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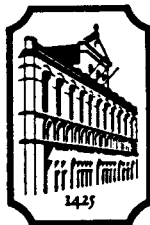
THE FOUR GOSPELS 1992

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THE REVERSED CONTEXTUALIZATION OF PSALM 22 IN THE MARKAN CRUCIFIXION

A SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an intertextual study of the Markan account of Jesus' crucifixion¹. Such a study calls attention to language as a social possession. M. Mikhail Bakhtin has helped us to understand that many voices from many socio-ideological locations speak through any individual person's use of language: "[L]anguage ... lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's Prior to [the speaker's] moment of appropriation, the word ... exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions"². Consonant with this observation, Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva have helped us to understand that all texts are a rewriting of previous texts and a reaction to present texts³. Moreover, every text is a product of various cultural discourses – "a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture"⁴. Intertextuality, then, "refers to the whole complex of relationships between texts within the general 'text of culture'. Seen in this way, intertextuality is closely connected with the cultural codes and conventions of thought of a particular period and even with the rules of logic in accordance with which people can or must reason"⁵. Intertextual study challenges the limited range of language usage New Testament interpreters traditionally bring into conversation with the text in the foreground. Willem Vorster and Jean Delorme observe that intertextual analysis is not restricted to canonical writings⁶. In addition, it is not limited to

1. S. DRAISMA (ed.), *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings. Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel*, Kampen, Kok, 1989 is a foundational collection of essays on intertextual analysis in New Testament literature. Hereafter, *Intertextuality*.

2. M.M. BAKHTIN, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. HOLQUIST, trans. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981, pp. 293-294.

3. J. KRISTEVA, *Σημειωτική. Recherches pour une sémanalyse*, Paris, Seuil, 1969, pp. 52, 85; R. BARTHES, *S/Z*, Paris, Seuil; see W.S. VORSTER, *Intertextuality and Redaktionsgeschichte*, in *Intertextuality*, pp. 20-21.

4. R. BARTHES, *Image, Music, Text*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 146; see J.W. VOELZ, *Multiple Signs and Double Texts: Elements of Intertextuality*, in *Intertextuality*, p. 27.

5. E. VAN WOLDE, *Trendy Intertextuality?*, in *Intertextuality*, p. 45, based on M. FOUCAULT, *Les mots et les choses*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966.

6. VORSTER, *Intertextuality*, p. 22; J. DELORME, *Intertextualities about Mark*, in *Intertextuality*, p. 36.

causative influence. As Ellen van Wolde has explained: "The writers of the synoptic gospels, like all writers, chose their own ordering arrangements from the total of the possibilities their time and their codes offered them, and this selection and arrangement cannot be reduced to one or two causal influences The exegete or textual analyst is the reader who informs other readers about the possible worlds of a text, or the person who, on the basis of intertextual study, actualizes the possible textual relationships so that the 'universe of discourse' becomes visible"⁷. Intertextual study does not limit itself, therefore, to similar and different phenomena considered to be directly influenced by each other, causally or diachronically. This means that primary differences among interpretations arise as a result of the boundaries an interpreter draws for finding texts that contain the conversation in which the foregrounded text is engaged in the culture⁸.

This essay is an exploration in broadening the horizons of the universe of discourse for the Markan account of the crucifixion. In 1980, George W. E. Nickelsburg widened the horizons of intertextual study of the Markan Passion narrative with an analysis of literature in the Hebrew Bible and extra-canonical Jewish literature antecedent to and contemporary with early Christianity⁹. New Testament interpreters have responded favorably to the study, because it explores accepted canonical and near-canonical literature in an informed, creative manner¹⁰. More recently, John Dominic Crossan has widened the horizons of intertextual analysis of the canonical Passion narratives by integrating the extracanonical (usually called "apocryphal") Gospel of Peter into the history of the tradition of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus¹¹. This study, in contrast to Nickelsburg's study, is controversial, because it challenges traditional boundaries for intertextual study of New Testament literature.

7. VAN WOLDE, *Trendy Intertextuality?*, pp. 47-48.

8. Cf. the following, which limits intertextuality to the Hebrew Bible: R.B. HAYS, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989; G. O'DAY, *Jeremiah 9:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31: A Study in Intertextuality*, in *JBL* 109 (1990) 259-267.

9. G.W.E. NICKELSBURG, *The Genre and Function of the Markan Passion Narrative*, in *HTR* 73 (1980) 153-184.

10. For the concept of "near-canonical", see W.H. MYERS, *The Hermeneutical Dilemma of the African American Biblical Student*, in C.H. FELDER (ed.), *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, Minneapolis, Fortress, 1991, pp. 53-54.

11. J.D. CROSSAN, *The Cross that Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1988. The initial challenge to reassess the relationship of the passion account in the Gospel of Peter to the NT gospels came from H. KOESTER, *Apocryphal and Canonical Gospels*, in *HTR* (1980) 126-130; *Introduction to the New Testament. Vol. 2: History and Literature of Early Christianity*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1982, pp. 49, 162-163.

This essay explores the possibility that the intertextual boundaries for interpretation of the Markan account of the crucifixion and resurrection should be expanded beyond Jewish and Christian literature. In other words, it accepts the dictum that intertextual analysis is not restricted to canonical writings. A failure to widen the boundaries of interpretation runs the risk of presupposing that all sectors of early Christianity created a "unique" culture separate from Mediterranean society and culture in which it grew and, finally, flourished. In the end, such a procedure imposes a "ghetto religion" ideology on all sectors of early Christianity¹². It would be advantageous, in our opinion, to distinguish different sectors of early Christianity on the basis of their language usage and to explore the particular kind of subcultural or countercultural dynamics present in each sector¹³.

In pursuit of this broader goal, this paper introduces a text that has, in recent years, not appeared in an extended analysis of the Markan account of the crucifixion. This text exists in Dio Chrysostom's Oration 4 and describes the ritual mocking and abuse of a prisoner at an annual festival in eastern Mediterranean society and culture¹⁴. Once this text brings to light a possible cultural network of significations in the Markan account, the essay exhibits aspects of the conversation among this network, Ps 22, and the narratorial voice of the Markan text. Voices from other contexts also speak through the Markan text¹⁵, since this Gospel is an excellent example of a text that lived "a real life ... in an environment of social heteroglossia"¹⁶. The limits of space inherent in an essay like this, however, make it necessary to attend only to the cultural discourse evoked by the Dio text, Ps 22, and the Markan narratorial voice.

12. See J.Z. SMITH, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, esp. pp. 70-71. A.D. NOCK used the language "ghetto religion" to describe early Christianity in Z. STEWART (ed.), *Arthur Darby Nock: Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, Cambridge, MA, 1972, Vol. 1, pp. 344. W. WUELLNER recently has articulated a similar position in *The Rhetorical Genre of Jesus' Sermon in Luke 12.1-13.9*, in D.F. WATSON (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry. Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (JSNT SS, 50), Sheffield, JSOT, 1991, pp. 93-118, esp. pp. 112-114.

