Demons and Politics

A Consideration of Jesus' Exorcisms in Mark

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and they shall spring up as among the grass,
as willows by the water course

This book is dedicated to
Grandmother
(1916-2001)

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PREFACE

This monograph analyses the topic of exorcism in the light of 1c. Jewish understandings of demon possession, politics, and magical practice. This analysis will be historical and consider such correspondences in the light of the following questions:

- whether Jesus was considered to be a magician,

- what might Jesus and his followers have believed about demons.

We are concerned with the question of the historical plausibility of the exorcism accounts. We approach this question by considering whether there are appropriate first century contexts of understanding reflected in the exorcism stories.

Using the Gospel of Mark as the primary data, it is recognized that exorcism stories are not just source material for historical questions, but set within a narrative framework. The book puts forward a socio-political reading of the exorcisms of Mark and argues that this is their primary intent. We argue that although contacts exist between Jewish theology and the exorcism stories, and the stories also illustrate correspondences with magical practice, these contexts are incidental to the politico-religious intent of the Gospel narrative.

The book is comprised of four main chapters. In the first chapter, we set out the methodological context for our study, our objectives, and our main argument. In Chapter Two, we consider whether and how first century magic might be appropriate for understanding the exorcism stories, and whether Jesus and his disciples believed in demons. In Chapter Three, we examine whether the exorcism stories were perceived to be politically significant by Jesus' contemporaries. In Chapter Four, we look at two of Mark's exorcism stories from a literary point of view and enquire whether they illustrate any symbology.

This monograph includes material on Mark's account of the healing of the Synagogue Man and the account of the Gaderene Demoniac from my *Demons, Magic and Medicine*. This latter book considers all demon related material in the New Testament. The difference between the two books, which are complementary, is that this study engages scholarship in a more extensive way.

Prefatory Note – 2010

The changes made for the 2010 edition reflect a desire to make it clear that we do not subscribe to the view that there was a now lost source underlying the synoptic gospels called Q. Opportunity was also taken to clean up the text as regards source-critical theories of the gospels. The first edition was a university masters' thesis and this second edition has now removed the some of the critical presumptions of that context.

Note on abbreviations:

Ant.	Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*
DBI	Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation (Ed., J. Coggins; London: SCM, 1990)
War.	Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*
JAAR	Journal of the American Academy of Religion
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
MT	Masoretic Text
LXX	Septuagint
NTS	New Testament Studies

CHAPTER ONE

Method

Various methods have been used in the history[1] of Markan studies. For example, Form Criticism has focused on identifying the oral units underlying Mark, the individual units of tradition, and constructing theory about their *Sitz im Leben*; Redaction Criticism has focused on the authorial work involved in the process of bringing units of tradition into a cohesive whole with theological intent; and Source Criticism has focused on identifying the source materials that have been used in the composition of Mark.[2]

Inherent in these methodologies is an engagement with the problem of identifying reliable historical detail about Jesus – with positing historical subject matter in contradistinction to the interpretative overlays of author, redactor and community. Further, these methods have been literary and canonical in the sense that they have concentrated on analysing the canonical Gospels. These methods have been popular at different times in the study of the Gospels and associated with scholarly endeavours known as "quests for the historical Jesus".[3]

G. Theissen and A. Merz, in their book, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, describe recent methodologies associated with a so-called "third quest"

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[1] For a review of the history of the interpretation of Mark see W. R. Telford, "Introduction" in *The Interpretation of Mark* (ed., W. R. Telford; London: SPCK, 1985).

[2] For definitions of these methodologies see J. Muddiman, "Form Criticism" in *DBI*, 240-243; C. M. Tuckett, "Redaction Criticism" and "Source Criticism" in *DBI,* 580-582, 646-648.

[3] That is, *source criticism* was the method that underpinned 19c. critics in their "quest" for the historical Jesus; *form criticism* was pioneered by scholars (like R. Bultmann) in the neo-orthodox dialectical theology school that emerged in the early 20c. as a reaction to 19c. scholarship; and *redaction criticism* was pioneered by scholars (such as E. Käsemann and G. Bornkamm), working in the mid 20c., reacting to the *a*-historical ideology of dialectical theology, and initiating what was termed the 'new quest for the historical Jesus'. In the history of ideas, the 19c. "quest for the historical Jesus" and the mid 20c. "new quest for the historical Jesus" constitute a first and second "quest" for the historical Jesus.

for the historical Jesus.[1] These methodologies differ from the stratigraphic methods associated with former "quests" in being more focussed on situating Jesus in his original Galilean milieu. Instead of a concern with the layers of textual tradition, (which characterized Form Criticism, Source Criticism, and Redaction Criticism), scholars identified with the "third quest", like Theissen, employ social-scientific methods, archaeological methods, and methods deployed in cultural anthropology, in a comparative exercise to determine an historical picture of Jesus.

In short, the third "quest" is not literary in focus; instead it is concerned with the *realia* of history.[2] This does not mean that the "third quest" has rejected the results of previous criticism – that there are layers in the text – on the contrary, scholars working within this approach readily attribute to later layers of tradition those details in the text that they consider to be not attributable to Jesus' life. It is rather that within this approach, scholars are focused on drawing a picture of Jesus, using stated criteria of historical plausibility, that justifies placing Jesus within a specific historical context.

Our study assumes (but does not endorse) the preferences of scholars working within the "third quest" for the historical Jesus, as our concern is with assessing the plausibility of two worked examples of exorcism in Mark's Gospel in relation to three key contexts: Jewish theology, magic, and politics.

In **Chapter Two** we consider Jesus' exorcisms in relation to Hellenistic culture, magic, Hippocratic medicine, and Jewish literature. This analysis will be historical and consider correspondences with contemporary primary sources in the light of the following question:

- Can Jesus be considered a magician? If so, did his contemporaries view him as such? Did he and his disciples believe in demons?

In restricting our enquiry to this narrow field of enquiry, it is important to note that we will leave many questions untouched – issues that have informed past work on the miracle traditions.[3] Our goal is to give an

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[1] G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 1-15.

[2] For an overview of recent research into the historical Jesus, and a review of key scholars identified with the so-called 'third quest', see D. S. Du Toit, "Redefining Jesus: Current Trends in Jesus Research", in *Jesus, Mark and Q: The Teaching of Jesus and its Earliest Records* (eds., M. Labahn and A. Schmidt; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 82-124.

[3] Thus, we are not interested in supplying "reductionist" explanations of the exorcisms in order to strip away the supernatural element; nor are we

assessment of the *evidential* value of the tradition that comprises the exorcism accounts. Our argument is that Jesus' exorcisms are plausibly described in Mark's Gospel given the available comparative evidence. We use this conclusion to substantiate a view about how Jesus was perceived by contemporaries.

If we accept as historically plausible, "facts" such as: Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist, preached and taught a socially relevant message, experienced opposition from Jewish leaders and was crucified by the Romans, then this engenders a political context into which historians can place Jesus. The argument here is that because Jesus was a public figure he was a *political* figure. If we take this as our premise, it becomes a legitimate enquiry to ask whether the exorcisms of Jesus have political significance.

If Jesus' exorcisms had political significance in the context of his public career, then this means they were seen as political either by Jesus, or his followers, or the various leadership groups at the time, or the people. In order to evaluate whether Jesus' exorcisms were seen by contemporaries as having a political dimension, we have to carry out two intricately related tasks, and these we do in Chapter Three and Chapter Four:

- Identify what in the tradition reflects Jesus' situation and carries political overtones.

- Identify whether the text betrays a political theology attributable to the author.

These two tasks imply a change in our methodology from Chapter Two, a shift from the more traditional historical method of comparing primary sources to social-scientific methods and, finally, more formal literary analysis. Again, we will adopt this method to see how far it will take us; we do not endorse it as a satisfactory and sufficient method.

In **Chapter Three**, our method is broadly social-scientific. Our argument will be that Jesus' exorcisms were perceived by his contemporaries as part of a socio-political "statement" about the kingdom of God. Our case will be that such a perception is likely on internal considerations (i.e. considerations

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exploring the existential significance of these accounts within any Bultmannian framework of "demythologization".

internal to Mark's record, and in the light of cross-cultural anthropological studies into demon possession.

In addition to what we might infer about the political perceptions of Jesus' contemporaries, we are interested in the theology of Mark.[1] Our argument in **Chapter Four** is that there is a symbolic overlay to the exorcism stories embedded in Mark. We attribute this interpretation to the author of Mark and ultimately the Spirit.[2] Mark presents to readers familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures a symbolic description of Jesus' exorcisms. Drawing out such a symbology is an exercise in intertextual criticism, and hence it would be fallacy to suppose that in the cut and thrust of the set-piece exorcisms the participants and observers were privy to such a "hidden" meaning. If those in Jesus' day saw him as a political agent, they perceived him as such on other more immediate grounds.

These then are our objectives in Chapters Three and Four:

(i) to show how the exorcisms reinforced a socio-political message by Jesus about the kingdom of God.

(ii) to give a symbolic reading of two set piece exorcisms from the Galilean ministry by showing how Mark echoes and/or alludes to the Hebrew Scriptures in his story narrative.

In summary, our thesis is about Jesus' exorcisms and their proper context of understanding. In Chapter Two, we are concerned with the appropriateness of theological and magical contexts; in Chapter Three, we consider the appropriateness of a socio-political context; in Chapter Four, we consider the Jewish scriptural significance of the exorcisms for the author of Mark. We argue that Mark's exorcism stories show points of contact with 1c. exorcism

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[1] Audiences and readerships constrain any theology displayed in the exorcism accounts; an author, redactors and communities create such theology.

[2] Depending on the methodological framework in which scholars are working, they may be inclined to attribute any political theology (or aspects thereof) to an author, a redactor, or the community that engendered the miracle traditions (e.g. the Markan community). We attribute the symbology to an author called Mark, however, it should be noted that our main concern is *just* to show that there is a political symbology in the text. For a defence of the view that the theology of Mark is largely attributable to an author see W. R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

and these give evidential weight to the stories as genuine recollection. We also argue that Jesus' exorcisms would have been seen by contemporaries as part of a political message about the kingdom of God. This political context also adds evidential weight to the stories as genuine recollection. However, we also argue that such points of contact are overshadowed by Mark's *scriptural* treatment of the exorcism stories. It is to this symbolic and religious overlay that Mark directs the attention of the (implied) reader. In this, we are putting forward an argument for the inspiration of Mark as part of Jewish Scripture: his gospel is integrated with the Hebrew Bible because he continues its story and uses its motifs.

CHAPTER TWO

Magic and Medicine

There is no consensus in ancient literature about the nature of demons or evil spirits. The early Jesus' traditions presuppose or assume an understanding of demons; the Gospel authors assume their readers[1] will readily understand the mention of demons.

Sources for understanding demons include Greco-Roman and Jewish literature before and after the time of Jesus, the Greek Magical Papyri (PGM), curse tablets, and amulets.[2] Curse tablets and magical amulets have been discovered from all over the Mediterranean world, dating both before and after our period. The magical papyri are dated later (3c. C.E. and onwards), but they reflect the earlier traditions embodied in the curse tablets and magical amulets. Further, we cannot ignore the wider Near East and its possible influence on thinking about demons in first century Palestine.[3] These various sources are often highly syncretistic; there was a significant cross-fertilisation of ideas about demons and gods in the Ancient World.

The differences in source material can be characterised in the following way: in philosophical and literary works, the references to demons are more likely to be discursive and theoretical, whereas in the magical texts, curse tablets and amulets, references to demons are essential to the practical use of these texts in everyday life. It is these latter types of text that are more relevant to the traditions about Jesus' exorcisms simply because they are set in everyday social contexts.

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[1] For an overview of issues relating to identifying the readers of the Gospels, see R. Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

[2] The magical texts have been published in, K. Preisendanz and A. Henrichs, eds., *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (2 vols; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973-4). The curse tablets have been published in J. G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992). The magical amulets have been published in E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols of the Greco-Roman Period* (13 vols; New York: Pantheon Press, 1953-64).

[3] For example, see the entry under "Demons and Monsters" in J. Black and A. Green, eds., *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: The British Museum Press, 1992).

Plutarch (c. 46 - c.120 C.E.) is the principal philosophical source for 1c. views on demons. His main writing on the subject, *Oracles in Decline*,[1] is a dialogue set in Delphi, discussing the question of why Oracles were less used than in previous generations. Plutarch's characters represent two views on demons – they are either intermediary to the gods and/or they are the souls of the departed dead.[2]

Plutarch's characters adduce information about demons from the religious rituals and mysteries of the day. Demons are required because the gods cannot directly participate in men's affairs. They are souls because they manifest the same behavioural characteristics as humans who are essentially "souls". Generally, they are the souls of the dead, however, some are souls that have never been united with human bodies and are therefore independent spirits—intermediate beings between the gods and men. Demons may be good or evil.[3] Plutarch represents views about demons derived from Plato,[4] who may be considered to have moulded the consensus view for the educated Hellenized classes.

These two views represent alternative understandings that Jesus and/or his disciples may have entertained.[5] However, there is no Gospel-based evidence that Jesus or the disciples subscribed to such Hellenistic views. It is more likely that the disciples derived their conceptions from the surrounding Jewish culture, including Jewish literature and Jewish Scripture. We should also bear in mind that Jesus may have entertained a different point of view to that of the disciples on this question because of his superior knowledge.

The main evidence for Jesus' view on demons is the pericopæ known as the "Beelzebub Controversy". In this controversy, Jesus is accused of being

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[1] See *Oracles in Decline,* 414-417, 431 in *Plutarch: Selected Essays and Dialogues*, (ed., D. Russell; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993).

[2] For a study on the extensive evidence showing the popularity of the "ghosts view" of demons, see P. G. Bolt, "Jesus, The Daimons and the Dead" in *The Unseen World* (ed., A. N. S. Lane; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996).

[3] Philo voices the same view, "But as men in general speak of good and evil demons, and in like manner of good and evil souls, so also do they speak of angels…", *On The Giants,* 16, in *The Works of Philo* (ed., C. D. Yonge; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993).

[4] See *Symposium* 202d-203, *Timaeus* 40d, *Cratylus* 397d-398b, *Republic*, 427b, 469a, 540c, and *Laws* 909b in *Plato: Complete Works* (ed., J. M. Cooper; New York: Hackett 1997). All subsequent quotations of Plato are from this edition.

