thatcher, 'The Scar of the Cross: The Violence Ratio and the Earliest Christian Memories of Jesus' in *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 206

³⁵ See Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 69-97.

³⁶ Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Case for Mark: Composed in Performance* (Eugene: Cascade, 2011), 118.

its significance, so that it was left entirely to the Evangelists to supply their own interpretation independently of the tradition that preceded them'.³⁷

Moreover, the use of social memory theory shows how the characters of the disciples in Mark's story world become the new disciples in Mark's community. This is in view of the 'principle of applicability' and the emphasis on the relevance of the story to real life highlighted in social memory studies.³⁸ More specifically, what will be demonstrated is that Mark's target audience would have associated and identified themselves with both (or as sandwiched between) the 'chosen disciples' in the narrative and the 'chosen ones' (ἐκλεκτούς) at the return of Jesus. This is with the assumption that the performer knows the characters of the disciples well so he could re-tell about them faithfully, with the right tone, connotation and emphasis. For lack of knowledge about the disciples may result in an unfaithful and inaccurate rendering of the story.

Now, if memories about the characters of Jesus and his disciples are constructed and reconstructed in the recollection and retelling of the story, then the hearers' perceptions of them may develop (and possibly solidify) over time. And when applied to the oral performance of Mark's narrative, such retelling over time would have helped solidify Mark's community or aided in the community's identity formation—as belonging to Jesus' group. But what attracted them to listen in the first place was their prior knowledge about Jesus and the traditions or characters connected to him.³⁹ Eric Eve's rhetorical questions elaborate the point:

³⁷ Eric Eve, Writing the Gospels (London: SPCK, 2016), 44.

³⁸ Tom Thatcher, 'Beyond Texts and Traditions' in Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond Oral and the Written Gospel (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), 11.

³⁹ See Eve, Behind the Gospels (London: SPCK, 2013), 32. See also See Schacter, Searching for Memory, 69-71, 88-97; Todd Tremlin, Minds and Gods: The Cognitive Foundations of Religion (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 152; James Fentress and Chris Wickham, Social Memory (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 31.

What value would there be in quoting a saying of Jesus to an audience who had no idea why he should be regarded as authoritative? What significance would a miracle story about Jesus have for someone who had no other notion who Jesus was? Why would the parables of an otherwise unknown teacher be worth attending to? What apologetic function would even a connected Passion narrative have for people who have no reason to suppose that either the death or the person of Jesus held any particular significance?

The audience was drawn to Jesus by their previous knowledge of him, but how could the retelling of these memories by the performer have made an impact upon Mark's target audience? No doubt, there were interplays between the remembrance of Jesus and the recalling of the popular oral traditions akin to the OT and current in the audience's social memory, as we have demonstrated earlier. With the supposition that Mark's target audience was knowledgeable of Israelite popular traditions (which we call little tradition and mythic past) and of the traditions about Jesus (recent past), Mark would have composed his narrative in a way that relied on his audience's knowledge of these traditions. Thus, the audience was able to hear more than appears in Mark's written text. In other words, while Mark tailors his message to fit the present needs and context of the audience, his message was filtered through the audience's experiences and expectations.⁴⁰ This is observable in the way Mark narrates his story, which utilizes past memories and traditions to have a bearing upon his audience's present context. This is relevant to my whole project in as much as the audience tried to make sense of what they heard about Jesus and his disciples in relation to what else they knew in their socio-historical context.

What effect did the characters of Jesus and his disciples have upon Mark's target audience, or how did the memories about Jesus and his disciples make sense to the audience in relation to their Israelite tradition and present social context? This can be answered in connection to the development of oral hermeneutics and social memory studies, wherein memories normally aid in solidifying a community's sense of identity

⁴⁰ Eve, *Behind the Gospels*, 3.

and addressing their present context. As observable in Mark's narrative, the employment of traditions (mythic past or recent past) was meant to showcase Mark's portrayal of Jesus and his disciples, so that whenever the audience heard these traditions, they were invited to key or frame their perception of their current situations to salient aspects of the past. Moreover, past memories sometimes direct the audience to a common future⁴¹ or a narrative projects a common future of the audience. Thus, the employment of traditions in Mark's narrative would have helped Mark's target audience to define themselves and to be oriented towards the future hope Mark was pointing them towards as a new community—the 'chosen ones' (ἐκλεκτούς) in Mark 13:27.

The institution of the Lord's Supper is another example, as celebrated by Jesus and his disciples. There are at least two significant aspects of the tradition of the Lord's Supper in the Gospel of Mark, with reference to Mark's target audience.⁴² First, Mark places the Last Supper in the context of the Passover celebration when God delivered his people out of bondage from Egypt (Mark 14:12-21). Mark 14:24 also references the wider exodus tradition (Exo. 24:6-8) by alluding to the covenant ceremony involving blood: Moses sprinkled blood on the people saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words' (Exo. 24:8). Such would presumably be apparent to a Markan audience familiar with the Passover context of the 'Lord's Supper' and its implications for Jesus' suffering and death.