13. See B.L. MACK, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1989.

14. H.A. VOLLMER, *Jesus und Sacäenopfer*, Giessen, Töpelmann, 1905; ID., *Der König mit der Dornenkrone*, in *ZNW* 6 (1905) 194-198 credits Wettstein with the honor of discovering its affinity with Matthew and Mark. E. KLOSTERMANN, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT, 3), Tübingen, Mohr, 1950, p. 161 includes a reference to the passage. R. PESCH, *Das Markusevangelium, II. Teil, Kommentar zu Kap. 8,27-16,20* (HTKNT, 2), Freiburg-Basel-Wien, Herder, 1977, p. 470 refers to it, but gives it no serious attention.

15. E.g., Ps 69,21 in Mk 15,35-36; possibly Prov 31,6-7 in Mk 15,23; possibly Ps 38,11 in Mk 15,40.

16. BAKHTIN, *Dialogic*, p. 292, see n. 2.

Since a major challenge for intertextual study is to place texts in relation to one another in such a way that the dialogue respects the autonomy of each text¹⁷, the essay begins with a programmatic analysis of the inner texture of the Markan account before it moves to intertextual analysis¹⁸. Thus, the initial section of the essay displays the scenes that emerge as a result of repetitive speech in the Markan narration. This approach, which takes duality and three-step progression seriously in the text of Mark¹⁹, yields five scenes in the account of the crucifixion. After an exploration of the inner texture of the account with this strategy of reading, a second section investigates the presence in the Markan account of discourse similar to the ritual abuse of a prisoner during the Persian Sacian festival in eastern Mediterranean society. The third section explores the occurrence of language from Ps 22 in the Markan account of the crucifixion. The context of mockery and death into which Markan discourse places Psalm 22 reverses the sequence of scenes in the psalm and subverts the rhetoric of confidence expressed in it. This observation contributes to a reading of the account of Jesus' death as "son of God" that hears the many voices in Mediterranean culture that are engaged in dialogue about the nature of kingship and sonship. The overall purpose of the paper is to explore the tension between rhetorical progression in the Markan account and rhetorical progression in Ps 22. A second purpose is to exhibit the importance of including data from outside Jewish and Christian literature in our intertextual analyses of New Testament literature.

I. REPETITIVE AND PROGRESSIVE FORM IN THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS IN MARK

Since it is necessary for this paper to establish boundaries that produce a manageable unit in the Markan text, the analysis begins with Mk 15,1 and ends with Mk 15,46. Pilate's function as the overseer of the selection and deliverance of Jesus to the soldiers (15,15) and the one who grants Jesus' corpse to Joseph of Arimathea (15,45) establishes the opening and closure of this unit²⁰. These boundaries exclude Peter's

17. DELORME, *Intertextualities*, p. 42, see n.6.

18. For a discussion of the relation of the inner texture of a text to intertextual analysis, see the introduction to the paperback edition of V.K. ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark*, Minneapolis, Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992, pp. xix-xlix.

19. F. NEIRYNCK, *Duality in Mark. Contributions to the Study of Markan Redaction* (BETL, 31), Leuven, University Press, 1972, ²1988, esp. pp. 187-190, 222-227, 242-243; V.K. ROBBINS, *Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three-Step Progression*, in *NT 23* (1981) 97-114; V.K. ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 20-47.

20. See G.A. KENNEDY, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1984, pp. 33-34 for the establishment of a rhetorical unit.

denial and the trial before the Sanhedrin. Also, the focus on Pilate's role does not provide the framework for significant commentary on the role of the women who observe Jesus' death and burial at a distance (15,40-41.47) and find an empty tomb when they go to anoint his body on the day after the sabbath (16,1.5)²¹. The strength of this approach to the Markan account of the crucifixion lies in its focus on the mockery of Jesus and its analysis of the language from Ps 22 in the inner scenes of the account.

Duality and three-step progression reveal five basic scenes in Mk 15,1-46²². Pilate's role as the political figure in charge establishes (1) Mk 15,1-15 as the opening scene. In it, the crowd selects Jesus, who has been bound as a prisoner for torture and crucifixion, rather than Barabbas, who was taken prisoner earlier. The crucifixion of Jesus occurs in three stages: (2) the mockery of Jesus as royalty: 15,16-24; (3) the ridicule of Jesus while he hangs on the cross: 15,25-32; and (4) Jesus' crying out and death: 15,33-39. The final scene in this unit features: (5) the permission for and burial of Jesus' corpse: 15,40-46. The scenes depict abuse which leads to Jesus' experience of complete abandonment before he dies. At his death, only a centurion recognizes the implications of the ordeal. Women, who had followed Jesus and ministered to him, watch from afar as Joseph of Arimathea places his body in a tomb. During all of this, no one speaks a kind word to Jesus, nor he to them, as he experiences humiliation and brutality which leads to his death and burial.

1. *Selection of Prisoner to be Humiliated and Crucified: Mk 15,1-15*

The first scene features Pilate's direct action with Jesus (15,1-15). In fifteen verses, Pilate's name occurs eight times, and he is the subject of fifteen verbs and the antecedent of five participles²³. The scene opens with the handing of Jesus over to Pilate and closes with Pilate's handing of Jesus over to be crucified. Near the middle of the scene, the narrator tells us in a digression in pluperfect tense that Pilate "knew that out of envy the chief priests had handed him over". Thus, the overall theme of the action is the handing over of Jesus, and the scene depicts the final stage of the process which started when Judas Iscariot went to the chief

21. See ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher*, pp. 191-193.

22. See n. 18 for duality and three-step progression. Cf. F.J. MATERA, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies. Interpreting the Synoptics Through Their Passion Stories*, New York, Paulist Press, 1986, pp. 34-48 for a close reading of the unit containing many similar observations about the text.

23. Verbs: ἐπρώτα/ησεν (15,2.4); θαυμάζειν (15,5); ἀπέλυεν (15,6); ἐποίησεν (15,8); ἀπεκρίθη (15,9); ἀπολύσω (15,9); ἐγίνωσκεν (15,10); ἀπολύσῃ (15,11); ἔλεγεν (15,12.14); ποιήσω (15,12); ποιῆσαι (15,15); ἀπέλυσεν (15,15); παρέδωκεν (15,15). Participles: λέγων (15,4.9); ἀποκριθείς (15,12); βουλόμενος (15,15); φραγελλώσας (15,15).

priests and reached an agreement with them (14,10-11). Much as the scene with Judas contains an opening and closure governed by παραδοῖ (14,10-11), so 15,1-15 contains an opening, middle and closure which features the handing over of Jesus as the central action:

15,1 ... δήσαντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπήνεγκαν
καὶ παρέδωκαν Πιλάτῳ.

15,10 ἐγίνωσκεν γὰρ ὅτι διὰ φθόνον
παραδεδώκεισαν αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς.

15,15 ... παρέδωκεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν
φραγελλώσας ἵνα σταυρωθῇ.