[5] That the disciples may have believed in ghosts – see Matt 14:26, Luke 24:37 cf. Acts 23:8-9.

possessed by Beelzebub. This accusation is well attested in early tradition (Luke 11:14-18a, 19-20, 23;[1] Mark 3:19b-30), and the central charge may well have been made on more than one occasion (cf. Matt 9:32-34; 10:25; John 7:20; 8:48-52; 10:20-21). Likewise, Jesus' answers to the charge have multiple attestations (e.g. GThom 35 as well as Mark). This variety of independent evidence leads scholars to regard the Beelzebub Controversy as genuine.[2]

Mark's narrative comment on this controversy is that Jesus' opponents had accused him of having an unclean spirit (Mark 3:30) – and this suggests that Beelzebub was an unclean spirit – a demon. In a Jewish context, "Beelzebub",[3] the prince of demons (Mark 3:22), is another title for the leading demon in the Story of the Watchers (cf. Dan 4:17) – "Mastema" or "Satan" in *Jubilees* or Semyaz or Azaz'el[4] in *1 Enoch*. These texts develop a Midrash on Genesis 6 and offer an account of the origin of demons.[5]

In *1 Enoch*, the sons of God (fallen angels) marry the daughters of men and give birth to giants (*1 Enoch* 6:1-2, 7:1-2). These angels (led by Semyaz or Azaz'el) are imprisoned in the earth but the spirits of these giants are allowed to roam the earth:

> But now the giants who are born from the (union of) the spirits and the flesh shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, because their dwelling shall be upon the earth and inside the earth. Evil spirits

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[1] Many scholars hypothesize about a source called "Q" lying behind Matthew and Luke. For a popular introduction to the theory behind Q, which includes a reconstructed text of Q, see B. L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (Shaftsbury: Element, 1993). For a presentation of Q with critical apparatus and parallels with other gospels, see J. S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1988). We do not subscribe to the view that there was such a source.

[2] For a discussion see Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 298-299.

[3] The meaning of this title is disputed but we favour the view that it connotes "Baal, the Prince". This is suggested by archaeological discoveries at Ras Shamra (Ugarit), which have uncovered uses of the title *zbl. b'l* for Baal. See A. S. Kapelrud, *The Ras Shamra Discoveries and the Old Testament* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 33, 37; U. Oldenberg, *The Conflict Between El and Baal in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 82, n. 1; T. Jemielty, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets* (Louisville: WJK Press, 1992), 88.

[4] For a discussion of the names of the leading angel see, M. E. Mills, *Human Agents of Cosmic Power* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), ch. 5.

[5] Quotations from *1 Enoch* are from the translation in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1983-85).

have come out of their bodies.[1] Because from the day they were created from the holy ones they became Watchers; their first origin is the spiritual foundation. They shall become evil upon the earth and shall be called evil spirits. The dwelling of the spiritual beings of heaven is heaven; but the dwelling of the spirits of the earth, which are born upon the earth, is the earth. The spirits of the giants oppress each other; they will corrupt, fall, be excited, and fall upon the earth, and cause sorrow. They eat no food, nor become thirsty, nor find obstacles. And these spirits shall rise up against the children of the people and against the women, because they have proceeded from them. *1 Enoch* 15:8-12

They have defiled the people and will lead them into error so that they will offer sacrifices to the demons as unto gods, until the great day of judgement... *1 Enoch* 19:1

These spirits "which come from the flesh" will do their work until the consummation of the age.

This is only a brief and simple survey of the story of the Watchers. There are complex issues of interpretation raised by the text, which we have ignored. These do not affect our objective in considering *1 Enoch*, because we are just concerned with how the work accounts for the origin of demons.[2] *1 Enoch* provides a precise explanation of a) why there are evil spirits; b) why these beings are "spirit"; and c) why they dwell on earth.

Jubilees is the other major surviving source from the inter-testamental period that describes the fall of angels from heaven. O. S. Wintermute comments,

If Jubilees is dated between 161-149 BC, it becomes an important primary source for studying the evolution of the various religious parties which became prominent in Judea just before the birth of Christ.[3]

Jubilees gives a slightly different caste to the story of the Watchers. The leading evil spirit, Mastema or Satan, is one of the giants and left free to

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[1] This concept of "evil spirit" is different to the one found in the Old Testament, which is associated with angels (Jud 9:23, 1 Sam 16:14, Pss 78:49) – here in *1 Enoch* they are the spirits of dead giants.

[2] For a discussion of the Story of the Watchers in *1 Enoch* see N. Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), chs. 7-9.

[3] O. S. Wintermute, "Introduction" to *Jubilees* in Charlesworth, ed., *Pseudepigrapha*, 1:46.

supervise other evil spirits; in *1 Enoch*, Azaz'el or Semyaz is a fallen angel and imprisoned in the earth.

In response to the prayer of Noah for protection against the spirits of the giants, God instructs his angels to "bind them" in the earth. In response to this command Mastema addresses God:

> And the Lord God bade us to bind all. And the chief of the spirits, Mastema, came and said:
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> 'Lord, Creator, let some of them remain before me and let them hearken to my voice, and do all that I shall say unto them; for if some of them are not left to me, I shall not be able to execute the power of my will on the children of men because they are intended to corrupt and lead astray before my judgement because the evil of the sons of men is great.'
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> And he said:
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> 'Let the tenth part of them remain before him, and let nine parts descend into the place of condemnation.'
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> And one of us he commanded that we should teach Noah all their medicines; for he knew that they would not walk in uprightness, nor strive in righteousness. And we did according to all his words: all the malignant evil ones we bound in the place of condemnation, and a tenth part of them we left that they might be subject before Satan on the earth. And we explained to Noah all the medicines of their diseases, together with their seductions, how he might heal them with herbs of the earth. And Noah wrote down all things in a book as we instructed him concerning every kind of medicine. Thus, the evil spirits were precluded from hurting the sons of Noah. *Jubilees* 10:1-14[1]

The dimension that Jewish literature adds to Hellenistic ideas about demons is the nomination of a leading demon: The Devil and Satan. In Greek religion, demons might be the intermediaries of the gods, but no one

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[1] This translation is from H. C. Kee, ed., *The Origins of Christianity: Sources and Documents* (London: SPCK, 1973).

particular "god" is signalled out as a leader of demons.[1] In *Jubilees*, Mastema or Satan is given a recurring adversarial role in Israelite history.[2]

The scholarly consensus is that Jewish demonologies developed after the Exile as a result of contact with Persian thinking:

> The idea that demons were responsible for all moral and physical evil had penetrated deeply into Jewish religious thought in the period following the Babylonian exile, no doubt as a result of Iranian influence on Judaism in the fifth and the fourth centuries BC when Palestine as well as Jews from the eastern Diaspora were subject to Persian rule.[3]

Of the two traditions, *Jubilees* is closer than *1 Enoch* to the terms of Jesus' controversy with his opponents. Mastema was a "prince", and being a "prince" is a characteristic of Beelzebub. Jesus shows understanding of Jewish thinking in this area: he accepts that Beelzebub is a "prince"—for he talks of a kingdom and he accepts the casting out of demons "by" a figure of power. Jesus also substitutes "Satan" for the title "Beelzebub", which is a title for Mastema.

In terms of Jesus' and his disciples' thinking on demons, it is likely that some rendition of the Watchers Story informed their dealings with the people. Its popularity is evidenced in the number of surviving 1c. texts that mention the story, for example, in the Essene documents—the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen 2:1), and the *Damascus Document* (CD 2:14-20);[4] and in various inter-testamental works.[5]

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[1] See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 179-181, 329-332.

[2] See *Jubilees* 11:15, 17:15-18:13, 23:29, 46:1-2, 48:2, 12, and 50:5.

[3] G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: SCM Press, 1993), 61. See also, Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 147 and H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), 70.

[4] Another Dead Sea fragment, 4Q180, also mentions Azaz'el and the fallen angels. Unless otherwise noted all references to the Dead Sea Scrolls are to the edition, G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, (London: Penguin, 1998).

[5] The theme is also mentioned in the 2c. B.C.E. work, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs – T. Reuben* 5:6-7*, T. Naphtali* 3:2, 5. The giants are mentioned in the *Wisdom of Solomon* 14:6, (1c. B.C.E.), *Sirach* 16:7, (2c. BCE), *Baruch* 3:26, (1c.-3c. BCE), *3 Maccabees* 2:4, (1c. B.C.E.). This spread of witness to the story shows that it was a popular belief. All of these works can be found in Charlesworth, ed., *Pseudepigrapha*.

The story of the Watchers and their fall would seem to be an important theology about the cause of human suffering.[1] The frequency of its mention in various documents suggests that we have here a popular explanation[2] for evil and suffering with regard to demons. A final source from this period – Josephus[3] – adds another dimension to our discussion:

> Many angels of God united with women, and begat sons that were unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence that they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Greeks call Giants. *Ant.* 73

The connection between the story of the Watchers and Greek mythology about the Titans was being made in the first century and it shows how fundamental this story was in the thinking of the time.

J. Robinson comments on Mark that "the exorcisms, rather than being the nearest point of approach to history in a myth, are the points in a historical narrative where the transcendent meaning of that history is most clearly evident".[4] Robinson is referring to the cosmic aspect of the exorcisms in which Jesus is portrayed as in conflict with Satan or the demons under his command. This aspect is transcendent in the sense that Jesus is not just healing a possessed man, but the possession is symptomatic of a struggle between God and Satan over Israel, and Jesus, as representative of God, is confronting the enemy. The Beelzebub controversy interprets the exorcisms in this light. Robinson's argument is that apart from the interpretative context of the Beelzebub Controversy, the exorcisms would resemble other exorcism stories from the Ancient World, but "in the Markan presentation they depict a cosmic struggle in history to inaugurate the eschatological reign of God".[5]

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[1] One commentator argues for a symbolic reading of the myth of the fallen angels along these lines: The giants are social institutions because they take no food, but hunger and thirst and cause offences. They consume the acquisitions of human beings, and when the populace cannot sustain them, they turn against them. See H. C. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 81-82. We consider political readings of the exorcism stories in Chapter Three.

[2] Philo offers a contrary view in *On the Giants,* 58-61, 65.

[3] All citations from Josephus are from the edition, W. Whiston, ed., *The Works of Josephus*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987).

[4] James Robinson, *The Problem of History in Mark* (London: SCM Press, 1957), 33. This cosmic conflict is also seen by some scholars in Pauline Christianity, e.g. in Eph 6:12, Col 1:16, 2:16.

[5] Robinson*, Problem of History*, 38.

The Beelzebub controversy is important because it supplies Jesus' explanation of his healing ministry. The position of the controversy in Mark's narrative shows its pivotal importance. From the opening healing of the Synagogue Man with the unclean spirit, Mark has concentrated on healing stories. In Mark 3, scribes come down from Jerusalem and claim that Jesus "has" Beelzebub, and that by the "prince of demons", Jesus is casting out demons. This accusation is clearly pivotal for showing to readers Jesus' true source of power. Mark has recounted in detail Jesus' miracles, and now narrates the first hostile appraisal of those powers. To this accusation, Jesus responds in what Mark calls "parables" (Mark 3:23). He accepts the terms of the charge and is portrayed as confuting his opponents' logic. Jesus presents his exorcisms in a simile of someone entering into the "house" of a strong man and binding the owner. The "man" is clearly Satan, and therefore Jesus contextualises his exorcisms using the apocalyptic language of a conflict with Satan. But even in doing this, his language suggests that he is appraising his opponents as "of Satan". Our tentative conclusion then is that Jesus presents[1] his exorcisms in these theological[2] terms and it is likely that his disciples understood something of this cosmology.

Is a Jewish theological and cosmological context the only context for understanding Jesus' exorcisms? Jesus' literate opponents may well have understood Jesus' claim, but this does not mean that they accepted his argument. Further, the populace may not have had a sophisticated understanding of the Watchers Myth, and may not have seen Jesus' exorcisms on this larger scale. It has been argued that the people would have taken Jesus to be a magician.[3]

Pliny the Elder (c. 24-79 C.E.) in his *Natural History* surveys the state of Science and Art in his day. One volume is devoted to magic, about which he is disparaging,

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[1] It is *probable on other grounds* that Jesus is only using the terms of his opponents and therefore his statements do not represent his belief in demons. Establishing Jesus' beliefs about demons is difficult because there is little direct speech recorded of Jesus mentioning demons for us to assess.

[2] In arguing that Jesus contextualised his exorcisms in terms of a cosmic conflict, we are not excluding at this point in the study the interpretation that such a cosmic conflict was not translated by Jewish literature into political realities. See C. Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (New York: Orbis, 1988), 164-167. We discuss the possibilities of a political interpretation in Chapter Three.

[3] See M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1985).

No one will doubt that the origin of magic lay in medicine, and that it crept in surreptitiously under the pretence of furthering health, as if it were a loftier and holier form of the healing art. In this way, it acquired the enticing and welcome promises of religion which even now remains very much a closed book to the human race; and with this success it also took control of astrology, because there is no one who is not eager to learn his destiny or who does not believe that the most accurate method of so doing is to observe the sky. So, magic, with its triple bond on men's emotions, has reached such a peak that even today it has power over a great part of the world and in the east commands kings of kings. *Natural History*, 30.2[1]

Pliny briefly describes the origins of magic in Greece and some areas of the Mediterranean World where it was particularly strong. He identifies Persia and its religion, Zoroastrianism, as a main source for magical practices, and he traces their spread to Greece with the conquests of the Medo-Persian Empire. He also identifies Moses[2] and the Jews as a main source of magic (*Natural History*, 30.11). This view of the origins of magic only reflects a common first century opinion: (magic has been shown by anthropological studies to be a universal phenomenon). Pliny is representing a short-term historical perspective on the roots of the magic that he saw around him in the Roman Empire.[3] In addition to literary authors like Pliny, the actual materials used in magic are also a source of information. These materials are,

- magical texts (books and papyri)
- amulets
- curse tablets

The magical texts include spells for protection and magical rites and recipes for a much wider range of functions including requests for revelation from the spirit, angel or god, potions for love, and help in various aspects of life (cf. Acts 19:19). The curse tablets were more singular in purpose, invoking spirits, gods or angels to bring a curse on another person. The magical amulets, (usually precious stones which were worn), were for protection from evil spirits, demons, accidents, enemies and illness. The names of helpful

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[1] *Pliny the Elder, Natural History: A Selection*, (trans. John E. Healy; London: Penguin, 1991). All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

[2] Pliny's first century connection of Moses with magic is significant, because it shows that later magical texts (3c. C.E.) "authored" by Moses reflects earlier traditions.

