“OTHER BOATS WERE WITH HIM” (MK 4:36).

THE RADICAL INCLUSIVITY OF THE SAMOAN *MOTU O TAGATA* READING OF MARK.

by

Visesio Saga

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores a radically inclusive understanding of the crowds and other characters in Mark's Gospel from a Samoan perspective. Studies of the use of *ochlos* (crowd) in Mark have already shaped significant hermeneutical and theological movements, such as Minjung Theology in Korea (Ahn Byung-Mu) and Subaltern Hermeneutics in India (C. I. David Joy), which interpret the Galilean crowds as the oppressed and marginalised peoples who are drawn to Jesus. The Samoan translation of *ochlos* and related terms as *motu o tagata* ("island of people") includes and affirms such identifications but extends them to include everyone in the Gospel narrative, and locates them all on an island surrounded by sea (Samoa) rather than a sea surrounded by land (Galilee). This implied embedding of the Nation of Samoa in the Gospel narrative is consistent with our identity as a Christian Nation by Constitution, yet without a State Church, and as an island of people who continue to wrestle with our Traditional and Christian heritage.

I argue that what appears to be a colloquial translation that provides a challenging *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic for all Samoans living in or having connections to the Samoan Islands, also suggests new insights into the Markan narrative. The extension of the crowd to include other characters (suggested by Elizabeth Malbon, amongst others) is taken further to include all named and unnamed characters in Mark. This radical inclusivity is qualified only when some temporarily exclude themselves due to the varying degrees of their expressed or implied opposition to Jesus, and when all others in the Gospel of Mark fail to follow truly. Even so, these failures and oppositions are overturned by narrative reversals involving both disciples (Peter) and the elite (Joseph of Arimathea), for example, and by the open call for all to repent and faithfully engage the Goodnews.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I certify that the thesis entitled

"OTHER BOATS WERE WITH HIM" (MARK 4:36).

THE RADICAL INCLUSIVITY OF THE SAMOAN *MOTU O TAGATA* READING OF MARK.

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgement is given. This thesis has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any tertiary educational institution.

Full Name: Visesio Saga

Signature: 

Date: 10th January, 2022

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

my wife Angharad and our children—Eucharistia, Etuale, Maravina, Talamaria, and Toma;

our mothers–Mafa Lupeomanu and Taumuafa Toma;

and our sisters, brothers and their families.

Faafetai tele mo le tapuaiga

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *Anchor Bible Dictionary.* 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AJPS	*Asia Journal of Pentecostal Studies*
ANU	Australian National University
AQ	*Anthropological Quarterly*
ARA	*Annual Review of Anthropology*
ASE	*Annali di Storia delt'Esegesi*
AT	*Archaeology and Text*
ATJ	*Asbury Theological Journal*
AusAID	Australia Agency for International Development
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BI-JCA	*Biblical Interpretation – A Journal of Contemporary Approaches*
BIS	Biblical Imagination Series
BKC	The Bible Knowledge Commentary
BNTCS	Black's New Testament Commentaries Series
BR	*Biblical Review*
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BTF	*Bangalore Theological Forum*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CBW	*Communication with Biblical World*
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CMB	*Critical Mass Bulletin*
CP	*Contemporary Pacific*
CT	*Christianity Today*
CTC	*Commission on Theological Concerns, Christian Conference of Asia*
CTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
Diss.	dissertation
ed.	editor; edited by
EDB	Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible
EJSP	*European Journal of Social Psychology*
Enc	*Encounter*
ExpT	*Expository Times*
FAST	Faatuatua i le Atua Samoa ua Tasi (a political party in Samoa)
GoS	Government of Samoa
HJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HoS	Head of State
HSCP	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HRPP	Human Rights Protection Party (a political party in Samoa)
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
IJBT	*Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*
IJPT	*International Journal of Public Theology*

IJT	*India Journal of Theology*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religions*
JAJ	*Journal of Ancient Judaism*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBTSA	*Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JET	*Journal of Empirical Theology*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JMM	*Journal of Markets & Morality*
JPH	*Journal of Pacific History*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of New Testament*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MTh	Master of Theology
Neo	*Neotestamentica*
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovTes	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NUS	National University of Samoa
NZJH	*New Zealand Journal of History*
OBSA	Oceania Biblical Studies Association
PA	*Pacific Affairs*
PEB	*Pacific Economic Bulletin*
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
Phro	*Phronema*
PIBA	*Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association*
PR	*Philosophy and Rhetoric*
PT	*Practical Theology*
PTC	Pacific Theological College
RE	*Religious Education*
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBS	Samoa Bureau of Statistics
SCJ	*Stone-Campbell Journal*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SPCK	The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SQ	*Sociological Quarterly*
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
transl.	translators; translated by
UN	United Nations
USP	University of the South Pacific
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WW	*Word and World*

GLOSSARY

afakasi	half-caste children of Samoan-*papālagi* unions
aiga	family (families)
aiga potopoto	extended family
ali'i	paramount (high) chief(s)
alofa	love; compassion
Ao o le Malo	Head of State
au-meauli	black people generally, but especially of Melanesian-Samoans; a degrading reference to Samoans of darker-skin colour
au-Saina	Chinese people; Chinese Samoans
elo	stinking or foul smell; dreadful
Kamupani Oloa	a locally owned and operated copra-marketing company during German Samoa
fa'aaloalo	respect
fa'alupega	ceremonial greetings; traditional honourific salutations
fa'amatai	a Samoan traditional political system that evolves around chiefly authority
fa'aSamoa	Samoan customs and traditional; generic term for everything Samoan; Samoan way
faifeau	church minister; reverend; priest
Faipule	a bipartisan council of chiefly advisers to Mata'afa Iosefo, which was made up of chiefly district representatives
fanua	land; placenta; afterlife
fono	council
'ietoga	fine mat(s)
ifoga	a traditional Samoan apology using an '*ietoga* as a covering for the guilty party
Le Ali'i Sili	The Highest Chief
malaga	traditional Samoan visiting parties to see relatives and friends in other villages or islands, which can last from a few days to several weeks
malo	government
mativa	poor
Mau	a Public Opinion — a national movement of resistance (both passive and active) that has fought for Samoa's sovereignty during colonial times
Mau a Pule	The Opinion of *Pule*, see *Mau* for political purpose and *Pule* for origin
Mau a Tumua ma Pule	The Opinion of *Tumua* and *Pule*, see *Mau* for political purpose and *Tumua* and *Pule* for origins
mavaēga	dying wish
motu	island (singular); islands (plural)
motu o tagata	islands of people (literally); Samoan translation for crowd; multitude
motu-o-tagata	a Samoan hermeneutic employed in this thesis
pa'ia	sacred; sanctified
palapala	blood; dirt, mud, soil

papālagi	heaven breakers, sky bursters (literally) — a reference to white foreigners
Pule	the collective body of all Savaii orator chiefs
pulenu'u	a village equivalent of a mayor
sā	see *pa'ia*
Samoan Islanders	a collective identity that includes Samoan citizens and residents
Samoa mo Samoa	Samoan Islands for Samoan People—a patriotic cry for Samoan sovereignty
soālaupule	discussing and debating issues in order to reach a peaceful consensus
sui tamaita'i	village women's representative
Tafa'ifa	majestic four (literally) — a resemblance of kingship over all Samoa; supreme ruler; holder of all four paramount chiefly titles at the same time — Tuiatua, Tuiaana, Gatoaitele, and Tamasoalii.
tagata	person (singular); people or group of people (plural)
tama-a-aiga	sons of the families (literally) — an honourific reference to holders of four royal chiefly titles from leading traditional Samoan families, such as Tupua Tamasese, which is directly linked to the Tuiatua title from Atua district; Tuiaana and Tuimalealiifano titles from Aana; and Malietoa and Mata'afa title from Tuamasaga district
Taimua	an advisory council made up of principle contenders to royal titles under Solf's administration
taupou	maiden virgin
tautua	selfless service
tulafale	orator or talking chief(s)
Tumua	the collective body of all orator chiefs from Aana and Atua districts on Upolu Island
Tupu Sili	Supreme Chief or King
va tapu'ia	sacred space in-between; space made sacred

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis statement

This thesis explores a radically inclusive understanding of Mark's use of the "crowd(s)" (Greek, *ὄχλος/ὄχλοι*, transliterated as *ochlos/ochloi*) and associated terms to portray Jesus' ministry as including *all* who congregate together with Jesus for one reason or another. I argue for a porous boundary between the *ochloi* and all other named and unnamed characters and groups, such that even a boatful of Jesus' closest disciples is extended to include the "other boats" that "were with him" (4:36). This inclusivity is only broken at the narrative level when an individual or a group of people declare themselves excluded because of their expressed or implied opposition to Jesus, such as Peter's rebuke and denial of Jesus for example (cf. 8:32–33 and 14:66–72).[1] Others temporarily exclude themselves because of their different motives and intentions, such as some members of the Jewish leadership (cf. 2:6; 3:1, 6; 6:3, and so on); the disciples when they flee and desert Jesus during his arrest (cf. 14:50); and the frightened women fleeing from the empty tomb (cf. 16:8). Despite these apparent failures, the opportunity still stands for Peter and anyone else to consider re-joining by repenting and accepting Jesus' open invitation (1:14; cf. 16:7).

This inclusive reading of Mark reflects the Samoan translation of *ochlos* as "*motu o tagata*" (island of people), which is used thirty-five times in the Samoan translation of Mark.[2] Other similar Samoan terminologies are also used, including *nu'u* (village, 11:32), and *vao tagata* (jungle of people, 12:12, 41). The Samoan expression *motu o tagata* also translates both

[1] All biblical references, translations, and citations are from the English version of Mark's Gospel in *The Holy Bible – Containing the Old and New Testaments,* NRSV (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), unless otherwise stated.

[2] For these translation variants, see Appendix 2, based on the Samoan translation of the Bible, *O le Tusi Paia, O le Feagaiga Tuai ma le Feagaiga Fou,* Uluai Lomiga Fou Muamua (Tamaligi: Malua Printing Press, 2005).

the Greek *πλῆθος* (*plēthos*) and *πολλοί* (*polloi*) on two occasions (3:7; 6:33).[3] The term occurs in the other Gospels also (and Acts and Revelation, see Appendix 2) but I am focusing on Mark's use as the first Gospel written and the basis for Matthew and Luke's accounts. So *motu o tagata* is used predominantly for *ochlos* ("crowd") in Mark, but not exclusively, and its meaning reaches beyond the usual interpretations of *ochlos* to include many people.

This Samoan proverbial expression is a general and inclusive label that appropriately describes the Samoan reality at the time when the Samoan translation of the Bible took place with the help of missionaries from the London Mission Society (LMS).[4] This historic period (1800s) saw the influx of foreigners—missionaries, traders, political actors, and so forth—to the Samoan Islands. They formed another layer of "islanders," which enabled their inclusion in this Samoan expression—*motu o tagata*. Together with the native Samoans, they chartered their journey together, despite the chaotic impacts of colonialism and the influence of Samoa's highly hierarchical society. Thus, this *motu o tagata* expression echoes this inclusive understanding of all Samoan citizens and residents (henceforth referred to as "Samoan Islanders") who call the Samoan Islands home. This expression thereby functions as a hermeneutical lens ("*motu-o-tagata*")[5] through which Mark's story of all people as they

[3] For clarification, the following terminology as used throughout the thesis is defined:
–"*motu o tagata*" or "island of people" refers to the total collective identity of all characters and groups in Mark, including those listed immediately below. It also describes the implied readers of the Samoan translation of Mark—the entire population of Samoa and all who identify or live with them; with hyphens, *motu-o-tagata,* it refers to the hermeneutical approach based on this Samoan translation;
–"multitudes", "people", "many", "others", "collective", variously refer to *πλῆθος*, *πολλοι*, *ἄλλοι*, and all undefined third person plural constructions ("they");
–"crowds" refer to *ochlos* in the plural (strictly only when Mark uses it);
–"crowd" is used for *ochlos* in the singular (strictly only when Mark uses it);
–then there are the various named and unnamed individuals and groups featured in the narrative.
Jesus is the focal part of this shifting collective identity, and is sometimes named by Mark, though his identity *with* the people is underscored by the frequent use simply of "he" and by his self-description as "Son of Man" or "Human One." Unclean and demonic spirits possess/inhabit some members of the total collective, and seem to have inside knowledge of Jesus' identity, but they are expelled by him and/or flee from his presence.

[4] This Samoan linguistic expression could have relevant implications for any island context, but its present use in this thesis relates mainly to the Samoan context.

[5] Again, the hyphens indicate its use as a hermeneutical lens. See Chapter Two, Section 2.2 for discussion of this hermeneutic and its application in Chapter Seven.

encounter Jesus is analysed to complement and challenge other scholarly views, and to assess the ongoing relevance of the Gospel narrative for the "island of people" (indeed, the "planet of people") today.

1.2 Markan scholarship on *ochlos* and associated terms

Mark's use of *ochlos* has been interpreted in various ways. Rebekah Eklund persuasively advocates separate identities for two specific *ochloi* in the Gospels: one crowd of Galilean pilgrims who followed and heralded Jesus into Jerusalem, and the other one of Jerusalemites who shouted for his crucifixion (15:15).[6] This distinction is not explicit at the narrative level in Mark, though it may be historically plausible. But it is clear that the Galilean crowds respond enthusiastically to the Markan Jesus, and that they are mostly comprised of villagers and not the urban elites. This aligns with Ahn Byung-Mu's earlier view that Mark's use of *ochlos* represents a group of "socially uprooted people" from the Galilean lower classes.[7] Ahn developed Minjung Theology from this understanding of the *ochlos* in Mark, which fuelled significant opposition to the South Korean dictatorships in the decades following 1960. This provides an important example of how Markan hermeneutics can influence politics for the better. But as Sugirtharajah concedes after reflecting on Ahn's significant legacy, the *ochlos* would now more likely be seen "as a wide-ranging collection of people composed of both oppressed and oppressors liable to be lured by the enticements of the empire and not

[6] Rebekah Eklund, "From "Hosanna!" to "Crucify!" The Fickle Crowds in the Four Gospels," *BBR* 26.1 (2016): 21–41.

[7] Cited by Volker Küster, "Jesus and the minjung revisited: The legacy of Ahn Byung-Mu (1922–1996)," *BI-JCA* 19.1 (2011): 2, http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=0adbf3ac-b0ac-4d21-a296-375ca3ff9c85%40sessionmgr103. See also Joong Suk Suh, "Discipleship and Community in the Gospel of Mark" (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International), published PhD. Diss., Boston University Graduate School, 1986), iii–iv, who describes *ochlos* as a group of people on the periphery of society.

as a single group consisting of victims and the poor, as Ahn would have liked to portray."[8] Others have also argued for a widening of Ahn's description of the *ochloi* without wishing to lose the powerful critique in Mark of the abuse of power by the elite (10:42–45).

A slightly more inclusive reading allows David Joy to argue for the emergence in Mark's story of "the crowd and the minor characters" as "the subalterns of the day," a conclusion that combines both Joy's postcolonial context and Mark's implied readers' struggles against Roman imperialism.[9] I will draw further on Joy's analysis of the crowd and relate it to the Samoan context in Chapter Four below.

Widening the circle still further, Elizabeth S. Malbon treats both the Twelve[10] and the crowds as "more complementary than competing groups in the Markan narrative, contributing to a composite portrait of the followers of Jesus."[11] Malbon concludes that all followers of Jesus are fallible followers,[12] as I will also argue in this thesis. This thesis extends both Joy and Malbon's readings of *ochlos* in Mark's story, by proposing a radically inclusive approach to Mark's use of the crowds as a collective identity, the "island of people" (*motu o tagata*), to include "all" who seek out Jesus for whatever motives. It follows Malbon's approach of incorporating a cluster of varied terminologies used by Mark to describe the gathering around

[8] R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Introduction" in *Stories of Minjung Theology: The Theological Journey of Ahn Byung-Mu in His Own Words*, ed., Wongi Park, transl., Hanna In, International Voices in Biblical Studies 11 (Atlanta: SBL Press) 2019, xvi.

[9] David Joy, "Markan subalterns. The crowd and their strategies of resistance: A postcolonial critique," *BT* 3.1 (London: Equinox Publishing, 2005): 55. For other examples of "subaltern" hermeneutics, see Küster, "Jesus and the minjung revisited"; Donna Landry and Gerard MacLean, eds., *The Spivak Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 203, citing Gayathri C. Spivak's definition of "subaltern" as the "people who belong to the so-called non-elite or subordinated social groups."

[10] I have adopted this reference for Jesus' chosen Twelve disciples to differentiate them from other followers of Jesus.

[11] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Disciples/crowds/whoever: Markan characters and readers," *NovTes* 28.2, April (1986): 124, http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=c2fce2b9-2e9f-4cb3-92c6-c213ba69b26e%40sessionmgr4008. Her interpretation of Jesus' "whoever"-type statement extends that circle of the crowd "reaching beyond" (125).

[12] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark," *Semeia,* January 1 (1983): 30.

Jesus of large crowds,[13] as an indication of that collective response. This is perhaps the closest of recent studies to the argument in this thesis, which proposes extending this boundary even further by the inclusion of all other characters and groups in the collective whole, the *motu o tagata*.

The limits of this inclusion are tested when Mark explicitly highlights one group of people, named as the scribes from Jerusalem, who accuse Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. The question is asked (in parabolic form) how those who see the actions of Jesus as demonic can find forgiveness if they cannot discern the difference between Holy Spirit and unclean spirit? Such intransigence renders their accusation as blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (cf. 3:21–30), we are told, and thus qualifies as an unforgivable sin. Is this a judgment by Jesus, or a warning? We should note that at the beginning of the very same pericope it is Jesus' own family who are coming to take him away, "For they were saying, 'He has gone out of his mind'" (3:21). Translators often prefer 'people were saying' (to save Jesus' family from such irreverence), but the same construction concludes the pericope: "For they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (3:30). This *inclusio* of third person plurals "for they were saying" typifies the narrative ambiguity in Mark of who is with Jesus (*οἱ παρ' αὐτοῦ*, 3:21) and who is not (9:38–41). A *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic situates *all* readers equally in this narrative and forces us to keep asking these questions, rather than judging others as worse than ourselves and excluding them.

This understanding of both Mark's use of the crowds and associated inclusive terms, and this contextual hermeneutic of *motu-o-tagata*, illuminates the Samoan postcolonial reality in light of the current pressures from globalisation and economic domination. This present reality is a product of Samoa's sociohistorical journey—a mixture of foreign and internal forces

[13] These include *πλῆθος*, *πολλοί*, *ἄλλοι*, and *πᾶς*. See Malbon, "Disciples/crowds/whoever," 126–130.

of colonialism, political corruption, economic exploitation, cultural manipulation, religious confusion, and climate challenges.[14] The impacts of these influences have benefited only the minority elites with a paralysing effect on the ordinary people (cf. 2:17).

The significance of this local context for interpreting Mark has been foreshadowed in other regional postcolonial interpretations, such as Joy's reading of the Indian context mentioned above. Volker Küster also re-contextualises Ahn's work, in light of South Korea's developing dictatorship in the 70s and 80s.[15] According to Küster, Ahn's contextual reading focusses on the Markan Jesus' relationship with *ochlos*, whose members were the "socially uprooted people who gathered around him."[16] Joong Suk Suh also relates this understanding of the crowd to the Markan communities as a group of people on the periphery of society.[17]

This thesis affirms this line of inquiry by analysing the historical realities of both Mark's implied first readers and Samoan Islanders today, but widens its focus to challenge all the "island of people" to rise to the transformative challenges of the Gospel. It aims specifically to examine how Mark uses the crowds and other groupings of people to describe the significance of Jesus' ministry, and how that story can relate to the lived experiences of Samoan Islanders in this twenty-first century.[18]

[14] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 80–81, refers to this "modern imperialism" as the continuation of the nineteenth-century contest over empire.

[15] Küster, "Jesus and the minjung revisited," 2.

[16] Küster, "Jesus and the minjung revisited," 2.

[17] Suh, "Discipleship and Community in the Gospel of Mark," iii–iv.

[18] Terence E. Fretheim and Karlfried Froehlich, eds., *The Bible as Word of God: In a Post Modern World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 3, highlights the importance of these historic realities in discussing local theological issues.

1.3 Samoan issues and the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative

Theologians and biblical scholars from Oceania, including Samoans, face the difficult task of formulating a united front that binds diverse contextual theological and biblical thoughts from this region of "islands of people."[19] Oceania and Samoan scholars can only address this void by presenting an integrated approach that combines and radiates the richness of their cultural-oriented worldviews, as a transformative platform of inclusive acceptance, despite their minority and perceived inferiority.[20]

This slowly developing outlook can partly be attributed to colonial mentalities that dismiss Oceania's worthy contributions in various capacities and disciplines, including theology.[21] However, Oceania's theological insights continue to emerge on multiple biblical themes and are recognised as producing locally-oriented theological worldviews and Samoan

[19] Gilberto A. Ruiz, review of *Islands, Islanders and the Bible RumInation*, eds., Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed V. Davidson, *CBQ* 81 (2019): 163, sums up this difficulty due to the lack of a single island hermeneutical program. Also, "Oceania" is adopted instead of the usual Pacific designation, which emphasises the importance of the ocean to our people as a major resource.

[20] Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Beeny Liew, Fernando F. Segovia, "Toward Minority Biblical Criticism: Framework, Contours, Dynamics," in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism,* eds., Randall C. Bailey, Tat-siong Beeny Liew, Fernando F. Segovia, SBLSS 57 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2009), 3.

[21] An example of such attitude is alluded to by Damon Salesa, a New Zealander Samoan, who highlights New Zealand (NZ)'s past ignorance to "see itself as a Pacific Island nation or its people as Pacific Islanders. For Salesa, "Pacific Islander" is a category which ensures the "New Zealand ways of seeing are fundamentally disconnected from the Pacific." This landscape has slowly changed since 2000s and "New Zealand has become more closely integrated with the Pacific than with any other part of the world." See Damon Salesa, *Island Time: New Zealand's Pacific Futures* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Limited, 2017), 9, 21, 26. However, such separatist views persist as Kerry Howe, "Two Worlds?" *NZJH* 37.1 (2003): 50, insists that "Pakeha New Zealanders never regard themselves as Islanders or as of the region … [and] New Zealand was only incidentally in the Pacific." Such viewpoints are not confined to our bigger next-door island—New Zealand, as Jione Havea, "Engaging Scriptures from Oceania," in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Reading from Oceania,* eds., Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elain M. Wainwright, SBLSS 75 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 6, mentions this type of attitude towards Oceania, by pointing to a comment by the analyst Zhixing Zhang (concerning Hillary Clinton's visit to Australia and New Zealand in 2010) who does not "get why anyone gives a shit about Polynesia."

perspectives.[22] This work hopes to contribute to this trend, whereby biblical texts (for this thesis, the Gospel According to Mark) are read and interpreted from a Samoan viewpoint.[23]

This thesis examines the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative as a concept—a collective identity—which is explained with a cluster of related Greek terminologies.[24] It explores the contributions (both positive and negative) of various character groupings, including individuals, to Mark's description of the impact of the Goodnews of Jesus. Such examinations aim to illuminate the critical roles and functions of the *motu o tagata* on the narrative level, their responses, failures, and ongoing struggles, and how they provide analogies for the challenges of following Jesus in the Markan communities and in Samoa today. The characterisation, story settings and plots, and narrative techniques employed by Mark shape his story of the *motu o tagata* and humanise the social constraints experienced by its diverse members. Similarly, such human affairs on the narrative level resonate with the realities of various societies throughout history and the theological and social implications for contemporary Samoan Islanders through reflection, inspiration, and analogy.

Hence, this exploration asks questions of the *motu o tagata* on the narrative level. Who is included in this general reference? Who attempts to exclude themselves from the groups and

[22] For recent essays by Pacific theologians, see Jione Havea, ed., *Sea of Readings: The Bible in the South Pacific* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018); Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed V. Davidson, eds., *Islands, Islanders and the Bible: RumInation*, SBLSS 77 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015); Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elain M. Wainwright, eds., *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Reading from Oceania,* SBLSS 75 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). For examples of some recent Samoan studies, see Samasoni Moleli Alama, "Jabez in Context: A multidimensional approach to identity and landholding in Chronicles" (PhD diss., University of Divinity, 2018); Seumaninoa Puaina, "Beyond Universalism: Unravelling the Anonymous Minor Characters in Matthew 15:21–28" (PhD diss., Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley California, 2016); Vaitusi Lealaiauloto Nofoaiga, "Towards a Samoan postcolonial reading of discipleship in the Matthean gospel" (PhD diss., University of Auckland, 2014); Frank Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective: Towards an intercultural reading of the Fourth Gospel" (PhD diss., University of Auckland, 2010).