Within the framework of the handing over of Jesus, Pilate releases Barabbas. This action highlights the entrapment of Jesus in a process which is driven so forcefully by internal and external forces that there is no escape. The enactment of the release emerges subtly from its opposite – being bound: δέω. In the opening sentence of the scene, the chief priests, with the elders, scribes, and entire council, “bind” (δήσαντες) Jesus, lead him away, and hand him over to Pilate (15,1). Then in Mk 15,6, the narrator tells us that “one prisoner” (ἓνα δέσμιον) regularly was released during the feast and that Barabbas is imprisoned (δεδεμένος) among the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. The persistent use of δέ- root-words associates the containment of Jesus with the containment of Barabbas. Then the release of Barabbas, who committed murder in consort with other insurrectionists, creates bitter contrast with the containment of Jesus. After the narrator introduces the custom of releasing a prisoner during the feast (15,6), Pilate steps forward to perform the action. First, Pilate asks the people if he should release the King of the Jews to them (15,9); secondly, the chief priests stir up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas (15,11); and thirdly, he releases Barabbas to them (15,15). With this sequence, the contrast between binding and releasing accentuates the plight of Jesus. The progressive form emerges as follows:

15,1 ... δήσαντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ... παρέδωκαν Πιλάτῳ.

15,6 ... ἀπέλυεν αὐτοῖς ἓνα δέσμιον ὃν παρητοῦντο.

15,7 ἦν δὲ ὁ λεγόμενος Βαραββᾶς ... δεδεμένος

15,9 ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς λέγων,
θέλετε ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων;

15,11 ... μᾶλλον τὸν Βαραββᾶν ἀπολύσῃ αὐτοῖς.

15,15 ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ... ἀπέλυσεν αὐτοῖς τὸν Βαραββᾶν,
καὶ παρέδωκεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ... ἵνα σταυρωθῇ.

With this progression, Jesus, who was bound and handed over to Pilate (15,1), is now handed over to be crucified, while Barabbas, who was imprisoned for insurrection and murder, is released (15,15). The dynamics of the interaction among Pilate, the Jewish leaders, and the crowd prepare the stage for Jesus' death by crucifixion. The selection of this

mode of death emerges only toward the end of the scene. When Pilate asks the people what he should do with the King of the Jews, they cry out, "Crucify him" (15,13). When Pilate asks them what evil Jesus has done, they cry out all the more, "Crucify him" (15,14). This response leads to the final item in the closing sentence where he hands him over "to be crucified" (15,15). The scene closes, then, with two completed actions, Pilate's release of Barabbas and Pilate's handing over of Jesus. In the midst of threefold or fourfold references to the handing over of Jesus (15,1.10.15), to being bound or imprisoned (15,1.6.7), to the release of a prisoner (15,6.9.11.15), to Barabbas (15,7.11.15), and to crucifixion (15,13.14.15), Pilate identifies Jesus near the beginning, middle, and end as "the King of the Jews" (15,2.9.12). In the Markan narrative, no one has used this title for Jesus prior to this scene, but once it occurs on the lips of Pilate, it plays a major role in the Markan version of Jesus' death.

2. Mockery of Jesus as Royalty: Mk 15,16-24

The next phase features soldiers who gather the entire battalion to mock, abuse, and torture Jesus, then take Jesus out and crucify him. Language of crucifixion and address of Jesus as "King of the Jews" unites this scene with the previous scene. The opening, middle, and closure of the scene occur through a progression which links "leading away" and "leading out" with "crucifying":

15,16 οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται ἀπήγαγον αὐτόν

15,20 καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτόν ἵνα σταυρώσουσιν αὐτόν.

15,24 καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν.

First, the soldiers lead Jesus away and call the entire cohort together; secondly, they lead Jesus out to crucify him; and thirdly, they crucify him. In the context of the spatial movement, the dressing and undressing of Jesus establishes a progression which gives the scene dramatic closure:

15,17 καὶ ἐνδιδύσκουσιν αὐτόν πορφύραν

15,20 ἐξέδυσαν αὐτόν τὴν πορφύραν
καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτόν τὰ ἱμάτια τὰ ἴδια.

15,24 καὶ διαμερίζονται τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ

First, they dress him in purple garb; then, they remove the purple garb and put his own clothes on him; and finally, they divide his own clothes among themselves. The changing of clothes reaches its conclusion in the absence of clothes on Jesus while he is on the cross. This feature underscores the brutality and humiliation of Jesus' crucifixion. The mocking of Jesus dramatizes Pilate's designation of Jesus as "King of the Jews". In addition to clothing Jesus in purple, the soldiers place a woven crown of thorns on his head, hail him as "King of the Jews", strike his head with a reed, spit on him, and kneel down in homage to

him (15,17-19). This is a kingship ritual which the narrator tells us is a mockery (15,20: ἐνέπαιξαν αὐτῷ). When the changing of clothes (15,17.20) leads to the distribution of Jesus' own clothes (15,24), the reader has seen a sequence in which Jesus was taken prisoner, condemned to death, mocked as a king, and hung naked on a cross.

3. *Ridicule of Jesus while He Hangs on the Cross: Mk 15,25-32*

The narrator continues the account with a comment that it was the third hour of the day (15,25). The comment introduces information on which the account will build, much like the narrator's earlier comment that a prisoner customarily was released at the feast (15,6). Unlike the earlier comment, Mk 15,24 introduces a time sequence rather than an action. Also, instead of beginning with flashback information (15,6: in the past he regularly released someone) and moving into contemporary background information (15,7: Barabbas was among the rebels in prison), the narrator begins with contemporary background information (15,25: "It was the third hour") and continues with contemporary foreground information: "and they crucified him, and the inscription of the charge against him read 'the King of the Jews', and they crucify two thieves with him, one on the right and one on his left" (15,26-27). With this digression, the narrator introduces a new scene: responses to Jesus while he is on the cross between two thieves. The transition is smooth and skillful, since it continues the language of crucifixion and the designation of Jesus as "King of the Jews":

15,25 ἦν δὲ ὥρα τρίτη
καὶ ἔσταύρωσαν αὐτόν.

15,26 καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφή τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη,
ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

15,27 καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστές

In the center of the digression stands the second reference to Jesus as "the King of the Jews"²⁴ after the three references in the scene with Pilate. Thus, the narrator maintains the presence of this designation for Jesus in the setting where the soldiers crucify Jesus. With this action, the attention shifts to Jesus on a cross between two thieves.

The shift from the torture and abuse of Jesus to responses as Jesus hangs on the cross is exhibited by the opening and closure of this stage of the crucifixion:

15,27 καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστές

15,32 καὶ οἱ συνεσταυρωμένοι σὺν αὐτῷ

The two thieves are the last people who speak to Jesus before his death, and their response to him is startling. One might expect them to exhibit respect for Jesus or expect Jesus to say something gracious to them.

24. The first reference after the opening scene occurs in 15,18.

Instead, Jesus becomes as isolated from the two thieves as he does from everyone else. The progressive isolation occurs as follows:

15,29 καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι

ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτόν

15,31 ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς

ἐμπαιζόντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους μετὰ τῶν γραμματέων ἔλεγον

15,32 καὶ οἱ συνεσταυρωμένοι σὺν αὐτῷ

ὠνείδιζον αὐτόν.