[3] For an overview of Hellenistic magic, see J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1974), ch. 3.

gods and spirits were often inscribed on the amulet (the magical texts are highly syncretistic), to be used in a chant or invocation that went along with the use of the amulet.[1] The magical texts then often have the following elements:

- a specific ritual to perform, or a recipe to make
- invocation of a spirit who will expedite the request
- a statement of command[2]

The rituals and practices of exorcism can be defined as a kind of magic. This distinguishes exorcism from medicine, but where medicine ends and magic begins is a difficult judgment. Medicine begins with the observation of symptoms and proceeds via natural diagnosis to the application of natural remedies. Some of the remedies applied in the first century may seem strange to modern prejudices, but this does not make them "magical". Our working definition[3] of magical practice will be that it involves rites and devices that invoke or control the supernatural. Magical remedies typically invoke good spirits for personal advantage or against bad spirits, or they seek to control and nullify the malevolence of evil spirits. A magician may apply natural remedies, but when he addresses a demon, or invokes supernatural powers through various rites and devices, he is using magic. Some contemporary accounts of exorcism are the following:

Example 1
Josephus tells an anecdote that illustrates the use of herbs:

> I have seen a certain man of my own country whose name was Eleazar, releasing people that were demoniacal in the presence of Vespasian, and his sons, and his captains, and the whole multitude of his soldiers. The manner of the cure was this: - He put a ring that had a root of one of those sorts mentioned by Solomon to the nostrils of the demoniac, after which he drew out the demon through the nostrils; and when the man fell down immediately, he abjured him to return unto him no more, making still mention of Solomon, and reciting the incantations that he composed. And

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[1] For comments on these devices in Plato: on amulets see *Republic* 426b, on incantations in childbirth see *Theaetetus* 149cd, on charms see *Charides* 155e, on rites see *Phaedrus* 244e.

[2] Often using the verb ὁρκίζω – to command, cf. Acts 19:13, Mark 5:7.

[3] This is a simplification but it is beyond the scope of this study to consider the social anthropology of magic and medicine; see Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 291.

when Eleazar would persuade and demonstrate to the spectators that he had such a power, he set a little way off a cup of basin of water, and commanded the demon, as he went out of the man, to overturn it, and thereby to let the spectators know that he had left the man. *Ant*. 8.46-48

In this example, Solomon's name is invoked and a ring with a root attached is placed into the nostrils of the demoniac. The demon is adjured, and the exorcism is demonstrated by the disturbing of a basin of water. Jesus' exorcisms involved adjuring the demon, and in the case of the Gaderene demoniac, the exorcism was demonstrated by an external sign—pigs went down a hill; the exorcist commands the demon to enter no more into its victim, and this is what Jesus does with the epileptic boy (Mark 9:14).

Example 2

In the following example, Josephus reports,

…[The Baaras] root is only valuable on account of one virtue it hath, that if it be brought to sick persons, it quickly drives away those called demons, which are no other than the spirits of the wicked that enter into men that are alive, and kill them, unless they can obtain some help against them. *War* 7.185

This example shows the application of herbal remedies to the phenomena of possession. Josephus here assumes the view that demons are the spirits of the (wicked) dead. None of Jesus' reported exorcisms include the use of remedies; however, Johannine tradition reports the use by Jesus of spittle (John 9:6) in a healing.

Example 3

The following fragmentary text from the Dead Sea Scroll 4Q560 illustrates a Jewish incantation against various demons associated with various ailments.

Col. 1 2[…] the midwife, the punishment of those who bear children, any evil visitant or d[emon…] 3[…I adjure you, all who en]ter into the body: the male Wasting-demon and the female Wasting-demon 4[…I adjure you by the name of the Lord, "He who re]moves iniquity and transgression" (Exod 34:7), O Fever-demon and Chills-demon and Chest Pain-demon 5[…You are forbidden to disturb by night using dreams or by da]y during sleep,

> O male Shrine-spirit and female Shrine-spirit, O you demons who
> breach 6[walls…w]icked […][1]

The mention of the fever-demon should be compared with Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law, as Jesus likewise adjured and rebuked this fever (Mark 1:30, cf. Luke 4:39).

In addition to the adjuring of the demons, this example illustrates the use of the divine name[2] to carry out exorcism.

Similarities between Jesus' exorcisms and contemporary accounts are not the only argument put forward for the proposition that Jesus was perceived to be a magician. M. Smith presents several arguments for the view that that Jesus was a magician:[3]

- Jesus was accused of 'having' a demon, a spirit, and possession of spirit was the mark of a magician.

- Jesus was a miracle worker, and made predictions, like magicians such as Apollonius of Tyana.

- Jesus was connected with claims of divine sonship, and such claims were made by magicians.

Smith's case rests on the premise that the Gospel traditions have deliberately presented a picture that eliminates evidence that Jesus was a magician. Nevertheless, Smith argues that such evidence can be deduced. For example, Smith argues that Jesus "had" a companion spirit like other magicians; Gospel writers present this as the Holy Spirit, Jesus' opponents present it as Beelzebub.

The traditions about Jesus do not report him using devices or rituals in his exorcism, or invoking angels or spirits, or using magical words or names. However, there are points of contact—Jesus adjures demons, has verbal exchanges with demons, and exercises control over demons. There is therefore a basis for ongoing scholarly dispute on the question whether Jesus was a magician. Smith makes the telling point that magicians may have been

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[1] This translation is from M. Wise, M. Abegg Jr., and E. Cook eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996), 443.
[2] Jesus' name was used in such incantations in the later Greek Magical Papyri, cf. Mark 9:38.
[3] Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, chs. 6-7.

of different social "types". Even if much of the magical apparatus is absent from the Jesus' traditions, this does not exclude Jesus as a magician of the sort that exorcised magic with a minimum of artifice. This point, however, raises the semantic question: what should we regard as magic and the mark of a magician?

Theissen and Merz distinguish between "charismatic exorcists" and "magicians". Charismatics, they argue, "heal predominantly on the basis of their outstanding personality…and not on the basis of magical conjurations and magical rituals".[1] An example of a charismatic is recounted by Lucian of Samosata (115-180 C.E.):

> Everyone knows about the Syrian from Palestine, the adept in exorcism, how many he takes in hand who fall down in the light of the moon and roll their eyes and fill their mouths with foam; nevertheless, he restores them to health and sends them away normal in mind, delivering them from their straits for a large fee. When he stands beside them as they lie there and says: Whence came you into this body?, the patient himself is silent, but the spirit answers in Greek or in the language of whatever foreign country he comes from, telling how and whence he entered into the man; whereupon by adjuring the spirit and if he does not obey, threatening him, he drives him out. 16[2]

This example relates to Jesus' exorcisms in that it shows the link between the moon and the symptoms of epilepsy, and this is the way the Epileptic Boy is described (Matthew 17; Mark 9; Luke 9). It also reports the spirit speaking and, again, being adjured, which reflects Jesus' exorcisms; however, this example does not illustrate the use of magical rituals and practices.

G. H. Twelftree discusses charismatic exorcists,[3] and contrary to Smith, he labels Apollonius as a charismatic exorcist. Although exercising caution about the veracity of Philostratus' 3c. C.E. *Life of Apollonius*, Twelftree accepts several parallels between his exorcisms and those of Jesus, for example, the crying out of the demon, the reprimand of the exorcist, the visible external

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[1] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 290.

[2] *Lucian*, (ed., A. M. Harman; Loeb Classical Library; London: Heinemann, 1921). This example is given by way of an answer to the character Ion who asks Lucian what he had to say about "those who free possessed men from their terrors by exorcising the spirits". Lucian also gives other examples of exorcism.

[3] G. H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 22-34.

sign of exorcism, the amazement of the crowd, and the demoniac coming to himself. Twelftree concludes, "These elements, as well as the distress of the demoniac and the simple technique of Apollonius are probably those which would represent notions of exorcism in first century Palestine".[1]

This category of analysis — "charismatic exorcist" — seems more satisfactory than "magician", because it does not carry with it any magical apparatus. However, exactly what Theissen and Merz or Twelftree mean by "charismatic" is an open question: Theissen and Merz suggest a naturalistic explanation using the concept of "personality". G. Vermes places Jesus into this category of Jewish charismatic, citing parallels from Jewish Midrash and rabbinical figures.[2] He proposes that Jesus was a charismatic in virtue of being in "immediate" contact with God. A discussion of this definitional question is beyond the scope of this study. For our purposes, it is sufficient to acknowledge that there is a category of public figure (charismatic) that shares common ground with that of "magician", but which is nevertheless distinctive.

Our conclusion therefore is that the people would not have perceived Jesus as an itinerant magician, but rather as someone exercising the power of a charismatic exorcist. There are not sufficient points of contact between Jesus' exorcisms to justify the title, "Jesus the Magician". Furthermore, the category of "charismatic exorcist" is more easily integrated with those aspects of Jesus' public career captured by titles such as "prophet" or "sage".

The existence of parallels with contemporary accounts of exorcism is significant for an assessment of the historical plausibility of Jesus' traditions: the similarity adds evidential weight to these early traditions. Scholars working within the so-called 'third quest' for the historical Jesus offer the view that despite later redactional overlays, the exorcism stories represent reliable historical information about Jesus.

Magic was not the only medicine; orthodox medicine was critical of magic and sceptical of its claims. The situation was not unlike that today where we have traditional medicine and "alternative" medicine. The Hippocratic Writings are a benchmark of orthodoxy and one of these writings, *On the*

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[1] Smith, *Jesus the* Exorcist, 27.
[2] Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 69.

Sacred Disease,[1] castigates those who treat epilepsy as symptomatic of demon-possession. The writer comments,

> I do not believe that the 'Sacred Disease' is any more divine or sacred than any other disease but, on the contrary, has specific characteristics and a definite cause. Nevertheless, because it is completely different from other diseases, it has been regarded as a divine visitation by those who, being only human, view it with ignorance and astonishment. This theory of divine origin, though supported by the difficulty of understanding the malady, is weakened by the simplicity of the cure, consisting merely of ritual purification and incantation. If remarkable features in a malady were evidence of divine visitation,[2] then there would be many 'sacred diseases'... *On the Sacred Disease* 1[3]

The natural explanation, (which we need not elaborate), offered by the writer of this treatise, appears fantastical by today's measures. However, it is not his explanation that is of interest to us, but rather his criticism of the magical tradition. As part of the Hippocratic corpus, this criticism would have been central to Greek medical training. However, it is the method that it is important: - look for regular natural causes of disease.[4] The method and theory shows that recourse to the supernatural (demon possession or possession by the gods) was not the only approach in the ancient world.

The influence of the Hippocratic tradition in medicine can be seen in Jewish medicine. For example, a positive attitude to medicine is illustrated in the Jewish book of wisdom – Sirach (c. 2c. B.C.E.).[5] This text (e.g. 38:1-15) illustrates a dependence on God and a use of natural remedies, along with prayer and sacrifice. Or again, Josephus reports in his *Wars of the Jews* that the Essenes researched medicinal roots and properties of stones for the healing of diseases:

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[1] *Hippocratic Writings*, (ed., G. E. R. Lloyd; London: Penguin, 1978). All subsequent quotations from the Hippocratic corpus are from this edition.

[2] The notion of 'divine visitation' includes demon-possession as indicated by the writer's latter expression, 'divine visitation and possession by devils', *On the Sacred Disease* 3.

[3] For an extended discussion of this text, see G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), ch. 1.

[4] The same approach can be found in other Hippocratic writings, for example, in *On Airs Waters Places* 22 and in *On the Diseases of Young Girls*; see the commentary in Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience*, 28

[5] For an overview, see W. D. Osterley, *The Books of the Apocrypha* (London: Scott, 1914), 321-345.

> They also take great pains in studying the writings of the ancients, and choose out of them what is most for the advantage of their soul and body; and they inquire after such roots and medicinal stones as may cure distempers *War* 2.135, cf. *Ant*. 8.1361

We can also see the influence of the Hippocratic tradition in Roman medical writings of the period, like those of Celsus (14-37 C.E.) or Galen (129-199 C.E.). H. C. Kee comments:

> The idea that human disease is the consequence of divine wrath does not appear in Greek medicine; Galen mentions it only to add that so few believe. Similarly rejected is the concept, which probably originated with the Persians, and which strongly influenced Judaism in the post-exilic period as well as early Christianity, that sickness is the consequence of demonic possession.[2]

This brief characterization of the Hippocratic tradition illustrates that Jesus does not stand in this tradition — he has more in common with Jewish exorcism.

The contrast between magic, medicine and Jewish theology shows that disease and illness are social constructs and diagnosis and prognosis reflect beliefs. That is, the description of symptoms and behaviours is determined by belief systems. Such belief systems condition the message of the charismatic. Theissen and Merz comment, "Just as social expectations and patterns of explanation are a constitutive part of the sicknesses and infirmities, so too social expectations and interpretations play a part in the charisma of the miracle-worker".[3] Their argument here is that Jesus knew how to combine his extraordinary gift of healing with a message about the kingdom of God, which was to some extent cast in terms that the people understood. In short, there is a symbolic layer of meaning to Jesus' exorcisms, a symbology to do with the kingdom of God.

The tentative conclusion that we presented above (that Jesus presented his exorcisms in terms of a cosmic struggle with Satan) is therefore challenged by this suggestion of Theissen and Merz. Did Jesus in fact believe in a cosmic struggle or was he conforming to the common perceptions of the day for some ulterior purpose? Our next question therefore is whether Jesus'

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[1] See also Philo's comments on the Therapeutæ in *On the Contemplative Life* 2.
[2] Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic*, 61.
[3] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 312-313.

contemporaries saw his exorcisms in a more socio-political light like that of a message about a kingdom.