[23] Samoa herewith refers to the Independent State of Samoa (formerly Western Samoa), which excludes the eastern islands of American Samoa, a territory of the United States of America (USA). Although both islands share the same Samoan language, cultural, and religious values, they differ significantly in political status.

[24] See James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), who introduces this idea of a "concept" that can be explained by a cluster of terminologies. See also Wongi Park, ed., *Stories of Minjung Theology: The Theological Journey of Ahn Byung-Mu in His Own Words*, transl., Hanna In (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 18–19, who views the "Jesus event" as a collective event, which has been recurring within the church and history.

crowds following Jesus, and why? With different cultural, social, religious, and political orientations evident in the Markan narrative, does *motu o tagata* function as an exclusive ethnic label (Galilean Jewish people only) or an all-inclusive border-crossing title (people from diverse places)? Is there a bias in Mark's use of *ochlos* towards the marginalised, and if so, how does the wider *motu o tagata* framework relate to this? Is there movement between the ethnicities, social classes, and religious persuasions of the *motu o tagata* surrounding and responding to Jesus? These critical issues and questions formulate the relevant interpretational methodologies that will allow for an informed understanding of how the *motu o tagata* participate in and contribute to Mark's way of describing Jesus' ministry.

Prominent in these overarching objectives is a presupposition that this collective identity, the *motu o tagata*, includes individuals and other character groupings Mark explicitly identifies with various identity markers. These, for example, include *personal names* such as Jairus and Bartimaeus. Sometimes, different impersonal identity markers are used, such as *gender and conditions* (a man with an unclean spirit, a woman with haemorrhages), *titles and roles* (sinners and tax collectors), *ethnic identity* (the Syrophoenician woman), *named places and villages* (Simon's house in Capernaum, Bethsaida), and *named regions* (Galilee, the country of the Gerasenes, the region of Tyre, part of the Decapolis).[25]

In the latter category, some groups of people seem to take their identity from their territory, a variation, perhaps, on the idea in the Hebrew Bible of "people of the land" (Ezra 4:4). This resembles in some ways this Samoan hermeneutic—*motu-o-tagata*—which identifies Samoan Islanders explicitly with their location, the Samoan Islands.

These different identity markers had significance for the implied first hearers of the Markan narrative (cf. 13:14). They also inform our understanding of the human effects and the

[25] Jesus encountered these characters as either members or representatives of the *motu o tagata* and various sub-groups within it.

distinct roles the *motu o tagata* play in Mark's retelling of Jesus' ministry. Such socially structured identifications highlight the personal costs and social constraints encountered by the people. By focussing on these social identifiers and the human impact, readers can detect social, cultural, religious, economic, and political dynamics affecting the people and their lived experiences. They then inform our sense of who includes or excludes themselves from the *motu o tagata* who decide to follow Jesus and ascertain why and how they respond differently to Jesus' ministry of servanthood.

Mark's story of the "island of people" (the interaction of Jesus with everyone he encounters) resonates with the perceived realities of his own communities in the first century CE. As a point of departure, this thesis supports a post-70 provenance for Mark's Gospel within a network of communities in the wider Province of Syria.[26] This position places importance on the Gospel as an encouragement and a warning to hear Jesus' proclamation of the reign of God at the height of political and religious persecutions during the renewed Roman occupation of Palestine after the suppression of the Jewish revolt. I will argue that this context of social, political, and religious oppression surfaces Mark's purpose to persuade and encourage his

[26] This post-fall dating is supported by Brian J. Incigneri, *The Gospel to the Romans: The Setting and Rhetoric of Mark's Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); A. Edward Gardner, "Imperfect and faithful followers: The young man at Gethsemane and the young man at the tomb in the Gospel of Mark," *Encounter* 71.3 (2010):33–43; Fernando Belo, *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981); Bruno V. Manno, "The Identity of Jesus and Christian Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark," *Religious Education* LXX 6, November-December (1975): 625. Numerous detailed studies support different views on Mark's provenance. Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983/1977), and Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), among others, advocate for a pre-fall of Jerusalem, Galilean, or Syrian provenance. Perhaps still the dominant position of a pre-fall Roman provenance is represented by Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (London: SCM Press, 1985); and Donald Senior, "'With Swords and Clubs ... ': The Setting of Mark's Community and His Critique of Abusive Power," *BTB* 17 (1987): 10–20. See also the discussions in Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville/London/Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Stanley E. Porter, "What Do We Know and How Do We Know it?," in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, eds., Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 50; Stanley E. Porter, "Paul and the Process of Canonization," in *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective*, eds., Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov, Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 173–202. For a post-fall Galilean/Syrian provenance, see Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark," *JBL* 111 (1992): 441–62; Hendrika N. Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in Its Historical and Social Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

emerging communities of believers to remain faithful amidst the threats of persecution and death.[27] It is this resolute courage that Samoan Islanders are encouraged to emulate as they locate themselves in the implied readership of the *motu o tagata* in their translation of Mark, and through that identification and by way of analogy, to understanding better their present context.

These reader-response components (implied audience and Samoan Islanders) surface the contextual emphases of this thesis. As the analytical exegesis progresses, as a Samoan reader, I am actively engaging the text and trying to relate it to the collective context of Samoan Islanders. Analogies are made between Mark's narrative, a plausible reconstruction of its perceived historical context, and the lived experiences of Samoan Islanders, leading to a critical interrogation of the Markan story.

Does the Samoan translation, *motu o tagata*, provide a positive, solid foundation of hope for Samoan Islanders, or just reinforce negative connotations, such as a sense of forgotten and neglected islands scattered across the ocean?[28] Does this Samoan expression embody an inclusive approach or a divisive one? Can it be considered literally as an "island of people" reflecting Samoa's colourful proverbial phrases? Or can it be interpreted metaphorically to reflect the intimate relationship between the people, the islands we inhabit, and the Samoan and Christian traditions we inherit? Were our forefathers thinking of our situation and identity as islanders when they coined this translation? Or was it merely the best way they could describe a large gathering of people?

[27] Gardner, "Imperfect and faithful followers," 33.

[28] See Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Island," *CP* 6.1 (1994): 148, https://www-jstor-org.divinity.idm.oclc.org/stable/pdf/23701593.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A96eddb840b7346c732698234caafa0be, who discusses the vulnerability of island nations in Oceania, which drives them to be dependent on powerful nations.

This Samoan translation and hermeneutic, *motu-o-tagata*, highlights the uniqueness of living or having a connection to the Samoan Islands, and enduring all its associated positive and negative social changes. It illuminates Samoan Islanders' vulnerability and resilience in coping with our inherited status as islanders. Of symbolic importance, it denotes an intimate relationship between Samoan Islanders and these Samoan Islands—our inheritance spiritually from God and culturally from our ancestors, or in the case of more recent Samoan residents, through marriage, naturalisation, or long-term economic commitments. Life on these islands can produce positive impacts—unity, reciprocity, resilience, tenacity, endurance, and a sense of belonging or result in adverse effects—remoteness, isolation, vulnerability, limited resources, and a high cost of living, which every Samoan Islander endures in one way or another.

Another significant factor in using this hermeneutical lens relates to the fluidity of island life, where land and ocean contribute significantly (amongst other factors). Reading Mark's use of the "island of people" inclusively to embrace all Samoan Islanders with a shared sense of belonging define us in terms of a clearly described land bounded by the sea.[29] The land is our life-support system, producing the essential needs of the people and protecting them.

But land can and sea can also be a source of grave threat to islanders' wellbeing through natural disasters, such as the relatively recent earthquakes and tsunami in Samoa, not to mention frequent hurricanes. The land also accommodates and spreads biosecurity risks because of invasive species and diseases, such as the taro blight that devastated this local stable food and source of income. So, the land becomes a significant issue in many island nations because of its limited and fragile availability.

[29] This inclusive reading echoes Mark's use of *ochlos*, which explicitly includes people from other lands (cf. 3:7–8), when two *plēthoi* of Galileans, Judeans, and people from regions beyond all merged to form this particular *ochlos* (3:9). See Chapter Four, Section 4.2 for a detailed discussion.

Like land, the ocean that surrounds it provides and sustains the people. It is a maritime highway that connects various islands within an island nation, and yet, as a boundary marker, it divides based on different identities and nationalities. These "islands of people" within Oceania have also been traversed for political and economic reasons over the years, resulting in significant impacts on both island landscapes and inhabitants. Again, like the land, the ocean can have devastating implications for both the islands and islanders during disasters.[30]

These components—the land and the ocean—enhance this relationship between the Samoan hermeneutic and context, and Mark's Gospel. The land embodies this hermeneutical lens, which epitomises an intimate connection between Samoan Islanders and the Samoan Islands.[31] The ocean signifies the inherited and introduced forces that positively and negatively shape, move, and transform Samoan Islanders and change the landscape of the Samoan Islands. Concerning Mark's Gospel, similar foreign and domestic forces prompt the occasion of the "island of people." Their impacts affect the people and shape their being—from following and supporting Jesus to calling for his crucifixion.

Such positive and negative similarities are quite prevalent in Mark's story and the Samoan context. Whereas the Pacific Ocean surrounds the Samoan Islands, the Sea of Galilee is surrounded by land, both of which are prominent in Mark's retelling of Jesus' relationship with the *motu o tagata*. Both the Ocean and the Sea provide means of access while also acting as boundary markers. Jesus and the Twelve cross this Sea five times (4:35–5:1; 5:21; 6:32; 6:45; 8:10). They twice cross this boundary marker to reach other foreign regions—the Gerasenes (5:1) and back (5:21), and again back to Magdala from the Decapolis (8:10). For both Galileans and Samoans, the precise relationship to land and sea defines identity, ethnicity,

[30] Mosese Mailo, "The prodigal in the 'sea of stories': Encircling the void with Armstrong Sperry and Albert Wednt" (paper presented at the OBSA, Piula, Samoa (2015), 4, summarises these characteristics of the ocean as both "a friend and a foe."

[31] See Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 25, who makes this connection to both a "specific territory" and "descent" when defining ethnic identity.

and a range of cultural practices and assumptions. By exhorting his followers to "go to the other side" (4:35; and to attempt to do so, 6:45), Jesus challenges those assumptions and practices and renews identity (5:19–20).

Unfortunately, the Galilean region and the Sea of Galilee were also perversely crossed by imperial incursions with permanent and tragic impacts on the people, landscape, and cultural ideals. Jesus engaged diverse members of the *motu o tagata* in his own crossings and performed extraordinary deeds of power, demonstrating his authority over nature, such as stilling a storm (4:39). His superior power over spiritual and cosmological forces was authenticated with the exorcising of the demoniac Legion (5:1–20).[32]

Mark also records Jesus travelling on land and teaching in other Gentile regions—towards Tyre and Sidon—where he healed the Syrophoenician woman's sick daughter (7:24–30). In the region of the Decapolis (7:31), Jesus fed a crowd of four thousand people (8:1–9). In these encounters in foreign lands, Jesus demonstrated the inclusive and transcendent nature of his ministry, not limited to a specific region such as Galilee and Judea, or a particular ethnic group like the Jews, but open to all. But the narrative of Mark indicates that this openness leads to opposition—both from human and demonic forces.

The particular geographical locations mentioned by Mark—the Galilee, Jerusalem, and Gentile regions—correspond generally with the *motu o tagata*'s responses to Jesus by different sections of the *motu o tagata*. They are mostly positive in the Galilee and in Gentile areas. They are mainly negative in Jerusalem and Judea—the domain of Jewish authority and the extended arm of Rome's political power. Interestingly, Mark narrates Jesus going into the

[32] Hans Leander, *Discourses of Empire: The Gospel of Mark From a Postcolonial Perspective,* SBLSS 71 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 201–219, summarises the majority scholarly position of relating this demoniac Legion to Rome's oppressive rule and military prowess, with specific reference to Legio X Fretensis, which was stationed in Gerasa with the "boar" as their ensign (203). This Legion episode "introduces an additional dimension: the incredible strength of the dreaded Roman army" (201).

Gentile regions by referring to distant centres of power (Tyre, 7:24; Sidon 7:31; and Gerasa, 5:1), but does not mention the prominent Greco-Roman cities within Galilee, such as Tiberias and Sepphoris, and Jesus only approaches the "villages" of Caesarea Maritima (8:27), and even has no time for Jericho (10:46) or Jerusalem (11:11). Apparently, these dominant social locations and centres of power do not deserve mention due to their Roman and Herodian exploitative connections. Jesus' apparently deliberate absence from these cities is contrasted with his ministry in the villages of the Galilee and the wilderness of the surrounding regions.[33]

Also, the Romans are metaphorically presented in Mark's narrative as lording over the people in collaboration with the Herodians and Jewish leaders. They forced the people to live in fear (cf. 10:42–45), oppressed them with tributes and taxes, and suppressed them with their military might and power.[34] Mark reveals this in the cleansing of the Gerasene demoniac when he explicitly names that demoniac as Legion. Historical records testify of a Roman cohort's presence in the city of Gerasa,[35] which may explain historically the Gerasenes' fear. They were a subjected-people, ruled by Rome through their appointed administrators. The Gerasenes were understandably justified in asking Jesus to leave them, for they feared and dreaded a Roman reprisal for what Jesus did to a Roman "Legion," if not to their "pigs."

These realities of subjected people living in conditions of hopelessness, fear, neglect, marginalisation, and as out-groups within highly hierarchical societies are reflected in Mark's references to the crowd/s in the Galilee, as Ahn, Joy, and Joong have argued, and related to their own contexts as well. Their livelihoods were dominated by people with wealth, status, and authority, who collaborated with foreign imperial powers to sustain their privilege. Such

[33] Compare this to the Baptist's treatment and demise when he condemns Herod's infidelity with Herodias, his brother Philip's wife (cf. 6:17–28).

[34] See Chapter Six.

[35] Carl H. Kraeling, "History of Gerasa," in *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, ed., C. H. Kraeling (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1938), 40. Also, Josephus, *Jewish Wars: Books I–III*, ed., G.P. Gould, transl., J Thackery (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1927), 2.499–506, explains that the Legio X Fretensis was the first to be dispatched to fight the first battle in the Jewish War.

oppressive circumstances at the narrative level move the people to seek an alternative source of hope and change, as they seek out Jesus for help in great multitudes.

Yet Jesus' activities were also open to more elite members of society such as Jairus (5:22), the rich young man (10:17–22), and one of the scribes (12:28–34), as they appeared as individuals emerging from the more comprehensive contextual background of the crowds (cf. 5:21, 10:1, and 12:37 respectively). Jesus also attracted the interest of religious and political leaders, who continually attempted to get rid of him (from 3:6 on), even inciting two hostile crowds in Jerusalem to arrest him (14:43) and force his crucifixion (cf. 15:11). The hidden transcripts of Mark's narrative (the pigs, the Caesar coin, the fig tree) heighten these leaders' social and economic status and religious beliefs, and the threat that Jesus poses to them. This opposition threatens to exclude them from the reign of God (*βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ*, 1:15, transliterated as *basileia tou Theou*), unless they follow the Roman centurion's lead, whose acceptance of the truth (cf. 15:39) holds hope of inclusion, or that of Joseph of Arimathea, whose change of heart does the same (14:64; 15:43).

Unfortunately, the sociohistorical details of ordinary people have been on the periphery of scholarly research. Most of the received information focuses on monumental archaeological remains, important people, and prominent historical events. This biased portrayal paints a skewed view of history. However, some historians, archaeologists, and NT biblical scholars have shifted focus by studying the life of the "ordinary people" who made up the majority of ancient society.[36] This transition is challenging the obsession with the history of the elites by focussing on the everyday lives of ordinary people, whose contributions are assumed to have

[36] David A. Fiensy, "Archaeology and New Testament Studies: A New Emphasis," *SCJ* 22, Fall (2019): 218, puts this percentage of common people at ninety nine percent. See also William G. Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel: Where Archaeology and the Bible Intersect* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), vii, who explains this majority as "entirely invisible in typical histories of ancient Israel"; William G. Dever, *Beyond the Texts: An Archaeological Portrait of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 462.

"little to do with the making of history."[37] It is clear that Mark's narrative originates from the traditions of the ordinary people, from the wilderness and villages and not the centres of power, and that it is written in the common Greek of the lower classes.

Even classical historians, such as Thomas Grünewald, are observing this shift to recognise that "those on the margins of the community," significantly affect the historical process.[38] Regional contextual hermeneutics have also contributed to this challenge by advancing "a powerful and consistent resistance from the peoples of the voiceless groups to redefine the historical writings [of] the elites."[39] This thesis contributes by reading Mark "from below" as it were, in order to encourage ordinary Samoan Islanders to speak out against corruption and other suppressive practices that have negatively impacted their collective livelihoods. As Jesus and the Galilean crowds in Mark's Gospel advocate, so too the voices of Samoan Islanders must be heard.

This thesis continues this challenge by relating Mark's story of the *motu o tagata* and the crowds as part of it, to the reality of Samoan readers, the "island of people," with their distinct and highly hierarchical culture. More importantly, it encourages Samoan Islanders to relate and engage with Mark's depiction of the *motu o tagata* at all levels in ways that provide meaningful hope and encouragement for their particular circumstances. The significant contribution to Samoan Islanders (and all other islanders), which this thesis hopes to validate, is the importance of the servanthood that Jesus prioritises, especially towards those in need. It is a call for Samoan Islander followers of Jesus to re-interpret their servanthood role, especially

[37] Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), xii, point to this transition and place this biased assumption squarely on the assumption of modern Western thoughts. See also G. Anthony Keddie, Michael Flexsenhar III, and Steven J. Friesen, eds., *The Struggle over Class: Socioeconomic Analysis of Ancient Texts* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 3 https://monash.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/MON:au_everything:catau51489535840001751, who endeavour to "stimulate more transparent, critical, and theoretically nuanced discussions of the socioeconomic categories scholars use to analyse ancient Christian texts."

[38] Thomas Grünewald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1.

[39] Joy, "Markan Subalterns," 57. Also, Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Island," 148.

amidst the emergence of increasing individualism and economic division in their current reality.[40] This is a call to *all* Samoans, the *motu o tagata*, and not just the lower classes as represented by the Galilean crowds.

Also, this examination encourages Samoan Islanders to encounter their fear of new changes that are the reality of this modern era, where border crossing and engaging others are parts of that reality. There is a genuine need to engage and explore these changes with an open mind and make appropriate decisions that improve every Samoan Islander's livelihood. These decisions can be informed by active engagements with the biblical texts and show how these sacred texts can provide assurances of God's transforming grace and love, which Jesus proclaimed and practised.

Mark's Gospel and this hermeneutic of the *motu-o-tagata* can renew and encourage Samoan Islanders to deal with their present reality. It has been argued refreshingly that "to be excluded or to be forced into a story without our own experiences" indicates a void that must be engaged using "our Ocean retellings to fill that emptiness."[41] This process facilitates active engagement with biblical texts by Samoan Islanders, with support from sociohistorical literature and archaeological findings. By analogy, Samoan Islanders can relate and apply the teachings of these sacred texts through this hermeneutical lens of *motu-o-tagata* in a way that challenges all people.

[40] Aaron Kuecker, "Ethnicity and Social Identity," in *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, eds., J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 59–61, emphasises this "powerful and positive sense of belonging" in knowing oneself in a "world of dizzying and complex diversity."

[41] Mailo, "The prodigal in the 'sea of stories," 7.

1.4 Thesis outline

So this thesis re-examines the Samoan context in light of a *motu-o-tagata* interpretation of Mark's use of the crowd and related terms in his account of Jesus' ministry. It is a reader-oriented approach that accords with Bart Erhman's view:

> We are interested in the past because it can help us make sense of the present, of our own lives, beliefs, values, priorities, of our own world and our experience of it … all of us who study it are in fact interested in it for how it can help us think about ourselves and our lives.[42]

This purely historical interest is intensified by the explicitly Christian dimension of the Samoan Constitution. It implies that Gospel values are still formative for the challenging and renewing of Samoan culture—not in line with colonial or global traditions or expectations, but in ongoing dialogue with the way Samoans read the Scriptures. A key objective of this investigation is to provide Samoan readers with a hermeneutic to empower, transform, and liberate themselves from our present-day struggles. It relates Mark's Gospel to our present reality in line with Brendan Byrne's viewpoint:

> Mark tells the story and traces out the path of Christian living that is distinct, and that seems particularly attuned to address the darkness of unbelief and despair afflicting many human lives today … a readiness to confront absence and, in some sense, chaos, something that comes across many people as a distinct gift.[43]

Through the lens of "island of people," this thesis fuses the Markan narrative of those who encounter Jesus with the realities both of his implied audience and Samoan Islanders through critical engagement and analogy. These complementary approaches highlight the theological and narrative interests of Mark's story, then and now, and emphasise the critical contributions

[42] Bart D. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), xiii.

[43] Brendan Byrne, *A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), xi (italics original).

of the readers in this meaning-making process.[44] I contend that this engaging conversation can produce a defensible interpretation that relates to the readers' specific contexts.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One introduces the thesis' argument in comparison to existing scholarly works and its relevance to the Samoan context. Chapter Two discusses the complementary reading methodologies adopted to achieve the thesis' purposes. Chapter Three focuses on the vulnerability of various character groupings within the *motu o tagata* in Mark's narrative and how their inter-connected relationships enhance their contributions to the story. Chapter Four proposes a *motu-o-tagata* perspective on Mark's use of collective language and individual identity, which binds in-groups with "shared interests" in Jesus and reveals some out-groups with opposing responses that threaten their exclusion. Nevertheless, even those who curse Jesus, such as Peter and the Twelve's denial (14:31), are extended an invitation back (16:7). Chapter Five concludes the narrative examination by exploring the categories and functions of those comprising the *motu o tagata* in Mark's retelling of Jesus' ministry.

Chapter Six develops the narrative findings by comparing them with the lived experiences of the implied Markan audiences and communities in first-century Greco-Roman Palestine, insofar as it can be known. It excavates these ancient societies' social, cultural, economic, historical, and political realities, especially the imperial impact of Roman rule and local elites on the Galilean and Judean people. This thesis presupposes such sociohistorical conditions are embedded within Mark's story of the "island of people" and their encounters with Jesus.

Chapter Seven then reflects on the realities of Samoan Islanders and contextualises the *motu o tagata* of the Samoan translation of Mark through analogous active engagement. The

[44] Alama, "Jabez in Context," 5, calls this a "multidimensional approach."

hermeneutical lens of *motu-o-tagata* fuses this analogy. This fusion challenges the current reality of Samoan Islanders by interrogating various contributing factors that have shaped their journey of social and religious change, thus far. This hermeneutical and theological exercise highlights the need for Samoan Islanders to re-interpret their call to serve the Gospel and others, and actively pursue Jesus' invitation for re-inclusion when they fall.

A METHODOLOGY FOR THE *MOTU O TAGATA*

2.1 Introduction

Addressing the social and theological issues raised in the previous chapter requires a systematic and holistic approach. It calls for a detailed analysis of all named and unnamed characters and groups (the *motu o tagata*) in Mark's narrative and their interactions with the main focus of the Gospel, Jesus Christ (1:1). Such an approach situates the implied audience of Mark within a plausible reconstruction of their historical context under Roman imperialism, and explores the relevance of this for Samoan Islanders in our postcolonial context today. This double reader-response thus requires both a narrative and a sociohistorical approach, with the *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic as the framework, and the *motu o tagata* translation as the fusing link with the Samoan context.

This eclectic approach draws inspiration from Mark's accounts of interactions between diverse characters and Jesus and his life of servanthood, providing examples of the active faith that Samoan Islanders need to emulate in their present-day reality.[1] Jesus' radically inclusive engagement with all who meet him and real compassion for those in need is a genuine challenge for Samoan Islanders to mimic amidst a globalised economy and individualistic ambitions that have influenced every aspect of our local context. The reality of the hopelessness and oppression addressed by Jesus on the narrative level can encourage Samoan Islanders, by analogy, to face and engage their challenging local context.[2] The embodiment of the "island of

[1] John Paul Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action: A Reader-Response Commentary* (New York, Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992), 1, alludes to this purpose by saying "we hope to illuminate its rich meaning and lasting pragmatic value for Christians of today." Also, Ernest Best, *Mark: The Gospel as Story* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 59, 65, affirms that Jesus' miraculous deeds seek to convey to the audience (present and implied) what Jesus can do for them.