The scene depicts three groups who react to Jesus: (1) people who pass by; (2) the chief priests with the scribes; and (3) those crucified with him. The first people speak blasphemy against him. Earlier in the narrative scribes had claimed that Jesus blasphemed (evidently against God) when he forgave the paralytic's sins (2,7), and later Jesus implies that scribes from Jerusalem blasphemed against the holy spirit when they said he possessed an unclean spirit (3,29-30). When Jesus is tried before the Sanhedrin, the high priest asserts that Jesus' response is blasphemy (14,64). Now, people who pass by are said to blaspheme against Jesus by wagging their heads, claiming that he would destroy the temple and build it in three days, and taunting him to save himself by coming down from the cross (15,30). After this, the chief priests with the scribes are said to "mock to one another" (15,31). Earlier in the narrative, Jesus predicted that Gentiles would mock him (10,34), and this prediction was fulfilled by the soldiers (15,20), as discussed above. Now, the chief priests and scribes add to the mockery with remarks about "saving" and "coming down from the cross" which reverberate with Jesus' earlier remarks about "losing one's life to save it" and "taking up one's cross and following" (8,34-35). The response of the chief priests and the scribes creates the setting for the third reference to Jesus as "King" since the scene with Pilate. The presence of this designation may have made it natural for the Markan narrator to refer to the statements of the chief priests and scribes as mockery, since they are referring in jest to Jesus much as the soldiers did in their ritual (15,18). Markan narration adapts the wording of the title to fit the language of Jewish leaders: they call Jesus "the Messiah, the King of Israel" (15,32) while Pilate called him "the King of the Jews". This is the last reference to Jesus as king in the Markan narrative. In the next scene, a Roman centurion who has seen the proceedings refers to Jesus as "son of God". The significance of this change in language is one of the major interests in this paper. For now, we notice that the title "King" occurs systematically throughout the selection process, the mockery, and the crucifixion. In this context, even those who hang on the crosses beside Jesus "revile" him. In the end, everyone mentioned in the scene, including those crucified with him, reacts negatively to Jesus as he hangs on the cross.

4. *Jesus' Crying Out and Death: Mk 15,33-39*

The final stage of the crucifixion (15,33-39) depicts the death of Jesus. During this stage, there is no reference to the cross, the two thieves alongside Jesus, or the chief priests and scribes. There are many bystanders, and one runs and fills a sponge with vinegar while another is a centurion standing in front who speaks out after Jesus dies. All the foreground and background information directs the reader's attention to Jesus as he dies.

The scene opens with reference to a three hour span of time (from the sixth to the ninth hour) when there was darkness over the whole earth (15,34). Then at the ninth hour Jesus cries with a loud voice: *Ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι* (Ps 22,1 in Aramaic). This cry of Jesus introduces a new pattern of irony in the Markan version. The pattern unfolds as follows:

15,34 *ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ,*

Ελωι ελωι λεμα σαβαχθανι;

15,35 *καί τινες τῶν παρεστηκότων ἀκούσαντες ἔλεγον,*

ἴδε Ἡλίαν φωνεῖ.

15,36 *ἄφετε ἴδωμεν εἰ ἔρχεται Ἡλίας καθελεῖν αὐτόν.*

15,37 *ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείς φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν.*

When Jesus cries out, *Ελωι ελωι*, bystanders say, "Look, he is calling Elijah". Then someone runs and gets vinegar for him to drink and says, "Let us see if Elijah comes to take him down". Then Jesus lets out a loud cry and breathes his last breath. The alliteration and repetition in this sequence underscores the irony. Jesus has cried out the first verse of a psalm which contains a graphic depiction of agony suffered by someone who is encircled, entrapped, and tortured. God does not answer, and the people mock the cry by understanding it as a call to Elijah rather than to God. Jesus' cry exhibits his experience of complete abandonment: in this hour he is abandoned not only by all the people around him but also by God. Jesus is a victim with whom people play for entertainment – to see what happens – and whom God allows to die.

The centurion standing in front of Jesus responds when he sees and hears Jesus die. The relation of the centurion's response to the scene is apparent from the verbal relationship:

15,35 *τινες τῶν παρεστηκότων ... ἔλεγον, ἴδε*

15,36 *... ἴδωμεν ...*

15,37 *... ἐξέπνευσεν.*

15,39 *ιδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκῶς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ*

ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν,

Ἄληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν.

The centurion who was placed in front of Jesus represents those to whom Jesus was delivered for crucifixion and those who have mocked

him as “King of the Jews”. When this representative sees the manner of Jesus’ death, he infers that Jesus was “son of God”. The construction of the response connects the manner of the death with “this” man:

15,39 ἰδὼν ... ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν,
Ἄληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν.

We must seek to find out why, from the narrator’s perspective, the centurion would call this particular man son of God.

5. *Permission for and Burial of Jesus’ Corpse: Mk 15,40-46*

The narrator begins the next scene with a digression much as he began the scene with Jesus and the two thieves. First, he gives us contemporary background information (15,40: there also were women watching from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome); then he gives us flashback information (15,41a: who, when he was in Galilee, regularly followed him and ministered to him), and this leads to additional background information (15,41b: and many others who had come up with him to Jerusalem). Then he continues with foreground information (15,42-43: and when evening already had come ... Joseph of Arimathea came ... and requested the body of Jesus). At this point Pilate marvels if Jesus is already dead (15,44). This establishes a point of contact with the opening scene when Pilate marvelled when Jesus no longer answered anything (15,5). Pilate’s uncertainty leads him to summon the centurion, and this feature brings the centurion from the foot of the cross into the center of the scene which leads to the burial of Jesus. Then, in the mode of the opening scene where Pilate had asked Jesus if he was the King of the Jews (15,2) and again if he was not going to answer anything (15,4), Pilate asks the centurion if Jesus has already died (15,45). When the centurion informs Pilate that Jesus is dead, Pilate grants the corpse to Joseph who buys a linen cloth, takes Jesus down, wraps him in the cloth, and puts him in a tomb.

The Markan version of these episodes, then, emphasizes the role of the centurion who sees Jesus expire, comes to Pilate when summoned, and informs Pilate of his death. This sequence forms a three-step progression:

- (1) ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ
ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν ... (15,39).
- (2) ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἐθαύμασεν εἰ ἤδη τέθνηκεν,
καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν κεντυρίωνα ... (15,44).
- (3) καὶ γνοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ κεντυρίωνος ἐδωρήσατο
τὸ πῶμα τῷ Ἰωσήφ (15,45).

The closing scene of the crucifixion is concerned to verify the death and burial of Jesus. It is succeeded by a scene in which the women who saw the death and burial also see the tomb standing empty and are told that Jesus, who was crucified, has risen.