CHAPTER THREE

Politics

In the previous chapter, we concluded that the exorcism accounts are plausible descriptions of healing activity carried out by Jesus in a 1c. context; we now turn our attention to the question whether Jesus' exorcisms had a political dimension for his contemporaries.

We noted in Chapter One that certain basic facts about Jesus show that he was a public figure. This places him in a socio-political context. Recent research[1] into the historical Jesus has focused on aligning socio-political and economic factors with elements in the traditions about Jesus in order to explain Jesus as a leader and a public figure. There are several socio-political contexts of understanding in which we might place Jesus:

Political – Galilee was an occupied territory ruled by a client king, Herod Antipas; Rome was an oppressive empire, levying taxes and putting down unrest. In addition, Herod imposed his own layer of taxation. We could place Jesus in this context and ask whether and how he addressed issues of political oppression.

Economic – Galilee was an agrarian society with an unequal distribution of wealth, land ownership, power and privilege; society was hierarchical. We could place Jesus in this context and enquire whether and how he addressed issues of poverty and inequality.

Religious – Galilee was a marginal area vis-à-vis the cult. The Jerusalem temple was the centre of religious authority and aligned with the Roman power; in Galilee, the local synagogue mediated Jewish traditions. We could place Jesus in this context and ask whether and how he challenged or confirmed his own religious inheritance.

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[1] R. A. Horsley comments, "…the major problem with the standard interpretation of the historical Jesus is the depoliticization practiced in Western Christian theology and established New Testament studies in general", *Jesus and Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 13. Horsley is one of several scholars redressing the balance of studies into the historical Jesus by placing Jesus in a socio-political context drawn using an anthropological model.

Cultural – Galilee was permeated with Hellenistic cultural influences; Herod Antipas had built two cities in Galilee, Sepphoris and Tiberias, and established his court in Galilee. He was supported by the Herodian Party. We could place Jesus in this context and enquire whether and how he criticized cultural norms and society behaviours.

These contexts can be distinguished for the purpose of historical analysis, but it should be recognised that both Jesus' public behaviour and the societies in which he moved were not so cleanly differentiated. In particular, unlike in western societies, there was no separation of secular and religious authority in Judea and Galilee, but instead the secular power worked through and alongside the religious authorities.

In this chapter and the next, we are interested in two kinds of perception: the first perception is that of the author Mark, the second is that of Jesus' contemporaries. If we accept a 65-75 C.E. date for Mark, then these two perceptions are separated by a generation in time.[1] Our working hypothesis will be that in terms of Mark's writing, Jesus' exorcisms are drawn in symbolic terms. The passage of time and the experience of the early Christian communities produced a distillation of Jesus' significance that situated him in the literate context of those parts of Jewish "history" that had seen Israel oppressed by a foreign power. In terms of the perceptions of Jesus' contemporaries,[2] there is a more immediate and expectant political understanding of his words and actions.

In this chapter then, our socio-political focus is religious and political rather than economic or cultural. Jesus was perceived in both political and religious terms without distinction because there was no clear-cut separation of powers in the apparatus of the state: religious and political authority and the associated doctrine and law were intertwined. We will refer to this kind of context as a politico-religious context.

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[1] This is the scholarly consensus; for a discussion see W. R. Telford, *Mark*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 21-23.

[2] One result of recent studies into the relationship of Jesus and Judaism has been the recognition that Judaism in Jesus day is not a homogenous entity; Jesus confronted various Jewish groups which had differing doctrines, he worked among the peasant class of Galilee and confronted the religious leadership in Jerusalem – these classes would have had different expressions of a common tradition. So, although we speak of Judaism, it should be remembered that strictly there are just Judaism(s).

It is important to make the case that a politico-religious context is appropriate for understanding Jesus. This exercise will then form a supportive background to our thesis that the exorcisms of Jesus were perceived in politico-religious terms.

The case that we want to make has two aspects. Our first contention is that Jesus' words and actions, as recorded in the earliest source of Mark[1]— were drafted in a political light. The reactions and approaches to Jesus that are recorded indicate a political stance. Our second contention is that while Jesus' exorcisms would have been *read* as political, his contemporaries would not have seen any political symbology in them.

Several lines of argument establish the appropriateness of a politico-religious context for the understanding of Jesus.

Methodology. R. Horsley develops what he calls a "relational-contextual" approach to the study of the historical Jesus. Using a caricature of Form Criticism, Horsley observes that no one communicates in isolated sayings (or speeches) – communication is inherently relational and embedded in a context. As such it involves speaker, text, audience, context/setting and cultural tradition. This theory of communication, Horsley argues, fits well with the contextual emphasis of scholars working in the so-called "third quest" for the historical Jesus.[2] We cannot isolate Jesus' sayings (or speeches) from the narrative context with which they are associated; otherwise we lose our main access to their communicative context. As a matter of method, the fact that Jesus communicated with those around him requires us to seek out a context for that communication – one such context is the politico-religious context.

As a further point of method, Horsley includes in his outline of the conditions of communication the prerequisite of a cultural tradition. The existence of this facet in communication is one basis for a speaker and

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[1] Our main focus is Mark as we oppose the scholarly consensus that there is a "lost" source called Q. Mark and Q have been commonly regarded as the earliest sources for Jesus tradition and to be independent. As *early* sources, they carry more evidential weight in supporting a reconstruction of Jesus' life than later traditions. As *independent* sources, their joint record of any political significance to Jesus' words and actions adds further evidential weight to our thesis. However, we only apply these points to Mark. For an introduction to the theory of sources underlying the Synoptics see E. P. Sanders and Margaret Davies, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM Press, 1989), chs. 3-7.

[2] *Jesus and Empire*, 55-58.

audience perceiving symbolic meaning in the content of the communication. Cultural tradition is a complex factor in the pragmatics of communication;[1] religious tradition, such as scriptural tradition, is a key component of cultural tradition. As a matter of method, the fact that Jesus communicated with those around him requires us to be sensitive to the possibilities of a symbolic context for that communication.

Narrative. The plot[2] of Mark indicates that we should place Jesus in a political context. The plot of Mark is determined by the climax and constituted by those points in the narrative that drive the story forward to that climax. Given that the end of the story is a political form of execution, it is reasonable to suppose that the story has a thread of events, actions and words that make this end intelligible. Thus, Mark represents the Pharisees and Herodians plotting against Jesus in Galilee (Mark 3:6), and the chief priests and scribes plotting in Jerusalem (Mark 11:18, 12:12, 14:1).[3] Mark also represents Jesus as predicting his own death at the hands of the authorities (Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 11:33-34). The historical argument here is that this plot must at least reflect something of Jesus' public career and therefore a politico-religious context for Jesus' words and actions is appropriate.

Sayings and Speeches. The selection of the sayings in Luke indicates that we should place Jesus in a politico-religious context. For example, Jesus states that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor and the hungry (Luke 6:20-23, 12:22-31) and not the rich (Luke 12:16-21); Jesus delivers pronouncements against the Pharisees (Luke 11:42-44, 46-52); he declares that many children of Abraham will be excluded from the kingdom (Luke 13:28-30); he gives a prophetic lament against the rulers of Jerusalem (Luke 13:34-35); he tells a parable of a great banquet about original guests of high estate who refuse to

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[1] For an introduction to the pragmatics of communication, see G. Yule, *Pragmatics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), and for the role of culture, ch. 9.

[2] The notion of "plot" is a key concept in Narrative Criticism. For a discussion of Narrative Criticism in relation to the Gospel of Mark, see E. S. Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?" in J. Anderson and S. Moore, eds., *Mark and Method* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). For a discussion as to why there are narrative Gospels as opposed to just "sayings" collections like the Gospel of Thomas, see P. Merenlahti, *Poetics for the Gospels? Rethinking Narrative Criticism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), ch. 7.

[3] It is possible that Mark is integrating into the narrative two separate plots to kill Jesus from different times in Jesus' public career, however, Mark narrates that the chief priests and scribes "sent" unto Jesus the Pharisees and the Herodians to catch out Jesus in his words (Mark 12:13); these are the early plotters, and now in collusion with the Jerusalem authorities.

come and others from "the streets" who are then invited and do come (Luke 14:16-24); and he declares that the disciples will judge the tribes of Israel (Luke 22:30).

These sayings constitute a theme whereby Jesus identifies with the poor and the disadvantaged and condemns those in positions of power and privilege to the extent that they will be excluded from the kingdom of God and replaced by the twelve disciples who will rule over the tribes of Israel in a Mosaic oligarchy (cf. Deuteronomy 1). A sufficient number of sayings illustrate a political awareness on the part of Jesus, and it is also reasonable to suppose that they created the perception among the people and ruling groups that Jesus presented a political and religious challenge.

Actions. Mark narrates several incidents and actions of Jesus that appear politically significant given the close connection between religious and political power in Galilee and Judea. For example, he heals on the Sabbath in a synagogue (Mark 1:21:28, 3:1-6); he challenges the sacrificial system of the Jewish religion to mediate forgiveness (Mark 2:1-12); he contravenes established norms of table fellowship (Mark 2:13-22); he comes to the attention of Herod (Mark 6:14); he contravenes established rituals (Mark 7:1-23); he disrupts the economy of the Temple (Mark 12:15-18); he speaks against the Jerusalem scribes (Mark 12:38-40); and he speaks "against" the Temple (Mark 13:1-2). Even if only some events are genuine, the pattern is clear: Jesus challenged ruling religious interests and he would have been perceived in politico-religious terms.

Historical Context. The stage onto which Jesus entered makes it likely that his words and actions would have been construed as politically and religiously significant. Any individual commenting on social conditions and cultural norms would have been perceived as challenging the domestic status quo. Jesus' immediate forerunner, with whom he was closely associated, John the Baptist, had been imprisoned (Mark 1:14), and his eschatological message had been one of imminent judgment and catastrophe, a false sense of security on the part of the people, and the need for social justice before God, if anyone was to escape the coming judgment (Luke 3:7-9, Luke 3:10-14).

Jesus' message continued in the same vein as that of the Baptist: a message relating to the judgment of privileged groups (Luke 6:24-26, 11:39b-44, 46-52, 12:16-21, GThom 39, 54, 69b, 102), warnings about a coming judgment (Luke 12:39-40, 12:42b-46, GThom 21), predictions about the destruction of the temple (Mark 13:1-2, 14:58), predictions about a coming Son of Man (Luke 17:23-24, 26-27, 30), and an invitation to the peasant class to "enter" a

kingdom of God (Mark 1:15, 10:23-24, 13:1-2, Luke 16:16).[1] Jesus was likewise watched by the authorities and their supporters (Mark 2:16, 24, 3:6, 6:14, 17, 7:1, 11:27, and 12:12-13).

These five lines of argument establish the appropriateness of a politico-religious context for interpreting Jesus' words and actions. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to offer a political analysis of Jesus' public career. For example, to argue with Horsley that Jesus was engaged in political revolution against Jewish and Galilean authorities insofar as they were client rulers of Rome; or that Jesus was seeking to liberate the people in a political sense looking to restore Israel.[2] Or again, to argue with Marcus Borg that Jesus was engaged in a critique of how the boundaries of holiness were set by various groups like the Priests, Scribes and Pharisees — a social prophet in classical Hebrew tradition.[3] These two competing views (International Politics – Horsley, Domestic Politics – Borg), two out of many, are political theses about Jesus and sustained by multiple lines of argument. Our concern is with one line of evidence — Jesus' exorcisms and how these may be interpreted in political and religious terms. It is sufficient for our purpose to acknowledge that some political thesis about Jesus will be correct, not to argue which of the many competing political theses is correct.

If the points above establish a *prima facia* general case for the appropriateness of a socio-political context for Jesus' words and actions, did his exorcisms also have a socio-political aspect? One common argument to be found in the literature is that Jesus' exorcisms were politically significant on a symbolic level.

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[1] In attributing these "eschatological" themes to Jesus, none are uncontested by scholars, but we are persuaded by the argument that Jesus cannot be understood as a non-eschatological (sapiential) prophet, because he is part of an historical trajectory that begins with an eschatological John the Baptist and ends with an eschatological "Early Church".

[2] See Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, ch. 4, and commentary on Horsley by Du Toit, *Redefining Jesus*, 85-88.

[3] See M. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (Sheffield: Continuum, 1998). N. T. Wright provides an overview of Borg's thesis in a foreword to the second edition of Borg's classic work, and describes Borg's thesis in this way: "Jesus was a Jewish prophet of renewal and like all other such prophets was bound to come into conflict with others claiming the high ground of being loyal to Israel's God", xiv. Du Toit's analysis of Borg's position agrees with that of Wright, *Redefining Jesus*, 83-84.

S. Guijarro, with many scholars, proposes[1] that Jesus' Beelzebub controversy is "the key to interpreting his exorcisms". Guijarro is correct to see this controversy as a "key",[2] because in it Jesus discloses his understanding of exorcism: in exorcism, the power of the kingdom of God is manifested. It is unlikely that the early Christian communities constructed this Jesus' tradition, since we have no corroborating evidence from other early non-Gospel writings linking exorcism to the kingdom of God.

Guijarro is following scholars such as Horsley,[3] J. D. Crossan[4] and P. W. Hollenbach[5] in placing Jesus' exorcisms at the heart of a conflict with authorities. For example, Hollenbach claims that "it is directly in connection with this activity that all the prominent public authorities manifest extreme hostility toward him".[6] In addition to Jerusalem Scribes (Mark 3:22), others in Jerusalem (Luke 11:14-18a), and Galilean Pharisees (Matt 9:34; 12:24), Herod Antipas became antagonistic toward Jesus on account of his exorcisms (Luke 13:31-33). This evidence makes it plausible to suppose that Jesus' exorcisms had political significance and, (given the opposition of Scribes and Pharisees as well as Herod and the Herodians), politico-religious significance.

Hollenbach poses the "puzzle" addressed by these scholars: given that exorcism was common enough in Galilee and the Mediterranean world (as we saw in Chapter Two), why should it be central to a conflict between Jesus and other public groups and the authorities? The assumption behind this puzzle is

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[1] S. Guijarro, "The Politics of Exorcism" in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels* (eds., W. Stegemann, B. J. Malina and G. Theissen; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2002).