[2] Mark G. Brett, "Unequal Terms: A Postcolonial Approach to Isaiah 61," in *Biblical Interpretation and Method: Essays in Honour of John Barton*, eds., Katherine J. Dell & Paul Joyce (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

people" in the text challenges all who read to a re-evaluation of their priorities and active participation in God's Goodnews.

To this effect, complementary interpretive methodologies will be interwoven and fused together. This involves a narrative analysis of the "story world" of Mark's various depictions of the crowds (and related terms),[3] to unravel the complex mechanisms of their composition and perceived functions in the story. This is fused together with the examinations of both Mark's implied communities in the first-century CE and the Samoan Islander context in this twenty-first century, to enable an active and engaging "process of interpretation" and "meaning-making."[4] This premise emphasises the impact of wider historical events, which were of "momentous importance" to Mark's early readers,[5] and how Mark embedded such information into his presentation of the crowds and people around Jesus, and their potential relevance to Samoan Islanders.

As a Samoan reader and theologian, exposed both to the intricacies of Samoan culture and with some European-styled experiences, my reading engagement with Mark's Gospel with particular emphasis on the *motu o tagata* explores many of its implications for a general but inclusive Samoan context.[6] Despite its academic influence, this investigation opens space for

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2013), 243–56, relays how both contexts can "enrich" each other in relation to "contemporary theological or political engagements."

[3] David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel,* 3rd edn. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 4–5.

[4] Michael Glowasky, "The author is the meaning: narrative in Augustine's hermeneutics," *SJT* 71.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018): 161, quoting Jens Brockmeier and Hanna Meretoja, "Understanding Narrative Hermeneutics," *Storyworlds* 6/2 (2014). There is a close link between narrative analysis and reader-response as narrative critics "have been paying more attention to the place of the reader in the making of meaning." See David M. Gunn, "Narrative Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning. An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application*, eds., Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, revised and expanded (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 201.

[5] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 5. See also Jeremy Thompson and Wendy Wilder, "Language in Use," in *Linguistics & Biblical Exegesis*, eds., Douglas Mangum and Josh Westbury (Lexham Press, 2017), 60. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/lib/undiv/detail.action?docID=5244595. They refer to this as the "human context," where the reader's knowledge base differs drastically from that of the original audience.

[6] This presupposition emphasises the cultural and religious commonalities that unite nearly all Samoans, instead of personalised differences. See Skinner, "Telling the Story: The Appearance and Impact of Mark as Story," in *Mark as Story: In Retrospect and Prospect*, ed., Kelly R. Everson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 11.

any Samoan Islander reader regardless of status, position, or gender (within the Samoan cultural, political, economic, and religious settings) to engage with the hermeneutic at the heart of this thesis, by relating and making sense of the Markan narrative for Samoan Islanders. The hermeneutic also surfaces the relevant questions about identity, inclusion, and exclusion, by appreciating the "dynamic and personal aspects of meaning" which such fusion produces.[7] Samoan Islanders (and other islanders) can then entertain a local interpretation, which they can relate to in terms of its significance for their relationship between themselves and with others in these changing dynamics.[8]

The lived experiences of Samoan Islanders enhance this reading experience, and Mark's story can broaden, redefine, or transform this understanding. This "narrative identity" fuses a received text with the reader's pre-existing understanding and reconfigures their own identity based upon that interaction with the narrative.[9] This approach allows Samoan Islanders to re-evaluate their reality as "new ways of seeing … [and a] different sense of belonging to this world."[10] It is not a simplistic application of biblical truth to Samoan culture. Still, it seeks possible transformation that explores an analogical engagement across time, space, cultures, and localities, as David Neville concurs:

> Equally if not more important is the story-world into which Mark invites hearers and readers so as to shape or reshape, challenge or reinforce their attitudes and priorities, depending on their existing orientation.[11]

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[7] Glowasky, "The author is the meaning," 159. Also, Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, eds. Garret Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 271–281, 356–357, explains that this fusion facilitates the relevance of text to context.

[8] Aliou Cissé Niang, *Faith and Freedom in Galatian and Senegal: The Apostle Paul, Colonists and Sending Gods,* Biblical Interpretation Series 97 (Brill: Higher Education Press Limited Company, 2014), 138, argues that "striving to contextualise the gospel … [is] a horizon that must not be ignored in spreading the Goodnews of Jesus Christ."

[9] Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), cited by Coleman A. Baker, "A Narrative-Identity Model for Biblical Interpretation: The Role of Memory and Narrative in Social Identity Formation," in *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, eds., J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 105–106.

[10] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 72.

[11] David J. Neville, "Moral Vision and Eschatology in Mark's Gospel: Coherence or Conflict?" *JBL* 127.2 (2008): 365.

Combining these complementary methodologies will serve the purpose of this undertaking by providing a relevant interpretation of Mark's story of the "island of people" for Samoan Islanders, using a *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic. A brief introductory overview of Samoa's historiographical framework and current Samoan Islanders' lived experiences is warranted to appreciate this hermeneutic, and traces the arrival of the new islanders–*papālagi* (heaven breakers/sky bursters)—European explorers, traders, and church missionaries—in the 1700s and 1800s.[12]

The Polynesian Islands, which include the Samoan archipelago, is argued to have been settled "shortly before or since the birth of Christ" with migrants from Asia, from the islands off India.[13] However, archaeological evidence (Lapita pottery) suggests a much earlier timeframe of colonisation around 2900 BCE.[14] Despite this, Samoans believe that they were created by their own god Tagaloa and were given these lands as their perpetual inheritance.

In terms of European exploration and exploits into Oceania, the Dutch explorer, Jacob Roggeveen, first sighted the Samoan Islands on June 1722, followed by the French explorer, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville, on 3 May, 1768, who named the Samoan Islands, "Archipelago of the Navigators" when he encountered Samoans out in the ocean with their canoes.[15] The first land contact by Jean-François de Galaup de Lapérouse on December 1787 opened up the Samoan Islands to subsequent foreigners and their immediate impact.

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[12] See Augustin Krämer, *The Samoa Islands: An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa*, Volume I, translated by Theodore Verhaaren (Auckland: Pasifika Press, 1994). Also, Augustin Krämer, *The Samoa Islands: An Outline of a Monograph with Particular Consideration of German Samoa*, Volume II, translated by Theodore Verhaaren (Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1995);

[13] Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, Volume II, 34, 35–54.

[14] Anita Smith, *An archaeology of West Polynesian prehistory*, terra australis 18 (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2002), 2–10.

[15] Serge Tcherkézoff, *'First Contacts' in Polynesia: The Samoan Case (1722–1848). Western misunderstandings about sexuality and divinity* (Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies; Canberra: The Journal of Pacific History, 2004), 23, 15–23.

Since then, Samoa's cosmological horizon was disrupted with the arrival of these new islanders which exposed native Samoans to outside influences with traumatic and immediate impact, including a drastic population reduction due to disease and the deadly effect of guns.[16] Later colonial subjection extensively influenced Samoan livelihoods with profound transformation in personal lives, genetic codes, cultural, political, and religious forms and structures. This dislocation, mixed with outside interests (commercial, religious, diplomatic, and military), was volatile and dangerous to indigenous leaders and people.[17] The whole of Oceania endured border crossings and boundary transgressions at many levels when "colonial illusions of discovery, exploration, invasion, and occupation" impacted indigenous populations with both positive and negative destabilising effects, even down to the present-day generation.[18]

As many island nations are now independent, global economic liberalism and technological developments have replaced colonialism. The threat of climate change and natural disasters have intensified with devastating impacts, especially for Samoan Islanders.[19] Islanders are not immune from these developments and they bear the brunt of their harmful effects, while most can only see some or little benefit at all.[20] These dynamics have reshaped and sometimes uprooted traditional practices and values, while those in control blatantly ignore people's voices and efforts in their struggle to survive.

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[16] Ron Crocombe, *The South Pacific* (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 2001), 9–12.

[17] Damon Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny, New Zealand's Overseas Empire 1840–1945," in *Tangata o le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, eds., Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Mahina-Tuai, and Damon Salesa (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2012), 100.

[18] Nasili Vaka'uta, "Border Crossing/Body Whoring: Reading of Rahab of Jericho with the Native Woman," in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Reading from Oceania*, eds., Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elain M. Wainwright, eds., SBLSS 75 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 145. Also, Lalomilo Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel* (Fiji: Donna Lou Kamu, (1996), reprinted, Samoa: Marfleet Printing, 2003), 1.

[19] See Appendix 1.

[20] This point was reinforced by the former Prime Minister (PM) of Samoa, Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, (speech to the United Nations, New York, 30 September 2015), http://www.samoagovt.ws/category/prime-ministers-speeches/, who highlighted that "for some of the low lying Pacific island countries, climate change may well lead to their eventual extinction as sovereign states."

Many Samoan Islanders have also embraced western traditions, influences, and worldviews (particularly those of Euro-America) to the detriment of their unique islander perspective.[21] We have neglected our own culturally nurtured mindsets and no longer see others through our very own eyes. This Samoan context represents a fluid reality for Samoan Islanders, which this *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic explores.

2.2 A *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic

As we have seen, *motu o tagata* is the Samoan rendering of the Greek *ὄχλος* and some associated terms. This Samoan syntax typifies the richness of proverbial Samoan rhetoric passed down from our forefathers, who incorporated familiar surroundings as descriptive metaphors, such as this *motu o tagata* expression. At the time, it seemed to reflect Samoa's reality symbolically with the arrival of foreigners to the island. This presumption is informed by the general inclusive nature and appropriateness of this expression to describe the coming together of the native inhabitants and the newly-arrived settlers as *motu o tagata*. It seems an appropriate local representation for the Greek *ὄχλος* and other related terminologies, then and now, to classify both Samoan citizens and residents as Samoan Islanders, who have called these islands home.

I will argue below that this hermeneutic surfaces a grave concern about the social impacts of foreign political influence, economic exploitation, climate threat, and religious confusion.[22] Such impacts have created an environment of suspicion that legitimises fear for

[21] For further discussion on this issue, see S. Kelly, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002); Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

[22] "Political influence" alludes to a suspicion of the Chinese government influence through its Belt and Road Initiative which Samoa has joined. See Nicole Hao, "China's Park Project in South Pacific's Samoa Saddled with Quality Problems: Leaked Documents," *The Epoch Times,* Singapore Edition, 19 February (2021), https://epochtimes.today/chinas-park-project-in-south-pacifics-samoa-saddled-with-quality-problems-leaked-documents/, who calls out China's "debt trap of offering unsustainable loans, while exploiting their natural resources to drive the Chinese economy." Local impacts include increase cost of living as government try to

ordinary Samoan Islanders against dominant influences. These presuppositions provide the building blocks for this hermeneutic, which are relevant to the experiences of Samoan Islanders.

First, the general reference to *tagata* (people) collectively signifies Samoan Islanders as a group of people. Secondly, the people live on these *motu* (islands)—the Samoan Islands,[23] apart from other islands of people within Oceania.[24] This relationship is bound with the possessive conjunction "*o*" (of), which cements the relational connection between *motu* and *tagata*. Thus, the Samoan Islands collectively belong to Samoan Islanders, who are the custodians of these islands.[25] This relationship embodies the essence of this hermeneutic, which interrogates the diverse impacts of domestic and introduced dynamics on the people as a collective, Samoan Islanders.

Together with the surrounding ocean, these islands can fully provide for the people to take custodianship of their homelands,[26] even though both land and ocean can source great difficulties for the people. This reciprocated relationship constitutes the very sacred centre—heart—of Samoan society and culture, where their identity and unity as Samoan Islanders is grounded on these islands.[27] That is, their cosmic values, classificatory systems, and order are

service foreign debts; environmental abuses; local businesses are forced to close as Chinese companies move in, with more and more Chinese citizens and resources employed while local people are left out. "Religious confusion" relates mainly to non-christian religions that some Samoan Islanders have accepted, and the individualised interpretations of the Christian faith to legitimise personal choices.

[23] Samoan Islands refer to the islands of the Independent State of Samoa, unless otherwise stated. See Appendix 3.

[24] See Appendix 4.

[25] This suggestion does not have any effects on the rights of Samoan citizens to their customary lands.

[26] The important contribution of the "ocean" to Oceania prompts Efi to describe it as "family." See Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, "Samoa," *Dialogue & Alliance* 28.2 (2014): 80, http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=670a19d9-ea29-459e-ab84-4620ca1c8ab2%40pdc-v-sessmgr06. Also, Morgan Tuimaleali'ifano, "*Matai* Titles and Modern Corruptions in Samoa: Costs, Expectation and Consequences for Families and Society," in *Understanding Oceania: Celebrating the University of the South Pacific in Collaboration with the Australia National University*, ed., Stewart Firth and Vijay Naidu (Action: ANU Press, 2019), 103, views land as the "welfare of most Samoans."

[27] This central tenet reflects one tradition about the meaning of Samoa—a sacred centre/heart: *sā* (sacred) and *moa* (centre/middle/heart). See Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, 9–10.

focussed, invested, evoked, contested, developed, and maintained.[28] This oneness of emotions epitomises the lived experiences of Samoan Islanders expressed in this hermeneutic.

This hermeneutical lens also highlights the precarious position faced by Samoan Islanders, echoing their vulnerability to influential forces. This is a present reality shaped by internal and external pressures, such as geographic remoteness and its associated challenges;[29] limited space and resources leading to an inability to diversify and compete; and the present and future danger of the ever-increasing foreign debt to finance economic developments, some of which do not represent the genuine needs of the people.[30] These difficulties are compounded by corruption and abuses of power at controlling institutions, such as state and church, which have infiltrated and eroded traditional, political, and religious values with detrimental effects upon the people.

Furthermore, this viewpoint from the whole "island of people" also testifies to the historical and ongoing resilience of island people to face, cope with, and overcome these inherited and introduced influences. Samoan Islanders have endured these realities through the strong fabric of traditional and Christian values embedded within them by reading themselves as the "island of people" in the Gospel narrative. This perspective also emphasises the umbilical bond between Samoan Islanders and these islands, which provides for and defines them in this context. Others with genuine vested interest and commitment to developing Samoan land (through long-term economic leases) for the benefit of both investors and Samoan

[28] Stephen C. Barton, "Why Do Things Move People? The Jerusalem Temple as Emotional Repository," *JSNT* 37.4 (2015): 354.

[29] The World Bank, "Samoa: First Fiscal and Economic Reform Operation," 22 August (2014), 1, http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/639011468335964978/pdf/901210PGD0P149010Box385310B00OUO090.pdf, reaffirms Samoa's remote geographical location from major markets, like NZ and Australia, which directly correlates to increased production costs and ultimately a higher cost of living for islanders.

[30] For example, a new airport constructed at Tiavea (north-east of Upolu), which has so far cost taxpayers $17 million Tālā (Samoan dollars) with other additional costs to come. A similar sized airport near Apia was closed twice, with substantial costs for demolition and rebuilding. See Soli Wilson, "Prime Minister picks a fight over Tiavea Airport," *Samoa Observer,* 14 June (2020), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/article/64691.

people, can then be included in this Samoan Islander identity. This intimacy between people and land is elaborated further below.

Firstly, other English descriptions of land such as dirt, mud, soil, or earth are all rendered in Samoan as '*ele*'*ele* or *palapala*. These Samoan terms can also mean blood, which defines these (is)lands as the life source for the people.[31] Similarly, a more common Samoan word for land is *fanua*, which also refers to the placenta that nourishes and maintains an unborn child through the umbilical cord.[32] The *fanua* then becomes the "afterbirth," and it is a common practice to bury it in the land—"to place one inside the other."[33] This interconnected and intimate relationship grounds the people by establishing an identity that is directly defined by the land—"a place to stand."[34] This relationship can apply to customary lands, freehold lands, economic land leases, and state-owned land, collectively constituting the Samoan Islands.

Secondly, this relationship enhances mutual reciprocity for the benefit of both people and land. Samoan Islanders rely upon the islands for sustenance, security from natural disasters, and a place of belonging. In return, they have a responsibility as custodians and a moral duty to protect and sustainably develop these (is)lands for their survival and existence. However, this reciprocated relationship is threatened by both man-made and natural forces. Without these (is)lands, Samoan Islanders could potentially vanish as a group of people; otherwise, they could

[31] Ama'amalele Tofaeono, *Eco-Theology: AIGA - The Household of Life. A Perspective from Living Myths and Traditions of Samoa*, World Mission Scripts 7 (Enlangen: Enlanger Verl. für Mission und Ökumene, 2000), 181, signifies Samoans' reliance on land. Also, Rachel George and Sarah Marie Wiebe, "Fluid Decolonial Futures: Water as a Life, Ocean Citizenship and Seascape Relationality," *New Political Science: Beyond Citizenship and the Nation-State* 42.4 (2020): 498–520, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07393148.2020.1842706?fbclid=IwAR2T2_UYUi1UKV9XHRc9EDSY2fBXnyRveiw23PpR4oVhA1vDKAEsjDMMi9M&, express similar sentiments about water as a "life source, not a resource."

[32] For a similar perspective from Oceania, see Ilatia Tuwere, *Vanua: Towards a Fijian theology of place* (Suva: USP; Auckland: College of St. John the Evangelist, 2002), 35–36, who expresses similar sentiments – "To be cast from one's *vanua* is to be cut out from one's source of life, one's mother as it were."

[33] Damon Salesa, "Tangata, Moana, Whenua," in *Tangata o le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, eds., Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, and Damon Salesa (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2012), 336. Afterbirth can also relate to the body being returned to the earth after death.

[34] Salesa, "Tangata, Moana, Whenua," 336.

be displaced due to poorly planned economic development or relocated to other foreign land because of the adverse effects of climate change.[35]

Thirdly, Samoan Islanders view their land as an inheritance, spiritually from God, culturally from their ancestors, and economically through freehold lands and land leases.[36] The land embodies the heart and soul of Samoan Islanders, and they treasure and guard this wholeheartedly. The land is in their blood, their source of life, their afterlife, and if necessary, blood will be given (or taken) protecting and defending it. Much of the land in Samoa today (about eighty per cent) is customary land,[37] which belongs to Samoan traditional families with vested authority to current holders of chiefly titles associated with these lands, to control and administer them for every family member's benefit.[38] This administrative authority is passed along to future custodians, selected by the true heirs of the extended family.

[35] One example of these poorly planned developments is an international wharf built at Satitoa, Aleipata, on the eastern side of Upolu (closest point to American Samoa), with "promises of a booming township, based on trade, travel and tourism … with our American Samoa neighbour," quoting the then Minister of Works. See Pio Sioa, "Samoa Wharf Project Brings Promise of Trade," *Pacific Island Report,* 7 October (2008), http://www.pireport.org/. Due to public complaints about high costs of travelling from other parts of Samoa, especially for Savaii farmers, operations reverted back to the Apia wharf after less than a year in operation, and the wharf was badly damaged beyond repairs from the tsunami of 2009. It cost the taxpayers about eight million USD without any of the tangible benefits of the much hyped-up promises. Also, Ian Fry, "Are there climate change refugees in the Pacific?" *Asia & The Pacific Policy Society*, 24 June (2019), https://www.policyforum.net/are-there-climate-change-refugees-in-the-pacific/, advocates for "stronger legal and policy frameworks to support" Pacific Islanders and others with similar circumstances internationally, due to "perceive climate change as a threat to their livelihood."

[36] Tamasailau M. Suaalii-Sauni, et al., eds., *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference* (Samoa: National University of Samoa, 2008), 384. As a Christian nation, this follows an OT emphasis that the biblical Hebrews occupied the Promised Land as their inheritance from God. All of Samoa's customary lands were culturally divided at familial, village, and district levels. These are protected under the *Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa*, Part IX, Article 102, which prohibits the alienation of customary lands, unless authorised by an Act of Parliament for lease (clause *a*) or for public purposes (clause *b*).

[37] Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the History of Western Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies of USP, 1987), xiii. Also, Jennifer Corrin, "Resolving Land Disputes in Samoa," in *Making Land Work,* vol 2 (Canberra: AusAID, 2008), 203. As I will argue in chapter 6 below, this is very different to the implied audience of Mark and their likely situation under Roman and Herodian rule.

[38] Ron Crocombe and Malama Meleisea, eds., *Land Issues in the Pacific* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury; Suva: USP, 1994), 169, state that chiefs as heads of traditional families are also the administrators and trustees of family heritage.

Lastly, land from the cultural perspective has facilitated the political divisions of all Samoan lands into traditional districts made up of several villages, which constitute the "basic political unit of Samoa."[39] Each village has its own demarcated territory and a village *fono*—a governing council of chiefs—who lead their extended families and represent them in the village *fono*.[40] Most importantly, the collective decisions of the village *fono* are adhered to by every member of the village (even outsiders coming into this village setting), and their wisdom is sought in times of differences and uncertainties. These cultural protocols are respectfully adhered to, resulting in the harmonious way Samoan Islanders deal with their affairs. Occasionally, some people try to impose their selfish motives by manipulating, disrupting, and disrespecting these long-held traditions.

This Samoan understanding captures the essence of this *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic. It underpins the intimate relationship between Samoan Islanders and the Samoan Islands. A person who does not feel this sense of belonging to these (is)lands can only be seen as an oppressor trying to forcefully occupy and take advantage of these (is)lands and people. This is reminiscent of the dark era of colonialism when foreign powers threatened island leadership and communities while expropriating natural resources for economic gain.[41] Samoan Islanders then were subjected to foreign rule which significantly impacted their economic and political agency, and disrupted their belief systems.[42] They were even treated as a "second-class race"

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[39] Malama Meleisea, *Lagaga: A short history of Western Samoa*, eds., Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel Meleisea (Suva: USP; Apia: Samoa Extension Centre of USP, 1987), 28.

[40] Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The making and unmaking of an anthropological myth* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1983), 121. The village council of chiefs governs all affairs pertaining to that village and represents the village collectively when dealing with outsiders or other villages, especially in cases of land boundaries and crimes committed by or against village members.

[41] Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny," 100. Also, Featunai Liuaana, "Errand of Mercy: Samoan Missionaries to Southern Vanuatu, 1839–1860," in *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, eds., Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley (Suva: PTC and The Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 1996), 41.

[42] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 45–46, provides some examples of these impacts. In relation to religious beliefs, "old ideas and old gods were no longer adequate to explain the world … [and] Samoans were receptive to the teachings about a new God, when John Williams arrived in 1830." See also Sione Latukefu, "Pacific Islander Missionaries," in *The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific*, eds., Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley (Suva: PTC and The Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 1996), 19.

and an "exploitative commodity" that could be bargained with, bought, sold, divided, exchanged, relocated, destroyed, or manipulated.[43]

These incidents of colonial aggression contributed considerably to the current sensitivities and realities of Samoan Islanders, which can be compared analogously in some respects to Mark's story of the various groups of people encountering Jesus, using various complementary methods of interpretation, as follows below. It does not require too great a hermeneutical leap across the centuries to see such groupings within the "island of people" in both Mark and Samoa as the colonial/imperial aggressors; the local political allies and opponents of the intruders; the local religious allies and opponents; the dissenting radicals, both violent and non-violent; the seekers of peaceful reconciliation and transformation; and those who change sides to save themselves. Some historical plausibility assists in making these critical connections, but they are dependant mainly on the narrative of Mark, and on viewing all the human actors around Jesus as the "island of people," capable both of failure and faithfulness. These diverse groupings encapsulate the breadth of this *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic, through which Mark's story of the "island of people" is examined with help from the following complementary methods of interpretation.

2.3 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis shapes our account of meaning by relying on the final form and the story-world of the received text. This primary focus illuminates "the self-contained locus of meaning, irrespective of context and readership."[44] David Rhoads considers this "autonomy of

[43] Peter J. Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule: A Case Study in Meaning of Colonial Resistance* (Canberra: ANU, 1978; reprinted, Canberra: ANU eView, 2016), 26, https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n1857/pdf/book.pdf.

