

# **A Postcolonial Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus**

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## Abstract

This thesis reads Mark's story of Jesus from a postcolonial perspective. It proposes that Mark need not necessarily be treated in an oversimplified polarity as an anti- or pro-colonial discourse. Instead it may probably be treated as a postcolonial discourse, i.e., as a strategic essentialist and transcultural hybrid discourse that accommodates and disrupts both the native Jewish (nationalistic and collaborative) and the Roman colonial discourses of power. This thesis shows that Mark accommodates itself into a strategic third space in between the variegated native Jewish and the Roman colonial discourses in order to enunciate its own voice. As a mimetic, ambivalent and hybrid discourse it mimics and mocks, accommodates and disrupts both the native essentialist and collaborative as well as the Roman colonial voices. The portrait of Jesus in Mark, which I presume to be encoding also the portrait of a community, exhibits a colonial/ postcolonial conundrum which can neither be damned as pro- nor be praised as anti-colonial in nature. Instead the portrait of Jesus in Mark may be appreciated as a strategic essentialist and transcultural hybrid, in which the claims of difference and the desire for transculturality are both contradictorily present and visible. In showing such a conundrumic portrait and invoking a complex discursive strategy Mark as the discourse of a subject community is not alone or unique in the Greco-Roman world. A number of discourses—historical, creative novelistic and apocalyptic—of the subject Greek and Jewish communities in the eastern Mediterranean under the *imperium* of Rome from the second century BCE to the end of the first century CE exhibit very similar postcolonial traits which one may add to be not far from the postcolonial traits of a number of postcolonial creative writings and cultural discourses of the colonial subject and the dominated post-colonial communities of our time.

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## Abbreviations

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>ABD</i>         | : <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>   |
| <i>AC</i>          | : <i>L'antiquité Classique</i>   |
| <i>ANRW</i>        | : <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i> , eds., H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin: W de Gruyter, 1972-) |
| <i>Ant.</i>        | : <i>Antiquities</i> , Josephus  |
| <i>Ant. Rom.</i>   | : <i>Antiquitates Romanae</i> , Dionysius of Halicarnassus   |
| <i>Bib.</i>        | : <i>Biblica</i>   |
| <i>Bib. Inter.</i> | : <i>Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches</i>   |
| <i>BR</i>          | : <i>Biblical Research</i>   |
| <i>BTB</i>         | : <i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>  |
| <i>CAH</i>         | : <i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>   |
| <i>CBQ</i>         | : <i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>   |
| <i>CIG</i>         | : <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>  |
| <i>CIL</i>         | : <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>  |
| <i>CUP</i>         | : Cambridge University Press   |
| <i>Diod.</i>       | : Diodorus   |
| <i>Div. Iul.</i>   | : <i>Divus Iulius</i>  |
| <i>DSD</i>         | : <i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>  |
| <i>1 En.</i>       | : <i>1 Enoch</i>   |
| <i>EUP</i>         | : Edinburgh University Press   |
| <i>FGH</i>         | : <i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , (ed.), F. Jacoby  |
| <i>HTR</i>         | : <i>Harvard Theological Review</i>  |
| <i>HUCA</i>        | : <i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>   |
| <i>ICAN</i>        | : International Conference on the Ancient Novel  |
| <i>IG</i>          | : <i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>   |
| <i>JAAR</i>        | : <i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>   |
| <i>JBL</i>         | : <i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>  |
| <i>JHS</i>         | : <i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>   |

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| <i>JJS</i>       | : <i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>                  |
| <i>JRA</i>       | : <i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>               |
| <i>JR</i>        | : <i>Journal of Religion</i>                        |
| <i>JRS</i>       | : <i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>                   |
| <i>JSNT</i>      | : <i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> |
| <i>JSOT</i>      | : <i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> |
| <i>JTS</i>       | : <i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>             |
| <i>Jub.</i>      | : <i>Jubilees</i>                                   |
| LCL              | : Loeb Classical Library                            |
| <i>1 Macc.</i>   | : <i>1 Maccabees</i>                                |
| <i>2 Macc.</i>   | : <i>2 Maccabees</i>                                |
| MUP              | : Manchester University Press                       |
| <i>NH</i>        | : <i>Natural History, Pliny</i>                     |
| NT               | : New Testament                                     |
| <i>NovT</i>      | : <i>Novum Testamentum</i>                          |
| <i>NTS</i>       | : <i>New Testament Studies</i>                      |
| <i>OGIS</i>      | : <i>Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i>     |
| <i>OLR</i>       | : <i>Oxford Literary Review</i>                     |
| OT               | : Old Testament                                     |
| OUP              | : Oxford University Press                           |
| <i>PEQ</i>       | : <i>Palestinian Exploration Quarterly</i>          |
| Plut.            | : Plutarch  |
| Polyb.           | : Polybius  |
| <i>Pss. Sol.</i> | : <i>Psalms of Solomon</i>                          |
| PUP              | : Princeton University Press                        |
| SAP              | : Sheffield Academic Press                          |
| SBL              | : Society of Biblical Literature                    |
| <i>Sib. Or.</i>  | : <i>Sibylline Oracles</i>                          |
| <i>SIG</i>       | : <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>            |
| <i>SJT</i>       | : <i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>               |
| SPRS             | : Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies        |



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| SNTS             | : Society for New Testament Studies/ Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas  |
| TDNT             | : Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; 10 vols.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-) |
| <i>Tib.</i>      | : <i>Tiberius</i> , Suetonius  |
| TOTP:            | : <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (ed.), J.H. Charlesworth.  |
| TRAC             | : Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference   |
| <i>TynBul</i>    | : <i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>  |
| TZ               | : <i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>  |
| USQR             | : <i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>   |
| WJK Press        | : Westminster John Knox Press  |
| WBC              | : Word Biblical Commentary   |
| <i>Wis. Sol.</i> | : <i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>   |
| ZNW              | : <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>  |
| ZThK             | : <i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>  |

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This study germinated when I was engaged in a comparative discourse analysis of the First and Third World exegeses on the salvific suffering motif in Mark. Towards the end of that study and in a meeting with Dr. Stephen Moore at the University of Sheffield in 1998 I was introduced into the area of Postcolonial Studies, something I longed to do for quite some time without quite knowing how/ where to focus. Coming to Sheffield and working with Dr. Moore in the initial stages of this thesis gave me an opportunity to engage the theoretical and critical issues involved in Postcolonial Studies. After his departure from Sheffield I had the opportunity of working with Dr. Loveday Alexander whose expertise in the history and literature of the Greco-Roman world facilitated an application of the postcolonial theoretical concepts to reading some of the postclassical Greek and Jewish discourses from a postcolonial perspective. Working with her supervision immensely helped in applying postcolonial criticism to Roman imperialism and also reading Mark from a postcolonial perspective. To both Dr. Moore and Dr. Alexander I say 'thank you'.

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## Preface

This dissertation is a postcolonial reading of Mark's story of Jesus. On the one hand this reading is informed by a postcolonial theoretical framework (colonial discourse analysis) delineated by Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha in light of the modern European colonialism and the discursive responses of the colonised and dominated subjects from the so-called 'other' parts of the world. I may describe this theoretical framework (or model) as 'strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity'. On the other hand this reading is set in the historical and cultural framework of Roman imperialism and colonialism in the Greek/ Hellenistic and Jewish world, a world from which Mark's story of Jesus emanated in the latter half of the first century CE.

In connecting these two frameworks, I assume a transhistorical view of colonial histories. I assume that theoretically the discursive strategies of imperial Rome to impose its colonial domination on the native Greek and Jewish populations and the discursive responses of the Greeks and Jews to their domination appear to have certain correspondences of relationship with the modern European colonialism in 'other' parts of the world and the latter's responses to European colonial domination. Modern European colonialism was played out not only on the political and economic fronts but also on the perceptual and cultural spheres of the colonised peoples which one may find to be not too far different from the Roman colonial practices in the first century CE. Just as the colonised and dominated subject population responded to European colonialism in varied pro-, anti- and postcolonial manners in the latter half of the twentieth century so also the subject Greek and Jewish populations seem to have responded to Rome's *imperium* and colonialism in the early years of the common era.

This thesis, therefore, explores the nature of the discursive response of Mark's story of Jesus. It explores whether or not Mark is a pro-colonial discourse that collaborates with and consents to the Roman colonialism or an anti-colonial native nationalistic discourse that resents and resists the *imperium* of Rome or an ambivalent postcolonial discourse that accommodates and disrupts both its own native Jewish (collaborative and nationalistic) and the Roman colonial discourses of power.

This study endorses the view that one can talk about colonialism and postcolonialism as transhistorical concepts only by means of specific manifestations in particular times and places and it is only in those particular discussions, grounded in particular discourses and their contexts that strategic postcolonial moves can take place. Hence Mark's story of Jesus is read in light of its historical, cultural and discursive context, the context of Rome's *imperium* and the discursive responses of the subject Greek and Jewish populations. Access to this context is achieved via reading a postclassical Greek novelistic discourse that originated some time in the second half of the first century CE and also a number of historical and creative (apocalyptic) discourses of the subjected Greek and Jewish populations from the second century BCE to the latter half of the first century CE. Thus Mark is read in the wider context of Roman colonialism in the eastern Mediterranean and in light of the discursive responses of the subjected Greek and Jewish communities to Rome's *imperium* and imperial colonialism.

It needs also to be said that the specificity of my own locale in India and the eastern Christian perspective inform this reading of Mark's story of Jesus. The post-colonial context of India is one where the minority communities and the subaltern population are still subject to a kind of native 'colonialism' similar perhaps to the one that existed within the native communities of biblical and postbiblical antiquity. I try to shed light to my locale by means of reading two postcolonial creative writings from India which suggest that the postcolonial struggle of the subaltern in India is primarily to engage the native breed of internal colonists and only secondarily the colonialism that is past and exists perhaps covertly and indirectly in the form of neo-colonialism. In this struggle the strategy of the subaltern in India is not to revert to nativism or exclusive essentialism but to resort to a strategic essentialism that affirms their identity (selfhood) on the one hand and on the other elaborates strategies to cross over to the spaces and discourses of the internal (and external) colonists in order that they may create new identities and disrupt the discursive enclaves of the dominant and the dominating elements.

This thesis shows that Mark's story of Jesus is a discourse of the subject minoritarian community that suffered subjection or surveillance under both the Roman colonists and the native breed of elite Jewish collaborators and nationalists. As a postcolonial discourse it appears to accommodate and disrupt both the alien and the native discourses of power and create a strategic space for itself in between the Roman and the Jewish discourses. This reading thus sheds light on the complex affiliative alterity of Mark, a characteristic not uncommon in most postcolonial discourses—ancient or modern.



## Introduction

The importance of colonialism/ postcolonialism<sup>1</sup> as a critical reading strategy in literary, cultural and biblical studies needs no apology as we observe more than three-quarters of the population living in the world today whose lives and culture have been shaped by the experience of colonialism. Colonialism in the modern period appears not only to be a political and economic enterprise but also a discursive intrusion into the cultural and perceptual spheres of the colonised peoples. As a political and economic enterprise colonialism to a greater or lesser degree 'enriched' the economies of the modern colonial nations. But this is made possible and indeed profitable for a prolonged period by what may be called a covert colonization of the mind and psyche of the colonised subjects. Under colonialism the colonised are conveniently spaced into a discursive framework from which they are portrayed, and they may perceive themselves, to be the colonised 'other', lower in race, colour, culture, intellect, religious beliefs and practices. They may perceive themselves to be different and therefore are destined to be ruled by a colonial superior 'self'. Thus modern colonialism is played out not only on the political and economic fronts but also in the perceptual and cultural spheres of the colonised peoples.

Although the formal colonialism on the political and economic front has been dismantled to a large extent by the decolonizing independent movements in the latter half of the twentieth century its effects in the perceptual and cultural spheres still linger. Postcolonialism as a literary and counter-cultural discursive strategy engages these remaining and lingering aspects of colonialism. That is, as a literary and cultural practice it engages and ruptures the politics of culture of the colonists by means of a complex variety of creative cultural productions and discursive responses, and as a critical practice it examines the complexities and conundrums of the discourses that emanate from among the colonised and dominated in a colonial or post-colonial context.

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<sup>1</sup> For an introductory reading on 'colonialism/ postcolonialism' see Bill Ashcroft, *et al.*, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 45-51, 186-192, Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, London: Routledge, 1998.



### (i) Meaning of Certain Words

The word 'colony' is derived from the Latin word '*colonia*' which means 'farm' or 'settlement'. It is used to refer to the Greek and Roman settlements in other lands. Though historically colonization refers to the practice of farmers (*colonis*) who settle in new territories for farming (*colere*), during the imperial Hellenistic and Roman periods it appears to have assumed a military and political significance. During this time it is used to refer to the military garrisons and pockets of settlements stationed in conquered territories, cities and kingdoms for militaristic and imperialistic (empire building) purposes<sup>2</sup>. Hence the word colony is associated with expansion and empire building, hegemony and supremacy, subjugation and exploitation of other nations and cultures.

Postcolonial critics use the word 'imperialism' to "refer to the authority assumed by a state over another territory— authority expressed in pageantry and symbolism, as well as military power", and 'colonialism' to refer to "the consolidation of imperial power... manifested in the settlement of territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands"<sup>3</sup>. Imperialism, in the words of Said, at some basic level, means "thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others". It also means "the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling distant territory; 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on a distant territory"<sup>4</sup>. There is also a tendency to use these terms almost interchangeably in postcolonial studies despite the possible distinction one may infer between them.

Most postcolonial critics like Said and others, because of their diasporic experience in the west, seem to explain the meaning of these words in relation to the western colonialistic and imperialistic (past and present) practices in the former colonies. But a few postcolonial critics devoid of such diasporic experience deem to create a certain shift in the meaning of these terms in light of their post-colonial national experience within their own countries. They find that as the decolonisation

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<sup>2</sup> I will elaborate this in Chapter 4.

<sup>3</sup> Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, Oxford: OUP, 1995, p. 2.



processes were taking place in the second half of the twentieth century in their countries a native/ national breed of 'colonists and imperialists' (white settlers in USA, Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Africa, the creoles and mestizos in Latin America, the upper caste Hindus in India and the ruling elites in Africa) began to duplicate the imperialism and colonialism of their former colonial masters within their own countries<sup>5</sup>. These critics therefore infer colonialism also as an internal phenomenon in most post-colonial societies. They consider postcolonialism as a discursive decolonizing strategy that engages and challenges this new and far more subtle and covert form of 'colonial' and 'colonizing' tendency.

A summation of the meaning of words like 'imperialism', 'colonialism', 'colonial', 'colonialist' and 'postcolonial' literature/ discourses' used in this thesis may perhaps be appropriate here. The word 'imperialism' is taken to refer to the authority/ power of a state over another territory. 'Colonialism' involves consolidation of such power either by creating military and civilian settlements in such a territory or by exploiting its people and resources or by lording over its indigenous inhabitants. I may use these words quite interchangeably. 'Colonial literature/ discourses' is used in a general sense to suggest those writings and discourses that originate in a colonial context from among the colonists and the colonised with a colonial perspective. 'Colonist or colonialist literature/ discourse' is one that originates exclusively from the perspective of the colonists. 'Postcolonial' or rather 'colonial/ postcolonial literature and discourse' refers to the literature and discourse that springs from a colonised population during or after the colonial experience, that critically scrutinizes and engages the colonial contacts and perceptions of power. Generally speaking it is a complex, ambivalent and incongruous discourse that accommodates and disrupts the colonialist perceptions and perspectives of domination. To be yet more specific, a

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London: Vintage, 1993, pp. 3, 8.

<sup>5</sup> J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "The Postcolonization of the (Latin) American Experience, A Reconsideration of 'Colonialism', 'Postcolonialism' and 'Mestizaje'" in G. Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism, Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements*, Princeton: PUP, 1995, pp. 241-275, Mahasweta Devi, "Shishu" in S. Tharu and K. Lalita (eds.), *Women Writing in India*, vol. II, New York: The Feminist Press, 1993, pp. 236-250, *idem*, "Draupadi" trans., G.C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York: Routledge, 1988, pp. 179-196, Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, London: Flamingo, 1997, K. Ilaiah, *Why I am not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva, Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy*, Calcutta: Samya, 1996, G. Aloysius, *Nationalism without a Nation in India*, New Delhi: OUP, 1997.



colonial/ postcolonial discourse is that which originates in an interstitial space between the colonists and the colonised, which accommodates and disrupts both the native and the alien colonial discourses of power. In this respect 'post' in postcolonialism may signify an interstitial 'spatial' category and a critical discursive strategy and not necessarily a polarity (anti) or sequentiality (after). The hyphenated term 'post-colonial' is used to indicate sequentiality in the sense of 'coming after'.

### **(ii) 'Post' in Postcolonialism and a Possible Transhistorical view of Colonial Histories**

The preceding discussion has shown the complexity involved in giving an adequate, satisfactory definition to the term 'postcolonialism'. However, achieving some sort of a working definition is crucial to our ensuing discussion and application of a postcolonial approach to biblical studies. If postcolonialism is defined in historical terms referring only to the post-colonial societies liberated from the formal European governance then an application of postcolonial theory and criticism to, say for instance, the Hellenistic or the Roman colonialism in the ancient world or to any biblical or postbiblical discourses for that matter would be anachronistic and ahistorical<sup>6</sup>. A temporally or politically defined postcolonialism which tends to suggest that colonialism is dead in our postmodern world would also be a misapprehension of the political realities found both in white settler and other societies where a native breed of internal colonists is supplanting the former colonists to dominate and oppress their fellow beings.

We may therefore infer 'post' in postcolonialism as a spatial category suggestive of an interstitial cultural space (trope) between the colonists and the colonised and as a critical discursive strategy for delineating the discourses that originate from colonial contexts and contacts. This would entail a potential for transhistorical application<sup>7</sup>. For postcolonial literary and cultural or biblical and postbiblical critics this would mean a critical examination of at least some of the literary and cultural or the biblical and postbiblical discourses that emanate from the modern or the ancient colonial contexts as interstitial discourses that accommodate

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<sup>6</sup> Susan VanZanten Gallagher, "Mapping the Hybrid World: Three Postcolonial Motifs", *Semeia* 75, 1996, p. 230.

<sup>7</sup> This dimension is recognized by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp. 9f. Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*, London: Verso, 2000 (1997), p. 12.

and disrupt both the native and the alien colonial discourses of power. 'Post' in postcolonialism as a marker of the 'beyond' may be understood in terms of consensual-conflictual hybridity or in terms of an ambivalent affiliative-antagonistic cultural engagement in between the colonist and colonised cultures. This would open the door for a critical scrutiny of at least some of the biblical and postbiblical discourses as 'colonial/ postcolonial discourses', i.e., as strategic essentialist and transcultural hybrid discourses that accommodate and disrupt both the native and the alien colonial discourses of power<sup>8</sup>.

Again, an expanded definition of postcolonialism will facilitate its operation both as a mini and a meta-narrative in critical practice. As a mini-narrative postcolonial criticism needs to be grounded in the specificities of locale of postcolonial critics and in the context-specific details of the discourses under scrutiny. This would imply heterogeneity in postcolonial studies. But as a meta-narrative postcolonial studies profess to achieve what may be called a universal liberation hermeneutics. This would imply homogeneity in postcolonial studies. What we aim in postcolonial studies is heterogeneity in critical praxes and homogeneity in hermeneutical ambition. We can talk about colonialism and postcolonialism as universal concepts only by means of specific manifestations in particular times and places, and it is only in those particular discussions, grounded in particular discourses and their contexts, that strategic postcolonial moves can take place<sup>9</sup>.

Postcolonial studies therefore need not necessarily be confined to dealing exclusively with the economic, political and cultural issues emanating from the modern European colonialism in 'other' parts of the world. One can expand the horizon of postcolonial studies by undertaking a transhistorical view of colonial histories within the framework of postcolonialism, i.e., by considering modern colonialism to be in some measure similar to, say for instance, the Hellenistic or Roman colonialism<sup>10</sup>, and the discursive responses to modern colonialism to be

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<sup>8</sup> I will elaborate this in Chapter 1.4.4 and Chapter 2.1

<sup>9</sup> Gallagher, "Mapping the Hybrid World", pp. 232f. Also see Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'", *Social Text* 10:2/3, 1992, p. 111 (99-113).

<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of the ways in which the British used the image of Rome to identify and support their own nationhood and expansion see Richard Hingley, "The 'legacy' of Rome: the rise, decline, and fall of the theory of Romanization", *Roman Imperialism: Post-*



similar to the discursive responses of the colonised communities (Greeks, Jews and others) of biblical and postbiblical antiquity<sup>11</sup>. Postcolonialism, to paraphrase Segovia, can take the reality of empire, of colonialism, as an omnipresent, inescapable and overwhelming reality in the world: the world of antiquity, the world of west Asia and the Mediterranean basin; the world of modernity, of western hegemony and expansionism in 'other' parts of the world and the world of today, of postmodernity and the world of postcolonialism on the part of the Two-Thirds world and of neocolonialism on the part of the west<sup>12</sup>.

### (iii) The Goal of this Study

The goal of this study is to read the story of Jesus according to Mark as a postcolonial discourse of a minoritarian community under subjection and surveillance that tries to create a space in between the Roman colonial and the relatively dominant native Jewish collaborative and nationalistic discourses of power. Its focus is to explore and find whether or not Mark is a resistant anti-colonial, nativist, nationalistic discourse or a pro-colonial (colonialist) discourse that mimics the *imperium* of Rome or a colonial/ postcolonial discourse that accommodates and disrupts both the native elite Jewish and the alien Roman discourses of power. By using postcolonial theoretical concepts like mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity this study shows that Mark designs the story as a strategic essentialist and transcultural hybrid discourse that accommodates and disrupts both internal and external colonial discourses of power. It attempts to show that the Markan portrait of Jesus is neither pro- nor anti-colonial in nature. Instead the portraiture of Jesus in Mark can possibly and in my view best be decoded as a colonial/ postcolonial conundrum affiliative and disruptive to both the native and the colonial discourses of power.

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*Colonial Perspectives*, (eds.) J. Webster and N. Cooper, Leicester: School of Archaeological Studies, 1996, pp. 35-48 especially pp. 35-39.

<sup>11</sup> Though not from a postcolonial perspective Loveday Alexander in her introduction to the *Images of Empire* makes a similar suggestion. See "Introduction", *Images of Empire*, (ed.), *idem*, Sheffield: SAP, 1991, pp. 11-18 especially p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> F.F. Segovia, "Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic", R.S. Sugirtharajah, (ed.), *The Postcolonial Bible*, Sheffield: SAP, 1998, p. 56. Such a flattened, transhistorical view of colonial histories may be questioned by some of the postcolonial critics. See for instance Aijaz Ahmad, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality", *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (ed.), Mongia Padmini, London: Arnold, 1996, pp. 276-93.



In this thesis I argue that the Markan portrait of Jesus may neither be unduly derided as one of a colonist who mimics the *imperium* of Rome nor be desired uncritically as an archetypal anti-colonial resistant figure. Instead it may be appreciated as the portrait of a postcolonial figure that accommodates and disrupts both the native Jewish nationalistic and collaborative and the Roman colonial discourses of power just as the portraits of most of the protagonists in the postcolonial novelistic and other creative discourses of our time.

#### **(iv) The Design of this Study**

This thesis is written in three parts. **Part One** has two chapters. Chapter 1 delineates postcolonialism as a critical practice in biblical studies. Here I briefly describe the origin of postcolonialism as a field of study initiated in literary and cultural and subsequently adapted in biblical studies, and its theoretical roots in revisionist Marxism and Poststructuralism which facilitate a range of possible postcolonial readings. Attention is also given to the applicability of postcolonial studies to biblical studies and to the issues involved in stretching this field of study to biblical studies. The final section of this chapter gives a critical analysis of the four models of postcolonial readings practised in biblical studies. Chapter 2 in its early part (2.1) elaborates the postcolonial theoretical concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity and their potential for identifying and exploring the complex nature of postcolonial discourses as strategic essentialist and transcultural hybrid discourses in which claims of difference (selfhood) and the desire for transculturality<sup>13</sup> (border crossing) are both contradictorily present and visible. The latter part of this chapter (2.2) delineates my own post-colonial socio-cultural, national location and the vision for the future direction of postcolonial studies in India by means of two postcolonial creative writings that are written from the internal (and external) colonial contexts of India<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> In transculturation elements of both dominant and dominated cultures come into a dynamic, dialogic relationship of contradiction and combination. For more on transculturation see J. Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Critical Theory*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 43f.

<sup>14</sup> For a similar approach see Roland Boer, "Green Ants and Gibeonites: B. Wongar, Joshua 9, and Some Problems of Postcolonialism", *Semeia* 75, 1998, pp. 129-152, reprinted with a certain change in the caption in *Last Stop Before Antarctica: The Bible and Postcolonialism in Australia*, Sheffield: SAP, 2001, pp. 120-149. Also see E.S. Fiorenza, "The Politics of Otherness: Biblical Interpretation as a Critical Praxis for Liberation", *Future*

**Part Two** deals with the colonial/ postcolonial world of Mark within the context of the Roman *imperium*. This is portrayed firstly (Chapter 3) by offering a postcolonial reading of Chariton's *Chareas and Callirhoe*, a postclassical creative writing contemporaneous to Mark, written in the context of Rome's *imperium* in the east from among a subjected Greek population in the latter half of the first century CE. I do believe, and I endorse Bowersock who suggests, that for a coherent and persuasive interpretation of the Roman empire, fiction must be viewed as part of its history<sup>15</sup>. Secondly, (Chapter 4) I offer an historical analysis of the expansion of Rome's *imperium* in both Republican and imperial periods in the Greek and Jewish world and the complex discursive responses of the colonised subjects (both Greeks and Jews) towards Rome's *imperium*. Special attention is given to reading a number of historical and religious discourses that emerged from among the subjected Greek and Jewish populations from the second century BCE to the latter half of the first century CE, from Polybius to Plutarch, and from *1 Maccabees* to Josephus from a postcolonial perspective. This may not only portray the wider socio-political and cultural contexts in which the story of Jesus according to Mark emanated but also allow an entry into the discursive trope of the subject peoples of the first century CE, and suggest the possibility of a postcolonial reading of Mark.

**Part Three** offers a postcolonial reading of Mark. It has three chapters. The first (Chapter 5) gives a critical analysis of the current and proposed models of postcolonial readings which tend to read Mark in simplified polarities either as a pro- or as an anti-colonial discourse. I find such polarities and monolithic modelling to be inadequate and inappropriate in reading Mark for they fail to explore sufficiently the complexities and ambiguities of this discourse that originated in a colonial context and from among a minoritarian community which tried to space itself in between the native Jewish nationalistic and collaborative and the Roman colonial discourses of power.

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*of Liberation Theology*, (eds.), M. Ellis and O. Marduro, New York: Orbis Books, 1989, pp. 311-25

<sup>15</sup> G.W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, p. 12. For a similar view see F. Millar, "The World of the *Golden Ass*" *Oxford Readings in the Roman Novel*, (ed.), S.J. Harrison, Oxford: OUP, 1999, pp. 247-89.



The second (Chapter 6) reads the beginning of Mark (1:1-11) and shows how Mark designs the story of Jesus as an affiliative-disruptive response by appropriating and disrupting the available linguistic codes and cultural categories prevalent in both the native Jewish and the Roman colonial discourses. Special attention is given to show midrash as an affiliative-disruptive discursive strategy which may well be described as a postcolonial discursive strategy to present John as a prophetic messenger (*angelos*) and Jesus as an *huios*-human hybrid. The final chapter (Chapter 7) is an unraveling of the ‘biographic’ and ‘novelistic’ portrait of Jesus in Mark<sup>16</sup>. It shows that the portrait of Jesus in Mark is neither a pro- nor an anti-colonial one. Instead it may properly be viewed as a colonial/ postcolonial conundrum affiliative and disruptive to both the native and alien colonial discourses of power.

This thesis thus suggests the possibility of reading Mark as a postcolonial discourse. It applies the postcolonial theoretical concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity heuristically in reading Mark’s story of Jesus. It shows how Mark accommodates as well as disrupts both the Roman colonial and the native Jewish nationalistic and collaborative discourses of power with a view to carving a space and enunciating a voice for itself in between them.

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<sup>16</sup> I use ‘biographic’ here in the way it is used by Simon Swain and Mark Edwards in their pieces in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire* (eds.) *idem*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 1-37, 227-234. According to Swain, “the biographical focus on individuals does not aim simply to recount the facts of their lives: it is concerned with the setting of these portraits in social, political, and religious contexts. By studying it, we are studying the workings of society as constituted in writing at the level of the individual.” (p. 1). This sounds similar to what Bakhtin says about the connection between the social and political events and the ‘lives’ of individuals in novelistic discourses. See *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (ed.), Michael Holquist, trans., Caryl Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990 (1981), p. 109.

**Part One**

***Delineating the Approach***

## Chapter 1

### Postcolonialism as a Critical Practice in Biblical Studies

#### Introduction

This chapter explores the origin and use of postcolonialism as a critical reading strategy in literary and cultural studies, its theoretical roots in cultural materialism and poststructuralism, and the possibilities of applying postcolonialism as a critical approach to biblical studies, and offers a critical analysis of the four models of postcolonial readings currently practised in biblical studies<sup>1</sup>.

#### 1.1 The Origin of Postcolonialism as a Field of Study

The field of postcolonial studies has gained currency in literary and cultural studies (and much later in biblical studies) since the publication of Edward Said's influential critique of the western constructions (representations) of the Orient, including the works of a few modern western biblical critics, in his book *Orientalism*<sup>2</sup>. It examines how the formal study of the 'Orient', along with key literary and cultural texts, consolidated certain ways of seeing and thinking which in turn contributed to the continuation of colonial power. In this new critique of colonialist thought (colonial discourse studies) Said not only unravels the colonial discourses' (novels, travelogues and other writings) conscious or unconscious construction of Europe as the dominant 'self' and the colonised as 'others', but also in passing censures the modern European revolution in biblical studies which enticed Europeans to study and explore the 'Orient'—one of the west's deepest and most recurring images of the 'other' as an object of knowledge waiting to be dominated<sup>3</sup>. He therefore invites biblical critics, particularly those from the colonised world, to participate and engage in a postcolonial

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<sup>1</sup> For a survey and critical analysis of the transitions and shifts in the methods and approaches of interpretation (historical, literary, cultural criticism and cultural studies including postcolonial studies) in biblical studies see F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000, pp. 3-52.

<sup>2</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, London: Penguin Books, 1995 (1978). Some students of postcolonialism attribute its beginning to the writings of A. Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, London: Monthly Review Press, 1972 (1950), Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans., C. L. Markmann, London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1968 (1952), *idem.*, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans., C. Farrington, New York: Grove Press, 1961, Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, trans., Howard Greenfield, London: Souvenir Press, 1965 (1957) and others.

<sup>3</sup> See Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 17f., 51, 76f.



analysis of the Euro-American commentarial discourses and discursive strategies of the Bible which flourished during the colonial and post-colonial period. A few direct responses to this invitation have appeared in biblical studies in recent years<sup>4</sup>.

After *Orientalism* postcolonial studies as an investigative discipline in literary and cultural studies gained currency mainly in western academies by the publication of *The Empire Writes Back*<sup>5</sup>. Since then a daunting number of studies on postcolonial theory and practice have appeared<sup>6</sup>. Most of them theorize either the political and economic or the cultural and discursive practices of the imperial/ colonial nations of Europe in light of the emerging and influential postcolonial literature and writings from the former colonies. The European colonialism and its impact on the perceptual framework of colonised cultures and peoples and the latter's decolonisation strategies via postcolonial novelistic etc. discourses constitute the main resource for the theory and practice of postcolonial studies. That means, the postcolonial studies which we know today appear to be unconcerned with the ancient colonial and imperial practices, say for example, the Hellenistic or the Roman empires and the cultural and discursive strategies of ancient subject peoples (Greeks, Jews/Christians and others) which are obviously important for a postcolonial study of biblical antiquity<sup>7</sup>. The current

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<sup>4</sup> See Laura E. Donaldson (ed.), *Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading*, *Semeia* 75, 1996, K.W. Whitlam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, London: Routledge, 1996, M.D. Shomanah, *Toward a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1997 (*Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations*, Sheffield: SAP, 1998, *The Postcolonial Bible*, (ed.), *idem*, Sheffield: SAP, 1998, *Postcolonial Perspectives on the New Testament and its Interpretation*, (ed.), *idem*, *JSNT* 73, 1999, Simon Samuel, *The Salvific Suffering Motif in Mark: A New Historicist Investigation into the Politics of Exegesis*, M Phil thesis, Coventry University, Sept. 1998, E.S. Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, New York: Continuum, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*, London: Routledge, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> P. Williams and L. Chrisman, (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994 (1993); Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, (eds.), *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 1995; L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Edinburgh: EUP, 1998; Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. See the bibliography in these works.

<sup>7</sup> Postcolonial perspectives of imperialism are starting to make an impact on studies of the Roman Empire. See J. Webster and N. Cooper (eds.), *Roman Imperialism: Post-colonial Perspectives*, (School of Archaeological Studies) Leicester: The University of Leicester, 1996, D.J. Mattingly (ed.), *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, discourse, and discrepant experience in the Roman Empire* (JRA Supp. Series, no. 23) Portsmouth:



postcolonial studies in literary and cultural studies is a postmodern enterprise which either recounts boom in the commercial or the discursive cultural strategies of the 'modern' colonial west and its 'others' under the aegis of Marxist or Poststructuralist discourse theories.

## 1.2 The Theoretical Roots of Postcolonial Studies

Methodologically and conceptually postcolonial studies is rooted in a variety of both earlier and more recent 'western' theoretical landscapes. One of the earlier anti-imperial thoughts is pioneered in Marxist critical landscape. In critical practice the classical Marxists<sup>8</sup> and Marxist revisionists<sup>9</sup> draw a distinction between ancient and modern European colonialisms (though revisionists like Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser and others at varying levels stretch the Marxist tradition to include certain ideologies that animate social relations which eventually helped cultural studies to analyze the dynamics of race, ethnicity and colonialism<sup>10</sup>). Marxist critics define ancient empire building activities as pre-capitalist and the modern European colonialism as the progenitor of western capitalism<sup>11</sup> though paradoxically they characterize the European colonialism as a necessary civilizing mission and means of revolution in the primitive parts of the world<sup>12</sup>. According to them the European colonists restructured the economies of their colonies into a complex relationship in that there was a flow of human and natural resources from colonised to colonist

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JRA, 1997. These two works, important though they are, deal primarily with Roman imperialism in the west. However, they do recognize the significance of postcolonial theory in the study of Roman imperialism.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx, *Surveys From Exile*, D. Fernbach (ed.), London: Pelican Books, 1973, Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1947 (1916).

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (eds.), London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971 (1929-35), Aime Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans., B. Brewster, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Hall uses Gramsci's views on common sense, hegemony and ideology etc. to discuss issues on race, ethnicity and colonialism. See his "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity" in D. Morley and K.H. Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall, Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 411- 440.

<sup>11</sup> T. Bottomore, (ed.), *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, pp. 81-85.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Marx, *Surveys From Exile*, D. Fernbach (ed.), pp. 306, 320. Marx regards colonialism as a brutal precondition for the liberation of primitive societies. In connection with British colonialism in India as a prelude for Communist revolution he says "whatever



countries—slaves, indentured labour and raw materials moved from Africa and Asia to Europe and the Americas. In whichever direction human beings and materials traveled, profits always flowed back into the mother country<sup>13</sup>. Thus modern colonialism acted as a midwife to European capitalism.

Despite some vigorous and wide ranging works conducted under its aegis<sup>14</sup>, the Marxist engagement with imperialism has secured only very limited currency in postcolonial circles. For reasons of its own very specific reading of the development of capitalism in the late nineteenth century most postcolonial literary and cultural critics consider Marxism an insufficient tool to theorize or treat colonialism as an exploitative relationship between the west and its colonised 'others'. They argue that it has neglected to address sympathetically the historical, cultural and political alterity, or difference, of the colonised world and, in so doing, it has relinquished its potential appeal to postcolonial thought<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, because of the distinction drawn between ancient and modern colonialisms there is little room for manoeuvre in classical Marxist critical practice to conduct a colonial/ postcolonial study of biblical antiquity. An exclusive preoccupation with the economic paradigm and the social formations of colonialism tend to disengage Marxist critics from analyzing the discursive and cultural formations of colonialism which according to most postcolonial critics facilitated the material and economic exploitation of the colonised 'others' in the first place in the modern colonial system. Therefore, for an adequate understanding of colonialism or postcolonialism of any kind (of biblical antiquity or modern) an analysis of the cultural formations originating in colonial contexts is of paramount importance, let alone the biblical discourses of colonial antiquity. In a postcolonial reading of biblical discourses we need to engage the discursive and cultural colonial/ postcolonial strategies and representations found within these discourses, and for this task a Marxist discursive strategy alone seems to me to be an insufficient tool.

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may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution.”

<sup>13</sup> Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, pp. 3, 4.

<sup>14</sup> See A. Brewer, *Marxist Theories of Imperialism: A Critical Survey*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875-1914*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> Gandhi, *Postcolonial*, pp. 24f. For a critique of postcolonialism from a Marxist point of view see Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory, Classes, Nations, Literatures*, Oxford: OUP, 1992.

While Marxist critics solely engage the material and social base of modern colonialism and uphold an economic paradigm, the postcolonial critics of French Poststructuralist leanings in recent years tend to pay attention to the racial, cultural, discursive, psychological, etc. aspects, effects and implications of the European colonial enterprise which in their view facilitated economic exploitation and political subjugation in the colonies<sup>16</sup>. In the context of estrangement, dispossession and subsequent reconstructions of indigenous literatures, poststructuralist concepts of the political nature of language, race, gender, and class have a profound effect on postcolonial writers who deal with subject identity and oppositional discourse<sup>17</sup>. According to Said, a postcolonial reading strategy engages not only the socio-economic but also the perceptual sphere which has its bearing on the socio-economic and political life of both the colonists and the colonised<sup>18</sup>. The perceptions of the colonists and the colonised are often encoded in colonial discourses and in other art forms. Postcolonial studies therefore inevitably engage in a critical scrutiny of such discourses and art forms emanating from colonial relationships. Herein lies perhaps the newness and ‘innovativeness’ of Saidian postcolonial studies<sup>19</sup>.

The colonial discourse analysis pioneered by Said assumes that the discourses emanating from a colonial relationship are not neutral or disinterested objective or aesthetic discourses but rather are “immensely important in the formation of imperial

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<sup>16</sup> Poststructuralist concepts of the political nature of the language of race, gender, and class have had profound effects on postcolonial writers preoccupied with subject-identity and oppositional discourses. Edward W. Said (reads with Foucault), Homi K. Bhabha (reads with Lacan) and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (reads with Derrida) are considered to be ‘the Holy Trinity of colonial discourse analysis’ who use the French ‘high’ theory in postcolonial criticism. For a positive appraisal of these three postcolonial critics see Robert J.C. Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London: Routledge, 1990, pp. 136-175 also *idem*, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 159-166, *idem*, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, pp. 383ff., and for a critical appraisal see Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 34-151.

<sup>17</sup> M. Parker and G. Starkey, (eds.), *Postcolonial Literatures: Achebe, Ngugi, Desai, Walcott*, London: Macmillan Press, 1995, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 268. He does not deny the fact that “modern European imperialism was a constitutively, radically different type of overseas domination from all earlier forms” in respect of instituting a “sustained longevity of the disparity in power” and “the massive organization of the power” which affected the details of life (267).

<sup>19</sup> See *Orientalism* and *Cultural and Imperialism*. For an analysis of the intellectual background of Saidian discourse analysis see Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, pp. 20-43, L. Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 64-80.



attitudes, references, and experience”<sup>20</sup>. Discursive subjectivities (the order of discourse) in a colonial system set the rules governing what can be said and what not, what is included as related and what is left out, what is thought to be ‘self’ and the ‘other’ in colonial discourses. Consequently, a binary opposition emerges between the colonist ‘self’ and its colonised ‘other’ within the colonial discursive practice. This distinction elevates the ‘self’ in the centre from the ‘other’ of the peripheries, the former acquiring a sort of perceptual dominance paving the way for cultural domination and economic exploitation of the latter.

The Saidian discourse analysis which later modified into what he calls a ‘contrapuntal reading’ strategy<sup>21</sup> takes account of both processes, that of imperialism and of resistance to it, that of the visible and hidden, the manifest and latent, the dominant and marginalized ideas, institutions and voices in colonial discourses. It allows us to trace how power works through language, literature, culture and institutions in colonial/ postcolonial discourses. It enables us to find the structures of thought (ideology, culture and language) in colonial/ postcolonial literary and artistic productions, the workings of ‘knowledge and power’ in social and cultural formations. Applied to biblical studies it would facilitate reading a biblical discourse in light of its production in a certain colonial context, investigating the dynamics of pro-, anti- and postcolonial elements operating within this discourse, and also the modern western biblical exegetes’ overt and covert collusion with colonist culture and practices.

However, the Saidian colonial discourse analysis, especially the one proposed by Said in *Orientalism*, operated on the notion of a binary opposition between the colonial ‘self’ and the colonised ‘other’. A few postcolonial critics like Homi Bhabha<sup>22</sup>, Gayatri Spivak<sup>23</sup> and others<sup>24</sup> tend to disapprove of such a binary

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<sup>20</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. xii, 95ff, Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, pp. 12-97.

<sup>21</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 78f. The early Said in *Orientalism* is more an essentialist/ nativist critic than the later Said of *Culture and Imperialism*.

<sup>22</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. Said in his *Culture and Imperialism* tends to appreciate cultural hybridity. See chapter one ‘Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories’, pp. 1-72. He says: “Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic”, pp. xxix, 15

<sup>23</sup> Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, *idem*, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, (ed.), Sarah Harasym, London: Routledge, 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Young, *Colonial Desire*, Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*.

opposition in any colonial/ postcolonial discourse. They think that in a colonial/ postcolonial context there is no overly rigid binary opposition between the colonizer and the colonised for both are often caught up in a complex reciprocal relationship of desire and derision. Therefore it is necessary to examine the whole complex area of colonial cultural hybridity<sup>25</sup> (border lives, in-betweenness and liminality), i.e., the phenomenon of mobility and cross-overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism between the colonists and the colonised. Bhabha shows how Said underestimated the ambivalence and indeterminacy of a colonial discourse when it is decentered from its imperial domain and read by the colonised subjects. According to him the 'in-between' space provides the terrain for elaborating strategies of self-hood— singular or communal— that initiates new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation<sup>26</sup>. Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual<sup>27</sup>.

Bhabha, therefore, explains 'post' in postcolonialism as a gesture to the *beyond* (not as sequentiality 'after' or as polarity 'anti') embodying a restless and revisionary energy that transforms the present into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment. A colonial/ postcolonial text therefore exhibits instabilities, ambiguities and contradictions and seldom portrays itself as a self-consistent discourse. It reveals complicity and resistance to colonialism almost simultaneously.

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<sup>25</sup> For the use of this term in postcolonial studies see Ashroft, *et al.*, *Key Concepts*, pp. 118-121, *idem*, *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 33-37. Also see Chapter 2.1.3

<sup>26</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 1f., Young, *Colonial Desire*, pp. 22-28.

<sup>27</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 2. Later Said in *Culture and Imperialism* appears to have acceded to this viewpoint to a large extent. He says: "because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic" pp. xxix, 15.



As the postcolonial critics of Marxist and Poststructuralist leanings battle over the scope, perspectives and application of a postcolonial approach there are a few who prefer to “*hang on to two horses, inconstantly*”<sup>28</sup>. According to Leela Gandhi,

[w]hile the poststructuralist critique of Western epistemology and theorisation of cultural alterity/ difference is indispensable to postcolonial *theory*, materialist philosophies, such as Marxism, seem to supply the most compelling basis for postcolonial *politics*. Thus, the postcolonial critic has to work toward a synthesis of, or negotiation between, both modes of thought.<sup>29</sup>

It appears that the contestation or rather the diffusion of the theoretical roots of postcolonial analysis is bound to produce a plurality of application in postcolonial studies in whichever discipline this approach is applied including in biblical studies. This plurality will manifest itself in the different models of postcolonial reading practices ranging from essentialism/ nativism, resistance/ recuperation, to diasporic subculturalism and, strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity. But prior to an analysis of these different models of postcolonial practices in biblical studies it is important to trace the avenues of applicability and stretchability of postcolonial studies in biblical studies.

### 1.3 Applicability of Postcolonial Studies in Biblical Studies

We mentioned earlier that the current postcolonial studies and its sphere of interest (both in theory and practice) seem to engage exclusively with modern European colonialism, its economic and cultural impact on the colonial ‘self’ and the colonised ‘others’, and the counter-discursive, decolonizing artistic, literary etc. strategies of postcolonial subjects both in modern and in post-modern times. Therefore in order to practise a postcolonial approach in biblical studies we need to stretch the ambit of this approach to include the discourses of biblical and postbiblical antiquity.

In this process of stretching the ambit of postcolonial studies we need to find, firstly, whether or not the prominent trends in current postcolonial approach have any relevance or potential applicability in studying the social formations and cultural

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<sup>28</sup> Gyan Prakash, “Can the “Subaltern” Ride? A Reply to O’Hanlon and Washbrook”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34:1, 1992, p. 184 (pp. 168-184), *idem*, “Postcolonial Criticism and Indian Historiography”, *Social Text* 31/32, 1992, pp. 8-19. In biblical studies Fernando Segovia also find himself ‘able to go in either direction’. See his “Notes Toward Refining the Postcolonial Optic”, *JSNT* 75, 1999, p. 108 (103-114).

<sup>29</sup> Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, p. ix.

discourses emanating from an ancient colonial/ postcolonial context. Were there any pro- or anti- or postcolonial discursive, literary, religio-cultural strategies in the ancient world? Are the economic and political or discursive and cultural aspects and effects of colonialism exclusive and unique to modern European colonialism? Can they also be found in the colonialisms of biblical antiquity in some shape or form? Does the historical and cultural distance between the world of the past, the world of biblical antiquity, and the world of modern European colonialism and capitalism formulated in cultural materialism need to deter us from at least attempting a postcolonial analysis of the biblical and postbiblical discourses of colonial antiquity?

Secondly, we need to examine whether the biblical discourses have had their origin in colonial contexts and contacts and from among the colonised subject peoples of biblical antiquity. If they are produced and proliferated from colonial contexts, contacts and subject peoples then it is important to consider the nature of these discourses, and also the extent of their representation or response (appropriation and abrogation) to aspects relating to imperialism and colonialism. We also need to find whether there are any other discourses contemporaneous with biblical discourses emanating from colonial contacts and from among a similar subject population. If there are any then what kind of discourses are they? For instance, in this thesis as I pursue the possibility of a postcolonial reading of Mark's story of Jesus I will examine the discursive strategies and representations of a postclassical Greek novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe* which originated some time nearer to Mark and from among a native, subject people in the Greek east under the imperial Romans. I will examine whether or not this postclassical novel can be read as a postcolonial novelistic discourse. If it can be read as a postcolonial discourse then I suggest that one can possibly read Mark too as a postcolonial discourse. I argue that these ficto-historical writings—Mark's story of Jesus and Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*<sup>30</sup>—originating in imperial Roman times engaged and responded, in their own ways, to both the Roman and their own native cultures and discourses. Therefore it is not improper to read them as postcolonial creative writings.

Thirdly, most postcolonial critics in literary and cultural studies implicate, and quiet rightly so, the role of biblical discourses in the conduct of modern European

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<sup>30</sup> For a postcolonial reading of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* see Chapter 3.



colonialism in 'other' parts of the world. They treat the Bible as a colonialist, colonizing western discourse. In my view a postcolonial approach to biblical studies needs to take a much more cautious and considered approach and need not necessarily parody this view. We need to ask whether the biblical discourses are western discourses at all in the first place? Where do they originate? Who are the people involved in the early creation and proliferation of those discourses? In what context or contexts do they live and write? Is there a colonial/ imperial situation when a particular biblical discourse originated? If so what role or roles does it play in that situation? Does it take an antagonistic or an affiliatory or an ambivalent affiliative-disruptive, a complex consensual-conflictual response to the colonial domination of the time?

Fourthly, if the task of postcolonial studies is to examine the whole area of colonial/ postcolonial relationships, both political and economic and the formation of ideological, linguistic and cultural subjectivities in colonial discourses and the dynamics of consensual and conflictual cultural hybridity/ liminality, affiliation and abrogation, etc. of the colonists and the colonised then an application of postcolonial approach to colonialism of any time, say for example, the colonialism of biblical antiquity need not necessarily be an anachronistic or an ahistorical enterprise. If postcolonial studies is a critical scrutinization of discourses emanating from colonial relationships or in the context of border lives between colonists and colonised then there is no reason to exclude the study of biblical or postbiblical discourses which originated in contexts of ancient colonial contacts<sup>31</sup>—whether the colonial/ imperial agents were Egyptians, Hebrews, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Hellenists or Romans and the colonised subjects were natives, Greeks, Jews or early Christians. Postcolonial studies, just as they draw attention to the economic, political and cultural issues emanating from the modern European colonialism, can also engage similar issues emanating from the colonialisms of the ancient world because of the correspondence one may find between the ancient and modern colonialism. It is

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<sup>31</sup> Mark G. Brett, "The Ethics of Postcolonial Criticism", *Semeia* 75, 1998, p. 219. A stretching of the scope of postcolonial studies to include ancient postcolonial practices is not uncommon in literary and cultural postcolonial studies too. See for example the 1992 special issue of *Social Text* on postcoloniality, which discusses the Incan, the Ottoman, and Chinese empires, as well as contemporary forms of colonialism such as Indonesia's oppressive rule of East Timor.

possible to see that the Hellenistic and Roman imperial colonialisms in the ancient world were no less politically, economically and culturally motivated than modern European colonialism<sup>32</sup>. Just as national resistance against modern European colonialism was prevalent in the modern colonial times such native resistance against colonialism was not uncommon in the colonies of antiquity<sup>33</sup>. This can be traced in the discourses particularly the postclassical Greek, Jewish and Christian creative discourses which emanated from the imperial Hellenistic and Roman world. It is possible to examine these discourses from a postcolonial perspective in order to find whether or not there is any cross-pollination and collusion of ideas, images, languages and political and cultural practices between the colonised (Greeks, Jews/ Christians) and the colonists (Hellenists and Romans)<sup>34</sup> just as the postcolonial literary and cultural critics in recent years examine such elements in the colonial and postcolonial novelistic, etc. discourses (colonizing and decolonizing fictions, poems, short stories) of our time<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> For a recent discussion of this see Webster and Cooper (eds.), *Roman Imperialism*, Mattingley (ed.), *Dialogues*. Also see Martin Goodman, *The Roman World 44 BC to AD 180*, London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 100-104, 142-156, Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, vols. 1& 2, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, William V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 B.C.*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979.

<sup>33</sup> See Martin Goodman, "Opponents of Rome: Jews and Others" in *Images of Empire*, (ed.), Loveday Alexander, pp. 222-238; G. W. Bowersock, "The Mechanics of Subversion in the Roman Provinces" in A. Giovannini, (ed.), *Opposition et re'sistance a l'emprire d'August a` Trajan*, Geneva: Foundation Hardt, 1987, pp. 291-317, R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest and Alienation in the Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967.

<sup>34</sup> A number of works in recent years, though they are not written from a postcolonial theoretical perspective, may draw attention in this regard. For example L. Alexander (ed.), *Images*, N. R. M. de Lange, "Jewish Attitudes to the Roman Empire", in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, (eds.), Garnsey and Whittaker, Cambridge: CUP, 1978, pp. 255-281, Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, Vols. I, II, trans., John Bowden, London: SCM Press, 1974 (German original 1973), J. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996, Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: Reinvention of Jewish Traditions*, London: University of California Press, 1998, Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998 (1996), J.J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), Grand Rapids, MI: WB Eerdmans, 2000, T. Engberg-Pedersen, (ed.), *Paul Beyond the Judaism/ Hellenism Divide*, Louisville: WJK Press, 2001.

<sup>35</sup> See Diana Brydon and Helen Tiffin, *Decolonising Fictions*, Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1993, Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, Parker and Starkey, (eds.), *Postcolonial Literatures*.



Finally a few related issues are also in order. Firstly, it is possible that most critics who engage in literary and cultural postcolonial studies may not appreciate the idea of considering a biblical discourse, say for example the story of Jesus in Mark, as a postcolonial writing. However, during the time of its origin in the latter half of the first century CE most people in Europe were the colonised subjects of imperial Rome. So the children of colonial Europeans and of their colonised 'others' who engage in a postcolonial reading of Mark today may enlist themselves at least in an imagined colonised alterity status<sup>36</sup>. Though the patrons of today's postcolonial literary and cultural studies may detest this possibility<sup>37</sup>, I perceive that in biblical studies it may offer a change for the better. On the one hand it will allow the biblical discourses to return to their 'Asiatic' cultural frameworks, dispel the authoritarian axiomatic European voices in biblical studies and diffuse their instinctive superiority complex as they too perceive themselves to be the colonised 'others' at a certain time in history. On the other hand it will enable European voices to recognize, to be sensitive and respectful to the voices of their former colonised 'others' who are now engaged in biblical studies, and not to discard their voices as peripheral 'sort of' (or sodoff) third world voices. This will ultimately enable a sense of humility, 'otherness', subjectivity, plurality and postcoloniality to prevail in biblical studies despite the geographical, colonial divide. I perceive that it will create an environment to commence biblical exegesis afresh for the benefit of all. This, in the words of Spivak, will offer "a constructive rather than disabling complicity between our own position and theirs", a "choice between excuses and accusations, the muddy stream and mudslinging"<sup>38</sup>.

Another important issue may also be in order when we observe Christianity and biblical discourses from an eastern (and in my case an 'Indian') Christian perspective. We know that both Christianity and the biblical discourses have an Asiatic origin. From the time of their inception and proliferation they moved not only

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<sup>36</sup> For such a trend in studying the Celtic religion under the *imperium* of Rome see J. Webster, "A negotiated syncretism: readings on the development of Romano-Celtic religion" in *Dialogues* (ed.) Mattingley, pp. 165-184.

<sup>37</sup> Ahmad, "The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality", p. 283.

<sup>38</sup> Gayathri C. Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 3f.

to the west but also to the east<sup>39</sup>, an historical reality that attracts little if any significant attention in biblical and theological circles in the west. But unlike in the west where Christianity grew under imperial and state patronage to become (eventually!) a colonial religion it remained a religion of the persecuted minority even after the two thousand years of its history not only in the place of its very birth but also in many neighbouring Afrasian countries. The biblical discourse in most of these countries continues to remain a minoritarian discourse. Christians in the east, just as in the days of biblical antiquity, are still a ‘colonised’ minority in most Asian and African societies where they continue to experience ‘otherness’ in one way or another. The biblical discourses as far as they are concerned are anti- or postcolonial rather than colonialist in nature.

#### **1.4 Cutting the Ground: Models of Postcolonial Reading in Biblical Studies**

The introduction of postcolonial studies in biblical studies is a significant development in recent years. The first published work on ‘Postcolonialism and Scriptural Reading’ appeared in *Semeia* 75, (1998) edited by a native American feminist scholar Laura Donaldson. It is followed by a collection of essays in a book provocatively entitled *The Postcolonial Bible* (1998) edited by a Sri Lankan (Birmingham based) biblical scholar R.S. Sugirtharajah. His enthusiasm in the field of ‘The Bible and Postcolonialism’ seems insatiable as some of his subsequent publications—*Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism* (1998) and a *JSNT* issue (73, 1999) which he edited on *Postcolonial Perspectives on the New Testament and Its Interpretation* and a new pipeline initiative for *The Postcolonial Bible Commentary*—suggest. One of the editions of *Biblical Interpretation* (7:2, 1999) is also partly devoted to biblical interpretation in postcolonial Hong Kong. I also have a couple of reviews on *The Postcolonial Bible* in *JSNT* 74 and a response to these reviews in *JSNT* 75 and F. Segovia’s *Decolonizing Biblical Studies and Interpreting Beyond Borders*<sup>40</sup> and Roland Boer’s *Last Stop Before Antarctica* (2001) before me to identify and examine the varying models of postcolonial reading practised in biblical studies.

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<sup>39</sup> For a study of the history of Christianity in India see M. Mundadan, *History of Christianity in India*, vol. 1: *From the Beginning up to the Middle of the Sixteenth Century*, Bangalore: Church History Association of India, 1984.



I mentioned earlier that the contestation or rather the diffusion of the theoretical roots of postcolonial studies is bound to produce a number of shoots in the landscape of postcolonial studies. Postcolonialism as a *reading strategy* differs in accordance with the diffusion of its theoretical roots. Similarly, postcolonialism as a *condition of being* also varies according to the diverse colonial and post-colonial spaces, identities and experiences of its practitioners. Hence their reading practices are bound to vary in accordance with such spaces, identities and experiences.

The postcolonial readings practised in biblical studies may be classified under four models:

#### 1.4.1 An Essentialist/ Nativist Model

One of the postcolonial reading strategies in biblical studies tends to adopt a nativist, essentialist reading strategy similar to the one in vogue in certain quarters in literary and cultural studies. For example, the essentialist revolutionary writings of Anand, Fanon, Chinweizu and Thiong'o, as part of an anti-imperialist struggle for independence and postcolonial experience, emphasize the uniqueness of an essentialist Indian or African literary and cultural aesthetics<sup>41</sup>. They believe that even after undergoing western colonial linguistic, cultural, religious experiences the Indian and African culture and literature maintained their essentialist, autonomous identities because the constituencies in which they originated and flourished are separate and radically different from that of the colonial European cultures. Therefore, the postcolonial reading and writing strategies initiated by these writers aim to reassert or revive the essence (purity) of their pre-colonial societies, cultures and experiences.

Some of the postcolonial biblical critics especially from the native American perspective seem to advocate a similar essentialist model in postcolonial scripture reading. For instance Laura Donaldson in "Postcolonialism and Biblical Reading: An Introduction" proposes what she calls a 'reading like a Canaanite'<sup>42</sup>. In this model the Bible is treated (and quite rightly in light of the native American experience of

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<sup>40</sup> F.F. Segovia, (ed.), *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, Sheffield: SAP, 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1981 (1935), J.O. Chinweizu and I. Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature: African Fiction and Poetry and Their Critics*, London: KPI, 1985 (1980), Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, London: Currey, 1986, Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched*.

genocide under Christian colonialism) as a colonial, axiomatic European discourse which is anti-Canaanitic at its core. She argues that at the hands of the first European Puritan conquerors cum settlers the biblical discourse became an ideological means for the annihilation of native American peoples and their cultures. She, therefore, prefers a postcolonial reading that can reclaim the native voices and the essence of their culture. She thinks that the postcolonial biblical criticism must reach back to the Canaanitic voice subsumed within the biblical discourse<sup>43</sup>. Thus the postcolonial reading strategy of Donaldson and other native American scholars<sup>44</sup> potentially places them on a critical collision course not only with mainline traditional interpretive strategies but also with Anglo-American feminist and Latin American liberation theologians.

The essentialist reading strategy no doubt has a potential for decolonization. It caters to the nativist, nationalistic agenda which in turn may facilitate the reclamation and renegotiation of native pre-colonial experience. It asserts the native peoples' subjectivity and spells out their histories, provides a reading and intellectual discourse in a manner that affirms their personhood. The nativist reading provides an opportunity for buried painful secrets to be brought to light, silent hearts to be opened and a past to be shared among the natives. The native myths, religions, culture and history play a crucial counter-discursive role in essentialist postcolonial reading. The pre-colonial history of the people and the history of suffering under colonial occupation inform this reading practice. It is evident that a poststructuralist view of history and a native colonised condition of being inform the essentialist postcolonial reading strategy.

Though the nativist model allows the indigenous peoples' pre-colonial and colonial histories to inform their reading practice the practitioners of essentialist postcolonial reading seem to disengage the historical and cultural context in which the biblical discourses themselves emanated in the first place. The nativist model is built

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<sup>42</sup> Laura Donaldson, *Semeia* 75, 1998, pp. 1-14.

<sup>43</sup> For a similar approach in OT studies to reclaim a Palestinian voice see Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel*.

<sup>44</sup> Allan Robert Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquests and Liberation Theology" in *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, (ed.), Sugirtharajah, London: SPCK, 1997 (1991), pp. 277-285 (also in *Christianity*



solely on an historical experience of suffering under European Christian colonialism. The Biblical discourses are treated, not without reason, as a culpable agent in this colonial cannibalism. However, it is important to remember that the European colonists and settlers also used a biblical reading strategy to justify their historical adventure and experience of conquest, colonization and cannibalism in other peoples' land. So a discursive reading strategy built solely on peoples' historical experience results in treating the biblical discourse either as a 'culpable agent' or as a 'facilitating agent' of colonialism depending on the agenda or experience of the readers. Perhaps one of the ways to circumscribe this problem is to examine the historical experience behind the production and proliferation of the biblical discourses and their first readers themselves<sup>45</sup> in which case we may find that they too have had an oppositional essentialist agenda at the time of originating these discourses in perhaps very similar imperial/ colonial contexts. In practising such an agenda, as in the case of most nativist anti-colonial practice today, they fell into the trap of approximation (replacement *despite* displacement), i.e., using an 'imperial' means to replace an existing imperial system. In a postcolonial reading of the biblical discourse it is important to identify the problem of approximation in this discourse so that we may appropriately engage these texts and avoid the danger of repeating the imperialist agenda in our postcolonial reading and praxis. Nativism and exclusive essentialism can breed nationalist and exclusive racist orthodoxies which potentially repeat an imperial system which it tries to dispel in the first place.

Another theoretical issue in a reclamatory essentialist postcolonial reading strategy is the whole question of the pure subaltern voice in a colonial and postcolonial context. Gayatri Spivak in her much publicized question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" discusses this issue and concludes that in a colonial/ postcolonial context the subaltern seldom speaks<sup>46</sup>. If at all they speak they do so only through the

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*and Crisis* 49, 1989, pp. 261-65), Jace Waver, "From I-Hermeneutics to We-Hermeneutics: Native Americans and the Post-Colonial" in *Semeia* 75, 1996, pp. 153-176.

<sup>45</sup> The ethics of biblical interpretation is another solution suggested by Fiorenza and others. See Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship", *JBL* 107:1, 1988, pp. 3-17 especially pp. 9ff.

<sup>46</sup> Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, (eds.), Ashcroft, *et al.*, pp. 24-28, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" in *History and Theory* 24:3, 1985, pp. 247-272, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, (eds.), Guha and Spivak, New York: OUP,

voice of certain 'elite others' or what she calls the 'Native Informant'. So the claim of the reclamation of the cultural essence and native voice in a pure and unadulterated form (in pre-colonial cultural purity) in a post-colonial context is perhaps a utopian ideal<sup>47</sup>. Native cultures rupture decisively and irreversibly as a result of the invasion and colonization by outsiders. Therefore it is only from this ruptured 'in-between' space that the so-called 'natives' can speak which, again, according to Homi Bhabha<sup>48</sup>, is not without a disturbing and decolonizing effect on the colonial discourses and perhaps avoids the problem of approximation.

#### 1.4.2 A Resistance/ Recuperative Model

The chief proponent of this model is the ubiquitous Sugirtharajah. He introduces postcolonialism to biblical studies on two basic assumptions: (i) colonialism dominates and determines the interest of the biblical texts, and (ii) the biblical interpretations from the colonial western frame of references are unconcerned with colonialism. He therefore wants a postcolonial biblical criticism to (a) open a new era of academic inquiry which brings to the fore the overlapping issues of empire, nation, ethnicity, migration and language, (b) scrutinize and expose the colonial domination embedded in biblical texts, (c) 'overturn colonial assumptions' inherent in western interpretations (d) search for alternative hermeneutics, and (e) interpret the text in our own terms and read them from our own specific locations<sup>49</sup>.

It may be appropriate to say that during the initial days of introducing postcolonial studies to biblical studies, Sugirtharajah treated postcolonialism as "a resistant discourse which tries to write back and work against colonial assumptions, representations, and ideologies"<sup>50</sup>. He says: "it is an active confrontation with the dominant systems of thought, its lopsidedness and inadequacies, and underlines its unsuitability for us. Hence, it is a process of cultural and discursive emancipation

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1988, pp. 3-32, see especially pp. 10-15 on the 'Problem of Subaltern Consciousness'. For a discussion of issues involved see also Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, pp. 231-245.

<sup>47</sup> Brydon and Tiffin, *Decolonising Fictions*, p. 77, Boer, *Last Stop*, pp. 123-129.

<sup>48</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*.

<sup>49</sup> Sugirtharajah, "Biblical Studies after the Empire: From a Colonial to a Postcolonial Mode of Interpretation" in *The Postcolonial Bible*, pp. 15f.

<sup>50</sup> Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, pp. ix, x.



from all dominant structures whether they be political, linguistic or ideological”<sup>51</sup>. It is “an oppositional reading practice”, “a subversive stance towards the dominant knowledge”, “a discursive resistance to imperialism, imperial ideologies, imperial attitudes and their continued incarnations”. “The task of postcolonialism is to ensure that the yearnings of the poor take *precedence over* the interests of the affluent; the emancipation of the subjugated has *primacy over* the freedom of the powerful; and that the participation of the marginalized takes *priority over* the perpetuation of a system which systematically excludes them”<sup>52</sup>. In these lines he promotes a binary opposition and sounds more or less like a liberation theologian<sup>53</sup>.

Though Sugirtharajah admirably admits the prior existence and usefulness of anti-colonial nationalist and Marxist liberation reading strategies, he finds some sort of newness in current postcolonial resistant reading strategy. He explains:

it goes beyond the essentialist and contrastive ways of thinking... and seeks a radical syncretizing of each opposition. ... while challenging the oppressive nature of colonialism it recognizes the potentiality of contact between colonizer and colonized. ... the present postcolonialism tries to integrate and forge a new perspective by critically and profitably syncretizing ingredients from both vernacular and metropolitan centres.<sup>54</sup>

He recognizes that neither a reversal to nativism nor a cringing attitude toward all that is western is the way forward in postcolonialism. What is required instead is an ‘act of exorcism’ for both the colonised and the colonists. A postcolonial reading strategy would delineate the relationship between the ruler and the ruled which is complex, full of cross-trading and mutual appropriation and confrontation. For this task he invokes the Saidian ‘contrapuntal reading’ strategy. The Saidian ‘contrapuntal reading’ reads a colonial text with a double consciousness (with a forked tongue) in order to trace the

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<sup>51</sup> Sugirtharajah, “A Postcolonial Exploration of Collusion and Construction in Biblical Interpretation” in *The Postcolonial Bible*, p. 93.

<sup>52</sup> Sugirtharajah, “A Postcolonial Exploration”, p. 113. Italics mine. Also see his “Biblical Studies in India: From Imperialistic Scholarship to Postcolonial Interpretation” in *Teaching the Bible: The Discourses and Politics of Biblical Pedagogy*, (eds.), F.F. Segovia and M.A. Tolbert, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998, pp. 283-296 especially pp. 292-294.

<sup>53</sup> Until very recently he is known as a leading proponent of third world ‘liberation hermeneutics’ in the first world. See *The Voices from the Margin*. Also see “Postscript: Achievements and Items for a Future Agenda” in *The Voices*, pp. 434 - 444. By looking at the end ‘Notes’ of this piece one may find his rather strong affinity to Latin American liberation hermeneutics but at the same time a faint inclination toward something postcolonial though he did not quite clearly envisage such a move at the time.

<sup>54</sup> *The Postcolonial Bible*, p. 94. Also see his *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics*, pp. 15-18, “A Brief Memorandum on Postcolonialism and Biblical Studies”, *JSNT* 73, 1999, pp. 3-5.



silences, gaps, etc. in that text. Sugirtharajah stretches Saidian contrapuntal reading into a category of comparative analysis. In a comparative reading strategy he compares the Euro-American readings with the third world resistant readings of the Bible and the Christian texts with other eastern religious texts with a view to subverting the axiomatic valorism of the Bible and its western moorings and readings. He thinks that in addition to the Greco-Judean traditions the Indic and other eastern religious traditions too had contributed to the development of the New Testament and the Christian faith<sup>55</sup>.

Sugirtharajah's postcolonial resistance reading strategy interrogates the biblical narratives in order to identify the embedded colonial ideology and practice in them. It engages theoretically with the central question of the Bible's promotion of xenophobic, expansionist, militaristic, and ethnic tendencies. Instead of probing for a single meaning of the text it examines the text for its implicit or explicit colonial codes. As a postcolonial biblical critic he is perfectly justified in engaging in such a task. However, this task need not necessarily be guided solely by a postcolonial oppositional and anti-western agenda. The embeddedness of colonialism in the biblical narratives can be examined in light of the postcolonial context, contacts and peoples where, when and from whom the biblical discourses themselves emanated and also in light of the possible problem of approximation that biblical narratives consciously or unconsciously invoked when engaged in reverse discursive strategies in biblical antiquity. It is perfectly possible to look at the Bible as a colonialist document and explain how colonialism dominates and determines the interest of the biblical texts as its narratives originated in different colonial contexts of biblical antiquity<sup>56</sup>. But at the same time it is not impossible to treat most of its narratives as postcolonial nationalistic reverse writings which had fallen victim to the problem of approximation (repetition *despite* displacement, subversion by imitation) as some postcolonial nationalistic fictions too do in one way or another in our times<sup>57</sup>. "The

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<sup>55</sup> In the west he is a leading proponent of inter-faith hermeneutics. See *Asian Faces of Jesus*, (ed.), Sugirtharajah, London: SCM Press, 1993, "Inter-faith Hermeneutics: An Example and Some Implications" in *Voices*, pp. 352-363.

<sup>56</sup> Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, p. 19.

<sup>57</sup> Can we possibly read Solomon T. Plaatje's *Mhudi*, an anti-colonial nationalist fiction written in the colonial context of South Africa by a native South African in 1917, as a colonialist document simply because of its colonial gaze? [New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970 (Lovedale Press, 1930)]. Invoking past glories, military victories, racial or



problem called *approximation*, emerges as a recurring feature in most reverse or counter-discourses, including anti- and postcolonial writing”<sup>58</sup>.

In our analysis it is not difficult to find the ubiquitarianism of Sugirtharajah especially as we observe his multi-faceted (resistant, hybrid, multi, inter-faith) approach to relate postcolonial criticism to biblical studies. Therefore it is difficult to categorize his approach under the rubric of a single model. However, his emphases on resistance, opposition and liberative praxis against colonialism, his anti-Eurocentrism and ‘pro-Othercentre-ness’ etc. draw his approach toward a resistant/ recuperative postcolonial reading model. He tends to lean increasingly toward a materialist interpretation of history and hence his emphasis on solidarity and universal liberation of the poor and oppressed as an agenda of postcolonial reading strategy. In this reading strategy the condition of being a colonised subject is not a prerequisite. Anyone who is interested in the liberation struggle may engage in a postcolonial discursive strategy.

One may also find that Sugirtharajah’s postcolonial resistant reading model initiates a postcolonial contextual theology. In this task he seems to be inspired by a poststructuralist view of history. Here postcoloniality as a condition of being, that is, “postcoloniality involving the once-colonized “Others” insisting on taking their place as historical subjects”<sup>59</sup> is a prerequisite. However, he also recognizes that the times have changed in the case of many like him who live in the borders of different cultures and contexts with a ‘hybridized identity’. So the possibility of an essentialist poststructural contextual theology as far as he is concerned is remote. He says:

We have come a long way as interpreters, most of us starting by identifying ourselves with nationalism and patriotic causes. I think we need to reconsider our role as interpreters to take into account the multifaceted and enormously complex web of global and local relations, and to ask ourselves what is the Indianness or Sri Lankanness we are craving.<sup>60</sup>

As the borders of different cultures and contexts are increasingly blurring one can only long and hope for the creation of a ‘moral universe’. He says: “To me it is increasingly becoming clear that cultures, nations, and identities can never be defined in simple

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national superiority or the supremacy of native gods and heroes etc. can very well be the postcolonial tactics of nationalist writings.

<sup>58</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, p. 104 (Italics original).

<sup>59</sup> Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical*, p. 16.

binary appositions—East-West, center-margin... I for one,... would rather live with the complexities than easy binary appositions”<sup>61</sup>. These varying positions and positioning perhaps testify to the complex ubiquity of his postcolonial reading strategy.

While we appreciate his interest in applying the postcolonial reading strategy to the biblical discourse in order to expose its colonial collusion and the contrapuntal placing of Indic religious texts along the biblical text in order to replace the totalitarian and totalizing claims of biblical narratives, we are a bit surprised by his reluctance to examine whether or not the Indic religious texts (the Vedas and Epics for example) themselves are devoid of any cultural politics or embedded with any religio-cultural colonial and colonizing tendencies. He speaks quite appreciatively of the Indic religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) in metonymic terms. But he does not specify which segment of these Indic religions appeals to him most: the ‘Hinduism’ of its early Rig Vedic Aryan or later Vedic Brahminic tradition or the ‘conquestarian’ traditions of the epics<sup>62</sup> (*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*) or the popular indigenous religious traditions of the subaltern ‘Indians’, or the Buddhism of its *Hinayana* (traditionalist) or *Mahayana* (reformist) traditions. While engaging quite rightly the discursive (commentarial) strategies and missionary ventures of William Carey and others in colonial India, he speaks little of the discursive strategies and missionary enterprises of the Brahminic and the Buddhist traditions on the subaltern population within India and in the Far East, South and South East of Asia. He also seems to be silent on the specificity of his own locale and peoples in Sri Lanka where we sadly see a native version of colonial conflict raging ever since independence between the Sinhala Buddhist majority in the south and the Tamil Hindu-Christian minority in the north of this island nation. This seems to be a remarkable omission in his postcolonial reading agenda.

As an Asian immigrant living in the ‘mother country’ England, Sugirtharajah’s enthusiasm for a resistant postcolonial biblical reading against western imperial Orientalist and Anglicist readings is understandable. Though his specific locale before coming to England was in Sri Lanka his interpretive framework is often set in the

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<sup>60</sup> Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical* p. 138.

<sup>61</sup> Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical* p. 139.



Indian socio-political and cultural context. His use of 'India' in metonymic terms as though it is a single socio-political and cultural entity without sufficient attention to the diversities that are there, and also the silence about a native breed of colonists duplicating a sort of 'colonial' power and religio-political domination over a whole lot of 'native others' are subject to some criticism in light of what a few postcolonial Indian critics have to say about 'India' and Indic religion. According to Gayatri Spivak:

'India', for people like me, is not really a place with which they can form a national identity because it has always been an artificial construct. 'India' is a bit like saying 'Europe'. ... 'Indian-ness' is not a thing that exists. Reading Sanskrit scriptures, for example- I can't call that Indian, because after all, India is not just Hindu. That 'Indic' stuff is not India. The name India was given by Alexander the Great by mistake. The name Hindustan was given by the Islamic conquerors. The name Bharat, which is on the passport, is in fact a name that hardly anyone uses, which commemorates a mythic king. So it isn't a place that we Indians can think of as anything, unless we are trying to present a reactive front, against another kind of argument. ...

If an Indian asks me what I am, I'm a Bengali which is very different.<sup>63</sup>

Most migrant 'Afrasian' postcolonial critics, because of their alienated condition of being in the metropolis of former colonial countries, tend to appreciate their hybrid identity but at the same time implicitly weep over western colonialism as the root of many illnesses in their countries while sweeping under the carpet the equally monstrous internal, native breed of (ethnic, religious, caste/ class oriented) nationalist colonists lording over the native 'others' in their own countries. This tendency seems to be based on a feeling that as the colonised 'others' of the west they have a moral high ground to criticize everything that is western or Christian. This appears to be because of the specificities of the immediate locale in the west and the (real or imagined) experiences of isolation, indifference, racism and 'otherness' etc. they experience in western societies. Consequently, the internal colonial experiences of their fellow beings in their native countries (whether in Sri Lanka or 'India') do not draw much attention. As a short timer in the west and before coming to the west as a south 'Indian' Keralite living in different parts of north India where I am often branded as a *Videshi* (foreigner) and of low caste origin because of being a Christian, I wish to see the task of postcolonialism primarily and straightforwardly to engage the

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<sup>62</sup> Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p. 183.

<sup>63</sup> Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic*, (ed.) S. Harasym, pp. 39, 81.

duplication of a native and internal breed of colonists whether it is an ethnic, religious or a political majority dominating and subjugating its minorities in our own specificities of locale<sup>64</sup>, and secondly, to engage the one that is past and seems to be present now covertly and indirectly. The Christian communities in the east in the past as well as in the present are a minority of often persecuted communities colonised and marginalized (in certain cases ‘tolerated’) in the cultures and communities they live in<sup>65</sup>. They, like their ancestors of biblical antiquity, mostly speak from their colonised context and ‘othered’ or ‘in-between’ condition.