Second, the Lord's Supper looks forward to Jesus' promise of drinking the cup anew in the coming kingdom of God (Mark 14:25). The 'looking forward' to the

⁴¹ See Werner H. Kelber, 'The Generative Force of Memory: Early Christian Traditions as Processes of Remembering', *BTB* 36 (2006): 21; Mario Aguilar, 'The Archaeology of Memory and the Issue of Colonialism: Mimesis and Controversial Tribute to Caesar in Mark 12:12-17', *BTB* 35 (2005): 60; Mario Aguilar, 'Rethinking the Judean Past: Questions of History and a Social Archaeology of Memory in the First Book of the Maccabees', *BTB* 30 (2000): 65; Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel', *BTB* 27 (1997): 82.

⁴² Mark's presentation of the Lord's Supper (Mark 14:22-25) is identical to that of Matthew's (Matt. 26:26-29).

coming kingdom in relation to the Lord's Supper was also spelled out earlier by Paul (1 Cor. 11:26) which shows that the tradition of the Lord's Supper was already established. However, there are some notable differences in the details between Paul's account and Mark's, which demonstrate that although the Lord's Supper is generally celebrated among different Christian groups in early Christianity, there were variations in the specifics of the tradition. For instance, Paul talks about Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper 'in remembrance' (ἀνάμνησιν) of himself (1 Cor. 11:24-25), while Mark mentions no note of remembrance. Moreover, while Paul and Mark agree in attaching some kind of eschatological significance to the rite, their wordings are different. Mark presents Jesus as expecting that one day he will drink anew the fruit of the vine 'in the kingdom of God' (ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ) (Mark 14:25), while Paul explains that the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine will continue until Jesus 'comes' (ἔλθῃ) (I Cor. 11:26).⁴³ Thus, the audience were ushered to a new kind of hope and future celebration of drinking a new kind of wine in the coming kingdom of God.

The dual significance of the Lord's Supper which is framed in the context of the Passover and which nurtures hope for Jesus' return and the gathering of the elect is supported by social memory studies, wherein 'groups of people construct the present and indeed the future in relation to their memories of the past, with peaceful or violent outcomes'.⁴⁴ In other words, the remembering of the past 'both structure[s] present experience and chart[s] a course for the future, all the while assuming that group

⁴³ Paul's presentation of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34) is normally within the context of a love feast (cf. Jude 12), while Mark's presentation is more of a Jewish Seder feast (just like that of Matthew and Luke). Moreover, the presentations of the Lord's Supper are even more complex and have more variations in other traditions: Luke mentions two cups (Luke 22:17, 20), and the Didache presents the Supper more as a thanksgiving (Didache 9, 10, and 14).

⁴⁴ Aguilar, 'The Archaeology of Memory and the Issue of Colonialism', 60. See also Aguilar, 'Rethinking the Judean Past', 65.

identity is predicated on historical continuity'.⁴⁵ Thus, Mark's target audience not only recall the Passover context of Jesus' suffering and death upon hearing of the Lord's Supper, but were hopeful to belong to Jesus' 'chosen ones' (ἐκλεκτούς) upon his return (Mark 13:27). This is especially so since Jewish and Christian eschatological expectations would have formed part of the traditions shared by the audience which would have shaped the audience's expectation of the future.⁴⁶

Such a dual significance (memory of the past and hope for the future) can also be applied to Jesus' promise to go ahead of his disciples in Galilee (Mark 14:28), just after the institution of the Lord's Supper. The promise directs the audience to where the first disciples were called by Jesus—in Galilee—and to where Jesus would meet them—also in Galilee. This will be elaborated further below, although what we do here is not through the lens of social memory theory, but through a literary-rhetorical approach. Similarly, we can relate past memories to the present and/or future of Mark's target audience in the ending of the narrative (Mark 16:8) through a literary-rhetorical analysis. The women remained faithful to Jesus up to this time as they were on their way to anoint Jesus' body (Mark 16:2-3). But to their surprise, the tomb was opened with a young man telling them about Jesus' resurrection and his command to tell this news to his disciples, for he would meet them in Galilee as he promised prior to his death (Mark 16:4-7). However, the women fled and told nothing to anyone out of fear (Mark 16:8). The use of γάρ at the end of the final sentence (Mark 16:8) encourages 'reflection back to earlier elements in the story and forward into a dialogue with the listening community'.⁴⁷ According to Bauckham, the 'point at which Mark stops telling

⁴⁵ Tom Thatcher, 'Cain and Abel in Early Christian Memory', *CBQ* 72 (2010): 751.

⁴⁶ See for instance Jude 14 about eschatological expectations quoted from Enoch 1:9.

⁴⁷ Smith, 'Can we hear what they heard?' 257.

the story is not the end of the story' because the audience 'know what is to follow' as predicted by Jesus 'and in this last passage of Mark's narrative they are reminded by the young man's words to the women (16:7) of Jesus' predictions'.⁴⁸ It is earlier predicted that the disciples would go back to Galilee to meet Jesus after resurrection (Mark 14:28). Other predictions which are not resolved in the narrative include the proclamation of the gospel to all nations (Mark 13:10), the return of Jesus in glory with the clouds (Mark 13:26), and the gathering of 'the elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven' (Mark 13:27).