[2] We would also add that the Messianic Secret is a "key" to interpreting Jesus' exorcisms. This theme in Mark links the identity of Jesus to his exorcisms insofar as the Markan Jesus instructs demoniacs to not reveal his identity or what he has done for them. Many scholars, following Wrede, attribute this theme to Mark's later redaction, and so we will not consider it here as a key to the contemporary perception of Jesus' exorcisms as having a political dimension. For a review of the theme of the Messianic Secret in Mark see the essays in C. Tuckett, ed., *The Messianic Secret* (London: SPCK, 1983).

[3] *Jesus and Empire*, 99-103, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 184-190, *Hearing the Whole Story* (Louisville: WJK Press, 2001), 136-148.

[4] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 313-20.

[5] Paul W. Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study" *JAAR* 49, (1981): 567-588.

[6] Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study", 569.

that in order for the exorcisms to generate social conflict, they have to have social implications and consequences which cause conflict. The analytical challenge is to propose social explanations for this conflict.

Hollenbach discusses three extant theories that offer a social explanation of exorcism. These theories are based on 20c. social studies of exorcism and applied by analogy to explain the incidence of exorcism in Galilee and Judea. Hollenbach's presumption is that social-psychological explanations of exorcism are superior to individualistic psychological explanations.

The first theory that Hollenbach discusses is that social tensions cause or exacerbate mental illness, for example, class antagonism rooted in economic exploitation, conflicts between old and new traditions, and colonial domination and counter-revolution. Hollenbach's supporting evidence is from 20c. conflicts and in particular the Algerian revolutionary war against France. His interest is in examples that correlate an increase in the incidence of possession to times of colonial oppression. He concludes, "The main point made here, then, is that the colonial situation of dominance and revolution nourishes mental illness in extraordinary numbers of the population".[1]

The second theory discussed by Hollenbach is that mental illness is a response to social and economic oppression, an adaptation to stress and trauma. For example, Hollenbach sees cults that emphasize possession as a response to social and economic conditions; he discusses Haitian possession cults. Hollenbach's interest is in examples that show mental illness as a coping strategy to stress and trauma being engendered in society. This kind of response enables people to respond to oppression in ways that do not overturn the situation, and as such it can be tolerated or even encouraged by the authorities.

Hollenbach's third theory is that negative accusations of possession are used as a means of social control by dominant social classes. Accusations of mental illness (madness, possession), witchcraft or sorcery, are used as a device to neutralize contrary ideologies and values. If healers overstep their role in society, then they become threats to the status quo and are neutralized by such accusations. Hollenbach is particularly interested in this explanation of possession vis-à-vis Jesus. We can see that this third theory has explanatory power with regard to individuals, but it can also be seen as operative in how a society can control whole groups through a process of institutionalization. This theory explains the increased incidence of demon possession as a function of social control.

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[1] Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study", 575.

Whichever theory we are considering Hollenbach concludes that, "Demon possession and its ideology were integral parts of the social accommodation of first-century Palestinian Jews to the conditions of the time".[1] The nature of the accommodation was different for different groups (Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians, Essenes, etc.). Ruling groups might use accusations of demon possession to control deviant behaviour, or they may be complicit with the occupation and oppression of the general populace, accepting as a "necessary evil" the increased incidence of mental illness. Oppressed groups may respond to their situation by way of demonic behaviours as a form of protest. In addressing demon possession, Jesus was addressing a social and political phenomenon and radically upsetting (like other popular prophets) the status quo. The cause of the conflict between Jesus and ruling groups was that he challenged their accommodation to the conditions of the time.

Hollenbach argues that all three theories are applicable to Galilee and the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. The strength of his case is his cross-cultural anthropological analysis: he accepts that the data that we have from early Jesus tradition is insufficient in itself to sustain his socio-political gloss on Jesus' exorcisms, but he argues that the conditions in 1c. Palestine are sufficiently analogous to a wide body of social studies into demon possession as to make his case "very likely".[2]

 D. Oakman makes a similar methodological point when he states, "To pry out the specific meanings appropriate to the rural Jesus tradition, comparative anthropology must first give us a clue as to the customary universe of meaning shared by rural peoples. Comparative study of peasantries and other oral traditions can help in getting at the initial meaning of Jesus tradition".[3] The basis of this method is the fact that Jesus' public career was centred on the Galilean villages, and the preservation of oral traditions and memories of Jesus would have been among his followers in these villages.[4]

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[1] Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study", 580.

[2] Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study", 577.

[3] D. Oakman, "Rulers' Houses, Thieves, and Usurpers: The Beelzebul Pericopæ" *Forum* 4 (1988): 109-123 (111).

[4] We see in this methodological point a natural next step on from form critical study – sociological and anthropological questions complement form critical concerns. In this respect, the pendulum of Gospel Studies has in the 'third quest' swung away from redaction criticism back towards form critical emphases.

Hollenbach's thesis has been influential and is quoted by J. D. Crossan,[1] who adds a symbolic dimension to Hollenbach's analysis. Crossan cites G. Nickelsburg's assessment of the demonology of *1 Enoch* 37-71. This writing announces the coming of the great judgment in which God would vindicate his elect and punish the oppressors, whom Nickelsburg argues would have been understood to be the Roman generals, governors, late Hasmoneans and Herods by the author (writing at the beginning of the 1c.).[2] Crossan's comment on *1 Enoch* is that "For this representative of the Great Tradition,[3] then, Roman imperialism meant that God's people were possessed by demons on the social level". By this Crossan means that in the framework of the common cosmological dualism of the day, the Romans were associated with the forces of Satan, and on the basis of this association, demon possession was perceived as symbolic of Roman occupation. Crossan gives two illustrations of this symbology: (a) in the story of the Gaderene Demoniac – the demoniac was called "Legion", a symbol of the occupying power. Crossan argues that the adoption of this name indicates a symbolic understanding of demon possession on the part of the local people; and (b) Jesus' answers in the Beelzebub Controversy indicate a political perception of exorcism. Jesus uses the political metaphors of a "divided/fallen house" and a "divided kingdom" to describe his opponents' logic, and he characterizes Satan as having a kingdom (Luke 11:17-18; Mark 3:24-25).[4] Crossan's claim is that these details are historically reliable and reflect the common dualism of the day.

Jesus' *reductio ad absurdum* is that he is not with Satan; were he with Satan, Satan's rule would be collapsing. In symbolic terms, Jesus is not party to the Roman colonial oppression that lies at the root of the demon possession. Oakman supplements this analysis with a proposal about the tradition joined to the Beelzebub sayings on binding the "Strong Man" (Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-22; Matt 12:29). He interprets this tradition as a disguised claim by Jesus that he is like the bandits and "kings" who led uprisings against Herod in Galilee and redistributed the plundered wealth from Herod's palaces.[5]

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[1] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 317-8.

[2] G. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 215-223.

[3] The standard sociological expression, "Great Tradition", is used by Crossan and Horsley to refer to the scribal traditions of the establishment, particularly those upheld by the Jerusalem hierarchy; by contrast these scholars use the term, "Little Tradition", to refer to the popular and less articulate traditions of the village peasant classes.

[4] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, 319.

[5] Oakman, "Rulers' Houses, Thieves, and Usurpers: The Beelzebul Pericopæ", 114-116. Oakman ties his interpretation of the Beelzebub

Jesus' claim is to be "stronger" and able to plunder the strong man's "house", which was a common designation of a ruler's domain. Oakman concludes that the cluster of Beelzebub sayings "...all imply a setting in the realities of unrest and fall within agrarian monarchies of the late-Hellenistic type".[1]

Horsley agrees with Crossan and uses the same two illustrations[2] (the Gaderene demoniac being called "Legion", and the Beelzebub Controversy). Horsley also believes that these details are historically reliable and show that Jesus was a popular prophet "…who performed healings and exorcisms that manifested the victory of God's rule over that of the Romans".[3] However, Horsley argues for the "common dualism" of the day from different primary source material. The cosmological dualism, illustrated in the Beelzebub controversy, is not just a mythic struggle; it relates to the historical process. In the terms of the Qumran literature it was a struggle between the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness (Satan or Belial) and their representatives on earth (1QS II, 18-4:24). The Qumran theology here is that "…the struggle between two spiritual forces was taking place in the hearts of individual persons such that their personal behaviour as well as their social-political group was determined by their relative portion of the two spirits, of truth and falsehood (1QS IV, 2-12, 22-23)".[4] Horsley's conclusion is that, "When we attend to the concrete imperial situation…it is clear that the violent struggle between God and demonic forces was simply a symbolization or reflection of the violent social-political-religious conflict in which the people were caught individually and collectively".[5] This symbolization enabled the Qumran sectarians to come to terms with their situation as it evolved from an initial rejection of the Hasmonean priests to passive opposition to Rome and their client rulers.

The argument of these scholars, (Hollenbach, Crossan, and Horsley), that exorcisms stand at the centre of a politico-religious conflict between Jesus and other groups, can be accepted as proven. It can also be accepted that the Beelzebub controversy is key evidence for understanding the nature of that conflict. However, it is important to note that we are dealing with two different types of argument. Hollenbach's theories are inherently politico-

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Controversy to his treatment of "Son of Man" sayings — these (he claims) are the sayings of one who aspires to the throne. It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss the complexities of the Son of Man traditions.

[1] Oakman, "Rulers' Houses, Thieves, and Usurpers: The Beelzebul Pericopæ", 114.

[2] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 100-101.

[3] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 104.

[4] Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, 186.

[5] Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, 187.

religious, but they are theologically neutral—he does not argue that Jesus' exorcisms have a rich symbolic and ideational dimension.[1] Both Crossan and Horsley argue that the Beelzebub Controversy indicates a symbolic dimension to Jesus' exorcisms, one that is not just mythic but being enacted in the "historical process". It is important to note this distinction when evaluating the argument of these scholars.

The position of these three scholars can be questioned. S. L. Davis has offered a contrary analysis.[2] Davis' scathing comment is, "This line of thought is preposterous. But it seems to be state-of-the-art regarding the exorcism texts in the New Testament. The cause of demonic possession is said to be Roman domination of Galilee and the resulting indebtedness of Galileans; the act of exorcism is assumed then to be a political act with anti-Roman overtones that would have been clear to any who witnessed it. It is hard to know where to start in rejecting this interpretation".[3]

Davis' rejection of the Hollenbach-Crossan-Horsley approach rests on the historical research of E. P. Sanders and a psychological approach to demon possession. Sanders, he notes, has shown that Galilee was not occupied by Roman troops during the time of Jesus, that there is no evidence to show taxation in Galilee was higher then elsewhere in the empire, and that because of the royal building programmes, employment was relatively high.[4] This undermines the foundation of the Hollenbach-Crossan-Horsley approach.

Davis' main argument, however, is that demon possession is an "intra-family coping mechanism". After citing case studies, he concludes, "in light of such anthropological analyses, which could be multiplied considerably, it is almost certain that the majority of the demon-possessed individuals whom Jesus exorcised found themselves to be in intolerable circumstances of social

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[1] Since Hollenbach's original 1981 essay, he has since argued for a symbolic link between Roman colonial oppression and demon possession; see his *Help for Interpreting Jesus' Exorcisms*, published in the *SBL* Seminar Papers for 1993.

[2] S. L. Davis, *Jesus the Healer* (London: SCM Press, 1995), see ch. 6.

[3] Davis, *Jesus the Healer*, 79.

[4] E. P. Sanders rejects the picture of Galilee drawn by scholars such as Crossan and Horsley; see his "Jesus and Galilee" in *Jesus: A Colloquium in the Holy Land*, (ed., Doris Donnelly; Sheffield: Continuum, 2001). Another scholar relying on Sanders for this portrait of Galilee is P. Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), xix.

subordination within their family groups".[1] Davis' argument is that possession is to be understood on a smaller scale than the body politic.

Davis also proposes, again using clinical case studies, that we apply the model of multiple personality disorder (MPD) to some Gospel accounts of demon possession. He concludes, "It appears, then, that the aetiology of the cases of demon-possession reported in the New Testament may have been of two sorts. By analogy to cross-cultural anthropological studies we can presume that most of Jesus' clients were presently in situations of social, mainly familial stress, and that for them demon-possession was a somewhat effective, but socially acceptable, coping mechanism. Other clients, based on analogy to MPD theory, may have been under the influence of alter-personae that originated in the past, during childhood, as defence mechanisms resulting from abuse. These two aetiologies are not by any means mutually exclusive; occasions of abuse in childhood that resulted in MPD would indicate an oppressive family situation that might well continue into adolescence or adulthood and call forth a demon-possession coping mechanism".[2]

In addition to Davis' counter-argument, we would offer the following points against the Hollenbach-Crossan-Horsley approach:

1) The proposal that the incidence of demon possession in Galilee is to be explained as a function of Roman occupation and economic and social deprivation, or that it is the result of a conscious response to these conditions on the part of the peasant class, may have comparative anthropology to support it, but no evidence has been put forward that this was a common perception of groups like the Galilean Pharisees, Herodians, or the Jerusalem authorities. Scholars may apply a social-scientific perspective, but would the Pharisees have had this outlook? In addition, it is unlikely that the Romans viewed Jesus through Jewish cosmology; we cannot argue that Jesus' exorcisms were significant from a Roman perspective because they had anti-Roman overtones and that this is a reason why Jesus was crucified.

2) The relevance of the cosmological dualism of contemporary literature (e.g. Qumran literature, *1 Enoch*, and Jewish apocalypses) for the rural peasant classes has not been proven. Can we simply assume that the literate Jewish traditions are indicative of the rural peasant class and their worldview? If they were not aware of these ideas, can we say that their possession by demons was perceived by them to be symbolic of their political and economic plight?

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[1] Davis, *Jesus the Healer*, 85.
[2] Davis, *Jesus the Healer*, 89.

Even if we assume that literate groups held a dualistic view and viewed the Romans as allied with the powers of darkness, this does not mean that they saw demon possession as symbolic of Roman occupation and social and economic deprivation. Literate groups may have seen the Romans as instruments of Satan and believed that demons were under the control of Satan, but this does not prove that they saw one group (the demon-possessed) as symbolic of the other group (Romans).