[44] Mary Ann Beavis, "Mark's Audience: The Literary and Social Setting of Mark 4:11–12," *JSNT* Supplement Series 33, eds. David Hill and David E. Orton (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 13.

the story-world" fundamentally important as "narrative criticism works with the text as the "world-in-itself."[45] However, this view seems incomplete because an actual reader is needed to engage the text and extract meaningful discernment.[46] This necessity brings together these two essential components of "meaning-making"—text and reader. This interactive conversation conflates the narrative's story-world and the reader's lived experiences via various forms of analogy, which this work articulates.

Nonetheless, in the reading engagement with the text, the narrative's explicit literary features (narrator, setting, plot, character, and rhetoric) allow the readers to unpack a story and understand its meaning.[47] This process sanctions an implied author's active conversation through these features to an implied audience.[48] The first four narrative features allow readers and hearers to consider possible alternatives for their own lives, whereas rhetoric "identifies how the narrative may transform its audiences."[49] This conversation creates an interaction that enhances the reading process and transforms understanding, which is the essence of the reader-response perspective. These complementary features can reveal a cohesive portrait that truthfully reflects Mark's retelling of the *motu o tagata*'s experiences. Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie agree that Mark's narrative reveals:

> a remarkable whole cloth [where] the narrator's point of view is consistent. The plot is coherent: Events that are anticipated come to pass; conflicts are resolved; prophecies are fulfilled. The characters are consistent from one scene to the next.

[45] David Rhoads, *Reading Mark, Engaging the Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 4.

[46] Brian Cosgrove, ""It is Requir'd That You Do Awake Your Faith": Reader-Response and the Gospel of St. Mark," *PIBA* 27 (2004): 35, refers to this possible problem as an "impasse: if the critic is to be objective, how then is s/he to respond to a text (the Gospel) which can yield its significance only on the basis of subjective investment by that same critic?"

[47] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 6. See also Stephen P. Ahearne-Kroll, "Audience Inclusion and Exclusion as Rhetorical Technique in the Gospel of Mark," *JBL* 129.4 (2010): 717, who states that the "Gospel of Mark was constructed in its final stage as a unified story with a plot, characters, themes, motifs, and all the typical characteristics of a narrative."

[48] Skinner, "Telling the Story," 11.

[49] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 7.

> Oral techniques of storytelling such as recurring designs, overlapping patterns, and interwoven motifs interconnect the narrative throughout.[50]

The consistency impinges upon the reader's worldview, as Neville says of Mark's story:

> [It] bristles with the potential to alter one's perspective, transform understanding, provoke character evaluation, and reorient assumptions about the nature of reality and standard patterns of human relationships.[51]

This effect transpires even with "intentional gaps" within the Markan narrative:

> due to rhetorical strategies that create suspense, puzzlement, and an open ending; gaps due to a spare style that is suggestive rather than exhaustive in description; and gaps due to the episodic nature of a narrative designed for oral performance. There are additional unintentional gaps for twenty-first-century audiences that are due to our lack of knowledge that Mark and his first-century audiences possessed—knowledge we no longer share but which we must construct in order to understand the story.[52]

These characteristics depict human conditions that resonate with the implied audience's responses and their receptive faith towards God's rule. Mark's story-world also reflects his communities' ethical and moral choices that could lead to the possibility for change, transformation, or maybe even retaliation, as indicated in the diversity of responses to Jesus (cf. 14:43–50; 15:8–15). Accordingly, Richard Horsley suggests that literary studies have "(re)discovered the political-economic dimensions of literature,"[53] and it is time that we recognise the implications of these realities for our own interpretation of ancient texts.

These subtleties, the portrayal of people, places, and events of the story-world can also be applied analogically in the twenty-first century as agents of possible change and transformation as we interact with Mark's Gospel, and particularly for nations like Samoa that explicitly acknowledge their biblical and Christian foundations. Sociohistorical analysis

[50] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 3. I would qualify one aspect of this quotation — that if the characters are "consistent from one scene to another" it is because they are consistently inconsistent! See further the analysis of the Twelve in Chapter Three below (especially Peter), and also of the 'crowd' as *ochlos,* and of members of the Sanhedrin (Joseph of Arimathea), for example, who all change direction radically.

[51] Neville, "Moral Vision and Eschatology in Mark's Gospel" 365.

[52] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 4.

[53] Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 3.

advances this possibility by illuminating Mark's story within the lived experience of his implied audience and of present readers at their various social locations, but first the response of those readerships must be analysed.

2.4 Reader-response analysis

A reader-response approach emphasises the readers' life experiences in guiding their reading of a text.[54] It focuses on the reader as the creator of meaning since readers and authors are situated at different times, spaces, and social contexts. These factors play essential roles in interpretation,[55] as the intentions of the historical author (if we had access to them) may well differ in meaning from the interpretations of those who read his (her) story.

Marjorie Roemer summarises early proponents of reader-response thoughts, such as David Bleich, Wolfgang Iser, Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, and others. They all emphasise what occurs in the transaction between the reader and the text.[56] According to Roemer, Bleich pays more attention to how a reader projects his desires on a text. Iser and Rosenblatt are more interested in the interaction between the text and the reader, what the text activates, and what the reader activates in the text. Iser, in particular, argues that an active reader can anticipate looming events in a narrative by filling in the gaps.[57] On the other hand, Fish focuses on the

[54] David A. Holgate and Rachel Starr, *SCM Studyguide to Biblical Hermeneutics* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 89. Also, Beavis, "Mark's Audience," 10; John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd edition. (London: Westminister John Know Press, 2007), 168.

[55] Hayes and Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis,* 168.

[56] Marjorie Godlin Roemer, "College English," *Which Reader's Response* 49.8 (1987): 911.

[57] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 24. See also Cosgrove, "It is Requir'd That You Do Awake Your Faith," 36; Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 4.

communal conventions that control the attention we pay to the texts, thereby shaping our readings and dictating "potential and probable" responses.[58]

S.R. Suleiman proposes six varieties of reader-response criticism,[59] some of which apply to the Samoan context. Suleiman describes "reader" and "audience" acceding to the starring role:

> Today, one rarely picks up a literary journal … without finding articles (and often a whole special issue) devoted to the performance of reading, the role of feeling, the variability of individual response, the confrontational, transaction, or interrelation, or interrogation between texts and readers, the nature and limits of interpretation - questions whose very formulation depends on a new awareness of the audience as an entity indissociable from the notion of artistic texts.[60]

The reader's crucial role in creating meaning relies on his (her) fore-knowledge of the text's historical context, which is essential in procuring appropriate meaning and interpretation — even if that context cannot be known precisely. Such an understanding can only be discerned from an interactive conversation between the world of the text and the reader's context.[61] Mary Ann Beavis appropriately relates this to Mark's story as a "form of communication between author and reader, who are related as the sender and receiver of a message."[62] Mark conveys his message through his structure, literary devices, and commentary, and the readers encode this with questions from their lived experiences and contexts. Mark and his story is a "product of a specific literary and religious culture, which can be described in historical and sociological

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[58] Edgar V. McKnight, "Reader-Response Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, eds., Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, revised and expanded edition. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 231.

[59] Beavis, "Mark's audience," 14, citing S.R. Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds., S.R. Suleiman and I. Crosman (Princeton: University Press, 1980), 6–7.

[60] Beavis, "Mark's Audience," 13–14, citing Suleiman, "Introduction," 3–4, original quotation from R. Scholes and R. Kellog, *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford, 1968), 4.

[61] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271–281, 356–357. Also, Mark G. Brett, "The Future of Reader Criticisms?" in *The Open Text: New Directions for Biblical Studies*, ed., Francis Watson (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1993), 20, talks about "Reception Theory" where the meaning of the text depends on the reader's reception of, or reaction to the text.

[62] Beavis, "Mark's audience," 14. Also, Cosgrove, "It is Requir'd That You Do Awake Your Faith," 36; Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action,* 1.

terms."[63] These plausible reconstructions of historical context do not determine meaning as such, but rather describe possibilities and set limits to the meanings we infer.

To excavate an informed meaning and relevant interpretation that contemporary Samoan Islanders can relate to, they need to have some understanding of these various potential contexts of Mark's Gospel. The Samoan Islanders' contemporary situation and pre-understanding can then be challenged, transformed, and enhanced by an imaginative fusing of their local context with the text's literary features and possible contexts in this interactive-reading process.[64] This is "accepting the necessity of presuppositions, prejudices and questions connected with the social matrix of the interpreter."[65] Intricately, it is a reciprocated process of re-reading, re-examining, re-applying the received texts to the Samoan Islanders' context, and being aware of how this context may also influence interpretation. In this sense we are both reading Mark as addressing the whole "island of people" (since that is our received translation), and evaluating how that lens challenges and clarifies our interpretation of Mark.

However, for this fusion of methods to take effect, Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us that "a hermeneutically trained mind must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's quality of newness."[66] Gadamer anticipates that the preconceived ideas the interpreter brings to reading must be assessed consciously against the text during the hermeneutical task.[67] He argues that "understanding is not to be thought of as one's subjectivity, but as placing oneself within a process of tradition, in which past and present are constantly fused."[68] To realise this, Gadamer

[63] Beavis, "Mark's audience," 14.

[64] Vaitusi Lealaiauloto Nofoaiga, "Crowds as Jesus' Disciples in the Matthean Gospel" (Masters of Theology, Auckland University, 2006), 7.

[65] Joy, "Markan Subaltern," 56, citing J.R. Levison, "Liberation Hermeneutic," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 465.

[66] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 238.

[67] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Descriptions with special references to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer and Wittgenstein* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 305.

[68] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 258.

asserts that the interpreter engages the text in a "play movement,"[69] which takes place in experiencing these different worlds (the text and reader's contexts) in the process of reading and understanding. Hence, the readers share the text's story-world by relating it to their various contexts and locations in an ongoing and critical way. This involves some attempt at least to understand or imagine the world of the text (or of the art, in Gadamer's example), even if just on the basis of the text itself. But it is helpful to go even further where possible, and explore evidence within the text that may align with historical and political markers and periods outside the text — hence the need for sociohistorical analysis.

2.5 Sociohistorical analysis

Sociohistorical analysis was introduced to biblical interpretation in the latter decades of the 20th century,[70] and testifies to a growing interest in the "social world of the Bible and the social dimensions of its literature."[71] It examines biblical texts by determining the social aspects of the text and establishes a descriptive social milieu in which the text arises by exploring its likely historical context.[72] Any talk of the text's social world perceives its colonial history, political character, and religious culture as transmitted through its linguistic expressions. It highlights the vital contribution of "language" as a "social phenomenon."[73] Thus, the readers ask historical questions of a text as a form of inquiry into its social context.

[69] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 112–116, compares the question of meaning to the experience of art. Gadamer contends that an artwork has a world behind it—the artist's world. When it is experienced aesthetically by a spectator, it is viewed from the world of the spectator. This experiencing of art between worlds is called "play."

[70] Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, "Sociological Interpretation," in *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 3rd edn. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 177.

[71] John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 1. See also David G. Horrell, "Social-Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, ed., David G. Horrell (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 3.

[72] Soulen and Soulen, "Sociological Interpretation," 177. Also, Carl R. Holladay, "Contemporary Methods of Reading the Bible," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, ed., Leander E. Keck (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 135.

[73] John Edwards, *Sociolinguistic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 31.

Bruce Winter, however, emphasises the need first to establish the historical context of the studied text before a reader can apply any contemporary social theories.[74] It is also important to realise that questions and social modelling relevant to the present may unearth knowledge about the past.[75]

The focus on the social aspects of the biblical world is also grounded in social theory, where sources and redactional materials are essential elements. They constitute the "methods and theories for systematically describing and explaining group behaviours and meanings."[76] A reader can ascertain these group characteristics and projects abstract societies of a particular place and time by examining society's laws, regularities, or tendencies.[77] Such reconstructions require an inquiry into other social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, political science, and economics. History of religions, literary approaches, and conventional analysis can also help exegesis in conjunction with sociological interpretation. This inter-relationship makes it possible to combine complementary techniques to produce relevant and informed interpretation. This is the pathway which this exploration chooses.

Besides humanistic and sociological methods, the study of religion can also be a means to evaluate social understanding and describe community identity.[78] Although there is a limit to what readers can unearth from the past from the available sources, this limitation can be amplified by a "variety of possible implications, significances, and contexts" that can be relied

[74] Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), xiii–xiv. The desire to 'establish' the historical context claims too much for many New Testament texts (like Mark), but is plausible in the case of Corinth and the letter written to its Jesus followers.

[75] Andrew D. Clark and J. Brian Tucker, "Social History and Social Theory in the Study of social Identity," in *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, eds., J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 43.

[76] Norman K. Gottwald, "Sociological Criticism of the Old Testament," *Christian Century*, April 21 (1982): 474.

[77] Soulen and Soulen, "Sociological Interpretation," 177.

[78] Dale B. Martin, "Social-Scientific Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, eds., Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, revised and expanded edition. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 129.

upon.[79] Those who advocate this perspective argue that biblical texts are historical "records of dynamic social interchange among persons who lived in specific communities at particular times and places."[80]

Mark's Gospel contains social perceptions that reflect the "self-understanding of the community (audience) to which it is addressed."[81] An example is Jesus' appeal to "give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's" (12:17). Discerning Jesus' meaning requires considering the political-economic-religious reality in ancient Palestine under Roman domination, which Jesus knew and experienced. In this context, Caesar was not only the emperor but also considered a "son of god, lord and saviour of the world."[82] Caesar's presence and emperor worship were evident in temples, statues, and festivals, even in Palestine. Particularly for the Jews, Herod the Great's dedication of newly-built cities to Augustus and Pilate's erecting of the image of a Roman golden eagle above the Temple's gate were examples of emperor worship.[83] For Jewish members of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative, these examples of renderings to Caesar violated the Mosaic covenant's first two commandments (cf. Exod 20:1–6). From these political-economic-religious dynamics, we can see that Jesus was reminding the Pharisees and the Herodians that paying tributes to the emperor conflicted with their covenantal obligation to God.

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[79] Thomas L. Thompson, "The Background of the Patriarchs: A Reply to William Dever and Malcolm Clark," in *The Pentateuch: A Sheffield Reader*, ed., John W. Rogerson (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 39.

[80] Susan R. Garrett, "Sociology of Early Christianity," in *ABD* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1992), 89-90. See also Trevor J. Burke, *Family Matters: A Socio-Historical Study of Kinship Metaphors in 1 Thessalonians* (London, New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 10–11.

[81] Beavis, "Mark's Audience," 46. Also, Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 7.

[82] Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine,* 3. Also, Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives: Demetrius and Antony, Pyrrhus and Caius Marius – Antony*, 33.1*,* transl., Bernadotte Perrin (London: William Heinemann Ltd.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 209, who records that Julius Caesar was worshiped as a god after his death.

[83] Josephus, *War.* 1.401–421, 188–199. Also, Josephus, *Antiquities. Books XV–XVII,* ed., Allen Wikgren, transl., Ralph Marcus (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1963), 15.365, 15.380–425, 17.151; Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 137–138.

This example reflects the objective of sociohistorical analysis to detect, examine, and explain the social ramifications of linguistic expressions in a text and the active conversation between the texts, authors, possible contexts, and implied readers' reality. It dissects the inter-relationship of the "biblical texts and their social world" by examining the sociohistorical conditions that produced these documents and the specific functions they were "designed to serve."[84] Concerning early Christians, Wayne Meeks asserts that:

> the task of a social-historian of early Christianity is to describe the life of the ordinary Christian within that environment—not just the ideas or the self-understanding of the writers.[85]

Mark's Gospel invites such scrutiny. For example, Mark does not mention some prominent Roman/Herodian cities within the Galilee (Sepphoris, Tiberias), but he describes Jesus venturing into (or towards) such cities in Gentile regions (Gerasa, 5:1; Tyre and Sidon, 7:24 and 31). The need to differentiate between the historical contexts described in texts and that of the implied author is also crucial. This differentiation becomes paramount as Jesus' earthly ministry (circa. 30 CE) is around forty years before the earliest recorded history of that event—the Gospel According to Mark, most likely after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. But our inability to be certain of this dating or of the location of 'Mark' and his earliest readers should keep us humble before the literary and archaeological evidence.[86]

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[84] Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 3, 8–9.

[85] Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 2.

[86] Sharon Lea Mattila, "Revisiting Jesus' Capernaum: A Village of Only Subsistence-Level Fishers and Farmers?" in *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, eds., David A. Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins, SBL Semeia Studies 11 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 75-138, prompts these concerns as she reappraises a village known from the gospels as Jesus' base of ministry, Capernaum (75), and its "socioeconomic character in Jesus' time" (82). Mattila criticises Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus: A Re-examination of the Evidence* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 139-69, whose "characterisation of the Capernaum site is very misleading" (76). Her criticism also includes Reed and John Dominic Crossan, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 119-35, and other New Testament scholars such as Richard A. Horsley, Sean Freyne, and James H. Charlesworth (76). Her warning of "misleading" treatment of available evidence is timely, but also open to the same challenge. The excavated archaeological evidence tends to overlook the majority population who are unable to produce long-lasting artefacts. The underclasses (the minjung and the subaltern) are forgotten not only by history, but archaeology as well. For the arguments for a pre-fall or post-fall provenance for Mark, see Chapter One, FOOTNOTE 26 above.

Mark's recollection of Jesus' ministry in Galilee is politically un-eventful at one level, apart from the description of the death of John the Baptist (6:14–29) which reflects the ruthless but relatively stable reign of the Herodian dynasty.[87] But Jesus' Jerusalem ministry encounters religiopolitical oppression and counter opposition, which evokes the historical events of the great Jewish revolt of 66–70 CE and the destruction of the Jewish Temple. Immediately afterwards, Mark's Gospel emerged as a powerful reminder for the oppressed and scattered of the sovereignty of God's reign against any political empires. It was also a time of persecution of Christians by some Jewish leaders and Roman collaborators (13:9).

Mark's Gospel provided courage for his network of believers then to remain steadfast despite the life-threatening situation they were experiencing from Roman persecution and Jewish retaliation. This reminder emphasised the Markan Jesus' suffering in obeying God's rule, which his faithful followers were encouraged to follow in their own suffering from Roman oppression. This path of suffering is embedded within Mark's story of the followers of Jesus to remind and encourage Mark's readers, including today's Samoan Islanders, to remain faithful followers of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, despite their struggles in their various reading sites. According to Mark's story, the hope remains at the end of the Gospel for the scattered followers of Jesus to emerge from their experience as portraits of faithful believers and followers of Jesus Christ.[88]

However, to determine the people's perceived realities (at a particular time and place) in correlation with the corresponding historical events, social historians employ social theories

[87] Sean Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 BCE to 135 CE: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, Inc., and Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 63, attributes this political stability to their ability to correctly read the political Roman scene and their support of successful Roman leaders. Also, Mark A. Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13, states that the Herodians were able to maintain their position of status and power by acculturating themselves with foreign cultures; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.365, 176, states that Herod was rejected by the Jews as an "outsider," who "gradually corrupted the ancient ways of life" (*Ant.* 15.267). These resentments may have attributed to Herod's ruthless reign.

[88] Clark and Tucker, "Social History and Social Theory in the Study of Social Identity," 42, citing P. Burke, *History and Social Theory,* 2nd edn. (New York: Cornell university Press, 2005), 1.

to develop research frameworks,[89] which allow for an analysis of "any social phenomenon to generate a valid picture of societies as wholes."[90] According to Gerd Theissen, such social aspects enhance our understanding by "clarifying the sources … and to localise the texts."[91]

A sociohistorical analysis seeks to recognise early societal life through the communities to which they belonged and to glimpse their lives through occasions mirrored in the texts,[92] such as the perceived reality of the people within Greco-Roman Palestine.[93] A reasonable presupposition suggests the majority of the *motu o tagata* that followed Jesus were the 'ordinary' people.[94] Mark's Gospel reveals a demarcated society that was seemingly created by the religious demands, the imbalanced progression of economic development, and the political cruelty of the time. These different layers of suppression lorded over the people under the jurisdiction of the Roman empire (10:41–45).

To make sense of these examinations of various groups of people for Samoan Islander readers requires a blended fusion of such complementary interpretations within the inclusive hermeneutical lens of "*motu o tagata*" as a framework — an exploration of all possible

[89] Raymond Boudon and Mohamed Cherkaoui, *Central Currents in Social Theory: Contemporary Sociological Theory 1920–2000*, Volume V, eds., Raymond Boudon and Mohamed Cherkaoui (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000), in their Introduction to this volume, highlight the recognition and development of sociology since the beginning of the 20th century.

[90] Talcott Parsons, *Sociological Theory and Modern Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), discusses a variety of Social Actions, Social Institutions, Social Structures, and Social Changes with specific social issues like Influence, Power and Authority, Collective actions, Theory of Justice, Organisations, Structures of kinship, Families and Communities, Political ideologies, Power elite, and many more.

[91] Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, transl., Linda M. Maloney (London, New York: T & T International – A Continuum Imprint, 1992), 15. Also, Wesley Allen, *Reading the Synoptic Gospels: Basic Methods for Interpreting Matthew, Mark and Luke* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 33, highlights this need to investigate references that are foreign to us, "in order to understand the texts' significance in its original context."

[92] Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 2.

[93] I have adopted this "Greco-Roman Palestine" term to highlight the mixture of different cultures that were blended together in Palestine, which render a pure Jewish perspective impossible.

[94] These common people may be identified with families, rural peasant communities, their movements from rural to urban areas to seek employment or to sell their labour. Within their rank were the poor, the homeless and landless, the sick and the marginalised people whose reality was poverty because of the changing economic and political environments of the time. See Fiensy, "Archaeology and New Testament Studies," 218, puts this percentage of common people at ninety nine percent. Also, Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel*, vii, who explains this majority as "entirely invisible in typical histories of ancient Israel."

groupings and their socio-political roles within the narrative, corroborated by what we can know of the wider first-century Greco-Roman world.

2.6 Fusion

Reader-response analysis recognises many aspects of our identity as affecting our interpretation of biblical texts. These include gender and sexuality; ethnicity, age, ability and wellbeing; socioeconomic status and political affiliation; denominational, spiritual and theological traditions.[95] These lived experiences influence the reader's reading experience by suggesting ways to articulate the text in light of their background. This begins with anticipation on the reader's part, based on their upbringing or "historical conditionedness."[96] The reading process then facilitates a "point of fusion" where the horizon of the reader interacts (dialogues) with the horizon of the text to form a new understanding of the text.[97] This may culminate with a revised interpretation in light of the local context, then and now,[98] which leads to discovering the meaning of the text anew due to this hermeneutical conversation.[99]

Hence, this eclectic approach aims to produce a defensible, relevant, and meaningful interpretation of Mark's narrative of the response of diverse people groups to Jesus for the Samoan Island context. This fusion involves a holistic approach that appreciates each critical component of the literary cycle—text, context, implied author, implied audience, and the

[95] Holgate and Starr, *SCM StudyGuide to Biblical Hermeneutics,* 93.

[96] Gadamer, *Truth and Methods*, 301.

[97] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273–281, describes this as the "fusion of the two horizons". See also Thiselton, Anthony C, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutical Philosophical Description with particular reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1980), 307–312.

[98] Roger Lundin, Clarence Walhout, and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Promise of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 57.

[99] Klaus Dorkhorn and Marvin Brown, "Hans-Georg Gadamer's 'Truth and Method,'" *PR* 13.3 (Summer 1980): 173–174. However, Jürgen Habermas, "Hermeneutics and the Social Sciences," in *The Hermeneutics Reader,* ed., Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1985), 293–319, has argued that Gadamer's idea of fusion is "impossible" to achieve due to other essential claims where communication is lacking.

reader/hearer/interpreter and their unique contributions to meaning-making. Fusing these crucial aspects in an interactive conversation leads to relevant questions and possible answers to the critical issues evoked by reading Mark through, on and for the "island of people."

2.7 Summary

These complementary methodologies—narrative, sociohistorical, and reader-response, contribute to guiding this reading perspective of *motu-o-tagata*. The responses of Samoan Islanders as readers of Mark's story of the responses of people to Jesus are conditioned by their preconceived understandings as islanders, living and experiencing the reality of life on the Samoan Islands. This "historical conditionedness" imposes relevant questions of Mark's narrative in the reading process. This is not just a subjective imposition of a Samoan Island viewpoint or translation upon the text, but an interactive process rigorously informed by the text and the history of its interpretation, and constructed in dialogue with the compelling forces of the narrative and sociohistorical examinations. The complementarity of these approaches will, however, need to be demonstrated rather than assumed.

JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS WITHIN THE *MOTU O TAGATA*

3.1 Introduction

This narrative analysis examines the identity, functions, and limits of the *motu o tagata* depicted in the Markan narrative. It explores Mark's ambiguous presentation of the total group of people and their erratic and sometimes involuntary contributions to Jesus' proclamation of the Goodnews of God in human history. This ambiguity however, shrouds the purposeful inclusion of the *motu o tagata* rather than just the crowd (*ochlos*) as the total collective identity,[1] which fundamentally includes other character groupings and individuals until they exclude themselves. This radical inclusivity will be demonstrated in the following three chapters.

This chapter explores the radically inclusive composition of the *motu o tagata*, which is informed and enhanced by the integral contributions of various constituents of the collective identity on the narrative level. These members include the individual participants, the women, the marginalised, the multitudes, the Twelve, and various religious and political authorities until some temporarily void their membership. Their inclusion and interactions define the ministry and authenticate the divine authority of the main protagonist of the narrative, and the focal member of the *motu o tagata*—Jesus. He is portrayed by Mark as the binding thread that weaves the narrative together and prompts the gathering and responses of the various groups and individuals within the *motu o tagata*. Chapter Four will explore the relationship between the Markan use of crowd/s (*ochlos/ochloi*) and the *motu o tagata,* and Chapter Five will follow

[1] See Chapter Four, Section 4.3, for the discussion on this 'collective identity concept.'

through on the difference a *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic makes for interpreting Mark's narrative.

This examination argues against the popular scholarly view that portrays the Twelve as the prominent character grouping, by bringing to the fore the vital contributions of other members of the *motu o tagata*.[2] The Twelve's many failures and other character groupings' opposition to Jesus reaffirm the fallibility of all Jesus' followers and vulnerability of the *motu o tagata* as a whole, which can only be rescued by heeding Jesus' warnings and accepting his invitation to change (*metanoia*) in light of the in-breaking *basileia tou Theou* (1:15). Such interactions shape the inclusive nature of the *motu o tagata* as they gather with Jesus for one reason or another.

The involvement and responses of these character groupings provide the determinant factors for their inclusion or exclusion from the collective identity. For example, Mark presents the Jewish and Roman authorities as opposing Jesus because his influence on the people threatens their rule (cf. 3:6; 11:18). The Twelve, prominent for all the wrong reasons, represent a slow and unresponsive attitude to Jesus' activities while many others amongst the *motu o tagata* gather, listen, and obey him.[3] As representative members of the collective identity, the women characters represent role model portraits for Jesus' faithful followers, which the Twelve fail to produce.[4] Despite such temporary failures, Jesus still invites all of the *motu o tagata*

[2] For example, see Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), who emphasises Jesus and his disciples as the main characters while most other characters play an instructive but secondary role. However, in support of this thesis' emphasis, Rhoads, *Reading Mark*, 9, 103, argues that the presence of the crowd and individuals "subverts any claim to dominance and privilege by the twelve disciples as a separate group."

[3] Note the negative use of 'one of the Twelve' to refer to Judas (14:10,20,43) and the repeated failure of the Twelve to understand that Jesus must suffer (9:35; 10:32).

[4] Holly J. Carey, "Women in Action: Models for Discipleship in Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 81.3 (2019): 430, argues that Mark urges the followers of Jesus in his community to avoid the failures of the Twelve while affirming the faithful action of the women in their engagement with Jesus.

back to be heirs of the reign of God, as illustrated by his invitation to Peter and others (cf. 16:7).

Such diverse responses locate Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the pivotal point of interest in the Markan narrative. His participation provides centrepoint that embodies this radical inclusivity despite the differences and divisions amongst various constituents of the *motu o tagata*. It demonstrates the essence of Jesus' character, especially the title—Son of God, which draws great multitudes together with him and invites back those who fail him. So it is only proper to start this narrative examination with the person of Jesus to examine his relationships with different members of the *motu o tagata* and his influence on them, and vice versa.

3.2 Jesus, Son of God, and the *motu o tagata*

Mark's very first statement declares "the beginning of the Goodnews of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (1:1).[5] This christological assertion goes beyond a Jewish messiah and reveals Jesus' divine origin in the titular use of Son,[6] which underpins his intimacy with the Father

[5] Philip Ruge-Jones, "Omnipresent, not Omniscient: How Literary Interpretation confuses the Storyteller's narrating," in *Between Author and Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation*, ed., Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 33–34, relates the Greek *Ἀρχη* (transliterated as *archē*) to the story of God's creation through speech. See also Donald H. Juel, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Mark* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 28, who suggests *archē* refers to the prologue and how Jesus' story starts with John's baptism; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authority, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 31, differs by pointing to *archē* as only the beginning, or foundational part of a longer story not yet finished … until such time as Jesus returns in splendor; Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1993), 31, also interprets the "beginning" as referring only to those verses (4–8), whose subject matter corresponds to the OT quotation. In my view, the textual variants involving the Son of God title are best explained as originating from confusion over the *nomina sacra,* leading to the later omission of 'Son of God'. See the discussion in Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament,* 2nd ed., Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2005.

[6] A Jewish messiah had divine authority, who was expected to be a mighty warrior king from the root of King David, who would deliver Israel from her enemies. However, 12:35–37 does not agree with this Jewish expectation by pointing "beyond Jesus being merely the Messiah to David's Lord." See Rikk E. Watts, "Mark," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds., G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, and Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 112. Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 148, reaffirms this expected role for the Jewish messiah as "the anointed king, descended from David, who would restore sovereignty to Israel (Isa

(8:38; 13:32; 14:36; cf. 11:25).[7] This title affirms Jesus' divine authority and identity at his baptism (1:11) and is reaffirmed at his transfiguration (9:7),[8] to liberate human communities (not just Israel) from the power of darkness and demonic possession.[9] His liberating words and deeds change the tragic human conditions of oppression and free the *motu o tagata* to enjoy the goodness of God's reign on earth.[10] Hence, the title "Son of God" is significant for this thesis, as it surfaces important roles for Jesus and the implications of his relationships with all his followers collectively, even those opposing him.[11]

Mark describes Jesus' ministry of servanthood as astounding all (cf. 1:22, 27; 2:12; 4:41) and drawing many to him as his fame spread (cf. 1:28, 38–39, 45; 2:2, 13; 3:7–8), so that many were seeking him from every quarter (1:45). Being a servant underscores the importance

9:6–7; 11:1–10; Ps 2)" but points out that "[t]here were different views of the Messiah (messiahs) in Jesus' time, but they all revolved around an earthly deliverance and earthly kingdom."

[7] Watts, "Mark," 112, states that "Jesus' identity and mission … imply in some mysterious way the very presence of God himself."

[8] Dorothy Lee, "Christological Identity and Authority in the Gospel of Mark," *Phronema* 33.1 (2018): 3, states that "Jesus' authority is grounded in his identity as the Beloved Son," which is "established at his baptism and confirmed at the Transfiguration." Also, Ira Brent Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence: Temple as Locus of Conflict in the Gospel of Mark," *BI-JCA* 15 (2007): 230–231, interprets God's presence in Jesus as "a kind of possession of Jesus by God" and places significance on the preposition *eis* to describe the Spirit's activity of entering into Jesus.

[9] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, xii, believes that this is Mark's essential meaning where demonic possession has to do with "control" which "held people captive" in a personal, social, and economic manner. See also A. Edward Gardner, "The Concept of Beloved Son in Mark: Through the lens of Synchronicity as Timely Providence," *Enc* 75.2, Spring (2015): 12, 22, who concludes that Jesus' baptism and transfiguration represent "God's inner revelation to Jesus" and Jesus is "God's Beloved Son as the new Isaac." This truth "finds its objective event in Jesus' sacrifice, death, and resurrection. As a result of the sacrifice of Jesus the Lamb of God, God saves humanity from sin, death, and Satan."

[10] A.C. Wire, "The Structure of the Gospel Miracle Stories and their Tellers," *Semeia* 11 (1978): 110.

[11] Jesus' identity as the Son of God in Mark's Gospel has become almost a truism in Markan scholarship. See Joshua E. Leim, "In the Glory of the Father: Intertextuality and the Apocalyptic Son of Man in the Gospel of Mark," *JTI* 7.2 (2013): 215, who states Mark "teaches the reader to hear what *his entire narrative* says about Jesus as the Son of God and the fulfilment of Israel's hope." In this regard, the "eschatological revelation of YHWH in the Son of Man is not only continuous with, but grounded in, the narrative's fundamental proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God" (italics original). Also, Richard A. Burridge, "From Titles to Stories: A Narrative Approach to the Dynamic Christologies of the New Testament," in *The Person of Christ*, eds., Stephen R. Holmes and Murray A. Rae (New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 37–60; Chris Altrock, *Mark: A Call to Service* (Abilene: Leafwood Publishers, 2000), 7, affirms this identity of Jesus as the authoritative Son of God through the witness of four voices: Mark (1:1), Isaiah (1:2–3), John (1:4–8), and God (1:9–11); Gardner, "The Concept of Beloved Son in Mark," 1, suggests "God's voice to Jesus—"You are my Beloved Son, in you I am well pleased"—is a revelation from God to Jesus about his special relationship to God and his calling to an unfolding purpose." From a reader-response perspective, however, Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action*, 16, states the "Son of God denotes not physical descent from God but being appointed by God for a special role in his plan of salvation."

of serving others. On the narrative level, people are "sent out" (*ἐξέβαλεν*, 1:43), "called" (*ἐκάλεσεν*, 1:20; 2:17), or demanded to "go" (*ὕπαγε*, 1:44; 2:11; 5:19) by Jesus. Such linguistic expressions define serving others and are an integral part of a personal relationship with God in Mark's narrative, both for Jesus and for those he sends (cf. 1:38; 3:14; 6:7–13). Mark develops this servanthood motif from the start when the Spirit drives out (*ἐκβάλλει*) Jesus into the wilderness (1:12), where he is tempted by Satan for forty days (1:13).[12] Chadwick appropriately considers these Markan pericopes—Jesus' baptism and temptation—to be "instructive that [Jesus] should have suffered this affront, immediately upon being recognized as the Messiah."[13]

Jesus' call to serve (reaching its climax in 10:42–45) ultimately leads to the cross, but the Twelve constantly fail to understand this reality, as is shown most clearly by their responses to the three passion predictions (8:31–38; 9:30–37; 10:32–40). So Mark consistently portrays a wider group of followers, including individuals who do seem to understand Jesus' destiny (14:3–9). Beside the Twelve, Mark indicates that there are many other named and unnamed followers who are able to spread Jesus' message of service to and for others.[14] And just as Jesus encountered opposition (cf. 3:6; 6:3; 8;11; 10:2; 11:18, 28; 12:12–13; 14:1) and suffered humiliation (15:15) in willingly performing his duties, his faithful followers were also expected to follow the same radical path of servanthood and suffering because of their testimony to him (13:10–13).[15]

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[12] This "forty" motif has biblical symbolism. Moses was with God forty days and forty nights without anything to eat (Exod 34:28). Elijah had strength to travel forty days and forty nights to the mount of God, Horeb, after one meal (1 Kgs 19:8). The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years before reaching Canaan. See Donald English, *The Message of Mark*, BST, ed., John R. W. Stott. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 44. In terms of opposition, the closest parallel is David's victory over Goliath, who opposed Israel for forty days (1 Sam 17:16). See also John D. Grassmick, *Mark*, BKC, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 2 vols. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983), 2:106.

[13] Chadwick, *Strong Meat for Hungry Souls: The Gospel According to St. Mark*, paragraph 48.

[14] See Chapter Four, sub-Sections 4.2.1 and Chapter Five, Section 5.5.

[15] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom,* xi–xii, explains these aspects of following Jesus in terms of "a costly freedom," where proclaiming the Goodnews of Jesus Christ "does not come without a cost."

This prerogative to serve was afforded to the *motu o tagata* — to everyone — and the efforts of some of its members produced more immediate results than others. For example, after healing a man with leprosy, Jesus sent him away with a command to go and show himself to the priest and say nothing to anyone (else? 1:43–44, cf. 16:8).[16] The healed leper's presence before the priest was a message in itself: Jesus healed him and this was for the priest to confirm. Essentially, the priest would become a witness to Jesus' healing power (cf. 1:44) if he were to instruct the cleansed leper to perform the necessary offering commanded by Moses, and would thereby confirm Jesus' priestly ministry.

Instead of not saying anything to anyone (else?) as Jesus commanded, the healed leper went out and proclaimed what happened to him freely, resulting in more people coming to Jesus from every quarter (1:45). This positive response to a positive transformation is repeated throughout the Markan narrative. Jesus' healing power revitalises the lives of those affected, such as Peter's mother-in-law (1:31), the paralytic (2:3), Jairus' daughter (5:42–43), the Syrophoenician woman (7:30), and many more, who experienced God's grace and compassion through Jesus. In gratitude, they would simply not hide that newness of life but declared it for all to see and hear (cf. 7:36–37), prompting others to come to Jesus.

These examples serve both the function and purpose of servanthood. Jesus' ministry and the missional roles of the *motu o tagata*, particularly its individual members who follow Jesus truly, produce the required effect—more people coming to Jesus. The cycle has come full circle, and the process is repeated time and time again (cf. 1:45; 3:8; 5:19–20; 7:36). Consequently, the proclamation of the Goodnews of God reaches numerous people, which would not have been possible without the contributions of those healed and ordered by Jesus to go, and even sometimes, to keep quiet (1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26)! As those who showed faith

[16] Presumably the healed leper was to speak to the Priest, but not to anyone else, raising the possibility that such an understanding might also apply to the women at the tomb in 16:8.

and persistence, their collective involvement most likely enables this transmission to reach others within Galilee and regions beyond. This servanthood process continues today as readers of Mark's Gospel and followers of Jesus in their various locations continue to believe and proclaim the Goodnews of God in their work, ministry, and different vocations.

In performing his servanthood role, Jesus taught in the synagogue (1:21–22), cast out unclean spirits and demons (1:23–27, 34), and healed the sick (1:29–34) in Mark's first chapter alone. Many people were amazed at this "new teaching—with authority" (1:27), unlike that of the scribes (1:22). Similar powerful deeds were witnessed in the surrounding regions of Gerasa (5:1), Tyre, Sidon, the Decapolis (7:31), and even Caesarea Philippi (8:27) prompting parallel responses. Jesus' authority had been authenticated with words and deeds,[17] which revealed the newness of God's reign for all, just as he initially intended it "for human beings and the world."[18]

As an itinerant preacher, the Markan Jesus proclaims God's truth regardless of the consequences. His preaching tours point to a motif of "the way" by traversing Galilee, the surrounding regions, and onwards to Jerusalem.[19] Jesus taught in the synagogues (1:21, 39; 6:2), by the sea (2:13; 4:1; 6:34), around the villages of Galilee (6:6; cf. 1:14, 38–39), on the way (8:31; 10:1), and in the Temple in Jerusalem (11:17, 18; 12:14–17, 18–27, 28–34; 14:49). This diversity supports the nomadic nature of Jesus' ministry of servanthood, which was not assigned to any particular location, even though Capernaum was quite prominent.[20]

Mark portrays Jesus as teaching at any opportunity where people could listen and hear his message. He teaches indoors—at Peter's house, in the synagogues, and in the Temple. He

[17] Lee, "Christological Identity and Authority in the Gospel of Mark," 8.

[18] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 45.

[19] Rhoads, *Reading Mark,* 100, suggests that this "motif figures prominently in almost every major study of Mark's Gospel."

[20] See Appendix 5.

teaches outside, in the wilderness, by the Sea of Galilee,[21] in the villages and towns within Galilee, and the neighbouring regions. These diverse places illustrate Jesus' willingness to teach and minister to the people anywhere. Jesus proclaimed this Goodnews to all and did not discriminate based on ethnicity, gender, colour, culture, or location. This demonstrates the inclusive nature of his ministry by revealing the collective shared interest of particular groups gathering with him, despite their differences.

Jesus also taught in parables, which functioned to conceal the mystery of God's reign from "outsiders" (cf. 4:11), while privately explaining their mysterious meanings to his "inside groups"—those who were around him along with the Twelve (4:10). These parabolic teachings support and confound the "insider-outsider dichotomy" in the Markan narrative, which identifies various character groupings who are with Jesus (cf. 4:10) and differentiate those against him (cf. 4:11–12; 12:12).[22] Even so, Jesus' ministry includes all and transforms alleged outsiders—the unclean, the sinners, the sick, the marginalised, and the outcasts of society—to become insiders in God's household, as illustrated by their willingness to follow 'on the way' (10:52).

Jesus is shown as healing various diseases (cf. 1:31, 34, 40–42; 2:3–12; 3:3–5, 5:25–34) and casting out demonic spirits (cf. 1:34, 39; 3:15, 22, 23; 5:2–13; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 22, 28, 38; 16:9, 17). He even sent them away with an unspoken intent to proclaim (cf. 1:44; 2:11; 8:26), which he specifically spelt out when he sent the Gerasene demoniac back to tell his family and friends about the mercy of God shown to him (5:19). Mark does not inform us about the consequences of this uncontrolled missionary activity amongst Gentiles and others. From

[21] Grassmick, *Mark*, 2:108, describes the Sea of Galilee as "geographically central to Jesus' Galilean ministry."

[22] Paul Middleton, "Suffering and the Creation of Christian Identity in the Gospel of Mark," in *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, eds., J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 177.

his perspective, the Goodnews applies to everyone, the whole *motu o tagata,* regardless of their location and origins.

Jesus performs other extraordinary deeds, such as feeding the hungry (6:34–44; 8:1–9), stilling a storm (4:35–41), walking on water (6:45–52), and cursing the fig tree (11:12–14, 20–25), all of which demonstrate his authority ordained by "God's power."[23] The most astonishing of these miracles was raising Jairus' daughter from death, such that her parents and those around him were overcome with amazement (5:42). Her parents were then told to serve her by giving her something to eat (5:43).

The diversity of people's needs and their dispersed social locations support the radically inclusive nature of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative. These mainly undefined multitudes of people continually gathered with Jesus, many of whom took advantage of his healing ministry, while others found his authoritative powers to be offensive and feared that he could lead to their downfall.

3.2.1 "Son of God" establishes Jesus' authority

By proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God from the beginning, Mark immediately establishes Jesus' authority for the implied reader, even though the source and nature of that authority continue to be a mystery for those portrayed in the narrative — some perceive it truly, while others completely misconstrue it and name it as demonic (3:22). Those considered "sinners" (according to the scribes and the Pharisees' conception of holiness) respond joyfully as Jesus welcomes them all.[24] This inclusive hospitality effectively transforms such marginalised groups by making them complete, clean, and inclusively acceptable in the

[23] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 70.

[24] E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 232, interprets the reign of God as a new order, where even sinners will have a place.

basileia of God,[25] whereas in Greco-Roman Palestine, "hierarchical ordering" and ethnic hegemonic supremacy ruled.[26] Mark presents Jesus as opposing such suppressive mechanisms as his authority does not discriminate. Jesus' teachings and transformative power clearly indicate "who's in charge" (cf. 1:22, 27; 2:12; 4:41).[27]

Mark demonstrates this with Jesus' very first public exorcism. Cleansing a man with an unclean spirit (1:21–28) confirmed Jesus' authority over the demonic world. The people's response in relation to this new "teaching with authority" reaffirmed Jesus' divine wisdom over human intellect, such as that of the Pharisees (1:22, 27). Other transformative teachings prompted more amazed reactions from the *motu o tagata* (cf. 1:22, 27; 2:12; 5:20; 6:2, 6, 51; 7:37; 10:26, 32; 11:18; 12:11, 17) and influenced their movements as they gathered with Jesus, many seeking healing and salvation. They seem to realise that Jesus would alleviate their suffering and isolation, and allow them to engage with their families and society once again ("go to your home"; 2:11; 5:19).

3.2.2 "Son of God" confirms Jesus' life of service as "Son of Humanity"

Jesus earnestly begins his ministry, according to Mark, with a proclamation, saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the Goodnews" (1:15). Aloysius Ambrozic interprets this "summary and programmatic statement" to mark the imminent onset of the reign of God on earth.[28] For Mark, this proclamation warns

[25] E. Van Eck and A.G. Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark: A Social Scientific Interpretation," *Neo* 27.1 (1993): 29.

[26] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 31. Also, Philip A. Harland, "Climbing the Ethnic Ladder: Ethnic Hierarchies and Judean Responses," *JBL* 138.3 (2019): 665–686, examines this hegemonic dilemma between Judeans and others—Romans, Greek, and Egyptians.

[27] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 31.

[28] Aloysius M. Ambrozic, *The Hidden Kingdom: A Redactional-Critical study of the References to the Kingdom of God in Mark's Gospel*, *CBQ* Monograph Series II (Washington D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1972): 13. From a narrative perspective, these expressed and implied programmatic statements do support the unity and coherence of Mark's whole story as a narrative.

and calls Jesus' followers to repent (*μετανοεῖτε*) and believe in (*πιστεύετε*) the Goodnews. This critical moment has been described as the realisation of God's decisive action to redeem and restore all his people through his servant-Son, Jesus, in a non-violent fashion.[29] This is particularly evident in Jesus' self-identifying title, Son of Humanity (8:31, 9:31, 10:33), which is spoken of primarily in terms of his suffering.[30] The title Son of God is used by the narrator (1:1), the Divine voice (1:11 and 9:7), and lastly by the centurion at the cross (15:39), so it frames the whole narrative for all implied and real readers in an authoritative way.[31] But within Mark's narrative world the identity of Jesus is much more mysterious — the *motu o tagata* keep asking, "Who is this man?" (1:27; 4:41; 6:2–3; 6:14–16; 11:28; 14:61; 15:2). Jesus himself identifies completely with the *motu o tagata* by continually referring to himself as the Son of Humanity (14 times in Mark), and by leaving open the question of his identity. That is for others to confess.

Such is Mark's portrayal of Jesus as he ushers in the proclamation of the *basileia* of God throughout Galilee and the surrounding regions, serving those in need and seeking out the lost (cf. 2:17).[32] Mark also extends this servanthood call to Jesus' followers as alluded to during the transfiguration with a voice from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to

[29] Jordan Ryan, "The Ideology of Restoration and the Archaeology of Galilee: The Hasmoneans Transformation of Galilee as Context for Jesus and the Gospels," *CTR* 16.1 (2018): 44, links Jesus' transformative actions to the Hasmonean's transformation of Galilee from Hellenistic rule, but without the armed confrontations. See also Rodney L. Cooper, *Mark*, HNTC 2; (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2000), 11; and Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2002), 131–137, cited by Ryan, "The Ideology of Restoration and the Archaeology of Galilee," 67.

[30] R. Alan Cole, *Mark. An Introduction and Commentary,* ed., Leon Norris, NTNC Vol 2, second edition (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1989; reprinted 2008), 119. Also, Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, BNTCS (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 2001), 204–206 links the Son of Man's suffering to the cross.

[31] The unclean spirits are also compelled to admit the divinity of Jesus (1:24; 3:11; 5:7). Jesus himself only implies he is Son of God, ironically, when he denies that he knows what God knows (13:32), and perhaps analogously in the parable of the vineyard (12:6). It is for the *motu o tagata* to confess who Jesus really is (8:27–30)!

[32] Rhoads, Dewey and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 67–69, describe Jesus' ministry as more than just "movement across the landscape…[but] a frame for the events described in the story…[and which] structures the narrative as a whole." For them, Jesus' efforts to inaugurate the rule of God in Israel temporarily ends in Jerusalem (crucifixion).

him" (9:7).[33] This slight alteration (from the earlier Divine voice at Jesus' baptism) was directed at the three disciples as a reminder of their calling to serve others and follow Jesus by listening to him, just as Jesus, as the Son of Humanity, was called to serve, not to be served (10:45; cf. 8:31; 9:31).[34] Their servanthood roles encompassed suffering for the benefit of others, not for personal gain.