So the sudden ending rhetorically brings to mind the beginning of the Gospel of Mark; that is, that Mark set out to write *only* the beginning (which will be clarified further in the next paragraph). At the same time, since the ending is unexpected, the audience were invited to fill in what is lacking and engage in building the identity of their new community as they expect the return of Jesus with the clouds of heaven (Mark 14:62) in power and glory (Mark 13:26), when they will join the community of 'the chosen ones' (τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς) (Mark 13:27). In other words, if the traditions about Jesus (in the narrative) affect the expected result of the narrative's sudden ending (given Mark 13), then the expectation relates to the apocalyptic and prophetic contexts of Mark's narrative which includes the return of Jesus in the clouds.

Interestingly, Mark made clear (at the opening of his narrative) the limit of his endeavour to recount only the first part of the story because the first phrase in his Gospel is generally considered, in accordance with ancient literary style,⁴⁹ as the title of the whole narrative: 'The beginning of the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ' (Mk

⁴⁸ Richard Bauckham, Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 294.

⁴⁹ Other NT examples: Matt. 1:1; Rev. 1:1.

1:1).⁵⁰ Although other interpreters take it to refer only to the opening of Mark's work (up to verse 3 or 8 or 11 or 13 or 15 depending on the scholar),⁵¹ Mark 1:1 looks more of a title of the whole narrative, which would have echoed the Jewish story of creation—'In the beginning' (Gen. 1:1). This is because the Gospel (which, in Mark's context, includes the fulfilment of the promises of the OT and the culmination of the victory of Jesus and his community) can only be fully realized when it is preached to all nations (Mark 13:10), when the Son of Man comes in power and glory (Mark 13:26), and when the angels gather the 'chosen ones' (ἐκλεκτούς) from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven (Mark 13:27). Thus, what Mark narrated is only the beginning of the Gospel, and Mark's target audience were expected to be affected by the announcement of the good news and live out the second portion of the story as they await its consummation. As Humphrey articulates, 'To follow Jesus ... is ... what Mark sought to motivate his audience to do by his telling of the "beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ" (1: 1). The completion, and end, of that news will be when those who listen to this narrative, hear and follow him'.⁵²

Moreover, it is important to note that the placement of the word Ἀρχή (beginning) at the opening of the phrase is emphatic, calling the audience to take note. So Mark's opening would have a rhetorical effect upon the audience when the first portion of the good news was narrated. Now, if the ending is not really a closure of the story but a preparation for a sequel on the part of the audience,⁵³ then every time a

⁵⁰ H. Anderson, The Gospel of Mark (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1976), 66; V. Taylor, The Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Macmillan, 1966), 152; Kingsbury, Conflict in Mark, 31.

⁵¹ See for instance Robert A. Guelich, Mark 1-8:26 (WBC 34a ; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 7.

⁵² Robert Humphrey, Narrative Structure and Message in Mark: A Rhetorical Analysis (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 2003), 291.

⁵³ See Norman Petersen, 'When is the End Not the End? Literary Reflections in the Ending of Mark's Narrative', Interpretation 34 (1980): 151-66.

performer ended abruptly, the audience were moved to live out the supposed second portion of the story, by stepping into the role of faithful disciples, as they await its culmination in the return of Jesus in the coming *eschaton*. Thus, Jesus' call to follow him does not end at the cross, rather it is through the cross, suffering, and persecution (Mark 8:34-38; 13:9-13). This is emphasised in Mark's treatment of the passion of Jesus; Jesus' followers were called to face the same destiny, a mirror of the situation of Mark's community who knew about, even if they had not witnessed, the Roman attack on Galilee and other devastating effects of the Great Judeo-Roman War (66-70 C.E.).

In other words, if Jesus' movement is worthy and if he died for its worth, if his mission and the Gospel are worth advancing until Mark's community see Jesus coming back with the clouds in the future *eschaton*, then there is an expectation for the audience to continue the story. How many more were willing to lay down their lives for a cause so worthy (Mark 8:34-38; 13:9-13)? So the sudden ending, or what David Hester calls 'dramatic inconclusion',⁵⁴ is a call for the audience to finish the story, taking the role of Jesus' disciples themselves. 'As the women have replaced the disciples as followers in the narrative itself, so now the listening audience replaces the women'.⁵⁵ This is David Smith's point about the employment of an oral approach to the understanding of Mark's narrative: 'Mark's impact does not fade once the story is over. Rather, the application of Mark's message lives on long after the story's final line is delivered'.⁵⁶

The open-endedness of Mark's narrative is in accord with John Goldingay's assertion of an audience-oriented approach to interpretation which 'presupposes that ambiguity is inherent in a story and asks what its openness do [sic] to an audience, or

⁵⁴ David Hester, 'Dramatic Inconclusion: Irony and the Narrative Rhetoric of the Ending of Mark', *JSNT* 57 (1995): 61.

⁵⁵ Dewey, 'Gospel of Mark as Oral Hermeneutic', 84-85.

⁵⁶ Smith, 'Can We Hear What They Heard?' 257.

what it does with them, aware that precisely in its ambiguity at such points the story can challenge an audience regarding its own attitudes'.⁵⁷ It is in this area that the audience would fill in the gaps in the narrative where it deems necessary.⁵⁸ For any narrative (or text) contains indeterminacies that need to be filled in by the audience. This is especially so in an oral performance wherein feedback is expected from the audience. According to John Miles Foley, 'To the extent that the audience is able to co-create the work by enriching its textual integers and bridging its gaps of indeterminacy according to the rules of idiom, that the audience can recover its traditional, performance-centred resonance'.⁵⁹

In conclusion, this section demonstrates that the way Mark composed his narrative would have evoked the remembrance of the past which aided in constructing the present and planning a way for the future of Mark's target audience. More specifically, it is shown that Mark's audience was sandwiched between the characters of the early disciples, chosen by Jesus, and the chosen ones in the coming *eschaton*. That is, if Mark's target audience associated themselves with the disciples (chosen by Jesus), then they were expected to take the role of faithful disciples to be counted among the characters at Jesus' return in the *eschaton*, described as 'chosen ones'.