3) While it is historically plausible that some of Jesus' actions were seen in a symbolic light, with the people understanding Jesus in terms of their prophetic heritage, the Hebrew Scriptures do not have a cosmological dualism, neither do they have a demonology, nor do the "healing" prophets (Elijah, Elisha) engage in exorcism. We cannot presume therefore that the people saw Jesus' exorcisms in terms of, say, the prophetic revolution of Elijah and Elisha in Northern Israel (as per Horsley). Jesus' own remark about casting out demons with the "finger of God" (Luke 11:20) is an allusion to Moses' encounter with the Egyptian magicians (Exod 8:19) and places the "sons" of the Pharisees in the typical role of the Egyptian magicians (Luke 11:19), rather than symbolically portraying Roman occupation as demon possession.

4) If Davis' familial analysis of the causes of demon possession is correct, then this is damaging to the "international" analysis of the causes of demon possession by Hollenbach, Crossan, and Horsley. Both approaches are not necessarily in conflict as they are different kinds of causal explanation: the broader societal explanation may be a background factor to individual and familial causes of demon possession. For the purposes of our argument, the debate is moot: an ethnocentric[1] causal analysis of demon possession does not settle the question whether Jesus' exorcisms were perceived to have "international" politico-religious significance by his contemporaries. The critical issue here is whether Jesus' contemporaries made a symbolic connection between two spheres of Satan's supposed influence: the historical conditions seen in Roman occupation and the physical affliction of individuals. The Hollenbach-Crossan-Horsley approach puts the two spheres alongside but does not supply the literary evidence for a symbolic linkage; neither do they put forward sociological evidence that the people and the groups opposing Jesus were making such a linkage.

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[1] C. Strecker calls the approach of Hollenbach and Crossan "functional rationalism", in "Jesus and the Demoniacs", in Stegemann, Malina and Theissen, eds., *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, 117-133.

Rather than attribute an "international" dimension to Jesus' exorcisms, it is more plausible to see in them a domestic agenda. We can identify four dimensions to such an agenda:

1) Societal reaction to Jesus and his exorcisms indicates that we need a societal explanation for the impact of his exorcisms over and above the proposition that Jesus was another itinerant healer. Davis' familial approach does not have sufficient explanatory power to account for societal reaction to Jesus. This is particularly the case because Jesus came to the attention of society from Herod downwards and in both Galilee and Judea. If a symbolic awareness of societal causes of demon possession (Horsley-Crossan-Hollenbach) does not provide a satisfactory explanation of societal reaction, we should turn our attention from cause to effect.

The effect of Jesus' exorcisms (and healings) attracted attention – they made him popular; they were a key driver in attracting followers in Galilee (Mark 1:28, 37-39, 45, 2:13, 15, 3:7-8, 30, 4:1, 5:31, 6:2-3, 8:1-2, 9:14).

Jesus' exorcisms also had the effect of imparting "authority" to his teaching (Mark 1:22, 27; 11:28-33), which was in some sense contrasted with the teaching of the Scribes, Pharisees, and Herod (Mark 2:6, 16; 7:1-16; 8:15).

So it was that Jesus' exorcisms attracted the attention of Pharisees (Matt 9:34; 12:24), Jerusalem authorities (Mark 3:22) and Herod (Mark 6:14; Luke 13:32). Of itself, this attention is sufficient to make Jesus' exorcisms politically and religiously significant.

2) A second domestic aspect to Jesus' exorcisms concerns social boundaries and the way in which access to religious things was mediated. Crossan[1] argues that Jesus' healing (and exorcisms), along with his practice of table fellowship, symbolized a breaking down of social boundaries and demonstrated unbrokered access to God and the power of the Spirit. Such a programme would be a direct to challenge to any group in authority and with a vested interest in the status quo.

3) D. Rhoads argues that holiness was a key domestic concept for the nation: "Holiness was a core value of the society. It was the major concept by which the nation-culture structured and classified everything in its world - people,

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[1] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, ch. 13. Crossan is bold enough to say that if magic and meal are not central to Jesus' programme; his book will have to be "undone" (304).

places, objects and times".[1] This concept is central to M. Borg's treatment of Jesus' teaching in *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus*. Borg's definition of holiness is narrower than that of Rhoads and is based on ideas of purity and cleanness whenever these are applied in affirming and establishing social boundaries.[2] The "conflict stories" of Mark illustrate where Jesus' values were re-drawing boundaries of holiness: conflicts over table fellowship, washing and purity, tithing, Sabbath observance and temple sanctity.[3] Jesus' concept of holiness was one based on compassion and "wholeness" rather than ritual or physical separation – ideas advocated by competing Judaisms. Exorcism of "unclean" spirits (Mark 1:23, 3:11, 5:2, 6:7, 7:25) was part and parcel of Jesus' re-drawing of holiness boundaries: Borg argues they illustrated the transforming power of Jesus' concept of holiness to the people.[4]

4) Jesus' construal of his exorcisms as manifestations of a kingdom of God (Luke 11:20) further characterizes them as politically and religiously significant and presents a challenge to those with competing visions of such a kingdom. Whether Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God had an eschatological dimension,[5] it had a present application, and Jesus presented his own behaviour as a model of what was expected of people "in the kingdom".

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[1] D. Rhoads, "Social Criticism: Crossing Social Boundaries" in *Mark and Method*, (eds., J. Anderson and S. Moore; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 135-162 (147).

[2] Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics*, 8-10. Borg sees the practise of holiness in the societies of Jesus' day and conflict between the various Jewish groups over the application of holiness. Such applications were broader than just the application of Levitical Law, but holiness was not the only concept setting social boundaries.

[3] The "critical" message challenges the institutional Mosaic framework for forgiveness centred in the temple and its sacrifices (Mark 2:1-12), promotes an open table fellowship (Mark 2:13-17), flouts fasting customs (Mark 2:18-21), violates Sabbath law (Mark 2:22-28; 3:1-5). These "stories" are the preface to the plotting device of the Pharisee/Herodian plot to kill Jesus (Mark 3:6).

[4] Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics*, 147-149.

[5] This is a disputed question in current scholarship; Borg reviews the lines in *Conflict, Holiness and Politics*, 3-4. It is not necessary for our thesis to adopt a position on this question, although we favour placing Jesus in an eschatological context. Our point is that whether or not Jesus' teaching about the kingdom had an eschatological cast, it evidently had a contemporary social application.

These four politico-religious aspects of Jesus' exorcisms show that increasing popularity and a critical message caused groups like the Pharisees, Scribes and Herodians to regard Jesus with hostility. The Beelzebub Controversy, which the disparate traditions indicate occurred on more than one occasion, is a genuine reflection of the conflict. Through a process of labelling Jesus as "deviant", opponents attempted to place Jesus outside society, assign him a new identity, and enforce group boundaries.[1] Jesus' family and friends followed the same strategy in labelling Jesus as "beside himself" (Mark 3:21, 32).[2]

Our conclusion therefore is that Jesus' exorcisms were perceived to have political significance by his contemporaries. This was a domestic political significance bound up with perceptions of Jesus' religious teaching and how he was challenging social norms and received traditions. In constructing such a socio-political context for Jesus' exorcisms, we are giving the accounts an evidential value and ascribing a measure of historical plausibility to them as records.

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[1] Guijarro discusses this process in *The Politics of Exorcism*, 162-164.

[2] Both Jesus' family and his opponents illustrate Hollenbach's third theory explaining the incidence of demon possession, viz. Jesus was being accused of being possessed as a means of social control—Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities: A Socio-Historical Study", 577.

CHAPTER FOUR

Mark

It is important to distinguish symbolic perceptions that we attribute to Jesus' contemporaries, and which we construct from the historical sources, from any symbology we attribute to the author as part of an interpretative overlay. In the last chapter, we argued that while some of Jesus' actions might have been construed symbolically, it is unlikely that his exorcisms were viewed in this way by the people or opposing groups. Our argument was that there was a lack of evidence to show that Jesus' contemporaries perceived his exorcisms on a symbolic level. The same argument does not apply to the "author" of Mark. In this chapter, we are interested in whether and how Mark adds a symbolic layer of interpretation to the exorcism stories, and we will examine the stories of the Synagogue Man and the Gaderene Swine.

Telford, offers the following judgment about Mark,

> Redaction Criticism (and its sister discipline composition criticism) has uncovered the extent to which the evangelist has selected, arranged, linked, altered, modified, re-shaped, expanded and sometimes created the material of which his Gospel is composed.[1]

We do not need to adopt Telford's appraisal of NT criticism to accept that the exorcism stories have been shaped by Mark under inspiration. In shaping these stories, it can be shown that Mark has been influenced by several factors. One key influence on the development of the Gospel was the Jewish canonical scriptural tradition.[2] The use of the Hebrew Scriptures by Mark in shaping his stories can be demonstrated at many points in quotation, allusion and echoes.[3] R. Longenecker calls the uncovering of such allusions and

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[1] Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, 22.

[2] The *canon* of the Hebrew Scriptures was most probably established at a synod convened at Jamnia near Jaffa, between 90 and 100 C.E., but judging from the library at Qumran, we can assume that a *de facto* canon of similar books was in operation in Jesus' day; See G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Qumran in Perspective*, (London: SCM Press, 1994), ch. 8.

[3] There are many discussions of the use of Old Testament in the New Testament. For an introduction to this topic see S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction* (Sheffield: T&T Clark, 2001). For an overview of how Hebrew Scriptural traditions have shaped Gospel stories, see W. M.

echoes to the Jewish Scriptures "inner-biblical exegesis", and characterizes this as uncovering the "imbedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one". [1] The problem he highlights with such exegesis is one of method: what criteria can be used to identify echoes and allusions?

Longenecker, drawing on the work of M. Fishbane, suggests that allusions can be identified according to several criteria. However, Longenecker's own approach in "inner biblical exegesis" is to focus on explicit quotation, and he counsels caution with the identification of allusions. Interpreting Longenecker's suggestions on identifying allusions and echoes, our method in this chapter will be to trace links between the exorcism stories and the Hebrerw Scriptures (criterion (i)). We will test whether such links constitute allusions by asking whether they share a common theme (criterion (ii)). We will also ask whether such links are distinctive and unusual and likely to be the crafting of an author (criterion (iii)).

It is important to make the case that a symbolic approach to the Gospel of Mark is appropriate. This exercise will then form a supportive background to the exegesis. Two points can be made:

Firstly, examples of socio-political public behaviour[2] from the first century illustrate that those involved often acted symbolically using Israelite traditions

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Swartley, *Israel's Scripture Traditions and the Synoptic Gospels: Story Shaping Story* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994). Swartley's thesis about Mark is that it's threefold narrative structure (Galilee, "on the way", and Jerusalem) utilises exodus and conquest traditions and then switches to temple and kingship traditions when Jesus arrives at Jerusalem. For a discussion of the intertextuality of Mark's apocalyptic discourse and his demon miracles see V. K. Robbins, "The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in Mark" in *The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the New Testament*, (ed., D. F. Watson; *SBL* Seminar Papers, 14; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002).

[1] R. N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), xiv-xvii. Longenecker contrasts "inner biblical exegesis" with "extra biblical exegesis" – the uncovering of external influences on N.T. writers.

[2] We have chosen a neutral phraseology to make this point. There are varieties of socio-political behaviours in evidence during the first century, and classifications such as "rebel", "revolutionary", "social prophet", "bandit", "brigand", "eschatological prophet", "sage", "cynic", "messianic prophet", "charismatic", *and so on*, are discussed in the 'third quest' literature with regard to Jesus. Contextualising Jesus in this way is beyond the scope of this

as a model or template for their action. This historical pattern makes it likely that Jesus' own words and actions would have been construed symbolically. For instance,

1) John the Baptist mimicked the lifestyle of Elijah, and baptised the people in water, imitating Moses' leadership of the people through the Reed Sea (Mark 1:7-8, Ant. 18.116-119, cf. 1 Cor 10:2). In imitating Elijah, he was drawing an analogy between his day and the political situation of Elijah who in Hebrew tradition opposed Ahab (Herod) and Jezebel (Herodias).[1]

2) The leaders of popular prophetic movements such as Theudas and a prophet known as "the Egyptian" mimicked acts of deliverance known from the Hebrew Scriptures. Theudas led followers to Jordan claiming that he would divide the river and take the people across thus legitimating his credentials as a new "Joshua" (*Ant.* 20.97; Joshua 3). The prophet known as "the Egyptian" led followers out of Jerusalem to the Mount of Olives and claimed that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down at his command, thus claiming to be another "Joshua" (*Ant.* 20.169-70; *War* 13.261-3; Joshua 6; Acts 21:38). Josephus also mentions leaders who used "the wilderness" to show "signals of liberty", thus imitating Moses (War 2.260).[2]

3) The Essenes and the Qumran community was a separationist sect that used Israelite traditions of the Exodus to define their identity as "the true Israel, governed by twelve leaders, [waiting] for the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God".[3] Separation was their response to the political situation of their day (the Hasmonean High Priests' accommodation with the Seleucid Empire); they interpreted their experience in Hebrew eschatological symbolism, expecting the end.

4) Rebels and bandits typically set their leaders up as "kings" and ruled in their area of revolt until they were defeated and executed. This imitates the Hebrew tradition of the people electing a king (Ant. 17.271-85, War 2.56-65). Josephus particularly notes that two of the leaders (Simon and Athronges)

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book. Our argument is just that *symbolic behaviour* was a conventional kind of behaviour of the time.

[1] See A. Farrar, *St Matthew and St Mark* (London: Dacre Press, 1966), ch. 1.

[2] For a review of these movements, see R. A. Horsley, "Popular Prophetic Movements" in, *New Testament Backgrounds*, (eds., C. A. Evans and S. E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1997). Horsley describes the imitating actions of such prophets as "historical-eschatological typology", 131.

[3] Vermes, "Introduction" to *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 22.

were "tall men" which was (according to tradition) the defining feature of Israel's first king - Saul (1 Sam 9:2).