Conclusion

The Markan version of Jesus' crucifixion has five scenes. The opening and closing scenes feature Pilate, who hands Jesus over to soldiers for crucifixion and grants Jesus' body to Joseph of Arimathea for burial. The three scenes in the middle feature mockery and torture of Jesus. First, Jesus is mocked and abused as he is dressed in royal clothes, reclothed in his own garments, then undressed as he is hung on the cross. Second, Jesus is mocked by people who pass by, by chief priests and scribes, and by those who are crucified with him. Third, Jesus is mocked by people who mistake his cry to God (Ελωι) as a cry to Elijah. These episodes enact Jesus' experience of programmatic abandonment by everyone at his death. When Jesus dies in the context of the ritual mockery of him as a king, a centurion refers to him as "son of God", and Joseph of Arimathea buries Jesus in a tomb. Women who watch the crucifixion from afar see where Joseph puts the corpse and come after the sabbath to an empty tomb.

II. THE MARKAN CRUCIFIXION AND A PERSIAN RITUAL AT THE SACIAN FEAST

Now that we have before us an initial reading of the Markan text from the perspective of repetition within its progression, let us begin to ask what meanings may accompany the complex network of significations in it. It is clear that Ps 22 (LXX: 21) plays a generative role in the Markan formulation of the account, but there appears to be additional "cultural discourse" involved in the repetitive reference to Jesus as king and the extension of the mockery beyond the ritual by the soldiers (Mk 15,17-20) into the scene where Jesus is hanging on the cross (cf. ἐμπαίζω in 15,20.31) and the scene of Jesus' death cry where they make a mockery of his reference to Ελωι (15,34-36).

An intertextual search for the broader cultural discourse brings one to a fascinating discussion in the Fourth Oration of Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40 - after 112 C.E.)²⁵. In this text, Dio speaks about activities of the Persians at the Sacian feast that present a sequence of activities that contain many similarities with the Markan account of the crucifixion:

1. "They take one of their prisoners who has been condemned to death" (Dio 4,67).

Jesus, who has been condemned to death by the Sanhedrin, is taken by Pilate and his soldiers (Mk 15,15-16).

25. A helpful analysis of this discourse is present in R. HÖISTAD, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King*, Lund, Bloms, 1948, pp. 150-222. Also, see n. 18.

2. “[They] set him on the king’s throne, give him the royal apparel, and permit him to give orders, to drink and carouse, and to dally with the royal concubines during those days, and no one prevents his doing anything he pleases” (Dio 4,67).

Jesus is clothed in a purple cloak; a crown of thorns is placed on his head; he is hailed as “King of the Jews”; and they kneel down in homage to him (Mk 15,17-19).

3. “After that they strip and scourge him and then hang him” (Dio 4,67).

Jesus is stripped (Mk 15,20), and since he has already been scourged (15,15), he is led out and hung on a cross (15,25).

4. “If [the prisoner] understands [the meaning of the action], he probably breaks out into wailing and refuses to go along without protesting...” (Dio 4,69).

Jesus cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk 15,34).

When compared with the Dio account of the Sacian festival, the Markan account contains: (a) embellishment of the process by which a prisoner who has been condemned to death is handed over for the festival; (b) embellishment of the mockery of the prisoner as king but omission of activities which allow Jesus to function for a time as king; (c) embellishment of mockery of Jesus while he hangs in public humiliation on the cross; and (d) addition of an account of burial of the condemned prisoner after his death.

The presence of the tradition of the Sacian festival in Mediterranean society suggests an alternative to traditional interpretation of the scenes. The purpose for releasing a condemned prisoner would have been to allow the people to mock, abuse, and humiliate the prisoner during the days of the festival celebration. In other words, if Pilate were functioning culturally “in character”, he would release a condemned prisoner to the people with the understanding that they would put him through an ordeal of royal mockery during the festival. Whether the prisoner would be killed or not would be a matter of circumstance, or consensus, among the people. The first ironic dimension, then, is a process of selection whereby a prisoner guilty of murder is released without the conditions of an ordeal, while an unjustly condemned prisoner is turned over, according to the people’s wishes, to the brutality of soldiers. When this happens, the “real” king of the Jews (from the point of view of the narrator) undergoes the ordeal intended for a “real” condemned prisoner. This would be a “Christian” transformation of the broader cultural discourse.

The second ironic dimension emerges as Jesus is not allowed to live as a king during the festival. Athenaeus presents Berosus’ account of the five-day Sacian festival in his *Babylonian History* (5-4 cent. B.C.E.) as follows: “it was customary for the masters to be ruled by their slaves, and one of them, as leader of the household, was clothed in a robe

similar to the king's". (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 14,639). This reversal of roles brings Mk 10,42-45 into special prominence:

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

If an interpreter supposes that the Gospel of Mark presents Jesus' enactment of the principles he has taught earlier in the narrative²⁶, then these verses reveal the reason why there is no depiction of an interval of time when Jesus gives orders and lives the traditional life of a king. According to Markan discourse, Jesus will not exercise traditional kingly authority over others or live for a period of time in luxury and abundance. Rather, his role is as a servant who loses his life for his own sake and the gospel's sake.

Third, the events in the Markan sequence appear to result from Jesus' choice of "the ways of God" rather than "the ways of men" (8,33). Jesus is doing what he understands to be necessary as a result of the will of God²⁷. Dio emphasizes that a king who is a son of Zeus (Διὸς παῖς/υἱός; 4,21.27.31) will choose the way²⁸ that divine instruction rather than human instruction has taught him (4,29). He will know the foolishness of attempting to gain (κερδαίνειν) money and possessions (Dio 4,6; cf. Mk 8,36) and to clamor after wealth (πλοῦτος; Dio 4,10; cf. Mk 4,19; 10,25; 12,41). Rather, he will be a shepherd of peoples (Dio 3,41; 4,43; cf. Mk 6,34; 14,27), considering himself to be doing his duty only when he helps people: "having been appointed to this work by the greatest god, whom it is not right for him to disobey..." (Dio 3,55). The king depends on the loyalty (πίστις) of his friends, whom he needs as co-workers (Dio 3,86), and his greatest sufferings arise when he is wronged by friends whom he did not know to be his enemies (Dio 3,114).

This means that the Roman centurion could be functioning culturally "in character" when he calls Jesus son of God/Zeus. If so, his language may speak out of a much wider horizon of cultural discourse than traditional interpretations of this scene entertain. First, the high priest's understanding of Jesus as Messiah, Son of the Blessed (14,61-62), intermingles with Pilate's and the soldiers' understanding of Jesus as King of the Jews (15,2.9.12.18). When the title "son of God" emerges

26. See ROBBINS, *Jesus the Teacher*, esp. pp. 184-194, 209-213.

27. See Mk 3,35; 8,31; 9,11; 13,10; 14,36.

28. ἡ ὁδός; Dio 4,33; cf. Mk 1,2-3; 8,27; 9,33-34; 10,17.32.52; 12,14.

from the lips of the centurion, the concept of kingship from Hellenistic-Roman circles may be entering the conversations about kingship in Jewish and Christian circles. It is a well-known tradition in the first century Mediterranean world that a king can benefit his people by dying for them. The well-known verse of Horace (65-68 B.C.E.), "dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" ("sweet and fitting it is to die for one's fatherland")²⁹, included kings by the first century. One of the most widely known traditions of a king's voluntary sacrifice exists in the "example of Codrus, the legendary last king of Athens, who on the basis of an oracle went out to meet the enemy alone in slave's clothing; unrecognized, he was killed by them and in so doing saved Athens"³⁰. Direct evidence for the interest of Christians in the tradition of kings dying for their subjects is known from Clement of Rome: "Many kings and rulers, when a time of pestilence has set in, have followed the counsel of oracles, and given themselves up to death, that they might rescue their subjects through their own blood" (1 Clement 55,1-5)³¹. There is evidence that suggests the possibility, therefore, that the Markan account of Jesus' death intermingles broader cultural discourse with widespread discursive traditions in Jewish and Christian sectors of Mediterranean society and culture³².