### 1.4.3 Diasporic Intercultural (Subcultural) Model

Most postcolonial theorists, critics, artists and writers (Said, Bhabha, Spivak, Lamming, Rushdie, Wilson Harris, Derek Walcott, Soyinka, Achabe and others) are diaspora academics from former colonies who choose to live in various metropolises in the west<sup>66</sup>. Their experience of exile and diaspora (double or multiple) identities exerts an influence on their poetics and on the very production and proliferation of postcolonialism as a critical practice in recent years in the west. In their literary, theoretical and critical practice they tend to move away from essentialist/ nativist and resistant/ recuperative models to diasporic interculturalism or transcultural hybridity. Their “diaspora experience” in the words of S. Hall, “can be defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a

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<sup>64</sup> I believe that perhaps the future of postcolonial criticism in India may move in the direction shown by the two postcolonial novels—*The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and “Draupadi” by Mahesweta Devi –that are written primarily in the internal colonial context of post-colonial India and only secondarily in the context of alien colonialism. They give a lead to postcolonial criticism in a manner beyond the one suggested by postcolonial migrant critics who live in the metropolitan centers in the west. See my reading of these two creative writings in Chapter 2.2

<sup>65</sup> For a recent report on the plight of the Christian communities in the east see William Dalrymple, “Lost flock”, *The Guardian*, Tuesday 30 October 2001, pp. 2-4.

<sup>66</sup> For ‘A Diaspora Aesthetic’ see Dennis Walder, *Post-Colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, pp. 116-121. Also see Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, (eds.), Williams and Chrisman, pp. 392-403, Gareth Griffiths, *A Double Exile: African and West Indian Writing Between Two Cultures*, London: Marion Boyars, 1978, Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.



conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity*'<sup>67</sup>.

In biblical and theological studies Fernando Segovia is a leading advocate of diasporic intercultural (subcultural) criticism. He considers himself a postcolonial diaspora critic (Cuban-American) who comes "from the margins, from the world of the colonized" to "the center, in the world of the colonizers". "To begin with", he says, "I am a child of the Caribbean Basin, one of the most highly colonized and contested sites of the globe.... Then, with emigration and exile, ... I became a child of the diaspora, a part of the Hispanic American reality and experience in the United States, a context of internal colonialism..."<sup>68</sup>. As a Cuban-American his identity appears to be fluid, that is, his identity as a white 'self' in Cuba changes as a result of his migratory experience in the US where he is the 'other'. This demands a construction of new categories, new political and emotional spaces in which his multiple identities can be expressed.

The dispersal of non-western scholars to the west, according to Segovia, has brought enormous diversity not only in method and theory but also in faces and concerns within biblical scholarship. Their influx "should be seen as a veritable process of liberation and decolonization: a movement away from the European and Euro-American voices and perspectives that had dominated biblical criticism for so long, toward a much more diversified and multcentered conception and exercise of the discipline"<sup>69</sup>. On his part he imports and promotes a brand of Hispanic Latina/o American theology in the US— a "theology of the diaspora—a theology born and forged in exile, in displacement and relocation... a 'liberation' and 'postcolonial' theology"<sup>70</sup>. It is a self-consciously local and constructive theology, quite forthcoming about its own social location and perspective, a theology of diversity and pluralism,

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<sup>67</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", p. 401f.

<sup>68</sup> F. Segovia, "Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic" in *The Postcolonial Bible*, pp. 54f., "Interpreting beyond Borders: Postcolonial Studies in Biblical Criticism" in *Interpreting Beyond*, (ed.), *idem*, pp. 11-34. For various portrayals of Cuban-American identity, diaspora experience, border subjects etc. see Ruth Behar, *Bridges to Cuba/ Puentes a Cuba*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, Tamara R. Dukes, "Beyond the Binary of Cuban Identity: Review Essay of *Bridges to Cuba/ Puentes a Cuba*" in *Cultural Studies* 13:2, 1999, pp. 346-357.

<sup>69</sup> Segovia, "Biblical Criticism", p. 52.

<sup>70</sup> Segovia, "Biblical Criticism", p.53.



highlighting the dignity and value of all matrices and voices, a theology of engagement and dialogue, committed to critical conversation with other theological voices from both margins and centre alike. Thus Segovia's approach to postcolonialism (under the banner of cultural studies) appears to be a polyphonic, diversifying, inter/ subcultural model which facilitates "an excellent model for cross-cultural studies in the discipline"<sup>71</sup>.

Segovia's cross-cultural approach looks, firstly, upon the ancient texts of Christianity and Judaism as poetic, rhetorical and cultural/ ideological products (constructs) of a socio-religious, cultural and political reality—the reality of empire, of imperialism and colonialism in biblical antiquity<sup>72</sup>. Secondly it looks upon the readings of ancient texts as socially and historically conditioned constructs ("texts") because all those who engage in reading are historically and socially conditioned individuals<sup>73</sup>.

[I]ntercultural criticism sees all readings of texts—all reading strategies; all reconstructions of authors and readers, implied or real; all identifications of rhetorical concerns and aims; all reconstructions of history and culture; in fact, the entire process of unpacking and dis-covering the otherness of texts—as constructions on the part of readers.<sup>74</sup>

[F]or intercultural criticism all "text", all readings and interpretations of the ancient texts, are the result of interaction between socially and historically conditioned texts *and* socially and historically conditioned readers".<sup>75</sup>

Thirdly, intercultural criticism deals with readers of ancient texts and the authors behind the 'texts' as those who constantly engage in a process of "self"-construction. Therefore it approaches such "selves" in the same way it approaches the ancient texts and the readings of such texts: as artistic, strategic, and cultural constructions<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> Segovia, "Biblical Criticism", p. 54. Also his "Cultural Studies and Contemporary Biblical Criticism: Ideological Criticism as Mode of Discourse" in *Reading From this Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*, vol. 2, (eds.) Segovia and Tolbert, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, pp. 1-17, specially p. 17.

<sup>72</sup> Segovia, "Toward Interculturalism: Reading Strategy from the Diaspora" in *Reading from this Place*, pp. 321-330 (303-330), "Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies" in *The Postcolonial Bible*, pp. 56ff., "Reading-Across: Intercultural Criticism and Textual Posture" in *Interpreting Beyond*, (ed.), *idem*, pp. 59-83.

<sup>73</sup> Segovia, "Toward Interculturalism", pp. 325f., "Biblical Criticism", pp. 58ff.

<sup>74</sup> Segovia, "Toward Interculturalism", p. 326.

<sup>75</sup> Segovia, "Pedagogical Discourse and Practices in Cultural Studies: Toward a Contextual Pedagogy" in *Teaching the Bible*, p. 156 (137-167).

<sup>76</sup> Segovia, "Toward Interculturalism", pp. 326f., "Biblical Criticism", pp. 60ff.



The origin of biblical texts and their readings at various times by different peoples of varied cultures in the past manifests a distantiation (otherness) which demands an inter-cultural critical engagement in the present<sup>77</sup>. The result of this engagement may either be an appropriation or an abrogation of those texts and readings. It neither accepts the biblical texts as a foundational text or a 'faithful ally' or 'effective weapon' in the struggle for liberation nor recognizes any of the "texts" or readings of the modern colonial west as axiomatic, nor any subcultural experience as the key to the message of the Bible, including the experience of marginalization and oppression<sup>78</sup>. Instead it would recognize a plurality of readers and a plurality of readings or "texts" and a heterogeneity of experience. In a postcolonial reading what is required is an intercultural dialogue between the plurality of readers, readings and their heterogeneous experience which acknowledges, respects and values the otherness of texts, "texts", readers and their experiences.

Intercultural criticism entails an analysis of texts, of "texts" or readings of texts, and of "selves" or flesh-and-blood readers of texts. It is also a reading strategy that sees itself not as *the* one, sole, and definitive reading strategy but as a reading strategy among many, grounded in and addressing the reality and experience of the diaspora, my diaspora, and committed to the values of otherness and engagement<sup>79</sup>. As a model within cultural studies postcolonial studies has no choice but to see itself and represent itself as *unus inter pares*; otherwise, it could easily turn into an imperial discourse of its own. It is an optic, not the optic, in full engagement and dialogue with a host of other models and other optics.

The diasporic, inter/ subcultural model proposed by Segovia has the obvious marks of a complex modern and postmodern perspective. Firstly, it emerges from a diasporic margin within the west (Latina/o America) and facilitates all sorts of localized faces and polyphonic voices to speak. As a subcultural model its emphasis is on articulating the local or what has been projected as marginal and different. Secondly, it intends to initiate a liberation and decolonization process on a global

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<sup>77</sup> For a note on 'otherness' and 'engagement' see 'The Map of Diaspora Hermeneutics', pp. 322f.

<sup>78</sup> Here we notice a significant difference in approach between Sugirtharajah and Segovia. See Sugirtharajah, "A Postcolonial Exploration", p.113.

<sup>79</sup> Segovia, "Toward Interculturalism", p. 330, "Pedagogical Discourse", p. 156.

scale. Apparently Segovia wants the heterogeneity and polyphony of the margins (the politics of difference) to accomplish a universal goal— liberation and decolonization. He perceives that somehow the local and the global can co-exist and the local can initiate a liberation and decolonization process on a universal scale. This is paradoxical for it shows a tension between the agenda of modernism (Marxist materialism) and postmodernism (Poststructuralism) in Segovia's interpretive project<sup>80</sup>. This paradox appears to be the result of the fluid polifacetic identity he himself possesses as a result of being caught in between Cuba and America, his fractured Cuban identity (native and white) and the immigrant US identity (otherness), and a dialogue between the Cuban/ socialist discourse and US/ capitalist discourse. Because of a fractured self and forked tongue he moves in either direction (modernist and postmodernist) depending on the purpose for doing so at the time of the exercise without essentializing or hegemonizing any one of them.

However, it is uncertain whether or not Segovia is making a case for postmodernism in a direction which privileges the marginal groups and their anti-imperialist struggles as he refuses to accept marginalization and oppression as the key to biblical interpretation. This may possibly be because of his diasporic experience of what Naipaul says 'living in a borrowed culture' and in 'the threat of failure, the need to escape' which brought most diaspora non-western scholars in the west<sup>81</sup>. In the diaspora of the postmodern west most non-western intellectuals, especially theorists and critics, have become avid consumers of postmodern cultural commodities gorging on heterogeneity, fragmentation, subculturalism, pluralism, etc. to see the fractured edges of the Real, of Necessity, while ignoring the realities of the poor, the oppressed subaltern in their native countries who live in situations of internal colonialism and surrounded by a world enriched by modern colonialism. In the midst of external and internal colonialisms they find themselves brutalized by their unmitigated marginality. Survival for many in the margins of the first and third world is still an issue and not a matter of lifestyle or subcultural group allegiance or identification alone. Those who are left out by the modernist or the late capitalist postmodern boom can seldom afford

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<sup>80</sup> For an interesting debate on the issues of postmodern pluralism/ multiculturalism and the modernist view of liberation/ decolonization among the Latinos of US and among Latin American critics see Rosaura Sa'nchez and Beatrice Pita, "Mapping Cultural/ Political Debates in Latin American Studies" in *Cultural Studies* 13:2, 1999, pp. 290-318.



to relinquish social change for a 'carnival of choices'. Postmodernity for many of them is a condition of homelessness, violence and despair and a continuation of exploitation<sup>82</sup>.

Though Segovia develops a postcolonial optic to observe "the geopolitical relationship between centre and periphery", "to highlight the periphery over the center and the colonial over the imperial"<sup>83</sup> his diasporic intercultural lens allows him to see more of less a poststructural 'carnival of choices' where the issue of power between centre and periphery collapses to the detriment of those who are marginalized and oppressed in the periphery<sup>84</sup>. He thinks "there is no self-evident project of resistance and emancipation for all in the periphery"<sup>85</sup>. He believes that for those in the periphery their diversity itself is a tremendous victory in the struggle of resistance and emancipation<sup>86</sup>. It is true that in a cross-cultural carnival one finds diversities but they often exhibit a classless and genderless pan-ethnicity crisscrossing social, cultural and ethnic identities which makes it impossible to forge an effective culture of resistance. Segovia's collapsing of intercultural postcolonialism into a cross- or sub-cultural carnival in my view is problematic for the former, unlike the latter, often retains a potential for conflict while juxtaposing a consensual stand in an intercultural context. It is this element of consensual-conflictual hybridity, inherent in a diasporic postcolonial interculturalism, that Segovia fails to highlight sufficiently in his model. A postcolonial subculture (diasporic or otherwise) is a hybrid culture that can potentially be more troubling and disturbing than what Segovia envisages in a carnival of subcultural choices. Segovia seems to miss out on the fact that the production of subcultural difference is not just a consequence of simple particularisms but is rather,

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<sup>81</sup> V.S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage*, London: Penguin, 1975, pp.45, 73.

<sup>82</sup> Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita, "Mapping", p. 313.

<sup>83</sup> Segovia, "Notes toward Refining", p. 111.

<sup>84</sup> See Arif Dirlik, "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism", *Critical Inquiry* 20:2, 1994, pp. 328-356. He thinks that the insistence on multiple histories and fragmentation has been detrimental to thinking about the global operation of capitalism today.

<sup>85</sup> Segovia, "Notes toward Refining", p. 112.

<sup>86</sup> Segovia, "Notes toward Refining", p.113.

necessarily, a hybrid event since it can only happen within the double articulation of the local and the global<sup>87</sup>.

Segovia's model allows a cacophony of voices, but it is not clear whether or not this allowance gives room for the colonialist voices also to have its place in the contemporary market place or *mercado* of biblical interpretation. However, he is pleased to see the current influx of more and more readers from ethnic and racial minorities into this market place. This suggests that he is privileging them to a certain extent (even though he refuses to accept marginalization and oppression as the key to biblical interpretation) against western imperialist readers. He says that the purpose of intercultural model is to add more and more voices into the carnival of voices and some how this carnival will do the rest of resisting the imperialist 'texts' and subverting them.

From a postmodern cross-cultural perspective it is possible for some to consider the biblical texts as a localized discursive construct of biblical antiquity devoid of any foundational or universal significance. For them a distantiation of biblical texts can very well be an option. But this need not be the optic of many others who consider the Bible as a foundational or liberationist text. As far as they are concerned distantiation is hardly an option. So what we require is a critical engagement. In a critical engagement we may confront some of the biblical texts apparently as colonialist texts because of their colonial gaze and their (mis)use during the modern western colonial enterprise. But it is not entirely impossible for us to consider the biblical texts also as postcolonial texts in light of their production and proliferation in different colonial contexts and from among the colonised subject populations of biblical antiquity. Moreover in most parts of the post-colonial world it is still being used as a liberative, anti-colonial discourse<sup>88</sup>. In an intercultural criticism of the biblical texts we need to give sufficient attention to such crucial issues.

We may also need to grapple with the so-called 'colonial gaze' of the biblical texts. Like most postcolonial nationalist writings of our time they too were

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<sup>87</sup> Alberto Moreiras, "Hybridity and Double Consciousness", *Cultural Studies* 13:3, 1999, p. 388 (373-407).

<sup>88</sup> The postcolonial (anti-colonial) potential of the Bible in many former colonial spaces (e.g., among the aboriginal peoples of Australia) is recognized by Roland Boer. See his *Last Stop Before Antarctica*, p. 192.



postcolonial cultural hybrid, mimetic texts which adopted the means of approximation. The approximation of the colonial gaze in postcolonial writings is a counter-discursive decolonizing strategy rather than a colonizing strategy<sup>89</sup>. An intercultural engagement with biblical texts on the one hand needs to deal with the problem of approximation found in these texts, and on the other appreciate their postcolonial mimetic, ambivalent and hybrid discursive strategies of disturbing colonial authority and dominance even while adapting a colonial gaze.

As a diaspora postcolonial critic one may expect Segovia to exploit the complex issues of postcolonial mimicry, ambivalence and cultural hybridity, that is, of seeing with a double vision, speaking with a forked tongue and with double linguistic and cultural consciousness etc. Diasporic postcolonial critics and artists (Bhabha, Spivak, Achabe, Soyinka and others) whom we mentioned earlier engage such issues in their postcolonial theoretical and literary works. Their theoretical approaches and literary works deal with issues of hybridity, creolisation, in-betweenness, and liminality in colonial/ postcolonial discourses in order to show how the colonised or diasporic 'other' challenges and disturbs the authority and dominance of the colonial 'self' in a colonial/ postcolonial context, and also to explain the problem of approximation in colonial/ postcolonial discourses. We may turn to a model that takes such issues seriously and significantly.

#### **1.4.4 Strategic Essentialism and Transcultural Hybridity Model**

A few theorists of postcolonial criticism (Spivak<sup>90</sup>, Bhabha<sup>91</sup> and Boehmer<sup>92</sup>) who articulate the margins are weary and suspicious of the binary opposition (nativism and essentialism or resistance and recuperation) and the intercultural (subcultural) fragmentation models used in postcolonial studies. They think that these models have a potential either to reproduce or perpetuate the colonial structures of thought (a Manichean universe of absolute opposites) or to erase the possibility of an

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<sup>89</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, p. 104.

<sup>90</sup> See Spivak, 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia' *In Other Worlds*, pp. 103-117. Also see *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. F. Fanon too was aware of the dangers of fixity and fetishism of identities within the colonial cultures. See "On National Culture", *Colonial Discourse*, (eds.), Williams and Chrisman, pp. 36-52.

<sup>91</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*. Also see his "Editor's Introduction: Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations", *Critical Inquiry* 23:3, 1997, pp. 431-459.

<sup>92</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*.

effective subversion of colonialism. While nativism potentially empowers cultural essentialism and religio-political nationalism of the 'other', intercultural subculturalism romanticizes fragmentation by splintering margins into dissident micro-territories, constellations of voices and plurality of meanings thereby allowing a centre (or a system) to operate as the dominant 'self'. Therefore these theorists articulate the need for a careful deconstruction of the very structures of the dominant 'self' and the marginal 'other' (centre-margin cartography) in order to shed light on the complexities of negotiation and mutual dependence (the mechanics and intricate processes of cultural contact and conflict, intrusion and interanimation, fusion and disjunction) between colonial centre and colonised margin in a colonial/ postcolonial context, and the need to go *beyond* the centre and margin dichotomy to a different realm of experience where the claims of difference and desire for transculturality<sup>93</sup> are both contradictorily—possible.

Historically and culturally colonial contacts bring cross-overs. So it is imperative to imagine new transformations of linguistic, social, cultural etc. consciousness (articulations) which exceed reified identities and rigid boundaries. A pioneering move to theorize cross-overs in language is made by Bakhtin who describes the phenomenon in terms of hybridization. He explains the hybridity of language as "a mixture of two social languages within the limit of a single utterance, an encounter within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation..."<sup>94</sup>. Hybridity describes the ability of language to be simultaneously the same but different, the ability of one voice to ironize and unmask the other within the same utterance. This phenomenon when performed deliberately in an artistic device is called 'intentional hybrid' or 'conscious hybrid'. It is the perception of one language by another language, its illumination or subversion by another linguistic consciousness. An intentional or conscious hybrid utterance or word has two contradictory meanings, two accents, two socio-linguistic consciousnesses, two

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<sup>93</sup> I use 'transculturalism' in the sense of 'border crossing' where the structures of power are deconstructed and decentered unlike in 'cross-culturalism' where they are often left untouched. See Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation*.

<sup>94</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 358, also see pp. 304f.



axiological belief systems, two semantics that are concrete and social, one undoing the authority of the other.

This Bakhtinian insight into linguistic hybridity, particularly intentional hybridity, in novelistic literature offers an important model to explain the consensual and conflictual nature of social and cultural transactions in a transcultural colonial/postcolonial context. In postcolonial studies Homi Bhabha has made astute use of this insight. He thinks that a colonial/postcolonial context is a realm of the *beyond*, a realm of the ‘in-between’ where one can think beyond the narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ interstitial spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation for individuals and cultures. This exercise is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation for those living in the border of two cultures<sup>95</sup>. The borderline engagements of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual. The interstitial passage[s] between fixed identifications open up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains differences without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. Hybridity as a counter-concept dissolves the dangers of hegemonic or counter-hegemonic reification and ensures a sufficiently fluid politics of identity/difference that might warrant the cultural redemption of the subaltern<sup>96</sup>.

A significant minority of literary and cultural critics (Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Wilson Harris, Elleke Boehmer) advocate this concept of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity in recent years. A few biblical critics too seem inclined to move in this direction. We may mention two of them (Roland Boer and Jon Berquist) here in this chapter and another (Jim Perkinson) in Chapter 5 on the ‘Current Models of Postcolonial Reading on Mark’.

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<sup>95</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 1-2. For a critique of Bhabha see Benita Parry, “Signs of Our Times: Discussion of Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*”, *Third Text* 28/29, 1994, pp. 5-24, Lawrence Phillips, “Lost in Space: Siting/citing the in-between of Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*”, <<http://152.1.96.5/jouvert/v2i2/phillip.htm>>, Penina Werbner and Tariq Modood, (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, London: Zed Books, 1997.

<sup>96</sup> A. Moreiras, “Hybridity and Double Consciousness”, p. 373. Also see Chapter 2.1

Roland Boer thinks that in his socio-political location of Australia the question of postcolonialism is an “ambivalence over the multiple layers and relations of Aboriginal, settler and imperial centre”<sup>97</sup>. In “Green Ants and Gibeonites” he compares the works of Sreten Bozic, a Serbian immigrant Australian novelist, with the story of the Gibeonites in Joshua 9 focusing on the dialectic of postcolonial voices and multiple identities, i.e., the question of who can speak in a postcolonial situation and the features of clandestinity and fluid identities in a colonial/ postcolonial context<sup>98</sup>. On the question of who can speak he like Spivak takes an ‘anti-essentialist position’. But unlike Spivak<sup>99</sup> he advocates identity as a named or “staged” (nominalist) identity which may be preferred at the expense of a strategic essentialist identity. This shift one may argue can potentially lead to an erasure or usurpation of the strategic identity of the subaltern in a colonial-settler context. Though the nominalist identity is desirable for someone like Boer who is a settler sympathetic to the Aboriginal cause, it can potentially dispel the strategic selfhood necessary for the very survival of the Aboriginal communities in Australia. By preferring nominalism to essentialism he tends to sideline the historical and social reality and the inevitable essential identity of the subaltern subjects in the colonial and post-colonial context of Australia<sup>100</sup>. The native Australians’ identity is not a “named, or ‘staged’ identity”. Instead it is an identity immersed in an historical, social and cultural experience of bloody subjection and suffering, of mixtures and mutations which would continue to disturb and challenge the colonial settlers of their country in the days to come.

The so-called ‘nominalists’ who nominate themselves into the camp and cause of native Australians can possibly and potentially alter their nomination and allegiance as and when the wind of current trend in scholarship changes its direction. But this is hardly an option for the native subaltern subjects. Instead of nominalism they may

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<sup>97</sup> R. Boer, *Last Stop*, p. 19. He is much more vocal in his distaste for postcolonial subculturalism that advocates a strengthening of the local and the periphery. He professes himself to be “an internationalist in the old communist sense” and his desire is “to move from the periphery to the centre, to be where the action is” (7).

<sup>98</sup> Roland Boer, “Green Ants and Gibeonites”, pp. 129-152 reprinted with a slight change in the title in *Last Stop*, pp. 120-149. He advocates nominalism as a conceptual tool instead of essentialism.

<sup>99</sup> Spivak advocates ‘strategic essentialism’ which is not “a union ticket for essentialism”. See <<http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Glossary.html>>

<sup>100</sup> Gallagher, “Mapping the Hybrid World”, p. 236.



perhaps prefer an identity that is strategically essentialist with a potential to elaborate strategies of transculturality in the context of internal and external colonialism.

Another biblical critic who moves in the direction of transculturalism is Jon Berquist. He stretches postcolonial studies to include biblical studies and shows the possibilities of this approach in biblical studies. In his article on 'Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization'<sup>101</sup> he explores the specific colonization of Yehud, the area around Jerusalem, in relation to the Persian empire that created and named this colony. His goal is to describe the complex nature of the Hebrew canon. He thinks that it is both a colonial and a postcolonial document. In one sense it is a colonial text, representing the colonizing intentions of the empire as it is produced and promoted under the aegis of the Persian empire and its native elite collaborators. In another sense the social location of the texts' production reflects a group wedged between empire and colony, and so there are postcolonial opportunities embedded within the text itself. Thus he takes a much broader historical view of the syncretic and hybrid nature of colonialism in the early stages of Hebrew Bible canonization during the reign of the Persians in colonial Yehud<sup>102</sup>.

But rather than recognizing the cultural encounter, exchanges and effects in the light of postcolonial theory Berquist turns to deconstruction to argue that the biblical text is a prisonhouse of language where a continuous babble of voices is interspersed with silences<sup>103</sup>. He thinks that the canon represents and contains a variety of view points, languages, geographies, classes, and ideologies. It is not a complete, coherent or consistent document. Instead it is a bricolage that presented and presents multiple views and ideologies. Those who wrote the texts occupied a peculiar social location, partaking of the worldviews of colonizer and colonized at the same time.

Berquist has to a large extent succeeded in showing that postcolonial criticism can be extended to include ancient discourses such as the Hebrew Bible and the ancient colonial practices such as the one of Persia over Yehud. But it appears that there is no adequate discussion of the presence of colonizing and decolonizing

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<sup>101</sup> Jon Berquist, "Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization", *Semeia* 75, 1998, pp. 15-35. This essay seems to be the gist of his *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

<sup>102</sup> Gallagher, "Mapping", p. 237.

<sup>103</sup> Berquist, "Postcolonialism", pp. 28ff.

elements in the text or the incoherence and the inconsistencies in the text in terms of postcolonial hybridity or the affiliative alterity of the biblical discourses which originated in colonial contexts and from the colonised subjects in terms of postcolonial ambivalence. Instead he seems to suggest that the consensual and affiliative aspects are dominant in the canon because of its origin from among the colonised elite collaborators and hence it fails to procure an effective postcolonial, oppositional discursive stature. This seems to me to be only one side of the story. A few postcolonial critics in recent years have shown quite convincingly that in a postcolonial context the consensual and affiliative tendencies of the discourse from the colonised subjects tend to reflect conflictual and disruptive impulses<sup>104</sup>. The colonised mimic their masters' gaze, voice, language, style, discourse, ideology etc. not only to duplicate but also to mock, disrupt or rupture them<sup>105</sup>.

Another important aspect is that at an early stage of any nationalist revival in a colonial context a people's identity though long suppressed and dormant in its cultural (mythic) origins becomes a source for revival and reinterpretation. Usually this happens in the form of religious revivals, new literary and cultural poetics and renewed terms of articulation of the religious and cultural symbols. To this end both the myths and discourses inherited from the native religious, cultural etc. traditions and the literary conventions and discourses received from the colonizer are appropriated, translated, decentred, and hybridized in ways which we name postcolonial but which were in fact at the time anti-colonial, and which formed an important means of self-expression of a subjected or marginalized people<sup>106</sup>. So the discourse of a colonised people in a colonial context exhibits both appropriation and abrogation of the colonial masters' cultural mould and at the same time revives, though disruptively, native religio-cultural and political expressions. This discursive phenomenon potentially challenges both the alien and the native discourses of power. This dynamic is not adequately addressed in Berquist's analysis of the formation of the Hebrew canon under the Persians.

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<sup>104</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, Boehmer, 'Stirrings of New Nationalism' in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, pp. 98-137. E. Said, 'Resistance and Opposition' in *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 230-340, Ashcroft *et al.* *The Empire*, pp. 38-115.

<sup>105</sup> See Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, pp. 138-179

<sup>106</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, p. 100. Solomon Plaatje's *Mhudi* is a typical example of such a revivalist postcolonial novelistic writing.



## Concluding Comments

The preceding discussion tried to show that postcolonialism as a critical approach did not start originally in biblical studies. Like a few other approaches in biblical studies it too capitalizes on earlier experiments in literary and cultural studies though one may possibly find traces of it in similar studies conducted in biblical and postbiblical studies without this nomenclature or emphasis<sup>107</sup>. However, the postcolonial approach is new in biblical studies in the sense that it engages and foregrounds issues and aspects of colonialism which most earlier approaches in biblical studies in the western academia tended to overlook or keep in what Spivak calls a state of ‘sanctioned ignorance’<sup>108</sup>.

Hardly would anyone disagree that postcolonialism as a critical practice in biblical studies is an important way forward in biblical studies in our times. The biblical discourses because of their origin in diverse colonial and postcolonial religious-cultural locations and from among the colonised subject populations of biblical antiquity can be subjected to postcolonial scrutiny.

The critics who engage in reading biblical discourses from a postcolonial perspective, because of their condition of being as postcolonial subjects from different social locations and their choice of using different postcolonial theoretical frameworks, are bound to produce a multiplicity of conflicting voices.

Though originating in various colonial contexts and from among the minority colonised peoples and containing stories reflecting colonial experiences, the biblical discourse is made ‘popular’ throughout the world as a result of western colonialism. It is perhaps an irony in history that a discourse of the colonised Jews and Christians who suffered colonial subjection in biblical antiquity eventually became a colonizing/colonialist discourse at the hands of its modern western Christian followers. Postcolonial critical practice in biblical studies therefore needs to engage critically the discursive (commentarial and theologizing) practices of western biblical scholars and theologians.

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<sup>107</sup> See note 34.

<sup>108</sup> Spivak, *A Critique*, p. x.

It may also be a paradox that despite its (alleged) western colonial status many of the colonised and subaltern peoples of the world continue to use biblical discourses as a decolonizing agent. This suggests the complexities involved in practising postcolonial criticism in biblical studies. Most postcolonial literary and cultural critics usually and quite rightly implicate the Bible as an agent of western colonialism. But postcolonial biblical critics need to be aware that their task is far more complex.

In practising postcolonial studies in biblical studies it is important to treat the biblical discourses as imaginative ficto-historical writings and popular postcolonial writings which emanated from the colonial contexts of biblical antiquity. Any colonial context is a context of cross-overs in linguistic, literary, cultural, discursive, ideological etc. fields. Therefore, because of their origin in the interstitial 'in-between' space of colonist and colonised cultures the biblical narratives are bound to exhibit ambivalent and hybrid rather than Manichean characteristics. These at the surface level appear to be imitations (approximations) of a colonialist culture. But at a deeper discursive level they have the potential to empower the colonised subjects to disturb and challenge the authority and authenticity of colonial dominance. Colonial mimicry has a potential to mock, colonial parody has a travesty effect and colonial affiliation can at the same time be antagonistic<sup>109</sup>.

Postcolonialism as a critical practice in biblical studies can hardly function as a meta-narrative. There is no monolithic colonial experience and hence there cannot be a monolithic postcolonial experience or a monolithic critical practice. For example the postcolonial experience of native Americans in North America at the hands of colonist Christians seems to be different from that of the diaspora critics who live in the west or the colonial white settler critics of Australia. Postcolonial biblical critics who hail from different socio-political locales, cultural contexts and experiences differ in their views and approaches to colonialism and Christianity<sup>110</sup>. A postcolonial approach allows multiple identities and conflicting voices to be seen and heard in biblical studies.

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<sup>109</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 102-122, 198-211.

<sup>110</sup> I will shed light on my own social location in light of the two postcolonial creative discourses written in the context of post-colonial India (Chapter 2.2).



In postcolonial biblical studies it is important to bear in mind that Christianity at its inception and in its eastern sphere is not a colonizing religion as most literary and cultural postcolonial critics seem to think. Eastern Christianity for example has never been a dominating, colonial religion in the same way as western Christianity. Therefore we in the east need to ask: what sort of comparison can we draw between the dominant Christianity in the west and the dominated Christianity in the east? What do we make of ourselves as still persecuted, still powerless minority communities in most Asian societies? Aren't our socio-cultural and religio-political situations similar to that of the early Christians in the New Testament times? Isn't it right to suggest that the early Christians and their imaginative, creative discourses began in a colonial socio-cultural and political context when colonial Rome from the west began its colonial domination in the east? Can we accept that the alleged colonial ideology and colonist tendencies in the eastern Christian discourses are the signs of mere assimilation of western Roman colonial ideology? Don't they illustrate the fact that perhaps the early Christians by living in an interstitial space between the Roman *imperium* and the relatively dominant Jewish discourses were exhibiting postcolonial mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity with a view to surviving in the midst of both these discourses of power?<sup>111</sup>

In many eastern societies Christians live as dominated, persecuted, alienated minority peoples. They live in the border, in the *beyond* of Christianity meeting with different religions and cultures, and in the in-between space created by the colonial contact of western Christianity with eastern Christianity. In this respect our situation is not far from the situation of early Christians who also lived in the interstices of different religions, cultures and in the in-betweenness of dominant western Roman world meeting with the eastern world. Therefore, must our insistence to remain as 'consensual-conflictual hybrids' and survive in the midst of different religions and cultures in the east be treated as a colonialist attitude simply because western Christianity was a colonizing religion?<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> I will explain these concepts in Chapter 2.1

<sup>112</sup> This question is particularly poignant in India where the Christian minority faces persecution at the hands of fascist, nationalist forces. See K.N. Panikkar, "Towards a Hindu Nation", *Frontline* 16:3, 1999, Aijaz Ahmad, "Cultures in Conflict" *Frontline* 14:16, 1997, *idem*, "The Politics of Hate", *Frontline* 16:3, 1999.

## Chapter 2

### Key Concepts of Strategic Essentialism and Transcultural Hybridity and Two Postcolonial Discourses from India

... there is something Eurocentric about assuming that imperialism began with Europe.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

This chapter has two parts. The first part elaborates the main theoretical concepts— postcolonial mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity— of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity in colonial/ postcolonial discourses. As noted earlier, postcolonial studies engage in examining the complex web of desire and distantiation between the colonists and the colonised which is often reflected in discourses that emanate from the colonial or post-colonial contexts. Mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity are used as theoretical concepts to delineate this complex discursive phenomenon. In the second part, I present two postcolonial creative writings from the post-colonial context of India which delineate my social location, the native face of colonialism and the prospect of postcolonial studies in India.

First, I will elaborate the key theoretical concepts of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity in postcolonial discourses.

### 2.1 The Key Theoretical Concepts

#### 2.1.1 Postcolonial Mimicry

Mimicry is an important concept used increasingly in postcolonial studies in recent years. Taken from Lacanian psychoanalysis<sup>2</sup> and Bakhtinian analysis of parodic-travesty literary forms<sup>3</sup>, postcolonial critics use the term to describe the ambivalent relationship between colonists and colonised in colonial and postcolonial discourses. In these discourses where colonised subjects mimic by *repeating* their colonial masters' cultural habits, assumptions, language, institutions, values, voice,

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<sup>1</sup> Spivak, *A Critique*, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Lacan, 'The line and light', in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans., Alan Sheridan, London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977, pp. 73-104, especially pp. 98-100. He says: "Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an *itself* that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage, ... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of becoming mottled- exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare." (p. 99).

<sup>3</sup> For 'parodic travesty mimicry' in ancient popular art forms see Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 55-60.



etc. the result is never a simple re-presentation or reproduction of those traits but rather a 'blurred copy', a 'camouflage' which can be quite disruptive<sup>4</sup>. Postcolonial mimic wo/men crack the certainty of colonial dominance and create uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonised<sup>5</sup>.

Among postcolonial critics, Homi Bhabha is one of the leading advocates of this concept. He thinks that colonial mimicry operates in two ways. First, it operates as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge<sup>6</sup>. It is used by colonists to subdue and control the colonised 'other' under the pretext of 'civilizing mission'<sup>7</sup>. "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*"<sup>8</sup>. In the second, Bhabha traces the potential menace of mimicry of the colonised subjects to colonial authority. He thinks that as a result of the opportunity to emerge as the 'recognizable Other' the colonial subjects enter into a complex sphere of mimicry and parody from where they menacingly *repeat* their masters' discourses. The mimic wo/men in a colonial context are figures of doubling, of double-vision; the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire who alienate the modality and normality of dominant discourses as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects<sup>9</sup>.

Because of this dual functioning of mimicry, its impact on colonial subjects is two-fold. Firstly, it maintains the colonised subjects in their place of origin and cultural contexts but at the same time alienates them from their cultural 'purity' or 'essence' and allows them to enter and expand into the cultural regimes of their colonial masters. Hence they speak as wo/men of double-vision and forked tongue. Secondly, it enables them to pose a threat to the dominance of colonial unity and authority. This threat seldom comes from an overt resistance but from an identity of the colonised subjects that is not quite like their colonists. The mimetic identity of the colonized 'Others'—*almost the same but not quite the same*—is potentially and strategically insurgent. The mimicry of the colonial subjects is destabilizing as it

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<sup>4</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 60.

<sup>5</sup> Ashcroft, *et al.*, *Key Concepts*, p. 139.

<sup>6</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> For example the Macaulay 'Minute' introducing English education in India (1835) in order to produce a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

<sup>8</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 86. Also Gandhi, *The Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 149-154.

produces considerable political and cultural uncertainty in the structure of imperial dominance especially when the colonised 'Others' mimic the colonial discourses<sup>10</sup>. There can hardly be a colonial mimicry without producing some form of postcolonial mockery. Similarly the colonial mimic subjects pose a potential disruption to their own native discourses and cultural fetishism.

### 2.1.2 Postcolonial Ambivalence

Ambivalence, like mimicry, is a concept developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It refers to a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action<sup>11</sup>.

Adapted into colonial discourse theory it is used to describe the complex attraction and repulsion which mark the relationship between colonists and colonised<sup>12</sup>. In this respect, ambivalence is closely aligned with colonial mimicry. Mimicry occurs as a result of colonial ambivalence. Ambivalence arouses complicity and attraction in a colonial subject to mimic, but in mimicking the colonial subject ruptures the colonial authenticity and authority and in turn acquires the potential for resistance and repulsion of the colonial authority. Ambivalence suggests both complicity and resistance in a colonised subject.

A colonial relationship is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. When a colonial culture engages the colonised culture the result is an hybridized culture. This takes place because of the mimicry and ambivalence on the part of the colonised. The colonised enter into a mimetic and ambivalent relation with the colonists and disturb the colonial presence and make the recognition of colonial authority problematic. Ambivalence thus disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between colonizer and colonised. Ambivalence is therefore an unwelcome aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer. It produces ambivalent subjects whose mimicry is never far from mockery. According to Bhabha,

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<sup>9</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 88. Also Young, *White Mythologies*, pp. 145-148.

<sup>10</sup> Ashcroft, *et al. Key Concepts*, p. 142.

<sup>11</sup> Ashcroft, *et al. Key Concepts*, p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 85ff., 102ff.



the colonial relationship is always ambivalent and it generates seeds to subvert and destroy colonialism<sup>13</sup>.

The theory of ambivalence, according to Robert Young, is Bhabha's way of turning the table on imperial discourse<sup>14</sup>. Bhabha shows that both the colonists and the colonised are implicated in the ambivalence of colonial discourse. The concept is related to hybridity because, just as ambivalence 'decentres' authority from its position of power, so that authority may also become hybridized when placed in a colonial context in which it finds itself dealing with, and often inflected by, other cultures. In this respect, the very engagement of colonial discourse with those colonised cultures over which it has domination, inevitably leads to an ambivalence that disables its monolithic dominance<sup>15</sup>.

### 2.1.3 Postcolonial Hybridity

Another important theoretical concept used in postcolonial criticism is the concept of hybridity, also known as in-betweenness or liminality. This was used first in linguistic and discourse analysis by Bakhtin. According to him a hybrid construction in language is "an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological belief systems"<sup>16</sup>. He thinks that there is no formal—compositional and syntactic—boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a simple sentence. It frequently happens that even one and the same word will belong simultaneously to two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction—and, consequently, the word has two contradictory meaning, two accents.

Bakhtin defines hybridization as a "mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by

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<sup>13</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 107ff.

<sup>14</sup> Young, *Colonial Desire*, p. 161.

<sup>15</sup> Ashcroft, *et al.*, *Key Concepts*, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 304f.

social differentiation or by some other factor”<sup>17</sup>. He thinks that there are two forms of hybridization: intentional (conscious) and organic (historical). The mixing of two languages within the boundaries of a single utterance is an artistic device, but when it is done deliberately it can be called intentional hybridization. However, unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life and evolution of all languages. Language and languages change historically by means of hybridization, by means of mixing of various ‘languages’ co-existing within the boundaries of a single dialect, a single national language.

The image of language conceived as an intentional hybrid is first of all a conscious one; an intentional hybrid is precisely the perception of one language by another language, its illumination by another linguistic consciousness. Intentional hybridity is not only double voiced and double-accented (as in rhetoric) but is also double-languaged; for in it there are not only two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, as there are two socio-linguistic consciousnesses, two epochs. It is true that these are not here unconsciously mixed (as an organic hybrid), but they come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance. An intentional hybrid is a semantic hybrid; not semantic and logical in the abstract but rather a *semantic that is concrete and social*<sup>18</sup>.

In postcolonial theory, the term hybridity has been most recently associated with the work of Bhabha, whose analysis of colonizer/colonised relations stresses their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha contends that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in an in-between, hybrid space. He says:

what is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives or originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself.<sup>19</sup>

Bhabha thinks that it is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective

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<sup>17</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 358.

<sup>18</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 360.

<sup>19</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 1-2.



experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. In the in-between space terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. Here the presentation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. In a colonial context of in-betweenness the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The right to signify from a colonized context does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are in the minority. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities in the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition. The borderline engagement of cultural difference may as often be consensual as conflictual, and challenge normative expectations of traditions and customary boundaries<sup>20</sup>.

Bhabha argues that political empowerment and the enlargement of the multiculturalist cause come from posing questions of solidarity and community from the interstitial perspective. Social differences are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as project—at once a vision and a construction—that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in the spirit of revision and reconstruction<sup>21</sup>. The interstitial perspective not only creates space between fixed identifications but also opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. In this sense the interstitial space, which he calls 'the Third Space of enunciation', becomes a space of intervention and creativity. All cultural systems and statements in a colonial context are constructed in this space, and here hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable,

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<sup>20</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 3.

and meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew<sup>22</sup>.

I will use these theoretical concepts, which illuminate the strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity of postcolonial discourses, to identify and unravel the discursive strategies of a number of creative, historical and religious discourses that emerged under the *imperium* of Rome in the first century CE from among the subjected Greek and Jewish populations in the east. This I hope will show that these discourses, that are contemporaneous to Mark and that emerge from a very similar cultural trope and template, can be read as postcolonial discourses. It will also facilitate establishing the world and the discursive framework in which Mark's story of Jesus emerged. But prior to this, I may illustrate my own social location via two postcolonial creative writings written from within the context of post-colonial India. I believe that a strategic postcolonial move needs to take place in a particular social location (in my case the social location of India) and in the context specific details of the specific discourse under consideration (in our case the story of Jesus according to Mark). First, therefore, I will reflect on my socio-cultural location in India by means of two postcolonial creative writings here in Chapter 2.2, and secondly, the context-specific details of Mark in Chapters 3 and 4.

## 2.2 Two Postcolonial Creative Writings from India

The two postcolonial creative writings I read from my social location in India are Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi"<sup>23</sup> and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*<sup>24</sup>. They are cited with a view to elaborating the social location and the postcolonial vision that I share with millions of others in the post-colonial context of India<sup>25</sup>. They

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<sup>22</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup> Mahasweta Devi, "Draupadi", trans., Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, pp. 179-196 reprinted also in *The Postmodern Bible Reader* (eds.) D. Jobling, *et al*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, pp. 353-372. This reprint in the *Bible Reader* seems to be a recognition of the significance of this story in biblical studies. I saw this reprint after writing this thesis and I am delighted to see such an acknowledgment given to it by biblical scholars.

<sup>24</sup> London: Flamingo, 1997 (Winner of the 1997 Booker Prize).

<sup>25</sup> R. Boer in a similar manner uses Bozic's creative writings to cite his postcolonial location and direct his postcolonial reading. See *Last Stop*, pp. 120-22, 129-139. He says: "Wongar/ Bozic attracts me, for he provides a means to write my own troubled situation in a postcolonial country into this text: the marginal European who writes as an Aboriginal and who raises questions about identity and essence is the site for my own libidinal investment" (121). Also see E.S. Fiorenza, "The Politics of Otherness: Biblical Interpretation as a Critical



envisage and elaborate in a creative, imaginative manner the future direction of postcolonial studies in India. They illustrate the consensual-conflictual dynamic of certain communities within India that experience both internal and the pressures of external neo-colonialism. They show that colonialism is not always an alien phenomenon. It can manifest within a nation in the form of a native breed of elites duplicating the alien colonialism with a view to dominating and exploiting its native 'others'. These novels primarily engage and expose this breed of internal colonists and secondarily point the future direction of postcolonial studies in India. They are cited also because they appear to show certain similarities in the portrayal of their protagonists and the Markan portrayal of his protagonist<sup>26</sup>.

### 2.2.1 Mahashweta Devi's "Draupadi"

"Draupadi" by Mahashweta Devi is set in the context of the liberation of East Pakistan (Bangladesh). In this liberation struggle there was an alliance between the radical left (Naxalbaris) of west Bengal and the liberationists of East Pakistan, something the right wing government at the time in India did not want to see gaining any ground. So under the pretext of liberating East Pakistan the government of India deployed its armed forces to wipe out a 'rebellious' section of the rural population most of whom belong to the native *Santal* tribe<sup>27</sup>, one among the so-called 'others' and unwanted of India.

In this story Draupadi is the name of the protagonist who is a 'rebel' *Santal* in the eyes of the Indian authorities. She is introduced to the readers between two uniforms and between two versions of her name: Dopdi and Draupadi. Spivak thinks that it is either because "as a tribal she cannot pronounce her own Sanskrit name (Draupadi), or the tribalized form, Dopdi, is the proper name of the ancient

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Praxis for Liberation", *Future of Liberation Theology*, (eds.), M. Ellis and O. Marduro, New York: Orbis Books, pp. 311-325 especially pp. 311-15. She uses Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1987) to present a deconstructive critique on the limitations of liberation theology and the prospects of an hermeneutics of the 'others'.

<sup>26</sup> For a recognition of the similarities of certain modern novels with the ancient narratives of the Greco-Roman world including the Gospels see S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*, Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> For stories connected to *Santal* rebellion against the British *Raj* see Ranjit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency" in *Selected Subaltern*, pp. 49,50.

Draupadi.”<sup>28</sup> Thus through this name she retains some sort of an essential identity but at the same time mimics and mutilates Draupadi, the heroine of the ancient epic *Mahabharata*. She engages also one Senanayak who is the closest approximation to the first world scholar in search of the third world, and Argun Singh and his troops, the agents of internal colonists.

After tracking down Dopdi with the assistance of a few of her former masters (native elite Rtoni Sahu) and friends turned betrayers (Shomai and Budhna) the army men *counter* her in a rape encounter. She is stripped of her clothes and forced to take *pistons* of nightly ‘husbands’. Thus in the story she enters into a polyandrous ‘marriage’ and an enforced ‘stripping’ as the Draupadi of *Mahabharata* (65:32, 35-36). This scene mimics and mocks the native colonists, their religious discourse and collective culture. After an all-night stripping and rape *encounter* she, with her naked and scarred body, confronts Senanayak: “Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood, Two breasts, two wounds” and “pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts” saying “You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man? ... There isn’t a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on, *counter* me—come on, *counter* me—?” and “for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed *target*, terribly afraid.” (196). Reading this Spivak comments: “It is the menacing appeal of the objectified subject to its politico-sexual enemy—the provisionally silenced master of the subject-object dialectic—to encounter—‘counter’—her” (186).

Also in the story the first world discourses glorifying western *imperium*, militarism and war culture (Hochhuth’s *The Deputy* and David Morrell’s *First Blood*) and all claims of superiority of *the* English language are under attack. So also the native elite and ‘gentlemen revolutionaries’ who collaborate with the native colonists are mocked. It is only the dalit<sup>29</sup>, the doubly subaltern subject Dopdi who through her mimicking and mocking stands out powerful and victorious even in defeat. In the words of Spivak, “It is when she crosses the sexual differential into the field of what could *only happen to a woman* that she emerges as the most powerful ‘subject’”(184).

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<sup>28</sup> Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, p. 183.



### 2.2.2 Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

“I give you my book in memory of Velutha” is a promise that Arundhati Roy made in her address to the *Dalit Sahitya Academy* at Kozhikode on January 15, 1999<sup>30</sup>. “*The God of Small Things* is my book, but in some ways, because it grew out of this place it belongs to you too....”, she told the dalit audience of Kerala. Velutha is one of the *small* characters, like Ammu, Estha, Rahel and ‘Chappu Thamburan’ in the story<sup>31</sup>. He appears at first in the imagination of *small* Rahel as a ‘bare bodied and shining dark star’ painting the dome of a bat infected Syrian Orthodox Church (6), and perhaps symbolically to the readers, as ‘a small black bat’ trying to penetrate (cross-over) under the sari of the *Suriyani* Christian, Baby Kochamma. But when he is spotted and shaken off he “flew up into the sky and turned into a jet plane without a crisscrossed trail”. This portrayal at the very outset of the story in a symbolic manner exhibits the affiliative-disruptive dynamic of the Indian subalterns, and in a nutshell reveals what is to come in the rest of the story.

Next we are told that Velutha is confined in a police lockup where he is visited in vain by the *small* Ammu and her *small* twins: Estha and Rahel. When her request to see him is refused she perceives that “He’s dead” and that she is responsible for his murder. We are told that he is a dalit, an untouchable *Paravan* trained in carpentry with the help from Ammu’s Aymanam house. So he used to work in the Syrian Christian family home of Ammu. He loved her and her children as they too are *small* people in the eyes of the dominant members of the family. Ammu in her dream knows Velutha as the “the God of Loss, the God of Small Things” (220) and loves him. Together, “They had made the unthinkable thinkable and the impossible really happen” (256), that is, the untouchable touched the Touchable, entered the Touchable

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<sup>29</sup> The word ‘dalit’ means crushed. This is the name the Indigenes of India use to identify themselves.

<sup>30</sup> See *Frontline* 16:3 (1999) in <http://www.the-hindu.com/fline/fl1603/16030802.htm>

<sup>31</sup> In Malayalam ‘Velutha’ means white. He is a ‘dark star’ but he is called ‘Velutha’ So it appears that through his name he is portrayed as a hybrid who crosses social, cultural, caste and colour boundaries. Ammu is a *Suriyani* Christian but in and through her first marriage with a north Indian ‘baboo’ she crosses the community’s boundaries and gives birth to two hybrid children and thus disrupts her family and community. ‘Chappu Thamburan’ (which means ‘god of small things’) is a type of worm that covers it’s body with rubbish to camouflage itself from predators and cause menace to it’s prey. These are important signifiers in the story.

Kingdom. Because of this new Kingdom making he is arrested, tortured and locked up in the police station and she in her family home.

Roy's scathing criticism is not only against the colonial mentality of the upper caste Syrian Christians and Hindus (Nairs) and the colonial breed (British Margret Kochamma and Sophie mol) that continues its 'divorced neo-colonial relation' with the native intellectuals (Oxford don Chacko) but also against the Touchable 'colonial' police and the Communist Party of Kerala that pretends to be the messiah of the dalits. She shows how the Party activists practice caste differences, how comrade Pillai treats Velutha as a *Paravan* untouchable and betrays him (279), how the Touchable 'colonial' police in an alliance with other Touchables 'Encounter' the untouchables. In the story all her sympathies go to Velutha, the Indian 'History's twisted chicken' coming home to roost (283), to Ammu who ventures to cross socio-religious boundaries first by marrying a north Indian 'baboo' and then after divorce coming to the family home to meet and 'Touch' Velutha.

The arrest of the untouchable Velutha by Touchable police in *The God of Small Things* resembles Dopdi's arrest in "Draupadi". As the police advance to arrest him Velutha is "Asleep. Making nonsense of all that Touchable cunning"(308). The torture suffered by him at the boots of the police ("history's henchmen") resembles the torture by *pistons* of flesh of the army men in "Draupadi". Roy thinks that "If they hurt Velutha more than they intended to, it was only because any kinship, any connection between themselves and him, any implication that if nothing else, at least biologically he was a fellow creature—had been severed long ago. They were not arresting a man, they were exorcizing fear" (309). After torture, like Jesus on the Roman colonial cross, "Their Work, abandoned by God and History, by Marx, by Man, by Woman and (in the hours to come) by Children, lay folded on the floor. He was semi-conscious, but wasn't moving" (310). And later his body is disposed of by the police in the *themmadi kuzzy*—the pauper's pit—where the police routinely dump their 'encountered' dead. The story however ends with a scene of Velutha's apparent resurrection and re-appearance in a vision of Ammu who both then enter into a blissful union in the company of the camouflaged Chappu Thampuran, a scene which signifies the fruition of the new and menacing united Kingdom of the border-crossing (transcultural) 'Touchables' and 'Untouchables'.



## Conclusion

These two creative discourses reveal the internal (and external) colonial context in post-colonial India. Their primary task is aimed at deconstructing and decentering all the dominant socio-political, religious and linguistic meta-narratives (internal and external) in India. The voices of the subalterns who want to retain their identities and at the same time to cross over to assert a space for themselves in post-colonial India abound in these works. The future of postcolonialism in India therefore may best be expressed in the words of Roy who says that “the Dalit struggle for justice and equality in society wracked by caste prejudice is going to be, and indeed ought to be, the biggest challenge that India will face in the coming century”<sup>32</sup>. Both Devi and Roy think that in a postcolonial struggle nothing and nobody is above criticism. In this struggle they engage the native breed of new colonists who duplicate a colonialism after the manner of the former British colonists. This in my view is an important direction which I may endorse and pursue for the furtherance of postcolonial studies and praxis in India.

“Draupadi” and *The God of Small Things* are empowering stories enabling the subaltern subjects to retain their identities and at the same time to cross over strategically to become resistant hybrid subjects. Hence the protagonists in these stories emerge in essential and hybrid identities as ‘Dopdi-Drupadi’ and ‘dark star-Velutha’. They mimic and mutate the native colonists and their discourses of power by engaging in resistant suffering and asserting a space for themselves. It is not difficult to hear similar echoes of these stories in the postcolonial gospel stories particularly in the suffering of Jesus at the hands of the internal and external colonists. Like Jesus in Mark, Dopdi and Velutha engage, suffer and die (and rise again in the case of Velutha) as mimetic-menacing subjects in the post-colonial context of India.

I may reiterate the view that one can talk about colonialism and postcolonialism as transhistorical concepts only by means of specific manifestations in particular times and spaces and it is in those particular discussions, grounded in particular discourses and their contexts, that strategic postcolonial moves can take place<sup>33</sup>. Hence the delineation of my own location in India. Similarly, in the next two

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.the-hindu.com/fline/fl1603/16030802.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Gallagher, “Mapping the Hybrid World”, pp. 232f.

chapters (in Part Two) I will use the postcolonial theoretical concepts of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity outlined in this chapter to read the colonial/ postcolonial discourses emanating in the ancient world of imperial Rome from among the Greeks and Jews contemporaneous to Mark and see how various subordinate and subject populations in the Roman colonies in the east respond to Rome's *imperium* and colonialism during the latter half of the first century CE. This will facilitate delineating the socio-political, cultural and discursive world of Mark. I may do this, first, by means of a postcolonial reading of a postclassical Greek novel and, second, by analyzing a number of Greek and Jewish discourses that emerged during Rome's *imperium* in the east from a postcolonial perspective.



## **Part Two**

### ***Viewing the Discursive World of Mark***

## Chapter 3

### The Postclassical Novels as Postcolonial Novels: A Postcolonial Reading of Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* as a Model for Reading Mark

For any coherent and persuasive interpretation of the Roman empire it becomes obvious that fiction must be viewed as a part of its history<sup>1</sup>.

#### Introduction

This chapter reads a postclassical Greek novel (Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*) with a view to entering into the complex colonial/ postcolonial world of a subject population who lived under the *imperium* of Rome. This reading aims to shed light on the ambivalent affiliative-disruptive response of the colonised Greeks toward their own native and the Roman colonial culture and discourses of power in the Greek east toward the latter half of the first century CE, a time and similar discursive template in which Mark's story of Jesus is believed to be written from the perspective of yet another subject minority community. This chapter also suggests that if a postclassical creative discourse of the Greeks who lived under the *imperium* of Rome can possibly be read as a postcolonial discourse then it is not impossible to read Mark's story of Jesus also in a similar manner.

Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Xenophon's *An Ephesian Tale* (pre-sophistic), Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Heliodorus' *An Ethiopian Tale* (sophistic) are classified as the extant postclassical Greek novels ('*plasmatica*' or '*dramatika*')<sup>2</sup>. They are believed to be written in a new era of world history in the imperial/ colonial Roman times and therefore they are treated as postclassical creative writings<sup>3</sup>. Ben Reardon makes an interesting

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<sup>1</sup> G.W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, p. 12. He calls the novels 'romantic scripture'. Also see F. Millar, "The World of the *Golden Ass*", pp. 247-268, Ronald F. Hock, "Why New Testament Scholars Should Read Ancient Novels", *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, (eds.), *idem, et al*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998, pp. 121-138.

<sup>2</sup> For these novels in English translation see B.P Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Novels*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

<sup>3</sup> Most classicists consider 480-330 BC as the Classical Period and 330 BC - AD 330 as the Postclassical (Hellenistic and Roman Imperial) Period in Greek history. See Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, p. xi, Reardon, "General Introduction" in *Collected Ancient Novels*, pp. 1-16; J. R. Morgan and R. Stoneman, (eds.), *Greek Fiction: The Greek Novel in Context*, London: Routledge, 1994; Simon Swain, (ed.),



observation concerning the vicissitudes of scholarly interest in postclassical novelistic literature in the west which is significant in relation to considering some of these writings as postcolonial creative writings. He observes that the fascination of studying postclassical novels is nominal whenever colonial/ imperial practices inflate whereas the interest in reading this literature proliferates when there is resistance against colonialism. For instance he notices a general indifference to studying this literature in the west during the Byzantine and the modern European colonial times and a resurgence of interest in it during the Renaissance when the nation states of Europe began to emerge from the Roman (papal) domination and during the post-colonial era when the subjugated states (colonies) in the third world rose in revolt against European colonial imperialism. Concerning the latter phenomenon he comments:

... things have changed since the days of the gunboat. Wars and revolutions, the rise and fall of dictators, the swelling movement of democracy, the rise of a Third World all have changed the rules of the game; *imperialism* is now a dirty word. We are inclined to look behind the Roman empire, to analyze it more critically. In this perspective, the Greek East of the imperial period has seemed less negligible and has more and more attracted study.

Among the objects of that study has been the copious literature of that world<sup>4</sup>.

Another important observation which may help to turn our attention to reading these novels as postcolonial literature comes from Tomas Hägg. He refers, firstly, to the admiration of these novels, especially the sophistic novels, in Europe during the Renaissance and to the fading of their reputation during the modern (colonial) period<sup>5</sup>. Secondly he also points out the philhellenism<sup>6</sup> of the middle Republic and imperial Romans and the awakening of Greek nationalism and cultural revival after the humiliation of the Hellenistic period as contributory factors for the production and proliferation of postclassical novels<sup>7</sup>. The Roman interest and taste in Hellenistic culture and politics began in the third century BCE when Rome initiated its

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*Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel*, Oxford: OUP, 1999; *idem*, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 101-131.

<sup>4</sup> Reardon, "General Introduction", *Collected Ancient Novels*, pp. 13f.

<sup>5</sup> Tomas Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity*, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion on the 'Freedom of the Greeks' and 'Philhellenism : Culture and Policy' see Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome*, vol. 1, pp. 132-157, 250-272. Gruen quite rightly analyzes the ambivalent nature of philhellenism in the Middle Republic and in imperial Rome which is important for a postcolonial analysis of the texts originated during the imperial times (pp. 270f.).

<sup>7</sup> Hägg, *The Novel*, pp. 104-108. For a similar observation see also Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, pp. 12f., 22, Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*.

expansionist policies in the Hellenic east. Its philhellenism is characterized as one of ambivalent appreciation<sup>8</sup> of and antagonism<sup>9</sup> toward Greek culture. A number of Greeks (Achaean, Aetolian, Rhodian leagues and cities) in their turn considered the Romans as rescuers<sup>10</sup> and as barbarians<sup>11</sup>.

Such important and interesting observations may trigger us to pursue further the possibility of reading the postclassical creative writings from a postcolonial point of view. I propose that these novels can be treated as postcolonial novelistic literature. If they can be included in the category of postcolonial novels then it may not be improbable to treat some of the early Christian writings specially the story of Jesus in Mark too as a postcolonial novelistic writing because of their origin in the Roman colonial/ imperial context and from among the so-called 'others' of the metropolis or the periphery of the empire<sup>12</sup>.

Postcolonial creative and imaginative writings are produced by colonized 'others' who either belong to the colonized elite class and write from imperial centre or the so-called native 'others' who write from the fringes. It is generally acknowledged that the authors of postclassical novels are subjugated Hellenized Greeks (or even natives<sup>13</sup>) of Asia Minor and North Africa: Chariton of Aphrodisias in Caria, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius of Alexandria, Longus and Heliodorus of Emesa in Syria<sup>14</sup>. The postcolonial creative writers of the twentieth century more or less in a similar manner are either the westernized native elite who live in and write from the metropolitan centres in the west (Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Naipaul, Achibe, Soyinka) or those who, despite being influenced by colonial

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<sup>8</sup> Polyb. 18.46.5,15; Livy, 33.32.5, Plut. *De Sera Num. Vind.* 32, 567F-568A. Also see Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, pp. 252-260

<sup>9</sup> Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, pp. 260-266.

<sup>10</sup> Livy, 33.20.3: *Romanis liberantibus Graeciam.*

<sup>11</sup> Polyb. 9.28-39; 10.25.1-9; 11.4-6; 18.45.6; 24.8.6, 9.2, Livy 31.29.6-16; 41.6.8-12

<sup>12</sup> For studies on the literary similarities between postclassical Greek novels and Mark see Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, pp. 59-78, Mary Ann Beavis, *Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4:11-12*, Sheffield: SAP, 1989, pp. 35-37. Also see R.F. Hock, *et al.*, (eds.), *Ancient Fiction and Early Christian Narrative*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998, F.G. Downing, *Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century*, Sheffield: SAP, 2000, pp. 127-131.

<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 64.



cultures, prefer to write from their own post-colonial peripheries in Asia (Raja Rao, Arundhati Roy, Mahasweta Devi) and Africa (Plaatje, Chinweizu, Thiong'o)<sup>15</sup>. In either case these postclassical writers of the ancient world and the postcolonial writers of the modern and postmodern world appear to be creative, imaginative writers of postcolonial fictions who write back to the respective empires of their time.

### 3.1 The Colonial/ Postcolonial World of Postclassical Creative Writings

There is a general consensus among classicists that a new type of creative (novelistic) literature emerged in the postclassical middle or late Hellenistic and early Roman imperial times in regions around the eastern Mediterranean. This appears to be in association with a new phase in the political and cultural life of the peoples in the Hellenistic and Roman world. This new phase of political reality began with the extension of the power of Macedon in what is now northern Greece, by Philip and Alexander over the old cities of Greece from the mid-fourth century BCE. Before Alexander, Greece consisted of a number of small city-states around the Aegean, bound together by a common language and culture but politically divided into varying constellations<sup>16</sup>. After Alexander, Greek civilization spread over large parts of the east, and political power passed to big new monarchies with their centres in Macedonia/Asia Minor, Syria/ Mesopotamia, and Egypt. During Hellenistic times (330-30 BCE) as the Hellenistic empires (of the Seleucids and Ptolemies) extended their borders to India and Egypt new Greek cities (in the form of colonies) were also founded at certain key centres of the empire. Indigenous peoples lived around, outside, and sometimes inside these Greek cities and had some cultural impact on them. At the same time it is self evident that the majority of the peoples in the new kingdoms especially in the countryside, kept their own culture and language. But as a result of the contact and interaction between the Greek newcomers and the old dominant classes there arose what is known as Hellenistic culture, neither purely Greek nor

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<sup>14</sup> Swain, "A Century and More of the Greek Novel" in *Oxford Readings*, p. 5. These novels offer to look into the diverse and far-flung societies of the Mediterranean world, Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> See Ashcroft, *et al.*, *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 78-115, Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, pp. 167-250, Brydon and Tiffin, *Decolonising Fictions*, Parker and Starkey (eds.), *Postcolonial Literatures*.

<sup>16</sup> For a brief reading on Greek influence around the Aegean see *The Archaeology of Greek Colonisation: Essays dedicated to Sir John Boardman*, (ed.), Gocha R. Tsetskhladze and Franco De Angelis, Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1994.

Asiatic, but a mixture of both<sup>17</sup>. Greek is the common language, the means of communication and the carrier of culture, though a Greek which has been ‘levelled out’ and simplified (*koine* or ‘common’ Greek) in relation to pure Attic (the dialect of Athens)—it is now to be used both by Greeks of different native dialects and by foreigners who learn it as their second language.

Another significant development in the socio-political and economic life of the people in the late-Hellenistic times is the infiltration of Republican and imperial Rome (through loose political structures of *amicitia* and *societas* and more formal *civitates foederatae*) in the Hellenistic world. This began with Roman interference in the affairs of the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia in the third century BCE<sup>18</sup>. The break up of the Seleucid empire was a gradual business from the early second century BCE to the end of the Seleucid monarchy at the hands of Pompeius in 64 BCE. Of the independent petty states which benefited from the break-up of Seleucid power, a number had in turn fallen into Roman hands but many others remained independent or semi-independent<sup>19</sup>. In the early phase Roman imperial advance toward the east was treated as a liberative act by many native kingdoms, cities and communities which sought freedom from the Seleucids. This gave the Romans much deeper involvement in the east. In 64 BCE they established the province of Syria under a Roman governor. To protect the east and the southern flank of this province the Romans established a number of client kingdoms: Judea under Antipater and later Herod and the east of Jordan under certain Nabataean Arab tribes; in the north agreements were made with client kings of Commagene and Armenia. As part of the Roman world, the peoples of the Hellenistic east, both Hellenistic Greeks and natives, soon became involved in the big-power struggles of Roman political figures<sup>20</sup>.

According to Hägg, the corresponding borderline between Hellenistic and Roman times is much more arbitrarily drawn: on the one hand, the Roman conquest of the Hellenistic states began long before 30 BCE; on the other, ‘Hellenistic’ culture

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<sup>17</sup> T. Hägg, *The Novel*, pp. 82ff.

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed historical analysis of Roman infiltration and her instruments of diplomacy, attitudes, motivation and patterns of behaviour in the Hellenistic east see Erich Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, William Harris, *War and Imperialism*, E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968.

<sup>19</sup> See Goodman, *The Roman World 44 B C - A D 180*, pp.14f.



and many indigenous cultures ‘with a heavy overlay of Greek civilization’<sup>21</sup> lived on in the eastern Mediterranean region independent of the fact that the states had lost their political autonomy and had been made part of the Roman empire<sup>22</sup>. But the clash and intermingling of two peoples— the Roman west and Hellenic east— eventually created an amalgam which produced a hybrid culture in postclassical antiquity.

The Hellenistic and Roman societies in the east are complex, protean, polyglot, hybrid societies, difficult to grasp and impossible to summarize in a single formula. A complex synthesis of society and cultures is inevitable because of the enormous geographical diffusion of Hellenistic and Roman peoples. The Greek and Roman elements were mixed with different indigenous, colonised cultures in different regions. The colonial/ imperial expansion of Hellenists and Romans facilitated such cultural mixtures. The decline of the imperial Hellenists and the ascendancy of imperial Rome and the emergence of complex polyglot hybrid societies would perhaps be the context in which a new type of prose literature, often classified as ‘simple adventure stories’<sup>23</sup> or ‘love-and-adventure stories’<sup>24</sup> or ‘adventure stories of ordeal’ and ‘adventure stories of everyday life’<sup>25</sup>, is born. According to Reardon, “[a]s the large empires of Alexander’s successors became established in the eastern Mediterranean, and as thereafter the empire of Rome encroached progressively on them, there was an accelerating transformation of the values of a cosmopolitan world”<sup>26</sup> which paved the way for a new genre of creative literature. Hägg in a similar tone suggests that the people who needed and welcomed this new literature are the same as those who were attracted by mystery religions and Christianity, rootless and restlessly searching for an identity in big cities round the eastern Mediterranean<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> See A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East 168 B.C. to A.D. 1*, London: Duckworth, 1984; Goodman, *The Roman World 44 B C - A D 180*.

<sup>21</sup> Goodman, *The Roman World 44 B C - A D 180*, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Hägg, *The Novel*, pp. 82, 104ff. Also see Andrew Erskine, “Rome in the Greek World: The Significance of a Name” in *The Greek World*, (ed.), Anton Powell, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 368-383.

<sup>23</sup> Hägg, *The Novel*, p. 3

<sup>24</sup> Reardon, “General Introduction”, p. 2. For a similar view see Morgan, “Introduction” in *Greek Fiction*, (eds.), *idem* and Stoneman, pp. 1-12

<sup>25</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 86ff., 111ff.

<sup>26</sup> Reardon, “General Introduction”, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Hägg, *The Novel*, p. 90.

Though Reardon, Hägg and other western classicists recognize the Hellenistic and Roman colonial/ imperial context of the origin of postclassical novelistic writings they hardly perceive the possibility of considering these novels as postcolonial writings. Perry and Reardon suggest that the poetics of these novels is influenced by 'the appetite for entertainment' of individuals who need not have the same intense interest in political matters as in the classical city-state because of large empires controlled from Alexandria or Antioch. In large empires individuals became smaller, absorbed in themselves and in their private lives, in romance and love. And therefore there is hardly any need to explain why romantic sentiment, love, should occupy their thoughts. The novels reflect quite simply peoples' personal romantic experiences<sup>28</sup>. Tomas Hägg is of the opinion that some of these novels intend to rekindle and perpetuate the classical values of Greece during the Roman imperial period. So there is an element of nostalgic nationalism and cultural essentialism, (i.e., looking back to the political and economic acme of Athens with its unique cultural achievements) in these novels. He also thinks that there is a certain amount of 'religious component' in them because they flourished in the context where there was a flowering of mystery religions. Thus he recognizes some sort of a symbolic socio-political and religious significance in these prose writings<sup>29</sup>.

J. R. Morgan thinks that this novelistic literature may be written in response to a demand not simply for fiction but for a particular type of fiction, which constitutes their social and political context in the post-classical world of empire and imperialism. He argues that these novels are a new way to assert and justify the selfhood of individuals, a compensation in fantasy in a world controlled by centralized kingdoms and empires which deprived the individual of a whole nexus of functioning social relationships that had given his or her life a sense of place and purpose<sup>30</sup>. On the one hand he considers these romances as simply 'the literature of the individual', as 'non-social' literature, but on the other he proposes that they provide a potential alternative

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<sup>28</sup> Reardon, "General Introduction", p. 7; E. Perry, *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of Their Origin*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, pp. 3-43.

<sup>29</sup> Hägg, *The Novel*, pp. 90-108. Also see L. Alexander, "Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts", *NTS* 44, 1998, pp. 380-399 specially pp. 392-394.

<sup>30</sup> See Morgan, "The Greek Novel: Towards a sociology of production and reception" in *The Greek World* (ed.), A. Powell, pp. 130-151.



to the disillusioned rich individuals in the empire 'to enter a better world of imagination' and return to 'face the world again'. That is the novels offer a myth that answers the needs of Hellenistic society, and helps it to face anxieties in the world of empire. Therefore "[i]t would be a mistake to think the Greek novel offered easy escapism"<sup>31</sup>. Morgan also points out the multi-racial context in which these novels are born, and the multi-cultural and multi-racial background of some their authors<sup>32</sup>. Despite such interesting insights and important clues pointing toward the postcolonial nature of these novels he too resists the possibility of addressing or treating them as postcolonial novels<sup>33</sup>.

Ewen Bowie<sup>34</sup>, Douglas Edwards<sup>35</sup> and Judith Perkins<sup>36</sup> suggest that the ancient romance, like other literary productions of the ancient world, was produced both for and from the perspective of the upper classes. "In romance we can glimpse one of the means through which the Greek urban elite in the early years of the Roman empire created and maintained their identity", "embodied an elite idealized dream of society"<sup>37</sup>. In light of the wide ranging allusions and quotations from ancient classics, papyrological evidence and the vision to celebrate a revitalized social identity of the Greeks in these novels such an evaluation is not inappropriate. Unlike Perry, Reardon and others Perkins offers a social interpretation to these romances. She finds the

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<sup>31</sup> Morgan, "The Greek Novel", pp. 144, 147. He makes this comment in the context a discussion of comparing the social function of mystery religions and the ambiguity of fiction. He says that the novels "recognize the spiritual needs of their readers only to deny the reality of their solutions, not least by the fact that at the end the reader is compelled to close the book and face the world again. In this sense, the inherent ambiguity of fiction is antithetical to the certainties of religion, which it cannot help but deconstruct. It would be a mistake to think the Greek novel offered easy escapism." (p. 147).

<sup>32</sup> Morgan, "Introduction" in *Greek Fiction* (eds.) *idem* and Stoneman, pp. 3-8.

<sup>33</sup> For a survey of the western readings of postclassical novels of the Greek east see Simon Swain, "A Century and More of the Greek Novel" in *Oxford Readings*, pp. 3-35.

<sup>34</sup> "The Greek Novel" in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: The Hellenistic Period and the Empire*, vol. 1, Part 4, (eds.), P.E. Easterling and B.M.W. Knox, Cambridge: CUP, 1989, pp. 123-139 also in *Oxford Readings* (ed.), S. Swain, pp. 39-59.

<sup>35</sup> Douglas R. Edwards "Acts of the Apostles and Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*: A Literary and Sociological Study." Ph. D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1987, "Surviving the Web of Roman Power: Religion and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles, Josephus, and Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*", *Images of Empire*, (ed.), Alexander, pp. 179-201, *Religion and Power: Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greek East*, New York: OUP, 1996, "Pleasurable Reading or Symbols of Power: Religious Themes and Social Context in Chariton" in *Ancient Fiction*, (eds.), Hock, *et al*, pp. 31-46.

<sup>36</sup> *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 41-76.

centrality of marriage ('the archetypal community celebration of social union') in these novels as 'an affirmation of society and its future', and the travel, adventure and final union etc. as an idealization of social unity. These romances "through their trope of the loving couple dream of a social union able to endure and overcome every eventuality of fate or fortune"<sup>38</sup>. By focusing on marriage and chastity (even introducing a concern for male chastity), the romance not only reveals, but emphasizes, the dream of the Greek elite of the early empire about their society, social structures and boundaries. Similarly there is a focus on native deities. By invoking Aphrodite in his romance Chariton saluted the goddess of his own city Aphrodisias and Xenophon the goddess Artemes of his own city Ephesus. They also recognized these deities existence and popularity in other Hellenistic cities of the empire.

It is not clear in Perkins' analysis as to why should the Greek east dream of an ideal society or rather be concerned about its social boundaries and racial purity (epitomized in marriage and chastity) in a colonial context when the Hellenistic cities enjoyed much prosperity under Roman rule and the elite Greeks simply integrated Roman rule into their own ideological structures<sup>39</sup>. It is not clear in Bowie as to why the Greeks during the imperial period should portray their classical period in heroic terms as a means to interpret their present diminished situation amid the grandeur of their past. The elite origin or the romantic nature of these novels need not necessarily preclude us from treating them also as postcolonial novels for most postcolonial novels of the twentieth century originated from the colonized elite natives who wrote romances after the manner of the 'classic' western (colonial) novelists<sup>40</sup>. In our colonial/ postcolonial context it is the native (westernized) elite who often speak for

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<sup>37</sup> Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, pp. 42,43.

<sup>38</sup> Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, p. 47. To prove her case she cites Douglas Edwards "Acts of the Apostles and Chariton's Chaereas and Callirhoe", p. 61 and Simon Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, Cambridge: CUP, 1984, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> See for example Solomon Plaatje's *Mhudi* (1930) is 'a love story after the manner of romances; but based on historical facts'. It is written in English, in the style of Rider Haggard's story of the Zulus. Plaatje was the South African black writer, linguist, historian who wrote with a prophetic vision, combining different literary conventions and linguistic registers drawn from Shakespeare, the Bible and African oral forms. In this respect *Mhudi* is a hybrid text adapting a colonial gaze but representing a postcolonial intent. It is a highly political text carrying an implicit plea for black land rights. A similar novel in India is Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). It is a pastoral romance mixed with Hindu myth, composed in



the colonized subjects. If Chariton's novel reflects a world view of Greek elites on the periphery of Roman power that world view represents not only an appropriation (incorporation) of Roman authority (as Edwards proposes) but also an abrogation (disturbance) of imperial authority for in a colonial/ postcolonial context there can hardly be an appropriation of colonial/ imperial authority without a certain disruption of that authority<sup>41</sup>.