These four examples illustrate the practise of symbolic imitation of Israelite tradition[1] by different movements. Horsley comments,

> Many of the movements and revolts against Roman imperial rule took social forms that were distinctive to Israelite tradition and society - social forms that were suggestive for their similarities to prominent themes in Jesus' preaching and practice.[2]

Secondly, evidence in Mark suggests that at least some of Jesus' words and actions were being understood symbolically by contemporaries. For instance, when we reach the watershed of Jesus' public career, at Caesarea Philippi, the disciples report people's differing perceptions about Jesus: Jesus was like Elijah, John the Baptist, or one of the prophets (Mark 8:27-28; cf. 6:15). This shows that the people perceived Jesus in symbolic terms related to their cultural tradition.

Jesus' own words and actions allude to scriptural tradition. He fed the people in the wilderness like Moses (Mark 6:35-44, 8:1-9); he invoked the image of Israel as a vineyard, and spoke against the husbandmen of the vineyard (Mark 12:1-12, Isa 5), and his hearers understood that he was speaking against them; he cleansed the temple, quoting Jeremiah's diatribe against the priests (Jer 7:1); he compared himself to the prophet Jonah (Luke 11:29-32) and his times to those of Noah (Luke 17:26-27, 30) – both comparisons of judgment; he appointed twelve disciples, and the people would have associated this number of appointments with the twelve tribes (Mark 3:14, Deut 1:13, 15-16); and he "curses" a fig tree, a prophetic symbol of Israel (Mark 11:12-14, 20-23; Hos 9:10; Joel 1:7, 12; Amos 4:9).

In Chapter Three, we did not find evidence to show that contemporaries were interpreting Jesus' exorcisms symbolically, and in particular we did not find persuasive social-scientific arguments for an international (Roman) symbolic significance to Jesus' exorcisms. However, with the transition of

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[1] It is important to distinguish the tradition being imitated. Israelite Scripture had liberation tradition (Exodus), traditions of kingship (David and Saul), traditions of conquest (Joshua), and restoration (Post-Exile). Any or all of these could be used to illuminate a political message. It is beyond the scope of this book to consider how Jesus imitated his cultural traditions, except in the case of his exorcisms.

[2] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire*, 49.

individual oral units of tradition into a literate form, the influence of first century writing comes into play. The reflection of communities, authors and redactors is integral to this transition process. Jesus' contemporaries speculated as to what prophet he might have been, and likely saw some of his actions in a symbolic way. The setting down in writing of traditions about Jesus allows such writing to be enhanced with subtle and nuanced links to the Israelite literary heritage. Here, the way that the Qumran community symbolically handled the same heritage is a comparable example for analysing early Christian writings. Therefore, it is possible that even if Jesus' contemporaries did not see symbolic significance in his exorcisms, the Christian authors and redactors did see them in a symbolic light.

Mark's first exorcism story is, as Twelftree observes, "paradigmatic and programmatic".[1] The setting of this miracle sees Jesus entering a synagogue on a Sabbath and teaching with authority. The teaching is not described, but a man with an "unclean spirit" declares that Jesus is the Holy One of God. Jesus rebukes him, and the unclean spirit comes out of the man. The onlookers are amazed, and this is conveyed as rhetorical questions about the miracle and Jesus' teaching (Mark 1:21-28).

Textual links with the Hebrew Scriptures[2] suggest the following symbology:

1) The man is symbolic of the nation, and his possession of an "unclean spirit" symbolizes the nation's spiritual idolatry (Ezek 36:17-18, 25-26). Zechariah associates the expression "unclean spirit" with idolatry (Zech 13:2). Mark is presenting Jesus in this prophetic light: as the one who cleanses the nation of idolatry.

2) The demoniac uses certain expressions which fall into line with the symbology:

i) "Let us alone" is an echo of Exod 14:12, "Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?"[1]

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[1] Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 57. R. Bultmann describes the story as "a paradigmatic illustration of the ministry of Jesus" in his seminal *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. J. Marsh; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 209.
[2] The connections that we make in this chapter are to the Hebrew Scriptures. For simplicity, the conceptual connections are noted as mediated in English rather than the Hebrew or even the OG.

ii) "...destroy us" is an echo of Deut 1:27, "Because the Lord hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us."[2]

These echoes suggest that we are to take the demon-possessed man as representative of the people who are "spiritually" in Egypt wanting to be left alone, and fearing that they would be destroyed if they followed Moses. In typical terms, just as an unclean spirit possessed the man, so too Israel were possessed by Egypt. This was not just a physical bondage, although they were literally a "possession". It was also a spiritual possession, because the people had become attached to Egypt's gods (idols). In this way, they were "unclean" (Ezek 20:7-8) and in need of cleansing.[3]

3) The title used by the demoniac, "Holy One of God", is a quotation of Ps 78:41, and its use fits in with this Exodus typology:

> Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the
> Holy One of Israel. Pss 78:41

The "Holy One" of Israel was the Angel of the Lord who had delivered Israel from Egypt. They had provoked this angel by turning back from the land (Isa 63:9). This angel had done many "works and wonders" (Ps 78:11) in redeeming Israel, and as such Mark is presenting him as a type of Christ presenting himself to the people as their Holy One.[4]

The demoniac does not call Jesus "the Holy One of Israel", but rather "Holy One of God". This reflects Mark's Christology and his adaptation of scriptural tradition. Jesus is the Son of God (Mark 1:1, 15:39,[5] cf. 3:11), and a counterpart to the Holy One of Israel — the new redeemer of Israel from

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[1] The expression, "let us alone" - חדל (Exod 14:12), is an exclamation of distrust.

[2] Other Jesus traditions may supply a reason for this fear of destruction: the people thought Jesus had come to destroy the "established order", i.e. the temple and the Law (Matt 5:17, 26:61).

[3] Luke's tradition may reflect the same symbology. Jesus' message to Herod about his cleansing work was that it would take place 'to day and to morrow' (Luke 13:33), just as Moses cleansed the people at Sinai 'to day and to morrow' from their idols (Exod 19:10).

[4] See also uses of the title in Isa 41:20 and Hab 3:3 and the allusions to the Exodus in those contexts.

[5] This announcement by the soldier at the cross is Mark's *inclusio* with his opening title (1:1) and establishes his main Christological theme.

oppression — this time, Roman. The irony[1] here is that whereas the demoniac makes this identification, the people do not show this understanding. Mark has the demons declare that they "know" Jesus (Mark 3:10-11[2]), and this reflects the pattern that an Exodus style redemption involves "knowing" Yahweh (Exod 6:7, 10:2).[3]

4) Jesus "rebukes" the demon. In Jewish tradition, Israel is rebuked for her waywardness (Deut 28:20), and the nations are rebuked for what they do to Israel. The rebuke of the unclean spirit is more like the rebuke of the nations (Isa 2:4; 17:13). In terms of the Markan symbology, it is tantamount to a rebuke of Egypt (Rome) as the one who (illicitly) possessed Israel. The unclean spirit comes out of the man after tearing him (cf. Hos 6:1-3), and after uttering a "great" (μεγάλη) cry (Mark 1:26). This cry corresponds to the "great cry" uttered by the Egyptians on the death of their firstborn (Exod 11:6, 12:30).

Jesus' reply to the demon echoes Zeph 1:7:

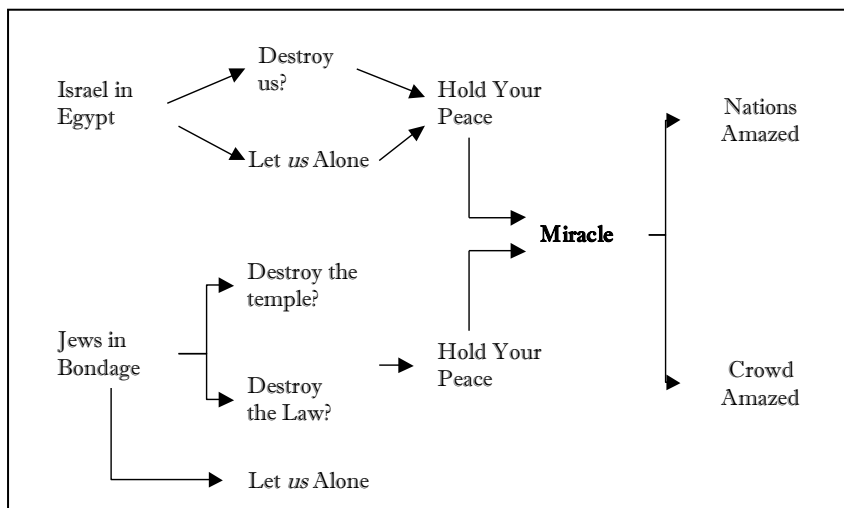> <u>Hold thy peace</u> at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand... Zeph 1:7-8

The context of this injunction in Zephaniah is the idolatry of Judah in Josiah's reign, and Mark's comparison is pitched so as to invite the people to

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[1] J. Knight comments of the parallel Lucan record, "The first indication of irony is the healing of the possessed man…The devil identifies Jesus as 'the Son of God' when he is cast out of the man. This is ironic because the demon utters knowledge which is true but which the other characters understand only incompletely. That the demons should identify Jesus in this way, but have their correct identification ignored by the other characters is a prominent theme of the early chapters", *Luke's Gospel* (London: Routledge, 1998), 65. For a discussion of irony, see S. H. Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel* (Sheffield, Sheffield University Press, 1996), ch. 6.

[2] Luke uses a neuter participle ("…saying…") in the parallel record — Luke 4:41, which agrees grammatically with the neuter noun "demons". The case of Mark 3:11 is not so clear: the critical eclectic text reads, λέγοντες, which is a masculine form of the verb for "saying", and would agree with the reference to people in Mark 3:10. The Majority Text of Mark 3:11 reads λέγοντα, which is a neuter form of the same verb and would agree with a reference to demons. For a discussion of the underlying manuscripts, see V. Taylor, *The Gospel of Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1963), 228.

[3] The identification of Jesus by demons is part of the problem in Markan Studies known as the Messianic Secret.

Israel in Egypt → Destroy us? → Hold Your Peace

Let *us* Alone → Hold Your Peace

Miracle → Nations Amazed

Jews in Bondage → Destroy the temple? / Destroy the Law? → Hold Your Peace → Miracle → Crowd Amazed

Let *us* Alone

recognize the nearness of day of the Lord. And in keeping with the Exodus typology, it is significant that Moses tells the Israelites at the Red Sea that they would "hold their peace" when they saw the salvation of the Lord:

> The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall <u>hold your peace</u>. Exod 14:14

5) The crowd reacted with amazement (Mark 1:27), and in the context of the Exodus symbology we are tracing, the crowd symbolize the nations who witnessed the Exodus. Their "amazement" or "disturbance" reflects the "amazement" of the nations at the deliverance of Israel from Egypt:

> Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Exod 15:15

As a result of the miracle, Jesus' fame "spread abroad" (Mark 1:28), and this detail mimics how the news of the Exodus spread quickly abroad through the nations (Exod 15:14; Num 14:14; Deut 2:25; Josh 2:9-10).

On the basis of these allusions, it can be argued that Mark has shaped the exorcism story using Exodus traditions. We can summarise and illustrate this "Exodus" shaping of the "Synagogue Man" in a diagram (above).

If we apply Longenecker's suggestions on identifying allusions and echoes to the story of the Synagogue Man we find that we have traced linguistic (i.e.

conceptual rather than lexical) links to the Hebrew Scriptures (criterion (i)); and we have traced links that share a common theme – the Exodus liberation[1] (criterion (ii)). However, it remains an open question whether the links are linguistically distinctive and unusual and likely to be the crafting of an author (criterion (iii)).

Twelftree[2] discusses the Markan exorcisms with a view to determining what language is attributable to the process of redaction and what is likely to reflect the original event. In his discussion of the Synagogue Man, Twelftree offers archaeological and literary parallels to show that the description of the exorcism is authentic to the 1c., (we made this point in Chapter Two), and he argues that there is nothing in the description of the demoniac or the conversational exchange that serves a theological purpose of early Christian communities. He concludes therefore that redactional influence is minimal, and he restricts such influence to the ending of the pericopæ and Mark's mention of amazement at Jesus' teaching and authority.

Twelftree does not discuss whether the language of the story has links with Jewish Scriptural traditions. Our presentation therefore constitutes countervailing evidence against Twelftree's position. Our claim, that Mark has shaped the story using Exodus traditions, shows a theological purpose and is consistent with the early Christian communities' use of Exodus typology to develop doctrine. However, we have not said that certain pieces of language in the story do not reflect the actual event of the exorcism; for example, we have not claimed that the demon-possessed man did not actually address Jesus as 'the Holy One of God'.

The determination of redactional layers in Mark is a complex scholarly process and beyond the scope of this study; moreover, its methodology is flawed. Our argument does not depend on identifying any particular piece of language as attributable to just Mark as an author. For example, some or all of the linguistic items that we have highlighted – 'let us alone', 'destroy us', 'unclean spirit', 'Holy One of God', 'rebuke', 'hold your peace' and 'amazed' – may reflect the original event or be attributable to Mark. We offer no view on this question, not because we cannot, but because it is beyond our remit.

However, an event can be imbued with symbolic significance by any number of authorial choices. For example, if we regard 'Holy One of God' as Markan, but regard the other details as accurate recollection of the actual event, this one change has a transforming effect on the story if we regard this title as

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[1] For a discussion of Mark's use of "liberation" symbology in his opening stories (1:21-3:6) see Swartley, *Story*, 50-60.
[2] Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, chs. 6-9.

linked to the title 'Holy One of Israel'. We would argue that Mark's summary of Jesus' exorcisms (Mark 3:11) provides the hermeneutical key: unclean spirits recognise Jesus as the 'Son of God', and it is the way that Mark incorporates this element of recognition into the stories that transforms them. The symbology of the story pivots around this recognition and this symbology compares Jesus to the Angel of the Lord.

Arguably, the most famous exorcism of Jesus is the healing of the Gaderene Demoniac. The three Gospel accounts of this story have many points of difference and the tradition history is complex.[1] Matthew, for example, details two men meeting Jesus, while Mark and Luke describe only one man. Our question is whether there is a political symbology in the final Markan redaction.

In Mark, a man encounters Jesus getting out of a boat, and he falls down and worships him. Recognising Jesus as the Son of the Most High God, he adjures Jesus to leave him alone. Jesus does not cast out the unclean spirit at once, but talks with him and discovers that he is one of many. All of the demons request to pass from the man into a herd of swine. This happens and the herd rushes down a hill and drowns in the sea (Mark 5:1-20).