III. PSALM 22 (LXX: 21) AND THE MARKAN CRUCIFIXION

As noted above, embellishment of the crucifixion account in Mark occurs not only in the scene of selection of the condemned prisoner but also in the changing of Jesus' clothes, the public humiliation of Jesus as he hangs on the cross, and the mockery when Jesus cries out his death cry to God. This section of the essay focuses on the presence of language from Ps 22 (LXX: 21) in the three inner scenes of the account, and it uses modes of "progymnastic composition" to describe the rhetorical practice by which the Markan text incorporates the language from the psalm³³.

29. Horace, *Odes* 3,2,13; see M. HENGEL, *The Atonement. The Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1981, pp. 13, 82, n. 47.

30. HENGEL, *Atonement*, 14, 82, n. 48. Cf. D. SEELEY, *The Noble Death. Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation* (JSNT SS, 28), Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1990, pp. 113-141; S.K. WILLIAMS, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event. The Background and Origin of a Concept* (Harvard Dissertations in Religion, 2), Missoula, Scholars, 1975, esp. pp. 137-163.

31. HENGEL, *ibid.*, p. 14.

32. See Dio 4,39-45; contra M. HENGEL, *The Son of God. The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1976, pp. 30, n. 57, who argues that "Son of Zeus" is fundamentally distinct from "Son of God".

33. The term "progymnastic rhetoric" refers to the rhetorical practices presented in treatises in antiquity entitled ΠΡΟΓΥΜΝΑΣΜΑΤΑ. For the concept and range of

The first use of language from Ps 22 occurs in Mk 15,24. As noted above, the Markan account presents the dividing of Jesus' garments at the point where they crucify him. This is the final act in a sequence where Jesus first is clothed in royal garments, then re clothed in his own garments, and then reduced to nakedness (15,17.20.24). Wording from Ps 22 emerges as the soldiers divide Jesus' garments among themselves by casting lots, but the exact wording of Ps 22,19 (LXX 21,19) is not simply recontextualized in the Markan text. Rather, 15,24 contains a "recitation" of the psalm verse in typical Markan style³⁴. The LXX text reads as follows:

διμερίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτιά μου ἑαυτοῖς
καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ἱματισμὸν μου ἔβαλον κλῆρον.

Markan composition has transformed the verse into a climactic statement that ends the initial mocking scene:

καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν,
καὶ διαμερίζονται τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ,
βάλλοντες κλῆρον ἐπ' αὐτὰ τίς τί ἄρη.

First, the Markan text has transformed the *parallelismus membrorum* construction of the psalm verse into a three-clause statement by adding σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν and introducing καί-paratactic plus present participle:

- (a) *and* they crucify him,
- (b) *and* they divide his garments,
- (c) casting lots for them who takes what.

The initial clause about crucifying Jesus is a narratorial continuation of 15,20c, and the participial clause ends with an ironic turn on "carrying" as the soldiers carry a piece of Jesus' garment away, in contrast to Simon who carried Jesus' cross (15,21). Second, the Markan text sustains historic present tense throughout the clause, in contrast to aorist tense in the LXX text. Third, the Markan text presents a third person narrative voice, "they divide his garments", rather than the first person narrative voice, "they divided my garments"³⁵. These features exhibit standard Markan style as language has been rephrased from Ps 22,19 to formulate the dramatic conclusion to a scene in which Jesus, mocked as "King of the Jews", is dressed in royal garments,

progymnastic rhetoric see V.K. ROBBINS, *Writing as a Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels*, in D.F. WATSON (ed.), *Persuasive Artistry* (n. 12 above), pp. 157-186. Also see V.K. ROBBINS, *The Crucifixion and the Speech of Jesus*, in *Forum* 4/1 (1988) 33-46.

34. R.F. HOCK & N. O'NEIL, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric. Volume I. The Progymnasmata*, Atlanta, Scholars, 1986, pp. 94-95; ROBBINS, *Writing*, pp. 146-155. Also БАХТИН, *Dialogic*, pp. 341-342, see n. 2.

35. Cf. Mk 1,2, where third person voicing is changed to first person.

re clothed in his own garments, then left without clothing as he hangs in public humiliation on the cross.

The next scene (15,25-32) exhibits “expansion composition”³⁶ as it incorporates language from Ps 22 to describe the people’s mocking of Jesus while he hangs on the cross. Ps 21,8-9 (LXX) reads:

πάντες οἱ θεωροῦντές με ἐξεμυκτήρισάν με,
ἐλάλησαν ἐν χεῖλεσιν, ἐκίνησαν κεφαλὴν
ἤλπισεν ἐπὶ κύριον, ῥυσάσθω αὐτόν·
σωσάτω αὐτόν, ὅτι θέλει αὐτόν.

All who have observed me sneered at me,
they spoke with their lips, they wagged their head,
“He hoped in the Lord, let him rescue him;
let him save him, because he wants him”.

First, the Markan text divides “all who have observed me” into three groups: (a) the ones passing by (v. 29); (b) the chief priests with the scribes (v. 31); (c) the ones crucified with him (v. 32). This provides a three-step structure in which the text embellishes language from Ps 21,8-9 with Markan discourse. Mk 15,27 builds on the final step in the previous scene (15,24) by repeating “and they crucify”. Now, however, the language shifts the scene to Jesus’ crucifixion between two thieves, “one on his right and one on his left”. In Mk 10,37, James and John had envisioned being seated on the right and left hand of Jesus in his glory. Markan narration stands this hope on its head, inverting the disciples’ expectation as it presents Jesus’ right and left hand men as thieves crucified along with him. Using καί-paratactic plus present participle, Mk 15,28-29 transforms the first *parallelismus membrorum* of the psalm verses into:

καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτόν
κινουῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν
καὶ λέγοντες.

Then, integrating preceding Markan discourse about destroying the temple (14,58), Mk 15,29-32 expands σωσάτω αὐτόν from Ps 21,9 to:

And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads, and saying:

- (a) “Aha, he who destroys the temple and builds it in three days;
- (b) save yourself (σῶσον σεαυτόν);
- (c) come down from the cross.