In the context of western scholarly reluctance in treating the postclassical novels as postcolonial novels it is important for us to ask whether the novels of love and romance written in a colonial context by colonized others merely intend to solicit the erotic, romantic needs of individuals?<sup>42</sup> Does fictional writing only represent private, non-social and non-political characteristics? If the postclassical fictive writings are composed by Hellenized metropolitan mimics or native 'others' of the fringes of empire and if they contain elements of appropriation and abrogation or any other postcolonial traits in relation to empire and colonialism what would possibly preclude them from being treated as postcolonial novels? It is important to examine whether there are linguistic, literary, social, political and cultural clues in these novels which would give them a postcolonial status. If these novels merit special attention from those interested in the economic and social history of the Roman empire as some scholars tend to think<sup>43</sup> then they potentially offer more than mere private romance and personal relief.

We may direct our investigation of these novels in a postcolonial perspective from a certain initiative provided by Bakhtin<sup>44</sup>. Though he did not envisage a postcolonial trajectory in literary studies many postcolonial theorists and writers (Homi Bhabha and others) today do derive inspiration from his studies of the Greek and Roman novels. He recognizes that they are born and nourished in a new era of

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traditional and western narrative techniques. The sub-text of the novel is the Gandhian resistance raging in India in the 30s.

<sup>41</sup> Ashcroft, *et al.*, *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 38ff.

<sup>42</sup> Love and romance can very well be the central plot in postcolonial novels as we see in *The God of Small Things*.

<sup>43</sup> E.L. Bowie, "The Novel and the Real World" in *Erotica Antiqua: Acta of the International Conference on the Ancient Novel*, (ed.) Reardon, Bangore: ICAN, 1977, pp. 91-96, Suzanne Said, "Rural society in the Greek Novel, or The Country Seen from the Town" in *Oxford Readings*, (ed.) S. Swain, pp. 83-107; F. Millar, "The World of the *Golden Ass*" pp. 247-268, Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, pp. 12ff., S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*.

world history (the Hellenistic and Roman era) and therefore they hold certain key characteristics of that age. They include: the formation of polyglotic and heteroglotic creative literary consciousness because of the meeting of west with the orient; a departure from conventional genre (epic, legend, lyric etc.) to create a multi-generic novelistic literature; an interest in parodying and travestyng the essentialist or valorized (hierarchical) tendencies and traditions in literature; the creation of 'intentional' or 'organic' cultural mixtures and hybrids; an interest in present realities (realistic poetics) rather than past certainties<sup>45</sup>. In these novels the absolute past of gods, demigods and heroes is brought to the present, is brought low, represented on a plane equal with contemporary life, in an everyday environment in the language of contemporaneity. Contemporary realities often constitute the core of these novels<sup>46</sup>. He also recognizes that the plots in these novels unfold in a broad and varied geographical background. They contain a fairly wide range of discussion on various religious, philosophical, political etc. topics. Though the novels deal with the private lives of individuals (characters) "it is not private life that is subjected to and interpreted in light of social and political events, but rather the other way round—social and political events gain meaning in the novel only thanks to their connection with private life"<sup>47</sup>.

Because of the constraints of space I will limit my reading on Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* to highlighting the underlying postcolonial features in this novel. It is generally believed that it is composed either during the latter half of the first or in the first half of the second century CE. Hence it is contemporaneous with Mark's story of Jesus.

### 3.2 A Postcolonial Reading of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*

*Chaereas and Callirhoe* is perhaps the earliest (middle of the first century C.E) of the extant Greek prose fictions. It is written by Chariton of Aphrodisias (1.1.1) in Caria, Asia Minor<sup>48</sup>. Located in Turkey's rugged Anatolian uplands, Aphrodisias

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<sup>44</sup> See Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*,

<sup>45</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 12ff, 63ff, 304, 358ff.

<sup>46</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 21f.

<sup>47</sup> Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 109.

<sup>48</sup> We use Reardon's translation of this novel from *Collected Ancient Novels*, pp. 21-124. For a discussion on the historical feature of this novel see T. Hägg, "Callirhoe and Parthenope: The Beginning of the Historical Novel" in *Oxford Readings*, (ed.), Swain, pp.



lies in the southwest of Izmir<sup>49</sup>. The earliest native inhabitants of the city (from the third century BCE) seem to have worshipped a Mother Goddess called Cybele. But following the armies of Alexander in the fourth century came Greek settlers, administrators, religious rites, customs and deities. As a result of this early phase of colonial experience the native goddess is transformed into what is called Aphrodite who retained some of her eastern features but adopted more and more of the new religious experiences of the new comers. She became the most important deity in this new Asianic-Greek city who transformed the name of the city from Ninoe (Ninos was the mythical founder of Assyrian and Babylonian empires) to Aphrodisias. This Greek goddess of love and fortune became the symbol for the existence and power of the city<sup>50</sup>. The Romans from the time of the dictator Sulla (82 BCE) had particular affection for this city. Emperor Augustus selected this city from all of Asia as his own city. "Beloved of the emperors, protected by the legions of Rome, Aphrodisias experienced its golden age early in the Christian Era"<sup>51</sup>. The imperial cult complex Sebasteion built between the reign of Tiberius and Nero exemplifies the link between Aphrodite of Aphrodisias, the Julio-Claudian house and Rome, a link stemming from the Julio-Claudian claim of descent from Aeneas, son of Aphrodite<sup>52</sup>.

Chariton introduces himself as the clerk to a lawyer called Athenagoras. Epigraphic and other evidence suggests that such names were not uncommon in ancient Aphrodisias. He writes about a love affair that began in Syracuse, a love affair set in the context of great empire, the great king of Persia, his governors and colonies, provincials and landed aristocracy, travel, wars, piracy, captivity, trials, crucifixion, release, restoration etc. In other words this love affair is set in a colonial/ imperial context. According to Reardon, "[t]he geographical and social background of one of

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137-160, and for its literary etc. features see Brigitte Egger, "Looking at Chariton's Callirhoe" in *Greek Fiction*, (eds.), Morgan and Stoneman, pp. 31-48.

<sup>49</sup> See Kenan T. Erim, "Aphrodisias: Awakened City of Ancient Art" in *National Geographic* (1972), pp. 766-91, J. Reynolds, *Aphrodisias and Rome* (JRS monograph No. 1), London: SPRS, 1982.

<sup>50</sup> See Gareth Schmeling, *Chariton*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1974, pp. 19-21.

<sup>51</sup> Erim, "Aphrodisias", p. 770. Also see Douglas Edwards, *Religion and Power*, pp. 33-36, 54-61, 73-81, J. Reynolds, "Ruler-cult at Aphrodisias in the late Republic and under the Julio-Claudian Emperors" in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity*, (ed.), A. Small, Ann Arbor, MI: JRA, 1996, pp. 41-50.

<sup>52</sup> Edwards, *Religion and Power*, pp. 54f.



the story's main locations, the region of Miletus, certainly seem to fit that area of Asia Minor in the early Roman Empire"<sup>53</sup>.

As the story unfolds the daughter and son of two leading rival families in Sicily enter into a matrimonial alliance devised by Eros and Aphrodite which settles an internal squabble in Syracuse. By this alliance the city is united and its future secured. Callirhoe (meaning 'Lovely Stream'), the heroine, acts in the story as a human imitation of Aphrodite (1.2) and her husband Chaereas a 'radiant star' like Achilles. After a certain period of marital harmony the couple separates because of the conspiracy of Italian tyrants. As a result of the tyrants' tricks Chaereas kicks Callirhoe to 'death' and subsequently she is buried. But in a strange turn of events she rises from her grave to be captured by pirates and taken to the colonial/ imperial territory, to Miletus in Ionia, and sold to Dionysius the wealthiest and noblest man of Ionia, a friend of the Persian emperor (1.12). Thus the soul and pride of Syracuse is separated from her people 'by so vast an ocean'. She becomes a captive of an imperial agent.

While in imperial captivity Callirhoe conceals her identity and acts as a postcolonial subject. She entraps and transforms her captors by her charm and stature<sup>54</sup>. Though she is a captive sold out into slavery the Ionians see her as a mimetic representation of Aphrodite (2.3,6). Her Aphroditic appearance bewitches Dionysius to such an extent that he nearly prostrates before her in worship as though she is a goddess when in reality she is 'not even a happy mortal!' (2.3). The whole population of the imperial space of Ionia submits to her as though to a 'queen bee'. Dionysius, the most distinguished man of Ionia, the admiration of satraps, kings, and the whole population, wounded, muted and sleepless, behaves immaturely like an adolescent. In

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<sup>53</sup> B.P. Reardon, "Introduction" on *Chaereas and Callirhoe* in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, pp. 17f. He thinks that "[a]lthough the background of the work reflects the contemporary world, it is a historical novel, set in the fourth century B.C; the historical setting is vague, however, and displays a number of anachronisms" (18). Roman advances in the Greek city of Syracuse began when M. Marcellus took the city in 211 and carried off, among other things, silver and bronze work, a collection of statuary and a host of paintings, Livy, 25.40.1-3, 26.21.6-8, 34.4.4; Polyb. 9:10.

<sup>54</sup> In a feminist reading of Chariton Brigitte Egger highlights this aspect. See her "Looking at Chariton's Callirhoe" in *Greek Fiction*, (eds.) Morgan and Stoneman, pp. 31-48, specially pp. 39f. "Her attractiveness proves two-edged; first it lands her in danger of being raped, then it enables her to gain sway over her masters and so apparently reverse the real conditions of power. ... Callirhoe has a sort of schizophrenic control over the love-sick Dionysius and the Great King, because she can manipulate them by means of her sexy chastity-... It is not always clear who is the master and who the slave".



captivity she hides her first marriage and pregnancy and agrees to another marriage (this feature of Chariton's novel is unique among ancient novelists) with Dionysius. She mimics becoming the mistress of her colonial master who tells her "in my house you shall be attended like a mistress, not a slave" (2.5). But at the same time he fears that the new slave turned mistress may shun him when the Syracusans turn up for her rescue (2.6). She subdues him by her charm for her kisses penetrate to his heart like poison (2.8). He behaves like a teenager. These are important aspects signifying the postcolonial mimicry and ambivalence of a captive subject who through such responses troubles and triumphs over her captors (3.1,2).

In captivity she bears the child of her Syracusan husband but rears him under her Ionian husband. The child grows as a cultural hybrid heir who will eventually become a link between Ionia and Syracuse (2.9; 8.4), between the imperial space and its periphery. He has 'two fathers—one the first man in Sicily, the other in Ionia', but he will be loved by all Syracusans (2.11; 3.7). Callirhoe consoles herself believing that it is Chaereas who is giving her to Dionysius as his bride for the sake of their child. She trusts Dionysius and lives as a Milesian. She mimics being Milesian and people love her as their Aphrodite. Her reputation becomes so great throughout the colonial world (4.1) that even the colonial King of Persia becomes captive to her charm<sup>55</sup>. Dionysius meanwhile lives in constant fear that Syracusans may come to rescue her (3.2) for she has not stopped loving her Chaereas (3.7). She is thus a cause of concern for her master turned husband. This sort of affection and alienation, love and fear are typical in a postcolonial relationship between the colonists and the colonised<sup>56</sup>.

Chaereas having heard Callirhoe risen (like Jesus) from the tomb (3.3 cf. Mk. 16:4)<sup>57</sup> goes in trace of her. In a pirate's boat he finds her funeral offerings. Having heard from Theron, the pirate chief that she is alive and lives in Ionia he sets sail to

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<sup>55</sup> It is interesting to note that the Greek novels mentions neither Rome nor Hellenistic or Roman emperors. Reference to Persian or Assyrian or Babylonian monarchs is an anachronism found in these novels. "Anachronisms and inconsistencies abound in the historical fictions of the novels" says Hägg, *The Novel*, p. 125. It is perhaps a cryptic way of referring to Hellenistic or Roman emperors. This method is quite prevalent in Judeo-Christian writings too (Daniel 7; IQM I:1, 10-14, XI:11; Rev.18 etc.).

<sup>56</sup> See Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders" in *The Location*, pp. 102-122.

<sup>57</sup> For a comparison of Mark's resurrection narrative with Chariton see Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, p. 116. He explains this similarity saying "[t]he stories of Jesus inspired

the land of her captivity. But when he enters the colonial waters he too is taken captive. He becomes a slave in Caria, a region under the satrapy of Mithridates the Persian viceroy who too 'suffers' under the charm of Callirhoe when he meets her on a visit to Miletus (4.2). One by one the emperor's men fall in secret love (4.6, 5.6) until at last the emperor himself falls as he "kept stealing a look at her" the "fairest of sights" (6.1,4). Finally a dispute between Dionysius and Mithridates over Callirhoe is brought before the Great King. In the trial Callirhoe captivates and afflicts the colonial court room (5.5,9) and the whole of the imperial centre (6.1). The captive corrupts and disturbs her captors—the Great King, the Queen and the imperial space—the palace, the court and the metropolitan centre.

The great trial to decide 'who is her husband' begins at the imperial court (5.4ff) where Mithradates allies himself with Chaereas to acquire Callirhoe from Dionysius (4.4,5) and Dionysius seeks assistance from the governor of Lydia and Ionia. The whole of the empire is afflicted, disturbed and divided by this captive Callirhoe. Even the trial fails to make any headway as the emperor wants to take possession of Callirhoe. At this time an Egyptian revolt against the emperor turns the tide of the question of possession of Callirhoe in favour of her rightful Syracusan husband Chaereas. He gets support from Egypt (6.8ff, 7.1ff) and in the battle that ensues he defeats the colonial navy (a combined force of Dionysius and the Great King 7.6). He not only rescues Callirhoe from her colonial captivity (8.1ff) but also captures the Queen and the whole entourage of the Great King.

Before leaving the land of their captivity for the freedom of Syracuse Callirhoe and Chaereas make a few gestures which again reveal their postcolonial identity. Callirhoe remains affectionate to the Queen of Persia and releases her to the Great King as a reward for the hospitality she received (8.3). She says to the Queen: "It is no enemy whose hands you have fallen into, but your dear friend, whose benefactor you have been. ... You too shall have your own husband, for the King is alive, ... And (when you return) remember Callirhoe" (8.3) "and write to me often in Syracuse" (8.4). She commends Dionysius to the King's and Queen's care and requests them to comfort him.

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the polytheists to create a wholly new genre that we might call romantic scripture." (143). This view is challenged in R.F. Hock, *et al*, (eds.) *Ancient Fiction*.



Chaereas on his part writes a letter to the King saying “it is not I who am sending this gift, but Callirhoe”. Thus he makes her a decisive even superior figure. Callirhoe in a secret letter expresses her ambivalent affection to and alienation from Dionysius. She calls him ‘my benefactor’ and thanks him for setting her free from pirates and slavery. She says: “I am with you in spirit through the son we share”. She requests him to remain unmarried and arrange a marriage between her son and his daughter and send them to Syracuse. In closing she bids farewell saying “remember your Callirhoe” (8.4). These responses reveal the ambivalence and double-vision of Callirhoe and Chaereas who became postcolonial hybrids as a result of their colonial ordeal. The Great King after receiving his Queen longs to see Callirhoe and Chaereas. He says: “Take me to Callirhoe; I want to thank her” (8.5). Dionysius after receiving the letter ‘clasped it to his breast as if it were Callirhoe present in the flesh’ (8.5) and kissed her name in the letter. He leaves for his estate in Ionia with sweet memories of Callirhoe. Chaereas and Callirhoe after a long sea journey reach Syracuse free and secure. When they arrive the whole city rejoices hearing that “there is in growing up in Miletus one who will be a Syracusan; a wealthy one, and reared by a distinguished man...” (8.7) and also for Callirhoe who becomes ‘the wonder of all Asia’ (8.8).

### **3.3 *Chaereas and Callirhoe* as Chariton’s Discursive Response to both Rome’s *Imperium* and Greek Nativism and Collaborationism**

Chariton wrote the novel in an imperial/ colonial context. He was a colonised subject who in all probability belonged to the elite class in the Greek east. Though the name Rome is conspicuous for its absence the discourse in one way or another defines and negotiates the relationship between the captives and captors in a colonial context. The novelist selects certain toponyms and chronotopes in such a way as to create a Rome-free landscape which in the late first or early second century CE must be a deliberate discursive strategy<sup>58</sup>. Though Rome-free the novel is not empire free. “Chariton’s text reverberates with the author’s concern to address issues of identity and the intersections between imperial, local, and cosmic power”<sup>59</sup>. Choosing an earlier imperial context instead of the existing one (dramatic time frame) in literary discourses is not an uncommon strategy among the subjugated peoples of antiquity.

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<sup>58</sup> L. Alexander, “Narrative Maps: Reflections on the Toponymy of Acts” in Daniel Carroll, *et al.*, (eds.), *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*, Sheffield: SAP, 1995, p. 35 (17-45).

The book of Daniel, for instance, uses the toponym of Babylon to set its story relating to events which took place at the time of the author in the Hellenistic empire. So also the author of Revelation uses the name Babylon to describe his situation in the Roman empire. Similarly Chariton cites the Persian empire, its emperor, imperial capital, satraps, colonies, local elites so on and so forth to create a Rome-free space and time. The Persian landscape appears to be a cryptic narrative landscape which in all probability represents the Roman empire. The emperor's and his agents' affection for the subject Callirhoe, her fears about the imperial space as barbaric, her association with and disassociation from Dionysius and Milesians, her affection for the Queen etc. in Chariton perhaps reflect the complex philhellenism of imperial Rome and the general attitude of Greek subjects toward Romans as rescuers and as barbarians.

According to Douglas Edwards the elite and their affiliates in the Greek east acquired and consolidated power during the imperial Roman rule by means of being affiliated to the Roman web of power<sup>60</sup>. Therefore he thinks that Chariton's novel too, as one of the symbolic discourses of elite Greeks, reflects this affiliation and negotiation for power. Though this may be one of the possible scenarios reflected in the novel it is important to remember that in a colonial situation it is always the colonised elite who speak for the colonised subjects. (The subaltern, in the words of Spivak, often do not or cannot speak in a colonial/ postcolonial context). The native elite's voice in a colonial subjugated context can also be ambivalent and oxymoronic rather than an exclusive affiliation to the colonial/ imperial power. The ambivalent affiliation of local elites in the colonial web of power often also disturbs this web. Their appeasing gaze can at the same time be antagonistic. This is seen in the postcolonial discourses of our times too (e.g., Solomon Plaatje's *Mhudi*: 1930). According to Elleke Boehmer "[a]cross the Empire, during the first half of the twentieth century, colonised elites, articulate though embattled, began to organize cultural revival, or raised their voices in protest at imperial power"<sup>61</sup>. It is not difficult to see the traces of cultural revival in Chariton's novel especially in his attempt to recall the past glory, military victory and communal memory of the Greeks of Magna

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<sup>59</sup> Edwards, *Religion and Power*, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> Edwards, *Religion and Power*, p. 20.

<sup>61</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, p. 99.



Graecia (not the Greeks of Attica who for Chariton are also imperial) which are potential challenges to the colonial web of power.

Ancestral and umbilical affiliation, historical and cultural retrieval are significant in postcolonial novelistic literature. At the very outset of Chariton's narrative it is clear that the story is carefully located in an historical past. The novel is written in the first or second century CE, but its heroine is portrayed as the daughter of Hermocrates, a Sicilian general (we read of Hermocrates in Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*) who thwarted the imperial ambitions of Athens in the fourth century BCE. He makes brief but important appearances not only at the beginning but also at other important junctures in the novel. Through him Chariton takes his readers to a consciously archaic landscape with a view to show their glorious past<sup>62</sup>, to arouse a communal memory of anti-imperialist struggle and ancestral valour against imperial ambitions, and to create a template for their resurgence and liberation struggle in the present. Hermocrates represents the freedom of Syracusans and their military victory against imperial Athens. In the novel he and his heroes, Chaereas and Callirhoe, represent a defiant and self-determining leadership against imperial agents. Such narrative attempts to reconnect the past via ancient heroes are common in the recent postcolonial writings of Derek Walcott (historical excavations and naval explorations of Achille who walks on the Atlantic back to Africa in *Omeros*, 1991) or in Elechi Amadi (the evocation of an Igbo history of war and the warrior leader Olumba in *The Great Ponds*, 1969). Ancestral affiliation and historical excavation arouse communal memory, cultural revival and initiate a search for self-definition<sup>63</sup>. Chariton's novel in some way is an attempt of the colonised Greek east to rewrite its own postcolonial story (ficto-history). Like most postcolonial historical fictions it gives structure to, as well as being structured by, history.

The frequent citations in Chariton from classical Greek writers (Homer and others) seem to be an attempt to mend the breaks with the past. Through these citations he retraces the historical personality and remakes the damaged selves of subjected Greeks in the context of fading Hellenistic empires and the emerging Roman empire. They reveal that the Greek past is neither blank nor morbid. It can still

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<sup>62</sup> Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, pp. 41f. He says that "from the beginning to end Chariton lays great stress on the cultural superiority of the Greeks".

speak and reinvigorate the present. Restorative connection with past history, literature, myths and religious traditions imparts restitution to a subjected population, gives them the power to gain control over their destiny, helps them to imagine their own selves and renews their independent identity in a colonial context.

However, the pleasant and lucid Greek and the Menippean style (a mixture of prose and verse) of Chariton give the novel an Asianic mode of expression as opposed to pure Attic. He is classified among the writers in the Asianic school, a somewhat derogatory designation when compared with the Attic school. Asianic Greek, as seen by later classicists (e.g. Philostratus), is not a positive or pure style, but rather a degradation, almost an antithesis, of the perfection of Attic style. Attic Greek because of the power of Athenian military and imperial power gained hegemony in much of the Greek world. Attic Greek was the dominant and influential language but as it spread to Asia during Hellenistic times it was tempered by local Asianic dialects and got corrupted. It was this corrupted Hellenistic Greek (koine), which Chariton used to compose his novel just like most postcolonial novelists from the former colonies of Britain who use a creolized, hybrid 'english' in their writings. Just like most postcolonial english novelists of the postcolonial world who use certain parts of 'Oxbridge English' and literature and mix them with postcolonial native 'english' and folk tales Chariton used certain parts of Attic Greek and literature but adopted as many innovations of Asianism as possible. "Chariton presents us with an interesting combination of Greek simply written but highly allusive to earlier classical Attic authors"<sup>64</sup>.

The restorative connection to and retrieval of the past in a postcolonial context do not necessarily mean a retrieval to an historical essentialism or to the so-called 'ancestral womb'. Instead it can be to what we may call a 'postcolonial hybrid womb' where the colonial besieger and besieged merge into the most complex of relationship of desire and distantiation. This is seen in a number of representations in Chariton: for instance, the marriage between Callirhoe and Dionysius, Callirhoe's mimicry of the Milesians, her journey into the imperial spaces, the emperor's desire for Callirhoe, the Syracusan desire for the Milesian son of Callirhoe so on and so forth. The hybrid son

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<sup>63</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial*, pp. 186-199.

<sup>64</sup> Schmeling, *Chariton*, pp. 24f. For 'Language and Style of Chariton' see, pp. 21-25.



of Callirhoe who is growing up in Miletus under Dionysius is an epitome of this complex relationship. The travels and journeys of the protagonists into imperial spaces prepare them to become postcolonial hybrids even after their return to Syracuse. Through the protagonists' travel and their postcolonial experiences in the imperial space Chariton draws Syracuse and the imperial space into an interdependent whole.

Travel and journeying, wandering and displacement and the resultant postcolonial cultural hybridity are important motifs in Chariton as in some of the postcolonial novels of our time [Wilson Harris, *Palace of the Peacock* (1960), Wole Soyinka's *The Road* (1965), Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967) Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1993)]. In portraying the journey motif Chariton, like these postcolonial novelists, employs a reverse and subversive agenda. He portrays the journey of Callirhoe from Syracuse (home) to the imperial waters and to the imperial interior centre (away) as a journey into the unknown, into the heart of darkness<sup>65</sup>. It is the colonial centre (away from home) which is diabolic, deceptive and dark (other imperial referents such as the Athenians and Italians like Babylonians also do not get a good treat in Chariton: Athenians are busybodies, a nation of gossips; Italians are tyrants and deceivers; Babylonians are barbarians). The home and its people away from the imperial centre are civilized and cultured. As the culminating event in any postcolonial journey narrative is the homecoming of its protagonists (e.g., in *Mhudi*, pp. 218-225) in Chariton too we find the homecoming of Chaereas and Callirhoe. They return into the family, freedom and familiarity of Syracuse united never to separate. This signifies that the imperial agents cannot hold on to their captive possessions for ever.

Romance and marriage are important constituent elements both in colonial and postcolonial discourses. In colonial discourses the female body is often described in

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<sup>65</sup> In a colonialist discourse like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* the colonized periphery Africa is full of darkness. But in a postcolonial discourse *Palace of the Peacock* by Wilson Harris (1960) a voyage upriver into the Guyanese hinterland is a dreamlike ritual of spiritual reconciliation for all the travelers (colonists and colonised) involved. For an interesting analysis of the journey motif in Chariton and Xenophon and its comparison with the journey motif in Acts see L. Alexander, " 'In Journeyings Often': Voyaging in the Acts of the Apostles and in Greek Romance" in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays*, (ed.) C.M. Tuckett, Sheffield: SAP, 1995, pp. 17-39.

terms of a new geography<sup>66</sup>. The new geography and the colonial periphery are often represented by means of the body of a beautiful virgin waiting for penetration and possession by colonial male bodies and masters<sup>67</sup>. Marriage often symbolizes possession of and control over land. Similarly the colonised or subjugated natives who capture, captivate and corrupt their colonial masters or mistresses by sexual or marital manipulations are an important feature in postcolonial novels<sup>68</sup>.

The centrality of marriage is an important aspect in Chariton's novel which appears to set yet another postcolonial socio-political agenda. Marriage and chastity, according to Judith Perkins, in Greek romances are 'affirmation of society and its future', 'the archetypal community celebration of social union' and not the 'quest for individual identity of the inhabitants of the Greek east whose traditional civic identity had been eroded beneath Roman hegemony' as Perry and Reardon suggest<sup>69</sup>. However, Perkins tends to think that marriage in Greek romance has an essentialist social agenda for she says marriage "served to manifest in the early empire the Greek elites' idealizing dream of their society and the social structures supporting and surrounding them"<sup>70</sup>. Though Perkins' analysis can be justified in general from Greek novels, especially the sophistic ones, it does not fully justify the intriguing dual marriage of Callirhoe in Chariton. We have shown that in a colonial/ postcolonial context historical and cultural essentialism is hard to achieve. Chariton reflects this via a second marriage of Callirhoe in the colonial space as part of her postcolonial hybrid experience.

Unlike in other Greek novels, in Chariton we find the dual marriage of its heroine. First she marries the Syracusan lover at home and then the Milesian master when she is brought to the imperial space. This second marriage in some measure continues even after her reunion with Chaereas and return to Syracuse. It is through these two marriages that the future of Syracusan society and polity is secured. She had her son conceived through the first marriage but bred through her Milesian

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<sup>66</sup> Barker, Hulme, *et al*, (eds.), *Europe and its Others*, vols. 2, Colchester: University of Essex Press, 1985.

<sup>67</sup> See *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*, (ed.), C.A. Patrides, London: Dent, 1985.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis Nkosi, *Mating Birds*, New York: St. Martin's, 1986, Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*, Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism*, pp.71ff.

<sup>69</sup> Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, pp. 41, 46.



‘master/husband/benefactor’. Callirhoe’s love for the second ‘husband’ is symbolic of a colonized subject’s response in a colonial situation. It epitomizes the clandestine survival as well as the subversive skills of colonized captive subjects<sup>71</sup>. It is to save and secure the Syracusan progeny that she marries Dionysius. She accepts a Milesian identity by putting on Milesian dress and rears her son in Milesia. She leaves him to be cared for by Dionysius even after her reunion with Chaereas. She always believed it is Chaereas himself who is giving her to Dionysius as his bride for the sake of their child. On the one hand she wants to leave her Milesian husband cum benefactor in order to join with her Syracusan husband. But on the other she wants to continue her ties with Dionysius. In a secret letter she addresses him as ‘my benefactor’, requests him to ‘remember your Callirhoe’, reassures him that she is with him in spirit through the son they share and requests him not to remarry. She longs for a marriage between her son and the daughter of her Milesian husband in order to secure a commonwealth of Milesia and Syracuse. Callirhoe’s two marriages thus symbolize the postcolonial in-betweenness and liminality of postcolonial subjects, the intertwining and overlapping of two territories. Hence the socio-political and cultural identity represented through Callirhoe’s marriages is not an essentialist but rather an hybrid one.

A postcolonial retrieval and renewal of society was also achieved via employing certain important religious mythic elements in Chariton. The protagonists in Chariton are participants of a sort of *Leela* (divine romantic ‘dance’) of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and her agent Eros. Aphrodite is a prime mover of the plots in Chariton. Her sphere of influence in the narrative extends from Syracuse to Babylon, from the periphery to the imperial centre. As a patron goddess of Syracuse she provides home territories to Callirhoe wherever she goes or is taken. According to Douglas Edwards the role of Aphrodite in Chariton reflects the acquisition and consolidation of power by the Greek elites during the imperial Roman rule. “[M]embers of local elite classes and their affiliates in the Greek East drew on religious symbols to negotiate various power relationships in the Roman Empire”<sup>72</sup>. No city better elucidates this negotiation than the Greek city of Aphrodisias in Caria

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<sup>70</sup> Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, p. 47.

<sup>71</sup> Brigitte Egger, “Looking...”, p. 41.

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, *Religion and Power*, p. 7.

of Asia Minor. “Here local elites long understood the power of the emperors within the rubric of their deity, Aphrodite”<sup>73</sup>. They promoted a dialectic in which local or Roman power confirmed the power of their deity and its proponents; in turn, the power of the deity affirmed local or Roman power. This power relationship, Edwards explains, tends to be more affiliatory, collaboratory and consensual<sup>74</sup> than either antagonistic or conflictual or a complex mixture of affection and rejection of the colonial web of power. He thinks that Chariton’s novel as part of the elite symbolics of power emerged under the patronage of imperial Rome and therefore this novelist, as a representative of the Greek elite class, furthered the cause of imperial Romans.

But such a conclusion on Chariton seems to me to be not fully justifiable in light of the synchronic (internal) evidences in the novel. I have already argued that an historical-cultural revival of an indigenous subjected people, elite or otherwise, seldom bolsters their chance to become the full-fledged accomplices of the imperial/colonial power. Whenever and wherever there are such revivals there will be some trouble for the colonial powers. Would a religious revival be any different?

Edwards thinks that Chariton’s portrayal of Aphrodite is a reflection of the revival of the cult of Aphrodite by the ruling elites of the Greek east under the patronage of Rome. He cites a number of iconographic, epigraphic, numismatic, sculptural, architectural etc. (diachronic) evidences from the Graeco-Roman world to support this view<sup>75</sup>. But his archival and archaeological analysis does not seem to investigate whether a creative and imaginative novelist like Chariton from a subjugated population should also necessarily sign up to the imperial agenda of the ruling elites of his time? In our analysis, we find that Callirhoe and Aphrodite are indistinguishable in Chariton. Hence we need to ask whether or not Aphrodite in her mimetic incarnation Callirhoe aids and abets imperial power in Chariton. Though the local ruling elites would have aided the Roman imperial power (which was highly probable in light of the diachronic iconographic, epigraphic, numismatic, sculptural, architectural etc. evidences), in Chariton we do not find enough synchronic traces to suggest such an abetting at least in the words and actions of the protagonists who speak on behalf of Chariton. Therefore it is probable that he did not belong to those

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<sup>73</sup> Edwards, *Religion and Power*, p.18.

<sup>74</sup> Edwards, *Religion and Power*, p. 46.



local ruling elites who aided the Romans, but to those ‘elite others’ who probably negotiated and disturbed the Roman power via discursive means<sup>76</sup>. As a creative and imaginative novelist from a subjected population Chariton need not necessarily pursue the world view of the iconographers, epigraphers, sculptors, builders of public buildings and priests who in all probability lived and worked under the patronage of native ruling elite or under the imperial Roman political authorities of Aphrodisias. It is not entirely impossible for a symbolics of power, the cult of Aphrodite, which the elite collaborators employed in order to negotiate their way into the colonial web of power, to play an entirely different role of colluding and corrupting the web of power at the hands of a creative postcolonial novelist like Chariton. Aphrodite through her representative Callirhoe cooperates and at the same time conflicts with the colonial/imperial powers in Chariton. She acts more in an ambivalent manner, affiliated but at the same time remaining detached from the colonial forces. She is a mimicker of the Aphrodite but her mimicry is not far from a mockery of the representatives of colonial/imperial power.

### Conclusion

Our analysis shows that Chariton’s novel has most of the essential features of a postcolonial novel. As a creative and imaginative novelist who lived as the ‘elite other’ in a colonial/imperial context he speaks through the protagonists in the novel. The protagonists embody the socio-political, cultural, religious etc. realism of the time. His novel gives structure to, as well as being structured by the history of the time in the same way as most postcolonial historical fictions of our time.

The postcolonial indeterminacy achieved via the postcolonial ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity of Chariton’s characters unleashes a mutation into colonial valorism. All the authoritative (colonist and colonised) hierarchical structures, except perhaps the *Leela* (the romantic ‘dance’) of the divine Aphrodite and her agent the Eros, are disrupted.

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<sup>75</sup> Edwards, *Religion and Power*, pp. 54-60.

<sup>76</sup> See S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 71, 412. I saw this work after writing this chapter. I am delighted that much of its conclusions are similar to what I find in my own reading of Chariton.

To some extent Chariton succeeds in dealing with the problem of approximation (repetition *despite* displacement) which often occurs in some of the postcolonial reverse and resistance writings. In Chariton, the colonists and their colonial authority are subverted but at the same time the colonised are transformed. The former is subordinated but the latter is not allowed to dominate. Both are never to be the same again as there is an intertwining and overlapping of colonist and colonised territories.



## Chapter 4

### The Colonial/ Postcolonial World of Mark

Every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant<sup>1</sup>.

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued that spatially, temporally and culturally the author and audience of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* probably lived as colonial/ postcolonial subjects (elite or otherwise) in a political, socio-cultural context created in and by the Roman empire in the Greek east in the late first or early second century CE. In my reading, I attempted to show that this novelistic discourse is a subjected community's postcolonial response not only to Rome's *imperium* but also to the essentialist claims of its own native culture. In the current chapter I want to further explore a number of Greek and Jewish historical and cultural discourses in order to analyze the nature of the discursive colonial/ postcolonial response they exhibit towards both the *imperium* of Rome and their own native cultures.

I will explore the colonial/ postcolonial relationship between Rome and the Hellenistic east in general and the Jews in particular for a period stretching from the second century BCE to the closing of the first century CE<sup>2</sup>, a period towards the end of which the story of Jesus *κατα Μαρκον* seems to be written. I will attempt to uncover the historical development of this relationship, and also describe what had actually transpired between the powerful empire and its leading politicians and the subjected communities—Greeks, Jews and others in the east. I will observe the nature of the imperialism Rome unleashed in the east and how Rome's *imperium* evolved into a colonial system. So also I will explore the colonial/ postcolonial responses of the subjugated, colonised peoples of the east toward Rome's *imperium*. This will facilitate my portrayal of the complex discursive context of Mark's story of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Colonial/Postcolonial perspectives of imperialism are starting to make an impact on studies of the Roman Empire in recent years. See Webster and Cooper, (eds.), *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, Mattingly, (ed.), *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*.

#### 4.1 Romans in the Hellenistic East and Greek Postcolonial Perceptions

Explaining Roman *imperium* (ἀρχή) in terms of ‘imperialism’ has been a bone of contention among modern historians because the very word ‘imperialism’ is believed to be of modern (mid-nineteenth century) origin unknown in antiquity<sup>3</sup>. In its modern origin and use the word ‘imperialism’ connotes the economic (capitalistic), political ambitions and aggressive colonial expansion of the imperial nations of Europe during the modern colonial period when paradoxically the very formation of overseas empire is considered to be a good gesture, an act of moral trusteeship of ‘backward’ peoples. A number of Roman historians of the modern colonial period therefore deny any aggressive economic or imperialistic intention of the sort found in modern colonial Europe in the Roman *imperium* of antiquity<sup>4</sup>. They explain Rome’s *imperium* in the east in a positive light either as a necessity imposed on Romans from outside by chance factors or a self-defensive mechanism or a failure of Rome’s attempt to live at peace with other great powers or a civilizing mission to preserve Greek liberty<sup>5</sup>. But these explanations do not seem to convince everyone involved in the discussion of Roman imperialism<sup>6</sup>.

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These works recognize the significance of postcolonial theory in the study of Roman imperialism and they use the analytical tools drawn from postcolonial theory.

<sup>3</sup> See J.A. North, “The Development of Roman Imperialism”, *JRS* 71, 1981, pp. 1-9, S.N. Eisenstadt, “Observations and Queries about Sociological aspect of Imperialism in the Ancient World” in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires (Mesopotamia: Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology v. 7)*, (ed.), M.T. Larsen, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979, pp. 21-33. For a critique see Jane Webster, “Roman imperialism and the ‘post imperial age’” in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, (eds.), *idem* and Cooper, pp. 1-17. For a discussion on the origin of ‘imperialism’ in general see R. Koebner and H.D. Schmidt, *Imperialism*, Cambridge: CUP, 1964, R. Koebner, *Empire*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965 (1961), pp. 1-33, A.P. Thornton, *Doctrines of Imperialism*, New York: Wiley, 1965, pp. 1-35, V. Ehrenberg, *Man, State and Deity: Essays in Ancient History*, London: Methuen, 1974, pp. 107-126.

<sup>4</sup> For a short survey see Philip Freeman, “British Imperialism and the Roman Empire” in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, (eds.), Webster and Cooper, pp. 19-34, *idem*, “Mommsen to Haverfield: the origins of studies of Romanization in late 19<sup>th</sup>-c. Britain” in *Dialogues*, (ed.), Mattingly, pp. 27-50.

<sup>5</sup> T. Mommsen, *The History of Rome*, trans., W.P. Dickson, London: Bentley, 1888 (1854), Tenny Frank, *Roman Imperialism*, New York: The Macmillan Press, 1914, M.I. Rostovtzeff, *A Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957 (1926). E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic*, E.N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976, Freeman, “British Imperialism”, 19-34.

<sup>6</sup> F.W. Walbank, “Polybius and Rome’s Eastern Policy” in *JRS* 53, 1963, pp. 5-13, P.D.A. Garnesey and C.R. Whittaker, “Introduction” in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, (eds.), *idem*, Cambridge: CUP, 1978, pp. 1-6; Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome 327-70 B.C.*; G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age*



#### 4.1.1 The *Imperium* of Roman Republic and Polybian Postcoloniality

The early stages of Roman intervention in the east (in Illyria, Macedonia, Greece proper, Thrace, the Aegean, Asia Minor, Syria Palestine and Egypt) began in the middle Republic in the third and second centuries BCE<sup>7</sup>. Polybius (c. 200-118 BCE), the Achaean historian who lived through the age of Roman expansion in the Greek east (including seventeen years' exile in Rome 167-150 BCE) tells us that Rome achieved its goal of world *imperium* (ἀρχή) by a policy of aggrandizement and expansion (Polyb. 1.37.7, 2.2.1-2, 3.3.9, 3.4.10-11). Polybius suggests that the Roman expansion in the east is not solely a unilateral act of aggrandizement but also a response to invitations from eastern communities, cities and kingdoms to settle their feuds, to tackle their territorial ambitions and to dispel the imperialism of powerful Hellenistic and other dynasts (e.g., Teuta of Illyria, Hannibal of Carthage, Philip V of Macedonia, Antiochus III of Syria). Rome made use of such opportunities not only to mark her authority and military superiority by diplomatic and military interventions but also to improve her chances of domination, expansion and exploitation by adjudicating and arbitrating over disputes, and by forming alliances and entering into treaties (*philia, amicitia, societas, clientela*).

Republican Rome's *imperium* in the east in its early stages (during the Illyrian and first and second Macedonian wars) can be characterized as one of forming relationships of *amicitia* and *societas* (after the manner of Greek and Hellenistic *φιλία* and *συμμαχία*) with smaller Greek cities, communities and kingdoms with a view to diffusing the imperial ambitions of powerful Illyrian, Aeotalian, Macedonian and Syrian neighbours.

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*to the Arab Conquests*, London: Duckworth, 1983, pp. 327-408; A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East*; Benjamin Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1990; E. Scott, (ed.), *Theoretical Roman Archaeology: First Proceedings*, Aldershot: Aveburg, 1993; Sally Cottam, et al, (eds.), *TRAC 94: Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeological Conference*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 1994; D. Kennedy (ed.), *The Roman Army in the East*, MI: Ann Arbor, 1996; Webster and Cooper, (eds.), *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*; Mattingly, (ed.), *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*.

<sup>7</sup> For a short description of the earliest stages of Graeco-Roman relation see Bettie Forte, *Rome and the Romans as the Greeks Saw Them* (Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome, vol. 24), American Academy in Rome, 1972, pp. 5-12. For Roman colonial, colonizing activities prior to and during its penetration and colonization in the east in the Italian peninsula see E. T. Salmon, *Roman Colonization Under the Republic*, London: Thames and

Treaties of *amicitia* and *societas* are convenient, loose and elastic treaty agreements with little or no long term entanglement effect (Livy 31.1.10-31.2.2, 35.38.4-6). There appear to be no formal *civitates foederatae* after the manner of colonial alliances formed with Italian communities at this stage. Though an established colonial power within Italy, during the first stage of expansion in the east Rome did not attempt to transfer her structured colonial system of Italian alliances into the Hellenistic world<sup>8</sup>. However, a city and its peasant armies which began their imperial/ colonial expansion from the banks of the Tiber into the Italian Peninsula (Livy 34.45.2-4, 39.55.7-9, 41.13.4-5) and into Sicily, Sardinia and Spain (43.3.1-4) seemed not to be without any imperial/ colonial intent in the east<sup>9</sup>. This may be seen in some of her treaties.

As the early stages of intermittent interference in the east and a decisive victory in the Hannibalic war (218 BCE) entangled Rome more and more in Hellenistic affairs she began to maintain a military and imperial lead in the Mediterranean world (Polyb. 3.32.7). She entered into certain treaties with Hellenistic kingdoms and leagues in order to portray herself as another hegemon in the east. For example in a treaty Aetolia is asked to keep faith with the *imperium* and majesty of Rome (*τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὴν δυναστείαν, imperium maiestatemque populi Romani*), to aid in no way those hostile to Rome, to count Rome's enemies as her enemies and to make war on whomsoever Rome shall make war (Polyb. 21.32.2-4; Livy 38.11.2 -3). At the same time Rome is not bound to keep the treaty. Rome need not assist in any undertaking nor defend it in the event of attack. After the third Macedonian War Rome resorted to a formal imperial control by decreeing the abolition of the Macedonian monarchy and dividing the kingdom into four 'free' republics (Livy 45.17.1-3, 45.29.14). Illyria too lost its monarchy and was divided into three 'independent' regions (Livy 45.17.1,4; 45.18.1,7). After the treaty of Apamea the Seleucid king Antiochus Megas was effectively prevented from penetrating into Greece proper and

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Hudson, 1969, pp. 29ff. For Italian wars and the imperial and economic motives of Roman colonization in Italy see Harris, *War and Imperialism*, pp. 58-67, 175-182.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, p. 25. Also see F. Millar, "The Political Character of the Classical Roman Republic 200-151 B. C.", *JRS*. LXXIV, 1984, pp. 1-19.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism*, pp. 9-104, 175-254, Walbank, "Polybius and Rome's Eastern Policy", pp. 5f., Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy*, pp. 15-17, Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, pp. 6-8, 14. Garnsey and Whittaker, 'Introduction', *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (eds.), *idem*, pp. 2f. Between 200-151 BCE the Romans exhibited a consistent and unremitting combination of imperialism, militarism, expansionism and colonialism in Liguria, in the Celtic lands of the Po Valley and in Venetia and Histria.



to the coastal and western regions of Asia Minor beyond the Taurus mountain range and the Tanais river (Livy 34.59.4-5, 36.1.1-6, 36.2.1-2, 36.10.10-14, 37.26-30,38-45). Antiochus Epiphanes who reigned after Megas had to maintain concord (*amicitia*) in order to avoid conflict with Rome (Polyb. 28.22.1-3, 29.27.1-10, Livy 42.6.10-12, 45.12.3-8). In Pergamum when Attalus III bequeathed his kingdom to Rome (133 BCE) she accepted and used it for the benefit of the People of Rome (Plut. *Ti.Gr.* 9). This was the first time the *Plebs* had a major taste of the benefits of empire<sup>10</sup>.

After the treaties of Apamea (with Syria in 188 BCE) and Pydna (with Macedonia in 146 BCE) Rome had nothing further to prove in the east as she had established her military might beyond challenge and presented herself as the defender of Hellenic freedom. The prolonged diplomatic intervention and military involvement of Rome in the affairs of the Greek east and the provincialization of eastern kingdoms show the military superiority, imperial ambitions and majesty of Rome [*τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὴν δυναστείαν τοῦ δήμου τῶν Ῥωμαίων* (Polyb. 21.32.2)] in the closing years of the middle Republic<sup>11</sup>. The continuation, maintenance and use of Hellenic political institutions, diplomatic instruments and the means of arbitration and settlement etc. after subduing a Hellenistic kingdom and league need not necessarily make Rome any less imperialistic in the Hellenic east. So also the image and reputation of Rome as a military power kept her hegemonic and imperial agenda alive in eastern affairs even when she presented no coherent image and generated no consistent Greek reaction. There was a mixture of awe and hostility, of indifference and anxiety, of gratitude and dissatisfaction among the Greeks<sup>12</sup>.

The Roman propaganda of ‘freedom of the Greeks’ (Poly.9.37.9, Livy 34.49.11) after the manner of imperial Hellenistic monarchs of the late fourth and early third century BCE (Diod. 20.107.2-4, 20.111.2) too seems to be not without imperialistic intentions. Among the Hellenistic monarchs (Ptolemaic, Seleucid or Antigonid) the overthrow of one with the assistance of another was greeted as an act of restoration of Greek liberty. Rome

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<sup>10</sup> Badian, *Roman Imperialism*, p. 41. Also see J. Rich, “Fear, greed and glory: the causes of Roman war-making in the middle Republic” in J. Rich and G. Shipley, (eds.), *War and Society in the Roman World*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 38-68.

<sup>11</sup> Harris, *War and Imperialism*, p. 2. Also see B. Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 68ff., B. Levick, *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967, pp. 2f.

<sup>12</sup> For the Greek tales and oracles relating to Rome’s destruction see Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 41-43, 78-79 and for Greek reactions to exploitation see pp. 95ff.

appears to have adopted this imperialistic Hellenistic convention at least after 196 BCE (after the Roman general T. Flamininus defeated Philip V of Macedon) in order to legitimize wars, overthrow regimes, exercise suzerainty and establish the ‘freedom’ of Greeks under her lordship in the east (Poly.18.11.4,11, Livy 33.20.3, 34.49.4-6, 34.58.8-12). The Roman appeal to and adaptation of certain Hellenistic politico-cultural discourses to appease the Greeks and control their Hellenistic opponents can hardly be without imperial intent (Livy 21.30.10, 34.58.8, 42.39.3).

As Rome adapted certain native political, social, cultural, etc. categories to maintain imperial domain over the Greek population the native Greeks accepted Roman symbols as a means of self-preservation and survival under Rome<sup>13</sup>. Roman appetite for Greek language, religion, art and culture was more ambivalent than mere appreciation and acceptance; appreciation moved alongside professed scorn for it. Appreciation for the Hellenic achievement and for what it could teach the Romans went side by side with condescension towards Greeks and contempt for those who aped them<sup>14</sup>. Greeks on their part too treated the Romans in an ambivalent manner as barbarians (Polyb. 18.22.8, 39.2-3.1, Livy 31.29.6) and rescuers (Polyb. 18.46.11-12, 29.21.1-9). They looked to Rome as one among a cluster of Hellenistic powers, sought her military aid in their internal fights, encouraged her patronage, and exploited her reputation. Greeks both benefited and suffered from Roman involvement, both solicited and resisted Roman interference<sup>15</sup>. They in an ingenuous manner attached and detached themselves in their response to Rome. Thus “Greeks and Romans were engaged in a tense dialogue of ‘cultural mapping’, of mutual self-definition and aggressive maintenance of boundaries”<sup>16</sup>.

Polybius<sup>17</sup>, a colonial/ postcolonial historian who lived in-between the two worlds, appears to articulate this ambivalence and dialogue in his account of Rome’s expansionist

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<sup>13</sup> The creation of cults to the goddess Roma after the manner of Hellenistic ruler cult in the east (Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.56.1). See R. Mellor, *ΘΕΑ ΡΩΜΗ: The Worship of the Goddess Roma in the Greek World*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975, pp. 134-180, *idem*, “The Goddess Roma” in *ANRW* II 17.2, 1981, pp. 950-1030, S. Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 40-47.

<sup>14</sup> See a discussion on ‘Philhellenism: Culture and Policy’ in Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, pp. 250-272 especially pp. 270-72.

<sup>15</sup> Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, pp. 316-356, 727ff. Also see S.E. Alcock, “Greece: a landscape of resistance?”, in *Dialogues in Roman* (ed.), Mattingly, pp. 103-115, *Graecia Capta: The Landscapes of Roman Greece*, Cambridge: CUP, 1996 (1993), pp. 8-32, 215-230.

<sup>16</sup> Alcock, “Greece: a landscape”, p. 109.

<sup>17</sup> For Polybius’ ambivalence, incongruity etc. see Walbank, “Polybius and Rome’s Eastern Policy”, pp. 1-13, *idem*, *Polybius*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, Gruen,



and imperialistic policies in the east. Incongruities and ambivalence plague his impressions of Roman expansion. On the one hand, he finds Rome an aggressive imperial power bent on glory and honour and on bringing her foes to their knees by means of force and violence (Polyb. 1.37.7, 1.64.5, 2.2.1-2, 3.3.9, 3.4.10-11, 31.10.7). But on the other, he admires Rome's ascendancy and leadership in the east (1.2.1-7, 3.59.3, 29.21.1-9). He describes the Romans as men of noble temperament with high regard for law and justice (24.8.2-5). He does not consider Rome's ascendancy as mere chance or due to any unwilled circumstance. Instead it is because of the superiority of Roman institutions, national qualities, training and experience (1.63.9-1.63.2, 3.2.6, 6.10.13-14). But at the same time he also ascribes Rome's success to the power of *Τύχη* who caused the whole Mediterranean to grow together into a single whole. Rome's rise is pre-ordained and engineered by *Τύχη* (1.4.4-5, 8.2.3-6). In attributing a divine role to Rome's rise to world dominance Polybius is not without influence from the Roman propaganda machine which justifies Rome's behaviour. Nevertheless as a Greek he is proud of his Greek heritage and at the same time criticizes the laxity, corruption and dishonesty found among contemporary Greeks (24.9-10) which he feared would corrupt the Romans too (31.25.3-5). He sees a deterioration in Roman morality and political practice after the Hannibalic wars and predicts that Rome will not glory in her *imperium* for ever. She will follow the former Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian etc. empires into doom and destruction (38.21.1-3 cf. *Sib. Orac.* 3.182-191). Thus we find that although Polybius' *Histories* contain much praise of early Roman virtue, they furnish an almost unbroken line of remarks hostile to Roman policy in his own time, a policy of which he was a victim<sup>18</sup>. Polybius' analysis of Roman domination and expansion reflects an ambiguity and ambivalence typical of a colonial/postcolonial subject.

#### 4.1.2 The Colonialism of Roman Imperators and Emperors and Greek Postcolonial Perceptions

From the time of the late Republic through the Flavian period Rome's *imperium* in the east is gradually translated into an imperial colonization and consolidation as Rome's political and military presence appears in a rather more clear, concrete and permanent form than in the middle Republic. The colonial discourses of Cicero (c. 106-43 BCE),

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*The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, pp. 343-351, Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 80-93. Cf. Harris, *War and Imperialism*, pp. 107-117.

Horace (c. 65-8 BCE) and Livy (c. 59 BCE - CE 17) acknowledge and celebrate the imperial exploits of the imperators and principes<sup>19</sup>. Cicero describes Rome's *imperium orbis terrae* as an *imperium* submitted to by all peoples, kings, and nations, some of their own accord, others through compulsion by superior force. He often speaks with contempt of provincials<sup>20</sup>. Horace sings of an increase in Italy's strength and renown, the *maiestas* of the *imperium* extends from one end of the world to the other (*Carm.*4.15.13-16). For Livy Rome is the *caput orbis terrarum* and her citizens the *princeps orbis terrarum populus* (1.16.7, 21.30.10, 34.58.8, 42.39.3) stretching from Gades to the Red Sea. These colonial writers, interestingly, portray Rome's imperial expansion as a *patrocinium* based on providing *beneficia* to those who need protection. Rome in their eyes fought wars both for her own survival and also for dominance (*imperium*), for freedom and to rule (Cic. *Phil.*8.12).

There is no doubt that imperialism, in the form of territorial expansion, occupation, colonization and economic exploitation, intensified after the enfranchisement of Italy and the Social Wars (90-89 BCE)<sup>21</sup>. After these Wars the rapidity of the Roman return to Asia is particularly startling. New colonies are to be founded not only for the defence of Roman territory, but also for appeasing the land-hunger of Roman and Italian peasant soldiers and the commercial interest of the Roman business class<sup>22</sup>. In Rome too the aristocracy was fragmented as a result of the Wars and the fragmentation afforded opportunities for individual leaders (dictators like Marius, Sulla and the Gracchi) to emerge. The most imposing figure to emerge in the aftermath of Sulla (78 BCE) was Pompeius Magnus. He commanded the legions of Rome in the Mediterranean in 67 BCE

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<sup>18</sup> B. Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, p. 81. For 'Polybius and Rome' see Walbank, *Polybius*, pp. 157-183.

<sup>19</sup> See P.A. Brunt, "Laus Imperii" in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, (eds.), Garnsey and Whittaker, pp. 159-191.

<sup>20</sup> Cic. *Phil.* 8:12, *Ad Herenn.* 4.13. The *Ad Herennium* is an anonymous Greek rhetorical treatise translated into Latin and transmitted under the name of Cicero. (I have this information through the generosity of Dr. L. Alexander).

<sup>21</sup> Badian, *Roman Imperialism*, pp. 69ff., Erich Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire*.

<sup>22</sup> Levick, *Roman Colonies*, p. 3, P.A. Brunt, 'Roman Imperial Illusions', *Roman Imperial Themes*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 433-480, Philip de Souza, "They are the enemies of all mankind': justifying Roman imperialism in the Late Republic" in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, (eds.), Webster and Cooper, pp. 125-133.



against pirates<sup>23</sup> and against Mithradates of Pontus, the Seleucids of Syria and the Hasmoneans of Judea. In the east he created and maintained a number of settlements for veterans, civic centres of self-governing municipalities, territorial provinces administered by proconsuls and subject kingdoms (e.g., Syria, Pergamum, Judaea) who paid tribute to the Roman People to become part of the empire<sup>24</sup>. Pompey thus created a new type of tributary dependency. Thus he appeared in the east as a colonial conqueror.

Caesar who emerged victorious after the civil war (49-46 BCE) and assumed a quasi-monarchical and religious aura unexampled in the Roman tradition (Caesar was worshipped in Greece and Asia long before he was offered divine honours at Rome) perfected the idea of Pompey both at home and abroad. Under him the practice of colonial settlement became more developed than ever before<sup>25</sup>. The colonial activity of Caesar fits into the pattern of former generals and even more so for he ruled the state long enough to work out a coherent colonial policy. His colonies were designed to benefit the dictator's veterans and the urban poor as most of them were settled in the provinces, and Italy was left in peace (Suet., *Div. Iul.* 38). Caesar encouraged and organized on a large scale a movement of people to plant provincial colonies. By sending colonists to Carthage, Corinth and into different locations in Asia Minor he was reviving not only the strategies of former generals (i.e., rewarding war veterans) and relieving the distress of the urban poor but also aiding and developing a provincial clientela to maintain an empire<sup>26</sup>. Many of Caesar's colonists from Rome were Greeks returning home and many dispossessed Italians (from Campania) who had Greek ancestors<sup>27</sup>. He used colonies for effective garrisoning of certain regions of his domain (e.g., colonies in the southern coast of Propontis and the Black Sea).

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<sup>23</sup> For Roman wars against pirates and imperialistic intentions see Philip de Souza, "Greek Piracy", *The Greek World*, (ed.), A. Powell, pp. 179-88, *idem*, "Piracy and Republican Politics", *Classical Review* 45:1, 1995, pp. 99-101, *idem*, 'They are the enemies of all mankind', pp.126ff.

<sup>24</sup> Badian, *Roman Imperialism*, pp. 46, 70, Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy*, pp. 186-234. For Greek affiliation to Pompey see B. Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 133ff.

<sup>25</sup> Badian, *Roman Imperialism*, p. 80. Also see Z. Yavetz, *Julius Caesar and His Public Image*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1983 (1979), pp. 143-50, F. Vittinghoff, *Römische Kolonisation und Bürgerrechtspolitik unter Caesar und Augustus*, Wiesbaden: Ak. d. Wiss. u. d. Lit. in Mainz, 1952. For a discussion on the civil war between Pompey and Caesar see Gruen, *The Last Generation*, pp. 449-497.

<sup>26</sup> Levick, *Roman Colonies*, pp. 4f., Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965, pp. 8f., 62-64, 67.

<sup>27</sup> Levick, *Roman Colonies*, p. 71.

Octavian under the name Augustus (31BCE-14CE) pursued the colonial expansionist policy of *Divus Iulius* and laid the foundation of the Roman empire<sup>28</sup>. He refounded some of Caesar's colonies (e.g., Corinth) and retained or renewed others established by his own dead rivals (Antonius and Lepidus). He founded a number of new colonies too in Greece, Syria and central Anatolia (Patrae, Nicopolis and the Pisidian colonies)<sup>29</sup>. He also made purposeful use of client kings (e.g., Herod) and dynasts in the east, some of whom are newly appointed by him and others retained and renewed after the Pompeian-Antonian tradition<sup>30</sup>. Roman colonies in the east under Caesar, Antony and Augustus appear not to be meant for Romanizing the Hellenistic east (on many occasions it was the colonist Romans who absorbed the native Greek/ Hellenistic culture) but for effectively disposing men and families from the urban population of Rome, dispossessed Italians and veterans on to available land. Augustus' colonial policy chiefly aimed at the disposal of veterans and planting veteran colonies (colonies as *ad hoc* garrisons) in strategic locations of his empire to provide secure observation and control bases for the army<sup>31</sup> (e.g., colonies along the coast of Mauretania or in Pisidia).

Like Caesar before him Augustus knew that a colony would revive the east's flagging economy for the benefit of Rome. So he revived or planted veteran colonies in economically significant locations (Patrae, Corinth, Alexandria, Troas). Romanization was also not out of the equation in the Caesarian Augustian colonial policy<sup>32</sup>. There are instances of naming places within the colonies after the names used for the districts at Rome. Colonization was practised to reward men for their service, to revive the economy and effectively garrison the empire. When a Roman commander settles and organizes colonial settlers within a colonial territory he would not be expected to settle and organize

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<sup>28</sup> For 'The Augustan Empire 44 B.C.- A.D. 70' see *CAH*, vol. x, (eds.), S.A. Cook, *et al*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> Levick, *Roman Colonies*, pp. 33f. He planted twice as many colonies in the west as he did in the east, p. 188. For further detail also see the 'Eastern Colonies' of Augustus in Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, pp. 62-72, 92-100. For Roman client kings see David Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: The Character of the Client Kingship*, London: Croom Helm, 1984.

<sup>30</sup> For Augustus' retention and removal of kings and dynasts after the civil war see Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, pp. 42-61.

<sup>31</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp. 67ff., Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy*, p. 19. Cf. Isaac, *The Limits*, pp. 311ff.

<sup>32</sup> For Romanization as a policy see W.S. Hanson, "Forces of change and methods of control" in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*, (ed.), Mattingly, pp. 67-80 especially 76-8. Cf. J.C. Barrett, "Romanization: a critical comment" in *Dialogues*, pp. 51-64.



them otherwise than on Roman constitutional and cultural lines<sup>33</sup>. But it seems impossible also for Roman colonists to ignore native Greek institutions in a colonial settlement. For example, in creating positions of *gymnasiarch*, *grammateus*, and *irenarch* the colonies were trying to have the best of two worlds, to enjoy the prestige of possessing both the highest city status in the Roman world and the most up-to-date Greek magistracies<sup>34</sup>.

The planting of Roman colonies also sometimes created a subject class when the native population remained hostile but in certain other cases where the natives were not hostile it is difficult to believe that they were disfranchised<sup>35</sup>. There seems to be no consistent pattern that can be discerned in the relation between Roman colonists and native population. Whether or not regulated by law it varied in each case with the circumstances and object of settlement, the condition and attitude of the previous inhabitants of the site etc. The Roman policy of colonialism ranges from complete exclusion of the natives, physical as well as legal (in Heraclea Pontica and Sinope or Camulodunum in Britain), to their wholesale incorporation in a single, integrated society (Carthage, Italy and Spain)<sup>36</sup>. Sometimes it was a question of admitting the natives (*peregrini*) to a colony, sometimes a colony of Roman citizens (legionary veterans of native origin and Roman colonists) grew up within a peregrine town. Sometimes a distinction is drawn between two bodies of people living within the same city wall; sometimes the two communities, destined to unite, are even physically distinct. In all cases provincials who had been given the citizenship formed a unifying bridge between the two communities. In this context of wide ranging choices of available precedents Augustus was left with virtually unlimited freedom of choice<sup>37</sup>.

Historians think that this period of Greek-Roman relations also witnessed two related and positive developments: the progressive acknowledgment by educated Romans of the superiority of Greek culture, and the forging of links of mutual interest between

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<sup>33</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, p. 69. For a recent study of Roman cities as means of cultural imperialism see C.R. Whittaker, "Imperialism and culture: the Roman initiative" in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*, (ed.), Mattingly, pp. 143-163.

<sup>34</sup> B. Levick, *Roman Colonies*, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Greek City: From Alexander to Justinian*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949, p. 173.

<sup>36</sup> See B. Levick, *Roman Colonies*, pp. 68-91.

<sup>37</sup> Levick, *Roman Colonies*, p. 72.

individual Roman and Greek aristocratic families<sup>38</sup>. According to Bowersock “[m]utual interests between men of the East and the West were the solid and genuine foundation of Rome’s eastern empire”<sup>39</sup>. Augustus’ aim and achievement were to foster the mutual dependence of colonial Romans and provincial/ colonised Greek subjects and thereby secure the empire and broaden its base. A network of personal connections between influential Greeks, aristocrats and men of letters and eminent Romans imparted stability to the empire by providing advantages to both sides. Imperial subjects could secure relief from oppression through diplomatic intercession, and Roman colonial authorities could cultivate loyalty and *clientela* in the provinces.

Most men of letters, rhetors and philosophers from the Hellenistic east under the patronage of *principes* and proconsuls orient their audience to Roman rule. Many who came or were brought to Rome (as prisoners of war) either spent their time lecturing to Romans on grammar or rhetoric or joined the retinue of a noble household and became the confidants of eminent Romans. Rome was fortunate in having on her side learned and astute men belonging to the eastern intelligentsia and aristocracy who instructed the Romans in the ways of Hellas<sup>40</sup>. Rome honoured these men either as the companions of imperators in the east or by appointing them as magistrates of cities or as benevolent tyrants of eastern kingdoms. For instance, Augustus encouraged his trusted Greek pedagogue Athenodorus to become the political leader of Tarsus and Nestor was the Tarsian Greek resident in Rome<sup>41</sup>. It is clear that Augustus was well aware of the value of intelligent and loyal Greeks both in his court and in the Greek-speaking places of the empire. The Greek world was also a place of refuge for a number of Roman political enemies and exiles<sup>42</sup>. They look to the Greeks to receive them. Similarly, the Hellenistic world for some Romans was a place of learning, initiations and travels and tours and for others a place to remain after renouncing Rome. An affinity with things Hellenic and a desire for integration of Roman and Hellenic cultures was so intense that Augustus himself in the year of his death (14 CE) distributed Greek clothing to Romans and Roman

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<sup>38</sup> Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture*, London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1987, p. 12. Also see Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp. 73-84.

<sup>39</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, p. 1

<sup>40</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp. 30ff., 73ff., 87ff., *idem Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

<sup>41</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp. 76f. For instance Tiberius in Rhodes before he became the emperor (Suet. *Tib.* 14.4)



clothing to Greeks in Neapolis and stipulated that each should wear the other's dress and speak the other's language (Suet. *Aug.* 98.3).

Though the era of the imperators<sup>43</sup> was not free from oppression and revolts in the Greek east<sup>44</sup> (e.g., revolt of Mithridates VI of Pontus) many of the elite provincials in the east maintained an ambivalent colonial/ postcolonial attitude toward Roman imperialism<sup>45</sup>. Poseidonios (c.135-50 BCE), the continuator of Polybius' history, like Polybius and his tutor Panaetius, enjoyed the company of Scipio Aemilianus, Pompey and the senatorial class<sup>46</sup>. He admired Roman advances in the east (Diod.37.5,8) and appreciated her civilizing missions in the west as bringer of peace and order. He was also critical of the Greeks who revolted against Rome (e.g., Mithridates and his allies)<sup>47</sup>. Thus as a provincial he affiliated himself with Rome and her imperial mission. But, at the same time, as a Stoic philosopher and historian who lived through the beginning of Roman exploitation in the east, the Italian Social Wars, the slave revolt in Sicily and the revolt in Pontus and Roman brutality he expressed regrets concerning the character of Roman rule, especially her greed for the wealth of Asia (Diod. 34, 35.25.1, 36.3.1, 37.2.1, 37.29.2). He believed that the moral qualities of the Romans, formerly outstanding, had been deteriorating since the destruction of Carthage. They are in a process of constant decay due to the Social Wars and civil war (Diod. 37.2.1ff., 37.2.12ff)<sup>48</sup>. Thus Poseidonios, like Polybius, described Rome in an ambivalent and ambiguous manner<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> This is Eric Gruen's usage to include Republican warlords like Sulla, Pompey as well as the emperors.

<sup>44</sup> For Roman colonial oppression and native revolt in the east see B. Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 98ff., G.W. Bowersock, "The Mechanics of Subversion in the Roman Provinces", pp. 291-317 and A. Momigliano, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the 'Religious Opposition' to the Roman Empire", pp. 103-129 in *Opposition et Resistances*, (ed.) Giovannini, M. Goodman, "Opponents of Rome: Jews and Others" in *Images*, (ed.), L. Alexander, pp. 222-238; in the west see Stephen L. Dyson, "Native Revolts in the Roman Empire", *Historia* 20, 1971, pp. 239 - 74, *idem*, "Native Revolt Patterns in the Roman Empire", *ANRW*, II:3, 1975, pp. 138-175.

<sup>45</sup> For pro-Roman oracles and sympathies in the east see Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 125ff., Goodman, *The Roman World*, pp. 159-164.

<sup>46</sup> See Hermann Strasburger, "Poseidonios on Problems of the Roman Empire", *JRS* 55, 1965, pp. 40-53, B. Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 96f., 137ff.

<sup>47</sup> See Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy*, p. 117, Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp. 1-13.

<sup>48</sup> H. Strasburger, "Poseidonios on Problems of the Roman Empire", p. 47.

<sup>49</sup> For further details see Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, pp. 351-355. For a note on the tendencies which shape the writing of history, particularly history written by historians from among the subject nations of the eastern Mediterranean in the Hellenistic and Roman eras see R.A. Oden Jr., "Philo of Byblos and Hellenistic Historiography", *PEQ* 110, 1978, pp. 115-126.



Similarly, Diodorus of Sicily (c. 60-30 BCE) gives the sentiments of an educated native about the suffering of his homeland under the Romans. On the one hand he admires the Roman achievement of empire, appreciates their courage, intelligence, moderation, humanity etc. (Diod. 32.2). But on the other his sympathies lay on the side of the Greeks when Rome treated Corinth harshly (32.26-27). Like Polybius and Poseidonios, he believed that Romans are corrupted by wealth and luxury and have become careless of the virtues which once distinguished them (37.3)<sup>50</sup>. Dionysius of Halicarnassus<sup>51</sup> who came to Rome to teach and write during the reign of Augustus promulgated the idea that the Romans were actually Greeks in origin and culture (*Ant. Rom.* 1.89.1-2). “Dionysius gave expression to the fusion of cultures which characterized the Graeco-Roman world”<sup>52</sup>. While acclaiming ancient Roman virtues (for he believed that they only derived from Greece) he also praised the revival of Attic style in the Greek language and culture of his time. His reflections are not without criticism of Roman imperialism in the east<sup>53</sup>. For example he observes in *Roman Antiquities* certain symptoms of cultural deterioration of Romans when compared with their earlier times (*Ant. Rom.* 4.24,10.17.6) when they originated from Grecian roots. For him a virtuous Roman is a Greek and a corrupt one is a barbarian.

Timagenes of Alexandria, captured and brought to Rome by Gabinius, was more vocal in his criticism of Rome than many of his contemporaries and predecessors. At first he became a friend of great Romans like Antony and Augustus and pursued the profession of *sophistes* at Rome. But he was also one of the frivolous Greeks who rated the glory of Parthia above the reputation of Rome. Later he refused to refrain from criticizing Rome after a fall out with Augustus<sup>54</sup>. Strabo (64BCE-21CE) from Amaseia in Pontus whose ancestors had been partisans of the anti-Roman Mithridates (Strabo 477 and 557) and of the Roman general Lucullus (Strabo 557-8), traveled to Rome, wrote his *History* and *Geography* and a few philosophical works to assist Roman aristocracy in their administration of the provinces. He also envisaged a unity between Greek and Roman

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<sup>50</sup> B. Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 157f.

<sup>51</sup> See Rhys Roberts, *Dionysius of Halicarnassus: The Three Literary Letters*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1901.

<sup>52</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp.131f.

<sup>53</sup> H. Hill, “Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Origins of Rome”, *JRS* 51, 1961, pp. 88 - 93. Cf. Bowersock, *Augustus*, p. 131.

<sup>54</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp.125-27. Also see M.H. Crawford, “Greek Intellectuals and the Roman Aristocracy” in *Imperialism*, (eds.), Garnsey and Whittaker, p. 193 (pp. 193-207).



worlds for he found a common kinship between Romans and Greeks (Strabo 232)<sup>55</sup>. After receiving Roman citizenship he accompanied his patron, the prefect of Egypt Aelius Gallus as an adviser. He treated Rome as an exemplary civilizing force (Strabo 66,127,144). The distinction between civilized and uncivilized is a recurring motif in Strabo. Rome as an imperial force is free to intervene and reduce a native population into subjection and annexation (287). But he also pointed out that the Romans acquired untold wealth after the fall of Corinth and Carthage, and applied it to the purchase of slaves, thus providing a stimulus for a massive surge in piracy and slavery.

Similarly, Plutarch (50-120 CE) offers (in *Parallel Lives* and *Political Advice*) complex evidence of how an educated Greek felt about Rome<sup>56</sup>. There is absolutely no doubt that he was sympathetic towards Romans and highly interested in Rome's history and institutions. He believed that the Roman power spread in the Greek world not without divine support and predetermined by divine providence (*Philopoemen* 17.2, *Flaminius* 12.10). But he remained a Greek (Boeotian) patriot through and through. He was critical of the maladministration of Roman dictators in the late Republic (*Sulla* 12-14), and supported the rise of monarchy in Rome. In his writings he appears as the one who strongly upheld Greek freedom and resisted political integration with Rome. This does not mean that he was anti-Roman. Though he was sympathetic to Romans he had a strong racial and cultural identity as a Greek<sup>57</sup>. His appreciation of Rome's benefits does not automatically entail total acceptance of her rule. He wanted the Greeks to govern themselves well without external assistance. Thus Plutarch appears to be 'several' as he writes. This phenomenon, in the words of Simon Swain, "represents the compromise and negotiation we must expect from someone living under a foreign power"<sup>58</sup>.

It is true that Rome had a policy of encouraging the eastern aristocracy to maintain imperial/ colonial control. Wealthier provincials had much to gain from Rome and with their help Rome maintained the administration of empire<sup>59</sup>. But the lower strata of eastern society, which endured Roman rapacity and war without hope of palpable compensation,

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<sup>55</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, p. 127ff., Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, pp. 12-15.

<sup>56</sup> Plutarch most certainly wrote these works after the reign of Domitian. For an excellent analysis of the ambivalence of Plutarch see S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 135-186.

<sup>57</sup> S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, p. 161.

<sup>58</sup> S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 162, 415.

<sup>59</sup> P.A. Brunt, 'The Romanization of the Local Ruling Classes in the Roman Empire' in *Roman Imperial Themes*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, pp. 267-281.



exhibited discontent and sedition<sup>60</sup>. Revolts against Roman domination and pro-Roman oligarchy in the east were not uncommon. Most people who participated in the revolt of Aristonicus were the dregs, destitutes and slaves of Asia (Strabo 646, Diod.34.2.26). The Mithridatic wars were signs of rejection of Roman colonial domination in the Greek world. Anti-Roman feelings often flared up among the Athenians. For example in Cyzicus during the reign of Augustus some Roman citizens were flogged and executed in factious riots (Dio. 54.7.6) and the city lost its free status (Dio. 57.24). Similar outbreaks of *stasis* occurred in Tyre, Sidon and Cyprus. There was also anti-Roman *stasis* or *sedition* caused by dissident aristocrats in Thessaly, Alexandria, Sparta, Athens, Lysia and Rhodes<sup>61</sup>. The Alexandrians were consistently hostile to Julio-Claudian emperors often for concessions shown to the Jews there. Discursive oppositional rhetoric, though rare, existed among the Greek intellectuals<sup>62</sup>. Metrodorus of Scepsis hated the very name of Rome and wrote fierce diatribes against her (Ovid. *Pont.* 4.14.37-8, Pliny, *NH*, 34.34). A few attributed the founding of Rome to vagabonds and barbarians. Some sophists of Rhodes were critical of the emperor Tiberius (Suet. *Tib.* 11.3). Philosophers and Cynics condemned Nero *en masse* for his excesses and the Greco-oriental astrologers prophesied Nero's fall. Plutarch, after the death of Nero of course, accused him of destroying the empire through madness and capriciousness (*Antony* 87.4). Livy's rhetorical question of who would have won had Alexander the Great turned to the west seem to be a discursive attempt to combat the subversive views of certain Greeks (e.g., Timagenes of Alexandria who lived in Rome during the days of the first Princeps) who maintained that Rome would have yielded to Alexander had he turned to the west (Livy 9.18.1ff). These Greeks were disposed to denigrate Rome in favour of the Parthians<sup>63</sup>. None of the first three successors of Nero

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<sup>60</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, p. 101, *idem*, "The Mechanics of Subversion in the Roman Provinces", pp. 291-317, and A. Momigliano, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the 'Religious Opposition' to the Roman Empire", pp. 103-29 in *Opposition*, (ed.), Giovannini. For native revolts in the west see Dyson, "Native Revolts", pp. 239-74, "Native Revolts Patterns", pp. 138-175.

<sup>61</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus*, pp. 104-108. For a Parthian perception of Rome see "Parthia and Rome: Eastern Perspective" in D. Kennedy, *The Roman Army*, pp. 67-90.

<sup>62</sup> See Forte, *Rome and the Romans*, pp. 228-237, R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, pp. 46-94.

<sup>63</sup> Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World*, p. 109f., 125f. Pompeius Trogus may be another important writer and historian during the Augustan era who opposed Rome in favour of Parthia despite his Roman citizenship. Trogus showed himself to be distinctly anti-Roman. He devoted two whole books to praise of the Parthians. His sympathies always lay with those who fought against empires and in that sense he is an anti-imperialist. For him all empires rule in terrible fashion. He hoped for the advent of a Parthian king to replace Rome. See Joseph Ward



effectively controlled the Greek east. The reign of Vespasian and Titus too was not free from the criticism of certain Greek philosophers and oracles<sup>64</sup>.