Jesus' suffering as the Son of Humanity was necessary (*δεῖ*, 8:31) on behalf of those who suffered and were discriminated against, such as many members of the *motu o tagata* who sought help from him. His life of service and his crucifixion was a ransom to rescue everyone from their sinful ways, if they decided to repent and accept his ways. Even though his identity and authority were divinely bestowed and shaped, this did not shield Jesus from facing opposition and humiliating suffering (cf. 8:31; 9:31; 10:33, 45). Accordingly, Gerd Theissen views Jesus as the "real presence of God among human beings, in his activity and suffering to the death."[35] This was the costly price Jesus willingly paid as "a ransom for many" (10:45).[36] His sacrificial act is said to have revealed his "supreme royal act of self-giving service" to redeem humanity from all manner of oppressive suffering and the devil's claw.[37]

Mark introduces this Goodnews by recalling the Prophet Isaiah's prophecy about a messenger who would prepare "your way" and the "way of the Lord" (1:2–3).[38] Both "ways"

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[33] Raymond Pickett, "Following Jesus in Galilee: Resurrection as Empowerment in the Gospel of Mark," *CTM* 32.6, December (2005): 437, suggests that this "voice from heaven, quoting Psalm 2:7, acclaims Jesus as the messianic servant of Isaiah who is endowed with divine authority to inaugurate Israel's eschatological comfort and deliverance from the hands of the nations (cf. Isa 40:10–31; 51:9–16; 52:10–15)."

[34] Neville, "Moral Vision and Eschatology in Mark's Gospel 363, states the fulcrum of Mark's theology and ethics is Jesus, the crucified Messiah. Also, Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 130, links Jesus' role to Isaiah's suffering servant (Isa 41:2).

[35] Gerd Theissen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion,* transl. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1999), 54.

[36] This is the closest indication in Mark's Gospel of Jesus' death as a vicarious sacrifice (cf. 2:17 and 15:28, which is not found in the earliest manuscripts).

[37] Sharyn E. Dowd, *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smith and Helwys, 2000), 112.

[38] These two verses in Mark combine both the Prophets Isaiah's (Isa 40:3) and Malachi's (Mal 3:1) prophecies about the Jewish messiah. Mark, however, attributes these only to Isaiah who emphasises the "servanthood and salvation" aspects, instead of Malachi's "judgement of the Messiah." See Cooper, *Mark*, 7; Also, Elizabeth E.

demonstrate the authority of the Son of God to ensure humanity's salvation by transforming the foolishness of human opposition to this Goodnews. It has continued God's saving grace upon his people, just as he already demonstrated for his chosen—the Israelites (cf. Isa 40:2).[39] God set them free from slavery by leading and accompanying them out of Egypt (cf. Exod 13:21; 15:13; 23:20; 33:12–17). He restored Judah from captivity in Babylon (cf. Isa 35:8; 40:3, 9–11).[40] Israel's story was reiterated in the story of Jesus, which Mark reorientates in Jesus' life of service. For Jesus' diversified followers then and now, Jesus' presence reaffirms the goodness of God's salvific grace that renews and transforms all who repent and believe in Jesus.

In enduring this servanthood role, Jesus allows himself to be identified with the *motu o tagata* as Son of Humanity, whose appreciative and positive responses by the majority of its members testify to this. It is also this life of service that Mark is trying to instil into his implied readers then, whose reality of suffering and persecution are attributed to several layers of authoritative and oppressive regimes—Jewish leadership and Roman appointed rulers and officials (6:10; 15:1–2; cf. 10:42; 12:38–40).[41]

3.2.3 "Son of God" has cultural and political implications

Finally, this designation Son of God conveys cultural and political overtones with consequences for Jesus.[42] From a religiopolitical prism, Mark's description of Jesus as the Son

Shively, *Apocalyptic Imagination in the Gospel of Mark: The Literary and Theological Role of Mark 3:22–30*, (Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter Inc., 2012), 44–49.

[39] "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that *her penalty is paid*, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Italics are mine to emphasise that Israel's penalty has already been paid.

[40] J. Alex Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 20, IVP (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 246, highlights God's salvation for his redeemed people throughout their history and reassures them of God's providence in times of suffering and uncertainty.

[41] See Section 3.4 below and Chapter Six, Section 6.2.

[42] C. A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20,* WBC 34B (Nashville: Nelson, 2000), lxxxi–xciii.

of God would strike a chord with Roman authorities. Such a portrayal would have Jesus competing against emperor worshipping cults, which exalted Caesar (and his successors) as Rome's own son of god, lord, and redeemer.[43] Anyone exhibiting such messianic ambitions within the realm of Roman control was considered a rebel and charged with sedition. They would undoubtedly meet death, and even their followers.[44] From this perspective, the perceived kingship of Jesus (cf. 15:2, 18) probably played a part in his crucifixion by Roman authorities (Pilate and soldiers) on behalf of the Roman emperor. The dire consequence of this power struggle possibly contributed to the Twelve's decision to flee in fear when the authorities arrested Jesus.

Can this title, Son of God, be explained from Jewish sources, which Jewish members of the *motu o tagata* could relate to? Its closest parallel to an individual in the Old Testament is King David, whom God calls his son (Ps 2:7; cf. 2 Sam 7:14).[45] Angels are also referred to as sons of God (Gen 6:2, 4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), while Israel is God's firstborn son (Exod 4:22–23). Sometimes, God refers to the people as his sons, daughters, and children (cf. Deut 32:19;

[43] Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, 209, relates that Julius Caesar was revered as a god after his death. For similar perspectives, see Mary Beard et. al., *Religions of Rome*, Volume Two (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 222; Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, 3; John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 136.

[44] For discussions on such messianic figures, see David Fiensy, "Leaders of Mass Movements and the Leader of the Jesus Movement," *JSNT* 74, London (1999): 12–14, who relays the story of Judas of Galilee, son of a rebel leader Hezekiah who claimed to be king of the Jews in 6 CE. Also, Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities: Books XVIII–XIX,* ed., G. P. Goold, transl., Louis H. Feldman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1965), 18.85–87, tells of a Samaritan, who, in 37 CE was put to death by Pilate after claiming he would show the people the sacred vessels that Moses buried on Mount Gerizim; *Jewish Antiquities: Books XX; General Index to Volumes I–X,* ed., G. P. Goold, transl., Louis H. Feldman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1965), 20.169–172, relays that in 55 CE, an Egyptian came to Jerusalem, claiming to be a prophet. He told the people he would command the walls of Jerusalem to fall down so that they could enter the city. The procurator Felix killed 400 people, took another 200 captive, while the Egyptian escaped; Edward M. Cook, "4Q246: Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon," *BBR* 5, Institute for Biblical Research (1995): 64, proposes a political aspect of the son of God in this Aramaic text, where Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his father, Antiochus III the Great, were assumed to be sons of god, and the rise of the people of God against them during the Maccabean revolt. However, Keith D. Dyer, "The Empire of God, the Postcolonial Jesus, and the Postapocalyptic Mark," (2014), 86, suggests that while there is "great hermeneutical value in recognizing the political dimensions of these Christological claims—then and now" we need "to read them in the context of the *many* Lords, Gods, and Saviours of that time, and not just as a showdown at high-noon between one JC and the successors of another."

[45] Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 15, IVP (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 67.

Isa 43:6; Jer 3:19; 31:9, 20; Hos 1:10, 11:1). Other Jewish literature calls the angels sons of God (Wis 5:5) and identifies the suffering righteous man as God's son (Wis 2:16–18; Sir 4:10).[46] These references emphasise a unique relationship where God loves and cares for the people as their spiritual Father. These differ from the intimate divine relationship between God, the Father (8:38; 13:32; cf. 14:36) and Jesus, the Beloved Son.[47] But God's love for the people expressed through Jesus, is demonstrated in the Markan narrative with positive transformation taking place in people's lives and the hope of more to come for those who return to Galilee to encounter the risen Christ (16:7).

The sonship of Jesus on the narrative level is also recognised by the demonic spirits (in a taunting way) because whenever they encounter Jesus, they address him as the "holy One of God" (1:24), "the Son of God" (3:11), and the "Son of the Most High God" (5:7).[48] The high priest also utters this in his tongue-in-cheek question: "are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" (14:61). Ironically, Jesus' main adversaries in the Markan narrative—evil spirits and the majority of Jewish religious leaders—mock Jesus with these scornful titles when unknowingly, they are right on the mark in addressing Jesus as the Beloved Son of God. This is one of the great ironies of Mark's narrative.

[46] R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 1, IVP (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 402. See also Robert L. Mowery, "Son of God," *EDB*, 1241; Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as a Model for Action,* 16–17; Cook, "4Q246," 43–66, recognises the importance of this Qumran document for biblical interpretation, but points out that scholars have not agreed on its interpretation. Cook provides a summary of scholarly viewpoints on this issue, citing John J. Collins, "A Pre-Christian 'Son of God' Among the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BR* 9.3, June (1993): 35, who argues the Son of God may be identified with a messianic figure; J.A. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 20 (1974–1975): 174, is more specific, identifying the Son of God as a "coming Jewish ruler who will be a successor to the Davidic throne." On the other hand, David Flusser, "The Hubris of the Antichrist in a Fragment from Qumran," *Immanuel* 10 (1981): 31–39, provides a negative interpretation of this text as an antichrist—a wicked ruler of the last kingdom, whose claim to divine status is blasphemous hubris.

[47] "υἱός," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 1405, stresses the intimacy of the relationship where Jesus, the Son, "partakes of the divine nature and in intimate union with God."

[48] Gundry, *Mark*, 8-9, points out that by shouting out Jesus' name, the demonic spirits thought this may shield them with magical protection, or may spare them from Jesus' divine potency.

Peter, representing the Twelve, falls into this same trap when he naïvely declares Jesus as the Messiah (8:27–33). His view sums up the Twelve's lack of understanding about Jesus' being and purpose because of their culturally conditioned mindset.[49] Peter confesses and proclaims Jesus in terms of triumph and glory instead of suffering (cf. 8:31), which is considered false and wrong.[50] Jesus even remedied this misguided human tradition by rebuking Peter and the Twelve (cf. 8:33) and emphasising that he must suffer and be killed (8:31; cf. 9:31; 10:33–34, 45). These prophetic revelations point to Jesus' destination at the cross as necessary (*δεῖ*, 8:31) for the sake of all humanity.

As Jesus' life of service reached its ultimate test of obedience in his crucifixion, the Gentile Roman centurion on behalf of the wider world, declared: "Truly this man was God's Son" (15:39). This acknowledgement on the narrative level by the very person who ensures that Jesus has taken his last breath, ultimately invites and gives hope of reconciliation to those who have excluded themselves from the *basileia* when they reject the divinity and kingship of Jesus. And after the resurrection, Jesus even extends that invitation (16:7) for re-inclusion to others who have constantly failed him, including Peter and the Twelve, and other scared followers towards the end.

From a rhetorical perspective, Jesus's character is described as a "binding narrative thread" that weaves together the Markan narrative, as he interacts with various members of the *motu o tagata*.[51] This is described as demonstrating the coherence of Mark's story as a complete unit instead of a compilation of "bits and pieces."[52] Even if some parts of Mark's story appear

[49] Marlene Yap, "The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ: From Extreme Shame to Victorious Honor," *AJPS* 21.1, (2018): 35–36, associates Peter's confession with a common perception that Jesus would overthrow Rome's empire and establish his rule in Israel.

[50] Werner Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 83. Also, Manno, "The Identity of Jesus and Christian Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark," 626.

[51] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom,* 16.

[52] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 2. Also, Leim, "In the Glory of the Father," 219, asserts that Mark's "rhetorical strategy of closely aligning Jesus as the Son of Man and the Son of God … lends narrative coherence and continuity"; Joanna Dewey, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry: Forecasts and Echoes for a Listening Audience,"

alien, that "unity, structure, and coherence … are instructive for both an original audience (whether real or implied) and a real twenty-first-century audience."[53] Hence, Mark is said to advocate for a "crucial priority" that calls Jesus' followers (then and now) to act and move in the "service of the Gospel."[54] This priority underscores the membership of Samoan Islanders in the Markan *motu o tagata* as all followers of Jesus have been collectively called to continue this service.

3.3 Jesus' servanthood challenges the *motu o tagata*

Jesus' life of service also designates the "human behaviour" expected from his followers.[55] It represents a repeated challenge to members of the *motu o tagata* who follow and accept Jesus, who struggle to understand and accept the nature of Jesus' messiahship. This is captured in Mark's unique way of presenting both Jesus and his believing followers, where their being, actions, and movements are crucial in telling his story.[56] Such followers are reminded to reorientate themselves to these "alternative values and practices" in performing their own calling in various vocations, and are often challenged in counter-cultural ways.[57] So James and John's expectations of leadership roles are turned upside down (10:35–45); the disciples' assumptions about children are flatly rejected, twice (9:33–37; 10:13–16); and women keep appearing in culturally awkward situations yet win Jesus' approval, and that of the narrator (5:25–34; 7:24–30; 14:3–9; 15:40–41).

CBQ 53 (1991): 221–236, emphasises this coherent structure of Mark's story, as he wove together material to create connections, rather than us breaking them apart to study them individually.

[53] Skinner, "Telling the Story," 13.

[54] Carey, "Women in Action," 433.

[55] Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as Model for Action,* 28–29.

[56] Carey, "Women in Action," 433, emphasises the importance of action and movement in the life of faithful disciples.

[57] Pickett, "Following Jesus in Galilee," 438.

The appearance of Elijah and Moses in the Markan narrative during the transfiguration further reinforce the importance of this servanthood role for Jesus' believers. God's disclosure to two of his most prominent servants, Moses (cf. Exod 24:12–18) and Elijah (1 Kgs 19:8–18) demonstrates this.[58] They were fearless servants who faithfully followed God's command. Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt in spite of Pharaoh's resistance (cf. Exod 5:2; 7:13).[59] Elijah defended Yahweh worship despite impossible opposition (cf. 1 Kgs 18:20–40). He was also expected to signal the arrival of God's judgement (Mal 4:5), which Jesus interprets as the restoration of all things (9:12a).

These servants epitomise the costly yet fruitful promise of obeying God, and the Divine voice exhorts the disciples to listen to Jesus (cf. 10:28–31), as he reminded the Twelve of his imminent fate awaiting him in Jerusalem (9:12b–13), the seat of the religious and political authorities.[60] This also acts as a reminder for the implied readers believing in Jesus of their own sufferings awaiting them in their ministries as they would be opposed and persecuted by those in authoritative positions, on account of their testimonies to the Goodnews (13:9–13; cf. 8:34–9:1; 10:39, 43–44). The challenge to the *motu o tagata* in the text applies equally to the earliest and to the current readers, including those who still see themselves as the *motu o tagata.*

[58] Craig S. Keener, "Jesus and Parallel Jewish and Greco-Roman Figures," in *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture : Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, eds., Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 97–99, discusses these Jewish figures as the "most obvious pre-Christian parallels for Jesus' ministry." Note that Mark names Elijah (prophets) before Moses (Law), the reverse of the usual 'Law and prophets' order that is found in Peter's reply and consistently throughout Matthew, for example.

[59] See Priscilla and Rebecca Patten, *The World of the Early Church: A Companion to the New Testament* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 118, who suggest that messianic expectations attributed to Jesus may have begun with Moses, "who not only redeemed Israel from her material troubles and political servitude, but also from her ignorance and spiritual bondage."

[60] The audience may recall the unusual endings of Moses and Elijah's service to God. Moses supposedly died in the land of Moab at the Lord's command but his grave site was unknown (Deut 34:5–6). Elijah did not meet an earthly death, but ascended into heaven in a chariot (2 Kgs 2:11). Jesus combined these events because he died, was buried, and ascended into heaven (16:19; cf. Act 1:9; 2:32).

3.4 Jesus challenges the authorities

In Mark's Gospel, the Jewish and Roman leaders represent positions of power. They are described as conspiring together to maintain that privilege and to destroy Jesus in the process (cf. 3:6), as Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie observe:

> The Pharisees and legal experts in Galilee confront Jesus over crucial legal issues and purity regulations; the high priests, elders, and legal experts in Jerusalem guard the temple and keep social order in Israel on behalf of the Romans; the Judean and Roman authorities each regard it as their right from God to rule, and they protect their God-given right; they do what is politically necessary for them to maintain power and control. At the same time, these various groups cooperate with each other in their efforts to destroy Jesus by forming various alliances.[61]

These authorities opposed Jesus and were determined to maintain their "self-interest" and authority by lording over the people (cf. 10:42),[62] who were positively impacted by Jesus' activities and drawn to him in great numbers. These responses could possibly jeopardise the authorities' privileges unless they controlled the people. On the narrative level, the *motu o tagata* scares them (cf.11:18, 32; 12:12) and ultimately prompts the majority of these leaders' opposing actions,[63] as alluded to by Raymond Pickett:

> Although the Jerusalem leaders claim that their authority comes from heaven, the ironic reality from the narrator's point of view is that it is actually subject to the "crowd." Likewise, Pilate, representative of the Roman Empire and the most powerful political figure in the Gospel, is said to have crucified Jesus not in compliance with Roman law but rather to "satisfy the crowd" that repeatedly cries out "crucify him" (15:13–15).[64]

Fear propels the religious and political leaders to extraordinary lengths to cover their incompetence. Pilate's political and military weaknesses are exposed when he wants to appease

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[61] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 117.

[62] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 230.

[63] This "majority" position highlights that some within their ranks, such as Jairus (5:22), sought help from Jesus, and that one of the scribes (12:28–34) and Joseph of Arimathea (15:43–46) appear to have opened up to Jesus' message.

[64] Pickett, "Following Jesus in Galilee," 438. Also, Robin Gallaher Branch, "A study of the woman in the crowd and her desperate courage (Mark 5:21–43)," *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 47.1 (2013): 6, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v47i649, attributes this fear to losing their position and further ruin of their country by the Roman army.

a hostile *ochlos* for fear of a possible riot. He is described as releasing the insurrectionist Barabbas while condemning the innocent Jesus to be flogged and crucified (15:15). King Herod is described fearing John the Baptist because the latter is considered by the people a righteous and holy man (6:20), and then as fearing Jesus as his reincarnation (6:16)! Even so, Herod's egotistic demeanour organises the beheading of the Baptist just to please Herodias and save face before his officers and important Galilean guests (cf. 6:17–28). Nevertheless, Mark's account reveals the cracks appearing in the hegemony of the Herodians and Romans as the *basileia* of God begins to spread amongst the *motu o tagata.*

When the chief priests and the scribes hear about Jesus' outburst and actions in the Temple's Gentile court (cf. 11:15–17), they keep looking for ways to kill Jesus because they fear him and the way his teachings have a spellbinding effect on the *motu o tagata* (11:18). When the same leaders realise Jesus had told a parable against them (12:1–11), they want to arrest him, but they fear the crowd (12:12). Even before the Passover festival, they were still looking for a way to capture and kill Jesus, saying, "Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people" (14:2).[65]

The leaders possibly recognise a challenge by Jesus to their "prevailing understanding of God's way" and a threat to the "legal authorities," both of which they perceive to be their prerogatives from God.[66] Jesus exposed their flawed views (cf. 12:24, 27) and condemned their "ostentatious honour-seeking and exploitation of the poor (12:38–40)."[67] Such animosity may

[65] This is the only use of *laos* (people) in Mark's narrative, as the only other occurrence (7:6) is in a quotation of Isaiah (referring to the Jewish people). If Mark intends to refer here to the Jewish people and pilgrims in Jerusalem for the Passover, then it suggests that *ochlos* (crowd) in 15:11,15 should not be understood as a (hostile) 'Jerusalem crowd' rather than a (supportive) Galilean crowd, as some have argued, or Mark would have used *laos* there too.

[66] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom,* 52. Also, Pickett, "Following Jesus in Galilee," 438, alludes to the Pharisees' claim to have authority from God to interpret law; Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 230, alleges that as caretakers of the house of God, the Jewish leaders believed they were the "enforcers of God's will."

[67] Stuart T. Rochester, *Goodnews at Gerasa: Transformative Discourse and Theological Anthropology in Mark's Gospel* (Oxford, Bern: Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, 2011), 234.

have been growing because of jealousy at the people's reaction to Jesus' teaching, "as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (1:22; cf. 15:10).

Fear is said to compel the authorities to maintain control and act to save themselves and the traditions as they see them.[68] They attempt to maintain the status quo as fear dictates their responses when facing the popularity of Jesus.[69] Even though they were determined to be rid of Jesus, they left it to the Roman authorities to carry out their wishes. Herod executed the Baptist (6:27–28), and Pilate authorised Jesus' crucifixion (15:15). Rhoads, Dewey and Michie best summarise the authorities' dilemma:

> In Mark's portrayal, the authorities are prime exemplars of the "faithless" generation. As those who "think in human terms," the Judean leaders replicate Gentile (Roman) rulers who "lord over" people. Rather than trust in God, they use their own power to secure themselves. Because they have misunderstood God's power in terms of domination rather than service, they have become leaders of an "adulterous and sinful generation." By the end of the story, they have so abused their power that their authorization to be leaders will be taken away, for the lord of the vineyard will "destroy those farmers and give the vineyard to others."[70]

These were lost opportunities for the Jewish leadership. Although they were the insiders as leaders to God's chosen people, they became outsiders to the Goodnews when they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, servant-Son of God.[71] Their false narrative was clearly pointed out to them by Jesus as they knew "neither the scriptures nor the power of God" (12:24).

Despite these apparent failures, the appearances of Moses and Elijah, and the confession of a Roman centurion on the narrative level, point to "ways" of overcoming such human weaknesses and for re-inclusion in Jesus' way to the *basileia*. The openness to these

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[68] Norman R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 38–39.

[69] Branch, "A study of the woman in the crowd," 6.

[70] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 118.

[71] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 230, suggests these leaders' "blindness to Jesus' identity" as one of the reasons for rejecting him. See also Stephen D. Moore, "The SS Officer at the Foot of the Cross: A Tragedy in Three Acts," in *Between Author and Audience in Mark: Narration, Characterization, Interpretation*, ed., Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 44–61, who provides a comical script about the centurion's confession, which highlights the ambiguities of insider/outsider in the Gospel of Mark.

exceptional leaders on the narrative level (see Joseph of Arimathea's 'repentance' in 15:43, cf. 14:64b) reminds those in leadership positions of their responsibilities to the people, by fearing God. The examples they set also warn others of similar standing who abuse their authoritative roles for personal gain, and the ramifications of such selfish ambitions (cf. 12:38–40).

The centurion's response provides a reconciliatory acceptance of Jesus' demands for re-inclusion, particularly for those in leadership positions and holding military power, when he declared the divinity of the crucified Christ (15:39). Jairus exemplifies such inclusion when he sought out Jesus to heal his dying daughter (5:22–24, 35–42). The same can be said of one of the scribes who approached Jesus searching for God's reign (cf. 12:28–34), in a way very similar to Joseph of Arimathea, who did what he needed to do (cf. 15:42–46). These examples illustrate the "ways" for such authoritative figures to be re-admitted as faithful members of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative, despite their failures. The Twelve are also portrayed by Mark as being in need of this transformation because of their many failures.

3.5 Jesus challenges the Twelve

The Markan narrative is said to reveal the composite nature of Jesus' followers and portray the "successes and the fallibility" of following Jesus.[72] From his many followers amongst the *motu o tagata*, Jesus chose the Twelve to be with him and sent them out to proclaim the message (3:14; 6:7–13,30–32). Unfortunately, despite some successes, they consistently failed to meet these expectations, as this part of the analysis demonstrates. The first four chosen disciples were two sets of brothers—Peter and Andrew, and James and John.

[72] Malbon, "Fallible Followers," 29. Also, Jeffrey W. Aernie, "Borderless Discipleship: The Syrophoenician Woman as a Christ-Follower in Mark 7:24–30," in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Reading from Oceania*, eds., Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elain M. Wainwright, SBL Semeia Studies 75 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 191, describes this as the "successes and failures of Christ-followers."

They were fishermen (1:16, 19–20), and Jesus called them to be fishers for people as he passed along beside the Sea of Galilee (1:16).[73]

This setting accentuates this important theological theme of "the way" in the Markan narrative. The phrase "passing along" (*παράγων παρὰ*, 1:16) indicates Jesus in motion describing him as on "his way" to proclaim the message (1:38) when he called his first disciples. This motif encourages Jesus' followers to be mobile and not to stagnate. The Sea of Galilee facilitates this crucial motif, by enabling Jesus to travel within Galilee and regions beyond. The Sea was one of the various arenas within which Jesus' extraordinary power and authority were powerfully demonstrated. It even served as a classroom for the Twelve in their boat, in their learning processes and relationships with each other and Jesus.[74] The Twelve failed in both arenas (cf. 4:38–41; 6:49–50). The chaotic sea is said to symbolically represent "demonic rule" from which God, through Jesus Christ, would save his people.[75]

From the sea's economic abundance, Jesus called his first four disciples. They immediately left all to follow after him (1:20).[76] Jesus' supreme authority and an "unprecedented command" must be obeyed, as exemplified by these sets of brothers leaving their families and occupations behind (1:18, 20).[77] This was a radical move against the grain of a tradition that suggests a person's identity is embedded in family structures and

[73] English, *The Message of Mark*, 53, reflects on this positive NT use of the fishermen metaphor to capture the transformation that Jesus' Goodnews had on such negative imagery from the OT (cf. Jer 16:16; Ezek 29:4ff; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:14–17). Also, Grassmick, *Mark*, 2:108, suggests "although the prophets used this figure to express divine judgment, Jesus used it positively to avoid divine judgment."