So also the chief priests mocked him to one another with the scribes, saying:

- (a) others he saved (ἄλλους ἔσωσεν);
- (b) himself he cannot save (ἑαυτόν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι);

36. HOCK & O’NEIL, *The Chreia*, pp. 100-103; V.K. ROBBINS, *Pronouncement Stories and Jesus’ Blessing of the Children: A Rhetorical Approach*, in *Semeia* 29 (1984) 43-74, esp. pp. 48-51.

- (c) let the Messiah the King of Israel come down now from the cross;
 (d) that we may see and believe.

Then, the third step provides dramatic closure with a brief statement that reiterates language in Mk 15,27:

(15,32c) καὶ οἱ συνεσταυρωμένοι σὺν αὐτῷ ὠνειδίζον αὐτόν.

This final statement incorporates language from Ps 21,7, which refers to the sufferer as “reviled of men” (ὄνειδος ἀνθρώπου) just before verses 8-9 discussed above. We will return to this use of language from the preceding verse in the psalm. Suffice it to say at this point that the Markan text has expanded aspects of Ps 21,7-9 into a three-step display of mockery and humiliation of Jesus while he hangs on the cross.

The scene that presents the death of Jesus (Mk 15,33-39) begins with a recontextualization of the opening verse of Ps 22 (LXX: 21)³⁷. The new context, however, turns the verse into a chreia attributed to Jesus³⁸. The chreia, which contains transliterated Aramaic words, provides a context for mockery as Ελωι is heard as Elijah. Between the Aramaic version and the mockery stands a rephrasing in Greek translation. The translation is very interesting in relation to the LXX version available to us:

ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός μου, πρόσχερς μοι·

ἵνα τί ἐγκατέλιπές με;

μακρὰν ἀπὸ τῆς σωτηρίας μου οἱ λόγοι τῶν παραπτωμάτων μου

ὁ θεός μου, κεκράξομαι ἡμέρας, καὶ οὐκ εἰσακούση,

καὶ νυκτός, καὶ οὐκ εἰς ἄνοιαν ἐμοί.

The Markan text reformulates “I shall cry out day ... and night ...” (LXX: 21,3) into “when it became dark ... Jesus cried out with a loud voice ...” (Mk 15,33-34). Then the Markan text strengthens the call “God, my God”, by doubling the ὁ θεός μου in the manner of its double occurrence in 21,2.3 and by the absence of “give heed to me”. This creates a poignant three-step cry: (a) my God, (b) my God, (c) why have you forsaken me?

Interpreters who have tried to turn this cry into a positive statement have imposed the rhetoric of Psalm 22 on the rhetoric of Markan

37. For “reciting by heart”, see BAKHTIN, *Dialogic*, p. 341.

38. See V.K. ROBBINS, *The Chreia*, in D.E. AUNE (ed.), *Greco-Roman Literature and The New Testament* (SBL Sources for Biblical Study, 21), Atlanta, Scholars, 1988, pp. 1-23, esp. 2-4. For the placement of quotations from authoritative literature on the lips of personages in Mediterranean literature contemporary with the gospels, see, e.g., Plutarch, *Alexander* 28.3: “At a later time, however, when Alexander had been hit by an arrow and was suffering great pain, he said: ‘This, my friends, that flows here, is blood, and not ‘Ichor, such as flows from the veins of the blessed gods’” (Homer, *Iliad* 5,340). For this and other examples, see V.K. ROBBINS, *Ancient Quotes & Anecdotes. From Crib to Crypt*, Sonoma, CA, Polebridge, 1989 (for variant versions of this chreia, pp. 96-97).

discourse³⁹. Interpreters are right that Psalm 22 contains a rhetoric of confidence, trust, and hope. It is improper, however, to let this rhetoric silence the rhetoric of abandonment displayed in Mark. Interpreters have overlooked the Markan context and selection of language from the Psalm. The Markan scene occurs when all hope of rescue has disappeared. Mk 15,37 tells the reader that when Jesus let out his loud cry, his breath went out of him. In other words, this was Jesus' last cry, his death sound.

This brings this essay to an observation that, to my knowledge, has not been made in prior interpretation of the Markan account. The Markan sequence uses scenes from Ps 22 (21) in the reverse order in which they occur in the Psalm. In the Psalm, the sufferer's cry is a cry for help; in Mark, Jesus' cry is his final death cry. In the Psalm, the sufferer says many things after this initial cry, and in the end he tells God how he will praise his name in the midst of the congregation (22,22), how all the proud of the earth will bow down to him (22,29), and how the Lord's deliverance will be proclaimed to the coming generation (22,30-31). In Mark, in strong contrast, Jesus' final utterance is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me".

To put this another way, the sequence of Mk 15 inverts the sequence of Ps 22, and with this inversion comes a subversion of its rhetoric. The sufferer in the psalm expresses hope to the end; Jesus on the cross expresses the agony of abandonment by everyone including God. An interpreter needs only to look at Ps 38,21-22 (LXX: 37,22-23) to see how Jesus' cry would read if he were expressing hope:

μη ἐγκαταλίπης με, κύριε·	Do not abandon me, Lord;
ὁ θεός μου, μη ἀποστῆς ἀπ' ἐμοῦ·	my God, do not desert me.
πρόσχεε εἰς τὴν βοήθειάν μου,	Give heed to my help,
κύριε τῆς σωτηρίας μου.	Lord of my salvation.

The final words of Ps 38 are a plea for God to help, and the plea is punctuated with reference to God as "Lord of my salvation". The Markan account of the crucifixion, in contrast, presents a Jesus who no longer holds any hope for rescue from the agony of death. This is the reality of human suffering Jesus enacts on the cross in Mark.

The Markan approach, which emphasizes the agony and reality of Jesus' death, produces a backwards reading of Ps 22. The reading begins with verse 19, the place in the middle of the psalm where the sufferer refers to the dividing of his garments by the casting of lots. The reading continues by proceeding backwards to verses 7-8, where the

39. E.g., See this tradition of interpretation in F.J. MATERA, *The Kingship of Jesus. Composition and Theology in Mark 15* (SBL DS, 66), Chico, CA, Scholars, 1982, pp. 127-135, 194-196. For the use of Psalm 22 in Jewish tradition, see M.G. HOFFMAN, *Psalm 22 and the Crucifixion*. Ph. D. Diss. Yale University (forthcoming).

sufferer refers to the wagging of heads and the mocking speech, "let him save him". Then the Markan text moves back to verse 6 of the psalm as the narratorial voice says that those crucified with Jesus "reviled" him, just like the sufferer in the psalm refers to himself as "reviled" of men. Last of all, the reading proceeds backwards to the first two verses of the psalm. The Markan reading ends with the death cry of Jesus, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

The mockery of Jesus, then, creates the framework for the selection of the scenes from Ps 22, and broader cultural discourse contributes to the ironic understanding of the mockery. Narratorial emphasis on the death and burial of Jesus works in consort with the broader cultural discourse to create a reverse reading of Ps 22. Only accounts containing the ritual mockery of Jesus as king (Mark, Matthew, GPeter) place the first verse of Ps 22 on Jesus' lips at or near his death. In other words, the presence of the use of scenes from Ps 22 in reverse order occurs only in those accounts that exhibit the kingship ritual from the broader cultural discourse. The Lukan version, which does not have a sustained use of scenes in reverse order from Ps 22, also does not have the initial ritual mockery of Jesus as king of the Jews.