Our analysis of the coming of Rome into the Hellenistic world shows that there was a slow but steady expansion of Roman *imperium* and colonialism from the middle Republic through the early empire in the Greek east. The Greeks responded to this phenomenon in a complex manner. There were isolated cases of either outright acceptance or rejection of Roman rule. But our analysis of a number of Greek and Hellenistic writers (historians and biographers from Polybius to Plutarch) reveals that the Greeks generally responded to the Roman advances, invasions and colonization in an ambivalent manner accepting and rejecting Rome and also appreciating and disrupting their native Greek/ Hellenistic culture almost simultaneously<sup>65</sup>.

## 4.2 Roman Imperialism and Jewish Colonial/ Postcolonial Perceptions

### 4.2.1 Republic's *Imperium* and the Jews

The Jews in Palestine during the Republic's *imperium* in Hellenistic east were an already colonised community under the colonial imperialism of the Hellenistic Ptolemies (301-200 BCE) and Seleucids (200-135/63 BCE). Hellenistic military and political dominion over the Jews began with the conquest of Alexander (*Ant.* 11.326-39). After his death (in 323 BCE) Palestine became a disputed buffer-state between the Ptolemies and Seleucids (the so called Syrian wars) until at last it fell into the hands of the Seleucids in 200 BCE<sup>66</sup>. The Seleucids under Antiochus Megas portrayed themselves as rescuers of

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Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History Under the Roman Empire" in *Classical Philology* 35:1, 1940, pp. 16-18.

<sup>64</sup> For 'Astrologers, Diviners, and Prophets' who brought fear and panic in the Roman empire see MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, pp. 128-162.

<sup>65</sup> See Whittaker, "Imperialism and Culture: the Roman Initiative" in *Dialogues*, (ed.) Mattingly, pp. 143-163 especially p. 149. For a similar phenomenon in the west see J. Webster, "A Negotiated Syncretism: readings on the development of Romano-Celtic religion" in *Dialogues*, (ed.) Mattingly, pp. 165-184 especially p. 167. She recognizes this phenomenon as some sort of 'resistant adaptation'. She says: "resistance, adaptation, and acceptance need not be regarded as discrete responses but may occur simultaneously." (p.170).

<sup>66</sup> Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, New York: Atheneum, 1975. For 'The Historical Framework: Palestine as a Bone of Contention between Ptolemies and Seleucids' see M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. 1, pp. 6-12. Also see John H. Hayes and Sarah R. Mandell, *The Jewish People in Classical Antiquity: From Alexander to Bar Kochba*, Louisville: WJK Press, 1998, pp. 13-100, Leonard J. Greenspoon, "Between Alexandria and Antioch: Jews and Judaism in the Hellenistic Period" in *Oxford History of the Biblical World*, (ed.), M.D. Coogan, New York: OUP, 1998, pp. 421-465. Cf. Louis H. Feldman, *Jews and*



the Jews from the dominion of the Ptolemies. They seem to have received support from a section of the Jewish population (*Ant.*12.138ff). The Jews in return received aid to rebuild the temple and to maintain the ritual of daily offerings, along with official support for the special status of Jerusalem and its temple, reduction of some taxes etc. The Seleucids established a number of military colonies (*κληρουχίαι, κατοικίαι*) in different parts of Palestine. But this rise of Seleucid power was checked as a result of its defeat at the hands of Rome in the battle of Magnesia and by the treaty of Apamea (188 BCE). Rome became an additional imperial power in the east.

Rome's first recorded contact with Jews occurred in 164 BCE in the form of a letter from her envoys Quintus Memmius and Titus Manius (*2 Macc.* 11:34-38). This was a time when Antiochus Epihanes ascended to the Seleucid throne, when internal rivalries between different factions (pro-Ptoleмиads and pro-Seleucids) and the Maccabean revolt erupted in the Jewish world. This was also a time when the Republic successfully extended its *imperium* under the pretext of 'freedom of the Greeks', when alliances and friendship treaties were made under the pretext of protecting weaker cities and kingdoms from the imperial ambitions of larger Hellenistic neighbours. In the Jewish sphere too Rome made a similar pretext of freedom of the Jews from Seleucid imperialism (*Livy* 37.35.10) which was clearly welcomed by the writer of Daniel (11:30).

The letter of the Roman legates makes reference to a communication by Syria's minister Lysias agreeing to an amicable settlement with the Maccabean fighters (*2 Macc.* 11:16-21). The Roman legates asked for more details so that they could better present the Jewish case at Antioch. It is improbable that this letter originated with the awareness of the senate. In all probability, representatives of the Jews contacted Rome's envoys, on their way to Antioch, and asked them to support the Jewish cause against Antiochus<sup>67</sup>. The Romans simply endorsed the agreement between the Jews and Lysias. The letter however indicates that Roman envoys are willing to speak on behalf of the Jews before the Syrian king. It states: "as to the matters that he decided are to be referred to the king, as soon as you have considered them, send some one promptly so that we may make proposals appropriate for you" (v. 36). It is not clear whether this initial contact has any discernible impact upon the Jewish struggle against Seleucid overlords.

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*Gentiles in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian*, New Jersey: PUP, 1993, pp. 6-18.



Another early contact of Jews with Rome (161 BCE) may be cited in a pact (*φιλία*) which Judas Maccabaeus planned to enter after hearing *τὸ ὄνομα τῶν Ῥωμαίων* (*1 Macc.* 8, *Ant.* 12.414-419). He sent delegates to the senate in order to facilitate *φιλίαν καὶ συμμαχίαν*, “and to free themselves from the yoke; for they saw that the kingdom of the Greeks was enslaving Israel completely” (*1 Macc.* 8:17f). Rome too seem pleased to ally themselves with the Jews (8:29). But again it is not clear whether Rome provided any tangible support to her Jewish ally against Demetrius, the son and successor of Antiochus Megas of Syria who defeated the Jewish fighters and brought about the death of Judas immediately after this pact (*1 Macc.* 9:1-27, *Ant.* 12.420-434). Such an outcome leads us to suppose that this pact is characteristic of strong senatorial statements without a trace of implementation<sup>68</sup>. Nevertheless, it formed a basis for future representations, renewals and reaffirmation. In 144 Judas’ brother Jonathan sent envoys to the senate to renew the friendship and alliance (*1 Macc.* 12:1-4, *Ant.* 13.163-165). Again when fighting broke out the Romans stayed away (*1 Macc.* 12:24-13:30, *Ant.* 13.174-212). Jonathan’s brother Simon too sent an envoy to confirm the alliance with Rome (*1 Macc.* 14:24, 15:15ff.) with no more tangible consequences than the previous negotiations (*1 Macc.* 15:25-16:10, *Ant.* 13. 223-227). Josephus refers to two more contacts of Jews seeking Roman assistance during the time of Hyrcanus I and the response from the senate was polite and positive but left the Jews to work matters out for themselves (*Ant.* 13.259-266, 14.247-255).

The Roman-Jewish contacts during the Republic’s *imperium* in the east seem to be not different from that of most contacts and connections Rome had in the Hellenistic east. The responses such contacts evoked (like that of Polybius and others) too seem similar. For example, the author of *1 Maccabees* (composed probably in the late second century BCE) gives us certain clues to the ambivalence in Jewish-Roman relation. On the one hand the Jews consider Rome in a positive manner (*1 Macc.* 8), that is, Rome as ‘very strong’ and ‘well-disposed toward all who made an alliance with them’ so on and so forth (8:1ff). The author praises Rome’s military successes in Gaul and Spain in the west and Macedonia and Syria in the east and also the Republican model of administration (8:14-

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<sup>67</sup> Eric Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 2, p. 746.

<sup>68</sup> Eric Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, p. 46. Also see E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976, pp. 4ff., Sherwin-White, *Roman Foreign Policy in the East*, pp. 70-79.



16). Thus the second century BCE Jews portrayed the Romans as powerful and steadfast allies, despite the absence of any concrete intervention on their behalf<sup>69</sup>.

But on the other hand it appears that the document is not without certain negative overtones in spite of its overwhelming positive posture. The author registers the consequence of a Roman victory and the ruthless manner by which she crushed her enemies: large-scale massacres, the placement of women and children in captivity, plunder of property, control of the land, and reduction of the populace to servitude etc.<sup>70</sup>. The image of Rome evokes terror and fear (8:12c). She installs and deposes kings at will. The Jews often expected assistance from Rome due to their alliance and friendship. But in most cases Rome's assistance was in words instead of tangible actions. The author also reveals that the Jews in desperation often sort matters out on their own (*1 Macc.* 9:7-10). Thus we find elements of admiration and anxiety mingle in the lines that apply to Rome in *1 Maccabees*<sup>71</sup>. The author of *1 Maccabees*, like Polybius, Posidonius and other Greek historians, seems to reflect an ambivalent, even postcolonial, attachment to and detachment from Rome.

The *Sibylline Oracles*, a Greco-Roman medium adapted and used by Jews in the late second century<sup>72</sup>, too adopts a similar stand. There is a recognition in the third *Oracle* that Rome arose at the end of a series of empires (3.156-61,334-6, 4.49-104) after which the Most High will establish His kingdom (3.194f). Rome is portrayed as an empire from the western sea which will rule over much territory, will topple many, and will instill fear in all kings (3.77,175-79), a successor of eastern kingdoms but worse than all predecessors (3.156-181). She is a barbarian who lays Hellas waste, who ravages and plunders, who carries off women and children into slavery (3.537). Thus in these oracles

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<sup>69</sup> G. Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, p. 216.

<sup>70</sup> Eric Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, p. 338.

<sup>71</sup> Eric Gruen, *The Hellenistic World*, vol. 1, p. 341.

<sup>72</sup> The reference to 'white many-headed, from the western sea' (3.176) may be an allusion to the Roman Republic. For the date, nature of composition etc. of *Sibylline Oracles* see E. Schürer, 'The Sibylline Oracles' in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. - A.D. 135)*, (rev. ed., G. Vermes & F. Millar, Vol. I), Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1973, pp. 618-654, J.J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles (Second Century B.C.-Seventh Century A.D.): A New Translation and Introduction", in *TOTP* vol.1, (ed.) J.H. Charlesworth, pp. 317-472, Eric Gruen, "Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the Third Sibylline Oracle" in M. Goodman (ed.), *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, pp. 15-36. Gruen thinks that "Book III of the Sibylline Oracles constitutes a conglomerate, a gathering of various prophecies that stem from different periods ranging from the second century BCE through the early Roman empire." (p. 18).



there is a fierce eastern resentment against Roman exploitation and an expectation of a happier future when the empire is crushed and concord restored by a divine agent (3.350-355). But at the same time there appears to be a mood in accepting Rome as though she is to be 'cast down' to be 'raised up again' (3.356-61, 367-80), as though she is a weapon in God's hand (like Assyria, Persia and other imperial powers before) to punish Israel for going astray from Him (3.268ff). However, just as those empires in the past did not last for ever before the Lord (3.303), Rome too will not last ('Rome shall become a street', 3.364). These lines combine the two contrary traditions of respect for the Roman name and hatred of Roman exactions<sup>73</sup>. The might of all empires including that of Rome in the Sibyl's view is no match for the might of the Most High who will bring forth a king (3.652-56, 659-97) and secure his peoples' safety (3.702-20). The mightiest kingdom of the immortal king (World-Ruler) will supersede all kingdoms (3.46-49, 767-71) and Rome is no match to it.

## **4.2.2 The Colonialism of Roman Emperors and Jewish Colonial/ Postcolonial Perceptions**

### **4.2.2.1 The Colonialism of Roman Emperors and the Jews**

Jews appeared to have enjoyed some freedom as a result of Rome's imperial/ colonial domination in the east up until the advent of Pompey. Pompey's campaign in the east (66-63 BCE) marked a turning point in Roman-Jewish relation. He interfered in a civil war between two Hasmonean brothers (Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II) after the death of queen Alexandra in 67 BCE as an arbiter. In 63 BCE he, having decided in favour of the weak Hyrcanus II, defeated Aristobulus II's followers, and captured the Temple in Jerusalem after a siege of three months and a massacre of no fewer than twelve thousand Jews. Thus began the imperial suzerainty of Rome over the Jewish nation which culminated in its total annexation a century later. From the time of Pompey the Romans were firmly in charge. The Jewish kingdom was greatly reduced into a vassal state under the high priesthood of Hyrcanus and the watchful eyes of the Roman governors of Syria

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<sup>73</sup> A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973, p. 401.

(Diod. 40.2, *Ant.* 14)<sup>74</sup>. Judea under Hyrcanus and Antipater his Idumean advisor became a client state dependent on the Roman governors of Syria (*Ant.* 14.80).

A section of the Jewish population however remained loyal to Aristobulus and expressed their anti-Roman feeling via occasional riots and wars (*Ant.* 14.83-85, 93-96, 100). Meanwhile, in Rome the Republican administrative structure gave way to a dictatorial triumviral and quasi-monarchical structure. When Julius Caesar seized power in Rome after Pompey he tried to turn the faction fighting in Judea to his advantage by sending the anti-Pompiean Aristobulus to Syria. On his arrival he was poisoned to death by pro-Pompiean factions. But Caesar's victory in Rome drew Hyrcanus and Antipater to his side and he recognized Hyrcanus as High Priest-cum-ethnarch and Antipater as a Roman citizen and procurator of Judea (*Ant.* 14.137,143,190-212). Hyrcanus is acknowledged as the spokesman of all Jews including the diaspora (of Alexandria, Asia Minor) who became 'friends and allies' of Rome (*Ant.* 14.213,216)<sup>75</sup>.

When Caesar was assassinated (44 BCE) Cassius and later Mark Antony took charge of eastern affairs and the Jews changed their allegiance accordingly to stay with the winning side. Antony portrayed himself as a defender of Jewish rights by issuing orders for the liberation of Jews who were sold into slavery by Cassius (*Ant.* 14.304-323) and showed exceptional affinity to Herod, son of Antipater whom he nominated along with his brother Phasael as tetrarchs of Galilee and Jerusalem (*Ant.* 14.326). But while Antony was partly detained in Egypt by Cleopatra and partly engaged in the concerns of Italy Antigonus, the surviving son of Aristobulus II, with the help of the Parthians gained control of Jerusalem, forced Herod to flee and Phasael to commit suicide, and maimed Hyrcanus, before being handed over to the Parthians (*Ant.* 14.365-368). Herod having escaped to Rome convinced the senate (with the support of Antony and Octavian) of his abilities and trustworthiness. As a result Rome declared him to be the king of Judea (*Ant.* 14.381-93). With the blessing of Antony and the help of an Idumean and foreign

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<sup>74</sup> See for the history of this period E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People*, vol.1, pp. 233-242, Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, pp. 21-30, E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE - 66 CE*, London: SCM Press, 1992, pp. 30-43.

<sup>75</sup> For Caesar's pro-Jewish measures Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, pp. 38-43, Michael Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973, pp. 59-64. For a discussion on whether or not there was a Roman charter for the Jews see Tessa Rajak, "Was There a Roman Charter for the Jews?", *JRS* LXXIV, 1984, pp. 107-123.



mercenary army Herod recaptured Judea from Antigonus and commenced his rule as a client king of Rome (37BCE - 4CE).

When the balance of power swung in favour of Octavian in Rome after the battle of Actium Herod without any hesitation shifted his allegiance (*Ant.*15.194-195). He presented himself before Octavian at Rhodes in the spring of 30 BCE and impressed him with his fidelity to Antony, admitted past errors and pledged allegiance to the new ruler (*Ant.*15.183, 187-193). As a result Octavian confirmed his kingship (*Ant.*15.195) and Herod in return aided the new master's war against Antony in Egypt (*Ant.*15.199-201). With the stability of administration in Rome under Octavian Herod's position in Palestine became secure. He remained a loyal ally of the Roman state through all political vicissitudes until his death in c. 4 CE.

Herod as a client king did all that he could to remain in the good books of Rome. He hastened the cult of the emperor in the predominantly Hellenistic parts of his country. In 27 BCE when Octavian assumed the title of Augustus (*Σεβαστός*) Herod changed the name of the city of Samaria to Sebaste and erected a temple there (*Ant.* 15.292-296). He built a port and named it Caesarea and a temple containing statues to Augustus and Rome (*Ant.*15.293, 331-41). In Jerusalem he built a theatre and inscriptions were laid in honour of the emperor. His building projects also moved beyond Palestine. For the Rhodians he built a temple at his own expense. He assisted in building the city of Nocopolis to please the emperor. He surrounded himself with Greek men of letters (e.g. the court historian Nicolaus of Damascus) and prided himself on being closer to Greeks than to the Jews. However he did enough to gain the good will of Jews by keeping a few Jewish priests in high esteem (15.370) and by initiating the reconstruction of the temple in Jerusalem (*Ant.*15.380ff). But his disregard for the Jewish law (affixing a golden eagle to the gate of the temple, control over high priesthood etc.) and leanings towards Greeks and Romans aroused hatred from the zealous segments of the population (*Ant.*15.281ff., 17.158,167).

Upon Herod's death Jewish antagonism spilled over in a series of revolts which were suppressed by Varus, governor of Syria<sup>76</sup>. Augustus divided Herod's kingdom between his sons but none of them is acknowledged as king. Archelaus became ethnarch of Judaea, Antipas the tetrarch of Galilee and Philip in the region east of Galilee and

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<sup>76</sup> See Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, pp. 105ff.,

Transjordan. A Jewish delegation requested the abolition of the Herodian dynasty in favour of priestly rule (*Ant.*17.314). Revolt and sedition erupted frequently in Jerusalem (*Wars* 2.184-270, *Ant.*17.206ff., 273-77, 285) and in Galilee (*Ant.*17.271-2). In Galilee Judas the Galilean led an uprising (*Ant.* 18.4ff.,23, *Wars* 2.56ff., *Acts* 5.7)<sup>77</sup>. Rome repressed such rebellion and sedition with an iron hand. Eventually Rome removed Archelaus from office (6 CE) and Judea was added to the province of Syria under a praefectus of equestrian rank (*Ant.* 17.342ff).

After Augustus' death his stepson Tiberius took charge as emperor of Rome (*Ant.*18.33). The people of Syria and Judaea begged the new emperor to lessen their tribute (Tacitus, *Annals* 2.42). But no concrete action was taken to redress their grievances. In 26 CE Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate as procurator (*Ant.* 18.35) who governed the province for ten years. Though he had a long tenure in office it was not free from unpleasant incidents such as the one following Pilate's decision to bring Roman standards with images of the emperor into Jerusalem (*Ant.* 18.55ff) which was defeated by the concerted action of the Jews, to expend 'that sacred treasure which is called Corban upon aqueducts' (*Wars* 2.175), to set up gilded shields in Herod's palace in the holy city (Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*, 299) to annoy the Jews. The evidence of the Gospels also suggest that Pilate did not see eye-to-eye with the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem (Mk.15:1-15)<sup>78</sup>. In Galilee, meanwhile, Antipas pursued a pro-Roman policy like his father building a city (Tiberias) in honour of Tiberius. He too faced opposition from Jewish prophets like John the baptizer whom he feared would raise a rebellion against his rule (*Ant.*18.118). So Antipas silenced him by putting him to death (Mk. 6.17ff., cf. *Ant.* 18.118f.). Following the death of Tiberius in 37 CE and in light of the subsequent friendship of Herod Agrippa with Gaius Caligula, Antipas fell out of favour with Rome. In 39 CE Gaius banished him to Gaul (*Ant.* 18.255).

Caligula entrusted the tetrarchy of Philip and Antipas to his friend Agrippa I, a grandson of Herod and Mariamne, and made him king. But this friendship did not lead to

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<sup>77</sup> For details of this and other uprisings up until the great revolt see Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, pp. 110ff., M. Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D.*, trans., David Smith, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989, pp. 325-376, R.A. Horsley and J.S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus*, New York: Harper, 1988, pp. 34ff., Richard Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press, 1995, pp.62ff.

<sup>78</sup> Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, pp. 160ff.



the emperor's appreciation of Jewish sensibilities. In 40/41 CE his decision to erect his statue (Caligula-Zeus) in the Jerusalem temple (*Ant.* 18.261ff., *Wars* 2.184ff.) in response to the Jewish refusal to allow Greeks to erect a statue of the emperor in Jamnia aroused much opposition (*Wars* 2.195ff)<sup>79</sup>. Caligula was insistent on the worship of himself as a universal imperial divinity. This crisis was avoided by the untimely death of Caligula which saved the Jews from a mass slaughter (*Wars* 2.204, *Ant.* 19.110). Josephus comments that this Gaius did not demonstrate his madness in offering injuries only to the Jews at Jerusalem, or those that dwelt in the neighbourhood, but suffered it to extend itself through all the earth and sea (*Ant.* 19.1).

Agrippa who had attempted to keep the population of Judea calm during this crisis worked toward the accession of Claudius (*Ant.* 19.36). For this he was rewarded (*Wars* 2.204ff). The new emperor severed Judea and Samaria from the province of Syria and so from direct Roman rule. He appointed Agrippa king over the whole area once held by Herod and he ruled it until his sudden death in 44 CE (Acts 12:20-3 cf. *Ant.* 19.344ff). After his death Claudius annexed the territory as an imperial province. Then came a series of procurators each contributing to increasing domestic revolts caused by a certain prophet Theudas who attempted to part the Jordan river and reenact the great exodus and occupation of the land (*Ant.* 20.97-99), by the sons of Judas the Galilean (*Ant.* 20.102), also by a Jew known as the 'Egyptian' who led a large number of Jews to the Mount of Olives having promised them that he would bring down the wall of Jerusalem (*Ant.* 20.167ff), by the Sicarii (*Ant.* 20.162-65) etc. culminating into the great revolt and the fall of Jerusalem (66-70 CE).

Under Nero (54-68 CE), the Jews were finding it harder and harder to obtain justice. Josephus says that Nero authorized a rescript 'annulling the grant of equal civil rights to the Jews' (*Ant.* 20.183). When he appointed Albinus as procurator matters went steadily from bad to worse. The sicarii terrorism was in the ascent and Albinus was bent on eliminating them (*Ant.* 20.204ff). Florus who followed Albinus pushed the conditions in Palestine towards war (*Wars* 2.280-83)<sup>80</sup>. In Caesarea hostilities and conflicts between

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<sup>79</sup> Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule*, pp. 175ff.

<sup>80</sup> For 'The Great War with Rome A.D. 66-74(?)' E. Schürer, *The History*, vol.1, pp. 484-513, Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt Against Rome A.D. 66-70*, Cambridge: CUP, 1987, Jonathan J. Price, *Jerusalem Under Siege: The Collapse of the Jewish State 66 - 70 C. E.*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992.

Jews and non-Jews burst into open violence (*Wars* 2.284-91). This was followed by a Roman-Jewish confrontation due to Florus' exaction of temple treasure and his soldiers' looting of the city market (*Wars* 2.305f). A number of arrests and crucifixion ensued. Agrippa II, the pro-Roman king of the Jews, addressed the people to remain subject to Rome (*Wars* 2.345-401). But the growing strength of nationalist groups in the countryside eventually led to their capture of important fortresses like Masada, Cypros, Machaerus etc. In Jerusalem, the traditional sacrifices offered in the temple on behalf of Rome and the princeps were brought to an end by a priestly movement led by Eleazer son of Ananias which according to Josephus was the foundation of the war with Rome (*Wars* 2.409). The insurgents took control of the temple and the palace of Agrippa and the small Roman force was under siege. Hostilities between Jews and Gentiles led to massacres in many cities (*Wars* 2.457-65, 477-80).

The war began as the Roman legate in Syria entered the field in 66 CE. Cestius Gallus, the Roman legate despite certain early casualties moved close to Jerusalem but the capture of the city was delayed because of stiff resistance from anti-Roman freedom fighters (*Wars* 2.554). The news of a Roman withdrawal made Nero send out Vespasian, a veteran soldier with proven war record. With no less than sixty thousand troops under his command he came to Palestine (*Wars* 3.64-69). The first offensive was in Galilee. Many of the Jewish fighters fled, and Josephus who was in command took refuge in Tiberias (*Wars* 3.115-31). With the fall of the city of Joapata all the males were killed, the women and children enslaved, and Josephus joined the Roman camp (*Wars* 3.316ff., 392ff.). Later on Tiberias surrendered to Vespasian. Roman garrisons were established throughout Galilee (*Wars* 4.442). Vespasian then moved to Caesarea. Meanwhile in Jerusalem faction fighting erupted between different Jewish groups (*Wars* 3.305-33). Vespasian isolated the city by laying siege to it. Following the deterioration of the political condition in Rome (a quick succession of emperors after Nero- Galba, Otho and Vitellius) Vespasian moved to Rome to take control of the empire (*Wars* 3.645-57) entrusting Titus his elder son with orders to crush Jerusalem (*Wars* 3.658-63). The siege began in earnest. The Roman battering rams did the work of breaking the walls (*Wars* 5.266-302,331-47). A large number of Jews were slaughtered (*Wars* 5.451, 6.24-32). Attempts were made to make the rebels to surrender in order to save the temple from destruction but they failed (*Wars* 6.94-130). Finally Titus (unwillingly according to Josephus) ordered the temple



gates to be burned (*Wars* 6.220-28), the Romans occupied the outer court and then the temple was fired (*Wars* 6.252). The rebel leaders were taken to Rome and punished accordingly (*Wars* 7.153-54).

#### 4.2.2.2 The Jewish Colonial/ Postcolonial Perceptions

How did different segments of the Jewish community comprehend and respond to these imperial/ colonial events from Pompey (63 BCE) to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Titus (70 CE)? What sort of discursive (postcolonial) responses did the Jews produce during this period in response to Roman imperial/ colonial domination in their land? We have noted that from the first century BCE onward Rome was metamorphosed from a distant and kindly giant, into a tangible and not so sympathetic reality. What was the Jewish attitude or attitudes to this reality? In order to find this we have a host of Jewish literature that spans the whole period of Roman rule. Much of the material has an esoteric character, being written for initiates. It tends to avoid the explicit, to prefer the hint, the allegory. There is little straightforward historical writing; instead we have snatches of dark prophecies, of homilies, of commentaries of ancient texts<sup>81</sup>.

In the **Qumran Commentary of Habakkuk**<sup>82</sup> the Kittim, identified as Romans<sup>83</sup>, are praised as 'quick and valiant in war', who will cause the men of violence and the breakers of the Covenant to perish. All the world shall fall under the dominion of Kittim (1QpHab. 2.1). Kittim shall march across the plain smiting and plundering the cities of the earth... They inspire all the nations with fear... and deal with them in cunning and guile... They came from afar from the islands of the sea and like an insatiable *eagle* they devour all the nations, ridiculing their kings and mocking their armies... At the end, the wealth of the last priests of Jerusalem will be seized by them (1QpHab. 3-6,9). There is a recognition in this reflection that Kittim arose according to God's plan to deal with the Wicked Priest and those who are unfaithful to the New [Covenant] (1QpHab.2:10, 9:10), who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to the house of his exile (1QpHab.11). But the

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<sup>81</sup> N.R.M. de Lange, "Jewish Attitudes to Roman Rule" in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, (eds.), Garnsey and Whittaker, p. 255.

<sup>82</sup> See Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, London: Allen Lane, 1997, pp. 478-485.

<sup>83</sup> G. Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, p. 216. Davies, "Daniel in the Lions' Den" in *Images*, (ed.), Alexander, pp. 168ff. For a 'cautious' analysis of Kittim in Qumran Pesharim see George J. Brooke, "The Kittim in the Qumran Pesharim" in *Images*, (ed.), L. Alexander, pp. 135-159.



righteous who observe the Law in the House of Judah will be delivered by God because of their suffering and because of their faith in the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab.8). It is interesting to note that although the Community ascribes great cruelty to Kittim (1QpHab. 6.10), they are not castigated. In fact the army of the Kittim is referred to as the ‘*remnant of the peoples*’ (1QpHab.9.5). This is because the author, heartily detesting the Hasmonaean establishment and hoping for its imminent fall, saw in the Kittim a divinely chosen instrument of vengeance<sup>84</sup> (cf. Jer. 25:29;43:10). What we may note in this discourse is an affiliative attitude toward Rome and an antagonistic attitude toward certain native Jewish religio-political institutions. This appears to be the attitude of at least a segment of Jews at the advent of the imperators of Rome (Pompey) in the Jewish world.

While the Qumran Hab. commentator sounds a consensual cord over the coming of Rome the author of the *Psalms of Solomon*<sup>85</sup> exhibits a more or less ambivalent affiliatory-antagonistic attitude. He, quite like the Hab. commentator, admits the religious guilt of his compatriots (2.3, 8.7-13) and accepts the coming of Rome as the righteous judgment of God to punish the sins of God’s people (2.4,7-18, 8.14-15). He thinks that God allowed the Roman army to enter Jerusalem ‘as a father entereth the house of his sons’ (8.18). God himself led the Roman general in safety while God’s people wandered and wasted away (8.19b). However, unlike the commentator, the poet refuses to excuse the enemy (2.22ff). He calls on God to rebuke the enemy (2.23,25). He thus becomes the first Palestinian writer to voice an unequivocal hostility towards Rome<sup>86</sup>. Pompey in his view is a ‘proud sinner’ (2.1), ‘the dragon’ (2.25), ‘the insolent one’ (2.26a), ‘the lawless one’ (17.11a) pouring out wrath upon the people of God (2.24), destroying young and old and their children together (17.11b). He boasted of being the lord of land and sea (2.29), but his destruction is imminent for he will be slain on the mountains of Egypt (2.26) with no one to bury him (2.27). This is divine doing for God alone is the king over the heavens who judges kings and kingdoms (2.30). He will send them (the Romans) away even unto

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<sup>84</sup> Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, p. 216.

<sup>85</sup> Allusions to the Jewish national conflicts and references to certain international events in the text suggest that the *Psalms of Solomon* existed before the end of the first century CE, possibly prior to 70 CE. It is possible to identify the gentile conqueror referred to in it as Pompey (17:12), the sinners (the Hasmonaean Sadducees who usurped the monarchy) as the Jewish opponents of the devout (17:5-8). See R.B. Wright, “Psalms of Solomon: A New Translation and Introduction” in *TOTP*, vol. 2, (ed.), J.H. Charlesworth, pp. 639ff. Also see S.P. Brock, “The Psalms of Solomon” in *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed.), H.F.D. Sparks, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985 (1984), pp. 649ff.



the west (17.12). The poet prays to God to raise a king, 'the son of David' (17.21), 'the anointed of the Lord' (17.32c) to shatter the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem from the nations that trample her down to destruction (17.22) and to gather together a holy people (17.26) and shepherd the flock of the Lord faithfully and righteously in the fear of God (17.40-43, 18.7-12).

The picture here is a complex one. The conquest is a national disgrace, but it is a just punishment, and not a sign that God has abandoned his people, a theme already seen in the third *Sibylline Oracle*. It contains little of specific judgment on Rome; on the contrary, we see Rome gradually being assimilated into the traditional Jewish world view to become a nation subject to the sovereignty of Israel's God<sup>87</sup>. However, there is no univocal sentiment toward Rome. We have seen before that the supporters of the Maccabees praised Rome when the Seleucid threat loomed largely over them whereas the author of the third *Sibylline Oracle* remained more critical. It is also not surprising to witness the non-sectarian author of the *Psalms of Solomon* judging the capture of Jerusalem and the profanation of the temple differently from a Qumran commentator; the former cared for Jewish society and the sanctuary as they were, the latter did not, because he held both to be wicked<sup>88</sup>.

However, towards the last decades of first century BCE and the first half of the first century CE it appears that the Qumran Community's attitude toward Rome changed considerably. This may be seen from the so-called **War Scroll** of the Community<sup>89</sup>. The Scroll recognizes that "[The king] of the Kittim [shall enter] into Egypt, and in his time he shall set out in great wrath to wage war against the kings of the north, that his fury may destroy and cut the horn of [Israel]". But this victory is short lived for 'the dominion of the Kittim shall come to an end'. 'On the day when the Kittim fall, there shall be battle and terrible carnage before the God of Israel' executed by the sons of light (1QM1). All those who are ready for battle shall march out and shall pitch their camp before the king of the Kittim... (1QM15) and under the leadership and encouragement of the High Priest

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<sup>86</sup> G. Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, p. 217.

<sup>87</sup> de Lange, "Jewish Attitudes", p. 260.

<sup>88</sup> Vermes, *Post-Biblical*, p. 222.

<sup>89</sup> For the date of the War Scroll see Vermes, *The Complete*, p. 163. For a discussion of the 'contents and purpose of the scroll' see Yigael Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness: Edited with Commentary and Introduction*, trans., Batya and



with all ritual formalities of battle engage in a war against the Kittim (1QM16,17). The battle will be fought not only in the terrestrial realm (the realm of Israel in the midst of all flesh) but also in the realm of the gods (the kingdom of Michael in the midst of the gods, 1QM17.5). The battle will be fought under the constant trumpet sound of 'Massacre' and the Kittim shall be crushed without remnant (1QM18, 4Q285, fr.4). The scroll in IQM 16-18 clearly implies that a series of actual wars will be fought against the Kittim and her allies.

The Zealots' response to Roman rule too sounds similar. It is well known from Josephus that, following the famous census by Quirinius, and when Coponius was Judea's first prefect (6-7 CE), a certain Judas nick-named the Galilean "incited his countrymen to revolt, reproaching them with cowardice for consenting to pay tribute to the Romans, and tolerating mortal masters rather than having God as their only Lord" (*Wars*, 2.118). Initiated in the distant Galilean hills, the revolutionary movement was inspired by extreme messianic fervour. It believed that messiah would restore the house of David and secure military supremacy for the Jews<sup>90</sup>.

The *Assumption of Moses*<sup>91</sup> known also as the *Testament of Moses*<sup>92</sup> written most probably during the first century CE<sup>93</sup> also contains a certain response to the Roman conquest and rule in Palestine. It begins with an historical delineation of God's installation of His people in the land and also God's dealing with His people according to their response to God: the united kingdom, the divided kingdom, the fall of Jerusalem, the exile and return, the apostasy of hellenizing priests, the suffering of the faithful (2-5). Then a king (Herod) not of the race of the priests, a man bold and shameless judged them as they deserve (6.2). He shall cut off the chief men and slay the old and the young like the Egyptians (6.4-6). He will be succeeded by his sons for shorter periods. "Into their

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Chaim Rabin, Oxford: OUP, 1962, pp. 3-17. The difference of attitude towards Rome between the Habakkuk Commentary and the War Scroll see Davies, "Daniel in the Lions' Den", pp. 169f.

<sup>90</sup> For a study on Zealots see Hengel, *The Zealots*, Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*.

<sup>91</sup> See "The Assumption of Moses" (The translation of R.H. Charles revised by J.P.M. Sweet) in *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, (ed.), Sparks, pp.601ff.

<sup>92</sup> J. Priest, "Testament of Moses: A New Translation and Introduction" in *TOTP*, vol. 1, (ed.), Charlesworth, pp. 919ff.

<sup>93</sup> The proposed date of this document ranges from 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE to 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. See Priest, "Testament of Moses", pp. 920f. But the widely accepted date is the first half of the first century CE. It is believed to be written in Palestine. The text seems to have no unified



parts cohorts and a powerful king of the west shall come, who shall conquer them; and he shall take them captive, and burn a part of their temple with fire, (and) shall crucify some around their colony” (6.8-9). This time will be followed by the rule of destructive and impious men, saying that they are just (7.1ff). The reference of them being ‘treacherous men, self-pleasers, dissemblers, lovers of banquets, glutton, devourers of the goods of the poor etc. (7.1-8, cf. *4 Ezra* 11.40-3, *Sib. Ora.* 5.386-93) appears to be a reference to Roman governors and their priestly Jewish collaborators. But then the kingdom of the Lord shall appear and the most high will punish the Gentiles. Israel will mount on the wings and the necks of the eagle and they shall be ended (10.1-10). The message seems to be rather clear: Israel was punished in the past repeatedly for her sin but the Lord always restored her. Therefore the current crisis of occupation and loss of land because of ‘a powerful king of the west’ will end and God will restore his reign over his people.

The visionary in *4 Ezra*<sup>94</sup> portrays Rome as ‘an eagle which had twelve feathered wings, and three heads’ that ‘came up from the sea’, ‘spread his wings over the whole earth’, ‘flew with his wings to reign over the earth and over them that dwell therein’ (11.1-6 cf. *Dan.* 7, *4 Ezra* 12.10ff). The eagle reigns over the earth, but its wings and heads drop successively from it, until one head is left. Finally a lion (i.e., Messiah *4 Ezra* 12.31-2) speaks to the eagle: ‘Hear O eagle, I will speak to you: the Most High says to you, are you not the one remaining of the four beasts which I made reign in my world, that the end of my times might come about through them? But you, the fourth to have come, have overcome all of the previous beasts’ (11.39-40a). After describing the eagle’s cruel deeds (11.40b-42.) the speech ends: ‘So you shall disappear, O eagle... and so the whole earth, free from your violence, shall be refreshed and hope for the judgment and mercy of him that made it’ (11.45-6). The destruction of Rome, according to Ezra, occurs at the hands of a Man who flew with the clouds of heaven, who destroy the nations from mount Zion (*4 Ezra* 13. 2, 9ff., 35ff.).

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structure and it is possible that “the text has a long and obscure literary history which includes additions, interpolations and other forms of editing.” p. 921.

<sup>94</sup> B.M. Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra: A New Translation and Introduction” in *TOTP*, vol. 1, pp. 517ff. This book is believed to be written in the late first century CE in Palestine.



The above portrayals show that there exists a complex mixture of attitudes, perceptions and negotiations towards Rome among the Jews<sup>95</sup>. This complexity is best expressed by some moderates who find Rome as a reasonable master, more acceptable even than the Herodians (*Ant.*17.314). **Josephus** comes in this category<sup>96</sup>. His career embodies in a distinct way the principal themes and conflicts of the Roman middle east during the first century CE: the tension between local patriotism and the claims of the imperial order, between native culture and the allure of Greco-Roman civilization, between Semitic languages and Greek, between pragmatic flexibility and committed sectarianism, between class loyalty and group loyalty<sup>97</sup>.

Josephus' varied career and writing can be seen as an expression of the ambivalences and conflicting forces to which prominent Jews were increasingly subject under Roman rule<sup>98</sup>. He was always a Jew, and, through out his writing life, was preoccupied with Judaism; fought for his people and their liberation; yet he was also for some time a politician who had constantly to be looking Romewards; and after that, when he became a writer, it was in Greek that he wrote<sup>99</sup>. He received Roman citizenship yet he did not try to become a Roman or a Greek (*Life* 1). In him, the Jew and the Roman had become one man. As a political realist and leading diplomat he believed that the fate of his country and people was inextricably bound up with that of Rome. For him the *pax Romana* was the best possible framework within which the Jews could live according to their laws, and do this in a manner which would benefit all the peoples of the empire<sup>100</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> Sanders, *Judaism*, pp. 41f.

<sup>96</sup> See Thackeray, *Josephus: The Man and the Historian*, New York: Ktav Publication House, 1967, Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, London: Duckworth, 1983, Horst R. Moehring, "Joseph ben Matthia and Flavius Josephus: the Jewish Prophet and Roman Historian" in *ANRW* II 21.2, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984, pp. 864-944, P.A. Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes*, pp. 282-287. For a critical survey of Josephic studies see L.H. Feldman, "Flavius Josephus Revisited: the Man, His Writings, and His Significance" in *ANRW* II 21.2, 1984, pp. 763-862. For a comparison of Josephus with Hellenic writers like Polybius and others see R.J.H. Shutt, *Studies in Josephus*, London: SPCK, 1961, pp. 92-116, Per Bilde, *Flavius Josephus between Jerusalem and Rome: His Life, his Works, and their Importance*, Sheffield: SAP, 1988, pp. 203-206.

<sup>97</sup> Rajak, *Josephus*, p. 1.

<sup>98</sup> Rajak, *Josephus*, p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Rajak, *Josephus*, p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> T. Rajak, "The *Against Apion* and the Continuities in Josephus's Political Thought" in *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives*, (ed.), S. Mason, Sheffield: SAP, 1998, pp. 222 - 46. H.R. Moehring, "Joseph ben Matthia and Flavius Josephus", *ANRW* II, 21.2, p. 869.



In the *Life* Josephus portrays himself to be a well-born, pure Jew of priestly and royal lineage from a family of great reputation in Jerusalem (1-2,7). Religiously he at first was devoted to the desert sect of a certain Banus and later on joined the Pharisees (11f.). He also acquainted himself with Rome by leading a successful embassy to Rome at the time of Felix the procurator of Judea in order to plead the release of certain priests who were taken captive to Rome (13ff). This visit probably impressed him with the might of Rome and the futility of a revolt against such an imperial power (17f.). Hence his pleas for his countrymen to desist from venturing a war against Rome. However, his participation in a war against Rome (29) suggests that he was against Roman rule to start with even though he says that he was forced into this war. The very fact of him being sent to Galilee to command the war there by Jerusalem leaders shows his commitment to independence and the freedom of the Jews. But after his capture and defeat he probably changed sides and in the *Life* he did not conceal his pro-Roman sympathies.

In the *Jewish War*, perhaps the first of his compositions, Josephus portrays Rome as an unwilling party to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. He assigns the primary responsibility for its destruction to a small band of Jewish rebels. While deploring the atrocities of Rome (*Wars* 2.272-6, 282f., 5.372, 403-406) he details also the atrocities perpetrated by Jews upon their fellows (*Wars* 4.135ff., 357). In his view the rebels harmed the city more than the Romans (*Wars* 2.10, 3.297, 4.397, 556-65, 5.28). He thinks that a small number of Jewish war mongers persuaded the crowd too to join them in support of the revolt and caused the fall of the city and the temple. Yet, though joined on the side of the Roman conqueror after his surrender at Jotapata (*Wars* 3.352ff) and prophecy before Vespasian (*Wars* 3. 392ff) he lamented the fall of the city and the destruction of the temple (*Wars* 6) and at the same time implicitly indicated via his prophecy that God still controls the history of the world.

It is also interesting to note that Josephus perceives the destruction of the temple as a purposeful event. In its destruction he finds God's purpose for the world and the divine arrangements for the destiny of nations. He also views this event from the perspective of his people's sin and God's righteous punishment (*Wars* 2.455, 5.19). We may say that the Jewish idea of God and his providence looms largely in Josephus' interpretation of events that had happened. Thus he provides a distinctive Jewish interpretation to the political history of his nation even while adopting a Greek tradition of



historiography<sup>101</sup>. He seems implicitly to suggest that even though God is on the side of Romans 'now' [*ἄρτι* (*Wars* 5. 367)] a time will come, as it happened many times in the history of Jewish people, for a restoration when God will restore his people again (*Wars* 5.415) even though that distant day is not something to dwell on and to fight for. The Jews should wait patiently until the situation changes and this will come to pass in God's own time. Here it appears that Josephus believed in God as the master and director of history who brings the great powers to fall and raises new ones to power. 'Now' God has given this power to Rome, but only for a limited period. And when this period is over, then the eschatological turn will come to the Jews<sup>102</sup>.

In a way this foreshadows the idea behind the *Antiquities of the Jews* in which Josephus cites God's recurrent dealings (punishment and restoration) with His people from the very creation etc., the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian domination which culminated in the first destruction of the temple (Books 1-10) to his own time of the Jewish revolt (Books 11-20)<sup>103</sup>. In *Ant.* 10 he describes the destruction of the first temple (586 BCE) and in *Ant.* 20 he anticipates the destruction of the second temple (70CE). However there is a link between these two chapters for in *Ant.* 10.79, 276 there is a prediction alluding to the second destruction. He seems to suggest that since the first

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<sup>101</sup> See Joseph Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History Under the Roman Empire", pp. 1-21. Swain argues that the belief (and propaganda) of a four and a fifth empire was not uniquely a Jewish one. The Persian colonial settlers (*Μαγουσαῖοι*) who settled in Asia Minor used this as a propaganda invoking Roman support against the Hellenistic colonial masters (against Antiochus III and IV). The Romans too took this idea as a means of propaganda to justify their imperial rule in the east. Conversely, it was also used by anti-imperialists in the east (e.g., Pompeius Trogus) to oppose Rome's *imperium* during the late Republican and Augustan eras and to express their longing for a Parthian king.

<sup>102</sup> Per Bilde, "Josephus and Jewish Apocalypticism" in *Understanding Josephus*, (ed.), Mason, p. 54 (35-61).

<sup>103</sup> Josephus knew and reported that the history, traditions and the roles of certain leading men (like him) of Israel were formed and shaped in the context of contacts and conflicts with other nations and cultures. For instance Abraham's Chaldaean connections and conflict (*Ant.* 1.157), Israel's contact and conflict with Egypt (2.91, 165, 241, 277ff. cf. 14.188), Assyria, Babylonia, Persia (*Ant.* 10), Macedonia: Alexander, Ptolemies and Seleucids (*Ant.* 12) and Rome (14-20). He emphasizes that certain lessons are to be learned from Babylonian imperialism ['for it foretells what must come to pass' (10.142), and from the role of certain leading men in like Joseph (*Ant.* 2.91) and Moses in Egypt (2.241), Daniel in Babylon (10.188,194,208) and in Persia (10.249-251,263) predicting the coming of Hellenistic kings and Romans (10.269-276). He sounds as though he is one in the line of these great men especially of Daniel in prophesying and writing for posterity (10.266-69) in the context of Roman imperial colonialism (10. 276b)]. He believed that in a general sense the Jews enjoyed the protection of great powers. This is an affiliatory tone indeed!



destruction had resulted in the exile of the Jews the result of the second destruction would not be any different. "In Josephus' view, the Babylonian Exile, like the destruction of the Temple in 586, may be said to anticipate, predict and describe that exile which for Josephus himself and thousands of other Jews turned out to be a decisive result of the fall of the second Temple in the year 70"<sup>104</sup>.

Thus Josephus's acceptance of Roman rule, Flavian patronage, Roman citizenship etc. along with his deep seated Jewish patriotism makes him a complex and ambiguous character who lived and worked 'in-between' the two worlds of Rome and Judea<sup>105</sup>, and his historical (and theological) discourses like that of Polybius<sup>106</sup> and other Hellenistic, Jewish authors from the Roman colonial east, exhibits an ambivalence typical of any postcolonial subject who lives and writes in a colonial/ postcolonial context. Therefore to read his attitude towards Rome as exclusively 'positive' or affiliatory appears to be rather too hasty a conclusion<sup>107</sup>.

### Conclusion

Thus the response to Roman *imperium*/ colonialism from the time of Polybius to Josephus of the subjected peoples in the east can be characterized as a complex one. There are elements of either antagonism or affiliation from isolated segments of the subjected peoples. But to a large extent the response in general was an ambiguous and ambivalent one of accepting and rejecting Rome's *imperium* almost simultaneously. Similarly there appears to be an ambivalent affiliative- disruptive attitude toward the native (Greek or Jewish) religio-cultural traditions. In this discursive context it seems

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<sup>104</sup> P. Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, p. 90.

<sup>105</sup> Bilde, *Flavius Josephus* pp. 147-150, 187-88. For traces of 'an implicit, suppressed apocalypse' in Josephus' attitude towards Rome see T. Rajak, "Friends, Romans, Subjects: Agrippa II's Speech in Josephus's *Jewish War*" in *Images of Empire*, (ed.), L. Alexander, pp. 122-134, especially p. 132; F.F. Bruce, "Josephus and Daniel" in *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* (Jerusalem) 4, 1965, pp. 48-62, Bilde, *Flavius Josephus*, pp. 200-206, *idem.*, "Josephus and Jewish Apocalypticism" in *Understanding Josephus*, (ed.), Mason, pp. 35-61. For a discussion on Josephus' writings as 'apologetic historiography' see G.E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992, pp. 226-301. He defines apologetic historiography as "*the story of a subgroup of a people in an extended prose narrative written by a member of the group who follows the group's own traditions but Hellenizes them in an effort to establish the identity of the group within the setting of the larger world*" (p. 17, italics original).

<sup>106</sup> Josephus was familiar with Polybian history, (*Ant.* 12. 135f).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Moehring, "Joseph ben Matthia", p. 917, Douglas Edwards, *Religion and Power*, pp. 23-4, 40-2. They seem to emphasize only the affiliatory attitude of Josephus.

difficult to imagine the early Christian response to Rome and to the native Jewish religio-political institutions and discourses of power as something far too different from that of the responses of such subjected peoples of the east<sup>108</sup>. I may turn my attention toward this, first, by a critical analysis of the existing models of postcolonial reading of Mark and, second, by offering a postcolonial reading of Mark's story of Jesus.

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<sup>108</sup> Ever since 1960 there have been a number of attempts to portray primitive Christianity solely as a resistant, anti-imperial movement by an increasing number of New Testament scholars under the influence of Latin American and other third world liberation theologies. See for example, Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988, John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, New York: Harper, 1992, Richard A. Horsley, (ed.), *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1997.



**Part Three**

***A Postcolonial Reading of Mark***

## Chapter 5

### Current Models of Postcolonial Reading of Mark

#### Introduction

The existing postcolonial readings of Mark may be classified into at least four models. These are not extensive or detailed readings but are more or less trial readings of certain isolated pericopes or chapters of Mark. Therefore they may be seen as signifiers suggesting that Mark is a postcolonial text and that a postcolonial approach is possible and perhaps appropriate for reading this discourse. The four models are: 1. Mark is an essentialist postcolonial resistance literature (Richard Horsley), 2. Mark is a resistant as well as a colonizing discourse (Mary Ann Tolbert), 3. Mark is a colonial mimetic discourse representing tyranny, boundary and might (Tat-siong Benny Liew) and 4. Mark is a colonial archive with traces of postcolonial heteroglossy (Jim Perkinson).

#### 5.1 Mark as an Essentialist Postcolonial Resistance Literature of 'the Other'

One of the models of postcolonial readings of Mark, though not seen in retrospect to be entirely new to at least a few Markan scholars, is proposed by Richard Horsley in an article in *The Postcolonial Bible*<sup>1</sup>. He enters the fray of postcolonial critics of biblical discourses, particularly of Mark's story of Jesus, after the manner of the historians of the Subaltern Studies group who read the (hi)stories of the peasants of colonial India from the traces of subaltern voices found in British colonial archival sources and the national elite historiography<sup>2</sup>. He says: "A postcolonial reading of Mark's narrative, however, makes it appear much like the sort of history that recent subaltern studies are striving to construct of the Indian peasantry"<sup>3</sup>. He thinks that western biblical studies, like western historiography and literature, "effectively obscured or submerged the histories and

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Horsley, "Submerged Biblical Histories and Imperial Biblical Studies" in *The Postcolonial Bible*, (ed.), R. S. Sugirtharajah, pp. 152-173, *idem*, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel*, Louisville: WJK Press, 2001. This model resembles Ched Myers' political reading of Mark in *Binding the Strong Man*.

<sup>2</sup> Ranajit Guha and others (eds.), *Subaltern Studies*, Vols. I-XI, Delhi: OUP, 1982-2000.

<sup>3</sup> Horsley, "Submerged Biblical...", pp. 156-7.



aspirations of imperially subjected peoples”<sup>4</sup> and, therefore, they need a radical overhaul. “A postcolonial (and anti-imperial) biblical studies includes in its agenda the emancipation of previously submerged or distorted histories of the movements that produced the literature that was later included in the Bible— partly by avoiding, opposing, and replacing the essentialist and depoliticizing categories and approaches of imperial Western biblical studies”<sup>5</sup>.

Some of the assumptions on which he bases his postcolonial reading are:

*Mark’s story of Jesus is a postcolonial resistant story.* “Mark’s Gospel, written from the site and perspective of a subject people at some distance from the metropolis, stands against both the Empire and its client Judean and Galilean rulers, Antipas and the high priests”<sup>6</sup>. “Mark’s Good News is the (hi)story of a concrete renewal movement of a people in resistance to imperial domination”<sup>7</sup>.

*Mark’s story of Jesus is written from the periphery, from the perspective of the other, for ‘the-out-of-the-way’ people, the colonised of Galilee.* “Mark stands not in what anthropologists have called the ‘great tradition’ of the Judean scribes and their temple-state sponsors, but in the ‘little’ or popular tradition of the Galilean peasantry”<sup>8</sup>. Mark speaks from and for a subject people in opposition to institutions in an imperial order.

*Mark portrays an essentialist and alternative vision for its audience.* “Remote from the universalizing discourse of Western imperial culture, Mark strives to build on the subject people’s history and revitalize its traditions. Indeed, Mark exhorts an indigenous people’s movement of resistance to the imperial order to embody an alternative social order, understood as the fulfillment of history of that (now) subjected people of Israel”<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 154.

<sup>5</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 155.

<sup>6</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 159.

<sup>8</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 158.

<sup>9</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 157.

*Mark promotes a liberationist ideology that replaces the Roman imperial ideology.* “Mark also provides a metanarrative that enables a movement to maintain its own identity and solidarity over against the pretensions of the imperial metanarrative”<sup>10</sup>.

Horsley like the historians in the Subaltern Studies group thinks that reading Mark from a postcolonial perspective may enable the recovery of Mark as a narrative of imperially subjected peasantries forming a movement of revitalized cooperative social formations based on their own indigenous traditions of independence of both exploitative local ruling institutions and western imperial domination<sup>11</sup>.

One may find that Ched Myers’ political reading of Mark is tuned along similar lines a decade ago<sup>12</sup>. He like Horsley thinks that Mark originated from the Palestinian periphery from among a people whose daily lives bore the exploitative weight of colonialism<sup>13</sup>. To them Mark offers a story of ‘radical discipleship’ in order to engage in a ‘war of myths’<sup>14</sup> against colonist Romans and their Judean and Idumean elite collaborators. In this sense Mark offers a non-violent resistant, revolutionary and reformist (subversive and constructive) strategy to an out-of-the-way people. Thus Myers too finds Mark a liberationist discourse which subverts Roman imperial ideology and replaces it with a sort of Gandhian non-violent revolutionary, constructive ideology<sup>15</sup>.

## 5.2 Mark as a Resistant as well as a Potential Colonialist Literature

Mary Ann Tolbert in her book *Sowing the Gospel* places Mark within the literary conventions and context of Hellenistic popular literature<sup>16</sup>. She thinks that the simplicity

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<sup>10</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 161

<sup>11</sup> Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, p. 162.

<sup>12</sup> A few other works on Mark in similar lines include Herman C. Waetjen, *A Re-ordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark’s Gospel*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, Robert R. Beck, *Nonviolent Story: Narrative Conflict Resolution in the Gospel of Mark*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996. A recent study on *Matthew* along this line may be seen in Warren Carter’s *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 6, 40ff., 80-82

<sup>14</sup> Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 14-21.

<sup>15</sup> For a summary and critical appraisal of Myers’ reading of Mark see S. Samuel, “The Salvific Suffering Motif in Mark”, pp. 125-147 (and for a critical analysis of Belo’s ‘Materialist’ reading of Mark see pp. 112-120).

<sup>16</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, 70ff.



of Greek style, the unpolished rhetorical development, the lack of philosophical or literary pretension, and the typological, conventional narration etc. place Mark (and other Gospels) in the realm of *popular culture and popular literature* which in all probability existed along side the elite culture and literature of Greco-Roman world<sup>17</sup>. It is possible that both the Hellenistic and the Roman imperial structures facilitated the growth of popular culture, especially in the large city centres. She thinks that popular culture is linked to the development of certain political, economic, and social institutions in imperial city centres where a working class with money and some education tend to enjoy certain amount of leisure like that of a privileged aristocracy. It is from and for such a working, semi-educated or uneducated lower-class that the Gospel of Mark was composed and used. Like other popular novelistic literature Mark was accessible to a wide spectrum of society, both literate and illiterate<sup>18</sup>. It is used as a perfect medium for religious propaganda or edification of people who are rootless and lost restlessly searching for security.

But unlike in *Sowing the Gospel* where her interest appears to be one of portraying Mark as a popular literature with a religious propagandist intent (sowing the good news of the nearness of God's kingdom to the nations), in an article published on the poetics of location of Mark later in 1995 she appears to expand her earlier position in order to add and attribute a postcolonial intent to this Gospel<sup>19</sup>. In this article Tolbert recognizes Mark as a resistant as well as an ambivalent literature which originated from the margins. However, as in her book, she continues to uphold that the intended audience

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<sup>17</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, pp. 59ff. (italics original). She disputes V. K. Robbins' comparison of Mark (*Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) with the elite literature of antiquity especially with Xenophon's (of Athens) *Memorabilia* and Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. She thinks that these works exhibit "far superior linguistic and technical skill, far more sophisticated literary and philosophical acumen, and far greater subtlety and sensitivity than anything found in the Gospel of Mark" (59).

<sup>18</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel*, pp. 70ff. She thinks of either Rome or another large city under Roman rule of the later first century as the highly probable place and time of the origin of Mark (305).

<sup>19</sup> Tolbert, "When Resistance Becomes Repression: Mark 13:9-27 and the Poetics of Location" in *Reading from this Place: vol. 2, Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*, (eds.), Segovia and Tolbert, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995, pp. 331- 346.



of Mark was composed of those from marginal groups in antiquity who were excluded from access to social, economic, political and religious power, who were in constant danger of concrete persecution and repression by those presently holding that power<sup>20</sup>. They lived as a colonized people under an imperial power and in this respect the Gospel itself might be understood an example of a colonial or even an anti-colonial literature which denounces the native colonist collaborators. At the same time the second Gospel appears to have an ambivalent attitude toward Rome. It “actually seems to make some attempt to rescue Herod and Pilate, the figures directly related to Rome, from major blame for their murderous actions by scapegoating Herodias, in the case of John the Baptist, and the Jerusalem Jewish leaders, in the case of Jesus”<sup>21</sup>. This ambivalence, she argues, “may relate to early Christian hopes of winning Roman converts” and “avoids offending too greatly those with real power to harm”<sup>22</sup>.

Tolbert finds that in advocating a resistant postcolonial rhetoric against colonist forces Mark invokes a rival imperial ideology. This is particularly evident in Mk.13: 9-27 where there is a promise of God’s deliverance of His faithful by imposing His violence upon their enemies. For the earliest audience of Mark’s story of Jesus the verses in chapter 13:9-27 would function as resistance literature against the colonial (elite Jewish and Roman) powers who controlled their economic, religious, and political destiny. And their resistance would end in victory when those councils, governors, and kings who now persecute them were in their turn to be destroyed by an even more powerful ruler, God<sup>23</sup>. For a marginal, colonized, powerless group, the appropriation and application of this text is fairly straightforward. But she wonders whether any group who see themselves as marginalized and powerless can be encouraged to appropriate this passionate hope for the divine annihilation of their oppressor. She asks: under what extreme circumstance is such a vengeful, blood thirsty, and pitiless view of one’s enemies morally justified? She finds

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<sup>20</sup> Tolbert, “When Resistance...”, p. 335.

<sup>21</sup> Tolbert, “When Resistance...”, p. 336, *Sowing the Gospel*, p. 305.

<sup>22</sup> Tolbert, “When Resistance...”, p. 336.

<sup>23</sup> In her book she appears to play down this role of God. She says “The meting out of divine punishment on the murderous authorities of this generation is unnecessary, for by plunging the world into that ultimate bloodbath of violence they bring down judgment on their



that a grave hermeneutical problem inevitably would arise when the text moves from its historical and cultural context of marginality to the centre (in her case to the United States) from where this so-called 'literature of resistance' can operate as a dominant and dominating 'literature of repression'<sup>24</sup>.

### 5.3 Mark as Colonial Mimicry of Tyranny, Boundary and Might

Quite contrary to Horsley, Myers and others who uphold Mark as resistance literature Benny Liew, though he recognizes the Roman colonial context of Mark and its anti-colonial polemic, views it as a colonialist discourse which duplicates and internalizes the colonial ideology of the Roman colonists<sup>25</sup>. Unlike Tolbert who recognizes the anti-colonial nature of Mark as a rival, resistant document at least in the context of its authorial audience, Benny Liew finds it simply mimicking the Roman colonists by internalizing and duplicating their ideology of colonialism in order to continue its own brand of imperial tyranny, boundary and might. He criticizes the so-called 'resistance' reading of Myers and others as an attempt to 'idealize' one aspect of the Gospel, where as his 'diasporic consciousness' refuses to idealize anything<sup>26</sup>.

Though Liew makes such an exalted claim of refusing to idealize anything, in actual practice of reading, he idealizes Mark as a colonial mimicry, i.e., Mark internalizes and duplicates the colonial ideology because Liew thinks that in a colonial context the colonised can simply and only internalize the world constructed by the colonists. Hence his (idealized) postcolonial (re)search for "the way Mark (i) attributes absolute authority

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own heads, securing their own demise. The coming, ...is a saving, protective, and totally positive event...", (*Sowing*, p. 266).

<sup>24</sup> See Tolbert, "When Resistance...", pp. 337-339. Also see "Christianity, Imperialism, and the Decentering of Privilege" in *Reading from this Place*, pp. 347-361. Elizabeth Fiorenza too in her reading of Revelation expresses similar concerns. See *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1998.

<sup>25</sup> Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark's Gospel", *JSNT* 73, 1999, pp. 7-31, *idem*, *Politics of Parousia: Reading Mark Inter(con)textually*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 46ff. In his book he deals with 'subjects of authority, agency and gender'.

<sup>26</sup> For his autobiographic 'diasporic consciousness' see "Tyranny, Boundary and Might" pp. 9-13, *Politics*, pp. 40-43, "Reading with Yin Yang Eyes: Negotiating the Ideological Dilemma of a Chinese American Biblical Hermeneutics", *Bib Inter.* 9:3, 2001, pp. 309-335. For

to Jesus, (ii) preserves the insider-outsider binary opposition, and (iii) understands the nature of ‘legitimate’ authority” with a view “to argue that Mark has indeed internalized the imperialist ideology of his colonizers”<sup>27</sup>.

According to Liew Jesus’ absolute (tyrannical) authority in Mark is evident in the way Mark presents Jesus in ‘categories of authority’ in relational, hierarchical terms. Jesus, though related to the Hebrew scripture, is the fulfillment of scripture as the son and heir. Hence Jesus as a ‘master scribe’ enjoys tyrannical authority to interpret or change or break the scripture. His status and authority as ‘God’s one and only regent’ replaces scripture. “This claim of singularity is, of course, an effective ideological weapon that leads to absolutism by allowing no comparison or competition”<sup>28</sup>. Similarly though Jesus is related to the good news as a propagator he is also the proclaimed. In Mark he associates himself with God and the good news (8:35; 9:37; 10:29f.). As a greater scribe, prophet, law giver and king and also as the only son of God he acts in tyrannical authority as a law unto himself.

Jesus’ authority as the only son in Mark seems to result in another hierarchical community structure. He, as the ‘lord’ of the community (family) ‘authorizes’ his ‘servants’ and ‘commands’ his ‘doorkeeper’ to keep watch (13:34-7). The imagery here “is that of an institution where vertical structure and the threat of punishment are all accepted modes of operation”<sup>29</sup>. Jesus is at the pinnacle of the pecking order of his family, like the Roman rulers at the pinnacle of their hierarchy of power, ‘lording over’ and ‘exercising authority over’ (10:42) those who rank below them. With Jesus on the throne, his disciples are often reduced to ‘sidekick’ roles as the loyal satellites—virtually personified colonies of the messiah<sup>30</sup>.

Another colonial mimetic scene which Liew highlights in Mark is the area of boundary making. The social formation of Jesus’ community in Mark is based on binary

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Diasporic Studies in Biblical Studies see also Segovia, (ed.), *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, Sheffield: SAP, 2000.

<sup>27</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might”, p. 13, *Politics*, pp. 108, 149f., 167. He thinks “Mark’s own anti-colonial narrative reinscribes colonial and patriarchal ideology.” (167)

<sup>28</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might”, p. 16, *Politics*, pp. 94-102, 104-107.

<sup>29</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might”, p. 18, *Politics*, pp. 103-104.



opposition. Following Jesus is a precondition to become ‘insiders’ and all others remain as ‘outsiders’. The outsiders are destined for violent destruction at the time of the parousia when those who ousted Jesus’ will be completely ousted. Thus by “[p]resenting an all-authoritative Jesus who will eventually annihilate all opponents and all other authorities, Mark’s utopian, or dystopian, vision, in effect, duplicates the colonial (non)choice of ‘serve-or-be-destroyed’”<sup>31</sup>. He promotes a hierarchical, punitive, and tyrannical concept of ruler and ruled, while claiming that it was all for the best.

And finally Liew argues that the authority which Jesus exercises in his teaching, healing and other activities is the manifestation of his power (might). Jesus’ authority as might or power is again obvious in the dramatic events associated with the parousia. In Mark, the parousia is God’s ultimate show of force and power through Jesus<sup>32</sup>. It is an act of righting all wrongs by annihilating all the wicked and vindicating the victims via vindictive means. Liew argues that by defeating power with more power, Mark is no different from the ‘might-is-right’ ideology that has led to colonialism, imperialism and various forms of suffering and oppression. Mark’s Jesus may have replaced the ‘wicked’ Jewish-Roman power, but the tyrannical, exclusionary and coercive politics goes on<sup>33</sup>. So Benny Liew concludes and questions, “[w]hat we have,..., is a Jesus sitting at the pinnacle of the hierarchy of his household, dishing out commands and punishments. How is that different from the Gentile or Roman rulers who also sit at the pinnacle of their hierarchy of power, lording over and exercising authority over those who rank below them (10:42)?”<sup>34</sup>.

#### 5.4 Mark as a Colonial Archive with Traces of Postcolonial Heteroglossy

Jim Perkinson’s reading of Mark<sup>35</sup>, like Jon Berquist’s reading of the Hebrew canon formation<sup>36</sup>, is based on an assumption that a form of colonialism played a crucial role in shaping the Christian scriptures. He seems to assume that Mark made its way into

<sup>30</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might”, p. 19, *Politics*, p. 100.

<sup>31</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might...”, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might...”, pp. 24-26, *Politics*, p. 99

<sup>33</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might...”, p. 26, *Politics*, p. 107.

<sup>34</sup> Benny Liew, “Reading with Yin Yang Eyes...”, p. 319.

<sup>35</sup> Jim Perkinson, “A Canaanitic Word ...”, pp. 61-85.

the canon because of its inkling toward domination. He contrapuntally reads Mark as a colonial archive or ‘a discourse of power’<sup>37</sup> where the colonial voice of Jesus, though abounding, fails to silence the Canaanite subaltern voice from emanating and speaking for itself<sup>38</sup>. Mark by the very nature of its origin in the colonial in-between, interstitial space cannot always prevent the subtle irruption of the Canaanite voice in its ranks. For example, in Mark the word of the Syro-Phoenician woman (Canaanite according to Matt. 15:21-28) irrupts and intersects the word of Jesus. Mark tells us that it is because of her ‘saying’ (λογος) that she goes away. Perkinson finds that this is the word of the ‘other’ becoming a messianic word. The messianic power is “wrested from the Christ by the word of the other”<sup>39</sup>.

Unlike Gerd Theissen and Dayananda Carr<sup>40</sup> who portray this woman as a member of a socio-political dominant class or a privileged Greek citizenry which oppress the local Jewish population, Perkinson, from the point of view of the text itself, sees her as a ‘woman’, ‘non-Jew’, ‘pagan’ who considers herself a ‘dog’, as “Jesus’ ‘other’—not only geographically, but sexually, racially and religiously”<sup>41</sup>. He sees her significance as a disruptive figure figuring in the text as a disruption. “To the degree the text is taken seriously as a discourse of power convening its own field of normativity, the woman is clearly a disruptive figure, figured in the text itself as a disruption”<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> Berquist, “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives of Canonization”, pp. 15-35.

<sup>37</sup> Perkinson, “A Canaanitic Word...”, p. 69.

<sup>38</sup> For a discussion on colonial archive see Spivak, “The Rani of Sirmur”, pp. 247-272. She thinks that colonial archive is where the production of othering of the colonised takes place. She raises the serious question whether the voice of the ‘other’ can be heard from such colonial discourses. For contrapuntal reading strategy see Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 59, 79.

<sup>39</sup> Perkinson, “A Canaanitic Word...”, p. 65.

<sup>40</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans., Linda M. Maloney, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, pp. 60-80. He associate Jesus as saying “First let the poor people in the Jewish rural areas be satisfied. For it is not good to take poor people’s food and throw it to the rich Gentiles in the cities.” (75). Dayananda Carr reads this passage in a similar manner in “Dalit Theology is Biblical and it makes the Gospel Relevant” in *A Reader in Dalit Theology*, (ed.) Aravind Nirmal, Madras: UELCI, nd., pp. 71-92.

<sup>41</sup> Perkinson, “A Canaanitic Word...”, pp. 68f.

<sup>42</sup> Perkinson, “A Canaanitic Word...”, p. 69. Theissen also sounds similar when he says that “she takes a cynical image and ‘restructures’ it in such a way that it permits a new view of the situation and breaks through walls that divide people, walls that are strengthened by prejudice.” (*The Gospels*, 79f). Though he recognizes the woman’s restructuring (disrupting)



In his postcolonial reading of this pericope, Perkinson appears to use postcolonial concepts like space and time, rumour and panic. He finds that in a postcolonial space and time the subaltern 'other' reiterates the 'discourse of power' and disrupts its authority and boundary. Similarly in a postcolonial space, rumour and panic<sup>43</sup> play a crucial role in raising the 'other' from his/her otherness to become a matter of concern for the 'self'. This facilitates the entry of the 'other' and his/her voice into the discourse of the 'self'. In the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman rumour disrupts Jesus in the space of the other ("he could not be hid" 7:24c) and it is as a result of this rumour that the subaltern woman approaches Jesus. In order to silence his subaltern 'other' Jesus cites time and employs the discourse of power (7:27). But she in turn reiterates the discourse of power and distorts it to her own advantage and destroys the time-structure (7:28). "Her word opens a gap in his word: the past catches up to the present. Suddenly there are discontinuous times contentiously present in one discursive space"<sup>44</sup>.

What is particularly significant as a result of the subaltern woman's entry into the gap is the assertion of her 'solidarity in littleness'. She valorizes Jesus' own "politics of the least" (Mk 9:33-37) in her discourse. By doing so, she opens a space for her own daughter in the privileged position which Jesus accords to the most vulnerable<sup>45</sup>. She beats Jesus at his own speech game. She, through her littleness, effects a covert displacement of his exclusionary manoeuvre. "[S]he *does* (covertly) shame him-into honoring her appeal by re-presenting it as the concrete implication of his own reason for refusal"<sup>46</sup>. She speaks as "the other", as a non-Jewish, pagan, female agent. For a brief

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strategy, he appears to salvage Jesus by illumining her intuition to know and hear the positive attitude and intention of Jesus toward her and "she behaves like a 'devoted dog.'" Perkinson challenges such traditional salvaging strategies of the western exegetes.

<sup>43</sup> Perkinson, "A Cananitic Word...", pp. 70ff. Perkinson borrows this concept of rumor and panic from Bhabha. See Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 198-211.

<sup>44</sup> Perkinson, "A Cananitic Word...", p. 74.

<sup>45</sup> Perkinson, "A Cananitic Word...", p. 76.

<sup>46</sup> Perkinson, "A Cananitic Word...", p. 76.

moment, she speaks in his place. The subaltern 'other' speaks in and through the colonial archive<sup>47</sup>.

### 5.5 A Critical Appraisal of the Four Models and a Possible Way Forward

According to the essentialist/ resistance model Mark's story of Jesus is a portrayal of the subaltern Jesus who through his movement resists the colonist Romans and their local Judean aristocracy. This model classifies this story as a postcolonial nationalist discourse stirring anti-colonial nativism and nationalism. It retains and promotes an untainted subaltern consciousness which any historian with 'subaltern sensitivity' can recover at random from a simple reading of Mark. Horsley's model tends to romanticize and homogenize the subaltern subject Jesus and his movement that tends to cultivate a nostalgia for the lost origins. But in a colonial context we need to examine whether or not such an 'untaintedness' can possibly exist in a subject community and the text it produces—that is whether a colonised culture remains essentially native and its cultural essence can be retrieved so easily. Can the colonised live in complete exclusion from any sort of cultural and other contacts with the colonists?

According to Horsley (Myers and others) the Jesus movement was a renewal and revitalizing movement engaged in recovering the authentic religious traditions of ancient Israel. They think that in a colonised context the subaltern can return to the essentials of its culture and traditions as though these traditions are 'pure' devoid of any colonial influences. But a few recent studies on the 'Yehudite' canon show that the so-called Israelite canon and religious traditions are not devoid of colonial/ postcolonial influences because of their composition and promotion under the shadow of the Persian colonial authority<sup>48</sup>. Therefore Israel's so-called 'pure' traditions may be colonial and postcolonial in nature rather than essentialist in nature.

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<sup>47</sup> Benita Parry thinks that traces of colonised voice can be heard from texts born in colonial context. See her "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse", *OLR* 9:1-2, 1987, pp. 27-58.

<sup>48</sup> Jon Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, Philip Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'*, Sheffield: SAP, 1992.



Horsley thinks that Jesus in Mark “performs the actions of the new Moses-Elijah”. Mark’s Jesus and his followers are informed by distinctively Israelite traditions of leadership especially the foundational prophetic traditions of Moses and Elijah. This linking of Jesus with Moses and Elijah seems to be an attempt to plant Jesus in Israelite traditions as though these traditions are devoid of any colonial, imperial elements. For a postcolonial Canaanite reader Israel’s conquest of Canaan and all the traditions developed in connection with Moses and Exodus are typical colonial/ colonizing activities with far reaching consequences in the modern times<sup>49</sup>. Elijah’s Yahwistic fury and the slaughter of the religious leaders of native Canaanites on Mount Carmel illustrates the colonizing adventures of ancient Israelites (1 Kgs. 18:40). In light of such colonist traditions one wonders how would Jesus as new Moses and Elijah remain untainted and act as an anti-colonial resistant figure?

Finally Horsley believes that “reading Mark from a postcolonial perspective may enable the recovery of Mark as a narrative of imperially subjected peasantries... based on their indigenous traditions...” (162). He seems to have accepted uncritically the Subaltern Studies group’s claims in recovering the histories of Indian peasantry. But there are postcolonial theorists who raise questions about the very possibility of recovering histories of the subaltern and subaltern consciousness from colonial archives<sup>50</sup>. Again one can charge (as do for example Benny Liew and Tolbert) that the resistant ideology which Horsley and others claim to have found in Mark can potentially be a rival imperial ideology, i.e., God in Jesus and the covenant community potentially replace the Roman colonists. Horsely, thus, subalternizes a narrative that aspired (and achieved) hegemony.

Tolbert’s postcolonial model seems to be an expansion of her earlier new historicist reading of Mark. In her earlier work she proposed Mark as a popular literature with more or less religious intent (sowing the good news to the nations), but in her

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<sup>49</sup> R.A. Warrior, “A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians”, *Voices* (ed.), Sugirtharajah, pp. 277-285; J. Weaver, “From I-Hermeneutics ...”, Clara Sue Kidwell, *et al.*, *A Native American Theology*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001.

<sup>50</sup> See Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*, (eds.), Ashcroft, *et al.*, pp. 24-28, *idem*, “The Rani of Sirmur”, pp. 247-72, *idem*, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, (eds.), Guha and Spivak, pp. 3-32.

postcolonial reading, like Horsley and Myers she attributes a liberationist, socio-political intent to Mark. But unlike Horsley and Myers she quite rightly recognizes the potential danger of invoking a rival, imperial ideology for the purpose of liberation. According to her, acknowledging Mark as an essentialist resistant literature is one thing, but recognizing it both as a resistant as well as a rival, colonizing (imperial) literature is another, for the implication of the latter is crucial in one's interpretation of the text depending on one's socio-political context. In her proposed model, she cautions interpreters that an essentialist postcolonial text of resistance can become a repressive colonizing text as and when it moves from a dominated to a dominant community.

Tolbert's recognition of Markan ambivalence, though explained only very briefly, is a significant aspect which needs further exploration for an adequate understanding of the postcoloniality of Mark. She finds that Mark is maintaining an ambivalent affiliative-antagonistic attitude, typical of a postcolonial discourse, towards Roman colonists. But instead of recognizing it as something that comes from its author as an ambivalent postcolonial writer, Tolbert attributes this ambivalence to Mark's intention of gaining more colonist converts. Postcolonial critics now recognize that authors hailing from postcolonial contexts are ambivalent and complex characters. Therefore the schizophrenic love-hate gestures they may reflect in their writings cannot be attributed to one phenomenon alone. Instead it is the result of their double vision and forked tongue. Double vision "is one in which identity is constituted by difference; intimately bound up in love or hate (or both) with a metropolis which exercises its hegemony over the immediate cultural world of the post-colonial"<sup>51</sup>. In the light of such a complex postcolonial context we need to ask, Why does Mark while acting as a resistant and essentialist text, simultaneously signal some positive images for the colonist Romans? And what are the dynamics of antagonistic and affiliative postcolonial mechanics in Mark? If a postcolonial text exhibits ambivalent characteristics could it function solely as a resistant or a repressive text?