6.5 'Follow Me': Between Jesus, the Disciples and Mark's Target Audience

As it was shown above, the absence of an appropriate ending to Mark's narrative would have functioned rhetorically before a listening audience, inviting them to

⁵⁷ John Goldingay, Models for Interpretation of Scripture (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 40.

⁵⁸ Goldingay, Models for Interpretation, 51.

⁵⁹ John Miles Foley, The Singer of Tales in Performance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 137.

continue the story and become faithful disciples of Jesus while awaiting his return in the future *eschaton*. There is of course a future hope, but the present has to be faced. So how would they now live the story and act as faithful disciples, if they indeed belong or wish to belong to Jesus' group? Would their expectations of the master-disciple relationship (discussed in chapter 4) conform to the way they were to act as the present disciples of Jesus? To answer these questions, three assertions will be noted as we integrate the findings in chapters 4 and 5 with the discussions above.

First, an understanding by Mark's target audience of the kind of relationship Jesus had with his disciples relates to believing in Jesus and belonging to his group. Since there is usually an element of trust needed for a disciple to approach a master, the audience would have been challenged to entrust themselves, even their future (Mark 13:9-27), to Jesus. For example, the way the disciples responded in obedience to Jesus immediately after their calling (Mark 1:17-18; 2:14) would have encouraged the audience to do the same, as indicated by speech act theory (see above). Similarly the cry of a father, 'help me overcome my unbelief' (Mark 9:23-24) after witnessing Jesus' healing power, would have directed the audience to believe in Jesus. Other miracles of Jesus would have directed the audience to put their trust in him which would have aided in convincing them to belong to Jesus' group. Here, there is the relationship between believing in Jesus and belonging to his group.

To explicate further, we turn to Jesus' words to those whom he called: 'Follow me' (Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου). The Greek words literally mean 'come after me', with 'μου' (me) as the point of emphasis (Mark 1:17; 2:14; 8:34). That is, anyone who wants to follow Jesus should be committed to him just like the disciples in the narrative, although we also know their failure. Especially notable is Peter's word: 'We have left everything to follow you' (Mark 10:28). This emphasis on following a master was common within

the socio-historical environment of Mark's target audience as discussed in chapter 4. However, while in other associations (e.g. proto-rabbis with students), a student can someday become a master with his own committed followers, Mark's target audience were challenged to focus only upon Jesus as their master. No one among the disciples can take Jesus' place as master as shown in the negative portrayals of Peter and the other disciples in Mark's narrative. For in Jesus' association, all are equals and only Jesus is the master. Thus, the audience would have been shocked with the behaviour of Peter when he rebuked Jesus (Mark 8:32) which would have been an unlikely scenario within the typical master-disciple relation during their time, for how can a mere student rebuke his master?

Moreover, associations in the audience's socio-historical context consisted of people who left their community, friends, and even family members to band together. However, unlike the group of the Rabbis, women and children can be part of the association of Jesus (Mark 2:31-35; 5:24-34; 7:30; 9:36-38; 10:13-16; 15:40-41), which would have invited women and children among Mark's audience to also join Jesus' group. In addition, although the banding together is observed in Jesus' group and the audience were invited to join his community, the expectation would have been varied because other followers of Jesus were sent out (e.g. Mark 5:19), not to mention the women who supported Jesus' group but were not obliged to live together with the group (Mark 15:40-41). So while Jesus' group was among the competing master-disciple relationships that existed in first-century Palestine and the message of Jesus was one of the many voices at that time, the rhetorical effect or force of Jesus' invitation 'follow me' in an oral performance does not only direct the audience to himself and to his way (although that is primary), but would have been understood as an invitation to belong to

his group (currently represented by Mark's community) rather than to the other groups existing at that time, as noted in chapter 4.

A second understanding by Mark's target audience of the kind of relationship Jesus had with his disciples relates to the message embodied by the group of Jesus discussed in the previous chapter. Here, the characters (rather than abstract or propositional ideas inscribed in a written text) are the messages. In such a first-century oral context, there is 'no distinct boundary' between the 'deliberate pedagogical measures and the teacher's way of life as a whole'.⁶⁰ The effect upon the audience of such an understanding would have been as follows: If the audience want to follow Jesus and join his group, they should be committed not only to his person and association but also to his message—to live according to the way of service and sacrifice (Mark 10:45) in contrast to the way of lording over others (Mark 10:42). So how would the audience have responded if Jesus' service and sacrifice is also meant for them (Mark 10:45)? One tendency would be to shy away in fear and shame. Fear of the Romans and being ashamed of the cross would have been felt by some of Mark's audience by virtue of the emotional effect of Jesus' violent death as shown in the fear of disciples, including the women at the tomb. It would have been easy to hide or shrink in silence. But the question of Jesus 'why are you afraid?' (Mark 4:40) would have challenged them, by virtue of speech act effect theory noted above. Similarly, Jesus' statement in Mark 8:38 would have been also a challenge to the audience not to be ashamed of him and the cross.