During the last decade, a fascinating debate has occurred concerning the juxtaposition of Jesus' death cry, the centurion's assertion that Jesus is "son of God", and the splitting of the temple curtain from top to bottom⁴⁰. This debate has made it clear that the expulsion of Jesus' spirit and the splitting of the temple curtain has an important relation to the baptism of Jesus, where the heavens split apart and the spirit descends into Jesus. The entrance and departure of the spirit signifies the beginning and end of Jesus' public career in Mark⁴¹. Moreover, the curtain to which the Markan text refers is likely to be the outer curtain, not the inner curtain around the Holy of Holies in the Temple⁴². This outer curtain, which was 80 feet high, contained "a panorama of the entire heavens"⁴³. When the spirit comes out of Jesus, the heavens on the outer veil of the temple split open, giving the centurion a view into

40. H.L. CHRONIS, *The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37-39*, in *JBL* 101 (1982) 97-114; H.M. JACKSON, *The Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle from the Cross*, in *NTS* 33 (1987) 16-37; S. MOTYER, *The Rending of the Veil: A Markan Pentecost?*, in *NTS* 33 (1987) 155-157; D. ULANSEY, *The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic Inclusio*, in *JBL* 110 (1991) 123-125.

41. F.J. MATERA, *The Kingship of Jesus* (SBL DS, 66), Chico, CA, Scholars, 1982, p. 139; JACKSON, *Death*, pp. 21-22; MOTYER, *Veil*; ULANSEY, *Veil*. It is important to observe that Mark refers to the spirit descending "into" (εἰς) Jesus, not "upon" (ἐπί) him. At the end, then, the spirit goes out of Jesus (Mk 15,37.38: ἐξέπνευσεν).

42. D. JUEL, *Messiah and Temple. The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBL DS, 31), Missoula, Scholars, 1977, pp. 140-141; JACKSON, *Death*, p. 24; ULANSEY, *Veil*, pp. 124-125.

43. Based on Josephus, *War* 5,5,4 (212-214). See A. PELLETIER, *La tradition synoptique du 'voile déchiré' à la lumière des réalités archéologiques*, in *RSR* 46 (1958) 168-179.

the outer court, to which all nations are supposed to have access (Mk 11,17). The centurion recognizes that Jesus was a king who accepted the will of his God that he should die to benefit the people over whom this God rules. In the speech of the Roman centurion, widespread cultural discourse speaks through Christian discourse. Language of sonship that was in the mouth of God, on the lips of demons, and in the speech of the High Priest now emerges from the tongue of a Roman centurion. When the centurion hears the cry of abandonment on Jesus' lips, this cry evokes an awareness that Jesus understood the nature of true kingship (Dio 4,69). Jesus possessed the divine instruction that informed him of the necessity to be willing to die for his people if the greatest God willed it. Also, the centurion sees the simultaneous expulsion of spirit from Jesus and splitting of the veil of the heavens on the outer court of the temple. A cosmic sign like this, which gives him and others sight into the house of prayer for all nations, convinces him that Jesus was "son of God", a true king informed by and supported by divine knowledge and power.

CONCLUSION

Whose speech, then, is on the lips of the Roman centurion? Is it Jewish speech? Is it Christian speech that appropriates only Jewish speech? Or is it speech that contains many cultural voices? Whose concepts of kingship, sonship, and benefit interweave in and through the voices in his language? The contention in this essay is that the language of the Roman centurion is borderline language in Mediterranean culture. This language belongs to many people. As a result, it is always "half someone else's language". When the centurion comes to speech, he evokes the many voices throughout Mediterranean culture who care deeply about the nature of true kingship, because their lives depend on it. They care deeply about those people through whom God, or the gods, work, because these are the people who nurture and support them, or abuse and destroy them. In other words, these discussions concern life and death. They concern the manner in which people either live together in mutual support or dominate and destroy one another when the opportunity arises.

The centurion stands opposite Jesus. But, in truth, he stands on a borderline between various groups who are interested in the benefits of heaven. The narrator says that boundary lines split open when Jesus dies. The veil between the people and the temple splits open, and the true nature of kingship becomes visible to all – Jewish, Christian, and Gentile. Finally, the voices may engage in dialogue with one another, because someone, namely a centurion, has discovered the common

language among them – language that is always half someone else's language.

The sustained mockery in the Markan account of the crucifixion becomes deeply ironic when the narrator uses Ps 22 in an inverted order. The inversion places the initial expression of an experience of abandonment by God on Jesus' lips as he dies, rather than placing one of the final verses of the psalm that would express a plea that contains hope and confidence in God's activity. And why not, we ask, express that confidence, since the narrator gives every reason for it in the account of the empty tomb? Our analysis suggests that the key lies in the ironic play on kingship which results from Pilate's use of the title "King of the Jews", from the chief priests' and scribes' mocking of Jesus as "Messiah King of Israel" and from Joseph of Arimathea's expectation of the "Kingdom of God". According to the Markan version, the kingdom of God occurs in and through the sequence of the ironic death of Jesus as "King of the Jews" followed by the empty tomb which points to his appearance in the future. We must look, therefore, for clues to this kind of ideology through intertextual analysis.

The gospel of Mark places patterns of understanding and action at home in first-century Mediterranean literature outside of Jewish and Christian circles in conversation with patterns, traditions, and titles from biblical and Jewish literature. The centurion's ability to see Jesus as a "real" Son of God occurs when he dies with a cry of abandonment on his lips. Through the thought and action of Jesus as a true king, the kingdom of God has drawn near. In the future this true king will come as the "Son of man" and gather the elect together from the four corners of the earth (Mk 13,27).

This portrayal raises a question whether there may be additional traditions about kings that could call forth the centurion's recognition of Jesus as "son of God" at his death. One of the most ironic portrayals of kingship outside of Mark resides in the cultural tradition of the Persian ritual during the Sacian feast. The context of Dio's discussion of the Persian ritual raises the possibility that the centurion in Mark associates Jesus' death as a mocked king with "a son of God" as a result of traditions about the true suffering king who is perceived to be a son of Zeus in Hellenistic-Roman society and culture. If this interpretation is correct, the title Son of God on the lips of the centurion strikes the ear of the Hellenistic-Roman reader with special force in the context of the splitting of the temple curtain from top to bottom. The Roman general Titus would burn the temple to the ground, but it was the messianic king of Israel, who died as a true suffering king, who removed the outer curtain and opened the benefits of God's activity beyond the boundaries of Israel to all people in the Roman Mediterranean world. But these benefits would come only to

those who refuse to inflict suffering and death on others (Mk 10,42-45) and who are willing to lose their lives as a means of saving them (Mk 8,34-37).

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