[74] See Altrock, *Mark: A Call to Service*, 6, who provides an ideal structure for the Twelve's learning programme: Jesus calls them to "walk behind him and observe (1:16–20)… to walk beside him and participate (3:13–19)… [and] to walk beyond him and multiply (6:6b–13)." Altrock structures Mark's Gospel into two major sections (1:1–8:30 and 8:31–16:20), which "hinge on 8:27–31, where Peter confessed Jesus was the Christ. Each half has its own *Christology* (who Jesus is), *discipleship* (what it means to follow Jesus), and *geography* (where the action takes place from which we learn the Christology and discipleship)." Italics original.

[75] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom,* 42.

[76] Grassmick, *Mark*, 2:108, advocates that the Greek verbal construction *ἀκολουθεω* "expresses the call and response of discipleship" by "giving Jesus their full allegiance." Hence, the aorist verbs "followed" (*ἠκολούθησαν*, 1:18; *ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω*, 1:20) possibly provide the motive behind these brothers' intention.

[77] Lee, "Christological Identity and Authority in the Gospel of Mark," 8.

responsibilities, especially in an agrarian/fishing society such as Galilee.[78] The brothers are portrayed as leaving behind their places of belonging, way of life, and security simply because Jesus called them to follow him.[79]

Jesus later called the rest of the Twelve to be sent out equipped with his authority over unclean spirits (6:7). Although they secured some initial success (cf. 6:13), they mostly failed to work together (cf. 9:33–37; 10:35–45). This failure is attributed to competing for honoured positions of "power and status,"[80] despite Jesus' clear warnings of the suffering and prosecution awaiting them. The Twelve also failed to work together with Jesus (cf. 4:35–41; 6:35–39; 8:4–5, 14–21, 27–33; 14:37–42, 50), suggesting that although they followed Jesus, they were sometimes in opposition to him (cf. 8:32–33), similar to other members of the *motu o tagata*'s response, such as the representatives of Jewish leadership. The Twelve had no clear idea of who Jesus was (8:17–18; cf. 4:41).[81]

The successes and failures of the Twelve suggest that following Jesus "is not easy" and that Mark paints a picture of the radical and seemingly unrealistic demands of discipleship.[82] To be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, one must be spiritually connected with, and empowered by him, with the necessary authority to wage war against evil forces (6:7). In addition, Jesus also requires his followers to "deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow" (8:34).

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[78] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 38. Also, Milton Moreland, "The Jesus Movement in the Villages of Roman Galilee: Archaeology, Q, and Modern Anthropological Theory," in *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, ed., Richard A. Horsley (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2006), 159, classifies Roman Galilee as an agrarian society struggling to conform to the pressures of a colonial administration.

[79] See Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 18. Also, Michael F. Trainor, *The Quest for Home: The Household in Mark's Community* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 1; Rhoads, *Reading Mark,* 101, who suggests that the disciples left behind everything for mobility purposes by separating themselves from things that rendered them "stationary—family, property, work and village (e.g. 1:16–20; 2:14; 10:28)."

[80] Rhoads, *Reading Mark,* 47–48.

[81] Wesley Hill, "I was blind, but now…I'm still blind: How the Gospel of Mark reframes Jesus' faithfulness," *CT* 60.7 (2016): 62, attributes this to Mark's portrayal of the Twelve as "clumsy, self-absorbed, and insensitive to the Spirit."

[82] Malbon, "Fallible Followers," 31. Also, Altrock, *Mark: A Call to Service,* 8, adds that following Jesus involves paying a price by leaving occupation and family behind.

One must be a "servant" (9:35b) and a "slave of all" (10:44). Mark describes a life of servanthood and commitment that requires Jesus' followers amongst the *motu o tagata* to go "all the way to the cross."[83]

Unfortunately, the Markan narrative reveals the Twelve's failure to meet these expectations because of their different priorities. Peter denies Jesus (14:66–72; cf. 14:30–31). James and John request positions of honour rather than being servants (10:35–43). The Twelve abandon Jesus and flee after his arrest (14:50). They were slow learners and were often reprimanded for having no faith in Jesus (4:40; 16:14; cf. 11:22) or in God's power manifested through him.[84] They also lacked understanding (4:13; 6:52; 7:18; 8:17, 21; 9:32).[85]

3.5.1 The Twelve lack understanding

The first glimpse of the Twelve's lack of understanding comes after Jesus' parabolic teaching about his true kindred—"whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (3:35). This was a rebuke of Jesus' biological family who came to restrain him (3:21). Jesus did not, by any means, demean his family members in absolute terms, but rather stress the priority of God's call. It has been argued that although Jesus embraces the family as the embodiment of both "commitment to God and life in the community,"[86] he is said to redefine a new emphasis on kinship ties for those who would do the will of God as his faithful

[83] Tracy A. Radosevic, "Follow Me: Reflection on Internalising, Embodying and Performing the Gospel of Mark," *CTM* 38.6, December (2011): 419.

[84] See A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2001), paragraph 866, where he discusses the Twelve's slow learning process.

[85] Middleton, "Suffering," 180, labels the Twelve as displaying "misunderstanding and incompetence." Also, Joel F. Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus: Minor Characters As Major Figures in Mark's Gospel*, ed., Stanley E. Porter, JSNT Supplement Series 102 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 23.

[86] John H. Elliott, "Jesus Was Not an Egalitarian: A Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory," *BTB* 32 (2002): 79.

followers.[87] The Twelve took time to understand this heightened relationship with Jesus. They continued to struggle with it all the way to Jerusalem (10:32) and ultimately failed and fled, but the narrative invites them back to Galilee to begin again as Jesus' faithful followers (16:7).

After another parable about the sower (4:1–9), the Twelve and those around him were mystified about its meaning and they asked Jesus about it (4:10), which invited his rebuke for their lack of understanding (4:13). But Jesus' reply (4:11) emphasises his followers' access to the mysteries of the reign of God when they choose to believe and follow him. They (and the readers) are privileged to acquire such knowledge through Jesus' teaching (cf. 4:14–20). Being taught in parables is said to preserve non-believers' freedom to decide whether to believe or not, and only God would enable them to do so, even granting forgiveness if he so wished.[88] For outsiders, the door has not completely been shut for inclusion (cf. 4:12). Such preferential treatment (cf. 4:34) ought to enhance the Twelve's understanding of their calling, if not, the divine attributes of the person they are following, but the Twelve continued to misunderstand.

After feeding the crowd of five thousand from only five loaves of bread and two fish (6:34–44), Jesus sent them ahead to cross to the other side to Bethsaida while dismissing the crowd (6:45). He then went up the mountain to pray. As the Twelve struggled against an adverse wind, Jesus came to them walking on the sea (6:48), which terrified them thinking he was a ghost (6:49–50a).[89] Jesus calmed their troubled minds with a personal reassurance ("I am!"), then he got into the boat and the wind ceased (6:50b–51). Mark then narrates that the "Twelve did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened" (6:52). This

[87] Paul R. Trebilco, *Self-designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 40, refers to this as Jesus' new "surrogate family."

[88] Grassmick, *Mark*, 2:119.

[89] The fishermen amongst the Twelve naturally would perceive Jesus a ghost at night time, knowing the history of the sea where many perished. Also, Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 144, mentions that "some Hellenized Jews accepted a common Greek notion of souls persisting in the air hence were unburied, hovered around the site of their death." Mark also alludes to Old Testament language of God "passing by" (cf. Exod 33:19; Job 9:11) and only God is said to have walked on water (Ps 77:19).

commentary remark binds three episodes together—the feeding miracles (one in retrospect, and one foreshadowed) and Jesus walking on water—as a lesson to highlight the Twelve's lack of understanding about Jesus. They had just witnessed Jesus feeding five thousand people from only five loaves and two fish, with twelve baskets left over for all the people of Israel. The five thousand men of the *motu o tagata* (the crowd in the wilderness) trusted him, obeyed his command, and their needs were fulfilled (6:40, 42). Yet, for the Twelve, not even the Divine presence again calming a storm could soften their hardened hearts to understand this sign of the *missio Dei* to God's people.

Jesus himself confirmed this of the Twelve following another feeding miracle (8:1–10) on the Gentile side of the sea. Jesus heartbreakingly points this out in the boat, "Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes, and fail to see? Do you have ears, and fail to hear?" (8:17–18). The Twelve remembered the mathematical details of the feedings (8:19–20), but failed to see their significance: twelve baskets for Israel, seven baskets for the Gentiles; God's mission to all the *motu o tagata*! They saw and heard his teachings and miracles, yet they did not hear or see Jesus for who he really was, or what he was revealing about God's transforming purposes for all people. In the words of the Markan Jesus—they had no faith (4:40, cf. 8:17–18).

3.5.2 The Twelve have no faith

Not only did the Twelve lack understanding, but they also displayed an absence of faith in their relationship with Jesus (cf. 4:40). Faith involves a trusting relationship with God and emphasises confidence in him, his words, and promises rather than reliance on one's effort. As God's beloved Son, Jesus inherited and exhibited such divine attributes, and the Twelve needed to comprehend this in their relationship with him and commit themselves to the way of Jesus.

The four fishermen displayed such faith initially when they left everything and followed him. The rest of the Twelve exhibited similar understanding when they first accepted their calling (cf. 3:13). However, their inability to process their surroundings and their reliance on traditional understandings possibly attributed to their lack of faith in Jesus. Their social-conditioning shaped their thought processes and guided their actions (cf. 8:32–33; 14:4–5, 10–11, 66–70). However, since following Jesus as members of the larger *motu o tagata* gathered around him, they too were amazed, astounded, and filled with awe at Jesus' extraordinary powers to heal, cast out demons, and even command the wind to be still. But the transformation needed to become true followers had yet to transpire in their mental and spiritual formation, and could not be based on such deeds of power alone. They heard and witnessed these extraordinary events, but needed to journey to Jerusalem and the cross in order to discern and accept the deep truth about Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. They needed confidence in his divine authority and leadership even when (especially when) the awful things he predicted began to be fulfilled.

This difficulty was evident when Jesus stilled a storm (4:35–5:1). All their experience at sea and familiarity with its conditions offered no practical solution to alleviate their situation.[90] Their fear of being swamped and perishing led them to wake up Jesus in their state of frightened hopelessness, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (4:38b). They called Jesus a Teacher, but they did not understand the essence of his teachings (cf. 4:10; 8:14–21). And if they had any faith in Jesus or even faith based on what they had seen, they would have confidence in his ability and authority for a safe crossing to the other side. This lack of faith drew sharp criticism from Jesus. He was blunt in his assessment of their performance:

[90] Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 139, suggests that Jesus' disciples were unfamiliar with this part of the sea because they only fished near Capernaum. Hence, they may not have predicted the conditions they faced. But the Sea of Galilee is small and any part of it is subject to sudden windsqualls funneled by the surrounding mountains.

"Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" (4:40). Even after such criticism, they were still asking one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41).

Their surprise reaction can be explained from a Jewish misunderstanding that God alone ruled the sea and wind (Ps 107:29; cf. Jonah 1:15), and so Jesus couldn't. The scribes expressed similar false perception when they questioned Jesus' authority to forgive sins, which they attributed to God alone (2:7). On one level, the Twelve and the scribes can then be grouped as outsiders, together with those who oppose and reject Jesus as the Son of God. These included the Jewish authorities from Jerusalem (14:61–64), Jesus' own people from Nazareth (6:1–6), the rich young man (10:17–22), and even Pilate (15:15). Their opposing motives temporarily exclude them from being members of the faithful followers as they preferred to rely on and trust their traditions, affiliations, and understandings and so to reject Jesus out of fear.

The Twelve have faith enough to follow Jesus all the way to Jerusalem (with some misgivings), but not faith enough to hear, understand and accept the nature of Jesus' destiny. In Mark's central discipleship triptych, three times Jesus foretells of his arrest and death (8:31–35; 9:31–37 and 10:32–45) and three times the Twelve or various members of it wilfully ignore and misunderstand these words straight afterwards—providing the opportunity for further discipleship teaching by Jesus. Clearly this way of telling the story is a teaching device for Mark's implied readers to learn about true discipleship. But just as clearly we can see that our faith and the faith of the wider *motu o tagata* is not dependant just on the Twelve or any idea of apostolic succession. Mark clearly tells us that in the midst of the storm, "other boats were with *him*" (4:36b, italics mine); and in the midst of the healings and exorcisms, others are also involved—and Jesus claims no exclusive franchise ("Whoever is not against us, is for us" 9:40).

3.5.3 The Twelve are afraid

The Twelve had no faith in Jesus because they failed to understand his being and purpose. They simply did not know who he was because fear blinded them from seeing Jesus' divine attributes and identity, as explained above.[91] They were afraid when the storm swamped their boat, fearing they would perish (4:38; cf. 4:40). Fear overwhelmed them when they saw Jesus walking on the water, thinking he was a ghost (6:50). Both these incidents highlighted their perception of reality, which was fuelled by a fear of the unnatural. Even on the way to Jerusalem, some of them were afraid (10:32), probably pondering on Jesus' solemn predictions (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34). When Jesus was arrested, the rest of the Twelve deserted him and fled (14:50; cf. 14:27).[92] These reactions, according to Rhoads, are "presumably in order to save themselves. Fear for themselves underlies their resistance to understanding, their lack of faith, and their failure to be faithful to the end."[93]

These examples highlight the fallibility of the Twelve and confirm their shortcomings in performing their discipleship role.[94] Jesus' three-fold predictions could have contributed to this failure such that instead of preparing them for such eventualities, the Twelve displayed the opposite, fear. They probably realised, as pointed out by some, the "costly implications for them."[95] But by revealing his ultimate destiny at the cross, Jesus was preparing them for their own fate, awaiting them in their future ministries (cf. 13:9–13; 16:7). This was a foundational understanding required for the Twelve's faith journey and servanthood role, which Jesus wanted to entrench into their thought process if they were to continue the Goodnews of Jesus

[91] See Section 3.2 above, particularly sub-Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

[92] Judas Iscariot was no longer a member of the Twelve (14:10–11).

[93] Rhoads, *Reading Mark,* 48.

[94] Malbon, "Fallible Followers," 29. See also T. Radcliff, ""The Coming of the Son of Man:" Mark's Gospel and the Subversion of the Apocalyptic Imagination," in *Languages, Meaning and God: Essays in Honour of Herbert McCabe*, ed., Brian Davis (London: Chapman, 1987), 176–198; Bastiaan M.F. van Iersel, "Failed Followers in Mark: Mark 13:12 as a Key for the Identification of the Intended Reader," *CBQ* 58.2 (1996): 244–263.

[95] Grassmick, *Mark*, 2:139.

Christ, the Son of God. They failed to understand this emphasis at the time, but presumably passed on their stories in some way to aid the teaching ministry of the followers of Jesus at a later date.

Understandably then, this learning process for the Twelve was slow and would progress in stages, as exemplified by the curing of a blind man at Bethsaida. Jesus had to perform the miracle twice (8:22–26). At Jesus' first attempt with saliva, the blind man's vision was partially corrected: "I can see people, but they look like trees walking" (8:24). As the blind man struggled to focus on people's blurred images, he compared them to trees walking. This comparison is unrealistically incompatible, and it can lead to confusion and a misrepresentation of reality. However, it serves its narrative purpose as a metaphor for the Twelve's learning progress, which was hindered by their traditional values and belief systems. Such interruptions blurred their focus on their discipleship calling because they were still thinking of their human values and traditions, as exemplified by Peter's false confession (8:29; cf. 8:33). And so after Jesus intently looked into the blind man's eyes for the second time, his sight was restored, and he could see clearly.

This miracle metaphorically represents the Twelve's learning process. It was prolonged initially, but they would eventually become faithful disciples, as the Books of the New Testament testify. Their eyes were finally opened after Jesus' resurrection, and they could clearly see their way forward—to proclaim the message—(cf. Act 2:36). However, their failure to perform their expected roles on the narrative level promotes other members of the *motu o tagata* to a prominent role, as exemplified by the contributions of women followers.

3.6 Women amongst the *motu o tagata*—exemplary followers of Jesus

It seems peculiar that Mark only names some of Jesus' women followers towards the end of his narrative, such as Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James the younger, and Salome (15:40, 41, 47; 16:1). It is an extraordinary feature because other nameless women distinguished themselves during Jesus' ministry, whom Jesus encountered and helped in Galilee, Judea, and even Gentile regions. Their important contributions represent exceptional discipleship traits, in comparison with those of the Twelve.

Furthermore, it is also strange, even insulting, that these unnamed women are identified only by their conditions, relationships, and social locations. For example, Jesus healed Simon's nameless "mother-in-law" at his home (1:30). Once she recovered, she became the first person in Mark's story to serve Jesus and some of the Twelve (*διηκόνει αὐτοῖς,* 1:31). Was she performing a hospitable host's role by serving her guests and a grateful goodwill appreciation for the transformation she had just experienced from Jesus? Or, was she merely conforming to her traditional subservient status as a woman serving (*diakoneō*) the men, even within the privacy of her own home? Traditions and patriarchal practices of the time would agree with the latter.[96] But the context of the episode—a family atmosphere and the effect of Jesus' renewal ministry through healing—appreciates the former.[97] This nameless woman is the first 'deacon/minister' in the Gospel story.

Even Jesus' own biological female family members are identified simply as "his mother" and "his sisters" (3:31–35), but not by names. Maybe Mark was conforming with the literary rhetoric and practices of the time, one of which is said to stress the difficulty of bringing "women to speech … or without consequences and, conversely, that women who are subject

[96] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 204, reiterates such societal norms where women were portrayed as "subordinate and inferior," while "presupposing men as the primary agents in social life."

[97] Gerald O'Collins, "Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29–31): More to be said," *ABR* 68 (2020): 68, positively agrees.

to man's speech are rendered vulnerable."[98] Concerning Jesus, Horsley agrees because it seemed that women were "insignificant and subservient to Jesus and his male disciples."[99]

The male-dominated reality of ancient communities, such as Galilee and Judea, suggests that a woman's place is mainly consigned to the privacy of one's household and not in the public domain (cf. Peter's mother-in-law, 1:29–31). Ethical and moral standards of the time nurtured such patriarchal practices, which truly reflected men's attitudes towards women. Such culturally structured norms (even in Samoan societies presently) do not diminish the valuable contributions of women followers to the theme of discipleship. In fact, an argument can be advanced that the woman as members of the Markan *motu o tagata* have set a very high standard, as the following examples illustrate.

Mark intercalates the healing of Jairus' little unnamed daughter, who was twelve years old (5:22–24, 35–42), with the renewal of a nameless woman who suffered from haemorrhages for twelve years (5:25–34). These individuals—Jairus and the unnamed woman—highlight an expressive faith that is required of Jesus' followers then and now. Their distinct and socially constructed circumstances support the radically inclusive nature of the *motu o tagata* interacting with Jesus. Jairus was a leader of the Jewish synagogue with responsibilities to the Jewish establishment. In spite of this association, he sought Jesus' help for his dying daughter. Jesus responded with a compassionate reassurance, "Do not fear, only believe" (5:36b), then he raised the unnamed daughter from death.

Amongst this same crowd was a nameless woman, who endured her condition for twelve long years (5:26). She is said to have displayed similar participative faith that led to her

[98] Victoria Phillips, "The Other Instance of Women's Silence in the Gospel of Mark," *CBW* XXXI (2011): 142.

[99] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 206.

healing.[100] Her condition rendered her unclean, as well as anyone else whom she might have come into contact with, according to Jewish purity laws (cf. Lev 15:25–57). Such religious and social constraints isolated her from society. Despite these barriers, she approaches Jesus with some determination amongst the crowd and touches his clothes (5:24b–25, 27). This led to her healing as power flowed from Jesus to her via his clothes, which Jesus confirmed, "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (5:34). This nameless woman prioritised her personal need above any communal and corporate restrictions, which had marginalised her. She helped herself by acting on the stories she heard of Jesus and reaffirmed her faith in him (5:27).[101]

Such display of faith would, unreservedly, lead to a renewed transformation for those who genuinely sought out Jesus for help, regardless of their circumstances. On the narrative level, these transformations also represent the renewal of the whole of Israel (and every island of people) through Jesus' proclamation and ministry. This is alluded to by Mark's repetitive formula of "twelve years"—the woman suffered for twelve years (5:25) while Jairus' daughter was twelve years old (5:42). Jesus' authority over "incurable diseases and death itself" transformed the people and cleansed the land.[102] His transformative power also reunited families and those segregated by their conditions, such as this nameless woman with a haemorrhage.

[100] Branch, "A study of the woman in the crowd," 2, describes this woman not only from her condition, which may have excluded her from worship and community life, but also as without families and friends. These conditions rendered her "lonely, isolated, impoverished, quite likely anaemic, and possibly dying. She appears hopeless and she is desperate."

[101] Carey, "Women in Action," 437, describes her taking matters into her own hand, banking on the stories she heard about Jesus' power to heal. Also, as the Markan narrative progresses, other people also heard stories of Jesus or about Jesus, such as the *motu o taga* (3:8), Jesus' family (3:21), Herod (6:14), people in Gennesaret (6:55), Syrophoenician woman (7:25), Bartimaeus (10:47), chief priests and scribes (11:18; 14:11), those who gave false testimony against Jesus (14:58), and finally Jesus' unbelieving disciples (16:11).

[102] Lee, "Christological Identity and Authority in the Gospel of Mark," 8.

These transformations overwhelmed the intent of the purity code, which the religious authorities strictly adhered to (cf. 2:16, 24; 7:1–8). The uncleanliness of coming into contact with both a woman with blood (Lev 15:25–27) and a dead young woman (Num 19:11) would render those touching them unclean. Jesus overpowered such traditions by connecting with both women. Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, could not be polluted by human prohibitions. He is said to have purified such constraints when he restored both women—both now named as daughters— as renewed members of their families and societies.[103]

Another prominent woman displaying true discipleship traits was the unnamed Syrophoenician woman (7:24–30). Her unwavering faith and bold determination allowed Jesus to cleanse her possessed unknown little daughter, regardless of their origin and locality.[104] The story of this Gentile woman reaffirms the inclusive manner of Jesus' proclamation to include all, not just Galileans and Judeans. These different ethnicities and localities demonstrate the radical inclusive composition of those gathering with Jesus—the *motu o tagata*—for one reason or another. Jeffrey Aernie alludes to this by stating that the Syrophoenician woman's take on discipleship "crosses both physical and rhetorical borders and helps to define the theme of Markan discipleship as existing on a borderless plane."[105]

In this encounter, however, Musa Dube advocates for the discriminatory implications of Jesus' seemingly harsh words (cf. 7:27), which the woman in Mark refused to recognise.[106]

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[103] Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark*, 110.

[104] Susan Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, ed., Mark Goodacre, The Library in New Testament Studies 259 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 90–91.

[105] Aernie, "Borderless Discipleship," 192. However, Gregory Thomas Basker, "Orientalist tendencies in the portrayal of gentiles (*ochloi/ethnio/barbaroi…*) in the Acts of the Apostles: A postcolonial critique," a paper presented at SABS (2018), argues that Jesus and the earliest Jewish Christians "considered gentiles to be out of their field of operation."

[106] See Musa Dube, "Reading for Decolonization (John 4.1–42)," in *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in their Third World*, ed., R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed., 25th Anniversary Edition (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 2016), 368, who states that "Jesus and his disciples are travellers with high authority far above their hosts."

It is also said that she endures such "humiliation in order to win her daughter's liberation."[107] Others have appreciated her insistence that children and dogs at the same table rendered both as members of the same household (cf. 7:28).[108] Her boldness and persistent attitude aligned her daring request with Jesus' purpose that Jews and Gentiles were all destined to be part of God's reign, even though the implementation must be done in an orderly way (cf. 7:27). The children would be first, and then the dogs would have their share. Both children and dogs implied inclusiveness at the same table, and both belonged to one household even though the children had priority.