On the other hand, there would have been the tendency for some of the audience to understand revolt in a militaristic way, as has been understood by their Palestinian forbears and contemporaries. It is also because Roman injustice abounds before them

⁶⁰ Birger Gerhardsson, Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 186.

and stories about Roman brutality would have spread among them (as noted in chapter 4). But if they appreciated Jesus' group (as noted in chapter 4) and were convinced of Mark's message (noted in chapter 5), they would have known that it is not the place of the Jesus' group to follow after the militarism of the Zealot-like revolutionaries. Thus, the call to follow Jesus and belong to his group would have moved them to lay down the militaristic and violent understanding of revolution and follow Jesus' way of non-violent means, even to the point of being willing to sacrifice their lives (Mark 8:34-38). Just as Jesus (their master) sacrificed for them, the reciprocal response of a disciple in those days is usually to do the same. Besides, being a disciple then meant not only following the teaching of the master but also following the way, life-style, and character of the master.

A third understanding of the way the audience would have heard Mark's characterization of Jesus and his disciples relates to their faithfulness as the current disciples of Jesus in the newly founded mission movement. Just as the other groups (in their socio-historical context) had to speak out their faith to be heard and recruit followers, the audience (by virtue of speech-act theory elaborated above and the rhetorical effect of an oral performance) would have taken for themselves the role of spreading the good news (Mark 3:14; 6:6-12). This is in accordance with the general structure of a master-disciple relationship in their socio-historical context where the master's words are authoritative and should be followed. This is also in accordance with the general practice of imitating the practice of the master by the disciples, which is a common feature of the master-disciple relationship among the other associations in their socio-historical context. For in order for the movement to flourish, the audience should

respond as present followers of Jesus and pass on to others their master's teaching, vision and mission.⁶¹

Moreover, the call to spread the good news is not only in accordance with the demand of the ending of the story as explained above, but in accordance with the words of Jesus in Mark 13:10. The word $\pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\varsigma$ (first) emphasizes the spreading of the good news as being of primary importance within the missionary works of the disciples. Also, the word $\delta\epsilon\iota$ literally means 'there is need' having the sense of moral obligation,⁶² which tells what a follower of Jesus must do if, indeed, he or she joins and is identified with the group. But since Mark 13:10 calls for mission to the ends of the earth—even to the sinners—the audience would have been moved to share the good news to outsiders, unlike the members of the Essenes/Qumran community who have a rule not to share their teaching to those outsiders and sinners. The aim of the current disciples is supposedly to recruit new disciples who can call Jesus Lord, Messiah, and Son of God. This is different from other groups who can form their own movement apart from their master. Recruiting other disciples necessitates a form of itinerant missionary work (as in the case of Jesus' group and their forbears, Elijah-Elisha relationship), while waiting for Jesus' return in power and glory (Mark 13:26).

In conclusion, this section shows how Mark's target audience would now live the story being told to act as faithful disciples, if they indeed belong or wish to belong to Jesus' group. Their expectations of the master-disciple relationship that they already know in their socio-historical context partially conform to the way they were to act as

⁶¹ See Loveday Alexander, 'Memory and Tradition in the Hellenistic Schools' in Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Perspectives (eds. W. H. Kelber and S. Byrskog; Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 113–53.

⁶² H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (9th edition; revised by H.S. Jones and R. McKenzie; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 372.

the present disciples of Jesus, in accordance with Mark's presentation of Jesus' relationship with his disciples. So if they appreciated the group of Jesus while comparing it to other groups and if they were persuaded by Mark of his ideological thrust (represented by the character of Jesus over against his disciples and other characters), then it is more likely than not that they would have been moved to follow Jesus and belong to his community as faithful disciples.

6.6 Conclusion

As in the previous two chapters, this chapter explains how an oral performance of Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples would have achieved an interactive effect (that is, the force of the interaction between the oral performer and Mark's target audience) when heard in first-century Palestine. Particularly, this chapter aimed to find out how Mark's target audience heard Mark's characterizations of Jesus and his disciples in view of their calling to belong to Jesus' group and follow him in faithful discipleship. The outcome is that, in the communication of the story and through the principle of identification, the disciples in Mark's narrative become the new disciples in Mark's community. They were challenged to live as faithful disciples, if they were or want to become part of the association of Jesus. Such is in accordance with whatever they know of a master-disciple relationship and Mark's presentation of Jesus' relationship with his disciples. So Mark's target audience would have identified themselves with the disciples in Mark's narrative in the following ways:

Firstly, Tannehill's work of identification and repulsion was used as a starting point to show how the disciples in Mark's narrative mirror the situation of Mark's community or target audience. Although Tannehill's methodology and findings have limitations, his emphasis on the intention of the author and how the audience would

have responded supports the argument that while Mark speaks of Jesus' disciples, he was also speaking to current disciples of his community, wherein Jesus' disciples became object lessons for the new disciples.