In the third model we find a radically reversed opinion quite contrary to the ones proposed by Horsley, Myers and Tolbert. Benny Liew thinks that in a colonial context the



colonised only mimic or duplicate the colonists and their imperial ideology. Though he accuses others like Myers of taking an idealized reading of Mark he appears to idealize the concept of postcolonial mimicry as duplication and appropriation. This seems to be an inadequate view of the whole concept of postcolonial mimicry and its function in a postcolonial context. Though he borrows the concept of mimicry from Bhabha his use of it in Mark does not fully concur with Bhabha's use of this concept in reading postcolonial texts<sup>52</sup>. According to Bhabha the colonised mimic the colonist masters with a view to mock, mutate and create menace. Mimicry is not only duplication but also disruptive and menacing. I discussed this in 'Postcolonial Mimicry'<sup>53</sup> and I will use it to read Mark in ways similar to the postcolonial theorists like Bhabha who used this concept in reading certain texts emanating in India during the colonial era.

Though Benny Liew recognizes Jesus' split personality and conflicting behaviour in Mark he fails to acknowledge it sufficiently in the sense of it as a characteristic response of postcolonial hybrids. The so-called authority and tyranny which he finds in the Markan Jesus can also be explained in terms of postcolonial (consensual-conflictual) hybridity.

It is interesting to note that in Liew's argument, in the first part of the paper, Jesus' mimicry of colonial authority mutes the binary opposition between Jesus and the Roman colonists. In his view Jesus became as tyrannical as the Roman colonists in Mark. But in the second part of the paper he seems to suggest that Jesus' mimicry creates a binary opposition between insiders and outsiders. This use of the concept of postcolonial mimicry is ambiguous and problematizes its use by other postcolonial theorists.

Benny Liew's reading does not sufficiently exhibit the complex portraiture of Jesus in Mark. For instance in Mark Jesus is the powerful *huios* and at the same time he is the suffering *huios*-human. He is the Son of Humanity having authority and also the

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<sup>51</sup> Ashcroft, *et al.*, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> Benny Liew problematizes Bhabha's positive use of colonial mimicry. He says: "I am using 'mimicry' to refer to a reinscription or a duplication of colonial ideology by the colonized". See "Reading With Yin Yang Eyes", p. 318 no. 16. This in my view is an inadequate use of the concept of colonial mimicry in a colonial/ postcolonial discourse.

<sup>53</sup> See Chapter 2.1.1

suffering Son of Humanity. He is crucified on a colonial cross and at the same time he dies according to God's will as a ransom and a covenant for many. It is also important to ask that if 'might is right' for the Markan Jesus how can he possibly be crucified on a Roman colonial cross? Is Jesus replacing and duplicating the colonial Roman and the elite Jewish discourses of power or is he the victorious 'other' and the 'objectified subject' (as Velutha in *The God of Small Things* and Dopdi in 'Draupadi') in Mark? Does he play the role of the tyrannical 'self' or the postcolonial victorious victim ('the other') in Mark? Is he a colonist 'self' or an hybridized 'other' in Mark?

In the fourth model, Mark is generally treated as a 'colonial archive' where the voice of the colonist 'self' abounds. This model at the same time recognizes that the subaltern voice is present and traceable within the Markan colonial archive. Therefore the role of a postcolonial critic is to trace this voice and give adequate sound quality to this voice. By doing so the colonial archive will deconstruct itself and give up its colonial authority. Treating Mark as a colonial archive, though understandable in the case of those who suffered under western Christian colonialism, seems inappropriate in the first century colonial context where this story first emerged, where both the author and his audience lived most probably as colonised subjects. The assumption and treatment of Mark as a colonialist archive is inappropriate in light of its origin in the first century Roman colonial context and from among a subjected minoritarian community that lived under surveillance of both the native Jewish elite and the Roman political authorities. An apparently domineering rhetoric in a discourse emanating from a colonised subject in a colonial context need not necessarily make it a colonizing discourse. Can we possibly treat 'Draupadi' or *The God of Small Things*, or Solomon's Platjee's *Mhudi* or Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* as colonialist or colonizing discourses simply because of the domineering rhetoric or postures of the protagonists in these creative novelistic discourses?

In the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman it appears that Jesus acts as a colonist but it is important to remember that in any postcolonial context the colonised subjects see with a double vision, i.e., with the vision of the colonised and colonists, and speak with a forked tongue, speaking as the dominant and the dominated. Therefore it is important to



treat this story within the dynamics of transcultural (consensual and conflictual) hybridity and not as a dialogue between colonist Jesus and colonised woman. What is happening in this pericope perhaps illustrates the typical postcolonial feature of place and displacement: the subaltern Jesus displaces and enters into a colonist space and the doubly subaltern woman moves from her double subalterity to the place of 'victorious otherness'. This story also illustrates the postcolonial crisis of identity and the liberative dynamics of reiteration (woman repeating the words of Jesus), the problem of approximation (Jesus approximating a colonist posture) and the possibility of different layers of colonialism within the colonised 'other'<sup>54</sup>.

Perhaps a word of caution in using this model may also be invoked here. Perkinson's model of reading may sound suitable to resurrect the subaltern voice from this particular story but it can pose problems when applied to a certain similar story in the other Gospels. If Perkinson's model is the way forward then one wonders how it may be applied to read say for instance the story of the Roman centurion's coming to Jesus with a very similar request (Matt. 8:5-13; Lk. 7:1-10). Here it is the Roman centurion's word and faith that bring the desired outcome as though the *logos* of the colonist centurion wrestles the *logos* out of Jesus!

### Conclusion

It is quite clear that these four models recognize that Mark can be read as a postcolonial text though there are a few major problems in these models. They appear to dispute only the nature of postcoloniality of Mark. For the first it is a resistant, essentialist text, for the second it is a resistant text with potential colonizing impulses, for the third it is a colonial mimicry (duplication) of colonizing ideology and for the fourth it is a colonial archive with only a few traces of anti-colonial subaltern voices. One may say that these models if taken in isolation would appear not to be sufficiently comprehensive to deal with the complexities, conundrums and cross-pollination of a postcolonial story such as the story of Jesus in Mark. Each tends to assume that Mark has a singular and monolithic make up, and replaces one set of socio-political stereo-types with another.

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<sup>54</sup> The possibility of different layers of colonialism within the colonised 'other' is

Such studies give the impression of a static and unvaried vision of the story of Jesus and suggest that there is only a single viewpoint.

It appears that these models have not succeeded in shedding light on the creative transcultural impulses and the dynamics of mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity existing underneath the apparently antagonistic or affiliative surface structures of a postcolonial text such as the story of Jesus in Mark. On the surface a colonial/ postcolonial text may appear as either abrogating or appropriating colonist discourses but at a deeper level it may not be the case of an 'either-or'. Instead it may exhibit a complex process of appropriating and abrogating, mimicking and mocking, affiliating and repulsing, consenting and conflicting with both the native and the alien colonial discourses of power. I hope to explore some such complexities in the story of Jesus in Mark as I engage in a postcolonial reading, firstly, of the affiliative-disruptive beginning of Mark and, secondly, in a decoding of its conundrumic colonial/ postcolonial portraiture of Jesus.



## Chapter 6

### The Beginning of Mark: An Affiliative-Disruptive Design

Learning to read a gospel beginning is one way to begin an informed reading of the gospels<sup>1</sup>.

#### Introduction

The postcolonial reading of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and a number of historical and apocalyptic discourses of the Greeks and Jews from the second century BCE to the close of the first century CE shows that an ambivalent colonial/postcolonial response to Roman colonialism was also prevalent among certain subject communities during this period in addition to the possible anti- and pro-colonial responses<sup>2</sup>. It is in this wider socio-political and complex discursive context that we may locate Mark's story of Jesus<sup>3</sup> in order to explore whether or not Mark too represents an anti- or pro-colonial response or an ambivalent colonial/postcolonial response towards both the native Jewish and the alien Roman discourses of power.

In the current chapter I read the beginning—the superscription (1:1) and the introduction (1:2-11)<sup>4</sup>— of Mark from a colonial/postcolonial perspective to see

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<sup>1</sup> Mikeal C. Parsons, “Reading a Beginning/Beginning a Reading: Tracing Literary Theory on Narrative Openings”, *Semeia* 52, 1991, p. 11 (pp. 11-31).

<sup>2</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4

<sup>3</sup> For a recent study on the setting of Mark, the Markan community etc. see Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible, v. 27), New York: Doubleday, 2000, pp. 17-39. The exact date of Mark is a controversial matter from the time of Clement of Alexandria [who thinks that Mark is written during Peter's life time, (cited in Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.14.5-7)] and Irenaeus [who believes it to be written after Peter and Paul (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1)] to our own times. Modern scholars associate its origin in relation to the Roman-Jewish War (66-70 CE). Some would place Mark in the mid-60s during the Neronian persecution (V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London: Macmillan, 1953, pp. 31f.), others during the war (W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel*, trans., James Boyce, et al., New York: Abingdon Press, 1969) and yet others either during or after the war (D.E. Nineham, *Saint Mark*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963, p. 42, J. Gnllka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus*, 1 Teilband, *Mk 1-8,26*, Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1978, p. 35, M.D. Hooker, *A Commentary on The Gospel According to St. Mark*, London: A & C Black, 1991, p. 8, Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, pp. 28ff.). Entering into this debate over date and location is beyond the limits of this thesis. What is important for my purpose is its locale in the Roman world and its origin from among a subject community some time in the latter half of the first century CE (cf. Hooker, *A Commentary*, p. 8).

<sup>4</sup> A number of Markan scholars treat 1:1 either as a verbless title, a superscription or a caption-summary. See Eugene Boring, “Mark 1:1-15 and the Beginning of the Gospel” in *Semeia* 52, 1991, p. 50. He makes a distinction between title (1:1) and introduction (1:2-15). For a similar approach see Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, Teil 1, *Einleitung und Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1-8,26*, Freiburg: Herder, 1984, pp. 74-75, J.D. Kingsbury, *The*



whether or not Mark begins the story of Jesus as an affiliative-disruptive response to both Roman and the relatively dominant native Judean-Jewish discourses.

It is generally acknowledged that the author of Mark<sup>5</sup> writes the story of Jesus<sup>6</sup> in the Hellenistic-Roman-Jewish world in the latter half of the first century CE and in a cultural setting which produced a number of what we may identify as postcolonial novelistic, historical and apocalyptic discourses<sup>7</sup>. Hence it is possible to assume that Mark like the authors of those contemporary discourses cannot but be concerned with issues and perceptions emanating from this colonial context and contacts. After all, his story is about Jesus who was tried in a Roman court and crucified on a colonial cross. In my postcolonial reading of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, I argued that this novelistic discourse is affiliated enough to be disruptive to Roman colonialism in the Greek east. Chariton appears to be different to a certain degree from the contemporary native elites in the east who expressed exclusive affiliation to Rome via participating in

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*Christology of Mark's Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983, p. 56. But there are others who challenge such a distinction between 1:1 and 1:2ff. See Tolbert, *Sowing*, pp. 108ff., 239ff., Gnllka, *Das Evangelium*, p. 42, R.A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* (WBC 34a), Dallas: Word Books, 1989, pp. 6ff., Hooker, *A Commentary*, pp. 33f. Joel Marcus in a reconciling mood suggests that "Mark begins his work with a title (1:1) that introduces both the prologue (1:1-13 or 1:1-15) and the Gospel as a whole; this title then flows seamlessly into a conflation of three OT citations... that present John the Baptist and Jesus as the eschatological fulfillment of biblical hope (1:2-3)". He then adds: "Interpreting 1:1 as the title of the book ... helps make sense of the abrupt ending at 16:8...". *Mark 1-8*, pp. 143, 146. I perceive that the nature and extend of Mark's beginning are rather fluid for "a beginning is a process", perhaps "an open ended process". See E.S. Malbon, "Ending at the Beginning: A Response", *Semeia* 52, 1991, pp. 176, 184 (175-184).

<sup>5</sup> Unlike the author of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* (1.1) the author of Mark chose to remain anonymous. For a discussion on authorship see Taylor, *The Gospel*, pp. 26-31, Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, pp. xxv-xxix, Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, pp. 17-24.

<sup>6</sup> The genre of Mark has been a subject of debate among Markan scholars. For the possible literary antecedents of Mark see H.C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel*, London: SCM Press, 1977, pp. 14-30. Mark as Hellenistic 'Life' see C. Bryan, *The Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in Its Literary and Cultural Settings*, New York: OUP, 1993, pp. 22-64. In recent years an increasing number of scholars treat Mark as a narrative or novelistic discourse. See G.G. Bilezikian, *The Liberated Gospel: A Comparison of the Gospel of Mark and Greek Tragedy*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1977, N.R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978, D. Rhodes and D. Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982, E. Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, Tolbert, *Sowing*, pp. 55-79, Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, pp. 13-44.

<sup>7</sup> Recent Markan scholars like Beavis, Tolbert and Robbins read Mark within the context of Hellenistic and Jewish novelistic, biographic etc. discourses. See Beavis, *Mark's Audience*, pp. 31-39, Tolbert, *Sowing*, pp. 59-78, Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 1-17, 53-



imperial architecture, art, sculpture and the imperial cult in order to play a major part in the web of power<sup>8</sup>. Chariton as a postcolonial discursive writer appears to adopt an ambivalent affiliative-disruptive response to both the Roman and the native Greek discursive landscape. This chapter, therefore, will examine whether or not Mark like Chariton maintains an ambivalent response both to Rome and to the relatively dominant native Judean-Jewish (nationalistic and collaborative) discourses of power<sup>9</sup>.

I would argue that it is not improbable for Mark to begin the good news of Jesus Messiah in a moment of historical transformation of his minority community which is trying to map a space for itself in between the colonial setting dominated by Rome on the one side and also by a certain segment or segments of the Judean native Jewish culture on the other. In such a setting the social articulation of difference may for Mark be a complex process that potentially creates cultural hybridities<sup>10</sup>. Mark, in writing the story of Jesus the colonised subject, may be engaging in a complex negotiation in between the ethnically dominant Jewish and politically and culturally dominant Roman discourses and perceptions of power<sup>11</sup>. This negotiation in all probability estranges any immediate tendency to establish an originary or essentializing identity or to affiliate entirely with the colonialist cultural categories, perceptions and traditions to the extent of losing one's own strategic identity. Mark's borderline engagements of cultural difference may be consensual and conflictual, affiliative and disruptive to both the native and the alien discourses of power.

### The Task

Every writer knows that the choice of a beginning is crucial not only because it determines much of what follows but also because a work's beginning is, practically

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73. But they, understandably, do not consider it as a postcolonial novelistic literature, a possibility I pursue based on their works.

<sup>8</sup> Both S. Price and D. Edwards suggest that the elite in the Greek east responded to Rome solely in an affiliatory manner. See Price, *Rituals and Power*, Edwards, *Religion and Power*.

<sup>9</sup> For a similar approach to study Mark via postclassical novels see R.F. Hock, "Social Experience and Beginning of the Gospel of Mark" in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack*, (eds.), E. Castelli and H. Taussig, Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996, pp. 311-26. For Markan ambivalence to native nationalistic discourse of power see Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 2. See also Chapter 2.1

speaking, the main entrance to what it offers<sup>12</sup>. A beginning on the one hand is where the writer departs from all other discourses but on the other a beginning will immediately establish relationships with already existing discourses, relationships of either continuity or antagonism or a mixture of both<sup>13</sup>. It is in exploring this ‘mixture of both’ that I am interested in my postcolonial reading of the beginning of Mark and not necessarily the syntactical structure, the extent or the ending of the Markan beginning<sup>14</sup>.

In this chapter, firstly, I examine the ‘intentional hybridity’ (consensual-conflictual) of the Markan superscription (1:1). For this I will explore the possible socio-linguistic, religio-political and the complex and often conflicting cultural perceptions behind the use of *ἀρχή*, *εὐαγγέλιον* and *υἱὸς θεοῦ* in the Roman imperial cult and also the Jewish perceptions of *ἀρχή*, *εὐαγγέλιον*, *Χριστός* and *υἱὸς θεοῦ* while living under the colonial dominion of Rome. Secondly, I explore the

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<sup>11</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, p. 4. His ‘comparative analysis’ traces mostly the ‘similarities’ and ‘influences’ contained in Mark from a general stream of Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions. He seems to be not interested in the political map of these traditions.

<sup>12</sup> A prologue, according to Aristotle, paves the way for what follows (*Rhetoric* 3.14.1). For a study ‘On the beginning of books’ and ‘Historical prefaces’ in Greco-Roman literature see L. Alexander, *The preface to Luke’s Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1*, Cambridge: CUP, 1993, 11-41. For different types of narrative beginnings—the preface, the dramatic prologue, the incipit, and the virtual preface—in ancient literature see Dennis E. Smith, “Narrative Beginnings in Ancient Literature and Theory” in *How the Gospels Begin*, (ed.), *idem*, *Semeia* 52, 1991, pp. 1-9. He thinks that Mark’s opening is an ‘incipit’ type, i.e., a brief phrase or title that introduces this document (p.4). For a discussion on Mark’s beginning see L.E. Keck, “The Introduction of Mark’s Gospel”, *NTS* 12, 1965-66, pp. 352-70, F.J. Matera, “The Prologue as the Interpretive Key to Mark’s Gospel”, *JSNT* 34, 1988, pp. 3-20, Boring, “Mark 1:1-15...”, pp. 43-81.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, p. 3. Also see Mikeal C. Parsons, “Reading a Beginning/Beginning a Reading”, pp. 11-31 especially pp. 24f.

<sup>14</sup> There is no consensus on the syntactical structure, extend or the ending of Mark’s beginning. For Mk. 1:1-13 as the beginning see R.H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1950, pp. 15-30, J.M. Robinson, *the Problem of History in Mark*, London: SCM Press, 1957, pp. 21-32. According to Keck and Boring Mk. 1:1-15 is the beginning. Concerning the syntactical fluidity of Markan beginning Boring says: “Mark 1:1-4 can be construed syntactically in several different ways. ... There are a number of ways of seeing Mark 1:1-4 as two, three, or four syntactical units.” (“Mark 1:1-15...”, pp. 48f., 47-50). I perceive that Mark allowed a syntactical fluidity in conjunction with the ambivalence and fluidity of the words, codes and categories of culture he employs in these verses. Mark maintains fluidity, but the scholars want a clear-cut syntactic, thematic outline and structure in the story. “The scholar’s desire for a clear outline may arise from our need to simplify and control the complexities of narrative”, R.C. Tannehill, “Beginning to Study ‘How Gospels



interpretive (midrashic) tradition in Judaism and the Markan affiliation and disruption of this tradition in the introduction (1:2-11). I suggest that Mark's midrashic strategy appears to be a postcolonial (affiliative-disruptive) discursive strategy. I will also analyze the portrayal of John as a prophetic angel and also the way in which Mark attaches and detaches John and Jesus (1:4-8) and, initiates Jesus as an apparently anomalous *huios*-human hybrid (1:9-11).

### 6.1 *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ] (1:1)*

Mark begins the story of Jesus with a certain category of words, referents, representations and symbols—*Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]*<sup>15</sup>—in the form of a superscription. Why does Mark seize these words and symbols? What are their possible discursive contexts? Do they appear in the imperial and in any other religio-cultural discourses of his time? If they do what possible perceptions do they represent? Does Mark potentially abrogate these perceptions by appropriating these words? How would these words and symbols speak in a complex socio-political context and in the polyphonic religio-linguistic consciousness<sup>16</sup> of an audience<sup>17</sup> who live in the *ἀρχή* and majesty of imperial Rome and in the socio-cultural context of variously manifesting Judaisms with their manifest and hidden messiahs and sons of God? Does Mark disrupt the symbolics, the cultural categories and the privileged knowledge of the imperial centre by mimicking and simultaneously creating a critique behind the back of the dominant? Can Mark's appropriation of the

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Begin” in *Semeia* 52, p. 186 (185-92). For fluidity, mimicry etc. as important elements in postcolonial writing see Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 86ff.

<sup>15</sup> Most manuscripts including some early ones add *υἱοῦ θεοῦ* to *Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, but it is absent in Sinaiticus and several other important textual witnesses. However, I take it as part of the superscription as it appears in *The Greek New Testament* edited by Kurt Aland and others (3<sup>rd</sup> corrected edn. UBS).

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of text and language releasing multidimensional meaning see Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 304-360, Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans., Stephen Heath, New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, pp. 146-148. According to Barthes, “the text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture” p.146. Also see M. Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans., D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977.

<sup>17</sup> For ‘Authorial Audience’ see Tolbert, *Sowing*, pp. 52-55.



language and symbolics of the empire and the discursive strategies of the Judean Jewish culture be seen as consensual<sup>18</sup> or conflictual<sup>19</sup> or a mixture of both?

### 6.1.1 *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου υἱοῦ θεοῦ* in the Roman Imperial Cult

In Chapter 4 on ‘The Colonial/ Postcolonial World of Mark’ I relate the various means by which the imperial/colonial Romans engaged in diplomatic (e.g., treaties), military (wars) and cultural (e.g., slogans such as the “freedom of the Greeks”) discourses in order to enforce the *ἀρχή* and majesty of Rome in the Hellenic and Jewish east. In the current chapter I may add that the *ἀρχή*<sup>20</sup> of Rome is also expressed and enforced via a cult of Rome’s emperors being worshipped either as gods (Julius Caesar as *divus*<sup>21</sup>) or sons of God (Octavian and Claudius as *divi filius*) both in Rome and in the provincial (colonial) peripheries since the beginning of the principate<sup>22</sup>. Writers such as Taylor<sup>23</sup>, Fears<sup>24</sup>, Price<sup>25</sup> and Brent<sup>26</sup> have shown the

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<sup>18</sup> Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might”.

<sup>19</sup> Some of the recent studies and lectures on Mark, Matthew and Paul continue to use the ‘opposition model’ portraying the New Testament writers as ‘essentially’ anti-imperialistic in nature. See Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, Horsley, “Submerged Biblical...”, Warren Carter, “Toward an Imperial-Critical Reading of Matthew’s Gospel”, *SBL Sem. Papers*, Part 1, 1998, pp. 296-324, Horsley, (ed.), *Paul and Empire*, N.T. Wright, “A Fresh Appraisal on Paul”, The Manson Memorial Lecture, University of Manchester, 26 Oct., 2000.

<sup>20</sup> The word *ἀρχή* has a convenient width of meaning in Greek. It means ‘beginning’ (Herodot. 3.153,7.5) or ‘empire’ or ‘realm’ (Herodot. 1.91, Thu. 4.128) or ‘power’ or ‘sovereignty’ (Aristotle. *Pol.* 1284b2) or ‘the original material from which everything has evolved’ (Philo, *Rer. Div. Her.*, 172, *Decal.*, 52, *Plant.*, 93, *Leg. All.*, I,5, *Jos. Ant.* 8.280). Polybius uses *ἀρχή* to express Rome’s desire to rule over the whole world (1.3.6, 1.3.10, 3.2.6) and also as ‘beginning’ or ‘origin’ (4.28.3). In Latin the equivalent word ‘*imperium*’ is mostly Post- Augustan and in the publicists’ language it means ‘supreme power, sovereignty, sway, dominion, empire’. See ‘*imperium*’ in Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962 (1879), p. 900.

<sup>21</sup> See S. Weinstock, *Divus Julius*, London: OUP, 1971, Price, “Gods and Emperors: The Greek Language of the Roman Imperial Cult”, *JHS*, Vol. CIV, 1984, pp. 79-95.

<sup>22</sup> For a recent discussion on Roman imperial cult see *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity*, (ed.), A. Small. For a bibliography on ruler cult see P. Herz, “Bibliographie zum römischen Kaiserkult (1955-1975)”, *ANRW* II. 16.2, 1978, pp. 833-910.

<sup>23</sup> L.R. Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, Connecticut: The American Philological Association, 1931. She, according to the views of on imperial cult during the time of her writing, viewed imperial cult as a ‘superficial’ religious phenomenon, i.e., it is more a matter of practical politics than of religion. See pp. 35, 237f.

<sup>24</sup> J.R. Fears, “The Cult of Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology” in *ANRW* II. 17.1, pp. 3-141, *idem*, “The Cult of Virtues and Roman Imperial Ideology” in *ANRW* II 17.2, pp. 827-948.



centrality of the imperial cult to Roman religion, particularly its ability to synthesize itself with traditional cults in various subtle ways. The Roman emperors through the imperial cult espoused a worldview, a myth of supernatural character beyond military, economic and socio-political bases of power which defines and legitimates their rule and the existence of their empire.

The concept of the emperor's divinity developed as did the empire itself after the old republican form of government had proved itself inadequate to rule a wide domain<sup>27</sup>. It grew up at a time when Rome was in close contact with the ideas of the life and thought in the east. The worship of emperors either as divine beings or as agents of gods had been an eastern and Egyptian practice. The Persians worshipped their emperors as gods<sup>28</sup>. When Alexander of Macedon turned to the east and overran the Persian empire (victory over Darius at Gaugamela) he was honoured as a god or as a son of god. After him his successors were worshipped either as divine beings or as divine manifestations (e.g., Antiochus Epiphanes) in the east and in Egypt<sup>29</sup>. This practice seems to have continued when the 'great' generals of Rome won victories in the eastern and southern parts of the empire. Pompey, for example, as saviour of the Orient, had many a temple built to him in the cities that he liberated from 'pirates' and the power of Mithradates<sup>30</sup>.

The domination of the east by Rome, and of Rome by Augustus, put an end to the creation of new cults of kings and governors, while the cult of Rome was easily

<sup>25</sup> Price, *Rituals and Power*, *idem*, "Gods and Emperors". He uses the 'theory of symbolic evocation' which permits us "to accept that people mean what they say but it does not entail the crude 'literalist' consequences. People can mean what they say without their statements being fully determinate." (*Rituals*, p. 9).

<sup>26</sup> A. Brent, 'The Foundations of the Imperial Cult' (ch.2) in *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity before the Age of Cyprian*, Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 17-72.

<sup>27</sup> Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, 50ff. For the role of the cult of Jupiter in Republic Rome's imperial expansion and the evolution and personification of Jupiter in the emperor of early principate see J.R. Fears, "The Cult of Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology", pp. 3-141.

<sup>28</sup> See L.R. Taylor, 'The Worship of the Persian King' in *The Divinity*, pp. 247-255.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion on 'The divinity of Kings in the Hellenistic East', 'Alexander and the Proskynesis' see Taylor, *The Divinity*, pp. 1-34, 256-266, E. Badian, "Alexander the Great between two thrones and Heaven: variations on an old theme" in *Subject and Ruler* (ed.), A. Small, pp. 11-26. Also see Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 25-40, "Gods...", p. 81.

<sup>30</sup> See 'The Divinity of Man and King in Republican Rome', Taylor, *The Divinity* pp. 35-57, For cults of Roma and individual Romans and Greeks see Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 40-49.



transformed into a cult of Rome and Augustus or a cult of Augustus alone<sup>31</sup>. Augustus initially as the *Pontifex Maximus* and *augur* performed an act of augury which would be sufficiently powerful, as the existing cult was not, to deal with the disintegration both in the natural and in the socio-political order of things and thus to secure the *pax deorum*<sup>32</sup>. Then as *imperator* and *princeps* he promoted myths and stories to propagate a belief that he was the son of a god and Julius Caesar was a god himself<sup>33</sup>. He presented himself as *divi filius*, the son of a god or 'god the son of the god Caesar' in his official name (*θεοῦ Καίσαρος θεοῦ υἱοῦ*)<sup>34</sup>.

Later on the Julio-Claudians and Flavians also pursued this tradition in the provinces as a means of imperial control<sup>35</sup>. From Tiberius onwards we find examples of the continued qualification of each individual deity in the cult of the virtues<sup>36</sup> that shows their gradual assimilation by the godhead of the imperial cult. Such virtues when they ceased to be separate divinities became part of the collective personality of the divine emperors<sup>37</sup>. The worship of emperors as personifications of these virtues in private and public cult would in effect invoke these virtues in the empire. The

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<sup>31</sup> See R.L. Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, London: Penguin, 1986, pp. 39-40, Garnsey and Saller, *The Roman Empire*, pp.163-170, Taylor, *The Divinity*, pp. 142-180, Price, *Rituals and Power*, pp. 49ff., 54-9, Paul Zanker, "The Power of Images" in *Paul and Empire*, (ed.), R. Horsley, pp. 72-86, Larry J. Kreitzer, *Striking New Images: Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World*, Sheffield: SAP, 1996, pp. 69-98, Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 50-72.

<sup>32</sup> Augustus' appropriation of the divine and personalized *Pax* to *Pax Augusta* was a discreet means of assimilating *Pax* to his own divinity. So also the transformation of his house into the temple of Vesta made the worship of Vesta and the *Penates* of Augustus indistinguishable. See Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 51, 61

<sup>33</sup> "O Caesar... you come as god of the vast sea and sailors worship your divinity..." (Virgil, *Georgics*, 1.24-30). "This is the man ..., Augustus Caesar, son of God, who shall found the golden age once more over the fields where Saturn once reigned..." (*Aeneid* 6.791-5). "Julius the god, looking down upon the good deeds of his son, admits that they are greater than his own... . . . may that day be slow to come, postponed beyond our generation, on which Augustus, leaving the world he rules, will make his way to heaven..." Ovid, *Metamorph.*, 15.803-79.

<sup>34</sup> See V. Ehrenberg and A.H.M. Jones (eds.), *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955, no. 118 p. 93. For the development of imperial cult in different stages under Augustus see Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 50-71.

<sup>35</sup> See Price, "Gods and Emperors", p. 81 no. 18 and p. 82 no. 37.

<sup>36</sup> The virtues personified as gods include *Pax*, *Salus*, *Felicitas*, *Concordia*, *Pietas* etc.

<sup>37</sup> Cassius Dio, *History of Rome*, 51.20. 6-8. See also Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, pp. 65f., Goodman, *The Roman World*, pp. 123-134, Simpson, "Caligula's cult: immolation, immortality, intent" in *Subject and Ruler*, (ed.), Small, pp. 63-71, Reynolds, "Ruler-cult at



imperial cult thus appealed to Augustus, as it did to later emperors, as a way of focusing the loyalty of provincials on the imperial *persona*, as a means of achieving colonial *ἀρχή* by consent. The imperial cult integrated the local elites to the imperial power structure. This is indicative of the fact that the cult of emperors (as gods or sons of gods) was employed as a discursive instrument to promote the military and colonial *ἀρχή* of Rome<sup>38</sup>.

The *ἀρχή* of Rome and her emperors was often invigorated by an eulogy (*εὐαγγελίον*) of the victory of Rome. In victory the empire was founded and through victory it was perpetuated. It was the theology of victory that provided the essential political myth for the monarchies of the Julio-Claudians and Flavians. From the commencement of the principate, Victoria Augusta assumed a central position in the political mythology invoked to sanction the immense and cumbersome fabric of the far-flung, disparate, and supranational empire of Rome. As such Victoria Augusta formed an essential feature of Roman imperial statecraft<sup>39</sup>. Victories in wars are celebrated as the epiphanies of Victoria. Octavian's victories proclaimed as *εὐαγγελίον* are also celebrated as epiphanies of a specific Victoria, i.e., Victoria Augusta<sup>40</sup>. Victoria in times of wars was personified in Octavian (*Victoria Caesaris Augusti Imperatoris*) and other emperors (*Victoria Imperatoris Caesaris Vespasiani Augusti*) bringing peace (*pax*) and salvation (*salus*)<sup>41</sup>. Vespasian is believed to be the recipient of divine favour to rule and also to act as an agent of divine blessings<sup>42</sup>. The

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Aphrodisias in the late Republic and under the Julio-Claudian emperors", *Subject*, (ed.), Small, pp. 41-50.

<sup>38</sup> Price, *Rituals*, pp. 62ff., 239ff. On imperial cult as a unifying force see also K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, Cambridge: CUP, 1978 (ch.5), Goodman, *The Roman World*, pp. 135-140.

<sup>39</sup> Fears, "The Theology of Victory at Rome: Approaches and Problems" in *ANRW II*, 17:2, pp. 736-826 especially 804-812. Also see Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, pp. 46ff.

<sup>40</sup> Fears, "The Theology of Victory at Rome", p. 742. A League of Asian cities proclaimed the nativity of Augustus as the beginning of good tidings, see p. 806. "Caesar is associated with an *ἐπιφανεία*, *ἐλπίς* and *εὐαγγέλια* which surpass all other hopes and promises made" (Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 70).

<sup>41</sup> For a note on the personification of the theology of victory, see Fears, "The Theology of Victory at Rome", pp. 778-83, 787-812, W. Carter, "Contested Claims: Roman Imperial Theology and Matthew's Gospel", *BTB* 29:2, 1999, p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.10,18; 2.69, 82; 4.26,47; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.2-6; Dio, 64.9.1; 65.1.2-4. See also K. Scott, *The Imperial Cult Under the Flavians*, Stuttgart-Berlin: W.

deeds of these emperors were epiphanies of gods bringing salvation to the entire human race. Specific cults were established in recognition of the godhead manifested in earthly form.

The word *ἀρχή* may refer not only to the *imperium* of Rome but also to a certain significant theo-political 'beginning' in her religio-political history and the history of the world (*οἰκουμένη*). A document of the provincial assembly of Asia (Priene) reads:

... from previous gods we have received favour... whether the birthday of the most divine Caesar is more pleasant or more beneficial which we would justly consider to be a day equal to the beginning of all things ... for when everything was falling [into disorder] and tending toward dissolution, he restored it once more and gave to the world a new aspect<sup>43</sup>.

After a few lines we read that even if Augustus has not set the beginning of all things right 'in nature', "at least ... he has given to the whole world a different appearance". This shows that the divine Caesar's advent and rule is the beginning of a new political order<sup>44</sup>. *Αρχή* in this context means the beginning of a new political order, the beginning of the kingdom of the divine Caesar. This beginning of a new order is indeed the good news. An explanation of the Asian assembly's granting of honour to Augustus says that it is Providence that produced Augustus and sent him as a saviour who "exceeded the hopes of all who had anticipated good tidings. ... the birthday of the god marked for the world the beginning of good tidings through his coming..."<sup>45</sup>. As the passage continues, Caesar's appearance is associated with an *ἐπιφάνεια*, *ἐλπίς* and *εὐαγγέλια*<sup>46</sup> which seem to suggest that his and his successors' advent and reign is the *ἀρχή τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Καίσαρου υἱοῦ θεοῦ*.

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Kohlhammer, 1936, pp. 28-31. For Vespasian's coins honouring Victoria see Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, pp. 136f.

<sup>43</sup> Lines 1-6 *OGIS* 2, no. 458 cited in Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 68. For the full text and commentary of the Priene document see F.W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, St. Louis, Missouri: Clayton Publishing House, 1982, pp. 215-222.

<sup>44</sup> Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> Cited in Price, *Rituals and Power*, p. 54.



### 6.1.2 *Αρχή, Εὐαγγέλιον, Χριστος, Υἱος Θεοῦ* in Biblical and Post-Biblical Jewish Perceptions

In the Jewish religio-political and linguistic consciousness also *ἀρχή* would possibly evoke a width of meaning. Firstly the Jews who read the LXX may perceive *ἀρχή* in reference to the lineal ‘starting point’ or ‘beginning’ of time when God began his creative activity (*Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν*, Gen. 1:1) or the ‘commencement’ of the word of the Lord by (in) a prophet (*Αρχὴ λόγου Κυρίου ἐν Ὠσηέ*, Hos. 1:2, cf. 2 Es. 8:19) or God himself as *ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος* (Philo, *Plant.*, 93; *Ant.* 8.280; *Sib.* 8.375). Secondly it can mean a ‘foundation’ referring to, for example, the fear of the Lord as the ‘foundation’, ‘source’ or ‘beginning’ of wisdom (*Αρχὴ σοφίας φόβος Κυρίου* Prov. 1:7, 9:10, Ps. 111:10a, *Sir.* 1:14). Thirdly it can refer to the ‘dominion’ of the colonial power (... *ἐν πάσῃ ἀρχῇ τῆς βασιλείας μου*, Dan. 6:26), of the enemies of Israel (*Καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν θηρίων μετεστάθη ἡ ἀρχή*, ... (Dan. 7:12), ... *καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν μεταστήσουσι* 7:26) or of a Son of Humanity who comes to the ancient of days (*Καὶ αὐτῷ ἐδόθη ἡ ἀρχὴ* ... 7:14). Here Daniel envisages two competing *imperia*, and this competition is resolved only when the *ἀρχή* of the colonial enemies of the Jews is taken away and given to the one like a Son of Humanity<sup>47</sup>. In portraying a category of imperial culture in this manner Daniel appears to be setting a pattern of adopting and abrogating the political and linguistic categories of imperial culture for the Jewish and Christian subjects of imperial Rome<sup>48</sup>. The earliest Christians too seem to use *ἀρχή* in a variegated manner to refer either to rulers (*τὰς ἀρχὰς* Lk. 12:11), to dominion (*τῇ ἀρχῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ ἡγεμόνος* Lk. 20:20), or to divine beginning (Mk.10:6a, 13:19b, John, 1:1, Rev. 3:14) or source (Col. 1:18) or to God himself as *ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος* (Rev. 21:6, 22:13).

<sup>46</sup> Brent, *The Imperial Cult*, p. 70.

<sup>47</sup> For ‘*The ideology of Imperium in Daniel*’ see Philip Davies, “Daniel in the Lions’ Den” in *Images*, (ed.), L. Alexander, pp. 160-167 (Italics original). Explaining the ambivalence in Daniel Davies says: “There is no single image of empire or of reaction to it; the reader will find within it an unresolved tension between qualified approval and outright condemnation, between obedience and resistance, between co-operation and opposition.” (p. 161).

<sup>48</sup> Philip Davies, “Daniel in the Lions’ Den”, p. 160.

A reference to *εὐαγγέλιον* occurs in LXX in connection with the proclamation of the good news of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa. 40:9; 41:27; 52:1-7)<sup>49</sup>. Here the prophet announces the advent of a victorious reign of YHWH and the release and return of his people from colonial captivity. It is interesting to note that Deutero-Isaiah as a postcolonial prophet espouses an affiliative note when he portrays colonial Persia in a positive light (Isa. 45:1-4)<sup>50</sup> but at the same time this apparent affiliation is not without a ‘hidden script’ antagonistic towards Persian colonial masters (Isa. 52:11; 55:12). The good news, for Isaiah, is about YHWH’s *imperium* (reign) implying indirectly the end of Persian *imperium* over his people. The coming of a messenger with this good news (*εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθὰ*) according to Isaiah suggests the beginning of the good news of YHWH’s reign (52:7), an idea which Mark exploits when he quotes and puts together a conflated Isaianic prophecy, and implies it to be fulfilled by the coming of John (Mk. 1:2a, 4a, cf. Isa. 40:3) at the very outset of his story of Jesus.

The word *Χρίστος* (πῑψῆ) would potentially evoke a complex mixture of meanings within the Jewish socio-political and religio-cultural discursive context<sup>51</sup>. The term and concept of ‘messiah’ (anointed one) originated in a world of ideas connected with Israelite monarchy (“The Lord will give strength to our kings, and will exalt the horn *χριστου̇ αὐτου̇* (1 Sam. 2:10, 2:35), though at times high priests too are referred to as ‘the anointed priest’ (*ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ χριστός* Lev. 4:5). It referred to the anointing of Saul when God sent Samuel to anoint him as king (... *καὶ χρίσεις αὐτόν εἰς ἄρχοντα ἐπὶ τὸν λαόν μου Ἰσραὴλ, καὶ σώσει τὸν λαόν μου ...* . 1 Sam. 9:16, 10:1). Saul is called the *χριστός Κυρίου* (1 Sam. 12:3,5; 24:7-8,12;

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<sup>49</sup> For ‘*The Gospel and Deutero-Isaiah*’ see Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark*, Louisville: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1992, pp. 18-21.

<sup>50</sup> See Berquist, “Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives for Canonization”, *idem*, *Judaism in Persia’s Shadow*.

<sup>51</sup> The classic scholarly view (E. Schürer and G.F. Moore) often presents a uniform system of messianic expectation in ancient Judaism. This is challenged by the recent revisionist approach to the study of messiahs, messianisms and Judaisms. See Jacob Neusner, *et al*, (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, Cambridge: CUP, 1987, James H. Charlesworth, (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, (The First Princeton Symposium on Judaism and Christian Origins), Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature*, New York: Doubleday, 1995.



26:9,11,16; 2 Sam. 1:14; 2:5). When Saul was rejected David became *Κυρίου χριστός* (1 Sam. 16:3,13; 2 Sam. 2:4; 12:7). After David there was an expectation of a royal messiah from the line of David (2 Sam. 7:11-17; 2 Chron. 6:42)<sup>52</sup>. But with the gradual growing of a critical and negative attitude towards kings in actual history on the part of the prophets, the concept of messiah became attached to the idealized figure of a 'King to Come' (Jer. 23:5-6; Ez. 34:23-4)<sup>53</sup>. In this process of developing this idea the concept lost some of its initial concreteness and it became invested with a measure of non-reality<sup>54</sup>. The messianic king is also thought to be a son of God (2 Sam. 7:13f., Pss. 2, 45, 89, 110, 132, Isa. 9; Zech. 12:8) even though he is not identified with the deity in a full sense<sup>55</sup>. In Second Isaiah the Persian emperor Cyrus is called the christ of God (*τω χριστω μου Κυρω*, Isa. 45:1). In Daniel the reference to the messiah (*Χριστου ηγουμενου* 9:25f) suggests a priestly figure. Here is an allusion to a messianic saviour figure who is not of Davidic descent but a heavenly figure who is more like an angel than a human being<sup>56</sup>.

We have numerous postbiblical sources that show the messiah variously as one who will serve as the eschatological high priest or as the all powerful king, judge and destroyer of the wicked, deliverer of God's people etc. The Qumran Covenanters, for instance, believed in two anointed ones: a messiah of Israel and of Aaron, one representing the royal line of David and the other the high-priestly house, the former subordinated to the latter (IQSa=IQ28a)<sup>57</sup>. There is an inference that God will beget

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<sup>52</sup> See J.J.M. Roberts, "The Old Testament's Contribution to Messianic Expectations" in Charlesworth, (ed.), *The Messiah*, pp. 39-51.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Klausner appears to suggest that the word 'Messiah' as a designation of the expected redeemer does not occur either in the holy scriptures or in the book of Apocrypha. In this sense it is found for the first time in the Book of Enoch. See *The Messianic Idea in Israel from Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, trans., W.F. Stinespring, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1956, pp. 7f.

<sup>54</sup> Shemaryahu Talmon, *King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel: Collected Studies*, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1986, p. 206. Also see W. Schniedewind, *Society and the Promise to David*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

<sup>55</sup> J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, p. 23.

<sup>56</sup> J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, pp. 34-38.

<sup>57</sup> See K.G. Kuhn, "The Two Messiahs of Aaron and Israel" in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, (ed.), K. Stendahl, London: SCM Press, 1958, pp. 54-64, S. Talmon, "The Concept of *Messiah* and Messianism in Early Judaism" in *Messiah*, (ed.), Charlesworth, pp. 79-115 especially pp. 101-113, *idem*, "Waiting for the Messiah: The Spiritual Universe of the Qumran Covenanters" in *Judaisms and Messiahs*, (eds.) Neusner, *et al.*, pp.123-126 (111-137), J.H. Charlesworth, "From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology: Some

the messiah, perhaps implying that the messiah will be God's son (IQSa 2.11-12). The Covenanters also expected a coming of 'the prophet' along with the coming of two messiahs (IQS 9.10-11). This shows that the Community seems to have variegated views about *the* messiah. The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha also exhibit a complex picture of messiahs<sup>58</sup>. The *Psalms of Solomon* depicts a messiah who is the son of David, one who destroys the unrighteous rulers, the unlawful nation (the Romans) with the sword of his mouth. This messiah wins the war against Rome because he is undergirded by God and he will expel the Romans from Jerusalem (17.21-33; 18:3-9). He will usher in the messianic age by gathering a holy people and will lead them in righteousness<sup>59</sup>. In the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*I En.* 37-71)<sup>60</sup> we find him on the one hand an inactive character (48.10) but on the other an exceptionally strong and powerful figure on the earth (52.4). Also in it the messiah and other characters like the Son of Humanity, the Chosen One, Son of God are conflated into one and the same messianic eschatological figure (48.10; 49.2,4; 53.6; 105.2)<sup>61</sup>. This adds to the element of indeterminacy in understanding the nature and function of the messianic figure in early Jewish thought. In *4 Ezra* the messiah is the son who will be revealed with those who are with him (7.28) and after a period of four hundred years he will die

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Caveats and Perspectives" in *Judaisms and Messiahs*, (eds.) Neusner, *et al.*, pp. 230-33 (225-264).

<sup>58</sup> Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, pp. 272-386, M. de Jonge, "The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus", *NovT.* 8, 1966, pp. 132-148, J.H. Charlesworth, "The Concept of Messiah in the Pseudepigrapha", *ANRW* II, 19.1, 1979, pp. 188-191, *idem*, "From Messianology to Christology", pp. 234-247.

<sup>59</sup> Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, pp. 317ff.

<sup>60</sup> *I Enoch* also known as 'Ethiopian Enoch' is a composite document of five books, of which *The Similitudes* is the second. There is clear proof that a greater part of *I Enoch* with the exception of *The Similitudes* (37-71) was known at Qumran in pre-Christian times. Book I (1-36), *The Book of Watchers*, was probably the oldest (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE). The date of Book II (37-71) also known as *The Similitudes* is disputed. Some attribute its origin in the late first century BCE (Charles), others in the late first century (Knibb), and yet others in the late third century CE (Milik). It has a number of verbal parallels with the NT which raised the issue of a post-Christian origin (see Milik, *HTR* 64, 1971, pp. 333-78). But a number of scholars think of its origin some time during the first century CE (see *NTS* 25, 1979). Book III (72-82) is called *The Astronomical Book*, Book IV (83-90) *The Book of Dreams* and Book V *The Epistle of Enoch* (91-108). We do not know when the five books were put together or the dates of the Greek or the Ethiopic translations. For details see *The Apocryphal Old Testament* (ed.), Sparks, pp. 169-179 and *TOTP*, vol. 1, (ed.), Charlesworth, pp. 5-12.

<sup>61</sup> Charlesworth, "From Messianology", p. 239. He says: "the Elect One, the Righteous One, the Messiah, and the Son of Man are different titles for the same messianic and eschatological figure" (p. 240). He thinks that both the authors of the *Similitudes* and Mark used such conflation technique (p. 241).



(v.29). The idea of the death of the messiah found only here (other than in early Christian literature) is a difficult and complex one to assess. In 12:31-32, Ezra talks about a lion-like messiah of the line of David rousing, roaring and speaking to the eagle (Rome) who will judge and destroy ‘them’ (12.33). Messiah is also ‘my son’ (13:32,37,52; 14:9) and also ‘a man’ (13:26,32) who came up out of the heart of the sea who carved out a mountain and flew up on to it (13.3ff). He fought with the multitude with a stream of fire from his mouth (13.10). These are diverse portrayals of a messianic figure. In early Jewish literature, ‘messiah’ is a complex signifier with no clear or monolithic signified. “[T]he term is notable primarily for its indeterminacy”<sup>62</sup>.

The term *υἱος θεοῦ* potentially invokes a plurality of meaning in the context of biblical and postbiblical Judaism in addition to its meaning in the context of Roman imperial cult. There are many references to son of God or sons of God in biblical and post-biblical Jewish literature. The Hebrew Bible refers to heavenly or angelic beings (Gen. 6:2,4; Deut. 32:8, Ps. 29:1; Dan. 3:25), the people and kings of Israel (Ex.4:22; Jer. 31:20; Hos. 11:1; 2 Sam.7:14; Ps. 2) as sons of God. In post-biblical discourses angels are sons of heaven (*I En.* 13.8; 106.5), a just man is God’s son (*Sirach* 4.10b; *Wis. Sol.* 2.18), Israelites with circumcised hearts and filled with the holy spirit are God’s sons (*Jub.* 1.25), a holy people whom the Lord leads in righteousness are sons of their God (*Pss. Sol.* 17.26f.). In *Joseph and Aseneth* Joseph is called the son of God (6.2-6; 13.10; 21.3). A number of Jewish charismatics are called sons of God: Honi the circle drawer (*mTaan.* 3.8), Hanania ben Dosa (*bTaan.*24b)<sup>63</sup>. The Qumran Covenanters probably believed in a messianic priest who is ‘engendered’ or ‘begotten’ by God (I QSa 2.11f). The king as a son of God seems to be not completely lost in the messianic nomenclature of this Community<sup>64</sup>. However, it is premature to conclude a reference to ‘the son of God’ or ‘the son of the Most High’ in 4Q246 as a reference to

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<sup>62</sup> William Scott Green, “Introduction: Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question” in *Judaisms*, (eds.), Neusner, *et al.*, p. 4 (1-13). Also see E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, London: Penguin, 1993, pp. 89-90, 240-41, M. Goulder, “The Anointed” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, (ed.), S. Moyise, Sheffield: SAP, 2000, pp. 66-74.

<sup>63</sup> See Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian’s Reading of the Gospels*, London: SCM Press, 1983 (1973), pp. 69-78, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, pp. 178-214.

<sup>64</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp.198f. He says: “Available Qumran documents ... appear to point to a central position of the *son of God* concept in the Messianic nomenclature of the Dead Sea sect”. Also see Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and History of Jewish- Hellenistic Religion*, London: SCM Press, 1976, p. 44.

either a present or a future Jewish king<sup>65</sup>. Nonetheless, this reference tells us that the Covenanters were not unaware of the practice of a human king being addressed as son of God. For Philo, a diasporic Alexandrian Jew, the spiritual world of ideas, the *logos* etc. are sons of God<sup>66</sup>.

### 6.1.3 Markan Superscription: A Consensual-Conflictual Conundrum

In light of the above discussion it is possible to assume with reasonable certainty that the Markan beginning would potentially create a complex and conflicting mixture of impressions in the mind of his first century audience—Romans, Greeks, Jews and Christians—as it sets (exchanges) the story of Jesus within the religio-cultural categories and linguistic consciousness and codes of imperial Rome and of the first century Judaisms, and their images (and imaginations) of ‘messiahs’ and ‘sons of God’. For instance, the word *ἀρχή* would potentially mean an ‘*imperium* of the good news....’ or a ‘divine historical beginning of the good news...’<sup>67</sup>. In the former case the good news of Jesus Messiah son of God potentially appropriates the *imperium* of Rome and her emperors but disrupts it with the *ἀρχή* of the good news of Jesus Messiah. That is, the centre of *imperium* is decentred from Rome and her emperors to the *imperium* of the good news of Jesus Messiah son of God<sup>68</sup>. The *imperium* of Rome is approximated in an *imperium* of the good news of Jesus messiah son of God. In the latter case the Jewish religio-cultural category of *ἀρχή* would invoke a divine or historical beginning continuous and discontinuous with the earlier creative and liberative beginnings of God<sup>69</sup>.

Since there existed various perceptions concerning ‘messiahs’ and ‘sons of God’ in Judaism at the turn of the era Mark’s use of ‘Jesus (Yosua<sup>70</sup>) messiah’ ‘son of

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<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the controversy surrounding the Son of God reference in 4Q246 see J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, pp. 154-172.

<sup>66</sup> Hengel, *The Son of God*, pp. 51-56.

<sup>67</sup> Jakub Santoja in a recent study on the Markan beginning makes a similar observation. He, in light of Bakhtinian dialogic discourse analysis, suggests that “the word *ἀρχή* bears not only the sense of ‘beginning’ but an utterance also the sense of ‘authority’ or ‘power’”. See *The Sense of a Beginning: Bakhtinian Dialogic Criticism on ‘The Gospel’ in Mark*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Sheffield, Sept. 1999, p. 7.

<sup>68</sup> C. Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 123f.

<sup>69</sup> See W.H. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974, pp. 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> The English translation of *Ἰησοῦς* of Mark (and other NT discourses) into ‘Jesus’ is rather puzzling as we observe the translation of *Ἰησοῦς* in LXX (Hebrew יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) into



God' would in all probability have evoked a complex and conflicting mixture of impressions in the mind of his readers concerning the sort of messiah, son of God Jesus would be<sup>71</sup>. Mark's choice of 'messiah' as a surname for Jesus (a sort of strategic code-switching) at the outset is not without a purpose. He seems to be making use of the potential slippage and fluidity of this Jewish title as did a number of other Jewish groups who attribute complex pictures to 'messiahs' and 'messianisms' under Rome's colonial rule. For different groups of Jews 'messiah' can signify either Davidic or non-Davidic, priestly or prophetic, earthly or heavenly militant warrior figure. He can defeat the enemy with or without military means. He can act on his own initiative or be totally subservient to God. He can be of Davidic descent or be preexistent. He can conflate (or disguise) with other 'messianic' earthly or eschatological figures such as 'the Chosen One' or 'the Son of Humanity' or 'the son of God' or the suffering servant etc. The use of 'son of God' appropriates and at the same time abrogates the son of God status of Roman emperors. In the Jewish context it evokes a picture of an angelic or celestial being, a royal or saintly figure or a divine messianic figure or a miracle working charismatic figure.

In light of this it is possible to suggest that Mark in all probability allowed an element of slippage and fluidity to play a part in the superscription of the story. This slippage and fluidity do not seem to be a weakness but strength especially when we observe them to be important characteristics of colonial/ postcolonial discourses<sup>72</sup>. Slippage and fluidity facilitate ambivalent appropriation and abrogation, affiliation and disruption of the dominant discourses by a colonised subject. Markan affiliation to the codes and categories of the colonial discourses has a potential for decentering the normative meaning and the narcissistic demand of the colonial and other dominant or prevalent discourses. Mark's mimicry of the cultural categories and codes from the Roman and Jewish discourses, though represents an ironic compromise, is not without

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'Joshua' (Yosua) (Josh.1:1,10). Mark's (and NT's) *Ἰησοῦς* becoming 'Jesus' instead of 'Yosua' may continue to puzzle us.

<sup>71</sup> Many of these titles were originally far more 'fluid' than once we supposed. See Hooker, *A Commentary*, pp. 19f. For a general discussion see M. Hengel, "Early Christianity as a Jewish-Messianic, Universalistic Movement" in *Conflicts and Challenges in Early Christianity*, (ed.), D.A. Hagner, Harrisburg: Trinity International Press, 1999, pp. 1-41.

<sup>72</sup> For ambivalence, ambiguity, slippage etc. in postcolonial writings see Bhabha, *The Location*, pp.85-92, 102-122.

a potential for disruption<sup>73</sup>. It is probable that he and his community deprived of status and significance by the native and the colonial discourses of power set up their own discourse that consents and conflicts with the values of those discourses and asserts a status and significance that they were deprived of by the dominant discourses<sup>74</sup>.

## 6.2 Καθὼς γέγραπται ... (1:2-8): A Markan Midrash

The affiliative-disruptive dynamic of the superscription appears to continue in the introduction of Mark (1:2-11) which has both the form and method of a midrash<sup>75</sup>. Here Mark introduced a paraphrased proof-text (1:2f) by a citation formula (*Καθὼς γέγραπται*) to affiliate the story to certain existing native discourses, and at the same time exegeted the text in a new perspective importing new meaning (1:4-8) and thus directing the story to a rather new terrain.

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<sup>73</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 88. See also our discussion in Chapter 2.1 For a similar phenomenon of accommodation and resistance strategy in Celtic religion in the west see J. Webster, "A negotiated syncretism: reading on the development of Romano-Celtic religion" in *Dialogues*, (ed.), Mattingly, pp. 165-84.

<sup>74</sup> According to C.A. Evans, "Mark's opening words, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God", would have had the ring of a competitor's claim on the devotion and loyalty of the people of the Roman Empire. .... the Markan evangelist presents Jesus as the true son of God and in doing so deliberately sets Jesus over against Rome's quest to find a suitable emperor, savior, and lord". He thinks that the struggle for power (civil wars) before Vespasian ascended the throne in Rome is the context of Mark's story of Jesus. See *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC 34b), Dallas: Word Books, 2000, p. 59. Also see S.E. Porter, "Literary Approaches to the New Testament: From Formalism to Deconstruction and Back" in *Approaches to New Testament Study*, (eds.), *idem* and D. Tombs, Sheffield: SAP, 1995, p. 122 (77-129). For Mark's presentation of Jesus "as a thorough-going rival to Romulus and so to all his successors" see F.G. Downing, *Doing Things with Words in the First Christian Century*, Sheffield: SAP, 2000, pp. 133-151 especially pp. 138-51. He suggests the possibility of exploring the Rome-Romulus discourses also as one of the discursive contexts of Mark's story of Jesus (pp. 145f).

<sup>75</sup> Midrash (מדרש) refers to the manner of exegesis of the Biblical text which aims to bring out its contemporary significance. See Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987, Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies*, pp. 59-91. Gary Porton, "Defining Midrash" in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, (ed.), Neusner, New York: Ktav, 1981, pp. 55-92. Midrash may not be different from the 'pesher' of Qumran which also is the art of bringing the application of the Scriptures up to date. See G.J. Brooke, "Qumran Pesher: Towards the Redefinition of Genre", *Revue de Qumran* 10 (1979-81), Dec. 1981, pp. 485-503, *idem*, *Exegesis in Qumran: 4Q Florilegium in its Jewish Context*, Sheffield: SAP, 1985, ch. 1. For a brief discussion on the difference between Midrash (as scholastic) and Pesher (as sectarian) see Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988, pp. 47-57.



### 6.2.1 Midrash as an Affiliative-Disruptive Strategy

Midrash is a highly complex discursive strategy which cannot be described easily. However in its broader sense it can be modelled as a text-linguistic process that creates out of the raw material of scripture a textual artifact which can be presented in a variety of textual forms and serve a variety of functions. As a text-linguistic process midrash is an exegetical activity which requires ‘pegs’ in the biblical text on which to hang its interpretations<sup>76</sup>. It refers to “the types of scriptural exegesis carried on by diverse groups of Jews from the time of ancient Israel to nearly the present day”, “to a compilation of scriptural exegeses”, to “written composition ... in which a verse of the Hebrew Scriptures is subjected to some form of exegesis”<sup>77</sup>. Though traces of midrashic activities can be found in the Hebrew scriptures<sup>78</sup> they appear rather more vigorous and widespread in a schismatic manner in early Judaism. It is suggested that the “inter-sectarian politics of early Judaism” and “the realities of life in the Greco-Roman world” must have played an important part in its widespread divisive and disruptive use<sup>79</sup>. During this time the stakes were high for the diverse sects and movements within Judaism as each of them affiliated itself to the Hebrew Bible for its own credibility and survival.

According to Vermes the aim of a midrashist, whether dealing with doctrinal matters (haggadah) or issues pertaining to religious or social life (halakhah), was to expound, to connect, to harmonize and to bring up to date the Hebrew scriptures<sup>80</sup>. For him the midrashic units can be understood only by comparing them with scripture, the fixed starting-point of the exegetical trajectory, and then with each other. On the contrary, for Neusner the meaning of midrash must be determined by its own context

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<sup>76</sup> P.S. Alexander, “The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism” in *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Old Testament Studies*, (ed.), A.D.H. Mayes, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, pp. 35-62 especially pp. 37f. Midrash may be a ‘rewritten Bible’ (Genesis Apocryphon) or a ‘codification’ (Temple Scroll) or ‘translation’ (Aramaic Targumim) or a ‘commentary’ (Qumran Pesharim) or a ‘proof-text’ (in the Gospels).

<sup>77</sup> Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, pp. 8f. He studies Midrash as paraphrase, prophecy and parable (pp. 1-3, 7f.).

<sup>78</sup> See Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, pp. 17-30, Vermes, *Post-Biblical*, pp. 59-91.

<sup>79</sup> See P.S. Alexander, “The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism”, Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, p. 32 (31-57), C.D. Stanley, “The Social Environment of ‘Free’ Biblical Quotations in the New Testament” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, (eds.), C.A. Evans & J.A. Sanders, Sheffield: SAP, 1997, pp. 18-27.

<sup>80</sup> Vermes, *Post-Biblical*, pp. 6f.

within the document in which it is found. He plays down the role of scripture in midrash, and so discounts the value of analyzing in detail any given midrash against its biblical basis. For him a midrash has its own identity and meaning within the community where it occurs which need not be connected to the meaning of its scriptural base<sup>81</sup>. While Vermes upholds the affiliative aspect of midrash, Neusner asserts its rupture or the disruptive aspect.

However there are a few who hold these two dimensions together<sup>82</sup>. For them a midrash has a basic biblical unit the message of which may be recoverable but that message is different from the meaning which it acquires when it becomes part of a larger composition which is a completely new entity. A midrash in early Judaism often operated as eisegesis despite its exegetical posture. In the words of Alexander, the various early Jewish sects used scripture as a national flag; like a national flag it was a force of unity, but its interpretation “became a force for schism and disunity”<sup>83</sup>. This in all probability suggests the affiliative-disruptive dynamic of midrashim.

### 6.2.2 The Affiliative-Disruptive Dynamic of the Markan Midrash

According to Markan midrash<sup>84</sup> in 1:2-8 the first phase, as it were, of the *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]*, is in the coming of John the baptizer (*ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων* 1:4a) whose advent apparently ‘stands written’<sup>85</sup> in the prophecy of ‘Isaiah’. For Mark that which ‘stands written’ and ‘John’ who appeared accordingly are agents at the threshold of an unfolding story. They provide a strategic affiliation<sup>86</sup> as well as a diversion to his story. Affiliation may be identified in the sense, firstly, of relating the story of Jesus with earlier authoritative

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<sup>81</sup> Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, pp.102-105, Alexander, “The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism”.

<sup>82</sup> Alexander, “The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism”, pp. 37ff.

<sup>83</sup> Alexander, “The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism”, p. 39. For a similar conclusion on the Markan exegesis’ ‘continuity and discontinuity with Jewish exegesis’ see Joel Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 199-202.

<sup>84</sup> A study on Mark as a passover midrash see John Bowman, *The Gospel of Mark: The New Christian Jewish Passover Haggadah*, Leiden: Brill, 1965.

<sup>85</sup> For a study on Scripture citing Scripture see J.A. Fitzmyer, “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament”, *NTS* 1960-61, pp. 299-305, D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson, (eds.), *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture, Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF*, Cambridge: CUP, 1988, Bowman, *The Gospel*, pp. 8-12.



discourse(s) via a discursive agent— John the baptizer—and secondly, of making it a *scripture-continuum* by textualizing the story of Jesus and by texturing it with what ‘stands written’ in the earlier stories. In doing so Mark appears to be accepting a standard procedure of exegesis (midrash/ peshet) of the Jewish partners of his time<sup>87</sup> who engage in a process of continuing, relating or retelling the sacred discourse<sup>88</sup>.

However the Markan affiliation and conflation of Isaiah with other prophetic writings (Ex.23:20; Mal.3:1; Isa. 40:3) under the rubric of a conflated ‘Isaiah’<sup>89</sup> within the text seems not to be without a “certain shift”<sup>90</sup> or “radicalism”<sup>91</sup> or “continuity and differences that appeal and at the same time do away with some of its teaching”<sup>92</sup>. Studies on intertextuality show that the embedding of one text inside another does not result in a single resolution but a range of interpretive possibilities<sup>93</sup>. They reveal that the relationship between two texts is equivocal. It includes, at the same time, both

<sup>86</sup> *καθὼς γέγραπται* as a mode of affiliation see R.A. Guelich, “The Beginning of the Gospel’: Mark 1:1-15”, *BR* 27, 1982, p. 6 (5-15), also *Mark 1-8:26*, p. 10.

<sup>87</sup> See M. Black, “The Theological Appropriation of the Old Testament in the New Testament”, *SJT* 39, 1986, 1-17, Andrew Chester, “Citing the Old Testament” in *It is Written*, (eds.), Carson and Williamson, pp. 141-169, J. Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 12f., E.E. Ellis, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity: Canon and Interpretation in the Light of Modern Research*, Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1991, pp. 77ff.

<sup>88</sup> P.S. Alexander, “Retelling the Old Testament” in *It is Written*, (eds.), Carson and Williamson, pp. 99-121, *idem*, “The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism”, pp. 56f.

<sup>89</sup> For Markan conflation and redaction in 1:2-3 see Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 15-17. His study shows that Mark himself is responsible for the present form of 1:2-3. Also see Bowman, *The Gospel*, p. 9.

<sup>90</sup> Scholars like Dodd and Lindars talk about ‘shifts’ and ‘expansion’ in the appropriation and application of the OT passages in different parts of the NT. See C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology*, London: Nisbet, 1952, p. 130. B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of Old Testament Quotations*, London: SCM Press, 1961.

<sup>91</sup> Alexander, “The Bible in Qumran”, p. 57.

<sup>92</sup> I.H. Marshall, “An assessment of recent developments” in *It is Written*, p. 15 (1-21). He says: “it may be interesting to work out how far the early Christian use of the OT as a court of appeal was affected by their readiness to do away with some of its teaching. Did they see themselves as abrogating it or rather as reinterpreting it to suit their own situation?” Marshall does not give an answer to this question. I think it will be appropriate in light of this question to examine whether one can appropriate and reinterpret a text without disrupting the original scope and the intent of that text? According to Bowman, the New Testament “was more of a danger to first century Judaism than heathen philosophy, for it used Jewish literary types, Jewish methods of exegesis, and claimed to be the fulfilment of the Jewish Bible”. See *The Gospel*, p. 41.

<sup>93</sup> See S. Moyise, “Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament” in *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J.L. North*, (ed.), *idem*, Sheffield: SAP, 2000, p. 14 (pp. 14-41). For dialogical relationship between texts see T. Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.



acceptance and rejection, recognition and denial, supporting and undermining. To recognize that a text is related to another text is both to affirm and to deny the earlier text<sup>94</sup>. In light of this we may suggest that Mark's conflation and alteration (hybridization) of 'Isaiah' indicate that his text is not only a fabric woven of elements appropriated from numerous 'authentic' discourses but also a disparate discourse that *repeats* and *re-replaces*<sup>95</sup> or ruptures those discourses, and as a result potentially disrupts their meaning drawn in certain quarters<sup>96</sup>.

For instance, the Qumran Covenanters claimed Isa. 40:3 to authenticate their separation of going into the wilderness away 'from the habitation of unjust men'. The Community Rule says:

when these become members of the Community in Israel according to all these rules, they shall separate from the habitation of unjust men and shall go into the wilderness to prepare the way of Him; as it is written, *Prepare in the wilderness the way of..., make straight in the desert a path of our God* (Isa.xl,3). This (path) is the study of the Law (מִדְרַשׁ הַתּוֹרָה) which He commanded by the hand of Moses, that they may do according to all that has been revealed from age to age, and as the Prophets have revealed by His Holy Spirit (IQS 8.14-15, cf.9.20).<sup>97</sup>

This suggests that the Covenanters saw themselves as living in the last days, as the only true remnant of Israel and the inheritors of the covenant, that they can interpret scripture, and above all the prophetic utterances of scripture, as being fulfilled in their very community and as applying directly to them and to the age in which they find themselves living<sup>98</sup>. They believe that the preparation of the messianic way takes place through their מִדְרַשׁ הַתּוֹרָה. This exegetical strategy has an affiliative and disruptive effect. It affiliates the Covenanters as the authentic inheritors of the

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<sup>94</sup> P.D. Miscall, "Isaiah: New Heaven, New Earth, New Book" in *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible*, (ed.), D.N. Fewell, Louisville: WJK Press, 1992, p. 44 (pp. 41-56).

<sup>95</sup> For interpretation and adaptation of OT quotations and allusions in Mark leading to a point of rupture see Hooker, "Mark" in *It is Written*, (eds.), Carson and Williamson, pp. 220-230, S. Schulz, "Markus und das Alte Testament" in *ZThK* 58, 1961, pp. 184-97. When a subjected community repeats the master's discourse it re-replaces that discourse. See 'Replacing the text: the liberation of post-colonial writing' see Ashcroft, *et al.*, *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 78-115.

<sup>96</sup> For a similar observation on Paul's midrashic strategy see D. Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 118ff.

<sup>97</sup> Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 109.



scripture but at the same time disrupts (or even abrogates) the claims of other 'authentic' (mainstream or otherwise) claimants. As far as the Covenanters are concerned this prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in the formation of their community<sup>99</sup>.

In Mark, we find an adaptation of the same Isaianic prophecy with a midrashic paraphrasing (Mk.1:3=Isa.40:3). For Mark, John's appearance in the wilderness as an angel (messenger) and voice is something that happened in accordance with this prophecy and it was to prepare the way of Jesus, the stronger one. According to Mark though John had an apparent separation by coming into the wilderness (1:6) he did not initiate a separation from the habitation of unjust men or conduct the preparation by 'the study of the Law' (מדרש התורה). Instead his preparation was through a proclamation of the baptism of repentance and by baptizing many Judeans and Jerusalemites (Mk. 1:4ff) and also by predicting the advent of a stronger one after him (1:7f). In this respect we may say that Mark's midrashic affiliation to Isa. 40:3 is potentially disruptive to its use at Qumran. Mark's appropriation and interpretation of the scripture has an affiliative and disruptive rather than an orderly 'progressive' and 'updating' function<sup>100</sup>.

Some of the Markan scholars tend to think that Mark's affiliation to earlier scriptural tradition (γέγραπται) has an essentialist agenda. For example, according to Myers, "[i]t was something of a convention in ancient literature to use the first lines of a narrative to establish the "credentials" of the story... . This was usually accomplished by appealing to recognizable literary, mythic, or political traditions that would lend instant legitimacy to the work"<sup>101</sup>. This may partially be the case in Mark.

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<sup>98</sup> Chester, "Citing the Old Testament" in *It is Written*, (eds.), Carson and Williamson, p. 150. Also see K.R. Snodgrass, "Streams of Tradition Emerging from Isaiah 40:1-5 and their Adaptation in the New Testament" in *JSNT* 8, 1980, pp. 28-31 (24-45).

<sup>99</sup> For a similar line of thought see Paulson Pulikottil, *Transmission of Biblical Texts in Qumran: The Case of the Large Isaiah Scroll (IQIsa(a))*, Sheffield: SAP, 2000.

<sup>100</sup> Robbins' socio-rhetorical reading of Mark appears to consider Mk. 1:1 as a form of 'qualitative progression' where the stage is set for the document and 1:2-3 a form where a 'logical progression' begins. He treats the conflation of different scriptures (Ex. 23:20; Mal. 3:1 and Isa. 40:3) in 1:2-3 only as an 'updating technique'. See *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 76-82. I perceive that Robbins' treatment of Mk. 1:1-3 as an 'updating technique' has not sufficiently explored the disruptive effect of 'updating'. Updating takes place as a result of appropriation and when there is an appropriation a disruption too seems inevitable. For a similar conclusion see Joel Marcus, *The Way*, p. 200. He talks about the dynamic of continuity and discontinuity/ departure.

<sup>101</sup> C. Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, p. 92.

But it is also important to see the disruptive dynamic of the midrashic meaning Mark imports into these verses. According to Neusner, when a midrashist paraphrases scripture he imports fresh meaning by “obliterating the character of the original text”<sup>102</sup>. Midrash as paraphrase may include fresh material. Similarly in midrash as prophecy an exegete would ask scripture to explain the meanings of events here at hand. As a result the scripture unit and its interpretation when welded together can become a completely new entity and speak to the situation at hand in a completely new way. So Mark’s midrash, like the midrashim of most other Jewish midrashists, does not appear to retain an essentialist agenda.

Mark (and other NT writers) may have disrupted the contemporary Jewish (mainstream or peripheral) midrashists in another important respect too. In Jewish midrashim we do not find any evidence of them relating to the life and work of an individual figure as the Gospel writers do. In the words of Neusner, “No rabbinic composition in antiquity presents the life of an individual person as the principle of editorial cogency, whether of Scriptural exegesis or legal teachings, ... . no “life” of a sage of antiquity forms the base line for a composition, whether made of exegeses, or, more likely, of legal opinions”<sup>103</sup>. But we find Mark and other New Testament writers employ midrashim around the life Jesus<sup>104</sup>. In our study here in Mark 1:2-8 we find that the author cites Isaiah as a base line for the coming of the angelic John and through him the coming of Jesus the beloved *huios*. Such a midrashic twist in illuminating the life and role of an individual may have a disruptive effect on the existing terrain of Jewish midrashim.

### 6.2.3 *ἔγένετο Ἰωάννης* ... (1:4-8): The Midrashic Creation of a Prophetic Angel

The midrash in Mk. 1:2-8 centers around an individual person— John the baptizer and through him relates to the person of Jesus *ὁ ἰσχυρότερός* and *ὁ υἱὸς ὁ*

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<sup>102</sup> Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> Neusner, *What is Midrash?*, p. 38. He recognizes that “There are a few chapters in the Mishnah (*m. Kelim* 24), that systematically express the generative principle of a single authority; there are many units of discourse framed around opinions of a single authority, and a great many around disagreements between two or more fixed names. But these are not comparable.” (p. 38f.) Vermes cites the haggadah on ‘The Life of Abraham’ developed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. See *Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 67-125.

<sup>104</sup> “The greatest difference between early Christian exegesis and other forms of Jewish scriptural interpretation is the impact made by Jesus”, Juel, *Messianic*, p. 57.



ἀγαπητός<sup>105</sup>. In this respect itself the Markan midrash appears to be potentially disruptive. By centering and relating the midrash to two (quasi)-individuals— John the ἀγγελός, φωνή and Jesus ὁ ἰσχυρότερός, ὁ υἱός ὁ ἀγαπητός—Mark stretches the exegetical terrain of contemporary Jewish midrashim to new limits. However, by citing John as an angel/ messenger and prophetic voice in between the Jewish and the emerging ‘Christian’ *huios* tradition Mark portrays John to be a fitting transitional agency to link *the huios* Jesus to the biblical and postbiblical Jewish discourses. For Mark the angelic portrait of John is a fitting prelude to the *huios*-human portrait of Jesus.

John the baptizer<sup>106</sup> provides what we may call a dialogic affiliation and diversion to Mark’s story of Jesus. He appears in Mark as an ambivalent figure standing in the interstitial space between the Jewish prophetic/angelic and the emerging ‘Christian’ *huios* tradition<sup>107</sup>. He affiliates Jesus to the scriptural framework and at the same time diverts him to a new and uncharted terrain. For this task a midrashic portrait of John as an anomalous prophetic angel<sup>108</sup> appears to be necessary at the very outset of the story.

Mark’s midrash on John begins by a paraphrased proof text saying that ‘just as it stands written’ God sent his angel (ἀγγελος, cf. מלאך Ex. 23:20, מלאכי Mal. 3:1) and a voice (φωνή קול cf. Isa. 40:3) to prepare the way of the Lord (Mk. 1:2-3)<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>105</sup> Bowman, *The Gospel*, p. 11.

<sup>106</sup> For a study on John see Robert L. Webb, *John the Baptizer and Prophet: A Socio-Historical Study*, Sheffield: SAP, 1991, Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser: John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997.

<sup>107</sup> For an analysis on a similar fluidity and duality of symbols in postbiblical Judaism see Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 56-66, especially pp. 65f.

<sup>108</sup> For a study on the transgressive (interruptive) power of anomalous figures see Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1974, pp. 166-230; Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meaning: Essays in Anthropology*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, pp. 90-114. Douglas recognizes the dangerous or beneficial powers of exchange inherent in anomalous confluences of otherwise distinct categories.

<sup>109</sup> Darrell D. Hannah in a detailed study on angelic christology argues that the ‘Exodus angel’ in Ex.23:20-21 carries the divine name. He also recognizes that this angel is also a substitute for YHWH (33:1-3) and spoken of by God in the third person. Hence it has “a quasi-individual existence”. Though Hannah attributes this nature to the ‘Exodus angel’ he treats its apparent application in Mk.1:2ff. as one of the references to “human, rather than heavenly, messengers”. I presume that because the ‘Exodus angel’ is referred to John in Mark Hannah considers it to be a reference to ‘human messenger’. But I wonder what would be the response and implication if such a reference is related to Jesus (for instance reading Mk.1:2



Then he goes on to identify (interpret) that this *ἄγγελος* and *φωνή* is a flesh and blood human being: John the baptizer who came in the wilderness as a messenger proclaiming the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins and as a baptizer giving baptism to ‘all’ Judeans and Jerusalemites in the Jordan (away from the temple) and as an Elijah-type prophet prophesying the coming of ‘the stronger one’ after him. John in Mark’s midrash appears as an anomalous angel/ messenger-baptizer-prophet figure. As an angel he is sent by the Lord (*Ἴδου ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου*) to be the forerunner to go ahead in the wilderness to prepare the way (cf. Ex.23:20,23) and also as an eschatological messenger-voice to prepare (survey) the way of the Lord (cf. Mal.3:1, Isa.40:3). He, as a messianic angel/ messenger appears to be ‘more than a prophet’ (cf. Mt.11:9/ Lk.7:26).