Textual links with the Hebrew Scriptures suggest the following symbology:

1) There are several links with Isaiah 65 which Twelftree notes[2] has led some scholars to suggest Mark's account is a kind of "midrash" on Isaiah 65.

i) The man has his dwelling among the tombs and monuments of a graveyard set on a hillside, and this setting echoes the description of Israel in Isaiah 65:

> "people...which remain among the tombs, and lodge in the monuments... Isa 65:3-4

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[1] See Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, ch. 7.

[2] Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*, 73. Twelftree does not develop this approach. V. Taylor, *Mark*, 279, and H. B. Swete, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, (London: Macmillan, 1898), 88, also note the textual link with Isa 65:4, but only as an example of the practise of inhabiting tombs. Scholars who suggest that Mark's account may allude to Isaiah 65 (but without developing the links) include, D. E. Nineham, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, (London: A & C Black, 1968), 153, and R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 227.

This echo suggests a symbolic reading whereby the man stands for the 'people' of Israel in a state of idolatry.[1]

ii) The man was always "in the mountains" and this detail picks up on the fact that Israel continually served idols on their respective mountains:

> Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burned incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills... Isa 65:7, cf. Hos 4:13

Mark's symbology is presenting the cause of Israel's captivities as her persistent idolatry.

iii) The man is possessed by many demons, and in Isa 65:11 the people are described as preparing a table for 'Gad' (MT) the god of fortune (LXX — τῷ δαίμονι) Paul alludes to this Isaiah text in his warning to the Corinthians about sharing a table with demons (1 Cor 10:21).

iv) The region is one where pigs are raised, and in Isa 65:4 the people are described as eaters of 'swine's flesh'.

These allusions, (i)-(iv), present a picture of Israel as idolatrous. The Isaiah text is chiding the people as idolatrous and unclean, and declaring that there was another nation, not called by God's name, who was responding to God (v. 1). Paul uses this text in support of the legitimacy of his Gentile mission (Rom 10:20-21). In a similar fashion, Mark is providing support for a Gentile mission through the implied criticism of the nation in Jesus' exorcism.

The geography of the miracle is consistent with this symbology. The miracle takes place in the country of the Gaderenes[2] rather than Galilee. It is as if the nation (represented by the man) is in a foreign country, to which Jesus has

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[1] This connection would constitute an argument for the view that the man is 'of Israel' rather than a Gentile, which is an alternative commentary approach, for example, M. D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (London: A & C Black, 1995), 140-146. A. Farrar argues for a Jewish symbolic application of the healing miracles in *St Matthew and St Mark*, ch. 2. Farrar's proposal is that Mark has 12 healing miracles to match the 12 tribes of Israel and 1 healing miracle to the Gentiles (The Syro-Phoenician Woman).

[2] There is disagreement over the accuracy of this detail and the Jesus' traditions and Greek manuscripts give conflicting information. Many commentaries cover this issue; for a discussion see B. Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 179-180.

come as a redeemer, although the man does not believe himself to be in captivity. This symbology also explains the name of the demoniac — Legion. The Jews were now in "captivity" to the Roman superpower and her legions.[1] 2) The man is described as having often been bound with fetters and chains (Mark 5:3-4). This description alludes to the various captivities of Judah, which were brought about because of the idolatry and spiritual unfaithfulness of the people. These are described using the language of "fetters and chains" (2 Chron 33:11, 36:6, 2 Kgs 24:7). The purpose of these captivities was to bring the people back to God.

Against the background of this symbolic description of the people as a demon-possessed man, Jesus comes as a redeemer: Rome was to be removed from the land.

3) The exchange of conversation between the unclean spirit and Jesus is similar to the case of the Synagogue Man:

> What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not. Mark 5:7

The Christology here is comparable with the unclean spirit's declaration in the story of the Synagogue Man. The expression 'most high' ($\H{υ}ψιστος$) is used in apocalyptic contexts and carries overtones of political rule (cf. uses in Daniel, e.g. Dan 4:17). As such it evokes the sense of a political confrontation, as Jesus is the son of the one who rules in heaven. The expression is also used to describe God as the deliverer in wilderness traditions (Ps 78:17, 56), so that it would evoke memories of God as a liberator of his people. Finally, the title is used by non-Israelites to describe the God of Israel (e.g. Num 24:16; Isa 14:14). All three kinds of use fit a symbolic understanding of the demon as "foreign" to Israel. In particular, the use of this title in the wilderness traditions suggests that Mark is portraying

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[1] Whereas in the previous chapter, we rejected the proposal of Horsley and Crossan that the *locals and leaders of the region* understood that the demoniac was symbolically possessed by Rome, our proposal now is that the detail does fit into Mark's *literate* symbology. The symbolic significance of 'Legion' is not the locals' perception, but the demoniac's self-understanding; and as such, it is part of the "supernatural knowledge" he betrays when he calls Jesus, 'son of the Most High God': he is a Roman Legion and Jesus is the redeemer of Israel. J. Bowman, contrary to most commentators, suggests that the term has nothing to do with a Roman Legion, and may have translated a Semitic word meaning 'host', but he produces no parallel. It is more likely that it is a Latinism. See J. Bowman, *The Gospel of Mark: The New Jewish Christian Jewish Passover Haggadah*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), 143-144.

Jesus as an agent of God, similar in function to the Angel of the Lord that brought Israel out of Egypt.

The demon asks not to be sent out of the country, a request that echoes Zech 13:2:

> And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. Zech 13:2

This prophecy predicts that the unclean spirit will "pass out of the land", and Mark's echo invites the reader to see Jesus in the light of Zechariah's prophecy.

4) Jesus sends the demons into a nearby herd of swine, which rush down, headlong, into the sea. The Egyptians, the archetypical oppressors of Israel, were "destroyed" in the Red Sea, and this action is therefore symbolic of the removal of the current oppressors of the nation. The result of the miracle was that the people of the Gaderene region were afraid, and this is how the nations reacted to Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Exod 15:14). Jesus instructs the man to tell how God had shown him compassion, just as God had shown compassion in the wilderness (Ps 78:38; Mark 5:19).

The event is described as "great things" (Mark 5:19). This expression further picks up Exodus typology, insofar as Israel's deliverance from Egypt is also described as "great things" (Ps 106:21).

Our proposal is that Mark presents his Gaderene Demoniac account as a symbolic cleansing of the nation from idol worship and their liberation from Rome. However, Mark is not assuming that the people were idol worshippers in Jesus' day. Rather, the perspective of the miracle is historical, i.e. the people are being described in historical terms. The people are being given their prophetic and historical character, and Mark is presenting Jesus as the liberator of the nation in relation to their history.

If we again apply Longenecker's suggestions on identifying allusions and echoes to the story of the Gaderene Demoniac we find that have a number of semantic connections with the Hebrew Scriptures (criterion (i)), and several from Isaiah 65; further, the links share a common theme – the captivities of Israel because of idolatry, and Jesus as a liberator of the nation (criterion (ii)).

The same doubt can be raised for our treatment of the Gaderene Demoniac as for the Synagogue Man: are the links likely to be the crafting of an author (criterion (iii)). Here we can offer two points: the number of links to Isaiah 65 are impressive and suggest intentional use; secondly, with this second set-piece miracle being amenable to a similar symbolic treatment as the Synagogue Man, we are building a cumulative case for the hypothesis that Mark regards all exorcisms as symbolic of a conflict between the kingdom of God, Israel, and Rome.

Again, as with our argument about the Synagogue Man, it is not necessary that all of links with the Hebrew Scriptures are proven. Some correspondences may be constructs of the reader rather than intentional echoes by the author. What is required however is that some link is proven and for that link to bring with it a symbolic template that allows readers to see other language in the story as part of the symbology.

Our argument here can be supplemented by a further consideration about echoes and allusions. Our reading does not depend on there being lexical similarity between Mark's Greek text and the LXX, nor does it depend on their being a semantic equivalence between Mark's text and corresponding MT language. A piece of language that we identify in Mark's account has to share some of its semantic field with a corresponding MT (or even an LXX) expression for us to suggest a link.

However, such a link does not of itself amount to an allusion by an author. For this to be shown, we have to demonstrate an authorial intention. However, such an intention may not be to allude to a particular expression in the Hebrew Scriptures or the LXX; the intention may be to allude to the framework of an Israelite story.

So, for example, part of the Israelite story of the Exodus includes the detail that the people feared that Moses had brought them out of Egypt to perish in the wilderness. This feature, along with others from the Exodus story, fits the framework of the account of the Synagogue Man. Mark may be echoing the Hebrew tradition in this way rather than, in our example, alluding to the expression 'destroy us' from Deut 1:27.

Similarly, in the case of the Gaderene Swine, Mark may not be echoing the mention of fetters and chains in the description of Judah's captivities (2 Chron 33:11; 36:6; 2 Kgs 24:7), but he may be alluding to the fact that Judah's idolatry led to her captivities.

Our argument therefore is not that Mark is echoing any one specific expression that we identify in either the Greek or Hebrew Old Testament; if

he is doing so, then it is most likely that he is alluding to the titular traditions of the Hebrew Scriptures. Our linguistic proposals are suggestive, but they require more methodological work. Our principal argument is rather that Mark is alluding to the framework of stories in Israel's traditions – the linguistic links we noted in this essay are put forward as heuristic devices towards this argument.

We have put forward a symbolic and typological reading of Mark's exorcisms. It is a pre-critical[1] reading in the sense that we have not engaged the historical concerns that characterize redaction criticism. A number of issues are raised by our exegesis in this chapter:

F. Kermode identifies a key problem: "…the more complex the purely literary structure is shown to be, the harder it is for most people to accept the narratives as naively transparent upon historical reality".[2] This problem arises because the complexity is attributed to the author and his art in telling the story. The presumption is that the author will have chosen to include detail that is not rooted in the historical event or he will have chosen to describe the event according to his own design. Our thesis therefore requires further methodological work arguing that literary artifice is consistent with historical story-telling.

A second problem identified by Kermode is whether Mark intended such echoes and whether the audience understood them.[3] This challenge requires any literary typology to be set within the context of the development of Mark's community. This is the essential argument of H. Kee's "community" approach to Mark.[4] If we were to propose a community setting for this

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[1] The notion of a 'pre-critical' reading is derived from H. W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), ch. 2. Frei is describing the era of Biblical interpretation prior to the rise of the historico-critical method as "pre-critical".

[2] F. Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1979), 62. Kermode makes this remark as part of his assessment of the work of Farrar on Mark; Farrar was noted for his symbolic reading of N.T. texts. Kermode notes that Farrar's work was rejected by the establishment because it was so literary (p. 63), but then it is interesting that Kermode is writing before the "literary turn" in N.T Studies that has taken place since 1979.

[3] Kermode, *Genesis*, 62.

[4] "The conceptual freight carried by the vocabulary and reinforced by the rhetorical and stylized modes of expression he employs cannot be fairly assessed in abstraction from the socio-cultural setting in which and for which

symbology, then a symbology portraying Jesus as a liberator is consistent with a context of Jewish rebellion against Rome and an expectation of an imminent Parousia.

A third observation made by Kermode is that such a typological reading presents a hidden plot within "the manifest one".[1] It is not just a question of seeing Jesus' exorcisms as a contributory factor leading to his death; there is a broader plot of salvation history. This plot requires us to set Jesus' words and actions within the context of Israelite history and the history of God's dealings with mankind. Our thesis requires further development relating Jesus' exorcisms and other "events" in Jesus' public career to the Jews and their relationship with God.

In addition to the above points, we can make the following observations on the argument of this chapter:

1) We have made connections with the Hebrew Scriptures, but Mark's text may echo other inter-testamental literature. Our approach has displayed a canonical bias, but we have not argued for any primacy to be afforded the Old Testament. The titles of Christ, 'Holy One of God' or 'Son of the Most High God' may reflect other literary backgrounds. This is a large and disputed area of scholarship in its own right.

2) We have considered two set-piece exorcisms as examples. If an author-intended politico-religious symbology is to be sustained in each of these cases, a broader cumulative argument should be attempted. The other set-piece exorcisms could fall into the same pattern (Epileptic Boy[2] and Syro-Phoenician Woman).[3] Critical passages or texts, relating to demon possession, like the Beelzebub Controversy, could be amenable to similar treatment; finally, Matthean and Lucan material may illustrate the same symbology, in key texts like the Parable of the Wandering Spirit, or even the accounts of exorcisms in Acts.

The success or failure of this project (to provide a symbolic interpretation of Jesus' exorcisms) has wider implications. It was Bultmann who observed that in the light of modern scientific knowledge, "it is no longer possible for

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the author prepared his work". H.C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel*, (Louisville: WJK Press, 1977), 11.

[1] Kermode, *Genesis*, 64.

[2] For a similar approach to the Epileptic Boy in the Matthean tradition, see D. C. Allison, *The New Moses* (T&T Clark, 1993), 243.

[3] See A. Perry, *Demons, Magic and Medicine* (Sunderland: Willow Publications, 1999).

anyone seriously to hold the New Testament view of the world".[1] A symbolic approach to the exorcisms, if it can be justified, is one way of meeting Bultmann's challenge. Theissen and Merz make the telling point that if the Gospel writers approach the exorcism stories in a symbolic way, then this encourages Christians in this day and age to handle them in the same way.[2] Over and above this, however, the politico-religious approach to the exorcisms allows the hypothesis to be entertained that Jesus was not a believer in demons. It allows the suggestion that he was using the social construction of disease and illness common in Galilee to make another point – that he was enacting a parable of liberation in front of the people, a parable displaying the character of the kingdom of God. He did this in the people's terms, even if they did not see the messianic secret embedded in the exorcisms. The point of the exorcisms is not the healing of the individuals concerned; the point is the symbolic display of the kingdom of God. This may not have been perceived by his contemporaries, but Mark has sought to capture it in the transfer of oral tradition to literate form.

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[1] R. Bultmann, "Existence and Faith" in H. D. Bartsch, ed., *Kerygma and Myth* (SPCK, 1953), p. 4. For a discussion of Bultmann's programme of demythologization see J. D. Dunn, "Demythologizing – The Problem of Myth in the New Testament" in I. H. Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1979).

[2] Theissen and Merz, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 313.

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