Secondly, with the aid of speech-act theory, it was demonstrated that Mark's characterisations of Jesus and the disciples evoked the interaction of the audience, as the narrative has moved to encompass the audience in the unfolding of the narrative. This is especially so if there is a similarity between the situation of the disciples in the narrative and the situation of Mark's target audience, as advanced by Tannehill. Whatever was spoken by Jesus to the disciples in the narrative was also spoken to the hearing audience. Mark's target audience, therefore, became the new disciples who took for themselves the message of Jesus and the challenge to follow him. Moreover, a multi-purpose intention of Mark is advanced in this chapter for Mark's narrative to be relevant to and meet the needs of both members and non-members of Mark's community.

Lastly, it was also demonstrated in the light of social memory theory and literary-rhetorical analysis that the way Mark characterizes Jesus and his disciples evoked either a memory of the past traditions in the light of the present needs of Mark's target audience, or that the present needs of Mark's target audience provoked the memory of the past traditions and offered hope for a better and brighter future. While Mark shaped his narrative to fit the audience, his message was received through the audience's expectations in accordance with whatever they knew about their popular traditions which were relevant to their needs and present socio-historical context. More specifically, it was shown that Mark's target audience was sandwiched between the characters of the early disciples, chosen by Jesus, and the 'chosen ones' in the future *eschaton*. If Mark's target audience identified themselves with the chosen disciples, then they were expected to take the role of faithful disciples to be counted among the

‘chosen ones’ at Jesus’ return in the *eschaton*. Thus, when Jesus called his disciples to follow him on his way, there was an anticipation of a new world order—the kingdom of God—with Jesus’ disciples in the narrative and Mark’s target audience forming the new community of the elect of this coming eschatological kingdom of God. Mark composed his narrative not only to evoke the remembrance of the past as it makes sense of the present, but also to direct them to their destined future as a community of the ‘chosen ones’. This heightened the expectation that Jesus, rather than any contending rival, is not only the proclaimer of the coming of God’s kingdom but also he brings the kingdom of God on his return. So, in a way, traditions (both mythical and recent past) explain the present while at the same time influence the present or the future of Mark’s target audience.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This final chapter reviews what this thesis has investigated, relates it to the current state of NT scholarship, and recommends some further studies arising from the present research.

7.1 Summary of Argument and Findings

We have argued in this thesis that the way Mark characterises Jesus and his disciples (in view of other characters) is a dramatization of an ideological clash which would have aided in the construction of a community's social identity. Firstly, we set the association of Jesus and his disciples in its Jewish context, thereby postulating that the audience understood and appreciated the distinctiveness of Jesus' association, to which they were invited to belong, in comparison with other Jewish groups in their socio-historical environment. Secondly, we highlight the way Jesus and his disciples are characterised as a dramatization of an ideological clash, with Jesus' way of service and sacrifice worthy to be emulated by Mark's target audience contrasted with the way of domination observable among the disciples and other characters (Jewish authorities, Roman rulers, and Satanic forces). Thirdly, we also advanced the view that the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples (in contrasting ways) were meant to invite the target audience to participate in the unfolding of the narrative and guide them as they become the current disciples of Jesus and hope to be among the chosen ones in the coming eschaton.

How did we arrive at our conclusions? After surveying the different methods employed in the study of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciple in the Gospel of Mark, we opted for an eclectic approach that takes into account the oral-memorial dynamics of narrative performance in first-century popular culture. We found the

traditional methods employed helpful in understanding Mark's characterisations, but argued that they can be enriched by considering the oral/aural context of the first-century in which the Gospel was produced and initially relayed. So the methodological approach of this research encompasses the strengths of earlier traditional methods, addressing the historical, literary, theological/ideological and practical concerns, but also participates in the discussion of oral/aural hermeneutics that situates the composition and reception of an ancient biblical text in the context of an ancient oral narration, particularly in first-century Palestine and the greater Mediterranean world. For convenience, we term our method oral-memorial-comparative approach. That is, following the framework of Richard Horsley (*text-context-tradition*)¹ which is highly influenced by Foley's account of the metonymic referencing of tradition, we understand that the narrative (*text*) was composed to be performed or read publicly to an audience operating in the oral culture (*context*) of Palestine and utilising Israelite popular *traditions* (e.g. the social memory of some of the traditions reflected in the OT) in their reception of Mark's narrative. In such a framework, the author and the target audience would have exploited their socio-historical context for the composition and comprehension of the characterisations of Jesus and the disciples in the Gospel of Mark. In other words, the concern of this thesis is not only the questions behind the text and within the text, but also questions in front of the text insofar as it relates to the reception by Mark's target audience of the written text orally performed or read publicly.

Thus, we set out to inquire into the rhetorical function of Mark's technique in his narrative composition, particularly in his characterisations of Jesus and his disciples, which would have invited a number of responses from his target audience. More specifically, we inquire into the following: (1) How might Mark's target audience have

¹ This is elaborated in Richard Horsley, Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 63-70.

received the model of discipleship (between Jesus and his disciples) presented by Mark in his Gospel in the context of other contemporary models? (2) How might Mark's target audience have heard and understood the function of the characterisations of Jesus over against his disciples (in relation to other characters) in view of Mark's ideological thrust in the context of an ancient oral narration? (3) How might Mark's target audience have heard and understood Mark's characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in view of their calling to follow Jesus in faithful discipleship? The answers to the questions advance the argument that Mark's characterisation of Jesus compared with his disciples (in view of other characters) dramatizes an ideological clash which would have helped persuade Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his group, which was then represented by Mark's community.