John’s appearance in the wilderness too can raise diverse resonances as this spatial category has a complex semantic in Jewish thinking. Wilderness, first of all, is a place through which YHWH by his angelic *ἡγούμενός* led the first exodus of his people from captivity and so it is the place of God’s revelation and mighty redemptive actions even though it is a place associated with desolation, danger, and temptations (Ex.19:1-6; 32)<sup>110</sup>. Secondly, it is a place where a heavenly voice signals a second exodus (Isa. 40:3)<sup>111</sup>, and thirdly, it is also a place for a community in flight to seek a new beginning (*The As. of Isa.* 2.7-11, IQS 8.14-15). Like Elijah or the other prophets in *The Ascension of Isaiah* or the Qumran faithfuls who departed from the mainstream to the wilderness John came to the wilderness to commence a new beginning<sup>112</sup>. These prophetic figures claim to be the authentic heirs of the Jewish tradition and yet in some way are dissenters destined for a new beginning<sup>113</sup>. Mark, by

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& 9-11 together) instead of to John in the study of angel, angelic or angelomorphic christology! It is also not clear why some reference to *ἄγγελός* can be ‘angel’ (Num.20:16) and others ‘messenger’ (Ex.23:20, Mal.3:1=Mk.1:2) even though the angel in Num. and Ex. is sent by God and do the same function. See *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999, pp. 21, 122 no.1, 140ff. For a similar study see C.H.T. Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology*, Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1997.

<sup>110</sup> See Ulrich Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and its Basis in the Biblical Tradition*, London: SCM Press, 1963, pp. 15-36.

<sup>111</sup> Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*, pp. 50f.

<sup>112</sup> *I Kgs.* 19, *The As. of Isa.* 2:8f., *IQS.*8.10.

<sup>113</sup> For prophets in the context of second temple Judaism and John and Jesus as prophets who ‘belong’ and ‘broke’ the mould from which they came, see N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, London: SPCK, 1996, pp. 150-55, 160-68.



picking John as a prelude and by portraying him as a prophetic angel from God, sets the stage for the *huios*-Jesus who is the main character of his story.

In Mark John is also an Elijanic prophet figure [John is characterized as Elijah *redivivus* as the reference to his dress and food suggests (Mk.1:6)]<sup>114</sup> with whom Jesus can easily be attached and detached. Mark attaches Jesus to John as the one who went out to receive John's baptism as did many Judeans and Jerusalemites, also as the one who 'came after' John. Later on in the story John appears as a fitting prelude to Jesus in challenging the political cronies of Rome and consequently suffering imprisonment and violent death at its hand and an apparent resurrection at least in the eyes of some (Mk. 6:14-29 cf. *Ant.* 18.116-119). He is an Elijanic eschatological figure who suffered and died 'as it is written of him', a tag for Jesus to imitate (Mk.9:11-13). John's baptism and the authority to do what he did at the Jordan (gathering a new community and reconfiguring Israel) is the very authority for Jesus to do things that he had been doing (Mk. 11:27-33). John in Mark is the one whom Jesus could mimic and yet remain a distinctively stronger and superior figure. Mark's John consents to Jesus' superiority saying: *Ερχεται ὁ Ἰσχυρότερος μου ὀπίσω μου, ... αὐτος δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ* (Mk.1:7f.). For Mark John is only an angelic prophet, an Elijah figure, a path-maker and a messianic prophet. But Jesus is ὁ υἱὸς ὁ ἀγαπητός (Mk.1:11), the '*huios*-human' hybrid.

### 6.3 *Καὶ ἐγένετο Ἰησοῦς ... (1:9-11): A Midrash for the Huios-Human*

The second phase, as it were, of the *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]*, according to Mark is in the coming (*Καὶ ἐγένετο*) of Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee to be baptized by John in the Jordan (Mk. 1:9). His advent and the ensuing baptism culminates in a heavenly midrash (Mk. 1:10-11)<sup>115</sup>. Though it is not cited in a typical *καθὼς γέγραπται* form, Mark creates a midrashic framework in the form of a 'voice' occurring out of the heavens (*καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν* 1:11a) that proclaims Jesus as the beloved *huios* in whom God is well pleased

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<sup>114</sup> For a discussion on the post-biblical belief in '*The returning Elijah*' see Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 94f. The Elijanic figure can either be a redeeming, peace-making figure (Mal. 3:1; 4:5 or a messianic forerunner (*I En.* 90:31,37).

<sup>115</sup> Bowman says that "in Mark 1:9-13 we have the beginning of the Haggadah proper", *The Gospel*, p. 106.

(1:11b,c). The acclamation of Jesus as ‘son’ potentially gives him the required strategic affiliation to and distantiation from a number of biblical<sup>116</sup> and postbiblical images *viz.*, to the ‘man-son’ figure in *4 Ezra* 13:3,26,32, to the *Geber/ Ish* of Qumran (IQS 4.20-22), to the ‘new priest’ of the *Test. of Levi* 18:2,6, and to the royal son of Ps. 2:7 and 2 Sam. 7:14 as well as the bound son (seed) of Gen. 22:2,12,16 and the suffering servant of Isa. 42:1. The sonship of Jesus shown here will have certain significant nuances in the conundrumic Markan portrait of Jesus as the Son of Humanity who wields authority on the one hand and suffers on the other.

### 6.3.1 The Midrashic Sites of *Huios*-Man

The portrait of Jesus as the beloved *huios* at the waters of baptism appears to have a faint allusion to “the figure of a man (who) come up out of the heart of the sea” in the vision of *4 Ezra* (13:3). In the interpretation of this vision Ezra is told that the ‘man’ who comes up from the heart of the sea is the “son ... whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages” (13:26,32,37 cf. 7:28, 14:9). But unlike Jesus who comes to John as a flesh and blood being in the Jordan, the man/ son figure of *4 Ezra* appears in the vision of the sage in which he comes out of the sea, flies with the clouds of heaven and wages war with the voice from his mouth.

John’s baptism which marks the *huio*-ship of Jesus seems to have an echo of the ritual purification of the *Geber/ Ish* of Qumran. The Qumran Manual of Discipline says:

God will purify in His truth all the fabric of *Geber*, and shall refine unto Himself the frame of *Ish*, rooting out all spirit of wickedness from the bounds of his flesh, and purifying it of all impurity by the holy Spirit. As water of purification He will pour upon him the spirit of truth (cleansing him) from all the abominations of falsehood. He shall be plunged into the spirit of purification in order to teach the knowledge of the Most High to the righteous, and to cause the perfect to understand the wisdom of the sons of heaven.”<sup>117</sup>

In Mark we do not see any trace of a purification of Jesus via John’s baptism or a “rooting out all spirit of wickedness from the bounds of his flesh” even though the Judeans and Jerusalemeans received a baptism which included a certain gesture of purification (‘having confessed their sins’ 1:5). However Mark tells us that the spirit descended into Jesus as in the case of the *Geber/Ish* of Qumran not to cleanse him

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<sup>116</sup> For a study on the biblical echoes in Mk. 1:9-11 see Joel Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 48-79.



from all the abomination of falsehood but to elevate him as the son. When Jesus came up out of the water he saw (*εἶδεν*) the heavens torn open (*σχιζομένους*) and the spirit (*πνεῦμα*) as dove descended into him (*εἰς αὐτόν*) and a voice (*φωνή*) came out of the heavens saying: *Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα* (Mk.1:11b)<sup>118</sup>.

The *Test. of Levi* paints the picture of Levi as the ‘son’ who is the priest in the presence of God (4:2). It also tells us that when priesthood ran into disrepute (cha.16) there will come a ‘new priest’ (18:2). When he comes the heavens shall greatly rejoice (18:5), ‘will be opened’ and ‘a fatherly voice’ will come upon him (18:6). The spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him [in the water]<sup>119</sup>. In his priesthood sin shall cease and the spirit of holiness shall be upon him (18:9). However the new priestly figure in this discourse seems to affirm the role and authority of the priestly tribe whereas the Markan Jesus as *huios* seems to disrupt them<sup>120</sup>.

It is quite possible that Mark echoes some of these images and imaginations in relation to the heavenly declaration at the time of Jesus’ baptism. Jesus can be affiliated to the man/son of 4 *Ezra* who came out of the water in baptism, the *Geber/Ish* of Qumran who received the spirit and the new son/priest of the *Testament of Levi*. But at the same time he as the *huios* seems to be moving beyond the representations of these *huiotic* images.

### 6.3.2 *Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ...* : A Heavenly Midrash to Jesus as the *Huios*-Human Hybrid

Mark tells us that the audition—*Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός...*, (1:11) came out of the heavens exclusively to Jesus just as the visions of the heavens being torn apart and the spirit descended into him as a dove (1:10). The visions and audition appear as though the heavens revealed a secret to Jesus. Mark with the help of the

<sup>117</sup> IQS 4.20-22. This translation is from Vermes’ *Scripture and Tradition*, p. 57.

<sup>118</sup> For the baptism of Jesus as an enthronement, see Jarl Fossum, “Son of God” in *ABD*, vol.6, New York: Doubleday, 1992, p. 134 (128-137).

<sup>119</sup> This most probably is an early Christian interpolation based on Jesus receiving the spirit at baptism (Mk.1:9-11), which is also linked with a heavenly voice. See H.C. Kee, “Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: A New Translation and Introduction” in *TOTP*, vol. 1, p. 795. However, the early Christians’ interpolation of a reference of Jesus’ baptism in this text shows their affinity to this pre-Christian Jewish text (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE).

<sup>120</sup> For Markan Jesus’ affiliation and disruption of the scriptural discourses and their custodians see Hooker, “Mark” in *It is Written*, pp. 220-230 especially 228.

omniscient narrator passes this information on to his audience so that they may relate this new revelation and perhaps comprehend it in the diverse discursive framework of the biblical and postbiblical discourses.

This revelation can be treated as a midrash. We noticed that Mark commenced the introduction of the story with a midrash and therefore it is not improbable for him to conclude it with a 'revelatory midrash' so that the whole story may be built on an 'interpretive-revelatory framework' affiliative and disruptive to the mainstream or peripheral midrashim of the time.

The Markan audience can potentially affiliate the sonship of Jesus to (i) the relation between God and the Israelite-Judean king as father and son (Ps. 2:7 and 2 Sam. 7:14 cf. I Chr.17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Ps. 89:27f.), and (ii) the bound son of Gen. 22:2,12, and the suffering servant of Isa. 42:1<sup>121</sup>. This seems possible because as *huios* Jesus evokes two nuances in the Markan portrait as the 'son of authority' and the 'suffering son' which becomes a major feature in Mark's story of Jesus.

In Ps. 2:7 God calls the king whom he set on Zion as 'my son' and in 2 Sam. 7:14 God through Nathan's oracle says that the Davidic descendant king shall be his son. In light of the postbiblical discourses we know that in pre-Christian times certain segments of the Jews interpreted this image in messianic terms (e.g., 4Q174; *Pss. of Sol.* 17:21-46)<sup>122</sup> and therefore we may suggest that the reference to Jesus as the son in Mark can be a midrashic declaration of the enthronement of Jesus as the royal son/messiah. A midrash on Jesus as the son/messiah on the one hand affiliates Mark's midrash with that of say for example the sectaries of Qumran or the sages of the *Psalms of Solomon* but on the other it potentially disrupts their claim to be the elect people of the son/messiah.

The Qumran Covenanters in a collection of midrashim (4QFlorilegium) interpret 2 Sam. 7:11ff. to affirm their faith in the coming messiah/son. It says:

And concerning His words to David, ... . *The Lord declares to you that he will build you a House* (2 Sam.vii,11c). *I will raise up your seed after you* (2 Sam. vii, 12). *I will establish the throne of his kingdom [for ever]* (2 Sam. vii, 13). [*I will be*

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<sup>121</sup> Bas van Iersel, *Mark: Reader-Response Commentary*, Sheffield: SAP, 1998, pp. 102f.

<sup>122</sup> For details see Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 59-66. He reads mainly a single nuance (son as a kingly figure) into the *huio*-ship of Jesus in the light of 1:11. See pp. 69-72.



*his father and he shall be my son* (2 Sam. vii, 14). He is the branch of David who shall arise with the Interpreter of the Law [to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time... (4Q174.1.10-14).

The sectaries of Qumran thought of themselves as the elect or the new Israel of the last days (4Q174. 1.1-5) who will be ruled by the son of David who will also be the son of God (4Q174.1.10ff). For Mark (and the early Christians) this son is Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee who in the baptism of John is enthroned by a heavenly declaration: *Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός ...*. Therefore we may say that the “Christian and Qumran interpreters shared a basic approach to the verses, but their exegesis led in rather different directions”. That is, “[t]he passage furnished the sectarian community with an opportunity to reflect on their future in terms of the ‘place’ and the ‘rest’ God promised David. Christian interpreters were more interested in the images used of the coming king, like ‘seed’ and ‘son’”<sup>123</sup> in Jesus.

The ‘beloved son’ imagery in Mark arguably can have another potential nuance for the Markan audience who may perhaps connect Jesus to the ‘beloved son’ of Abraham (Isaac) in the context of his binding as a sacrifice to God (Gen. 22:1-14 cf. *T. Levi* 18:5-12) or to the ‘beloved’ ‘servant’ of Second Isaiah who is destined to suffer for others (Isa. 41:8-9, 42:1)<sup>124</sup>. Scholars like Daly and others argue that Mk. 1:11 (Matt. 3:17, Lk. 3:22) “is almost surely, among other things, an allusion to the LXX of Gen. 22:2: ‘Take your beloved son, the one you love’ (*λάβε τὸν υἱόν σου τὸν ἀγαπητόν, ὃν ἠγάπησας*)”<sup>125</sup>. They think that because of the similarities of theophany motifs in Isaac’s binding and the baptism of Jesus the Akedah forms an essential part of the background of the voice from heaven. But others like Joel Marcus dispute this view. According to Marcus there is little trace of Akedah theology in Mark 1:11<sup>126</sup>.

<sup>123</sup> D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, pp. 62, 88. Also see pp. 79-81.

<sup>124</sup> B. Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus’ Own Interpretation of Isaiah*, London: SPCK, 1984, pp. 128-130, Joel Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 48-79.

<sup>125</sup> Robert J. Daly, S.J., “The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac” in *CBQ* 39, 1977, p. 68. (pp. 45-75). For the significance of Akedah theology in postbiblical Jewish and Christian interpretation see Vermes, “Redemption and Genesis XXII” in *Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 193-227.

<sup>126</sup> Joel Marcus finds little trace of Akedah theology in Mark 1:11. He says: “The echo of the Akedah story in Mark 1:11, therefore, is very faint if present at all”. See *The Way*, p. 52. Also see Davies and Chilton, “The Akedah: A Revised Tradition History”, *CBQ* 40, 1978, pp. 514-546.

However the potential of relating the binding of Isaac with the baptism/suffering (Mk.10:38c) of Jesus may not be impossible in light of a certain doctrinal development in postbiblical Judaism based on the binding of Isaac. For instance in a prayer in the Fragmentary Targum the sage prays: "Now I pray for mercy before You, O Lord God, that when the children of Isaac come to a time of distress You may remember on their behalf the Binding of Isaac their father, and loose and forgive them their sins and deliver them from all distress"<sup>127</sup>. It appears that the use of Akedah, the appeal to the merit of Isaac, is only a special development of a larger conception—that the individual is saved not only by his own virtue but also by applying to himself, or by God applying to him, the merit of the Patriarchs<sup>128</sup>. In the Christian sphere too we may notice that the baptism of Jesus is related to the suffering of Jesus (Mk. 10:38f). The baptism of Jesus the 'beloved son' is therefore not only an enthronement but also a prelude to the baptism of suffering for the sake of others like the binding of Isaac in postbiblical Judaism<sup>129</sup>.

The beloved *huios* who is destined to suffer in Mark may also recall the image of the suffering servant in Second Isaiah (Isa. 41:8-9; 42:1; 53 etc.)<sup>130</sup>. Though the suffering servant motif cannot be applied to Isaac, "the leading idea of Isaiah liii is parallel in *leitmotiv* to the targumic tradition on Genesis xxii"<sup>131</sup>. Joel Marcus and Bruce Chilton argue that Mk. 1:11 is related more to Isa. 42:1 via Ps. 2:7 than to the Akedah image in Gen. 22 in light of *Tg. Isa.* 41:8-9, 42:1, 43:10<sup>132</sup>. They find that certain images like the servant and the messiah in whom God is pleased and in whom God put his spirit according to *Targum Isaiah* are linked to the images of Jesus in Mk. 1:9-11. It is also possible to argue that Mark has already cited Isaiah at the very outset (1:2-3) in relation to John's ministry of baptism. Therefore it is not improbable for him to relate certain Isaianic motifs in connection with the baptism of Jesus<sup>133</sup>. We

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<sup>127</sup> Cited in Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, p. 206.

<sup>128</sup> Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman World: Symbols from Jewish Cult*, vol. 4, New York: Pantheon Books, 1954, p. 181.

<sup>129</sup> See Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 222f.

<sup>130</sup> Vermes says that "By using words borrowed from Genesis xxii.16 and Isaiah xlii.1, the heavenly voice implies that Jesus is destined for salvation and deliverance from sin: You are my beloved Son. In you I am well pleased. (Mk. i.11; Lk.iii.22).", *Scripture and Tradition*, pp. 222f.

<sup>131</sup> Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition*, p. 202.

<sup>132</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 53ff, Chilton, *Galilean Rabbi*, pp. 128ff.

<sup>133</sup> W. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1974, p. 55.



also read in the story that at the time of Jesus' baptism of suffering/death on the cross he is pronounced as the son of God by a human agent in the story (15:39) in a manner similar to the heavenly declaration at the time of the baptism in the beginning. Moreover John who prepared the way also went ahead as a suffering figure. So the Isaianic nuance of the suffering servant and John as a suffering precursor may show the way to Jesus the beloved son.

The midrashic portrayal of Jesus as the 'beloved *huios*' in Mark appears to pose two potential nuances. As *huios* he can be the royal son and the son of authority as well as the suffering son. The heavenly midrash on Jesus as the beloved son thus prepares the ground for the rest of the story where Jesus is portrayed as a conundrumic Son of Humanity of authority and the suffering Son of Humanity.

### Conclusion

The above discussion suggests that Mark had two cultures, their categories and traditions—the Roman imperial/ colonial culture and the native Jewish religious traditions—to engage as he begins the story of Jesus. The former is an alien colonialist culture and the latter a number of 'native' religio-cultural traditions, a few of which probably duplicated and practised a form of internal colonialism. Mark at the very outset of his story designs an agenda to engage both these cultures and their codes and perceptions of power by a strategy of accommodation and disruption of those codes and perceptions in order to create a space for himself and his community. The *imperium* of the good news of Jesus Messiah, son of God, affiliates and abrogates the imperial gospel of Rome and all it represents, and its emperors' divine claims as sons of God. The 'beginning of the good news of Jesus messiah, son of God' also appropriates similar categories prevalent in Jewish traditions but disrupts their normative perceptions and accredited assumptions.

Mark, just as he used the title in a consensual and conflictual manner, also used the two midrashim in the introduction. In the first (1:2-8) he portrayed John as a prophetic angel who would stand in between the biblical, postbiblical Jewish traditions and the emerging *huios* tradition of the Christian community. In portraying Jesus as the *huios* via the second revelatory midrash (1:9-11) Mark not only connects Jesus to the son-man figures of biblical and postbiblical Judaism but also stretches his

image disruptively as a *huios*-human hybrid who would be a conundrumic *huios* of authority and suffering.

Jesus as *huios* in Mark is an anomalous hybrid figure. This too may not be without a postcolonial intent, for it is shown by studies in cultural anthropology that “[a] people who have nothing to lose by exchange and everything to gain will be predisposed towards the hybrid being, wearing the conflicting signs, man/god ... . A people whose experience of foreigners is disastrous will cherish perfect categories, reject exchange and refuse doctrines of mediation”<sup>134</sup>.

I may conclude this chapter with an anecdote, a story that circulated among a segment of the native population in India during the British *Raj*.

There is a great gathering of Sontals 4 or 5000 men at a place about 8 miles off and I understand that they are all well armed with Bows and arrows, Tulwars, Spears & ca. And that *it is their intention to attack all the Europeans round and plunder and murder them. The cause of all this is that one of their Gods is supposed to have taken the Flesh and to have made his appearance at some place near this, and that it is his intention to reign as a King over all this part of India, and has ordered the Sontals to collect and put to death all the Europeans and influential Natives round. As this is the nearest point to the gathering I suppose it will be first attacked and think it would be best for you to send notice to the authorities at Berhampore and ask for military aid as it is not at all a nice look out being murdered and as far as I can make out this is a rather serious affair.*<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> M. Douglas, *Implicit Meanings*, p. 307.

<sup>135</sup> Cited in Ranajit Guha, “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency”, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, (eds.), Guha and Spivak, pp.49f. (italics original) This letter is sent by W.C. Taylor, Esqre. to F.S. Mudge, Esqre on 7 July 1855 in relation to the Santal rebellion of 1855 in Damin-I-Koh.



## Chapter 7

### The Portrait of *Huios*-Jesus in Mark: A Colonial/ Postcolonial Conundrum

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their own town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.

... . Then they came to the tree from which Okonkwo's body was dangling, ...<sup>1</sup>.

#### Introduction

In the previous chapter I tried to show that Mark begins the story of Jesus as the discourse of a subordinate minoritarian community which is attempting to map a space in between the Roman colonial and the relatively dominant native Jewish discourses. I argued that while appropriating the words, codes, categories and symbols from these cultures and discourses Mark probably also disrupts their privileged meaning and perceptions of power by articulating a hidden transcript and postulating an indeterminacy of meaning behind their back. He thus designs a discourse which accommodates and disrupts certain Jewish religio-cultural discourses and also the perceptions of the Roman colonial culture and discourses of power. I also examined the ways in which Mark introduces Jesus as the beloved *huios* who is apparently human and at the same time different from other human, angel and angelomorphic beings<sup>2</sup>.

In the current chapter I will explore the portrait of *huios*-Jesus in the Markan discursive landscape. This exploration does not aim simply to recount the life of Jesus in Mark. Instead it assumes that the Markan portrait of Jesus is made not without a

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<sup>1</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, Oxford: Heinemann, 1986 (1958), pp. 3, 149. Okonkwo, known also as the 'Roaring Flame', is the protagonist of Achebe's postcolonial novel. He is a zealous wrestler of his clan. His zeal brings him into conflict with the colonial religion, the commissioner and the native collaborators, which culminates in his shameful death on a tree. The initial contest of Okonkwo with 'Amalinze the Cat' at the outset (p.3) is a sign of what is to come at the end (p.149) of the story.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the difference between Jesus and other divine agents of Judaism, and the Christian veneration of Jesus as a sign of mutation from the parental body see Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish*

certain concern also for the religio-cultural and socio-political perspectives and concerns of a minority community under subjection and surveillance which longs for a strategic space in between the Roman colonial and certain other relatively dominant Jewish and/ or perhaps even 'Christian' discourses. So my reading of the portraiture of *huios*-Jesus in Mark is primarily an analysis of the strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity<sup>3</sup> of a subjected minoritarian community portrayed in writing at the level of an individual<sup>4</sup>.

In a survey of the prevalent models of postcolonial reading of Mark we find that most of the proposed models assume Mark to be either a straightforward resistant (anti-colonial) or a colonialist or potentially colonizing discourse<sup>5</sup>. For instance, Richard Horsley reads Mark as a resistant, anti-colonial discourse. Benny Liew finds Mark simply mimicking the Roman colonial discourse of power in order to enforce its own brand of imperial tyranny, boundary and might. For Liew Jesus' absolute tyrannical authority is evident in the way he is presented in categories of authority in relational, hierarchical terms. Mary Ann Tolbert, though she recognizes Mark as resistance literature, finds its advocacy of resistance and anti-colonial rhetoric to be something that potentially invokes a rival imperial ideology. For Jim Perkinson Mark is a 'colonial archive', 'a discourse of power' in which the voice of the colonialist Jesus, though it abounds, fails to suppress the subaltern voice of the Syro-Phoenician woman. These critics more or less tend to frame Mark in a monolithic discursive framework and portray Jesus in singularities either as a colonialist or as an anti-colonial nationalist/ nativist figure. We need to see whether these models and portrayals give adequate attention to the colonial/ postcolonial conundrum in the Markan mapping of Jesus.

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*Monotheism*, London: SCM Press Ltd., 1988, pp. 93-128. Also see his "Pre-70 CE Jewish Opposition to Christ-Devotion", *JTS* 50:1, 1999, pp. 35-58.

<sup>3</sup> See our discussion on 'strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity' in 1.4.4 and 2.1. Also see P. Werbner and T. Modood (eds.), *Debating Cultural Hybridity*.

<sup>4</sup> For a similar approach see M.J. Edwards and Simon Swain (eds.), *Portraits*. They describe a 'biographical portrait' as 'the biographic of a community'. Swain, "Biography and Biographic in the Literature of the Roman Empire", pp. 1-37 and Edwards, "Epilogue: Biography and the Biographic", pp. 227-234. Also see Bakhtin, *The Dialogic*, p. 109. Cf. Gospels as *βίαι* see R.A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter. 5.



I do recognize that certain discourses emanating from the colonial context and from among the subjected community may exhibit either anti-<sup>6</sup> or pro-<sup>7</sup>colonial characteristics. However, it is also important to recognize that these are not the only responses a colonised population can possibly manifest in response to its domination. One of the features of discursive response to colonial domination is recognized as the ‘problem of approximation’. It occurs because the world of the colonized is dominated by empire not only ideologically but also in almost every aspect. The colonial/ postcolonial writers who live in an empire need to work with the colonizer’s perceptions of power even when creating oppositional categories of meaning. So in an effort to be more themselves they run the risk paradoxically of mirroring the authoritative postures of the colonizer. Because they are forced to participate in the dominant culture in order to make their case, they find themselves affiliating with the symbolic system that impelled their resistance in the first place. This problem emerges as a recurring feature in most reverse or counter-discourses, including anti- and postcolonial writings<sup>8</sup>.

It is also important to recognize that the colonial context and experience potentially facilitate at least some colonised subjects to attain a culturally in-between posture and imitate their masters with a difference and thereby engage in a strategic manner both their own native and the dominant colonialist cultures and discourses of power. I prefer to describe this posture in terms of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity, i.e., a posture in which the desire for difference (selfhood) and transculturality are both contradictorily—necessary. This is a mimetic, ambivalent and hybrid<sup>9</sup> posturing by which certain colonized subjects accommodate and disrupt both their own native and the alien colonial cultures, traditions and discourses. We noticed this as an important phenomenon in our postcolonial reading of Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe*<sup>10</sup>. In this novelistic discourse the heroine Callirhoe is portrayed as a strategic essentialist and a transcultural hybrid accommodating and disrupting not only her own native (Greek) cultural landscape but also the colonial (Roman) landscape.

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<sup>6</sup> Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Anandamath* is essentially an anti-colonial discourse designed to resist the British *Raj* in Bengal.

<sup>7</sup> Chandu Menon’s *Indulekha* may be included in this category.

<sup>8</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, pp. 104, 167-175.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 2.1

Similarly in my postcolonial reading of Mark I will examine the portrait of the postures and exhibits of the Markan Jesus in order to see whether or not he acts as a colonist or an anti-colonial nativist figure or as a strategic essentialist and transcultural hybrid who accommodates and disrupts both his own native (Jewish and certain 'Christian') space and the Roman colonial cultural space which entered into his world.

So this chapter is an exploration of the conundrum of colonized self-expression. That is, to explore whether or not Mark's affiliation and appropriation of the imperial and dominant cultural categories in portraying the protagonist Jesus leads to an accession of colonialist posture to Jesus. Does the Markan Jesus who presents himself as an authoritative teacher and performer of mighty acts repeat what he dispels? Does Mark handle the problem of approximation? Does he attribute a monolithic or a polysemic mode of expression to the portrait of Jesus? How does Mark use the colonizers' cultural categories? Does he make use of imitation-with-a-difference as a mode of self-assertion? In the previous chapter we examined the affiliative-disruptive design in the beginning of Mark. Does Mark set the same design for the rest of the story? In order to find answers to some such questions we may unravel the portrait of *huios*-Jesus in the Markan landscape.

The portrait of *huios*-Jesus in the Markan discursive landscape engages our attention in this chapter. For a point of reference in our reading we may focus on a certain reference Mark employs recurrently in the projection of the protagonist. In Mark Jesus is portrayed to be speaking of himself as the *υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* (*manushyaputhran* or the Son of Humanity<sup>11</sup>). As *manushyaputhran* he associates himself as an authoritative lordly figure who performs acts of ritual aggressions (Mk. 2:10,28) and a powerful apocalyptic parousia figure who judges and destroys the enemy (8:38; 13:26; 14:62). Simultaneously as the Son of Humanity he is destined to suffer, die and rise again (8:31; 9:31; 10:33f.,45) and to be betrayed into the hands of

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 3. The two novels from my context in India (*The God of Small Things* and "Draupadi") also exhibit similar traits. See Chapter 2.2

<sup>11</sup> *ἄνθρωπος* in Greek, like its Semitic equivalents is best understood as a generic term meaning human being. For details see A.Y. Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology: Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, pp. 139f. The translation of *ἄνθρωπος* into *manushya* (Human) in my mother-tongue Malayalam or *manush* in Hindi conveys much more accurately this generic meaning. So *υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* may well be



the sinners (14:21,41). It appears that this complex designation of Jesus in Mark in a nutshell shows the colonial/ postcolonial conundrum of Mark's story of Jesus<sup>12</sup>.

Social anthropologists and postcolonial creative writers often acknowledge that anomalous beings or at least a belief or portrayal of them as liberative agents, play a prominent part in the discourse of a community which confronts calamities and other forms of socio-political upheavals<sup>13</sup>. For instance, we referred to a belief of the *Santals* in India of a god who came in their midst in the form of a man to aid their agitation against the *Raj*. The epigraph cited at the outset of the current chapter shows how the protagonist in Achebe's postcolonial novel *Things Fall Apart* acts as a 'revolting hybrid' because of being torn apart in between his native Nigerian and the colonialist British culture<sup>14</sup>. A number of biblical and postbiblical Jewish discourses written during the time of the colonial (Hellenistic and Roman) occupation/ subjection of the Jews exhibit the activities of a number of anomalous beings<sup>15</sup>. For instance Daniel portrays the one like a *manush ka puthra* coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient One to gain eternal dominion after the destruction of the beast-like colonial powers (ch. 7). In the *Similitudes of Enoch* the sage sees the one to whom belongs the time before time and with him the Son of Humanity who is designed to take revenge on the colonial kings and landlords and restore the elect/ pure of Israel (chs. 46, 48). In *4 Ezra* a 'man comes out of the sea' who is also called 'my son' to confront the eagle (Rome) and gather a peaceable multitude of Jews (chs.12,13). In Mark Jesus comes out of the water as the 'beloved son' (1:11) and engages in certain acts of ritual aggression and restoration as the Son of Humanity (2:10, 28; 8:38; 13:26; 14:62; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33f; 14:21, 41).

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translated as 'Son of Humanity' or *manushyaputhran* (Malayalam) or *manush ka puthra* (Hindi).

<sup>12</sup> For a short but significant survey and evaluation of the Son of Humanity debate in modern scholarship see Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation*, Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings*, pp. 276-314. Here she deals with 'revolting hybrids' within a social context.

<sup>14</sup> See the epigraph of this chapter. Achebe's subsequent novel *No Longer at Ease* (London: Heinemann, 1960) further elucidates this phenomenon. Also see Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, pp. 102-104.

<sup>15</sup> These can be either malevolent (Satan or demonic) or benevolent (angelic or angelomorphic) beings. See our discussion on 'Messiah', 'Son of God' etc. in Chapter 6.

I may also follow the portrayal of *huios*-Jesus in the Markan geographical landscape<sup>16</sup>. Jesus in Mark after accepting the baptism of John and the acclamation from heaven as the *huios*, goes to Galilee, his home territory with an edict of God and begins to exercise ritual acts of aggression and sultanic authority<sup>17</sup> over a whole landscape and extends it to the whole of the northern region as a wazir of God (1:14-8:30). He then travels ‘on the way’ to the south performing mighty acts and predicting his impending suffering and glory (8:31-10:52). In Jerusalem he confronts the native religio-political authorities and suffers crucifixion on a Roman colonial cross (11:1-15:47). Finally he is raised from the tomb to return to the home territory in Galilee (16:1-8).

### 7.1 Portraits of the Son of Humanity in Jewish Discursive Landscapes

The occurrence of the Markan portrayal of Jesus as the *huios*/ Son of Humanity needs to be seen in light of the Jewish discourses where we come across this expression. In some of the biblical and postbiblical discourses this expression appears in synonymous poetic parallelism as an emphatic counterpart to the words designating ‘man’ or ‘human being’<sup>18</sup>. Some of the references emphasize the difference between human beings and God in relation to human mortality (e.g., Job 25:6; IQS 11:20), others emphasize the superiority of humans over other beings (e.g., Ps. 8:5-8). There is also an instance of God’s prophet being addressed as a ‘son of man’ (Ez. 2:1; 3:1) which perhaps points to the finite as well as the revelatory (intermediary) status of prophets<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion on ‘The Geographical Outline’ see Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, pp. 54-116, Malbon, *Narrative Space and Mythic Meaning in Mark*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986, pp. 15-49.

<sup>17</sup> The word *ἐξουσία* refers to both judicial authority and military/political dominion. In Dan. 7:14 (LXX) *ἡ ἐξουσία* is used along with *ἡ ἀρχή*. In the Aramaic of Dan. 7 the term ܘܬܠܫ occurs seven times. All these instances are rendered by the LXX with *ἐξουσία* which refers to the power, dominion or authority exercised by the different beasts and then given to the Son of Humanity and to the saints. For a study on the use of this word see Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation*, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1986, pp. 68f., Anne Dawson, *Freedom as Liberating Power: A socio-political reading of the ἐξουσία texts in the Gospel of Mark*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Num. 23:19; Isa. 51:12; 56:2; Jer. 49:18,33; 50:40; 51:43; Pss. 8:4; 80:17; 146:3; Job 16:21; 25:6; 35:8; IQS 11:20.

<sup>19</sup> For scholars who argue the Son of Humanity as an idiomatic periphrasis or circumlocution (i.e., for ‘I’, not just for ‘human’) see G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7*, London: SPCK, 1979, B. Lindars,



In addition to such generic use of the phrase Son of Humanity we find it being used to denote certain human-like anomalous figure/s who appear exclusively in the nightly dreams/ visions of sages who confide their identity behind certain ancient sages. Instances of this may be found in Daniel 7, the *Similitudes of Enoch* and *4 Ezra* 13<sup>20</sup>. These are Jewish discourses originated in Hellenistic and Roman colonial contexts and from among the subjugated Jews. In this respect they need to be seen as anti- or postcolonial responses to Hellenistic and Roman colonialisms.

### 7.1.1 The One Like a Son of Humanity in Daniel 7

In Daniel 2:38 and 5:21 the references to ‘sons of humanity’ in the plural occur in a generic sense to denote human beings in general. In 8:15 and 10:16 the phrase is used for an angelic figure (‘someone having the appearance of a man’ and ‘the one in human form’) and in 8:17 it is used by the angel Gabriel to address Daniel himself. This shows that in Daniel the ‘Son of Humanity’ expression is used in a varied manner.

With this observation we may turn our attention to its occurrence in 7:13f. where ‘the one like a human being’ (כבר אנוש) appears in an heavenly night vision of the sage after the appearance and disappearance of four dominant beasts one after another. This Son of Humanity comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient One and presents himself before him. To this figure “was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14). In this vision the Son of Humanity is obviously a human-like superhuman being who receives dominion (לשלטון LXX ἡ ἀρχή / ἡ ἐξουσία) in heaven from the enthroned Ancient One. His portrait in Danielic interpretation may allow us to suggest that he possesses an ambiguous individual (7:13f.) and corporate identity (7:18, 27), and as an hybrid divine-human, individual-

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*Jesus Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels*, London: SPCK, 1983. For a critique of their arguments see J.A. Fitzmyer, *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979, *idem*, “Another View of the Son of Man Debate”, *JSNT* 4, 1979, pp. 56-88.

<sup>20</sup> It can safely be said that Daniel pre-dates Mark (165 BCE) and the other two may either be contemporaneous or post-date Mark (60-75 CE).

corporate figure he is poised to start an eternal sultanate over all peoples, nations and languages via the saints of the Most High<sup>21</sup>.

According to Collins the symbols and the mythic framework of this vision have certain elements of the native Ugaritic/ Canaanite myths as well as certain biblical images (e.g., Hos. 13:7; Isa. 11:6, 17:12-14; 51:9-10; Jer. 5:6; Ez. 1; Pss. 74:13-17, 89:9-11). He argues that “[t]he use of ancient mythology in a Jewish apocalyptic work such as Daniel must be seen in the context of the interest in old traditions throughout the Hellenistic world”<sup>22</sup> to revive ancient myths for meaning and guidance in the Hellenistic age. He thinks that this interest in antiquity and native tradition is not without a nationalistic anti-imperial agenda<sup>23</sup>. Whether or not we fully consent to this observation it is possible to assume that in Daniel the opposition between the sea beasts and the heavenly figures (the Ancient One and the one like the Son of Humanity) and the final and eternal victory of the latter beings over the former are framed within an oppositional agenda. Daniel in a hidden transcript (vision) envisions the *imperium* of the beasts<sup>24</sup> to be replaced by the *imperium* of the heavenly Son of Humanity who represents the saints of the Most High in the heavenly court.

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<sup>21</sup> For the mythic element in Dan. 7 and its apocalyptic anti-colonial frame of reference see J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977, pp. 95ff. *idem.*, *The Scepter*, pp. 173-176, G.W.E. Nickelsburg, “Son of Man” in *ABD*, vol. 6, New York: Doubleday, 1992, pp. 137-150. Cf. J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 229ff., Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark: A Study of the Background of the term ‘Son of Man’ and its use in St. Mark’s Gospel*, London: SPCK, 1967, pp. 17-23, Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 169ff. They suggest that the Son of Humanity reference in Daniel refers to the saints of the Most High who will be given world-wide messianic dominion. For a theological approach to explain the Son of Humanity as a sanctified substitute for fallen humanity see Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 55ff.

<sup>22</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision* p. 102. For suggestions of an Iranian or Indo-Iranian, Chaldean, Hellenistic, Gnostic etc. background of the Son of Humanity see S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans., G.W. Anderson, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956, pp. 348ff, 422ff. Also see F.H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History*, London: SCM Press, 1967, pp. 75ff.

<sup>23</sup> For a similar assessment on the second Sophistic movement in relation to the revival of Greek ‘nationalism’ under the Roman rule see Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 17-100. Also see R.A. Oden, Jr., “Philo of Byblos and Hellenistic Historiography”, *PEQ*, 110, 1978, pp. 115-126, G.E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-definition*, ch. 6.

<sup>24</sup> The four beasts signify four empires. See H.H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1935, pp. 67-160. Also see Klausner, *The Messianic*, pp. 228f.



The one like a Son of Humanity, a heavenly human representative figure<sup>25</sup> is invested with dominion (שלטן) in heaven so that the saints of the Most High (the elect of Israel) may establish an eternal sultanate over the whole earth (cf. IQM 17:5-8)<sup>26</sup>. The Son of Humanity triumphs in the divine court so that the saints of the Most High will triumph over their colonial masters on earth<sup>27</sup>.

In light of such an apparent connection between the one like a Son of Humanity and the suffering saints of the Most High in terms of receiving dominion, and the representation of the latter in the former (Dan. 7:13,18,27) it may not be improbable to attribute an element of suffering in the portrait of the one like a Son of Humanity prior to his vindication in the presence of the Ancient One<sup>28</sup>. Daniel shows that the suffering righteous in Israel are represented in the Son of Humanity and therefore God will grant them dominion and authority despite their current momentary affliction at the hands of the beast-like colonial powers<sup>29</sup>. Thus it is possible to find some room, though ambiguous, in Daniel for the one like a Son of Humanity who

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<sup>25</sup> For an argument on the distinction between one like the Son of Humanity and the saints of the Most High in Dan. 7 see Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 73-80. For 'Israel being represented by one like a Son of Humanity' see Hooker, *The Son of Man*, pp. 19-47, Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, pp. 350ff., J.D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1989 (1980), pp. 68-75. For a discussion on the one like the Son of Humanity representing the archangel Michael see J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision*, pp. 123-47, or the angel Gabriel see C. Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*, London: SPCK, 1982, p. 182.

<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that even though Daniel has a nationalistic, anti-imperial agenda the author deliberately avoids any reference to a Davidic messianic figure. In this respect this discourse has a disturbing effect on those who hold on to the Davidic royal ideology. He maintains the nationalistic revival well away from the Davidic monarchism just as the authors of the book of Maccabees. However the author/ compiler of *1 Enoch* (90: 6-39) seems to bring together around a single royal figure the fulfillment of most if not all the messianic prophecies.

<sup>27</sup> Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, pp. 178-183. Though he finds little 'identification' between the one like a Son of Humanity and the saints, he thinks that "we are probably justified in assuming that the receiving of divine sovereignty by the human-like figure in the heavenly court is an indication that the saints too will receive dominion". So he accepts the argument that the human-like figure as an angel 'represents' the saints. pp. 181f.

<sup>28</sup> See W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, London: SPCK, 1955, p. 280, Hooker, *The Son of Man*, pp. 28ff. C.F.D. Moule, "Neglected Features in the Problem of 'the Son of Man'" in *Neues Testament und Kirche: für Rudolf Schnackenburg*, (ed.), Joachim Gnilka, Freiburg: Herder, 1974, pp. 413-28. Cf. W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah: The Synoptic Tradition of the Revelation of God in Christ*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943.

<sup>29</sup> Hooker, *The Son of Man*, p. 29, M. Black, "The Messianism of the Parables of Enoch" in *The Messiah* (ed.), Charlesworth, p. 147 (145-168).



suffers and exercises authority. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the Danielic Son of Humanity/ saints of the Most High suffers at the hands of his own people or comes as an eschatological judge to exercise authority on earth directly. Nothing is said about his coming on earth in person to vindicate the elect or to forgive sins or to be the lord of the Sabbath (cf. Mk.2:10, 28). Instead, he is a vice-regent who exercises divine sovereignty on God's behalf in the heavenly court which may signify an imminent impartation of the kingship, dominion and greatness of the kingdoms of the whole earth to the people of the Most High (7:27).

### 7.1.2 The Son of Humanity in the *Similitudes* (1 En. 37-71)

Another set of important and comparatively numerous references to the Son of Humanity figure appear in the *Similitudes of Enoch*. It is suggested that since no fragments of the *Similitudes* are found at Qumran it may have a late Jewish or even Christian origin<sup>30</sup>. But this view is challenged by the SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminar which met in 1977 in Tübingen and in 1978 in Paris. The consensus opinion in this Seminar is that the *Similitudes* is a Jewish text and originated in the latter half of the first century CE<sup>31</sup>. If this view is valid then we need to recognize that the *Similitudes* originated either contemporaneously with or immediately after Mark. The parallelism between the portraits of the Son of Humanity conflating with other messianic and human figures within the *Similitudes* and the portraits of Jesus as the Son of Humanity conflating with other messianic figures in Mark is something that may attract our attention<sup>32</sup>. This may suggest that perceptions concerning the Son of Humanity as a

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<sup>30</sup> J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1976. He argues that by 400 CE the Book of Giants as in the Qumran Aramaic Enoch had been replaced by the late Christian work, the *Similitudes*, in a new Greek Enochic Pentateuch. Also see M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch with Commentary and Textual Notes*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985, pp. 183-193. Unlike Milik Black thinks that the *Similitudes* contain pre-Christian Jewish traditions (a radical turn from his earlier position). However, he attributes chs. 70-71 to a post-Christian date. For a survey of the critical scholarship on the date of the *Similitudes* see D. Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>31</sup> See J.H. Charlesworth, "The SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminars at Tübingen and Paris on the Book of Enoch" *NTS* 25, 1979, pp. 315-23, *idem*, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins*, Cambridge: CUP, 1985, pp. 88-90, 102-110 specially pp.108f., M.A. Knibb, "The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review", *NTS* 25, 1979, pp. 345-59, C.L. Mearns, "Dating the *Similitudes of Enoch*", *NTS* 25, 1979, pp. 360-69. Also see E. Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn im äthiopischen Henochbuch*, Lund: Gleerup, 1946, Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 85-92, E. Isaac, "1(Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch" in *TOTP* (ed.), Charlesworth, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Charlesworth, "From Messianology..." in *Judaisms* (ed.), Neusner, p. 241.



deliverer of the righteous elect of Israel prevailed at least in certain Jewish quarters from where different trajectories of this perception may well have developed.

In the *Similitudes* the Son of Humanity references<sup>33</sup> occur in the visions of Enoch (sixteen times) in the second (45-57) and the third (58-69) parables, and also in the epilogue (70-1). In one of his visions Enoch saw ‘the One to whom belongs the time before time’ whose head was white like wool and “with him another individual, whose face was like that of a human being” (46:1, cf. Dan. 7:13). On inquiry he learned that

This is the Son of Man to whom belongs righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells. ... This Son of Man whom you have seen is the One who would remove the kings and the mighty ones from their comfortable seats and the strong ones from their thrones. He shall loosen the reins of the strong and crush the teeth of the sinners. He shall depose the kings from their thrones and kingdoms (46:1-5 cf. 38:1,3,5).

This Son of Humanity was given a name even before the creation. The Lord of the Spirits has chosen him and so he is ‘the Chosen One’ (48:6; 49:2). He will become a staff for the righteous ones (for he is ‘the Righteous One’ 38:3) in order that they may lean on him and not fall (48:4-6). He has revealed the wisdom of the Lord of the Spirits to the righteous and holy ones (46:3; 49:1-4). In those days the kings of the earth and the mighty landowners shall be humiliated on account of the deeds of their hands for they have denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah (48:1-10). Here the Son of Humanity and the Chosen, Righteous One are conflated with the Messiah (cf. 49:2,4; 53:6). According to Charlesworth, “the Elect One, the Righteous One, the Messiah, and the Son of Humanity are different titles for the same messianic and eschatological figure”<sup>34</sup>.

In another vision Enoch tells us that on the day when the Lord condemns the ruling class (kings, governors, the high officials and the landlords), they will see the elect Son of Humanity, who is concealed from the beginning, sitting on the throne of

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<sup>33</sup> The author uses three different expressions for ‘Son of Humanity’: *walda sab’e* (46:2, 3, 4: 48:2), *walda b’esit* (62:5), *walda ’egwala ’emma-heyaw* (62:7,9,14; 63:11; 69:26,27; 70:1; 71:17). For details see J.C. Vanderkam, “Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71” in *The Messiah* (ed.), Charlesworth, pp. 174f. (169-91).

<sup>34</sup> Charlesworth, “From Messianology...” in *Judaisms* (eds.), Neusner, *et al.*, p. 240. For similar views see R.H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1912, p. 70, Nickelsburg, “Son of Man” in *ABD*, pp. 138-40, M. Black, “The Messianism...” in *The Messiah* (ed.) Charlesworth, pp. 149f.

his glory (62:5ff.). When the Lord destroys the sinners and oppressors the righteous shall eat and rest and rise with that Son of Humanity forever and ever (62:14). The Son of Humanity whose name is revealed shall never pass away or perish from before the face of the earth (69:27). But those who have led the world astray shall be bound with chains and all their deeds shall vanish. Nothing corruptible shall be found because the Son of Humanity has appeared and has seated himself upon the throne of his glory (69:29). In the final scene an angel comes to Enoch and greets him saying: “You, son of man, who are born in righteousness and upon whom righteousness has dwelt, the righteousness of the Antecedent of Time will not forsake you...” (71:14ff.).

The Son of Humanity references occur in *1 Enoch* essentially in the context of an opposition between ‘the community of the righteous’ and ‘the sinners/ the mighty kings of the earth’, a context in which the former will be vindicated and the latter will be destroyed by the Lord of the Spirits. In executing this destructive judgment the Son of Humanity has a significant role to play (chs. 46, 48, 62, 63). The Son of Humanity appears to have more than one identity in the *Similitudes*. He is identified as the ‘Righteous One’ (38:2f.; 53:6) the ‘Elect One’ (39:6; 40:5; 45:3f; 61:8f; cf. 46:4; 69:27), the ‘Messiah’ (48:10; 52:4) and also the man Enoch himself (70:1; 71:14ff)<sup>35</sup>. In the Parables in general, as they stand now, we find a merging of these identities. The Son of Humanity in the *Similitudes* seems also to be a heavenly-earthly and individual-corporate<sup>36</sup> figure of authority who will execute judgment on the enemies of Israel. In Daniel the one like a Son of Humanity is a corporate figure with individual traits, in *Enoch* he has become an individual with corporate characteristics; in the former he is the elect community and in the latter he is the leader of the same elect community<sup>37</sup>.

Now can we find any room for the suffering of the Son of Humanity in the *Similitudes* as in Daniel where the suffering community of the Most High arguably

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<sup>35</sup> Hooker, *The Son of Man*, pp. 40-3. She says: “Although the Son of Man himself is an individual, he is nevertheless closely associated with the community of the righteous of which he is the head;...”. Also see Klausner, *The Messianic*, pp. 289-301, Rowland, *The Open Heaven*, pp. 184f., Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 109ff., M. Black, “The Messianism of the Parables of Enoch: Their Date and Contribution to Christological Origins” in *The Messiah* (ed.), Charlesworth, pp. 145-168.

<sup>36</sup> The Elect One and the ‘elect ones’ in the Parables may refer to the remnant of Israel. See Black, “The Messianism...”, p. 150.

<sup>37</sup> Hooker, *The Son of Man*, p. 46.



attributes an element of suffering to the Son of Humanity because of the possible link between the two? There are conflicting answers to this issue. According to Vermes, there are no references to humiliation or suffering for the Enochic Son of Humanity<sup>38</sup>. But there are others who draw attention to the Isaianic *Ebed Yhwh* tradition which in some way relates to the suffering of the righteous ones in the *Similitudes*<sup>39</sup>. There are references to the blood of the righteous ones crying before the Lord of the Spirits for judgment to be executed on their behalf. When the Ancient One sits in judgment their hearts rejoice for their prayers have been heard. In that place Enoch sees the fountain of righteousness and wisdom for the thirsty ones to drink so that their dwelling place become with the holy, righteous and elect ones (48:1, cf. Isa. 55:1; 53:11). “At that hour, that Son of Humanity was given a name in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits... . He will become a staff for the righteous ones in order that they may lean on him and not fall. He is the light of the gentiles and he will become the hope of those who are sick in their hearts ... For this purpose he became the Chosen One” (1 *En.* 48:2ff. cf. Isa. 43:1; 42:6; 49:1,6; 61:1f.). It appears that in these verses the traditions relating to the Elect Son of Humanity, the *Ebed Yhwh* and the elect righteous ones in some way are conflated and there is an oscillation between the one and the many<sup>40</sup>. The Elect, Righteous Son of Humanity (46:1-3; 48:2,6; 52:6,9; 62:2,7,9) in the *Similitudes* is not only the transcendental Messiah (48:10; 52:4) but also the agent and symbol of the suffering/ renewing Israel (38:1-6; 39:6; 40:5; 45:5; 47:2-4; 48:4; 51:3-5; 62:14-16; 71:14,17).

### 7.1.3 ‘Something Like the Figure of a Man’ in 4 Ezra 13

The man-like figure of Dan. 7:13f. and the *Similitudes* resurfaces in 4 Ezra’s sixth vision. It says: “After seven days I dreamed a dream in the night; and behold, a wind arose from the sea and stirred up all its waves. And I looked, and behold, this

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<sup>38</sup> Vermes, *Jesu the Jew*, p. 175.

<sup>39</sup> For a connection between the ‘Chosen One’ and the ‘Righteous One’ of the Parables with the Isaianic ‘Servant of the Lord’ see J. Jeremias in *TDNT* 5, 1954, pp. 617-717, Nickelsburg, “Son of Man” in *ABD*, pp. 138-40, M. Black, “The Messianism...”, pp.150-161, *idem*, “Salvation without and with a Messiah: Developing Beliefs in Writings Ascribed to Enoch” in (eds.) Neusner, *et al.* *Judaisms*, pp. 56-68(49-68). Cf. J. Theisohn, *Der auserwählte Richter. Untersuchungen zum traditions-geschichtlichen Ort der Bilderreden des äthiopischen Henoch*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975. Theisohn rejects the idea of a suffering Son of Humanity developing in the Parables. However, he finds a blending of the Elect Judge tradition with the *Ebed-Yhwh* tradition, pp. 117, 124.

<sup>40</sup> M. Black, “The Messianism...”, p. 160, *idem*, *The Book of Enoch*, p. 189.



wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea. And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven..." (13:1-4). He had a terrifying gaze, for everything under his gaze trembled and all who heard his voice melted under the power of his voice. When a great multitude turned to make war against this man he carved out a mountain for himself and flew upon it (13:5f.). He encountered this multitude and burned them not by any military means but by the stream of fire, the flaming breath and the great storm from his mouth. After this that man came down from the mountain and called unto himself another peaceable multitude (13:12). Ezra is told that the man who came from the heart of the sea is the one whom the Most High has been keeping for many ages. The Most High calls him 'my son'. The mountain which he carved out and flew on is Mount Zion. The wind, fire and storm from his mouth are the words (the law) he speaks, and the new peaceable multitude is the ten tribes who went into exile but now return to their land and join the remnant, i.e., "those who are left of your people, who are found within my holy borders", in safety (13:46-50).

This sixth vision comes in the hinterground of the fifth vision (the eagle vision *4 Ez.* 11,12) which speaks of an eagle that reigns oppressively over the whole earth until the lion appears. The eagle appears to represent Rome<sup>41</sup> and the three heads perhaps the Flavian emperors<sup>42</sup>. The lion is the messiah of Israel, later identified as being of the royal line of David (12:32) who overthrows the evil reign of Rome. In the vision concerning the man rising from the sea the opponent is not specifically Rome but the nations of the whole world. In both these visions we may note the nationalistic, anti-imperial agenda of *4 Ezra*<sup>43</sup>.

The vision of a man rising from the sea has similarities with Dan.7 and the seer's knowledge of Daniel is explicit (12:11; Dan.7:7)<sup>44</sup>. The man from the sea in *4*

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<sup>41</sup> Andre Lacocque, "The Vision of the Eagle in 4 Esdras, a Rereading of Daniel 7 in the First Century C.E." in *SBL Sem. Papers*, 1981, pp. 237-258.

<sup>42</sup> See Bruce Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, Sheffield: SAP, 1995, p. 71. For a discussion on it as a reference to the triumvirate see H.C. Kee, "'The Man' in Fourth Ezra: Growth of a Tradition" in *SBL Sem. Papers* 1981, pp. 199f. (199-208).

<sup>43</sup> It is quite clear in *4 Ezra* that the people Israel are the true heirs of Adam and other nations are like spittle. Only the people of Israel has the divine right to rule the world (6:53-9). See Hooker, *The Son of Man*, pp. 49-56 on the nationalism and essentialism of *4 Ezra*.

<sup>44</sup> For instance the wind stirring up the sea—13:2, Dan.7:2; the four winds of heaven—13:5, Dan. 7:2; the mountain cut out from an unknown place—13:6f, Dan.2:34f;



*Ezra* 13:3 seems to be an echo of the one like a Son of Humanity in Dan.7:13. But unlike the Son of Humanity figure in Daniel who comes in the clouds of heaven to the Ancient One, the man-like figure in *4 Ezra* comes out of the sea and flies with the clouds of heaven and goes to wage war against the multitude of nations by the words (law) that comes out of his mouth. The man in this vision is a messianic figure who is also identified by God as ‘my son’. He is a pre-existent being (13:26,32,52) though in an earlier reference he is portrayed as a mortal being (7:29).

The sage in *4 Ezra* envisages that suffering and eschatological vindication are ordained for the faithful few. He speaks about the suffering of the people of God (6:55ff). He seems to believe that unless the living pass through difficult experiences, they can never receive those things that have been reserved for them (7:14). The righteous can endure suffering by hoping for the advent of better days (7:18). Only those who are delivered from the evils that attend the end of the age shall see the wonders of the new age especially the revelation of the messiah who comes with those who are with him. Those who survive and endure will rejoice for four hundred years (7:28).

But before the final resurrection occurs, even the son messiah has to die together with “all who draw human breath” (7:29). This appears to be a picture of solidarity of the messiah with his people<sup>45</sup>. Suffering and trials are essential, ineluctable features of the life of the true Israel, and of the son through whom God accomplishes his purposes. Thus, though we do not have a clear and formal doctrine of a suffering Son of Humanity in *4 Ezra*, there is a picture of a messiah and his people who, through struggle and suffering and death, are both agents and beneficiaries of the divine triumph.

#### 7.1.4 Reflections on the Jewish Portraits of the Son of Humanity

*Colonial subjection and the hope of divine deliverance.* The references to the Son of Humanity in Daniel, *Similitudes* and *4 Ezra* occur in the nightly visions/dreams of the sages in relation to their being downcast at the plight of their people who suffer subjection and suffering at the hands of the beast-like (Hellenistic and

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fire, flame—13:10, Dan. 7:9; enemy destroyed by fire—13:11, Dan.7:11. For *4 Ezra* as a midrash on Daniel 7 see Kee, “The Man”, p. 203.

<sup>45</sup> Kee, “The Man”, p. 205.

Roman) colonial powers<sup>46</sup> and also in relation to the hope of a great deliverance of the suffering righteous ones of Israel by the Ancient One and the one like a human being (in Dan. 7:9f, 13f.), the Lord of the Spirits and the Son of Humanity (in *1 En.* 46:1), the Most High and his lion-like pre-existent messianic son/man (in *4 Ez.* 11:36-12:1-3, 31-35; 13:3, 8-13). Thus the Son of Humanity is used as a powerful political symbol in these Jewish discourses.

*The Son of Humanity as an expression of identification.* The Son of Humanity or the human-like figure is seen by the seers in their heavenly visions. The expression is neither used as a title or in a circumlocution to refer to oneself but it is used as a phrase of identification. The Son of Humanity does not speak of himself as the Son of Humanity. This expression is always the seers' impression concerning the heavenly figure which they used to distinguish a/ the human-like figure from other beast-like or angelic beings. He is human-like in contrast to the beast-like imperial powers. Though he appears as a human-like figure he potentially represents the saints of the Most High in Daniel. The Enochic tradition links an extraordinary human being with this heavenly figure bridging the gap between the human and divine, between the earthly and heavenly.

*The Son of Humanity is an agent of opposition expressed in the form of a hidden transcript.* The references to the Son of Humanity most often occur in contexts of conflicts when he comes to the aid of the righteous/ dominated elect ones against the dominant class. As his references occur only in the dream/ vision of the sages, they must be treated as a kind of coded hidden transcript made in isolation and in opposition to the public transcript of the colonial kings and nations. In the case of Daniel and *4 Ezra* the sages see their vision/ dream of the human-like or man figure when they lie down in bed (or in the field in the case of Ezra) in the night, and in the case of *1 Enoch* the sage is lifted up to the heavens to see visions. In the visions the beasts (the multitude in *4 Ezra*) are arrayed on the one side and the Ancient One and his associate, the human-like (Son of Humanity) figure on the other. This is a scenario

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<sup>46</sup> Dan. 7: 2-8; *1 En.* 46:4-7; *4 Ez.* 11:1-35; 12:17-30; 13:5. Also see Klausner, *The Messianic*, pp. 272-76, 385. He finds the pseudepigraphic apocalyptic literature as a means of 'consolation' for the suffering people, dew to the suffering souls, balm to the broken hearts, food for the marvel seeking imagination of the common people. They are inspiring documents devoted to a love for the home land, love of the nation and hatred for the oppressors, p. 385.



of conflict and confrontation. These visions/ dreams show that obviously this is a struggle for dominion and in this conflict the power and status of the Ancient One and his associate are superior to that of their opponents. The Ancient One has his throne of fire but the beastly powers do not have their throne, and the Son of Humanity flies with the clouds of heaven indicating his acquaintance with the divine. The Ancient One delegates dominion to the human-like figure and as a result on the ground the holy ones of the Most High shall rule for ever (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; 4 Ez.13:12; 1 En. 48:9). What we have here is a clear example of the approximation of power by the holy ones of the Most High, a kind of replacement of the *imperium* of the beast-like colonial powers by the *imperium* of the Son of Humanity/ saints of the Most High.

*The Son of Humanity is an embodiment of native, anti-colonial nationalism and racial essentialism.* The role of the Son of Humanity is essentially nationalistic and anti-colonial in nature. In Daniel he comes with the clouds of heaven and receives indestructible dominion, glory and kingship after all the beasts are eliminated by the Ancient One (Dan.7:9-14) for and on behalf of the saints of the Most High. He, by receiving dominion in the heavens, enables the holy ones of the Most High to be dominant over kingdoms and nations. In the *Similitudes* he favours the elect and righteous of Israel against the dominant colonial powers that rule over them (1 En. 48:8f). In 4 Ezra he is against Rome (chs.11,12) and the multitude (13:11) that rise against the peaceable multitude of Israel. So he as the Son of Humanity is an epitome of nationalism and racial, religious essentialism. His role is to deliver the elect (pure) of Israel and destroy the enemies. Thus a religious and ethnic essentialism seem to be the dominant agenda in these discourses. The Son of Humanity is the epitome of the pure essence of Israel.

*The Son of Humanity does not operate in person on earth. He exists/ operates in the dreams or visions of sages.* The human-like figure in all three discourses is a figure of authority who exercises a delegated authority to invigorate the elect/ essence of Israel. In this respect he comes to reinstate Israel and her religion, race and culture. There seems to be little evidence to suggest that the authority of the Son of Humanity is something that disturbs the native religion, culture and leaders. Though there is some room to suggest that this figure of authority is also the one who suffers because of his apparent link with the suffering saints of God there is little

evidence to suggest that his suffering is caused by the religio-political leaders of Israel or that he will face opposition from them. The Son of Humanity in these discourses, except perhaps *4 Ezra*, is portrayed mainly as an heavenly figure (or a human elevated into a heavenly realm in the case of Enoch in *1 En.71:14*) who receives dominion in heaven. In Daniel he receives dominion in the heavenly court when he came to the Ancient One. There is little to suggest that he is coming to earth as judge even though he is referred to as the one who comes with the clouds of heaven only to meet the Ancient One in the heavenly court (Dan.7:13 cf. Mk. 13:26; 14:62). There are few indications to suggest that he is delegated as a divine deputy to come down to the earth. In the *Similitudes* the Son of Humanity is with the Ancient of Time (46:1). His task is to remove oppressive kings, governors and the mighty ones and deliver the righteous ones, but we are not told how he does this—by staying in the heavenly court or by descending to earth. It appears that ‘the angels of plague’ execute judgment on earth, on kings, governors and landlords (53:4; 62:11), and after this the Righteous and Elect One will reveal the house of his congregation (53:6), the Son of Humanity will sit on the throne of his glory (62:5), the righteous and elect ones shall eat and rest and rise with that Son of Humanity forever and ever (62:14). In *4 Ezra* we see something like the coming of the man-like figure out of the heart of the sea, who flew with the clouds of heaven and imposed a judgment on the multitude of the earth with the word (law) of his mouth (ch.13). He is called ‘my son’. He stands on the top of Mount Zion and gathers a peaceable multitude (13:32, 35,49).

*The Son of Humanity is a fluid, ambiguous figure who can conflate with other messianic figures.* The Son of Humanity seems to be an ambiguous (fluid) individual-corporate, divine- human figure in these discourses. He appears to be a human, divine, divine-human, angelic and a representative of the holy ones of Israel. In Daniel he first appears ‘like a human being’ but with divine qualities because he comes ‘with the clouds of heaven’. He appears to have an individual identity for he looks ‘like a human being’ but in relation to the dominion he received from the Ancient One and its apparent link to the reception of the dominion of the holy ones we may find a certain connection between the individual and corporate identity of the Son of Humanity (7:8,27). In the *Similitudes* certain identities that are attributed to the Son of Humanity (‘Righteous One’ and the ‘Elect One’) seem to suggest that he, despite



the apparent individual identity (71:14), potentially represents the ‘righteous ones’ and the ‘elect ones’ of Israel (48:1-2,6,9) and thus can hold a corporate identity. The man-like figure in *4 Ezra* increasingly moves towards an individual Davidic royal identity compared to its portrayal in the other two discourses. This may well be seen as yet another trajectory in the development of the Son of Humanity tradition. At the same time it is important to recognize that the entire thrust of *4 Ezra* is a reflection on the community of God which despite its status as the chosen of God suffers under alien occupation. The deliverance of this community is the main agenda of *4 Ezra* and it is in this context that the man-like son-messianic figure pops up who in fact draws a peaceable multitude (from the diaspora and the remnant who are left within the holy borders) after the destruction of the inimical multitude (13:49). So the status and role of the man-like figure cannot be seen outside a corporate identity of the remnant of Israel.

The Son of Humanity in these portraits appears as a fluid figure. He is a human-like or an angel-like figure who potentially represents the saints of the Most High i.e., the pure essence of Israel. He conflates other messianic figures like the ‘Messiah’ (in the *Similitudes* and in *4 Ezra*). He can operate in the heavenlies (as in Daniel and the *Similitudes*) or on earth (in the *Similitudes* and *4 Ezra*). There is no suggestion that he is physically present on earth except perhaps in the vision of the sages, and that he refers to himself as the Son of Humanity. There is no suggestion that he has authority on earth to forgive sins or that he is the lord of the Sabbath or he disturbs the people or the nation on whose behalf he acts or he suffers, dies and rises again.

With these complex portraits of the Son of Humanity in biblical and postbiblical Judaism in mind let me examine the portrait of *huios*-Jesus as the Son of Humanity in Mark.

## **7.2 The Sultanate of *Huios*-Jesus in the North and the Formation of a Transcultural Community (1:12-8:30)**

### **7.2.1 The Prelude**

#### **7.2.1.1 The Son and the *Satanas* (1:12-13)**

Mark portrays Jesus in the baptism scene as an anomalous hybrid figure who is endowed with the spirit of God. In the baptism and temptation scenes Mark presents

Jesus not only in the human, historical language with which John and his followers are described, but also in the cosmic language of God's *huios* versus Satan<sup>47</sup>. In baptism Jesus emerges out of the water as the 'beloved son' endued with the spirit (Mk. 1:10f) to be thrown into the wilderness in a test of strength (*πειραζόμενος*) with Satan, the spirit of the wilderness. Here he is with the wild beasts<sup>48</sup> and ministered to by the angels<sup>49</sup>. On the one hand this experience enhances his status as the stronger son<sup>50</sup> but on the other, Mark, by describing Jesus' temptation within a mythical paradigm symbolically shows the thematic thrust of his story, perhaps an augury of what is to come—the impersonated *huios* will engage (encounter) the adversary and its historical agents and suffer the inevitable consequence<sup>51</sup>. This pericope thus sets an oppositional category and stages an oppositional strategy of Jesus<sup>52</sup> which starts as soon as he enters Galilee to take charge of the area, and extends his domain by performing mighty works over the whole of northern terrain up until Caesarea Philippi (1:16-8:30).

#### 7.2.1.2 The Son and the Royal Rule of God (1:14-15)

After John is handed over (*παραδοθῆναι*) Jesus comes to Galilee<sup>53</sup> from the wilderness declaring the good news of God, saying: *Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ*

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<sup>47</sup> J.M. Robinson, *The Problem*, p. 27, Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p.15. For a note on Satan see V.P. Hamilton, "Satan", in *ABD*, vol. 5, pp. 985-89.

<sup>48</sup> For 'beasts' as a referent to kings in Daniel see Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>49</sup> A similar reference in *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* reads: "If you achieve the good, my children, ... . The devil will flee from you; wild animals will be afraid of you, and the angels will stand by you" (*T. Naph.* 8:4). "If you continue to do good, even the unclean spirits will flee from you and wild animals will fear you" (*T. Benj.* 5:2).

<sup>50</sup> R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993, p. 59, Hooker, *St. Mark*, p. 49.

<sup>51</sup> Scholars seldom agree on what actually happened in the wilderness. E. Best thinks the temptation was a conflict between the son of God and the prince of evil in which Jesus was victorious decisively at the very outset. See *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soterology*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), Cambridge: CUP, 1990 (1965), pp. 7-15. But Robinson and others think that the conflict only begins here and it culminates in the cross and resurrection. See Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark*, pp. 27-53, Mauser, *Christ in the Wilderness*, p. 130, Nineham, *Saint Mark*, pp. 63f., Marcus, *Mark: 1-8*, pp. 72f. For a probable solution to this dispute see John Riches, "Conflicting Mythologies: Mythical Narrative in the Gospel of Mark", *JSNT* 84, 2001, pp. 29-50.

<sup>52</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> The major geographical schema of Mark— Galilee, the way and Jerusalem has long been recognized as an important element of its organization and theology. See R.H. Lightfoot, *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938, E.S.



ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ (Mk.1:14-15). This sounds like the proclamation of an imperial edict, the first and the foundation of a series of ritual aggressions and authoritative teachings of Jesus. Jesus the son who engaged the *satanas* of the wilderness for forty days now acts as the herald and wazir of God's *imperium* on earth. On the one hand this passage draws a clear dividing line between John and Jesus. John has played an essential though subsidiary role in the beginning of the story, but now his time is over and the time of the stronger son begins. On the other hand it provides a commentary on the baptism-temptation unit and exhibits the status of Jesus. It also creates an avenue for a subjected community to perceive the *imperium* of God emerging on their behalf. However, there is a clue to suggest that the fate of John (*παραδοθῆναι*) is something that awaits the son and his followers<sup>54</sup>.

John proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (1:4 cf. *Ant.* 18.116-19). Jesus, like the herald in Isaiah 40:9; 52:7 and 61:1, announces the good news of God's royal rule<sup>55</sup> that draws near in Galilee. He preaches repentance in view of the nearness of the kingdom<sup>56</sup>. Repentance<sup>57</sup> (returning to) and believing in the news of God's imminent victory<sup>58</sup> appear to be the criteria for the rule of God. By

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Malbon, "Galilee and Jerusalem: History and Literature in Marcan Interpretation", *CBQ* 44, 1982, pp. 242-48, Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988, pp. 33-68. For history of Galilee see R.A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Mk. 3:19; 9:31; 10:33; 13:9,11-12; 14:10,11,18,21,41,42,44; 15:1,15.

<sup>55</sup> The expression *basileia* of God expresses a Jewish religious-political vision that spells freedom from domination which was common to all the different movements in first-century Israel. It most probably envisaged an oppositional character of the empire of God as an alternative to that of the empire of Rome. See E.S. Fiorenza, 'The Central Vision of *Basileia*' in *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, pp. 168-174.

<sup>56</sup> There is quite a bit of conflicting arguments on the question of whether or not the historical Jesus called for general repentance in view of the coming kingdom. For instance compare E.P. Sanders' (*Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 106-113) discussion on this issue with J.H. Charlesworth's ("The Historical Jesus in Light of Writings Contemporaneous with Him", *ANRW* II.25.1, 1982, pp. 451-76).

<sup>57</sup> The message of repentance is central to all the Hebrew prophets. See Klausner, *The Messianic*, pp. 40, 61-62, 96, 117-8, 120-22, 150, 171, 183, 209. Repentance is the means to receive God's grace, redemption, to get rid of affliction and to be free from God's punishment which operates in the form of colonial occupation see pp. 305-308, 346. It is also one of the pre-requisites of messiah's coming, pp. 427-39.

<sup>58</sup> Mark perhaps uses the word 'good news' fluidly suggesting it to mean the good news of God's victorious reign proclaimed by Jesus (1:15) and also the message concerning the Christ event (8:35; 13:10) in the Pauline sense (Rom. 1:3).



citing the declaration of Jesus (1:15) and his invitation to certain fishermen to turn and become his followers (1:16-20) Mark shows that there is an apparent connection between responding and following Jesus and coming under the domain of God<sup>59</sup>. Jesus is not only the herald who invites others to follow but also the *huios* who embodies, activates and implements the reign of God<sup>60</sup>.

### 7.2.2 The *ἐξουσία* of Jesus: The Sultanate of Son of Humanity

The travels and actions of Jesus ensuing his acclamation as the *huios* and his own announcement of the imperial edict in 1:16-8:30 are panoramic scenes, obvious take-offs to rule over a whole terrain which in some way echoes the activities of the heroes and heroines in most anti- or postcolonial novels<sup>61</sup>. He travels boldly in the demon—and illness—infested but familiar landscape of Galilee liberating the subdued and disturbing the agents of power as a sultan of God<sup>62</sup>. It shows that he arrogates a cartographic and metaphoric authority to rule in a new way<sup>63</sup>.

Mark clearly portrays Jesus as the one who wields authority and exercises a commanding vision and voice. The authority of Jesus is signified in a number of ways. He commands a Galilean audience to ‘repent’ and ‘believe’ in the good news (*μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε* 1:15). He commands the fishermen to come after him (*Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, Ακολουθεῖ μοι* 1:17; 2:14). He teaches as the one having authority (*ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων* 1:22; *Ἀκούετε* 4:3, *Βλέπετε τί ἀκούετε* 4:24). He

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<sup>59</sup> Following the Teacher of Righteousness, returning to the covenant of God and converting to the covenant community etc. are important for the Qumran Covenanters who consider themselves to be the eschatological community of God. See 1QS.1-5, CD 1-8. For a discussion on the programmatic nature of this statement (1:15) see C.D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, Cambridge: CUP, 1989.

<sup>60</sup> Hooker, *St. Mark*, p. 57, Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 15. Kelber describes it as the struggle of two kingdoms, p. 16, Riches, “Conflicting Mythologies”, pp. 40f., 48. He recognizes a “metaphoric interanimation” between the mythic and the moral cosmologies (the moral of following Jesus and living as a new community of God and the cosmic necessity of a conflict between the son and the *satanas*) in the story of Jesus in Mark.

<sup>61</sup> See for example the travels and activities of Mhudi in Solomon Platjee’s *Mhudi*.

<sup>62</sup> Miracle working and political power may go hand in hand as a propaganda tactics for effecting consent and hegemony. Vespasian is said to have worked miracles of healing (propaganda) as a means to establish his legitimacy and power. See Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.10; 2.78; 4.81; Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.2-6; 7.2-3; Dio, 64.9.1; 65.1.2-4; 65.8.1; *Wars* 1.23; 4.623; 3.401-04.

<sup>63</sup> In Solomon Platjee’s postcolonial novel the protagonist Mhudi (the black heroine) acts in a similar manner which indicates her familiarity and authority over her home territory in contrast to the colonists. She travels boldly across lion-infested landscapes in some ways like, yet also extremely unlike, the colonial masters and explorers.



delegates his disciples to exercise authority over unclean spirits (*καὶ ἔχειν ἐξουσίαν* 3:15; *ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν* 6:7). He commands the unclean spirits to be muzzled and come out (*Φιμώθητι καὶ ἔξελθε* 1:25; *Ἐξελθε* 5:8) and the ritually unclean to be cleansed and show himself to the priests as a witness to them (*καθαρίσθητι* 1:41 *ὑπάγε ... καὶ προσένεγκε* 1:44). Mark tells us that most of the healings take place at Jesus' command (*ἐγειρε ἄρον τὸν κράβαττόν σου καὶ ὑπάγε* 2:5; *Ἐγειρε εἰς τὸ μέσον ... Ἐκτεινον τὴν χεῖρα* 3:3,5; *Ταλιθα κουμ, ... ἔγειρε* 5:41; *ὑπάγε* 7:29, *Ἐφάθα, ὃ ἐστίν, Διανοίχθητι* 7:34). There is also an instance when he exhibits his wrath (*καὶ περιβλεψάμενος αὐτούς μετ' ὀργῆς* 3:5). When the crowd gathered around him for days he orders his disciples to feed them (*Δότε αὐτοῖς ὑμεῖς φαγεῖν* 6:37). He warns his disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Herodians (*Ορᾶτε, βλέπετε* 8:15). Mark appears to be saying that the authority of Jesus is the authority of the Son of Humanity. As the Son of Humanity he has authority even to forgive sins (*ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς* 2:10) and procure healing and wholeness, and to be the lord of the Sabbath to disrupt its stipulations (*κύριός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου* 2:28).