We answered the first sub-question in chapter 4, arguing that the audience would have received the model of discipleship presented in Mark's narrative in the context of other contemporary models in first-century Palestine and the wider Greco-Roman world. We situated the group of Jesus and his disciples in their socio-historical context by exploring other master-disciple parallels which would have influenced the way Mark's narrative would have been understood by Mark's target audience. This required an awareness of the historical environment as well as the social memory of Mark and his audience, while noting how Mark's audience would have heard Mark's depiction of the relationship of Jesus and his disciples in comparison with other associations in first-century Palestine.

Our investigation endorses the Jewish context of Jesus and his disciples, which was known to Mark's target audience when they heard of their association or relationship. They would have understood the relationship Jesus had with his disciples to be like other Jewish associations because, on one hand, Mark took advantage of his

audience's shared cultural/social memory especially with regards to the different associations known by his audience to drive home his point on the kind of relationship Jesus had with his disciples. Mark's target audience would have brought knowledge of some stories, traditions, materials or concepts available in their socio-historical context to bear in the way they understood the relationship between Jesus and the disciples. On the other hand, Mark's audience would have also viewed Jesus' association with his disciples as distinct from other groups. They would have understood that Jesus' association with his disciples had similarities with other groups but it was not enough for them to categorize the group of Jesus into one of the other groups of their time because of their differences.

We answered our second sub-question in chapter 5, arguing that the audience would have understood Mark's message through an ideological clash between Jesus and his disciples (and also other characters) in the narrative. Mark's audience would have heard and understood his characterisations of Jesus in relation with his disciples (and other characters) as counter-ideology (1) against Israel's great tradition centred in Jerusalem as represented by Jewish authorities, (2) against the Gentile rulers' ideology of imperial domination, (3) against the mistaken point of view and behaviour of the twelve disciples, and (4) against the domination of Satan and demonic forces. What we have observed is related particularly to the way of domination and power (observable among these items and the figures embodying them), in contrast to the way of Jesus (Mark 1:2-3): the way of service and sacrifice (Mark 10:45).

While Jesus and his way are highlighted in the narrative, his disciple-companions function as supporting actors making Jesus appear beyond human understanding. In some scenes in Mark's story, the disciples are portrayed as devoted followers of Jesus, just like Israel's devotion to Yahweh as they followed him in the

wilderness. But at other times, the disciples are presented as craving for power and domination similar to the Roman rulers, Jewish authorities, and other satanic forces. Thus, the disciples function as representative of the twelve tribes of Israel who failed in the wilderness, though they were not a total failure. They also function figuratively for both the difficulty and possibility of following Jesus in discipleship because ‘what is impossible with man is possible with God’ (Mark 10:27).

We answered our third sub-question in chapter 6, arguing that the audience (as they compared themselves with the disciples in the narrative) would have been moved to participate in the narrative, so that the disciples in Mark’s story world become identified with or models for the new disciples in Mark’s community. In accordance with Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ relationship with his disciples and whatever the audience knew of a master-disciple relationship, the audience would have been challenged to live as faithful disciples if they were or want to become part of the association of Jesus. So they would have identified themselves with the disciples in Mark’s narrative in the following ways: Firstly, following after Tannehill’s emphasis on the intention of the author and the reception of the audience (although his methodology and findings have limitations), we advance our argument that while Mark speaks of Jesus’ disciples, he was also speaking to current disciples of his community, wherein Jesus’ disciples became object lessons for the new disciples. Secondly, with the aid of speech-act theory, it was demonstrated that Mark’s characterisations of Jesus and the disciples evoked the participation of Mark’s target audience. This becomes evident as the narrative moves to encompass the audience, so that Mark’s target audience became the new disciples who took for themselves the challenge of Jesus to follow him faithfully in discipleship.

Lastly, it was also presented in the light of social memory theory (with the aid of a literary-rhetorical analysis) either that the way Mark characterises Jesus and his disciples evoked a memory of the past traditions in the light of the present needs of Mark's target audience, or that the present needs of Mark's target audience provoked the memory of the past traditions and offered hope for a better and brighter future. While Mark shaped his narrative to fit the audience, his message was received through the audience's expectations in accordance with whatever they knew about their popular traditions which were relevant to their needs and context. More specifically, if Mark's target audience identified themselves with the 'chosen disciples', then they were expected to take the role of faithful disciples and so be included among the 'chosen ones' at Jesus' return in the coming *eschaton*. Thus, when Jesus called his disciples to follow him on his way, there was an anticipation of a new world order—the Kingdom of God—with Jesus' disciples in the narrative and Mark's target audience forming the new community of the 'chosen ones'.

Therefore, we conclude that our findings support the thesis of this research that Mark's characterisation of Jesus and his disciples (in relation with other characters) dramatizes an ideological clash which would have helped persuade Mark's target audience to follow Jesus and belong to his group. In other words, our oral-memorial-comparative approach applied to the characterisation of Jesus and his disciples in Mark aids in understanding how following Jesus in first-century Palestine and the oral communication dynamics at that time relate to the construction of a community's social identity.