The authority of Jesus is not simply a matter of his status or knowledge (as the stronger son 1:7,11), but also reflects his power<sup>64</sup>. Jesus has the power to act; his words can effect changes. Jesus' *ἐξουσία* is demonstrated in the power of his words which produce healing and expulsion of unclean spirits. His words perform mighty acts. Jesus as the *ὁ υἱός* and *ὁ ἰσχυρότερός* clearly exercises power to exorcise demons, heal the sick and to pose a challenge against the native religio-political leaders of the people.

It may be rather puzzling that in the early part of Mark's story we neither read of any direct reference to the Roman colonial presence nor get an impression that this story has anything explicit to say about this political phenomenon. However this need not necessarily surprise us because avoidance of a direct reference to colonialism can be a strategy in any anti- or postcolonial writings which originate in colonial contexts.

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<sup>64</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, p. 136.

We noticed this feature in Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*<sup>65</sup>. Social historians who study the responses of subjugated communities show that a subordinate group ordinarily dare not contest their subordination openly. But behind the scenes, mostly in religious and cultural discourses, it is likely to create and defend a social space in which an offstage dissent to the official transcript of power may be voiced<sup>66</sup>.

As a postcolonial discourse Mark seems to avoid any explicit reference to Roman colonialism in the early part of the story. However, a reference to the announcement of the good news of God's imminent reign echoes the Isaianic herald who announced the good news of God's reign in the context of an alien *imperium* (Isa. 40:9; 52:7; 61:1). The Isaianic herald announces the reign of God in an ironic concurrence and opposition to the reign of Persia<sup>67</sup>. Like the herald in Isaiah Jesus in Mark announces the good news with a command to people to 'repent' and 'believe' in the good news of God's reign. This may not be without an offstage and implicit dissent to the *imperium* of Rome and the victories of her divine emperors, and to those hegemonic Jews who believe in the victory of Rome and in the reign of her divine emperors (cf. *Wars* 6.312-15) and also to those Jewish nationalists who violently oppose Rome<sup>68</sup> (cf. *Ant.* 18.6; *Life* 17, 262, 370f.). According to Mark the destiny of the Jews and others who follow Jesus lies neither in concurring to the *imperium* of Rome nor in upholding Jewish religious nationalism but in entering into a socio-religious space created by the good news of God unfolding in the story of Jesus messiah, son of God. One may enter this space by repenting and believing in the good news of God i.e., by coming after God's divine-envoy, the *huios*-Jesus. Though this may sound hugely apolitical it has the potential to create a social space behind the scenes in which an offstage dissent and disruption to the official transcript of power, both of the colonists and the nativists, can be posed. The specific means this social space takes (proclamation, returning and believing, gathering in unofficial places) or

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<sup>65</sup> See Chapter 3. For Rome-free landscape as a deliberate discursive strategy see L. Alexander, "Narrative Maps...", p. 35. To cite a modern example, R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (Teacher and Disciples) written in the colonial context of India in 1930s deals with colonial presence by avoidance. See *Swami and Friends: A Novel of Malgudi*, Greenwich, Conn, Fawcett Publications, 1970 (1935). Also see Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

<sup>66</sup> See J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, p. xi.

<sup>67</sup> For the affiliative and antagonistic aspect of Isaiah see Jon Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow*, *idem*, "Postcolonialism and Imperial Motives", p. 22.



the specific content of its dissent (ritual aggression via miracles, parabolic teaching, authority of the Son of Humanity and the hope of his return etc.) are not without political implications.

**7.2.2.1 ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ... (Mk. 2:10)**

Though Mark avoids any obvious reference to Roman colonialism in the early part of the story his protagonist most often encounters the native Jewish religio-political leaders who probably duplicated an internal form of colonialism<sup>69</sup>. The Markan Jesus at the outset affiliates himself to the religious institutions and customs of Judaism but at the same time he disrupts the authority of the religio-political leaders and their social space. He goes to the synagogue but does not teach like the scribes (1:22). His affiliation to the synagogue seems disruptive. His presence exposes the unclean spirit in the synagogue. He cleanses the synagogue by expelling the unclean spirit from there. Subsequently, as a result of a rumour of Jesus' activities in the synagogue a multitude of sick and demon-possessed of the city came to him when he comes 'out of the synagogue' into the house of Simon (1:29-34). He becomes so popular that he has little time on his own (1:35-36). Seeing the huge response he extends his disruptive activities far and wide 'in their synagogue in the whole of Galilee' perhaps to bring some 'out of the synagogue' (1:37-39).

Though the Markan Jesus starts off as a popular exorcist and healer which was probably not uncommon in his time<sup>70</sup>, his activities begin to break into the prerogative territories of the religious elite. Mark tells us that Jesus cleanses a leper and sends him as a witness to (against)<sup>71</sup> the priests (1:44). By cleansing and declaring the unclean leper clean he breaks into the territory of the priests (cf. Lev.14). This is followed by

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<sup>68</sup> See Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark" in *JBL* III/3, 1992, pp. 441-462.

<sup>69</sup> Criticism against certain native leaders from within was not uncommon according to some of the Jewish discourses of the Roman times. See for example the *Psalms of Solomon* and the *Assumption of Moses*. For an analysis of the duplication of colonialism see R.A. Horsley, *Galilee*, pp. 132ff. S. Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian: A Study of Second Temple Judaism*, Wilmington, Del.: Glazier, 1980, *idem*, *Galilee, Jesus*, pp. 135ff. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea*.

<sup>70</sup> For 'Jesus and charismatic Judaism' see Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 58-82. For miracles and miracle workers in Greco-Roman religions see Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, London, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978.

another serious irruption into the very realm of the divine and the divine agents (priests) by pronouncing the forgiveness of sins (2:1-12). In granting forgiveness of sins to the paralytic man the Markan Jesus, in the eyes of the scribes, commits a blasphemous act (2:7). He (and his community) have crossed the boundary and caused to irrupt a disturbance beyond repair<sup>72</sup>.

Mark tells us that in the context of severe opposition his hero claims his identity as the Son of Humanity<sup>73</sup>. When the scribes question his authority to forgive sins Jesus says: “Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’, or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk?’ But so that you may know that the Son of Humanity has authority on earth to forgive sins...” (2:9f.)<sup>74</sup>. By saying this Jesus simultaneously camouflages his authority and identity and at the same time affirms them. Jesus does not say that he is God to forgive sins. Instead he identifies himself as the Son of Humanity who has authority to heal and forgive sins. At his word the healing takes place as a sign of the forgiveness of sins and proving that he and not the scribes is on God’s side<sup>75</sup>. This silences the scribes and brings popular support for his action. The use of Son of Humanity is complex here in the sense that Jesus as Son of Humanity is not God to forgive sins but his action and its successful outcome does prove that he has a divine-like status or at least that he can exercise divine authority.

<sup>71</sup> The use of *εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς* is potentially adversarial here. See Myers, *Binding*, p. 153. Cf. Taylor, *The Gospel*, p. 190.

<sup>72</sup> Hurtado, “Pre-70 CE Jewish Opposition to Christ-Devotion”, pp. 37, Hooker, *The Son of Man*, p. 89, D.R.A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to Matthew*, Cambridge: CUP, 1967, pp. 133-35

<sup>73</sup> There is no scholarly consensus on whether or not Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of Humanity. According to Bultmann, a few Son of Man sayings were spoken by Jesus which distinguished Jesus from a Son of Man figure who was to have a role in the eschatological judgment. See *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, rev. ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1968, pp. 112, 122, 128, 151-52. This conclusion is disputed by Norman Perrin (*A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) and Philipp Vielhauer (*Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament*, Munich: Kaiser, 1965). For them none of the Son of Humanity sayings goes back to Jesus.

<sup>74</sup> Scholars argue over the awkward presence and the syntactical nature of v.10 here to show that this is an interpolation. See E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963 (1937), p. 54, H.E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans., D.M. Barton, London: SCM Press, 1965, pp. 126-30. Caragounis, a native speaker of Greek, sees no awkwardness in the literary or syntactical level of the text. He finds v.10 as a dramatic continuation from v.9 where Jesus, challenged by the objections of the scribes about his right to forgive sins, undertakes to demonstrate his authority in deed, by turning to the paralytic and commanding him to stand up. See *The Son of Man*, p. 184.

<sup>75</sup> Belo, *A Materialist*, p. 108.



Jesus' authority to forgive sins as the divine-like agent of God is again asserted by calling the tax collector Levi to follow him and by dining with many tax collectors and sinners (2:15). He disrupts the socio-religious status quo by declaring that he came not to call the righteous but sinners<sup>76</sup>.

Jesus like the Son of Humanity of biblical and postbiblical Jewish discourses exercises authority. This need not necessarily arouse any suspicion or opposition. But nowhere in this intertestamental literature is there any suggestion that this figure has authority to forgive sins. The Markan Jesus appropriates the authority of the Son of Humanity and uses this to claim divine status, and at the same time disrupts the native Jewish tradition on the Son of Humanity by extending the role of the Son of Humanity. It is not only God but he as the Son of Humanity who can forgive sins<sup>77</sup>. This is his eschatological glory not in heaven but on earth, not in the future but here and now<sup>78</sup>. By healing he proves that he is the one who has authority to forgive sins. He is the *huios*-human hybrid who can do the work of God. As Son of Humanity his primary focus is not to destroy the enemies of the Jewish nation but to disturb the nation itself. It is hardly surprising for the people to respond saying: "we have never seen anything like this" (2:12b). Mark's story thus by portraying Jesus in this manner not only affiliates Jesus to the Son of Humanity tradition in the biblical and postbiblical discourses but also disrupts these discourses and their religious (eschatological/ apocalyptic) perceptions concerning the Son of Humanity.

#### 7.2.2.2 ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστὶν Κύριος καὶ τοῦ σαββάτου (2:27f.)

Mark appears to be suggesting that Jesus as the Son of Humanity not only forgives sins but in his own right (*ἤλθον*) crosses the socio-religious boundaries between the righteous and sinners (2:13-17). He declares that his agenda is to initiate and retain newness and not to preserve antique customs and rituals like the ritual of

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<sup>76</sup> See 'Who are the Sinners?' N.T. Wright, *Jesus*, pp. 264ff. See also David Neale, *None But The Sinners: Religious Categories in the Gospel of Luke*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991, pp. 68ff.

<sup>77</sup> Joel Marcus treats this as a Markan midrash. He thinks that the Son of Humanity forgiving sins on earth is possible by a midrash on Dan. 7:13f., 9:9; Ex.34:6-7; Isa.43:25; 44:22. He compares the juxtaposition of Mk. 12:28-37/ Ps. 110:1 and Mk. 2:1-12/ Dan. 7:13-14 as Mark's way of reconciling the unity of God with the exalted role of Jesus. See his "Authority to Forgive Sins up on the Earth: The *Shema* in the Gospel of Mark" in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel* (eds.), C.A. Evans and W.R. Stegner, Sheffield: SAP, 1994, pp. 196-211. Also see Caragounis, *The Son of Man*, p. 189.

fasting (2:18-22)<sup>79</sup>. It is in this context that the controversy over the ritual observance of Sabbath occurs. On the question of observing the Sabbath and what is and is not lawful on the Sabbath the Markan Jesus resorts to a contrapuntal reading of the Jewish discourse on David who ate the shewbread rather unlawfully (1 Sam. 21:1-6). Though David broke the regulations concerning the shewbread and not the Sabbath Jesus seems to be saying that an unlawful act of ‘breaking’ a customary practice had happened at the hands of the messiah (anointed) of Israel and those who were with him in the context of a civil war (cf. *1 Macc.* 2:29-41). He seems to be suggesting that a similar situation is at hand now. So the regulations which are made to safeguard something which is holy—in this case the Sabbath—can be set aside by the Son of Humanity who is the *κύριος* of the Sabbath. It is not the Sabbath that matters but giving the rest that is needed for the suffering ones<sup>80</sup>. In this context the authority of the Son of Humanity is used to win the argument. As the Son of Humanity Jesus is the *κύριος* of the Sabbath to give rest and restoration to those who are in affliction (3:1-5). It is interesting to see that some of Jesus’ healings in Mark have taken place on Sabbath (1:21-27, 29-31; 3:1-5). The lordship of the Son of Humanity in verse 28 is connected to humans on whose behalf the Sabbath is made. It is for humanity (man) Sabbath is made and so human beings are above the Sabbath. *ἄνθρωπος* here stands for the corporate identity of Israel. The Sabbath is instituted for the blessing of Israel. This is further elucidated by the healing of a man with a withered hand in the synagogue on a Sabbath day (3:1-6).

Mark shows that Jesus and his followers’ affiliation to native Jewish religious institutions, customs and discourses has a potential for disruption. They seem to have no apparent desire to reinstate certain essentials of the native religious rituals and traditions (2:21-22)<sup>81</sup>. Instead they prefer to bring forth something new (2:21-2) even though it has a rupturous or disruptive effect on the old and its influential and perhaps elite custodians—the ‘scribes’ (1:22, 2:6), the ‘scribes of the Pharisees’ (2:16), the

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<sup>78</sup> Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History*, pp. 321f.

<sup>79</sup> See E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu*, (2<sup>nd</sup> rev edn.), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968, p. 118.

<sup>80</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 21.

<sup>81</sup> Hooker, *St. Mark*, p. 100.



‘Pharisees’ (2:24) and the ‘Pharisees and the Herodians’ (3:6)<sup>82</sup>. The elite custodians of native Jewish traditions oppose Jesus as the one who ventures to do blasphemous acts (2:6 cf. 14:63-64). But the so-called ‘others’ hear him as the life giving Son of Humanity who forgives sins and provides life-saving rest.

### 7.2.3 The Son’s Strategic Essentialism and Native Jewish Leaders

The native Jewish leaders in Mark<sup>83</sup> appear to be strict adherents of the so-called essentials of the native religious customs and cultural traditions<sup>84</sup>. They identify the activities of the Markan Jesus, for instance, healing the paralytic by forgiving sins as a blasphemous act (2:6). They retain ritual purity by abstaining from having fellowship with sinners and tax collectors (2:16). They preserve the Sabbath regulation and are prepared to go to the extent of committing murder for the sake of preserving the essentials of their religion and traditions (3:6). Such an enthusiasm for the essentials of religious values and traditions in a colonial context may be seen as an example of anti-colonial native nationalism<sup>85</sup>.

However, Mark shows that the leaders’ retreat into the religious traditions to preserve the essentials of their religion ironically brings them into collaboration with the colonial authorities in opposing Jesus (3:6; chs. 14,15) because Jesus’ activities appear to be affiliative and disruptive to both the native Jewish and the Roman colonial discourses of power. He makes enemies from both the native elite and the colonial masters as the story develops. It appears that the affiliative and disruptive activity of Jesus is strategically damaging both to certain native religio-political nativists/ nationalists and the Roman colonists. But for Mark it was the only way

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<sup>82</sup> For ‘Parties’ in Judaism see Jos. *Ant.* 13. 298; 17.42,171f, 297; 18.11-25; *Wars* 2.119-66. For a brief study on ‘The Issues that Generated Parties’ in Judaism see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 13-34, 317ff.

<sup>83</sup> For Jewish leaders in Mark see Michael J. Cook, *Mark’s Treatment of the Jewish Leaders*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978. He argues that the negative and perhaps mistaken portrayal of the Jewish leaders in Mark is an attempt of the early Christians to distinguish their image from the Jews around 70 CE “to persuade Rome that she and Christianity were natural allies, sharing as they did a common enemy, the Jews”, p. 6. Also see A.J. Hultgren, *Jesus and His Adversaries: The Form and Function of the Conflict Stories in the Synoptic Tradition*, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979, Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 315ff.

<sup>84</sup> For a literary study on the Markan characterization of Jewish leaders see E.S. Malbon, ‘The Jewish Leaders in the Gospel of Mark’ *In the Company of Jesus in Mark’s Gospel*, Louisville: WJK Press, 2000, pp. 131-165.

forward to challenge the national essentialism of certain Jewish authorities and the colonial domination of the Romans<sup>86</sup>.

#### 7.2.4 The Son and the Transcultural Community

Mark tells us that immediately after coming to Galilee and proclaiming the 'imperial' edict Jesus gathers a circle of Galilean disciples (1:16-20). Most of his healing and teaching attracts a vast crowd (1:32-34; 2:2, 13) and as the rumour of his mighty works spreads and he extends his sphere of authority towards the northern territory a great multitude from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea and beyond the Jordan and the region of Tyre and Sidon come to him and his disciples beside the sea (3:7-12). He appoints the twelve as apostles to be in charge and do the things that he has been doing as though he is reconstructing a new Israel (3:13-19). The whole scene also marks an alienation of Jesus from his immediate family and also from the leaders of the people not only in Galilee but also from those who came down from Jerusalem who denounced his actions as demonic (3:20-22). This sort of alienation and denunciation show the extent of the disruptive impact of the activities of Jesus. His actions disrupted not only his own family (3:21) and the Jewish leadership in Galilee and the surrounding locations but also the scribes who had come down from Jerusalem (3:22). The affiliation of Jesus and his community to the native Jewish religious institutions and discourses proves to be disruptive and destructive in the eye of the Jewish leaders. The charges and the counter-charges (the leaders accusing Jesus of blasphemy and Jesus covertly suggesting their accusations as blasphemous 3:22-30) show the extent of disruption caused by Jesus' activities.

Jesus acknowledges those who sit around him, who do the will of God as the members of the new family/ community of God (3:31-35) and he begins to teach the crowd and his disciples in hidden transcripts (parables) the mystery of the kingdom of

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<sup>83</sup> See Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, pp. 98ff. Simon Swain's *Hellenism and Empire* shows how the religious and cultural revival of the Greeks becomes an anti-colonial response to the *Imperium* of Rome in the first two centuries of the Christian era.

<sup>84</sup> Cook tends to think that Mark in the context of the Jewish war resorts to an exclusive affiliative attitude toward Rome against the Jews and this would possibly explain the negative portrayal of the Jewish leaders in Mark. In my view this explanation is not wholly accurate. Though it may be possible to find traces of a pro-Roman attitude or an image of a Christian distinct from that of a Jew in Mark it is not completely devoid of anti-Roman elements. I think it is fair to say that Mark is affiliative and antagonistic to both the native Jewish and the colonial Roman discourses.



God which demarcate the insiders and outsiders of the kingdom (4:1-34)<sup>87</sup>. He takes the twelve across the sea despite the dangers posed by the storm and the wave (4:35-41) and manifests his power in subduing 'Legion' in Decapolis (5:1-20) as though he is the new Caesar who can cross the stormy sea and conquer the enemy<sup>88</sup>. When he returns he responds to the receptive segments in Israel which may be seen in the healing of the woman with an issue of blood for twelve years and by raising the twelve-year-old daughter of Jarius the synagogue ruler (5:21-43). He delegates and sends the twelve to continue the task even while the shadow of John's murder hovers over them (6:1-29). He feeds the crowd that came to him in the wilderness (6:30-44) and saves his disciples from the danger at the sea (6:45-56). He defends his disciples in the face of opposition from the religious authorities who came from Jerusalem (7:1-23) and relates to the Syro-Phoenician woman by expelling the unclean spirit from her daughter (7:24-30). When he returns from the region of Tyre he heals a deaf mute man in the region of the Decapolis (7:31-37) and feeds the seven thousand in this region (8:1-10). This is followed by a confrontation with the Pharisees (8:11-13), a rebuke of the disciples for their lack of understanding (8:14-21), the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26) and the declaration of Peter (8:27-30). These events and incidents are suggestive of the affiliative yet disruptive impact of the Markan Jesus and his followers on the dominant native Jewish discourses and also the formative and expansive (propagandist and transcultural) dynamic of a new community devoted to Jesus which emerges from the Jewish and 'other' peripheral communities, from this and the other side of the sea<sup>89</sup>.

Thus far in our reading we notice that the sultanate of the son in the north is established by Jesus' authoritative posture, his kingdom declaration, teachings and acts of ritual aggression against both cosmic and human agents of power, by his

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<sup>87</sup> M.A. Tolbert's study shows that the parables in this chapter have direct correlation to the groups represented in the story, i.e., the group that opposed Jesus represent the ground along the way, the feeding ground of Satan, the disciples fit the pattern of the rocky ground, certain other characters like the rich man (10:17-22), Herod (6:14-29) represent the ground of thorns and weeds, the good earth that produce abundantly represent the cured demoniac, the woman who was healed of her flow of blood, and Jarius (ch.5). See *Sowing*, pp. 153-175.

<sup>88</sup> See Rich Strelan, "A Greater Than Caesar: Storm stories in Lucan and Mark" in *ZNW* 91:3/4, 2000, pp. 166-179, Myers, *Binding*, pp. 190-94. For exorcisms as defeat of demonic/ imperial forces see Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Palestine*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987, pp. 184-190, Theissen, *The Miracle Stories*, pp. 231ff.

deliverance of those who suffer subjection, and by the formation of a transcultural community formed to follow the son from this and the other side of the sea. The sultanic acts of Jesus and his community disrupt the space of the native Jewish leaders. Though Jesus and his community apparently adhere to certain native Jewish discourses their adherence often also turns out to be disruptive to the socio-religious spaces of these discourses. As the Son of Humanity of biblical and postbiblical Jewish discourses he (and his community) exercises authority but this authority is exercised not to reinstate but to disturb the native elite institutions and perceptions of power. Unlike the Son of Humanity in these discourses Jesus as Son of Humanity wields authority to forgive sins and abrogate the Sabbath law. Thus the portrayal of *huios*-Jesus as the sultanic son/ Son of Humanity in the early part of Mark appears to exhibit his and his community's strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity within the native Jewish religio-political discourses in the north.

### 7.3 The Suffering-Rising Son of Humanity and the New Community 'on the Way' (8:31-10:52)

As we enter the next phase of Mark's story (8:27-10:52) we may recall that Jesus as the Son of Humanity has already established a space in the north and created a transcultural community from among those of 'this and the other side of the sea'. Now this space needs to be extended to the south, to Jerusalem the centre of native Jewish and Roman colonial power<sup>90</sup>. So Jesus goes ahead 'on the way' with his disciple-companions from the comparatively safe space in the north to the danger zone in Jerusalem. We may notice that the story in this phase exhibits two interacting contexts<sup>91</sup>, one pertaining to the extension of the sultanate of the son to the south and the other the historical and divine inevitability of the son's suffering and the new community's hesitation toward such suffering. For the former the son travels to the south to engage the existing *imperia* (of the native elite and the Roman colonists) and suffer the inevitable outcome of colonial execution, and for the latter the community's perception concerning the son is challenged in light of the impending suffering of the Son of Humanity.

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<sup>87</sup> H.C. Kee, *Community of the New Age*, pp. 96f., Kelber, *The Kingdom*, pp. 45-65.

<sup>90</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 68.

<sup>91</sup> For interacting contexts in complex texts see Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983,



But before we discuss the extension of the son's sultanate to the south and offer a reading of the portrayals of the suffering Son of Humanity we may briefly examine the overall layout of the suffering motif in Mark.

### 7.3.1 The Suffering Motif in Mark: Latent and Revealed

One who reads Mark may notice that the suffering motif stretches as a thread from the very beginning to the end of Mark's story. Though this may be latent in the early part (1:1-8:30) it is much clearer in the later part (8:31-16:8).

The fate of John in 1:14a (*παραδοθῆναι*) and the subsequent references relating John to Jesus as a precursor in life and death (1:9-11; 6:14-29; also 9:11-13; 11:27-33; 15:35-6), directly or indirectly point toward the suffering and death of Jesus<sup>92</sup>. The references to the violent removal of the bridegroom (*ἀπαρθῆ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ὁ νυμφίος* 2:20), the conspiracy to destroy (*ἀπολέσωσιν* 3:6), the characterization of Judas (*παρέδωκεν*, 3:19), the opposition from the scribes (*Τί οὕτως λαλεῖ; βλασφημεῖ* 2:7, cf. 14:64) and other religious leaders (2:16,24; 3:22; 6:3; 7:1ff.) and the incomprehension and fear of his disciples (4:13; 6:50; 8:21 cf.14:50) point towards the passion and suffering of Jesus<sup>93</sup>. These earlier pointers prepare the audience for what is to come later in the story.

An accumulation of words referring to the suffering of Jesus in the latter half of Mark most certainly makes this a story of suffering<sup>94</sup>. Here one may come across certain direct references to the suffering and murder of Jesus as the Son of Humanity (*παθεῖν, ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι, ἀποκτανθῆναι, παραδίδοται* in 8:31; 9:31; 10:33f.). The repetition of the so-called passion predictions, misunderstanding of the disciples and correction by Jesus (the so-called triad structure in the narrative) appear to indicate that this section is a significant piece in the whole story which makes the suffering motif echo recurrently in the ears of Mark's audience<sup>95</sup>. There is also an

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p. 35. He thinks that no text has just one context; contexts are always plural and they demand interpretation in themselves and in relation to others, pp. 95-96.

<sup>92</sup> See D. Senior, 'Preparation for the Passion' in *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984, pp. 16-20.

<sup>93</sup> Senior, *The Passion*, pp. 15-24, A.Y. Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992, p. 61.

<sup>94</sup> Collins, *The Beginning*, pp. 62f.

<sup>95</sup> See N. Perrin, "The Creative Use of the Son of Man Traditions by Mark" in *A Modern Pilgrimage*, pp. 84-93 (also in *USQR* 23:4, 1968, pp. 357-365).

innate relation between the suffering of the hero and the suffering of the disciples as they too are invited to engage in doing *τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ* (8:34f.; 9:35; 10:43-45)<sup>96</sup>.

The impending suffering predicted 'on the way' is actualized when Jesus enters Jerusalem in the final phase of the story (chs.11-15). The disruptive act of Jesus in the temple immediately after his entry into the city gathers momentum for his own destruction (*ἀπολέσωσιν*, 11:18 cf.3:6). The opposition and conspiracy to murder Jesus is organized by the custodians of the temple and the Judean religious establishment (11:18,27; 12:13,18; 14:1). The execution of Jesus is actualized by a triangular conspiracy and covert action of the Judean temple authorities (14:1), Judas, one of the twelve (14:10f., 18, 43-45) and Pilate the Roman colonial prefect (15:2.15). It is carried out at the end by the Roman colonial soldiers (15:16,24). Judas (*παραδιδούς* 14:44) betrays (*παραδοῖ*, 14:10, *παραδώσει*, 14:18) Jesus to the Judean temple authorities. They hand over (*παρέδωκαν*, 15:1) him to Pilate who in turn hand over (*παρέδωκεν*, 15:15) Jesus to the Roman soldiers who carry out the ultimate colonial act of crucifixion (15:24).

Though the suffering and death of Jesus occur as a result of a plot set forth from the very outset of the story (3:6) and by a series of betrayals by his own associates and the native and colonial authorities, the ultimate irony of Jesus' death in Mark is that it happens as God too deserts him (*Ὁ θεός μου ὁ θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;* 15:34, cf. 14:27). This indicates that God is also an active participant in the actualization of the suffering and death of Jesus as though the Father 'murders' his 'beloved son' (cf. 9:12; 14:21). Here lies the ultimate paradox and irony of the whole story of Mark<sup>97</sup>. It shows that the death of Jesus happens as a result of the perfect plan of God. This is presented rhetorically by citing two dramatic events which occur at the time of the death of Jesus. At the point of Jesus' death the temple curtain is torn in to two paving the way perhaps for all into the *naos* of God, and the colonial Roman centurion makes an utterance concerning Jesus as 'son of God' which perhaps signifies an apparent transfer of allegiance of a colonist to the crucified Galilean, and

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<sup>96</sup> For the suffering of the followers of Jesus in Mark see Collins, *The Beginning*, pp. 66-8, N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969, pp. 40-57.

<sup>97</sup> Collins, *The Beginning*, p. 65. For a study on irony in Mark see J. Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992.



also the disruption of the Roman colonial power base<sup>98</sup>. The raising of Jesus by God (*ἠγέρθη* 16:6) shows that the whole episode of Jesus' 'huiotic' life and death happens according to the plan and purpose of God.

The above discussion suggests that the whole story is framed around the suffering motif which is shown behind a veiled curtain as a shadow in the historical geographical schema and revealed via Jesus' descriptions of himself as the suffering-rising Son of Humanity and actualized by his crucifixion on a Roman colonial cross. Mark hardly hides the fact that historically the suffering of Jesus is a political inevitability inflicted upon him by his own friend, the native Jewish (Jerusalem) leaders and the Roman colonial authorities. Though Mark shows this he also emphasizes that the suffering/ death of Jesus is indeed designed and destined by God himself. It is something which Jesus too envisages and prepares to pass through for the sake of others (10:45; 14:24 cf. *4 Macc.* 6:26-29). Here we may perhaps find a dynamic of Mark's story of Jesus—a dynamic which is designed to accommodate and at the same time disrupt the native Jewish and the Roman colonial and perhaps even certain 'Christian' (*theologia gloriae*) discourses of power. This I may refer to as a postcolonial rather than a pro<sup>99</sup> or anti<sup>100</sup>-colonial dynamic in Mark's story of Jesus<sup>101</sup>.

### 7.3.2 The Suffering-Rising Son of Humanity 'on the Way' to Jerusalem

We have seen that the authority of Jesus as the son/ Son of Humanity is shown through his authoritative teachings, acts of ritual aggression and deliverance and by the formation of a transcultural community. They facilitate a sultanate in the north despite the sporadic opposition of the native Jewish leaders. The activities of Jesus in the north spread a rumour concerning his identity as John the Baptist or Elijah or as one of the prophets among the general public (8:27-8) and an awareness as the much awaited messiah in the mind of his immediate followers (8:29). The disciples witness the authority of the son/ Son of Humanity in Galilee, on this and the other side of the

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<sup>98</sup> See Tae Hun Kim, "The Anarthrous υἱὸς θεοῦ in Mark 15,39 and the Roman Imperial Cult", *Biblica* 79 1998, pp. 221-241.

<sup>99</sup> Belo speaks the build up of the salvific suffering motif in Mark as a 'postpaschal theological discourse' designed to appease the Roman audience. See *A Materialist*, pp. 155-61

<sup>100</sup> Quite contrary to Belo, Myers explains the salvific suffering in terms of an anti-colonial resistance rhetoric. See his *Binding the Strong Man*, pp. 469-472.

<sup>101</sup> We will discuss this aspect later in this chapter.



sea, and in the north up until Caesarea-Philippi, and this enables them to declare Jesus as the Messiah (*Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστός*, 8:29). This declaration appears to be the culmination of the portrait of Jesus in 1:11-8:26. The (real or symbolic) creation of the sultanate and the disruption of native religious institutions and traditions in the north, and the acclamation of prophetic/ messianic identities may not go unnoticed as the group enters the south and into the centre of the native Jewish and Roman colonial power in Judea. It is in this context that the story relates the impending suffering of the Son of Humanity at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, the scribes and the gentile (colonist) Romans. The extension of the sultanate to the south away from home space is destined to culminate in conflict, crucifixion, resurrection and an apparent return to the safety of the home space<sup>102</sup>.

There are three main occurrences of the suffering-rising Son of Humanity references in Mark (8:31; 9:12,31; 10:33f). They are portrayed as the didactic utterances of Jesus<sup>103</sup> to educate his disciples ‘on the way’ to Caesarea-Philippi and from there to Jerusalem<sup>104</sup>. Each of these utterances occurs in a triadic literary structure where Jesus first teaches or rather ‘predicts’ his suffering as the Son of Humanity followed by the disciples’ failure to understand this teaching and finally Jesus’ correction of them. In light of the literary arrangement of the material and the organizational patterns and sequence of events it has been suggested that these sayings are probably the creative handiwork of Mark<sup>105</sup>, and that they reflect an internal christological conflict in the nascent Christian community<sup>106</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Note the similar dynamic of safety at home, travel to danger zones and return to the safety of home in postcolonial novels including Chariton.

<sup>103</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 158-163.

<sup>104</sup> See ‘Jesus’ Journey to Jerusalem’ in Malbon, *Narrative Space*, pp. 30-34, 104-105.

<sup>105</sup> See E. Haenchen, “Die Komposition von Mk viii:27- ix:1”, *NovT* 6, 1963, pp. 81-109, N. Perrin, “The Creative Use of the Son of Man Traditions by Mark” in *A Modern Pilgrimage*, pp. 84-93. Cf. Tödt, *The Son of Man*, p. 144ff., 152ff.

<sup>106</sup> J.B. Tyson, “The Blindness of the Disciples in Mark”, *JBL* 80, 1961, pp. 261-68, T.J. Weeden, “The Heresy That Necessitated Mark’s Gospel”, *ZNW* 59, 1968, pp. 145-58, *idem*, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971, pp.52ff., Kelber, *The Kingdom*, pp. 22,63-5, 67-85. For a critique of this view see R. Tannehill, “The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role”, *JR* 57, 1977, pp. 386-405, Best, “The Role of the Disciples in Mark”, *NTS* 23, 1977, pp. 390-93, Kingsbury, *Christology*, pp. 33-45, 89-102, E.S. Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark’s Gospel*, Louisville: WJK Press, 2000, pp. 100-130. Some of these papers are reprinted in *The Interpretation of Mark*, (ed.), W. Telford, London: SPCK, 1985.



Whether or not the repetitive teachings of Jesus concerning the suffering-rising Son of Humanity and the ensuing misunderstanding on the part of the disciples and Jesus' attempted correction indicate any particular christological conflict (*theologia gloriae versus theologia crucis*) within the Christian community it is not improbable to assume at least a community context and a situation of disruption within this community in this part of the story. Firstly, the community context may be invoked in light of the motif of 'the way'. At the outset of this section Jesus and his disciples are reported to be 'on the way' (8:27) and at the end Bartimaeus is shown to follow Jesus 'on the way' (10:52). The disciples engage in a controversy 'on the way' (9:33, 34) and Jesus teaches 'along the way' to correct their perception of discipleship (8:31; 9:31; 10:17,32). It is possible to suggest a community, teaching-learning context in light of this portrayal of travel 'on the way'<sup>107</sup>. The Markan Jesus as a Rabbi engages in a repetitive/ progressive teaching<sup>108</sup> that either corrects<sup>109</sup> or characterizes<sup>110</sup> the disciples.

Secondly, in this part of the story we may also find certain clues of a close affinity between Jesus and his disciples and also a relatively small crowd that associate with them 'on the way'. For instance Jesus goes with his disciples, teaches and calls them to him with the multitude, sits with them in a house (8:27-9:1; 9:30-50; 10:32-45). These references explicitly mention the presence of Jesus with his disciples and their close interaction<sup>111</sup>. This appears to signify a community context. The 'way' motif, the repetitive occurrences of teaching, misunderstanding and correction (8:31; 9:31; 10:33f) show a teaching-learning situation within the community.

Finally, the repetitive teaching and the persistent disinterest in hearing/ learning and the ensuing corrective approach perhaps suggests a situation of disruption within the community, the disciples representing a certain vision concerning their role as members or leaders of the community of Jesus-Messiah and

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<sup>107</sup> For details on 'the way' motif as a community context see Kelber, *The Kingdom*, pp. 69ff., Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, pp. 64f. Cf. Malbon, *Mythic Meaning and Narrative Space*, pp. 68-71, E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981. It may be noted that the followers of Jesus were initially known as 'the people of the way' (Acts. 9:2).

<sup>108</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 22-25, 37-41, 141, 158-163.

<sup>109</sup> Tyson, Weeden, Kleber, Perrin.

<sup>110</sup> Tannehill, Best, Malbon, Kingsbury.

<sup>111</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 24f.

Jesus as Son of Humanity representing a different vision. The former tend to avoid suffering (8:32) and seek status and glory (lord over) in the sultanate of the messiah/Son of Humanity (9:34; 10:37) but the latter prepares to endure suffering and death in the course of rendering his service (8:31, 9:31; 10:33f). Thus this phase of the story not only portrays the disruption within the community but also characterizes the community as a bunch of wrong-headed, fallible followers who need teaching and correction so that they may not degenerate into a dominant, dominating structure.

Up until Caesarea Philippi<sup>112</sup> the disciples seem eager to follow Jesus because of his authoritative acts, prophet-like popularity and messianic status. But in the journey from Caesarea Philippi Jesus proposes a change of perspective as though the time has come for the disciples to learn that the messianic activity also involves suffering, rejection and death in the course of rendering this activity for the sake of others<sup>113</sup>. This idea disrupts the ambitions of the community from invoking or repeating the imperial power, status and the *modus operandi* of tyrants and rulers in its communal praxis (10:42-44).

7.3.2.1 *Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου πολλὰ παθεῖν καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι· (8:31)*

According to this saying the suffering, rejection and murder of the Son of Humanity is necessary or is destined (*δεῖ*) to occur at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the scribes. Though the readers of the story can perceive such an eventuality this news seems to be a surprise to the disciples in the story. So when it is revealed to them Peter, who is a leading representative of the newly formed community and the one who previously acclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, rebukes Jesus. Obviously the suffering element seems unacceptable to Peter as the leader of the community. Jesus then turns and rebukes Peter calling him an agent of Satan who does not seek the things of God (8:33). This is followed by teaching to the crowd and the disciples on what it means to follow Jesus saying, “If any want to become my

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<sup>112</sup> This city in the north is where Herod built a temple for emperor Augustus and his son Herod Philip built the city in honour of the Roman colonists (*Ant.* 18.2.1).

<sup>113</sup> Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 162f. According to Robbins, Jesus inaugurates a new phase in his relationship to his disciple-companions. He engages in a direct attempt to



followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it” (8:34-5). This scene clearly indicates a disruption within the newly formed family and its understanding concerning the messianic sonship of Jesus, and what it is to be the community of this messiah.

*7.3.2.2 ἐδίδασκεν γὰρ τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι Ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν αὐτόν, καὶ ἀποκτανθεὶς μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστήσεται (9:31)*

This teaching about the betrayal of the Son of Humanity into the hands of men in order to be murdered by them occurs ‘on the way’ when Jesus and his disciples pass through Galilee. The repetition of a more or less similar saying implies the significance of this teaching in the community. Here again, the disciples who represent the new community do not understand or pay any attention to this teaching. While Jesus is teaching about the impending suffering they argue ‘on the way’ to sort out who among them would be the greatest within the community (9:32-34). Jesus corrects them saying: “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all. ...” (9:35-37). We may find here a decisive denial of anyone’s dominion within the new community.

*7.3.2.3 καὶ παραλαβὼν πάλιν τοὺς δώδεκα ἤρξατο αὐτοῖς λέγειν... ὅτι Ἴδου ἀναβαίνομεν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, καὶ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδοθήσεται τοῖς ἀρχιερεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς γραμματεῦσιν, καὶ κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτόν θανάτῳ καὶ παραδώσουσιν αὐτόν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν καὶ ἐμπαίξουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐμπτύσουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ μαστιγώσουσιν αὐτόν καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν, καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστήσεται (10: 32c-34)*

This perhaps is the longest of the so-called passion predictions of Jesus to his disciples as they reach near the city (10:32a,33a). In this saying the opponents are identified as the chief priests and scribes who will condemn Jesus to death and hand him over to the Gentiles, implying the colonial Roman authorities, who will mock, spit, flog and kill him. As in the case of the other two sayings here too the disciples seem uninterested in learning this. Instead, in the context of this teaching James and

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take them beyond simple imitation of him to a system of understanding that guides thought

John come to Jesus seeking for positions of pomp and glory and the other disciples become angry at these two. Thus there arises a disruption among the disciples. Jesus deals with this saying,

You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many (10:41-45).

This corrective teaching disrupts the constitution of the new community and its perception of what it means to be the followers of the Son of Humanity or the members of the new transcultural community. We find that 'on the way' the new community seems to be ambitious and hesitate to accept suffering (8:32). It seeks glorious moments (9:5) and engages in squabbles to advance one's own interest (9:34), prestige and authority (10:37). Jesus describes this as the *modus operandi* of the imperial system of tyrants and rulers which shall not be the means for the members of the new community. Instead its members may follow the suffering Son of Humanity and be prepared to lose their own lives (8:34f) and be servant leaders for the sake of others (9:35; 10:42ff)<sup>114</sup>.

It appears that the suffering Son of Humanity sayings not only disrupt the new community that follows Jesus in a hegemonic mind-frame but also the native Jewish perceptions concerning the Son of Humanity. Nowhere in the Jewish discourses do we read of the suffering of the Son of Humanity. In biblical and postbiblical Jewish discourses the Son of Humanity appears as a nativist essentialist figure who delivers the elect and pure of Israel by militant means. He comes to God's presence and wields authority and power on behalf of the suffering saints of the Most High with a view to eliminating the beast-like imperial monarchs. But Jesus as the Son of Humanity appears in Mark not to deliver an essentially Jewish race but to create a transcultural community from those of this and the other side of the sea. He affiliates himself with this new community with a view to constantly challenging and disturbing it. He empowers it not to exercise power or dominion over others but to serve. As the

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and action toward the saving of one self through the willingness to lose oneself.

<sup>114</sup> It is possible to see that this may potentially set forth some kind of a non-hegemonic resistance movement that envisages what postcolonial critics call a 'transcultural'



suffering Son of Humanity he challenges the new community not to seek pomp and power but to serve. It is through suffering and giving their lives for others that they will save their own lives.

### 7.3.3 The Suffering Motif: A Postcolonial Motif?

Though the community of disciples refuse to accept or fail to comprehend the need for Jesus-messiah's suffering and their own suffering discipleship the Markan Jesus hammers home repeatedly the very same motif, for in Mark the necessity of suffering is a divine necessity (8:31). It is something that stands written to be fulfilled (9:12). Even though the native Jewish (Jerusalem) leaders and the Roman colonial agents murder the Son of Humanity, they do this in accordance with a mandate (*δεῖ, γέγραπται*, 8:31; 9:12) of God. This approach to the suffering of Jesus on the one hand appears to acquit the native Jewish and the colonial agents from their culpable responsibility of murdering Jesus and place it squarely and straightforwardly in the hands of God. But on the other hand it poses a challenge to the ultimate colonial act of crucifixion. It sounds as though Mark is saying that the suffering of Jesus is not because of the colonial act of Romans and their Jewish collaborators but it is the salvific/ redemptive (*δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν*, 10:45) act designed by God. The Romans and their Jewish native collaborators are unknowingly, unwittingly and ironically partaking in the salvific act of God (cf. I Cor. 2:8). Though this may sound affiliatory here we may find that the Markan Jesus while accepting the suffering at the hands of the native Jewish and the Roman colonial authorities invalidates (abrogates) their intended purpose of murdering Jesus because the suffering Son of Humanity dies and rises again and thus effectively liberates many, and he will eventually come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels to gather the followers (8:38 cf. 13:26; 14:62), an event which will effectively eliminate the reign and suzerainty of Rome.

Similarly the suffering motif appears to disrupt and abrogate the salvific means set in place within the native Jewish religious institutions and discourses such as the sacrifices in the temple. It sounds as though the salvation bringing native religio-

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politics. See Nira Yuval-Davis, "Ethnicity, Gender Relations and Multiculturalism" in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, (eds.), Werbner and Modood, pp. 193-208.

cultural practices, personalities and structures are muted, ruptured and made redundant by the salvific suffering, death and resurrection of the Son of Humanity.

#### **7.3.4 The Sultanic-Suffering Son of Humanity under the Shadow of the Coming Son of Humanity**

In Mark the Son of Humanity is not only a sultanic (2:10,28) and a suffering figure (8:31; 9:12,31; 10:33f) but also a heavenly coming figure (8:38; 13:26; 14:62). At first the reference to this heavenly coming figure appears in the context and in association with the reference of the suffering Son of Humanity where Peter the leader of the new community refuses to accept the way of the suffering Son of Humanity (8:31-38). Here the heavenly glorious Son of Humanity poses a challenge to the new community letting it know that when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels he will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Jesus (i.e., those who are ashamed to follow Jesus, to carry their cross and lose their life for the sake of Jesus and the gospel) and of his words in this adulterous and sinful generation<sup>115</sup>. The juxtaposition of the suffering Son of Humanity with the heavenly coming Son of Humanity may give an impression that the earlier sultanic activities of Jesus in the north and his preparedness to suffer and die at the hands of the scribes, elders and chief priests in the south occur under the shadow of the heavenly coming Son of Humanity<sup>116</sup>. As the Son of Humanity he creates a sultanate in the north and also disrupts the religio-political agents who wield power here. He drafts a transcultural community to follow him on the way to the south. He is prepared to face up to the resultant suffering because as the Son of Humanity he will come in the glory of his Father with holy angels. His community in some way must also be aligned with him in this phenomenon of the coming of the kingdom in power (9:1). The community of disciples may follow the suffering Son of Humanity here and now so that they may participate and be vindicated in the glory of the coming heavenly Son of Humanity<sup>117</sup>.

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<sup>115</sup> Hooker, *The Son of Man*, p. 117.

<sup>116</sup> For the juxtaposition and connection of 8:31 and 8:38 see Tödt, *The Son of Man*, pp. 40-46, 146f., Hooker, *The Son of Man*, p. 120.

<sup>117</sup> Tödt sees a 'soteriological correlation' of the two types of saying. *The Son of Man* pp. 42, 146. Tödt's thinks that Jesus generally distinguishes himself from the coming son of man (see pp. 32-47) though the saying in Mk. 8:38 "probably can be traced back to Jesus' preaching". "But Jesus and the Son of Man are by no means identified here" pp. 40, 42, 46. For a critique of Tödt see I.H. Marshall, "The Synoptic Son of Man Saying in Recent



We have seen that the Danielic Son of Humanity comes in the clouds of heaven to the Ancient One and receives authority. He represents the suffering (Jewish) saints of the Most High (Dan. 7). In the *Similitudes* the heavenly Son of Humanity comes to avenge the kings and the mighty ones on behalf of the elect/ pure of Israel (*1 En.* 46:1-5). He sits on the throne of his glory as their king (62:5ff). In *4 Ezra* the son-man emerges from the sea and flies with the clouds of heaven only to bring back the ten tribes to rejoin them with the remnant in the land (*4 Ez.* 13:46-50)<sup>118</sup>. These Son(s) of Humanity come only for the racially and ethnically pure of Israel. They represent and deliver the Jews. But the heavenly Son of Humanity in Mark comes with the glory of the Father with the holy angels for those who are not ashamed of Jesus or of his gospel and those who are not ashamed of carrying their cross and losing their life for the sake of Jesus in this adulterous and sinful generation. He comes for the transcultural community who remain faithful to Jesus and the good news.

But even in this transcultural community the coming Son of Humanity acts as a potentially disruptive figure. He will be ashamed of those who refuse to take their cross and are unwilling to lose their lives for the sake of Jesus and his words. However, as for those who remain faithful to the suffering Son of Humanity the heavenly Son of Humanity will send out the angels and gather them (13:26)<sup>119</sup>. The Markan heavenly Son of Humanity in some ways is like the heavenly Son of Humanity of the Jewish nationalistic discourses, and yet he, unlike the heavenly one in those discourses, comes for those who remain faithful to Jesus irrespective of their national, racial background.

#### **7.4 The Sultanate of *Huios*-Jesus in the South (11:1-16:8)**

In this final section I examine the portrayal of Jesus in Mark as he and his followers enter the southern zone. I will examine whether or not Jesus exhibits a metaphoric authority over this area too and its religio-political institutions just as he has done in the north. So I explore the portrayal of Jesus' entry into the temple city, his attitude toward the barren fig tree which appears to symbolize the temple, his

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Discussion", *NTS* 12, 1965/66, pp. 335-43, S. Kim, "The Son of Man" as the Son of God, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1985, pp. 9-14.

<sup>118</sup> See Chapter 7.1.3

activities—disruptive ‘exorcism’ and teaching—inside and outside the temple, his posture among well-wishers and deserters, the manner in which he faces the judgments from the Jewish and Roman courts, his murder on a colonial cross, and subsequent burial and resurrection.

#### 7.4.1 The *Huios*-Jesus Enters the Temple City

##### 7.4.1.1 Entering the Temple City with Authority

Jesus and his followers as their journey to the south culminates come to Bethphage and Bethany near the mount of Olives from where they plan to proceed the final phase of their journey in a procession to the temple city (11:1). In an Indian setting this could be seen as a *yathra*, a procession with a political intent like those led by Gandhi. We have seen that the early phase of Jesus’ journey began from a colonial city (Caesarea Philippi) in the north (8:27) to Jerusalem and the temple, the centre of the elite native and the Roman colonial power, in the south (10:32f). As soon as they arrive they encamp at Bethany to commence the climactic phase of their *yathra* to the temple city. The arrangement of the material in this part of the story (11:1-13:37) is such that it presents Jesus’ visit to the temple as an historic occasion, the climactic phase of his activities in which he engages the temple cult, is challenged by the native Judean leaders, confronts and bests them in argument and finally pronounces the destruction of the temple<sup>120</sup>.

Jesus’ entry (or rather entries 11:11,15,17) into the city and the ensuing disruption inside the temple exhibit an authority similar to the one which he showed on this and the other side of the sea in the north<sup>121</sup>. Certain clues to this authority may be seen in his command to two of the disciples to go (*ὑπάγετε*, 11:2) as a search party to procure (*λύσατε, φέρετε*) a foal from the village. He gives them instructions

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<sup>119</sup> For the connection between 8:34-38 and the whole of chapter 13 see Hooker, *The Son of Man*, pp. 156f. She finds that the whole of ch. 13 is an elaboration of the theme found in 8:34-8.

<sup>120</sup> W.R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree: A redaction-critical analysis of the Cursing of the Fig-Tree pericope in Mark’s Gospel and its relation to the Cleansing of the Temple tradition*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980, p. 39. Also see Malbon, *Narrative Space*, pp. 30-4.

<sup>121</sup> See our discussion on ‘The Sultanate of the Son/ of Humanity’ in 7.2.2. Also see Myers, *Binding*, pp. 293f., F.J. Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus: Composition and Theology in Mark 15*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1982, pp. 70-74, D. Derret, “Law in the New Testament: The Palm Sunday Colt”, *NovT* 13, 1971, pp. 241-58.



with military precision about the place where they will find it and the means to get it for him. The two disciples just as they are told present Jesus as *ὁ κύριος* to the bystanders in the village who object to untying the foal. But the manner in which the bystanders relent and release the colt for this '*κύριος*' shows the authority of Jesus and the power of his word working even via his agents. As soon as the agents bring the colt it is prepared for Jesus' 'messianic' procession to the city and its temple. Thus begins the climactic phase of Jesus' *yathra*, he being seated on the colt amidst those ahead and behind chanting a patriotic anthem of some sort<sup>122</sup> saying:

Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven! (11:9b-10).

The symbol of being seated on the colt and the crowd cheering the *Hallel* chant conjure up the image of the king's triumphal procession into his royal citadel<sup>123</sup>. They exhibit the features of a nationalistic movement (cf. *1 Macc.* 13.51; *Wars* 2.17.8) with a certain longing at least on the part of the crowd to reinstate the long lost seat of David.

Jesus' entry to Jerusalem and to the temple has the image of a king's triumphant procession into his royal city/ palace<sup>124</sup>. The role of the mount of Olives (cf. *Zech.* 14:4), the centrality of the temple, the riding on a colt and the strewing of branches, the shouts of Hosanna and the acclamation of the *Hallel* Psalm 118:26—all these features appear to produce the scenario of a messianic entrance in the vein of *Zech.* 9:9-10 at least in the psyche of the native people<sup>125</sup>. The popular perception of

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<sup>122</sup> It has been suggested that this is a liturgical recital from Ps. 118 commemorating the cleansing of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus in 165 B.C. See Nineham, *Saint Mark*, pp. 291-294. According to Taylor Ps. 118 was used liturgically at the Feasts of Tabernacles and the Passover. *Hosanna* could be used in addressing pilgrims or a famous Rabbi, but as greeting or acclamation rather than cry for help. It is possible that Mark thought of *Hosanna* as a cry of homage, a kingly greeting. See Taylor, *The Gospel*, p. 456, Myers, *Binding*, pp. 290-297. For other possible suggestions see Hooker, *The Gospel*, p. 256.

<sup>123</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 92, Matera, *The Kingship*, p. 70. Van Iersel suggests that the readers in ancient Rome would possibly compare this motley party with the legendary triumphal procession of Vespasian in 71 CE, shortly after the conquest of Jerusalem (*Wars* 7.158-62). See for the kings of Israel and Jewish leaders in procession in 1 Kgs. 1:32-48; 2 Kgs. 9:13; Pss. 24:7-10; 118:26; *Zech.* 9:9; *1 Macc.* 13.51, *Wars* 2.433-440.

<sup>124</sup> P.B. Duff, "The March of the Divine Warrior and the Advent of the Greco-Roman King: Mark's Account of Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem", *JBL* 111.1, 1992, pp. 55-71, Downing, *Doing Things*, pp. 136ff.

<sup>125</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 92 n.12 for more references on the 'entry' text. Also see Telford, *The Barren*, p. 40, Hooker, *The Gospel*, p. 258.

Jesus as the one in the royal lineage of David is shown via Bartimaeus' call (10:47,49) and the popular plaudit (11:9-10).

However, the references to the untrained colt 'that has never been ridden', the promise to return it immediately, and the disciples spreading their cloaks on the colt, the crowd spreading theirs on the road in a spontaneous gesture of acceptance, and the initial act of entering in the temple not producing anything dramatic (11:11) suggest that Jesus is a religio-political figure of some sort and yet not the type of a nationalistic martial messiah (cf. *Wars* 2.254-263; 6.300-309)<sup>126</sup>. Later incidents in the story suggest that Jesus goes to Jerusalem and the temple not as a nationalist/essentialist to entertain or endorse the native religio-political establishment in the city (11:15-19) or to reestablish the Davidic royal lineage (12:35-37). He and his community draw near to (*ἐγγίζουσιν*) Jerusalem and enter (*εἰσῆλθεν*) the temple not to support but to disrupt or disqualify or even destroy the temple<sup>127</sup>. As Jesus enters the temple he looks around (*περιβλεψάμενος*) at everything with an obvious plan to return later for it is already late (11:11). The Markan use of '*περιβλεψάμενος*' intimates an authoritative, critical, angry or even judgmental observation of Jesus (cf. 3:5,34; 5:32; 10:23). He sets foot in the temple only to vacate it as darkness falls which again implies the impending hour of crisis<sup>128</sup>. He enters the temple not to 'cleanse' but to cast a judgment, a curse even so that the temple, as the leafy fig tree, may wither away to its roots. Thus Jesus' affiliation to the city and its temple turns out to be a disruptive even destructive affair.

#### 7.4.1.2 Cursing the Fig Tree

Jesus' encounter in the temple is associated with the incident of seeing a fig tree full of leaves but without any figs, and Jesus being hungry searching for figs (11:13). In the literary context where this scene appears it is not implausible to allude a symbolic association between the fruitless fig tree and the temple [11:1-11 (12-14) 15-19 (20-21) 22-25]. Just as the fig tree is leafy the temple is with religious

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<sup>126</sup> Belo, *A Materialist*, pp. 178f. He argues that some such references potentially eliminate the current semantics of the Zealots.

<sup>127</sup> See 'Jesus' Action in the Temple' Wright, *Jesus*, pp. 413-428, Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 61-76 especially p. 75, Myers, *Binding*, p. 296, Duff, "Jesus' Entry", pp. 68,70.

<sup>128</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom*, pp. 21, 98. He says: "*Periblepsesthai* (3:5a), to look around, is a uniquely Markan verb which has judgmental overtones when used in reference to the person of Jesus." (p. 21).



paraphernalia but without any desired fruit. According to Telford, “the story has been deliberately brought into connection with the tradition of Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem and the so-called ‘Cleansing’ of the Temple. By sandwiching his story on either side of the Cleansing account, Mark indicates that he wishes the fate of the unfruitful tree to be seen as a proleptic sign prefiguring the destruction of the Temple cultus”<sup>129</sup>. When the *huios*-Jesus came to Galilee after the baptismal coronation it was the *καιρός* to find fruits of the kingdom of God (1:15) ‘on this and the other side of the sea’, but now in the south as he enters into Jerusalem and the temple (11:11) he finds it is not yet the *καιρός* for the desired fruit (11:13c). Hence the curse: “May no one ever eat fruit from you again” (11:14a)<sup>130</sup>. The destructive power of the words of Jesus is apparent in the morning as Jesus and his disciples pass by the fig tree and Peter draws Jesus’ attention to the fig tree that withered away to its roots (11:21). This sets the stage for the events between Jesus’ entry (11:15) and exit (13:1-2) from the temple and the eventual fate of the temple and the impending fate of Jesus<sup>131</sup>.

#### 7.4.1.3 The Temple Disrupted for Destruction

Mark sandwiches<sup>132</sup> the story of Jesus’ activity in the temple (11:15-19) in between the fig-tree story [11:12-(15-19)- 25]. As soon as Jesus enters the temple (*τὸ ἱερόν*) he drives out those who are engaged in selling and buying in the temple. He

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<sup>129</sup> Telford, *The Barren*, p. 238. Also see Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977, p.130, L.W. Hurtado, *Mark*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983, pp. 170f., Hooker, *The Gospel*, p. 261. For a possible allusion in the fig tree to Rome and the potential of this pericope’s challenge to Rome and her emperors see F.G. Downing, *Doing Things*, pp. 142f. He says: “Mark’s Jesus, in temporary command in the Temple makes clear his opposition to all that prevents God receiving his due through the Jewish cult, *but also* his opposition to the cult inaugurated and sustained by the divine Romulus, the cult and service of Caesar, Romulus’s deified successor, and of Roma herself, as represented by the Roman coin.” (143).

<sup>130</sup> The image of the fruitless fig tree is often used as a metaphor for fruitless Israel (Jer. 5:17; 8:13; Hos. 2:12; 9:10,16; Amos 4:9; Micah 7:1ff. Isa. 28:3-4). For the OT and Late Jewish background of fig/ fig-tree imagery see Telford, *The Barren*, pp. 128-204.

<sup>131</sup> Telford, *The Barren*, pp. 136f., 161-163. He says: “For the Markan reader the cursing of the fig-tree was an eschatological sin prefiguring the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple”, p. 163. Also see R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994, pp. 17f., Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 357.

<sup>132</sup> See J.R. Edwards, “Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives”, *NovT* 31, 1989, pp. 193-216. T. Shepherd, “The Narrative Function of Markan Intercalation”, *NTS* 41.4, 1995, pp. 522-40, Downing, *Doing Things*, pp. 118-132. Downing thinks that this literary device also makes Mark similar to the postclassical Hellenistic romances (127ff).



overturns the tables of the moneychangers and the seat of those who sell doves<sup>133</sup>. He exhibits such a decisive, drastic and disruptive activity in the temple that he does not even allow anyone to carry anything through the temple (11:16). He conducts himself in this destructive manner with a conviction that the temple is meant to be a house of prayer for all the nations (*πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*) and not an exclusive enclave of robbers (*ληστῶν*)<sup>134</sup>. Hence the challenge, ‘Is it not written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations”?’ But you have made it a den of robbers’ (11:17 cf. Isa. 56:7; Jer. 7:11). This appears to be an indication of an open challenge by the Markan Jesus toward the (ab)use of the temple by both the native Jewish nationalists<sup>135</sup> and the Roman collaborators<sup>136</sup> for their own agenda, the former for their outright antagonism and the latter for their affiliation to Rome in order to regain or retain religio-political power. It also shows the readiness of the Markan Jesus to translate the house of God into a transcultural ‘house of prayer’ which can extend its borders beyond to peoples of other races, nations and cultures (*πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*)<sup>137</sup>.

The use of *τὸ ἱερόν* for the temple indicates that for Mark the temple is one undivided religio-political entity. It is the nerve centre of the city and in some strange manner the seat of both native Jewish (Zealot) nationalism and elite Jewish

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<sup>133</sup> For a critical evaluation of the existing scholarly views on Jesus’ action in the temple see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 61-76. He thinks that Jesus’ act of overturning the tables in the temple was a symbolic attack which to the onlookers would signify its destruction (p. 70), and Jesus intended to indicate that the end was at hand and that the temple would be destroyed, so that the new and perfect temple might arise (p.75). Cf. Wright, *Jesus*, pp. 413-421.

<sup>134</sup> For a study on the socio-political phenomenon of brigandage and its relationship to first century Palestine see M. Hengel, *The Zealots*, pp. 24-46; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, pp. 48-87.

<sup>135</sup> On Mk.11:17 as a reference to revolutionary brigands in the temple during the Jewish war, see G.W. Buchanan, “Mark 11:15-19: Brigands in the Temple”, *HUCA* 30, 1959, pp. 169-77; *idem*, “An Additional Note to ‘Mark 11:15-19: Brigands in the Temple’”, *HUCA* 31, 1960, pp. 103-105; C.K. Barrett, “The House of Prayer and the Den of Thieves” in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kummel zum 70 Geburtstag*, (ed.), E.E. Ellis and E. Grasser, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975, pp. 13-20; Joel Marcus, “The Jewish War”, pp. 448-456.

<sup>136</sup> Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple*, p. 131.

<sup>137</sup> Belief in the destruction of the existing temple and the creation of a new one where the nations may gather at the eschaton was not uncommon among certain segments of Jews in postbiblical Judaism (*Tob.13:5,11,16-18; 14:5; 1 En. 24-5; 89-90; Jub. 1:15-17; Pss Sol. 17; IQM 7.4-10; IQflor. 1.1-13; 4QpPs37 3.11; 11QTemple 29.8-10; Syb Ora. 3.294;*



collaboration with Rome<sup>138</sup>. The Markan Jesus' expulsion of the traders and their sacrificial birds must be understood as an attack directed against these power structures in the temple complex. His disruption of the business transactions wrecks their centre of life<sup>139</sup>. Jesus' repeated entries into the temple (11:11,15,27) and his zeal to drive out the 'robbers' in order to make this house a 'house of prayer for all nations' and his preparedness to stay in, confront and challenge the native religio-political leaders (11:15-12:44) in some measure show his affiliation to the temple. However, his teaching about faith<sup>140</sup> and prayer<sup>141</sup> (11:23), the parabolic prediction concerning the handing over of the vineyard to others (12:9) and the denunciation of Davidic messianism<sup>142</sup> (12:37) and the final exit from the temple predicting its imminent destruction (13:2) indicate the ambivalent affiliative-antagonistic dynamic of the Markan Jesus and his transversal community towards both the native Jewish nationalism and Roman collaborationism.

#### 7.4.1.4 The Landlord, his Son, Slaves and the revolting Tenants

The disruptive activity of Jesus in the temple inevitably creates a certain amount of concern among the patrons of the temple, the chief priests and the scribes. Just as in the north, where Jesus conducted exorcism in the synagogue and challenged certain native Jewish customs and traditions, the Pharisees collaborated with the Herodians to murder Jesus (3:6), here too in the south we find the religious authorities engaged in seeking a way to kill him (11:18). So they come to Jesus while he is in the temple to find by what and whose authority he does these things. Jesus, instead of giving a direct answer, wants them to tell him about the authority of John the Baptist,

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3.702-20; 5.414-33). See Sanders, 'New Temple and Restoration in Jewish Literature' in *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 77-90.

<sup>138</sup> For an analysis on the 'Faction Politics' see Goodman, *The Ruling Class*, pp. 135ff. especially 198ff.

<sup>139</sup> Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 100. Also see Wright, *Jesus*, pp. 413ff., Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, pp. 357ff.

<sup>140</sup> Christopher Marshall, *Faith as a Narrative Theme in Mark's Narrative*, Cambridge: CUP, 1989.

<sup>141</sup> See S.E. Dowd, *Prayer, Power, and the Problem of Suffering: Mark 11:22-25 in the Context of Markan Theology*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988. It is possible to suggest that the juxtaposition of the saying on prayer (11:22-25) with a story the point of which seems to be that the temple establishment will be rejected because it has not made the temple into a 'house of prayer for all nations' signifies a strategic transition from a 'temple made with hands' to a 'temple not made with hands' (14:58), from the temple to the transcultural Christian community. See Juel, *Messiah and Temple*, pp. 135f.

a test in which they fail utterly. Hence he also refuses to give them a direct answer concerning his own authority. Instead he challenges them by means of a parable. Thus in the Markan setting the parable of the absentee landlord, his obedient son, slaves and the usurping tenants appears in the context of a series of controversy dialogues between Jesus and the temple authorities within the temple precinct<sup>143</sup>.

This parable is a typical example of colonial approximation that shows how the colonised subjects often imitate the colonial systems and symbols as a norm for their own praxis<sup>144</sup>. In this parable the Markan Jesus talks appreciatively of an absentee landlord who leases his vineyard (where he planted, fenced, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watch-tower, 12:1 cf. LXX Isa. 5:2)<sup>145</sup> to certain tenants and goes to another country and then sends his slaves to the tenants at the right time ( $\tau\omega\ \kappa\alpha\iota\rho\omega$ ) to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard (12:1-2). But the tenants refuse to render any payment. Instead they beat and insult some of the slaves and others they kill. Finally the landlord sends his 'beloved son' thinking that the tenants will respect him (12:6). Contrary to his expectation the tenants seize, kill and throw him out of the vineyard with a view to acquiring its ownership. Because they have done this the owner of the vineyard will come and destroy the tenants and give his farm to others (12:8-9)<sup>146</sup>.

Though this is told in a parable its meaning becomes apparent to the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. They realize that he has told this parable against them (12:12). This is not surprising in the context of their probable familiarity with the vineyard song of Isaiah which talks about 'a vineyard on a very fertile hill' with 'a

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<sup>142</sup> See Kelber, *The Kingdom*, pp. 95f., Marcus, "The Jewish War", pp. 456-460.

<sup>143</sup> William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue on the Oppressed*, Louisville: WJK Press, 1994, p. 100, Roger David Aus, *The Wicked Tenants and Gethsemane: Isaiah in the Wicked Tenants' Vineyard, and Moses and the High Priest in Gethsemane: Judaic Traditions in Mark 12:1-9 and 14:32-42*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996, p. 3. K. Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*, Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1983, p. 46.

<sup>144</sup> I perceive this parable to be an example in the text of certain colonial subjects approximating the norms of their colonist masters. For a reading of this story (in Luke) as a text that reveals a "protest or oppositional voice" from the point of view of the people who were part of the audience see Sugirtharajah, "Biblical Studies in India", pp. 293f.

<sup>145</sup> For Jesus' allusion to *Isa. 5* see Aus, *The Wicked*, pp.3-6.

<sup>146</sup> For a detailed exegesis (pointing out the strains in an exclusive allegorical salvation-history reading) of this parable see Crossan, 'The Wicked Husbandmen' *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973, pp. 86-96.



watch tower' and 'wine vat' alluding to 'the house of Israel and the people of Judah' (Isa. 5:1-7) whose life centres round the temple. In later Tannaitic and Rabbinic traditions the vineyard is used as a reference to the temple<sup>147</sup>. In the context of such a world view it is not improbable for the leaders to perceive that the usurping tenants in the parable refer to themselves (cf. Isa. 3:14) and, therefore, that their rejection of *huios*-Jesus will result in the vineyard being taken away from them and being given to 'others' at which point they in turn will be destroyed (12:9)<sup>148</sup>.

This parable in a socio-political perspective graphically portrays the kind of exploitative relationship engendered by 'landlordism' in an agrarian colonial context<sup>149</sup>. The land lord is an absentee one, perhaps a native elite or an alien one and the tenants are those who feel a loss of their land and hence their desire to gain ownership. Their hostility to the owner seems typical of the socio-political relations in first century Palestine to reclaim patrimonial rights of land ownership<sup>150</sup>. The language used in this story exhibits a colonial domination and anti-colonial resistance or rather a 'conflicted agrarian situation'. Jesus speaks in the story as though he endorses a colonial system for he expects obedience from the tenants toward their master and his son<sup>151</sup>. The story appears to validate a colonialist socio-political, economic model as it portrays the land lord and his son and their actions in a positive light as though they are doing the rightful thing and what the tenants are doing is wicked contrary to the accepted norm. This attitude may possibly be explained and

For an allegorical salvation-history reading see J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, (rev. edn.), S.H. Hooke, London: SCM Press, 1963, pp. 70-77.

<sup>147</sup> For numerous references from these traditions see Aus, *The Wicked*, pp. 7-10. For a similar Rabbinic parable see p. 23.

<sup>148</sup> Juell, *Messiah and Temple*, p. 136, Aus, *The Wicked*, p. 18. Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989, p. 121, Kee, *Community*, p. 113, Snodgrass, *The Parable*, pp. 77, 91.

<sup>149</sup> See D.E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986, pp. 37-80, 141-144. Also see F.C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels*, Oxford: OUP, 1926; C.H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1950 (1935), pp. 124ff.

<sup>150</sup> For the historical background see Oakman, *Jesus*, pp. 37-91, 144.

<sup>151</sup> Oakman deals very little and struggles a bit with this parable. On the one hand he says that "Jesus demonstrates no particular sympathy with the tenants' behavior (12:9)" (144) and "does not endorse the actions of the tenants of Mk. 12:1-12" (148). He thinks that the accent of Jesus' message falls upon a new kind of interdependence between landowners and peasantry. But on the other he says Jesus "casts a critical eye on existing social relations, as is apparent from Mk. 12:1-12...", (148) and his "vision of the liberation and humanity

understood as an approximation of colonialist attitudes which the colonized subjects often mimic and practise. In the case of the Markan Jesus he uses it to explicate his relation to God as the son to the absentee landlord and the native Jewish leaders as the revolting tenants. The imperial model is imitated and incorporated as an appropriate model for the 'right' relation between God, *huios*-Jesus and Israel.

#### 7.4.1.5 Living in-between Caesar and God

The chief priests, the scribes and the elders after their attempt to restrain Jesus send the Pharisees and the Herodians (the two groups that conspired to destroy Jesus in Galilee, 3:6) to entrap Jesus with a precarious political question—"Is it lawful to pay tax to the emperor, or not?" (12:14)<sup>152</sup>. This is the first time we come across a direct reference to the Roman emperor in the story. It is also interesting to note that this question is raised not from a Roman colonial quarter but from the native Jewish elite leaders who seem affiliated (Wright uses the term 'heavily compromised liaison'<sup>153</sup>) with the Roman colonial structures of power in the temple city. Jesus discerns their hypocrisy for they are the ones who favour the payment of taxes to the emperor<sup>154</sup> and yet they want him to adjudicate on this matter. They want to know whether Jesus and his community are in liaison with the temple or with the colonial order.

Jesus engages this issue by asking them to procure a coin and identify the icon and the epigraph engraved on it which they do in earnest showing that it belongs to the emperor (*Καίσαρος*). This gives him an opportunity to tell them to give to the emperor his things (*τὰ Καίσαρος*) and to God the things belonging (*τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ*) to him (12:17). This appears to be an ambiguous answer<sup>155</sup>. It has a public and a hidden

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coming with the reign of God directly attacked principal elements of the Roman order in Palestine..." (168).

<sup>152</sup> The tax in question is paid direct into the Imperial *fiscus* and is especially hateful to Jews as a sign of subjection and because the coinage bear the name and image of Caesar. See Taylor, *The Gospel*, p. 479. For the Roman imperial finances and coinage see John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians*, London: SPCK, 1994 (1986), pp. 76-81.

<sup>153</sup> Wright, *Jesus*, p. 502.

<sup>154</sup> Goodman, *The Ruling Class*, pp. 33-38, 115-116

<sup>155</sup> S.G.F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth*, London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1968, p. 67, C. Rowland and M. Corner, *Liberating Exegesis: The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies*, Louisville: WJK Press, 1989, p. 108. For a survey of the diverse



transcript. In it Jesus sounds as though he both consents to and prohibits the payment of taxes to Rome. On the one hand there is an apparent recognition of the emperor. Jesus wants people to give to the emperor what belongs to him, to be affiliated to the imperial system<sup>156</sup>. On the other there is a recognition of God and of the need to give to God what belongs to him<sup>157</sup>. This instruction to be affiliated to the colonial emperor and to God sounds similar to Deutero-Isaiah's teachings to the exiles to be affiliated to the colonial emperor and also to YHWH the God of Israel (Isa. 45:1-6), or to Josephus who wants his fellow Jews to be affiliated to Rome and at the same time to the God of Israel<sup>158</sup>.

The affiliation of both Deutero-Isaiah and Josephus to the respective imperial systems of their time (Persia and Rome) appears not without an antagonistic element because of their affiliation also to God. In the case of both these prophets an unflinching commitment to the God of Israel is the answer to the current national crisis even though it may require a temporal (or clandestine) attachment to the imperial systems of power. It appears that such a view is reflected in the Markan Jesus' attitude towards Rome and to the God of Israel.

In his public and hidden transcript the Markan Jesus appears to strike a strategic code in between the nationalist zealots who utterly oppose Rome and the elite Jewish leaders who collaborate with Rome. Jesus by this strategic stand potentially ruptures the nationalistic essentialism of the Zealots and the heavily compromised affiliation of the Jewish elite leaders with Rome. He wants a role of

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analyses on this saying see F.F. Bruce, "Render to Caesar" in E. Bammel and C.F.D. Moule, (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992 (1984), pp. 249-63

<sup>156</sup> Brandon, *The Trial*, p. 68. Brandon thinks that Mark's Gospel is essentially an apologia. It is composed to assure the Christians in Rome that Jesus, though born a Jew, has no essential connection with Judaism, that he has endorsed Rome's rule in Judea. See pp. 79ff. Also see Ellis Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus?*, London: SCM Press, 1984, p. 77.

<sup>157</sup> Though Rowland and Corner recognize the possible ambiguity in this saying (pp. 108, 109) they tend to emphasize only the radical, antagonistic attitude of Jesus toward Rome. See *Liberating Exegesis*, pp. 108-111. They give credit to the fact that Jesus does not possess a Roman coin and hence he is neither contaminated nor is under any obligation to give tax. Only the participants in the Roman economic system are bound to pay the tax. This argument is admittedly borrowed from Eisler's treatment of this incident. See Robert Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist*, London: Methuen, 1931, pp. 332ff. But Paul C. Finney thinks that the rigoristic halakot centering on the ritual and daily avoidance of contact with idolatrous subjects is of no interest either to Mark or his hero. See his "The Rabbi and the Coin Portrait (Mark 12: 15b, 16): Rigorism Manque", *JBL* 111.4, 1992, p. 640 (629-44).

being apparently affiliated to Rome but at the same time remaining potentially detached from her. In one of his earlier teachings he teaches his disciples and the crowd that associate with him that the act of doing ‘the things of God’ (τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ) to God implies a preparedness to take up the cross (8:33-4). Doing the things of God or giving the things of God to God would inevitably disrupt Rome which then will inflict its symbol of colonial authority on those who do the things of God. Affiliation to God may strategically affiliate the colonized subjects to the emperor but at the same time create a space from where they raise a hidden transcript that would inevitably disrupt the emperor. Any sort of outright rebellion against the imperial order will be ruinous. Therefore what is required is a strategic stand that on the one hand is apparently affiliative and potentially disruptive to the imperial order and on the other is not supportive of a native nationalistic agenda. So the command to give to God what is God’s and to Caesar what is Caesar’s may be treated as a postcolonial strategy of Jesus and his community that enables them to strategically adhere to the God of Israel and at the same time cross the borders of native Jewish nationalism and collaborationism into a strategic space (what Bhabha calls ‘the Third Space of enunciation’<sup>159</sup>) that hardly propels Rome’s *imperium* and native Jewish racist nationalism<sup>160</sup>. No wonder those who pose the question are “utterly amazed at him” (12:17b).

In the next two incidents Jesus disrupts a certain belief system of the Sadducees and the nationalistic fervour of the Jewish royalists: the first is the belief of the Sadducees who say that there is no resurrection and hence reject the power of God (12:18-27) and the second is an expectation of the resurgence of Davidic monarchy (12:35-40). In the case of the former he reminds the Sadducees of their ignorance of the scripture and the power of God, and of the latter he draws attention to the

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<sup>158</sup> See our analysis on Josephus in Chapter 4. This ambivalent affiliative-disruptive dynamic of the saying is not recognized by Brandon.

<sup>159</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 37. See also Chapter 2.1.3

<sup>160</sup> Wright too arrives at a similar conclusion when he says that Jesus “was not advocating compromise with Rome; but nor was he advocating straightforward resistance of the sort that refuses to pay the tax today and sharpens its swords for battle tomorrow”. Jesus’ aphorism “transcended the popular view of the kingdom, subverting the blasphemous claims of Caesar, *and* the compromises of the present Temple hierarchy, *and* the dreams of the revolutionaries”. See *Jesus*, pp. 505, 507.



royalists' futile nostalgia for a Judaeen Davidic monarchy<sup>161</sup>. In between these two episodes Mark by citing the exemplary understanding of one of the scribes concerning the commandments of God reinforces the need for one's commitment to God and neighbour. This reinforces the Markan Jesus' teaching on strategic essentialism (commitment to Israel's God) and transcultural hybridity (loving one's neighbour).