7.2 Significance and Contribution to Current Scholarship

The present research, firstly, relates to the discussion about the characterisation of the disciples in Mark's narrative. The positive and negative portrayals, which are highlighted herein, have been taken into consideration in most recent discussion. In this research, through comparative characterisation, we have included Mark's target audience in the discussion, in the context of the dynamics of ancient oral narration. Moreover, we not only analysed such characterisations within the text of Mark, but also in comparison and in contrast with other similar associations in the first-century Greco-Roman and Mediterranean contexts. Thereby, we uncovered the metaphorical role of the failures of the disciples in Mark's narrative as being akin to Israel's failure in the wilderness, and their role in representing an ideology that is in contrast to Jesus'. Not only did the disciples mirror Mark's target audience, but also members of Mark's target audience were invited to become the present disciples of Jesus. Such an interaction between Mark and his target audience, in relation to the characterisation of the disciples in Mark, is still of current interest as seen in the publication and re-publication of Between Author & Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation.²

Secondly, the current research addresses a current methodological question in biblical studies: How much does hearing Mark's narrative enhance our private/silent reading of the narrative? In other words, the present research relates to the issue of communication between the author and audience in the first-century oral context. In consultation with the current debates on oral hermeneutics, social memory theory, and performance criticism (or storytelling), the present endeavour illustrates an approach that takes into consideration Mark's narrative genre, its historical context, and the dynamics involved in the oral/aural communication of Mark's message in a first-century

² Malbon, ed., Elizabeth Struthers Between Author & Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013).

society with a high degree of residual orality. There has been a growing interest in such a research venture in the past decade, and I hope that my study will prove a welcome attempt to contribute to the ongoing dialogue. Against the traditional practice of viewing Mark's target audience as readers, the tide of current scholarship has gravitated to the other side to hear what Mark's target audience would have heard. I hope I have heard well what the audience would have heard, but such a hearing is just a matter of high probability, not certainty (evident in my frequent use of 'would have'), based on the available Markan text (and other materials related to the text), the current discussion on social memory, speech-act theory, performance criticism, and oral narrative studies. I welcome other researches to prove or disprove the findings of the present research.

Thirdly, this study also relates to 'reception study', more particularly to the reception of the New Testament (or the Bible as a whole) in history including how it was read, heard, and applied from one generation to another and from one place to another. This discipline is broad, but the contribution of this present study relates to the reception of Mark's narrative in earliest Christianity or during the foundational stage of Christianity in the first-century. For Larry Hurtado, NT studies 'should include at least the first three centuries CE, and "NT Studies" should take in the period and processes beyond the composition of the NT writings and the originating situations to which they were severally addressed'.³ But if we take James G. Crossley's 'immodest proposal' for Biblical Studies in the university as broadly as possible within reception studies, then the discipline of 'NT Studies' is not only confined to the first three centuries CE. So although I insisted throughout my thesis on understanding the response of Mark's audience within its own particular historical and cultural context, the possible

³ Larry W. Hurtado, 'Fashions, Fallacies and Future Prospects in New Testament Studies,' Journal for the Study of New Testament 36.4 (2014): 316.

application to contemporary audience-response criticism is not absolutely rejected in this thesis. Moreover, my thesis may also have a bearing on contemporary mission research since the narrative oral approach to sharing the Gospel is important in mission evangelism today among semi-literate or pre-literate communities.

7.3 Suggestions for Further Study

Questions about the construction and reception of the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples in Mark's Gospel could also be asked in other Gospels. The methodology employed herein can also be applied to other books of the New Testament and also the Old Testament (even extra-canonical books) now that we are oriented to how ancient oral people would have heard and understood ancient texts. It is also of interest how the titles of Jesus or the designations of the disciples would have been heard and understood, not in its Jewish context but in its Greco-Roman context. This is significant if we think Mark aimed his narrative to be heard not only in the first-century Palestinian context but also further afield from Palestine. Would there be a significant difference between hearing Mark's narrative in a first-century Jewish context and a first-century Gentile context? It will also be interesting to study how other characters (other than the ones studied herein) would have been understood by Mark's target audience in relation to their socio-historical context. Furthermore, it is of interest to study how a contemporary (real flesh and blood) audience in different contexts might hear and understand the characters and characterisations in Mark's Gospel. More particularly, is there a significant difference between a Christian leader and an ordinary Church member hearing the characterisations of Jesus and his disciples?

Although I have emphasized in the main body of my thesis the cultural context of reception, a personal interest for me for further research and reflection relates to my community in the context of the Philippine Church. Generally, I am challenged to ponder upon the contemporary significance of my study. Since Mark wrote about Jesus and the disciples a few decades after the actual happening for the purpose of addressing the situation of his community, I want to ask whether contemporary readers/hearers in my community can still hear Mark's voice today. My emphasis on understanding a first-century audience's reception of Mark, and in particular how that would relate to their cultural memory and traditions, surely raises questions about how Mark might be received in the very different cultural context of a modern Asian church (particularly, the Philippine church), where audiences will likely bring a very different set of cultural traditions and memories to their interpretation of the text. Such questions are warranted in an audience oriented approach (particularly oral-memorial-comparative approach and performance criticism) which is appropriate in my Asian and Christian context, wherein the biblical text becomes a jumping-off point to address the issues and needs of my community. What was spoken then by Mark to his audience may still ring in the ears of hearers today, particularly in my community in my country, who claim to have been called by Jesus to a life of discipleship

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