#### 7.4.2 The Son's Strategic Exit from the Disrupted Temple

After a series of confrontations with different segments of the native Jewish leadership in the temple complex through symbolic gestures and teachings Jesus and his community quit the temple (*ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ*, 13:1) never to return or enter in it again. It is at this moment that one of the disciples draws his attention back toward the large stones and the large and great buildings which constitute the whole temple complex probably expressing his 'misplaced appreciation'<sup>162</sup> to stir Jesus' interest once again for the temple. In response to this continued admiration Jesus gives an oracle indicating the total doom and destruction of the temple saying, "Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down" (13:2b, cf. 11:14)<sup>163</sup>. This announcement which has the characteristics of a sentence seems to be the climax of the disruption he unleashed inside the temple (in chs. 11,12).

Jesus and his new community then depart from the temple mount and encamp in a favourite private location on the mount of Olives 'opposite the temple' (13:3). While they are sitting there some of the disciples (Peter, James, John and Andrew) want privately to know when the total destruction of the temple will take place and what will be the sign of this catastrophic event. The rest of the chapter is the response to these queries revealing the times, the signs and also about the cloud-borne Son of

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<sup>161</sup> Joel Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 139-149. He thinks that for Mark a messianic hope that has been fashioned along strictly Davidic lines is simply not big enough. It cannot adequately express Jesus' identity in the context of militant messianic nationalism, pp. 144, 149.

<sup>162</sup> Timothy Geddert, *Watchwords*, p. 85. He thinks that even the request for a sign (13:4) is a sign of the disciples' 'misguided expectation', p. 57.

<sup>163</sup> Pronouncements such as this against the temple are not uncommon in the Hebrew prophetic tradition. See Jer. 7:14; 26:6; Mic. 3:12. According to a tradition in the Talmud, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, a contemporary of Jesus, also foretold the destruction of the temple forty years before it occurred (B. Yoma 39b). Josephus also refers to one Jesus, the son of Ananus who 'laments a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house' saying "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!" (*Wars* 6.300-309). For the destruction of the city and the temple see *Wars* 7.

Humanity who with his angels will regroup the elect of all nations and thus establish a new transcultural community<sup>164</sup>.

Jesus warns his disciples to be on their guard that no one may lead them astray even when many will come in his name or identity and lead many astray, or when they hear of wars and rumours of wars as nations and kingdoms rise up against each other, or of earth quakes and famines. These internal, external or natural calamities need not alarm the new community. They are bound to happen but are not the signs of the end (*τὸ τέλος*)<sup>165</sup>. Instead they mark the beginning of the birth pangs (*ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων*, 13:8), the pangs that bring forth something new<sup>166</sup>.

We find that there is a whole lot of emphasis put on the persecution that may befall the new community, that its members will be handed over to councils, be beaten in synagogues, and will stand trial before governors and kings because of Jesus in the post-resurrection age<sup>167</sup>. There will be schisms within families and family members may betray one another. This shows that before the destruction of the temple there will be great trials and tribulation for the new community in the post-resurrection age similar to the ones suffered by Jesus himself.

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<sup>164</sup> It has been the practice among scholars to interpret this speech chapter (ch.13) in virtual isolation from the remainder of the story. For instance see G.R. Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark Thirteen*, London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1957, Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist*, pp. 151-206, R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk. 13*, Dusseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1968. For a narrative compositional approach see Geddert, *Watchwords*. Similarly it has been suggested that just as the Gospel relates the past of Jesus to the present here in ch. 13 the Markan reality bursts through the medium of the Jesus story (Kelber, *The Kingdom*, p. 110). Though there is greater consensus on this there seems to be little on the exact occasion of Markan reality whether it is prior to or during or after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. On the Caligula crisis and the interpretation of the Synoptic Apocalypse see Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, pp. 125-165 especially pp. 151ff.

<sup>165</sup> The talk of cities being destroyed, of wars and of celestial phenomena and the end of the present time is as much at home in non-Jewish as in Jewish writings of the time. See Downing, "Common Strands in Pagan, Jewish and Christian Eschatologies in the First Century", *TZ* 51.3, 1995, pp. 196-211, "Cosmic Eschatology in the First Century: Pagan, Jewish and Christian", *AC* 64, 1995, pp. 99-109, Bas van Iersel, "The Sun, Moon and Stars of Mark 13: 24-25 in a Greco-Roman Reading", *Bib.* 77.1, 1996, pp. 84-92, E.Adams, "Historical Crisis and Cosmic Crisis in Mark 13 and Lucan's *Civil War*", *TynBul.* 48.2, 1997, pp. 329-44.

<sup>166</sup> For reference to 'birth pangs' associated with the irruption of the messianic new age in the *Syriac Book of Baruch* and in *4 Ezra* see Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, pp. 332-339, 350-354. The messianic age according to these discourses is essentially nationalistic in character which is not the sort of picture we see in Mark. In it the birth pangs associated with the irruption of the messianic age are not to preserve nationalistic elements but to create a transcultural new community that live and suffer for Jesus Messiah and be vindicated by him.



Then the temple itself will be subjected to terrible humiliation as the desolating sacrilege (*τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως*, 13:14) will be set up where it should not stand. This is suggestive of yet another alien occupation and desecration of the temple<sup>168</sup>. This will be the time when great calamity will befall on the whole population<sup>169</sup>. But it is the time of the new community's great escape from Judea to the mountains never to return. Because of the elect new community the days of this terrible calamity will be short. During this terrible days false messiahs and prophets will arise and perform signs and omens to lead many astray. After this there will be cosmic catastrophe—the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give light, stars will fall and the powers of the heavens will shake (cf. *Syr Apo Bar* 10.11-12).

In those days the cloud-borne Son of Humanity who possesses great power and glory (cf. *Dan.* 7:13) will send out angels and gather his elect from the four winds (cf. *4 Ez.* 13) from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. Thus the new community of the elect will be gathered together from the four corners of the earth and it will re-grow like a fig tree that puts forth fresh leaves in the summer (cf. *Syr Apo Bar* 29, 30, 37, 72, 82)<sup>170</sup>. But before this all other things that are predicted need to take place quickly (“this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place” 13:30) even though no one knows not even the son except the father the exact day or hour of their occurrence.

Hence the community is challenged to be on its guard and keep alert for the apocalyptic/ eschatological hour may come in the evening or at midnight or at

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<sup>167</sup> Geddert, *Watchwords*, p. 192.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. *Dan.* 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; *1 Macc.* 1:54,59; *Wars* 6.316. In Daniel and *1 Macc.* it refers to the altar of Zeus which was set up on the altar of burnt offerings by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BCE. In Markan times the author may be either alluding this event in relation to the soldiers of Titus who attempt to set up the Roman standards in the temple and offer sacrifices in honour of the emperor (*Wars* 6.316) or reflecting on the memory of the Caligula episode (*Ant.* 18.272-74; *Wars* 2.184-203). On the Caligula crisis and the interpretation of the Synoptic Apocalypse see Theissen, *The Gospels in Context*, pp. 125-165 especially pp. 151ff. For a discussion on Mark written under the shadow of the Roman-Jewish War see Joel Marcus, “The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark”, pp. 441- 62, *Mark 1-8*, pp. 37-39. But he thinks that the Zealot revolutionaries whose occupation of the temple amount to sacriligious desolation.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. *4 Ez.* 4:24-26; *Syr Apo Bar* 8.2-5; 10.6-7; 32.2-3; 35.1-5.

<sup>170</sup> Whilst *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch* and *4 Ezra* reassert elements of Jewish nationalist essentialism in the post-war period Mark resorts to a strategic essentialism with enough room for a transcultural community.

cockcrow or at dawn. These time references appear to connect this phase of the story with the next in chapters 14-16:8<sup>171</sup>.

### 7.4.3 The *Huios*-Jesus Among Well-wishers and Deserters

#### 7.4.3.1 A Woman Anoints Jesus and Disturbs the Associates

From the mount of Olives Jesus and his disciples move to Bethany, a space near the mount (11:1), where he apparently finds a few well-wishers (11:3,9) who perhaps supported his travel to the city and the temple. In Bethany he comes to the house of a certain leper named Simon. The departure from the doomed temple to the mount 'opposite the temple' (13:3a) and subsequently to the house of a leper (14:3a) shows a shift in the strategy of the Jesus community. The specific reference to Simon as a leper seems to suggest a socio-religious border-crossing and the inclusive dynamic of the new community<sup>172</sup>.

While Jesus reclines at table in Simon's residence a woman comes with an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment of nard and pours (*κατέχειν*) it on his head in an apparently prophetic gesture of anointing/ honouring Jesus. Some of the associates who are with Jesus at the time perceive it to be an unwanted even wasteful act and so they try to prevent her. But Jesus permits her for he considers it to be an acceptable even beautiful act (*καλὸν ἔργον*) of anointing his body (*μυρίσαι τὸ σῶμα*) before hand for burial, an act which will become part of the good news<sup>173</sup>. This appreciation and recognition sets yet another level (in gender) in the border-crossing strategy of the Jesus community.

Mark sandwiches this story between the narrative of a covert plan of the native Jewish leaders (chief priests and scribes) to arrest and murder Jesus (14:1-2) and the covetous collusion of one of the disciples, Judas, with these leaders (14:10-11). This not only illuminates the contrast of the woman's prophetic/ priestly deed with that of

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<sup>171</sup> It is not impossible to read the echoes of events relating to Jesus' own suffering in this 'four watch schema' of the passion night. See R.H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message*, pp. 48-59, Geddert, *Watchwords*, pp. 94ff.

<sup>172</sup> For rules relating to the exclusion of those affected by leprosy see Lev. 13-14, 4Q272, fr.1, 4Q266, fr.6. Jesus' discipleship values cross the social boundaries of the dominant order, Myers, *Binding*, pp. 358f.

<sup>173</sup> For a feminist liberation hermeneutics on this story see E.S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, London: SCM Press, 1983, pp. xiii-xiv, 152-54.



the Jewish priests and scribes and the associates of Jesus but also suggests that it is not her but their actions and attitudes that are wasteful. Moreover, her prophetic/priestly act of anointing will become part of the proclamation of the good news of the transcultural community (14:9). It will continue to disturb for whenever this story is told along with the good news it will inevitably let the community know that Jesus is no longer present in their midst but the poor are and therefore it is time to do some expensive good (εὖ) to the poor<sup>174</sup>. Thus the anonymous woman's act of anointing not only disturbs the associates but also sets the tone of the new community.

#### 7.4.3.2 The Last Meal with the Twelve: A Passover Mimicry and Covenant Hybridization?

On the first day of the unleavened bread when the Passover lamb is to be sacrificed Jesus sends (ὑπάγετε) two of his disciples to the city with a certain sign for direction to the house where he and his disciples may congregate to eat the Passover meal (πῶρ). The style and the structure of this story evoke certain echoes of an earlier narrative when Jesus sends out two of his disciples to fetch the foal to facilitate his entry into the city<sup>175</sup>. The two disciples, just as they are told, go and find a large upper room furnished and ready (14:15f), and there they prepare the Passover meal (τὸ πάσχα). This preparation of a meal in the context of the Passover festival indicates the affiliation of the Jesus community to its native religio-cultural tradition<sup>176</sup>.

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<sup>174</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory*, pp. 153. She says: "The communal remembering of the woman's story always evokes the remembrance of the *basileia* promised to the impoverished and starving. Conversely, wherever the good news ... is preached in the whole world, what the woman prophet has done will be remembered". However she also points her finger at the anti-Jewish and the depoliticizing kyriarchal rhetoric of the story (p. xiv). See also Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, pp. 171-73.

<sup>175</sup> See Taylor, *The Gospel*, p. 536, V.K. Robbins, "Last Meal: Preparation, Betrayal, and Absence (Mark 14:12-25)" in *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14-16*, (ed.) W.H. Kelber, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976, pp. 23f.

<sup>176</sup> This meal appears to be a Passover meal for it was eaten at night, and in Jerusalem. The meal ended with a hymn, presumably the Hallel psalms sung at the end of the Passover meal, Wright, *Jesus*, p. 555. For a recent discussion on the affiliatory ('appropriation') aspect of the Last Supper to ancient Jewish sacrificial worship see Jonathan Klawans, "Interpreting the Last Supper: Sacrifice, Spiritualization, and Anti-Sacrifice", *NTS* 48:1, 2002, pp. 1-17 especially p. 16. For the disruptive effect see B. Chilton, *A Feast of Meanings: Eucharistic Theologies from Jesus through Johannine Circles*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994, pp. 46-74.

Jesus along with the twelve comes to this house toward evening in order to eat the Passover meal. While eating Jesus speaks to the twelve saying: “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray (*παραδώσει*) me, one who is eating with me” (14:18b, cf. Ps. 41:9). As audience we know who this person will be for we are told about this disciple on two earlier occasions (3:19; 14:10) even though the disciples are unaware of his identity. Hence their anguish and enquiry. At this point Jesus makes his final prediction concerning the suffering of the Son of Humanity, saying: “the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born” (14:21). This scene, just like the earlier suffering Son of Humanity saying scenes (8:31 etc.), depicts the disruption within the circle of disciples<sup>177</sup>. The meal scene is where the secret plans of the dissenting disciples exposed (14:18, 27,30) and the purpose of God revealed (14:22-25).

While eating Jesus takes a loaf of bread and after blessing it he breaks it and gives to them saying “Take, this is my body”. Then he takes the cup and after giving thanks he gives it to them saying “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” (14:22-24). The last meal scene, though it takes place in the context of the Passover meal and mimics its framework, does not recount certain native Jewish Passover traditions. For instance, there is no mention of bitter herbs or recitation of liturgy related to eating the Passover lamb. Instead the words of Jesus are of a completely different kind<sup>178</sup>. For Mark the Passover presents only a general framework to conduct such an empowering meal without any direct interest in Jewish

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<sup>177</sup> Robbins says: “If discipleship as portrayed by Mk relates to discipleship in Mk’s own community, then the community in which he lives experiences bitter conflict. Misunderstanding, dissension, and even betrayal reside within the Christian community itself.... The ‘betrayal-tradition’ in the center of the LS interprets the conflict which Mk faces in his own community”, “Last Meal:...”, pp. 29, 34. R.M. Fowler suggests the last supper scene as a divorce between Jesus and his disciples. See his *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark*, Chicago: Scholars Press, 1981, p. 147.

<sup>178</sup> Numb 9:11 requires the presence of bitter herbs and unleavened bread at the meal. Pes 10:5 attributes to Rabbi Gamaliel (first century CE) a tradition that who ever does not mention the lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs at the meal has not fulfilled his passover obligations. See Robbins, “Last Meal:...”, p. 25 n.11. Also see Eduard Lohse, *History of the Suffering and Death of Jesus Christ*, trans., M.O. Dietrich, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967, pp. 47ff.



Passover traditions<sup>179</sup>. The last meal in the context of the Passover mimics certain aspects of the native Jewish Passover tradition only to disrupt this tradition and hybridize the covenant (Ex. 24:8, cf. 1 Cor 5:7-8). The last meal viewed in terms of the paschal meal turns to be an occasion of eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus via the bread and the cup, and thus creating a new covenant for the Jesus community. It is intended to show that the last meal of Jesus though connected to the paschal meal is a hybridized version of the ancient feast of Israel that consents to and at the same time in some way conflicts with the parental feast<sup>180</sup>. Similarly, the symbolics of the bread to his body and the cup to his blood appears to set in motion a collective strategy to empower those who eat and drink the body and blood as though Jesus in some way through these elements potentially migrates into the ‘body’ of disciples. A rumour of such a conduct in secret may also cast fear and panic among outsiders as though the followers of Jesus is a secret society of cannibals who broke the ultimate taboo as they share and consume Jesus’ body and blood<sup>181</sup>.

#### 7.4.3.3 Gethsemane Gathering and Dissolution of the Community

After the last meal the group leaves for the mount of Olives from where Jesus makes a final forecast about the disruption and desertion of his disciples like the sheep of a stricken shepherd (14:27 cf. Zech. 13:7)<sup>182</sup>. But he also makes a promise that after his death/ burial he will be raised up and go ahead of them to the home range in Galilee (14:28 cf. 16:7). Peter, the closest associate, responds to this by refusing to be counted among the deserters and Jesus responds in a prediction saying he will not only

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<sup>179</sup> Robbins, “Last Meal:...”, p. 25.

<sup>180</sup> For connection and conflict see Lohse, *History of the Suffering*, pp. 39, 42, 45-49.

<sup>181</sup> For a short note on cannibalism as a motif that dominated the Eucharist see Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, pp. 128-131. There are times in the history of Christianity (second century CE) when Christians are suspected of practising cannibalism whenever they meet secretly in tombs and catacombs. See Martin Goodman, “The emergence of Christianity” in *A World History of Christianity*, (ed.), A. Hastings, London: Cassell, 1999, p. 20 (1-24). For a story of the secret circulation of flat bread (chapatis) in India during the first war of Indian independence and the potential of this as a cultural strategy to evoke fear and panic among the colonial authorities as though it is a “signal of warning and preparation, designed to tell the people that something great and portentous was about to happen, and to prompt them to be ready for the crisis” see Bhabha, *The Location*, pp. 201f. For a number of similar examples of native cultural strategies against occupation forces see B.R. Wilson, *Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest Among Tribal and Third-World Peoples*, London: Heinemann, 1973, pp. 221-308.

<sup>182</sup> For a study on the Old Testament allusions on the stricken shepherd see Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 154-164.



desert but also deny him three times before the cock crows twice 'this very night' (14:30).

When Jesus and his disciples come to Gethsemane he instructs his disciples to stay while he prays. He then takes Peter, James and John and begins to show great distress and agitation saying, "I am deeply grieved, even to death...". He tells them to remain there and keep watch (14:34 cf.13:37) while he goes further into the garden and throws himself on to the ground praying, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet not what I want, but what you want" (14:36). After this he comes back to the three only to find them sleeping. This is repeated three times and on the third occasion he gives up on them saying, "Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Humanity is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See the betrayer is at hand" (14:41b-42 cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33f). The behaviour of the three is shown in some measure in contrast to that of Jesus as though they do not grasp the significance of this hour. They sleep and let the hour pass by. They fail to watch and pray and hence their eventual flight from Jesus<sup>183</sup>. The expression of horror and fear of the impending death and the desire to bypass it as well as to surrender to the divine plan of suffering are complex expressions on the face of Jesus. He appears in some measure like and yet unlike the suffering righteous figures and fighters of Israel<sup>184</sup>.

At that time Judas one of the twelve arrives with a crowd armed and with the authority of the chief priests, the scribes and the elders (14:43), and he through a secret sign betrays Jesus into the hands of the crowd. It appears to be a very covert operation for Jesus said, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled" (14:48-9). By saying this he

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<sup>183</sup> For a redaction, composition critical reading of this story showing it as an integral part of Mark's total narrative scheme see W.H. Kelber, "The Hour of the Son of Man and the Temptation of the Disciples (Mark 14:32-42)" in *The Passion*, (ed.), *idem*, pp. 41-60. He finds that just as in the earlier threefold passion predictions here too Jesus gives his disciples a chance to endorse the model of the suffering Messiah which they missed. This "underscores the tragically irreconcilable conflict between passion Christology and discipleship failure" (53), or I would add 'the passion motif and the disruption of the Jesus community'.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Pss. 27, 35, 41, 51-57; *Wis.* 2:12-20; 5:1-7; *2 Macc.* 7. For a study on the Old Testament allusions to the Righteous sufferer traditions see Marcus, *The Way*, pp. 172ff. Also see J. Downing, "Jesus and Martyrdom", *JTS* NS 14.2, 1963, pp. 279-93



submits himself to the arrest. At that moment all the associates of Jesus including the disciples desert him and flee (14:50). The intensity of their panic and flight is shown via one of the associates' random use of the sword (14:47)<sup>185</sup> and another's flight when he is caught leaving his linen cloth and fleeing off naked (14:51f). Gethsemane prepared Jesus to give himself up whereas it made the disciples flee for their lives, and from now onward they part company never to meet again in Mark's story.

#### 7.4.4 The Trial of *Huios*-Jesus

##### 7.4.4.1 The Trial of Jesus in the Jewish Council

The initial trial of Jesus in Mark's story takes place before the high priest, the chief priests, the elders and the scribes who together seem to constitute some sort of a council (cf. *Ant.* 20.11)<sup>186</sup>. Mark tells us that the crowd "took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled" into *ὄλον τὸ συνέδριον* (14:53,55 cf. *Ant.* 20.202)<sup>187</sup>. This assembly seeks by vain various means to put Jesus to death. Many give false testimonies which do not cohere to procure a conviction. One of them is highlighted as though Jesus has said that he will destroy the temple (*τὸν ναόν*) which is 'made with hands' and in three days build another 'not made with hands' (14:58). But this testimony too does not achieve any desired end as Jesus remains ambiguously silent. As a result the temple destruction charge has to be aborted.

It may appear rather curious that even though Mark has given us a few direct and indirect clues concerning the temple destruction rhetoric of Jesus in chs. 11-13 he

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<sup>185</sup> Strangely some disassociate this figure from the associates of Jesus and explain his action as an accident. See Senior, *The Passion*, pp. 82f. Cf. Brandon, *The Trial*, p. 85.

<sup>186</sup> There are conflicting arguments on the historicity of a 'Jewish trial'. See Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus*, Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edn.), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974. They find the Sanhedrin trial narratives in the Gospels as Christian creations with a polemical intent. For a critique of Brandon and Winter see *The Trial of Jesus*, (ed.), Ernest Bammel, London: SCM Press, 1970. For arguments suggesting the probable involvement of the Jewish leaders especially the chief priest in the trial of Jesus see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, pp. 309-318, Goodman, *The Ruling Class*, pp. 113, 115ff., E. Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus?*, pp. 64ff., James S. McLaren, *Power and Politics in Palestine: The Jews and the Governing of their Land 100 BC-AD 70*, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991, pp. 88-101. Whether or not as a matter of fact there was a Jewish trial Mark wants his audience to hear that there was one for he was building up the story toward this. At least at this level this the trial narrative is significant. See Juel, *Messiah and Temple*, pp. 41ff.

<sup>187</sup> For the Sanhedrin's functioning and authority and the role of the high priest under Rome see Schürer, *The History*, vol.2, pp. 200-236, Goodman, *The Ruling Class*, pp. 112-16.

now suggests that the charge concerning temple destruction is a ‘false testimony’ (*ἔψευδομαρτύρου*) against Jesus (14:57)<sup>188</sup>. The ‘possibility’ and the ‘falseness’ of such a saying sounds as though Mark wants to create an ambiguity concerning the actuality of Jesus’ and perhaps his community’s attitude toward the existing temple ‘made with hands’ and the creation of another ‘not made with hands’. This to some extent indicates yet again the strategic affiliative-antagonistic attitude of the Markan Jesus and his community toward the native religious institution and their own strategic existence within the context of this institution and tradition<sup>189</sup>. It may perhaps be because of this ambiguity and ambivalence that the Council has to opt for another charge, perhaps a more focused and divisive one, to alienate and eliminate Jesus.

Hence the high priest changes the direction of the trial as though he wants a clear-cut chasm. He is puzzled at the ambiguous silence of Jesus at the temple destruction charge. So he wants to find the identity of Jesus and hence asks, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”, a question to which Jesus gives an affirmative answer saying, “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power’, and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven’” (14:61-2). This confession seems conclusive enough for a chasm between what he and Jesus represent. For the high priest it is a blasphemous acceptance and assertion worthy enough for the alienation and elimination of the one (or anyone) who makes such a claim. Hence they all “condemned him as deserving death. Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, ‘Prophecy!’ The guards also took him over and beat him” (14:64b-65). On the contrary, for Mark this confession is a

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<sup>188</sup> It is true that there is difference between Jesus’ prediction in 13:2 and the charge in 14:58. For details see Juel, *Messiah and Temple*, p. 11, T.J. Weeden, Sr., “The Cross as Power in Weakness (Mark 15:20b-41)” in *The Passion*, (ed.), Kelber, pp. 121ff., van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response*, pp. 445-46.

<sup>189</sup> See our discussion on 7.4.1.3. An ambivalent attitude toward the temple and the city is not uncommon in the Jewish prophetic, sectarian, charismatic tradition, e.g., Jer. 7, the DSS, *Wars* 6.300-309. In his literary reading of the Jewish charge Juel suggests that “The charge reflects Mark’s view of the relationship between the Christian movement and the temple establishment”, and the Jewish “trial provides the setting for Jesus’ ‘rejection’ by the Jewish religious leaders.” *Messiah*, p. 57, 117. But both Donahue and Weeden explain this as the reflection of a possible eschatological and christological conflict within the Markan community. See Donahue, *Are You the Christ? The Trial Narrative in the Gospel of Mark*, SBL Diss. Ser. No. 10, SBL, 1973, pp. 71-77, 83-102, 136-38, 172-187 especially pp. 180, 185, Weeden, *Mark-The Traditions in Conflict*, *idem*, “The Cross as Power in Weakness” in *The Passion* (ed.), Kelber, For a critique see Juel, *Messiah*, pp. 77-93



true assertion of Jesus' identity which has been the focus of his portrait of Jesus<sup>190</sup>. Ironically it is revealed partly, in the form of a question, by the high priest himself followed by a compliance and completion by Jesus. This revelation and confession appears to suggest the disruptive prowess of the Markan Jesus to disturb the very nerve centre of the native Jewish religio-political power.

The 'Jewish trial' appears to cast the blame of Jesus' arrest and the impending execution on the native Jewish priestly aristocracy to a large extent<sup>191</sup>. The Roman provincial authorities seem thus far to remain out of the Markan discursive landscape. Mark does not give any hint (except perhaps 10:33c; 12:14) of a collaboration between Rome and the native Jewish leaders who collaborate with the Roman colonial authorities to do their dirty work. This in all probability is a discursive strategy of Mark to implicate the native Jewish leaders as though they are primarily instrumental for the arrest, the handing over and the impending execution of Jesus by the Roman colonial authorities

But such a discursive strategy need not necessarily be categorized as an outcome of 'Christian' polemical or apologetic/ hortatory interests as Winter suggests<sup>192</sup>. For instance, in our analysis on Josephus we find him implicating the zealous nationalists for the destruction of the Temple (*Wars* 1.12, 5.257, 6.251), in a manner similar to Mark who implicates the high priests for the execution of Jesus. I would argue that both Mark and Josephus are neither polemicists nor apologists but rather strategic essentialists and transcultural hybrids who both accommodate and disturb both their own native and the alien power.

The narrative of the Council's verdict based on the identity of Jesus facilitates a strategic distancing of the Jesus community from the official line of Judaism. However, at the same time Jesus' apparent acceptance of his identity as 'the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One' and elaboration on this as 'the Son of Humanity seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds' potentially may affiliate the

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<sup>190</sup> A number of references in the story affirm this identity of Jesus 1:1,11, 2:10,28; 8:31,38; 9:7, 12, 31; 10:33f.; 12:6; 13:26, 14:21,62. Also see Juel, *Messiah*, p. 117.

<sup>191</sup> In all the Gospels the priestly class constitute one group that had a role in the trial of Jesus. It also emerges in the pages of Josephus as the natural Jewish leaders who ruled Judea on behalf of the Romans. See Schürer, *The History*, vol. 2, pp. 238ff., Goodman, *The Ruling Class*, pp. 118ff., Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, p. 317.

<sup>192</sup> Winter, *On the Trial*, pp. 33f.

community to a certain strand of the Jewish nationalistic/ apocalyptic tradition<sup>193</sup>. Thus in the 'Jewish trial' narrative Mark strikes a strategic connection of the Jesus community with certain strands of the variegated Jewish traditions and at the same time sets it free from the official and collaborative strand of the parent tradition.

#### 7.4.4.2 The 'Trials' of Peter outside the Jewish Council

While Jesus stands for the trial in the Jewish court and is being convicted for his blasphemous claim to be the 'Messiah, Son of God, Son of Humanity', Peter faces a series of 'trials' below in the courtyard first from one of the servant girls of the high priest and then in the forecourt from the bystanders and finally from a crowing cock<sup>194</sup>. First the servant girl points at sight to Peter saying that he was with the Nazarene Jesus (14:66f.) as though she had seen him with Jesus. But unlike Jesus Peter seems quick to speak out in denial saying "I do not know or understand what you are talking about" (14:68). She then tells the bystanders, "This man is one of them" which Peter denies again. Finally when the bystanders accuse him saying "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean" (14:70) Peter denies again a third time saying, "I do not know this man you are talking about". At that very moment the cock crows a second time as though it is charged to check on Peter on behalf of Jesus and it needs to signal, alarm and bring Peter back to his senses. And so when it crows a second time Peter cannot but succumb to his memory concerning the prophecy of Jesus and the cockcrow. His response is immediate. He breaks down and weeps much to the relief of the audience.

The sandwiching of Peter's denial narrative in the frame of the trial narrative enhances the rhetoric around Jesus in the trial. It enhances Jesus as the stronger, faithful one who despite the torment and trial makes the true confession in contrast to Peter who follows Jesus 'at a distance' and hides his identity and denies his association with Jesus. Jesus when questioned by the chief priest reveals his identity unambiguously but Peter conceals his identity before the servant of the high priest and

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<sup>193</sup> See our discussion of Enoch as the human-heavenly Son of Humanity in the beginning of this chapter and of 'Messiah' and 'Son of God' in Chapter 6. Also see Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "4Q374: A Discourse on the Sinai Tradition: The Deification of Moses and Early Christology", *DSD* 3:3, 1996, pp. 236-52

<sup>194</sup> For the framing of the denial story within the trial narrative see Kim Dewey, "Peter's Curse and Cursed Peter (Mark 14:53-54, 66-72)" in *The Passion*, (ed.), Kelber, pp. 96-114.



the bystanders in his courtyard. The repeated denials of Peter and cockcrow ironically enhance the prophetic prowess of Jesus at a time when he is challenged, 'Prophecy!' (14:65). The audience know that right under the nose of the courtiers and guards Jesus' prophecy concerning Peter is fulfilled in its minute details! They see the blindfolded Jesus in the court vindicated despite the torture and torments but Peter remains condemned by the cockcrow. However the dramatization and the rhetoric of the story draws the audience's admiration to Jesus and at the same time a certain element of sympathy toward Peter. When the audience hear that Peter "broke and down and wept" as soon as he hears the second cockcrow they cannot but acquit him from the serious charge of denying Jesus. Though he is found wanting in the 'trials' he is placed in a discursive spot (14:72d) from where he and the community of Jesus will be drawn toward the risen Jesus and to the originating space of the community in Galilee (16:7).

It appears that the episode of Peter's trial epitomizes a minoritarian community in turmoil because of being torn between the official strand of Judaism and the call to follow Jesus Messiah. It follows Jesus 'at a distance' and at the same time as though seeking a space in the courtyard of the high priests. The official strand of Judaism and its servants and bystanders at every opportune moment isolate the Jesus community because of its identification with Jesus. The official entourage encourages denial but the signals of Jesus repeatedly disrupt and challenge the community to remember and respond to Jesus the 'Messiah, Son of God, Son of Humanity'.

#### 7.4.4.3 The Trial before Pilate the Colonial Prefect

The chief priests who probably do not have the power to carry out capital punishment conduct further consultations (*συμβούλιον*) with the elders, the scribes and the whole council and hand Jesus over to Pilate, the colonial governor (15:1 cf. *Wars* 2.169ff., *Ant.* 18.55ff.)<sup>195</sup>. Here for the first time (except perhaps in 10:34 and 12:14) a Roman colonial agent, who is referred just by name (*Πιλάτος*) without a designation implying perhaps the audience's familiarity with this personality, pops up

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<sup>195</sup> For a study on the similarities and differences between the Jewish and Roman trial narratives in Mark see F.J. Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus*, pp. 7-16. For a study on the trial before Pilate see E. Bammel, "The Trial before Pilate", *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (eds.), Bammel and Moule, pp. 415-452. For a study on Pilate see Daniel R. Schwartz, "Pontius Pilate", *ABD* vol. v, pp. 395-401.

in the story. As the colonial prefect Pilate, not surprisingly, wants to know whether Jesus is ‘the King of the Jews’ (Σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων), perhaps a concern that matters to him most because we find in the story the prefect and his soldiers solely use this title to refer to/ accuse Jesus (15:2,9,12,18,26)<sup>196</sup>. To the prefect’s question Jesus gives an ambiguous answer<sup>197</sup> (Σὺ λέγεις) and keeps a dignified silence until he opens his mouth finally for a lament towards God at the colonial cross (15:34). Pilate in order to clarify this indeterminate response persuades Jesus in vain to speak and perhaps defend himself by denying the charges of sedition that he is no more a threat to the Roman law and order. So he resorts to what we may call the Barabbas episode (15:6-11)<sup>198</sup>. Pilate in an apparent move to set Jesus free turns to the crowd asking: “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” Mark tells us that this is Pilate’s ploy to circumscribe the chief priests and free Jesus from their net by the support of the crowd, an attempt in which he fails again. Faced with no further options he in agreement with the crowd condemns Jesus to death.

In this portrayal of Pilate Mark is curiously ambiguous and ambivalent<sup>199</sup>. On the one hand he wants to show Pilate as a manipulative colonial agent who uses covert means to test the allegiance of the people to Rome and to hand Jesus over as a pseudo-nationalist king to death. Pilate’s question to Jesus is nothing less than a mockery for he knows pretty well that the Jews as an occupied people can have no king of their own in Jerusalem and therefore Jesus is a pretender. Though he appears to relent and give way to popular outcry Pilate is not without political cunning as he plays his part in the events leading to Jesus’ execution<sup>200</sup>. The question he poses to Jesus signals alarm for in a first century Roman province a native taking on the posture of a king would run the risk of appearing to challenge the divine rule of Caesar (cf. Acts 17:7,

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<sup>196</sup> Belo, *A Materialist*, p. 223. He suggest that from the point of view of the Jewish semantic system Pilate’s question and the question of the Jewish leaders during their trial are the same. The difference is the difference between *Jewish power* and *Roman power*. Also see Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998, p. 106.

<sup>197</sup> For a note on the ambiguity of this answer see R. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991, p. 198.

<sup>198</sup> For a discussion on ‘Privilegium Paschale and Barabbas’ see Winter, *On the Trial*, pp. 131-143.

<sup>199</sup> Van Iersel, *Mark: A Reader-Response*, p. 462.

<sup>200</sup> For ‘The characterization of Pilate in Mark’ see Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, pp. 103-119.



*Ant.* 17.285). The question he poses to the crowd too seems to conceal a ploy to find whether there is anyone in the crowd who supports such a native king. Finally, he hands Jesus over to be crucified only when he has reassured himself that it will pacify the crowd who along with their leaders will support Rome and not ‘the King of the Jews’ to avoid an undesirable tumult (cf. 14:2) and its repercussions. Thus he covertly gains the continued allegiance of the crowd in favour of Roman colonial suzerainty<sup>201</sup>.

But on the other hand, Pilate is portrayed as the one who overtly aids Jesus. He in some way wants to release Jesus for which he even approaches the crowd to find whether according to the annual amnesty he may release Jesus ‘the King of the Jews’. This sounds as though he is accepting Jesus’ status and somehow wanting his release! He even thinks that the Jewish leaders out of their jealousy have arrested and handed Jesus over. Thus by showing Pilate in a positive light Mark appears to cast the entire blame of Jesus’ murder on the Jewish leaders who prefer the insurrectionist Barabbas instead of Jesus the one whom even Pilate appears to acknowledge as ‘the King of the Jews’<sup>202</sup>. Mark categorically states that it is the Jewish leadership and the crowd under the spell of their corrupt leaders are responsible for the verdict (15:12-4). The Roman prefect is as though left without an option but to relent to the popular outcry (*Σταύρωσον αὐτόν*) and release Barabbas and hand Jesus over to be crucified (15:15). Thus although portrayed as a strong political manipulator throughout this scene, Mark’s Roman is clearly not as hostile towards Jesus as his compatriots and their leaders<sup>203</sup>.

In the trial scene it is not difficult to read Mark’s adhesion towards Rome. He wants to show that Pilate is an unwilling partner in the conviction of Jesus who repeatedly tries in vain to save Jesus. It is the native Jewish aristocracy plotting together with the Jerusalem crowd who twists his hands to convict Jesus. Mark through the Barabbas episode suggests that it is the combined elements of the native Jewish leaders and the Jerusalem crowd who hand in hand with the native nationalist

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<sup>201</sup> For a similar view see Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, p. 116. She finds Pilate a skilful politician who manipulates the crowd to avoid a potentially difficult situation and safeguard imperial interest more than anything else (p. 117).

<sup>202</sup> Nineham, *Saint Mark*, p. 413.

<sup>203</sup> Helen Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, p. 116.

elements constitute an anti-Roman force in which Jesus or his community has no part. Here Mark echoes a response akin to that of Josephus towards Rome<sup>204</sup>.

However, Mark does not free Pilate entirely from blame. By heeding the cry of the crowd and their leaders' manipulation Pilate is shown to be responsible for the execution of Jesus. Mark reveals this in a cryptic manner. Though Pilate is the imperial governor he succumbs to popular outcry and prefers a crucifixion in order to safeguard the imperial interest rather than preserve a colonial subject who in his sight committed no evil at all (15:14a). Here he exhibits either a colonial political ploy or his own powerlessness. In the historical context of Jesus' trial the former appears to be a probability<sup>205</sup> but Mark for his own and for the sake of his audience seems to suggest the latter. Again, by offering the release of Jesus or Barabbas Pilate appears to give the Jewish crowd and its leaders an opportunity to ask the release of a native insurrectionist instead of the one who taught his people to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. By releasing Barabbas, he collaborates ironically with the native Jewish leaders and the nationalist elements in eliminating Jesus. Thus Mark appears to indict Rome and expose the idiotic act of her governor.

Mark portrays Jesus as 'the King of the Jews' at the nerve centre (the praetorium 15:16) of the Roman colonial authority in the colonial province of Judea. Since the time Jesus is brought bound into the Roman court he is repeatedly addressed as 'the King of the Jews' by the colonial governor. Paradoxical as it may sound, this is the Markan way of introducing a symbol that challenges the Roman colonial power in Palestine within the Roman court. The presence of Jesus in the court disturbs the court not only because of the charges brought against him but also because of the ambiguous answer and silence of Jesus in the midst of which Pilate appears (or pretends) to be totally helpless. He wants release but has to execute Jesus not only because of the popular outcry but also because, in the perception of the Markan audience, it is something that is necessary, written and predicted (8:31; 9:12; 10:33f).

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<sup>204</sup> See our reading of Josephus in Chapter 4. Also see F. Millar, "Reflections on the Trial of Jesus" in *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History*, (eds.), P.R. Davies and R.T. White, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990, pp. 355-381

<sup>205</sup> According to Rivkin, by giving the crowd a choice between the release of a revolutionary and the one who apparently made claims to be 'the King of the Jews' Pilate covertly compelled the crowd to choose the less dangerous figure, Ellis Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus?*, p. 66.



Pilate has no choice but to fulfill the divine obligation! Instead of being a colonial agent he is a partner in executing a divine plan (cf. I Cor.2:8).

#### 7.4.4.4 The Colonial Cohort and Crucifixion

The Roman soldiers bring Jesus to the courtyard of the prefect's praetorium and the whole company (cohort) gathers to conduct a mock ceremony prior to their climactic act of crucifixion. They clothe Jesus in a purple cloak and crown him with a crown of thorns. Then they give mock salute and ridicule him saying 'Hail, King of the Jews!' (15:18). They strike his head with a reed and spit on him. After mocking they strip off the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him and lead him to crucify him (15:16-20).

On the way they compel a passer-by who is coming from the country side, one Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry the cross (15:21). They bring Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull) where they crucify him (15:24) along with two other bandits. The charge against him reads 'The King of the Jews' (15:26). As he is hanging on the cross the passers-by deride Jesus saying "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" (15:30). Similarly, the chief priests along with the scribes also mock him saying "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe" (15:32). The bandits who are crucified with him also taunt him.

Mark's portrayal of the colonial cohort and the crucifixion scene reveals yet again his ambivalence toward Rome. On the one hand he shows the Roman soldiers' actions as typical of a colonial occupation army's response towards a native anti-colonial nationalist figure<sup>206</sup>. They treat Jesus contemptuously as a rebel claiming to be the native king who challenges Rome's imperial authority. Without a shadow of doubt Mark makes it clear that it is the Roman occupation army that executes Jesus (15:24a). On the other hand, Mark gives an impression that the Roman soldiers treat Jesus in a relatively sympathetic manner. In Mark Jesus does not carry his cross. Instead the soldiers compel a passerby to carry the cross on Jesus' behalf (cf. 8:34).

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<sup>206</sup> On crucifixion as a form of execution and as the supreme Roman penalty see Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion*, trans., J. Bowden, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977, pp. 22-38,

The actual crucifixion scene too is narrated in the barest minimum of detail in order to avoid a horror scene. The soldiers offer Jesus some sort of a pain relief prior to crucifixion so that he may take it and die without much pain. Mark tells that the soldiers conduct the crucifixion pretty quickly (15:24a). After crucifying and inscribing the charge against him they remain respectfully silent (as though in preparation for the centurion to comment later on that Jesus is a 'son of God' 15:39) whereas those who pass by and the chief priests, the scribes and the two nationalist rebels who are crucified with him revel in ridiculing him (15:29-32). The stature of Jesus amidst all this too is shown in a rather dignified manner. He remains silent through and through. He does not carry the cross and he is referred always as the King of the Jews (15:26). Though this is irony, as far as the audience is concerned, it is the true identity of Jesus<sup>207</sup>.

#### 7.4.4.5 The Death of Jesus on the Colonial Cross

Mark relates the death of Jesus in dramatic terms saying that when it is noon a darkness falls over the whole land (cf. 13:24) lasting until three o'clock when Jesus cries with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34). Those who hear him misunderstand him thinking that he is calling Elijah. They presume that Elijah may come and rescue him. But the readers know quite well that this will not happen for Elijah had already come and died (9:13). Then Jesus cries out in a loud voice and breaths his last (*ἐξέπνευσε* 15:37). As soon as he dies the narrator transports his audience from the place of the Skull to the temple to witness the curtain inside it being torn apart from top to bottom (15:38) and he immediately brings them back to the place of the Skull to hear the Roman centurion saying "Truly this man was God's Son!" (15:39). This sounds as though the death of Jesus has rhetorically caused a rupture both within the native Jewish religio-political institution and in the Roman imperial power base<sup>208</sup>.

The moment of Jesus' death is again portrayed as a disruptive time because there occurs a darkness over the whole land from noon to three o'clock in the

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46-85. Also see Winter on the Roman death penalty on rebellious slaves and seditious provincials in *On the Trial*, pp. 90-96.

<sup>207</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, pp. 99, 282.



afternoon (15:33). The loud lament of Jesus on the cross also causes commotion among the bystanders (15:35-6). They anxiously await expecting to see something dramatic but fail miserably. But Mark allows his audience (as we mentioned earlier) to see and hear two dramatic events as the direct result of Jesus' lament and death on the cross. The first relates to the disruption in the temple. The rending of the temple curtain is symbolic of the disruption of the temple and the facilitation of the a new transcultural community in its place. In the words of Hooker, the rending of the curtain for Mark may well have a positive as well as a negative interpretation. With Jesus' death the temple is disturbed, but at the same time others are brought into the community of God's people. The centurion's words are understood by Mark to be a response to the death of Jesus. For Mark it is this Roman soldier who gives to Jesus the title which hitherto has been spoken only by the heavenly voice or by the unclean spirits. The centurion thus in some strange and ironic manner acts as the representative of those (including the author, the narrator and perhaps the audience) who acknowledge Jesus as God's *huios*<sup>209</sup>.

#### 7.4.4.6 The Burial and Resurrection

In the evening a certain Jewish leader, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who like Jesus and his community has been waiting for the kingdom of God, goes for permission from Pilate to take the body of Jesus for burial (15:42). This seems to be a dramatic turn of events as though Mark wants to strike a positive chord with certain sympathetic elements within the Jewish official establishment before the story ends. Similarly he seems to create yet another link with the Roman establishment as he presents Pilate once again for the last time in a positive posture. When Joseph approaches Pilate for the body of Jesus the prefect's response is quick and positive. He learns from the centurion that Jesus is dead and hence grants the body to Joseph for a decent burial. Having got the body Joseph wraps it in the linen cloth and lays it in a tomb that is hewn out of rock. This portrayal of a native Jewish Councillor and the Roman prefect shows the postcolonial ambivalence and boundary crossing strategy of Mark. Though the Jewish Council and the Roman

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<sup>208</sup> For a similar view see John Pobee, "The Cry of the Centurion- A Cry of Defeat" in *The Trial of Jesus*, E. Bammel, (ed.), pp. 91-102. For the ambiguity of this saying see Fowler, *Let the Reader*, pp. 202-208.

<sup>209</sup> Hooker, *The Gospel*, p. 378.

authorities are responsible for the execution of Jesus Mark in some measure wants an affinity with these two representative elements of those agencies.

Similarly Mark portrays the women in a positive manner as they persistently follow Jesus from Galilee and prove to be better than the fearful male disciples of Jesus. They follow Jesus until Golgotha and watch the commotion there rather silently from a distance (15:40-41) and also perhaps watch what Joseph has done and the venue where the body of Jesus is buried (5:47). Like all other Jews they too rest on the Sabbath but as soon as it is over some of them (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome) bring spices to the tomb so that they may anoint the body of Jesus. They come to the tomb wondering who will roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb for them. But when they arrive at the tomb they find that the stone has already been rolled back. And as they enter the tomb they see a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side. Seeing this they are alarmed but the young man tells them not to be so. He then reveals to them the news that Jesus who is crucified is raised (*ἠγέρθη*) and therefore they need to go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of them to Galilee where they will see him again just as he had told them. Having heard this the women went out of the tomb afraid and amazed and as they flee they say nothing to anyone for the author says “they were afraid” (16:8). The audience by seeing this sight of women fleeing without speaking to anyone in an apparent failure of discipleship may perhaps be moved to respond in a positive manner<sup>210</sup> by returning to the beginning of the story in Galilee<sup>211</sup>. Thus the risen but absent Jesus facilitates for the audience a re-play of the *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ]*<sup>212</sup>.

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<sup>210</sup> Tolbert, *Sowing*, p. 297. She says: “By involving the audience in the narrative time of Jesus’ life and death, by aligning their evaluative perspective with that of the narrator and Jesus, by permitting them to share superior knowledge from the beginning of who Jesus was and what he was in the world to do, Mark has created in the role of the authorial audience the perfect disciple”. For the irony of this scene see A. Lincoln, “The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7-8”, *JBL* 108, 1989, pp. 283-300.

<sup>211</sup> Malbon, “Echoes and Foreshadowings in Mark 4-8: Reading and Rereading” in *JBL* 112:2, 1993, p. 229 (211-230). She suggests that the unresolved Marcan ending returns the reader to the beginning—where the reader is reminded that it is all a beginning. The whole Gospel is an echo of the good news, and its end is still the beginning of the Gospel because the good news is still echoing.

<sup>212</sup> A.Y. Collins, *The Beginning*, p. 137. She thinks that it is appropriate to see this ending as deliberately provocative and open-ended. “It lures the reader to reflect on the events narrated and on one’s own relation to those events”. Also see Myers, *Binding*, pp. 397-



## Conclusion

1. *Mark's portrait of Jesus is a colonial/ postcolonial conundrum.* Our task in this chapter has been to unlock the portrayal of *huios*-Jesus in the discursive landscape of Mark. In this attempt our basic premise has been to consider Mark as a discourse, in fact a postcolonial discourse, that reflects the socio-cultural and religio-political concerns of a minority community under subjection and surveillance which longs for a strategic space in between the Roman colonial and the relatively dominant Jewish and perhaps even certain 'Christian' discourses of power through a portraiture of the *huios*-Jesus. In this portrait Mark leaves us with an indeterminate, fluid picture of *huios*-Jesus that detains and disturbs us from perceiving either a monolithic colonialist or an anti- or pro-colonial perspective of the protagonist. Hence we may possibly say that the portrait of *huios*-Jesus in Mark is a complex colonial/ postcolonial one which can appropriately be expressed in terms of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity, i.e., a picture that accommodates and disrupts both the author's relatively dominant native Jewish culture, traditions and discourses and the alien Roman colonialist culture and discourses of power. Similarly the community that pre-texts this portrait is seen to be prevented from affiliating with either an anti- or a pro-colonial mode. The conundrumic portrait of Jesus seems to constantly disturb the new community from becoming a static or one-sided pro- or anti-colonial community. Instead its challenge is to *be* a postcolonial community.

2. *The conundrum of huios-Jesus may best be seen in his conundrumic Son of Humanity posture.* The conundrumic portrayal of Jesus as an authoritative and suffering figure is illumined via the figure of the Son of Humanity. We learn from our analysis on the biblical and postbiblical discourses that the Son of Humanity is an anomalous divine-human agent who appears in the contexts of colonialism whenever the elect of Israel are in serious trouble. He represents and acts mainly in the heavenly realms for and on behalf of the suffering elect/ pure of Israel. His identity is one that

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409, Maria G. Victorino, "Mark's Open Ending and Following Jesus on the Way: An Autobiographical Interpretation of the Gospel of Mark" in *The Personal Voice in Biblical Interpretation*, (ed.), Ingrid R. Kitzberger, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 55 (53-64). For a study on the ending of Mark see Lee J. Magness, *Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the ending of Mark's Gospel*, Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986.

distinguishes him from the beast-like colonial powers (Hellenistic or Roman) and his task is essentially anti-colonial to liberate solely the puritans of Israel. Thus the Son of Humanity figure in biblical and postbiblical discourses is an anti-colonial native essentialist figure. Mark's *huios*-Jesus adopts and uses this image sporadically but unlike the biblical and postbiblical Son of Humanity figures who come only for the racially and ritually pure of Israel the Markan Son of Humanity comes and constitutes a transcultural community which he promises to gather eventually from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens. To achieve this task the Markan Son of Humanity appears in the Markan discursive landscape as the stronger one, the Son of Humanity of authority, the suffering-rising and the powerful and glorious coming Son of Humanity.

### 3. *The Son of Humanity: A convenient camouflage?*

After the initial portrayal of Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God (1:1) and the Stronger (1:7) Son (1:11) Mark continues to construct Jesus as a figure of authority in vision and expression. His movements and actions assert the right to conceive a realm in his own terms. His recruitment drive beside the sea or the sudden entry and teaching in the synagogues testify the form of an occupying authority. In his exhibition of authoritative postures Jesus appears to repeat what he dispels. However, this element of approximation is inevitable in any colonial/ postcolonial discursive portrayal of the protagonists for the template on which such discourses operate is colonial in nature.

The authority which Jesus exercises is a mimetic one, an imitation that has the appearance of the dominant 'self'. His strategy is assimilation i.e., subversion by imitation. In a postcolonial context, in order to disavow dominant colonial myths and representations, the colonized act out a repetition, a 'slavish' copying<sup>213</sup> "*almost the same, but not quite*"<sup>214</sup>. But success lies in camouflage and subterfuge. The image of the Son of Humanity provides an adequate avenue for such a camouflage.

The Son of Humanity as far as the Romans are concerned signifies nothing. If it signifies a human or a divine-human figure it means little in their *imperium*. It is from this status of non-entity that the colonised often break into the trope of the

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<sup>213</sup> Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial*, p. 171.



colonists. For the Jews, the 'Son of Humanity' is a variegated figure camouflaged at times as a human and at other times as a 'crossover' figure exercising divine power and authority to defeat and destroy the colonial powers in the heavenly realms. The Jewish nationalists/ nativists and colonial collaborators are probably familiar with this puzzling figure. For them it can either be a circuitous reference to the one who speaks or to another person (that man) or to 'any man'. It can also mean to an anomalous divine-human hybrid being who operates in the heavenlies for and on behalf of the racially and ritually pure of Israel in their hidden transcripts of visions and dreams. In Jewish circles it is used plainly or figuratively for camouflage<sup>215</sup>. "The original purpose of the circumlocution is to provide a *double entente*"<sup>216</sup>. Perhaps because of this potential for variegated references, confederation and camouflage and anti-colonial rhetoric it is used by certain segments of Jews (Daniel, the *Similitudes* and *4 Ezra*) in the contexts of their Hellenistic and Roman colonial subjection. The anti-colonial visionaries among the subjected Jews envisage that the beast-like, epiphanied imperial monarchs are no match to the camouflaged heavenly human-like figure and the earthly saints whom he represents in the heavenlies. Therefore, it seems probable that the epithet, because of its connotation of ordinary humanity and its associations with the heavenly figure is used by Mark to explicate the meaning and function of his hero<sup>217</sup>.

**4. *The authority and dunamis of huios-Jesus/ Son of Humanity can be an imitation-with-a-difference instead of a mere mimicry of imperial power and authority.*** Mark obviously shows Jesus as a figure of great power (*ὁ ἰσχυρότερός*) which he expresses via acts of ritual aggression, his commanding vision and speech, his travel with or without any hindrance in the northern terrain on this and the other side of the sea up to Caesarea Philippi, and from there in his travel to Jerusalem, to the temple and the surrounding locations until his arrest in the night by a covert operation

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<sup>214</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 86.

<sup>215</sup> For a few examples of its use in biblical and post-biblical Judaism see Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, pp. 160-191. He says: "when it is employed as a circumlocution, it sometimes relates to the first person singular, and sometimes to the second: 'that man' can be 'I' or 'you'". p. 163.

<sup>216</sup> Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 165.

<sup>217</sup> A.Y. Collins says: "Because of its connotation of ordinary humanity and its associations with the heavenly figure of Daniel 7, the epithet was well suited to the Markan project of reinterpreting the meaning and function of the Messiah." *The Beginning*, p. 64.

by the temple authorities. His authority is made clear via his proclamation of an imperial-like edict (1:14f) and by means of his status as the Son of Humanity. This may possibly be seen as an approximation of the colonial rhetoric of power.

However, the authority of Jesus as the Son of Humanity is clearly exhibited in liberating the alienated elements in society such as the demon possessed and the socio-religious outcasts. It also disturbed the native Jewish religio-political institutions even while accommodating them to a certain extent. Thus though Jesus' authority may be seen as an imitation, it is an imitation-with-a-difference. It is exercised to liberate and set free those who are in religious and social bondage and also disturbed the institutions and discourses that are domineering and oppressive. The authority of Jesus disturbs the Jewish nativism and racial essentialism. One would think that in a colonial context this would align Jesus as a friend and ally of the Roman colonists. But ironically the Markan Jesus seems equally disturbing to the Roman colonists and suffers colonial execution at their hands which makes him a postcolonial figure rather than an anti- or pro-colonial figure. The Markan Jesus mimics but not without a difference. His camouflage as the Son of Humanity of authority causes menace both to the native religio-political and to the Roman colonial discourses of power.

*5. The portrait of suffering of huioi-Jesus/ Son of Humanity in Mark can be seen as a postcolonial discursive strategy that creates a strategic space for the transcultural community in-between the relatively dominant native Jewish and the Roman colonial discourses.* There have been conflicting suggestions that the suffering particularly the salvific suffering motif in Mark is a pro-colonial apologetic (Brandon, Belo) or an anti-colonial resistance (Horsley, Myers) strategy. According to the former view Mark presents the suffering of Jesus as a divine salvific act with an apologetic intent to appease his Roman audience. It is an indirect way of saying that Jesus, though executed by the colonial Romans, has in fact died according to the plan the foreknowledge of God. Belo describes this as a 'postpaschal discourse'<sup>218</sup> designed to evaporate the messianic, Zealotic anti-colonial elements of Jesus. According to the latter view, the suffering and cross of Jesus in Mark are symbols of

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<sup>218</sup> Belo, *A Materialist*, pp. 155-161, 241-297.



anti-colonial rhetoric against Roman domination<sup>219</sup>. Each of these two contrasting views carves a certain shape out of the conundrumic Markan portrait of Jesus in accordance with their own taste. The very fact that one can construct such contrasting portraits out of Mark suggests that the portrait of Jesus in Mark is much more complex, i.e., the Markan portrait of Jesus is both pro- and anti-colonial in nature. This complex conundrumic portrait may well be referred to as a postcolonial portrait.

Mark relates the suffering of Jesus as the suffering of the Son of Humanity. By invoking the title Son of Humanity and using it for Jesus, Mark affiliates the portrait of Jesus with the Son of Humanity figure of biblical and postbiblical Judaism. But we have seen that this figure in Judaism epitomizes an anti-colonial nationalist essentialist agenda which Mark does not invoke fully. By attributing suffering and death to Jesus as the Son of Humanity Mark attributes a rather new trajectory to this image which potentially disturbs the anti-colonial nationalistic image of this figure in Jewish apocalypticism. For Mark, the Son of Humanity suffers at first at the hands of the Jewish leaders and thus he implicates the native Jewish leadership for the suffering of Jesus.

Similarly, by attributing a divine inevitability to the suffering of Jesus and by explicating its salvific nature (ransom for many and blood of the covenant) Mark disrupts the redemptive significance of the existing covenant and sacrifice, its priestly institution, agents and temple rites. Redemptive ransom and the new community's covenant are thus directly connected to the suffering and death of Jesus the Son of Humanity. Such a discursive rhetoric affiliates and at the same time disrupts or in certain measure ruptures, the new transcultural community from its native Jewish religious roots. Mark by mimicking the salvific symbolism (ransom and covenant) of the native Jewish religious beliefs and by relating it to the suffering and death of Jesus makes an imitation-with-a-difference. In a way he accommodates and disrupts the relevance of native Jewish religious beliefs as far as the transcultural new community of Jesus is concerned. The native Jewish leadership by participating in the execution of Jesus make themselves and their religious institutions redundant. The divine inevitability of the suffering of Jesus as the Son of Humanity may also imply that it is not via Roman *imperium* that *pax* and *salus* come to humanity. The final showdown is

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<sup>219</sup> Myers' critique of Belo see *Binding*, pp. 469-472.

in the coming of the Son of Humanity who will gather the suffering righteous followers of Jesus from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens with an inevitable consequence of rupturing the reign of Rome.

The transcultural community too is defined not by its mimetic tyrannical *imperium* but by its call and involvement in suffering servanthood. Here we find yet again a postcolonial dynamic of the suffering motif. The transcultural community is an inclusive community and its model in the world is the suffering Son of Humanity. The leaders of this community cannot operate as rulers and tyrants (“it is not so among you” 10:43a) but as servants (“whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Humanity came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many”, 10: 43b-45). It is to this community and to reinstate such a community that the cloud-borne Son of Humanity comes. Thus Mark makes it pretty difficult for the transcultural community to invoke or mimic an imperial agenda.

**6. *The portrayal of Jesus in relation to the native Jewish leaders and institutions needs to be treated as strategically essentialist.*** It has been suggested (e.g., Cook and Brandon) that Mark portrays the Jewish leaders negatively with a view to appeasing Rome. There may apparently be a certain element of truth in this suggestion. But our analysis has also shown that the Markan Jesus affiliates often to the native Jewish institutions and discourses not to repeat or reinstate those but to disturb them. His strategy is not to invoke native Jewish nationalism or essentialism but to remain strategically an essentialist and a transcultural hybrid by affiliating and at the same time disrupting and at times also rupturing the native Jewish institutions, traditions and systems of power. The story reveals that all the Jewish leaders are not portrayed negatively. We see Joseph of Arimathea appearing in a positive light as he collaborates with the Roman prefect to give a decent burial to Jesus’ cadaver.

**7. *The portrayal of Jesus in relation to the Roman authorities may also be treated in terms of postcolonial ambivalence and transcultural hybridity.*** It may appear that Pilate, the colonial prefect, relates to Jesus in a positive manner and it is also possible that Mark wants the Roman authorities to be seen in a positive light. However, as we have seen in our reading, Mark does not eliminate the Roman involvement in the execution of Jesus and in this respect he casts the blame also on



the Roman colonial authorities. The Roman prefect ironically accepts Jesus as the king of the Jews and wants to release him but at the same time ridicules and gives him over for execution. So too the Roman centurion who crucifies Jesus and watches over his lament and painful death 'confesses' the crucified Galilean to be a son of God. Thus we find in Mark an ambivalent affiliative-disruptive portrait of the Roman colonial authorities.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

This thesis reads Mark's story of Jesus from a postcolonial perspective. It is based on an assumption that Mark, despite being set in writing at the level of an individual, encodes also the complex experiences of a subject community in the first century CE which lived in a trope between the *imperium* of Rome and a certain segment or segments of the native Jewish elite collaborators and zealous nationalist fighters. It is argued that this encoded Markan story of Jesus is neither an exclusively pro- nor an anti-colonial discourse. Instead it may be treated as a postcolonial (affiliative-disruptive) discourse.

In this thesis I maintain that 'post' in postcolonialism needs to be understood both as a spatial category, i.e., a cultural discursive space in between the colonists and the colonised, and as a critical discursive strategy for analyzing the discourses that emanate from the colonised and dominated subjects of a colonial or post-colonial context. This facilitates a transhistorical view of colonial histories and stretches postcolonial studies to engage discourses that emanate from colonial antiquity including the biblical and postbiblical discourses. I define postcolonial criticism as a critical scrutiny of the discursive relationship between the colonists and the colonised reflected often in the creative discourses and other artistic and cultural creations of a colonised subject community which live in an interstitial space either during or after its colonial ordeal.

The **first chapter** in this thesis briefly describes the origin of postcolonialism as a field of study in literary and cultural studies and its theoretical roots in the diverse discursive landscape of classical and revisionist cultural materialism and different postmodern discourse analyses. In this chapter I suggest that heterogeneity (conflicting voices) in postcolonial studies appears to be inevitable not only because of the diffusion of its theoretical roots but also because of the diverse socio-political and cultural locations and identities of its practitioners and the discourses they critically read from a postcolonial perspective. The four models discussed and analyzed in this chapter recognize the inevitability of such multiple identities and conflicting voices in postcolonial literary and cultural as well as in biblical studies. Out of these four



models my preference obviously is for the fourth model which I prefer to call a ‘strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity model’ for I find it well placed to engage the ambivalent consensual-conflictual dynamic and the affiliative alterity of the discourses that emanate from the colonial contexts and from among the colonised subject communities, whether ancient or modern. I find that postcolonial discourses manifest an ambivalent accommodative and disruptive dynamic toward both the native and the alien colonial discourses of power.

In the first half of **Chapter 2**, I elaborate the key theoretical concepts—postcolonial mimicry, ambivalence and hybridity—of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity of the discourses that emanate from the colonial or postcolonial interstitial spaces. They show that the discourses emanating from colonised and dominated subjects can seldom be described in a monolithic way as pro- or anti-colonial discourses. Instead they are ambivalent discourses because of being hybridized in an interstitial space between the colonists and the colonised by postcolonial cultural hybrid subjects.

It is also maintained that there is a need to take into account the specificities of locale of both the discourse under scrutiny and also the critic who engages in postcolonial discourse analysis. This thesis is written under an assumption that one can talk about colonialism and postcolonialism as universal or transhistorical concepts only by means of specific manifestations in particular times and places and it is only in those particular discourses, grounded in particular discourses and their contexts, that strategic postcolonial moves can take place<sup>1</sup>.

Because of this emphasis on the social locations of both the critic and the particular discourse (Mark) under consideration I have devoted, firstly, the second half of Chapter 2 to describing (I hope creatively) my own socio-cultural location in India via two postcolonial creative discourses, one from my own specific locale in Kerala in south India and the other from the north Indian context; and secondly, the next two chapters (**Chapters 3 and 4**) to describing the colonial and discursive contexts of the Roman-Greco-Jewish world from the second century BCE to the latter half of the first century CE, a world from which the story of Jesus according to Mark is believed to have emanated toward the latter half of the first century CE. In these two chapters a

number of Greek and Jewish creative, historical and apocalyptic discourses are analyzed from a postcolonial point of view. I have shown that they are most probably postcolonial discourses of the Greek and Jewish communities who lived under the *imperium* of Rome and responded to her imperialism and colonialism. It is shown that while engaging in such discursive responses these communities had shown mimetic, ambivalent and hybrid characteristics which may best be described in terms of strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity. These responses may be seen as ambivalent adhesion and abrogation, desire and derision towards both their own native and the alien discourses of power. They are complex, ambiguous and incongruous responses which can probably be explained as postcolonial rather than pro- or anti-colonial responses.

Reading *Chaereas and Callirhoe* from a postcolonial perspective in **Chapter 3** has shown to a large extent the complex relationship between the colonised and the colonists in the colonial context of first century CE in the Greek east. This reading shows that a discourse that emanates from a certain colonised ‘elite other’ in the Greek east need not necessarily be seen either as an affiliative or an antagonistic discourse instead it can be seen as an ambivalent affiliative-disruptive response towards both its own native Greek and the Roman colonial discourses of power. This conclusion derived from reading Chariton is suggestive of a strategy which Mark, a near contemporary, too may well have adopted towards Rome and his own native religio-cultural traditions.

In **Chapter 4** I further attempt to show that the responses of a number of Greek and Jewish discourses toward Rome’s *imperium* and imperial colonialism in the Greek and Jewish east (from Polybius to Plutarch and *I Maccabees* to Josephus) appear to be not far too different from Chariton. In this chapter I argue that the diplomatic and military motives of Rome from the middle Republic onwards had been imperialistic in nature to establishing her military and political dominion in the east. Most of the Greek and Jewish writers who lived under the *imperium* of Rome appear to show an ambivalent affiliative-disruptive response not only towards Rome but also towards their own cultures and traditions. In light of this, I argue that Mark too probably because of its origin from such a world and similar discursive framework

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Gallagher, “Mapping...”, pp. 232f.



may not necessarily have adopted a different course of action towards both Rome and its own native religio-cultural traditions of power.

**Chapter 5** offers a critical survey of the different models of postcolonial reading vogue in Markan studies. In this chapter I find that each of these models appears to adopt a monolithic view point by either praising Mark as resistant nationalistic discourse or damning it as a collaborative colonialist discourse. This to some extent reveals that traces of native nationalistic resistance as well as colonial collaboration are present in Mark and critics tend to pick and choose one or the other as they prefer to suit their own agenda. The very fact that Mark retains elements of both native nationalism and colonial collaboration tells me that it may plausibly be an ambivalent postcolonial discourse receptive as well as rupturous to both its own native and alien discourses of power, a characteristic akin not only to many contemporary Greek and Jewish writings that emanated under the *imperium* of Rome but also to most of the postcolonial creative writings of the colonised and dominated 'others' of our own time. I therefore argue that the use of monolithic models perhaps may fail to portray sufficiently the complex postcolonial nature of Mark. Hence I advocate a model, which I prefer to call 'strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity', which is sufficiently equipped to illuminate the conundrumic consensual-conflictual, affiliative-disruptive dynamic of Mark's story of Jesus.

In **Chapter 6** I argue that Mark designs the beginning of the story of Jesus (1:1-11) as an affiliative-disruptive response both to Rome and to a number of native Jewish discourses and their perceptions of either native racist-religious nationalism or religio-political collaborationism. I argue that the superscription of Mark (1:1) is an 'intentional hybrid' construction. In light of the diverse socio-linguistic consciousness and cultural codes and categories current at the time it can possibly be read as an '*imperium* of the good news of victory of Jesus messiah, son of God' or as the historical (or divine) 'advent of the good news of Jesus messiah, son of God'. In the former case it tends to adhere to and abrogate the discourses of power current in the Roman imperial cult and in the latter case it can potentially accommodate and disrupt the earlier or existing initiatives of God via various manifest and imaginative messiahs and messianic discourses. Therefore, I argue that the superscription of Mark may best be understood in terms of the strategic essentialism and transcultural hybridity of

Mark who accommodates and disrupts both the native Jewish and the Roman colonial codes, cultural categories, discourses and their perceptions of power.

In the second part of Chapter 6 I discuss the possibility of describing the midrashic strategy of Mark 1:2-8 and 9-11 as a postcolonial strategy of appropriating and disrupting the midrashim current in Jewish discursive quarters. I argue that the Markan midrashic creation of a conflated 'Isaiah' is to present John the Baptist as a prophetic *angelos* of God who can easily be attached to and detached from Jesus. John is a prelude to Jesus in life and death but he is not a *huios*-human hybrid. He is only a prophetic *angelos*. But Jesus, despite being affiliated to the Jewish discourses and cultural traditions via John the *angelos* of God, for Mark, is a distinct *huios*-human hybrid.

A midrash in the form of an 'heavenly midrash' is invoked to present Jesus as the *huios*-human hybrid. This has a potential to affiliate Jesus to the royal as well as the suffering son/ servant figure of biblical and postbiblical Judaism and at the same time to disrupt the perceptions concerning the royal son and the suffering son/ servant image in early Judaism. The *huios*-human hybridity attributed to Jesus in Mark appears to have a postcolonial anthropological dimension too for it is found that a people who have nothing to lose by exchange and everything to gain seem predisposed towards the hybrid being, wearing the conflicting signs, man/god, but a people whose experience of foreigners is disastrous will cherish perfect categories, reject exchange and refuse doctrines of mediation<sup>2</sup>. It is as though colonialism has reached such a state that it can be tackled only by means of an hybrid being who does not resort to either an exclusive essentialist (oppositional) or collaborative response but rather to a consensual-conflictual response which may potentially be subversive to the alien and transformative to the native discourses of power.

In addition to this dimension, it appears that the *huios*-human hybridity of Jesus facilitates Mark to portray Jesus as the Son of Humanity who wields authority and at the same time suffers subjection and death only to rise again and come in the clouds with great power and glory for an elect transcultural community gathered from 'this and the other side of the sea', a community which would effectively replace the alien colonists and the native nationalists and collaborators.



In **Chapter 7** I explore the colonial/ postcolonial conundrum of the Markan portrait of Jesus. I argued (following the lead from Simon Swain and Mark Edwards<sup>3</sup>) that this portrait, despite being set in writing at the level of an individual (Jesus), is also a portrait of a subject community that suffered surveillance and perhaps even subjection under the colonial Roman and the native Jewish nationalistic and collaborative discourses of power. In this portrait Mark strategically appropriates and abrogates both the Roman and the native Jewish discourses of power. He accommodates himself and his community via the conundrumic portrait of Jesus into an interstitial space (Bhabha's 'third space of enunciation'<sup>4</sup>) which provides a terrain for maintaining as well as elaborating strategies of self-hood, and a terrain of collaboration and contestation with both the native (nationalistic and collaborative) and the Roman colonial discourses of power. Mark, therefore, deserves the credit of being a postcolonial rather than a pro- or anti-colonial discourse of a subject community that lived in between the Roman and the native nationalistic and collaborative discourses of power.

A brief note on **the prospects and possible implications of this reading for other canonical Christian discourses** may also be in order here before I close. I suggest that the 'strategic essentialism and transcultural model' (or framework) experimented within reading the story of Jesus in Mark may also be applied to reading the other three stories of Jesus. I hope that such a reading may offer a corrective nuance to the polarizing anti-colonial readings proposed by Warren Carter on Matthew<sup>5</sup> and the 'Paul and Politics' Group on Paul<sup>6</sup> or the pro-colonial readings proposed by Musa Dube<sup>7</sup> and Van den Heever<sup>8</sup> on John.

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<sup>2</sup> Mary Douglas, *Implicit Meanings*, p. 307.

<sup>3</sup> See Simon Swain and Mark Edwards, (eds.), *Portraits*, pp. 1-37, 227-34.

<sup>4</sup> Bhabha, *The Location*, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Carter, "Pilate and Jesus (Matt 27: 11-26): Roman Justice Is All Washed Up", A paper presented at 2001 SBL Annual Meeting in a Consultation group on 'New Testament Studies and Postcolonial Studies' (S18-14).

<sup>6</sup> 2000 and 2001 SBL Annual Meetings' Groups on 'Paul and Politics'.

<sup>7</sup> Dube, "Reading for Decolonization (John 4: 1-42)", *Semeia* 75, 1998, pp. 37-60

<sup>8</sup> Gerhard Van den Heever, "John and the Imperial Persona: Divine Redeemers and the Conflict of Utopias", 2001 SBL Annual Meeting, (S19-60).

There are many excellent studies on the cultural politics of Paul such as the recent groundbreaking study entitled *Paul Beyond the Judaism/ Hellenism Divide*<sup>9</sup>. In my view, however, such studies need to engage with postcolonial issues relating to Roman colonialism and native Jewish religious traditions on the politics of culture of Paul and his audiences. I would suggest that Paul may best be portrayed as a postcolonial preacher-cum-writer whose politics of culture “beyond’ the Judaism/ Hellenism divide’ is affiliative and disruptive to both his own native Jewish and the Roman colonial (let alone the Hellenistic cultural) discursive landscapes<sup>10</sup>.

Again, the postcolonial model experimented within this thesis for reading the postclassical novel, Chariton’s *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, is worth pursuing to offer a similar reading on Acts of the Apostles. Themes like travel in the imperial terrain, surveillance by imperial agents on colonial subjects, court trials, dangers at sea and on land and the ever present protection of patron deities, the overlapping and intertwining of colonial and peripheral spaces, etc., are similar in both discourses. I perceive that such a reading may enlarge and enrich the earlier related readings of Acts by Pervo<sup>11</sup>, Robbins<sup>12</sup>, Alexander<sup>13</sup>, and Edwards<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen (ed.), *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, Louisville: WJK Press, 2001. Philip Alexander’s “Hellenism and Hellenization as Problematic Historiographical Categories” points toward this direction. See p. 79 (pp. 63-80).

<sup>10</sup> Such a reading will also challenge Yak-Hwee Tan’s pro-colonial reading of Paul in her “Paul, the Colonial Master, in Light of His ‘Colonized’ Christian Community at Corinth, as Represented in 1 Corinthians 12”, 2001 SBL Annual Meeting (S18-14). I intend to do the next phase of my research on Paul’s affiliative-disruptive discursive strategy. I am looking forward to work on ‘Paul and the Politics of Culture: Reading Paul from Postcolonial Perspective’, a reading which will build on D. Boyarin’s *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*.

<sup>11</sup> Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

<sup>12</sup> See Robbins, “Luke-Acts: A Mixed Population Seeks a Home in the Roman Empire”, *Images of Empire*, (ed.), L. Alexander, pp. 202-221.

<sup>13</sup> L. Alexander, “Narrative Maps” (1995), “In Journeyings Often” (1995), “Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts” (1998).

<sup>14</sup> D. Edward, *Religion and Power*.



Perhaps the postcolonial reading model proposed in my thesis may face its gravest challenge in reading the book of Revelation where its hero appears in an imperial/ colonial colour as a 'colonial consul' or 'viceroy' of God. On the one hand, it can be argued that this portrayal is typical of a reverse, resistance writing of a subject community, repeating what it tries to dispel, but on the other it may also be treated as a discourse that approximates the imperial discourse not without a view to disrupt the *imperium* of Rome<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, the colonialistic, imperialistic postures of Jesus in this discourse appear to be too overwhelming or even rupturous to be confined in the remits of my model.

Similarly, I am aware, and I am reminded by Benny Liew and Mary Tolbert<sup>16</sup>, that there is a potential impasse or stasis that my reading model might create, i.e., my reading can linger in an endless cycle of 'either pro- or anti-colonial' interpretive debate. It can also be used by Christian apologists to defend the occurrences of imperialistic language and rhetoric in the Christian Testament. Postcolonial critics like Sugirtharajah and Benny Liew who conduct postcolonial criticism exclusively at an hermeneutical level in the context of modern European colonialisms in 'other' parts of the world may challenge my model for its inadequacy in engaging the 'revolting' or 'silent subaltern voices' in this Testament or for its goal of solely concentrating on the Roman colonial context for the purposes of reading the Gospel story in its original context instead of reading for today's audience. This challenge in my view comes understandably from the viewpoint of perceiving the Christian Testament as a colonialist discourse of which the western Christian colonists made 'good' (ab)use for colonizing 'other' peoples lands, discourses and cultures.

In my opinion what is perhaps crucial in a postcolonial reading of the canonical Christian discourses using my model is to be mindful of the dynamic and potential of these discourses to shift from being anti- or postcolonial discourses to become colonialist discourses in the hands of certain commentators, preachers, clergymen and Christians from dominant and dominating socio-political contexts who

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Philip Alexander, "The Family of Caesar and the Family of God: The Image of the Emperor in the Heikhalot Literature" *Images of Empire*, pp. 276-297.

<sup>16</sup> They were the respondents to my paper 'The Beginning of Mark: A Colonial/ Postcolonial Conundrum' read in a Consultation on 'New Testament Studies and Postcolonial Studies', 2001 SBL Annual Meeting (S18-14).

can use the rhetoric of dominance of these discourses to dominate and colonize 'others'.

In this thesis, my purpose has been to explore some of the central themes of postcolonial theory and their implications in biblical and postbiblical studies. In my reading of Mark's story of Jesus I hope I have at least endeavoured to apply them heuristically.



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