In Jerusalem, Mark also mentions other unnamed women with vital contributions to the theme of discipleship. A nameless "poor widow" put two small copper coins into the Temple treasury as her offering (12:42) and many rich people also contributed significantly (12:41b). However, Jesus considered her offering "more than all those who are contributing to the treasury" (12:43) because "she, out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on" (12:44). Jesus' observation illuminated the importance of "how" to give, as a personal devotion to God, instead of how much to give. It was offering "all" one could afford with a willing heart instead of just "some" as a reflection of one's wealth. It was not an indictment against others who gave generously but a recognition of an offering done with total devotion, sincerity, and humility.

Before Jesus' death, another "unnamed" woman anointed him with an expensive ointment of nard, which drew condemnation from some observers as the poor could benefit from the sale of this ointment (14:3–5). Jesus rebuked them, saying, "She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them

[107] Greg Carey, "Introduction and a Proposal: Cultural, Power, and Identity in White New Testament Studies," in *Sounding in Cultural Criticism: Perspectives and Methods in Culture, Power and Identity in the New Testament*, eds., Francisco Lozada and Greg Carey (Augsburg Fortress, 2013), 7.

[108] Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2006), paragraph 15186.

whenever you wish … [but] she has anointed my body beforehand of its burial" (14:6–9). Both these nameless women displayed the exceptional traits required of Jesus' followers. They confirmed that following Jesus was not easy and with personal and financial costs. Despite many social, religious, economic, and political barriers, it required commitment, absolute resolve, and active faith in Jesus.

These women characters remain nameless mostly in the Markan narrative and therefore, faceless members of the *motu o tagata*. Yet they demonstrated, far and beyond, what was required to follow Jesus and what discipleship ought to be.[109] They corroborated true faith that was not blinded by things seen, but based on their perceived knowledge of Jesus through their movements, actions, and faculty of hearing. They heard stories of Jesus and convinced them to believe that he could help them. The same conviction gathered the *motu o tagata* with Jesus as he relieved many of its members from their struggles. Out of desperation, they had only one person to turn to for help—Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and he accepted and transformed them to be exceptional followers.

But it was only after Jesus was laid to rest and the Twelve scattered, that Mark names certain women (15:40a, 47; 16:1). Mark is said to have done this "out of necessity" to "provide literary and historical continuity between the absent male disciples and news of the risen Jesus."[110] The presence of these named women provides continuity and progression to the narrative in the absence of the male disciples. Their presence propels the narrative to Jesus' victorious resurrection and personalises his death (cf. 15: 40–41; 16:1). They also give hope of rescue to the male followers from their utter failure and desertion and are once again invited by the resurrected Jesus to meet him in Galilee (16:6–7). Even though these women fled in

[109] John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), 85, are of the same view.

[110] Phillips, "The Other Instance of Women's Silence in the Gospel of Mark," 131.

terror and said nothing to the disciples (or to others?), they became the first witnesses to the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

This critical contribution—narrative continuity—places the women on par with some particular *ochloi* who provide similar roles in the Markan narrative.[111] This validates these minor characters' essential purposes in the story and in Jesus' ministry. Their inclusion demonstrates that Jesus' proclamation welcomes all into his *motu o tagata* and everyone can seek out Jesus—males or females, named or unnamed, rich or poor, righteous or sinner, healthy or sick, friend or foe, Jewish or Gentile, and including Samoan Islanders of all kinds.

The women's participation demonstrates the qualities of true discipleship. They challenged the traditions and barriers that labelled them unimportant and religiously impure. They exemplified the courage to stand up and be counted as equal members of a society dominated by social divides, patriarchal preferences, and authoritarian political regimes. They were able to break down these socially constructed barriers that segregated them as second class citizens and persisted in coming to Jesus to be transformed as renewed members of society and as faithful followers. They portrayed the exceptional discipleship traits required of Jesus' followers in their various social locations. Their invaluable contribution provides contemporary readers with needed assurances of the Lord's inclusive providence, regardless of their circumstances. It gives faithful followers a solid foundation to emulate as they face different barriers in their various reading sites.

3.7 Summary

This first part of the narrative analysis demonstrates Jesus' divine identity and authority as the Beloved Son of God, shaped and authenticated by various members of the *motu o tagata*.

[111] See Chapter Five, Section 5.2.

These attributes illuminate “his way” of loyalty to his Father and servanthood to the people. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus powerfully displays these aspects throughout his ministry and ultimately on the cross. He also models “the way” for his followers’ radical call to serve others through struggle and suffering by imitating his lead.

Jesus’ ministry attracted a variety of people with different ideological purposes and motives. Their participation as they gathered with Jesus for one reason or another enhanced the radical inclusivity of the *motu o tagata* and accorded those members who excluded themselves the opportunity for re-inclusion. These include the Twelve who failed to perform their purpose and responsibilities. The same can be said of the Jewish and Roman authorities’ opposition to Jesus because their survival and social status were under scrutiny and seemed to be jeopardised by Jesus’ presence and proclamation. Their failures and opposition at the narrative level illuminate the need to repent and believe.

The women characters (named or nameless) and their significant contributions not only contrasted with the Twelve’s failures, but they exhibited fearless and bold persistence to seek out Jesus. They heroically broke down numerous social, religious, and political barriers that marginalised them from societies structured around patriarchal preferences and androcentric dominance. Their contribution enabled the overcoming of the males’ failures as they were invited back to Galilee.

Even though their treatment at the narrative level seems unimportant and discriminatory, they provide a solid foundation of what discipleship ought to be and represent a significant shift in biblical scholarship. These successes and failures of Jesus’ various followers demonstrate the diversified membership of the *motu o tagata* and their different responses, which can help identify the complex and composite nature of the *motu o tagata*’s role in the Markan narrative, which this analysis is now turning to.

THE CROWD/S AND THE *MOTU O TAGATA*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the mainly positive use of *ochlos/ochloi* in the Markan narrative as a collective identity within the wider *motu o tagata*. This inclusive concept emphasises a collective shared interest in Jesus and suggests everyone's inclusion unless they disqualify themselves due to their expressed or implied opposition to Jesus. Even then, as I have argued, the narrative suggests the ongoing possibility of repentance and an invitation for re-inclusion at the end. However, whilst the crowd/s respond positively to Jesus in Galilee and as he enters Jerusalem, the last four references to ochlos are hostile, and in the last two the crowd yells, "Crucify him!" (15:11,15). Is this the same crowd? Does it indicate a collective failure to follow Jesus?

The essence of collective identity, on one hand, promotes and prompts individualised (or grouped) participation and involvement in the story, which warrants their membership of the collective identity. On the other hand, the individualised actions and responses represent the collective's shared interest. So the crowd in Mark functions as a movable village, into which and from which characters and groups emerge and are absorbed. This radically expands Malbon's idea of the crowd in the Markan narrative as a "unified narrative entity or character,"[1] by including everyone in and beyond the crowds who interacts with Jesus – even to test and oppose him. The usual Samoan translation of *ochlos* as *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative affirms this radically inclusive interpretation, especially since it is also used to translate some

[1] Malbon, "Disciples/crowds/whoever," 105, especially Footnote 5, renaming Ernest Best's "unified sociological entity." http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=c2fce2b9-2e9f-4cb3-92c6-c213ba69b26e%40sessionmgr4008.

other collective terminology. So I argue here that the crowd in Mark is not a fixed character grouping even though there are clear associations with 'the people of the land' in its use in the Galilee narratives.

4.2 Occurrences of *ochlos/ochloi*

Mark uses *ochlos* 38 times,[2] of which only four occurrences (14:43, 15:8, 11, 15) reflect opposition to Jesus, suggesting that a different *ochlos* in Jerusalem was involved in Jesus' arrest and interrogation.[3] After the 'triumphant entry' into Jerusalem accompanied by the crowds of Galilean pilgrims (10:46; cf. 11:8) who continued to hear Jesus eagerly (11:18,32; 12:12,37), a more hostile *ochlos* sided with the Jewish authorities against Jesus. Their inclusion here contrasts with the positive responses by the other crowds within the *motu o tagata*, mainly in Galilee and the surrounding regions. It must be said, however, that at the narrative level there is no clear way of distinguishing between these uses of *ochlos* in Jerusalem. Eklund and others who argue for two different crowds may be making a plausible historical explanation, but at the level of the implied reader the crowd turns against Jesus in Jerusalem, as also even his closest male followers will do (cf. 14:50).

Other character groupings in the Markan narrative reflect opposition to Jesus, albeit to a lesser extent. In Jesus' home-town of Nazareth, his own people opposed him, perhaps out of jealousy and lack of understanding. They failed to recognise Jesus' divine identity (cf. 6:1–6), as they only knew him as the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother to James, Joses, Judas,

[2] *Ochlos* is mainly used within the Gospels—Matthew 50 times, Mark 38, Luke 41, and John 20 (Acts 22 and Revelation 4).

[3] Eklund, "From "Hosanna!" to "Crucify!"" 21, suggests that the triumphal entry crowd were pilgrims from Galilee, and the crucifixion crowd were Jerusalem residents (or as some have suggested Temple 'police', 12:43). See also R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark,* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 430; Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 494, 670–71; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16,* Anchor Bible (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1030.

Simon and their sisters (6:3). The Nazarenes failed to realise that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (1:1), a privilege that Mark's readers enjoy.[4] This oppositional attitude temporarily excludes them from the faithful followers, just as the disciples (14:50) and the first women witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (16:8) flee in fear. But they have an opportunity for reconciliation and re-inclusion, as the Risen Christ invites them all back (cf. 16:7, and in the later longer ending, 16:12, 20).

This invitation is also extended to the people from Gerasa (5:2–17) through the witness of the former demoniac (5:19–20). They are also afraid and earnestly beg Jesus to leave them after exorcising the demoniac Legion. This long account concludes with Jesus apparently causing the death of their herd of swine, when he allows the demonic spirits to enter the pigs and drive them off the cliff into the sea (5:13). It is a symbolic ending (reminiscent of Pharaoh's army in the Red/Reed Sea), which causes the Gerasenes to resent Jesus' presence and hence their insistence that he should leave. However, this fear can also be explained at another level, as Mark alludes to the Gerasene's historic reality under Roman occupation, by explicitly naming the demoniac as Legion.[5] This historical perspective attributes this fear more to the Roman military might and possible retaliation, rather than just mere opposition to Jesus, such that the Gerasenes want him to leave.[6]

There are also some minor complications due to the presence of the crowd/s. For example, the presence of a crowd inadvertently blocked the paralytic's friends from reaching

[4] Ahearne-Kroll, "Audience Inclusion and Exclusion as Rhetorical Technique," 719, states that the level of inclusion of the audience shapes how the audience might be persuaded by the story to accept Mark's central tenet that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Messiah.

[5] Symbolically, this is also reminiscent of Samoa's Mau (public opinion) movement against the German and NZ occupations, with their national attire of a dark blue *lavalava* (sarong) with a single white strip near the bottom worn by males. Even in times of national significance, such as the latest political crisis, members and supporters of the new government are seen wearing this uniform as a challenge to unjust rule.

[6] See sub-Section 4.2.1 above, and Chapter Six, Sections 6.1 and 6.2. Whether this is understood as referring mainly to the time of Jesus' ministry or to the violent events in Gerasa during the Jewish revolt, around the time of the writing of Mark, does not need to be decided here. At the narrative level it is a story of hope for the implied readers of the Gospel, since the pig/boar on the Legionary standards, medallions, and brickworks of the Tenth Legion (Fretensis) were ubiquitous throughout Greco-Roman Palestine for the first four centuries.

Jesus, so "they removed the roof above him" (2:4). Sometimes, the sheer number of people in the crowds pressed upon Jesus (3:9–10; 5:24; 5:31), forcing him to teach from a boat for fear of being crushed (3:9). Even at home, Jesus and the Twelve were unable to eat because of the presence of a crowd (3:20). They also sought refuge at a deserted place so they could be by themselves, with a chance to enjoy much-needed human leisure, such as eating (6:31) and resting. In the Gentile territory of Tyre, Jesus did not want any attention, but he "could not escape notice" (7:24) from a desperate Syrophoenician woman.

Despite the inconvenience and potential threats to Jesus' life, the presence of these crowds (named or implied) indicate in some respects positive responses to his activities. Such incidents also point to Jesus' popularity and the vulnerability of the crowd. Jesus responded by showing compassion for the many vulnerable people by feeding (6:34, 41–42; 8:1–2, 6), healing (cf. 1:31, 34; 2:11–12; 3:5), cleansing (cf. 1:26, 34, 39, 41–42), teaching (2:13; 4:1–2; 6:34; 10:1; 11:18; cf. 6:2, 6; 12:35; 14:49), calling (7:14; 8:34), and watching over them (12:41). He healed some sick people away from the crowds (cf. 5:39–43; 7:33–35; 8:22–26; 9:14–29),[7] while sometimes dismissing or leaving other crowds behind (4:36; 6:45; 7:17). On one occasion, Jesus, Bartimaeus, and the Twelve were amongst the crowd that left Jericho (10:46) on their way to Jerusalem.

These interactions illuminate the experiences of the crowds gathering with Jesus and reveal the reality of their struggles. Their diversified needs and dispersed social locations (mainly outside the centres of power) demonstrate the negative impacts of social, religious, and political processes and structures. Crucially, though these crowds seem mainly to consist of the marginalised in Galilee, they support the radical inclusivity of the wider *motu o tagata* to include people from various sectors of the population who sought help from Jesus, such as

[7] See Section 4.6 below for a discussion of these four miracles.

Jairus, the women, the sick, the possessed, and even a rich young man and one of the scribes, as will be discussed further below.

On the crowds' part, they gather around Jesus (3:32; 4:1; 5:21; 9:14; 10:1), follow (2:15; 3:7; 5:24; 10:32; 11:9), and listen to him (12:37). Occasionally they would answer his question (9:15). In these instances, Mark repeatedly explains that these crowds are spellbound and amazed by Jesus' teaching (cf. 1:27; 2:12; 5:20; 10:32; 11:18; 12:17). Jesus' influence and the crowd's positive reactions then prompt the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders to fear this emerging movement (12:12; cf. 11:18, 32; 14:2). They plot to get rid of Jesus because his influence could lead to their downfall (from 3:6 onwards). But even amongst these sub-groups there are individuals who defy the dominant culture of the powerful to respond in different ways, such as one of the scribes (12:28–34), Joseph of Arimathea (15:43–46), and even a centurion at the foot of the cross (15:39).

4.3 *Motu o tagata* and groups as "collective identities"

Wolfgang Stegemann defines collective identity amongst early Christians as the "identification of the self with a certain group … which binds the group together … gives reasons for its amalgamation and … shapes its outlook."[8] As a social discourse on social movements, Alberto Melucci defines it as an "interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level)," which dictate the "orientations of their action" and the "field of opportunities … in which such action is to take place."[9] Both definitions emphasise the interdependence of these individual-group connections, which

[8] Wolfgang Stegemann, "The emergence of Early Christianity as a Collective Identity: Pleading for a Shift in the Frame," *ASE* 24.1 (2007): 115.

[9] Alberto Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity," in *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 44.

allows the self to be consciously aware of "both individual and collective life."[10] Dorothy Holland, Gretchen Fox, and Vinci Daro further support this analysis, based on the individual's "shared sense of the movement as a collective actor," which can produce dynamic changes that they "identify with, and are inspired to support in their own action."[11] This also corroborates Henri Tajfel's argument that individuals' awareness of the self-concept may be derived from the "knowledge … value, and emotional significance" of being members of a social group.[12] This can lead to individualised participation that seeks "cultural and lifestyle-based change"[13] and "to be critical of the status quo."[14]

These contemporary thoughts must be cautiously approached when applied to ancient texts, such as Mark's Gospel. Nonetheless, the emphasis on shared human characteristics is intrinsic to humankind, despite the vast distances between cultural and social structures and historical realities. They provide the crucial link that enables interpreters to rely on such modern social concepts as windows through which to study the "world associated with the text."[15] With this cautionary approach, the emphasis on "shared interest" and "cultural change"

[10] Robert L. Brawley, "Nodes of Objectivity Socialisation and Subjective Reflection in Identity: Galatian Identity in an Imperial Context," in *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, eds., J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 120, citing Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, "Social Identity and Social Cognition: Historical Background and Current Trends," in *Social Identity and Social Cognition*, eds., Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 6.

[11] Dorothy Holland, Gretchen Fox and Vinci Daro, "Social movement and collective identity: a decentered, dialogic view," *AQ* 81.1, Winter (2008): 95. Their analysis of the "collective identity," the "importance of meaning-making in shaping movement participants and influencing movement actions," and the "difficulties and contentiousness of producing movement identities amidst multiple discourses and practices" is considered relevant.

[12] Henri Tajfel, "Social Categorisation, Social Identity and Social Comparison," in *Differentiations Between Social Groups*, ed., Henri Tajfel, European Monographs in Social Psychology (London: Academic, 1978), 63, may fairly reflect segregated societies in the first-century Mediterranean context.

[13] Ross Haenfler, "Collective Identity in the Straight Edge Movement: How Diffuse Movements Foster Commitment, Encourage Individualised Participation and Promote Cultural Change," *TSQ* 45.4, Autumn (2004): 785–786. His theoretical analysis on "diffuse movements that lack traditional organisation" help to loosen common scholarly constructions of Mark's depiction of the crowd as "a character" and thus provide a platform from which to identify the function of *ochlos* more inclusively in the Markan narrative as "island of people."

[14] Andrew D. Clark and J. Brian Tucker, "Social History and Social Theory in the Study of social Identity," in *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, eds., J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 44.

[15] Clark and Tucker, "Social History and Social Theory in the Study of social Identity," 46, warn of the need for scholars to "reconstruct the social dynamic" of groups targeted in the texts being studied, before analysing them.

becomes essential and relevant, as this helps to elucidate Mark's perceived purpose for the inclusion of various collective terms, and their formation, movements, and functions in the narrative.[16]

Andrew Clark and Brian Tucker argue that these relationships reasonably correspond to first-century Mediterranean societies, which were significantly "stratified and categorised by group identities: slave/free; rich/poor; Roman/Greek; Jew/Gentile" (cf. Gal 3:28; Col 3:11).[17] These social identifiers surface "relative deprivation," especially for those with limited access to "various benefits and opportunities."[18] In the context of Greco-Roman Palestine under Roman rule, it is argued that paying taxes primarily benefit the elite with minimal or no benefits for the people.[19] William Loader concurs, suggesting that most people in Capernaum fall through the redistribution cracks of the synagogue.[20] Mark embeds such misfortunes in his presentation of the "island of people" and groups around Jesus, who were deprived of their personal and social liberties due to circumstances beyond their control, such as the many being healed from the "whole city" (1:33–34), even some individuals (1:40–42; 10:46–52), and many others amongst the crowds (3:9–10; 7:32–36). The importance of being a member or representative of the collective then becomes crucial, as an avenue to realistically achieve

[16] This approach also helps to clarify counter examples, where some particular individuals in the narrative act *against* the shared interest of their group, such as Peter (cf. 8:33; 14:68–72) and Judas (cf. 14:10–11) of the Twelve, and Joseph of Arimathea (15:43–46) of the Sanhedrin.

[17] Clark and Tucker, "Social History and Social Theory in the Study of social Identity," 42.

[18] Philip F. Esler, "An Outline in Social Identity Theory," in *T & T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the New Testament*, eds., J. Brian Tucker and Coleman A. Baker (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 20.

[19] Richard A. Horsley, "Introduction: Jesus, Paul, and the 'Art of Resistance': Leaves from the Notebook of James C. Scott," in *Hidden Transcripts and the Art of Resistance, Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*, ed., Richard A. Horsley, SBL Semeia Studies (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004), 1. See also Chapter Six, sub-Section 6.3.3.

[20] William Loader, *The New Testament with imagination: A fresh approach to its writings and themes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 3. Even though the current synagogue remains in Capernaum date from the fourth century CE, some believe there are foundations of an older synagogue underneath it. In any case, the social institution of the synagogue was widespread in Galilee even before dedicated buildings became common. See UNESCO, "Early synagogues in the Galilee," 30 June (2000), https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1470/.

tangible change, as exemplified by Jairus (5:21–22) and the Syrophoenician woman (7:25–30).[21]

A collective identity concept follows a school of thought that "society forms persons; persons form society,"[22] or that "the psychology of groups is essentially and entirely the psychology of individuals," even with the existence of friction within them.[23] In Mark's Gospel, both Jesus' relationship with the *motu o tagata* and the interactions between its various constituents individually or collectively, reflect the idea of this collective identity, and the interplay between its diverse members. Solidarity within particular groups with similar interests is emphasised as a united front to achieve their specific goals for gathering with Jesus.

In this respect, Jesus' ministry of servanthood mobilises spontaneous gatherings of people, as if they were entirely controlled by an irresistible force to see him (cf. 1:32–34; 2:2, 6, 15–16; 3:7–10).[24] Others within the collective identity had different motives, even to cause Jesus harm, as exhibited by some of the Jewish authorities from Jerusalem (cf. 3:2, 6, 22).[25] The opposing nature of their involvement temporarily disqualifies them from being members of the faithful followers, just as other groups throughout the narrative do also, such as the hostile crowds in Jerusalem (cf. 14:43; 15:11) and even the Twelve themselves (cf. 14:50).

On the narrative level, these group movements and the individualised participation in them emphasise the ordinary people's desperate need for change. Mark describes Jesus receiving these people and transforming them as they gathered to him. Other groupings (scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests) are evidence of the authorities' failure as they neglected the needs of the people and prioritised maintaining their power and control over them. Such

[21] See Section 4.3 below for discussion of this "representative member" concept.

[22] Brawley, "Nodes of Objectivity Socialisation and Subjective Reflection in Identity," 121.

[23] Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications*, 12, cited by Esler, "An Outline in Social Identity Theory," 16.

[24] K.S. Wuest, *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament for the English readers,* Volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 108, emphasises the people's need to seek help from Jesus.

[25] Jack D. Kingsbury, "The religious authorities in the Gospel of Mark," *NTS* 36 (1990): 45.

privilege was threatened by Jesus' increasing influence upon the people (cf. 11:18, 32; 12:12). Jesus' characterisation then becomes the essential link that defines these diverse tensions and relationships, regardless of their intentions.[26]

Some interpreters would argue that these different responses to Jesus lead to the formation of in-groups and out-groups (followers and opponents) associated with Mark's depiction of the crowds and various character groupings.[27] This resonates with Tajfel's description of intergroup behaviour where the in-group favours their members while discriminating against those of the out-group.[28] The positive description of the crowds in the Markan narrative points to such in-groups of people who sought out Jesus for help, regardless of their social, cultural, and ethnic differences.[29] Those with opposing motives and attitudes towards Jesus are seen as constituting out-groups, which temporarily excludes them from the collective identity of faithful followers. Jesus then is seen as accommodating the needs of the in-groups, transforming them spiritually, socially, and economically.[30]

But if all characters and groups in Mark comprise the implied reader, the "island of people," then all these interactions with Jesus remain open to revision (as for the Twelve themselves and Joseph of Arimathea). In these interactions, suffering is one of the binding factors as Jesus identifies himself with the in-groups' suffering, by foreshadowing his own suffering on the cross.[31] Jesus' life of servanthood (cf. 1:38; 8:31; 9:31; 10:33, 44) invites the transformation of all people by saving and redeeming them in the midst of their suffering.

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[26] Timothy Howles, "The Undifferentiated Crowd: An Analysis of the Kierkegaardian 'Single Individual' in light of Girardian Mimetic Theory," *THJ* (2017): 767, talks about this middle link where a "community is a relationship between person-God-person: that is, God is the middle term."

[27] See Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus*, 11–14.

[28] Henri Tajfel, et. al., "Social Categorisation and Intergroup Behaviour," *EJSP* 1.2 (1971): 172. See also Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour," in *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds., Stephen Worchel and Williams G. Austin (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), 13, who reaffirm this "intergroup discrimination favouring the in-group."

[29] See Sections 4.4 and 4.5 below.

[30] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 233, describes this transformation as the people's "liberation."

[31] Middleton, "Suffering," 176.

Seeking help from Jesus leads to in-groups of people with similar interests, which differentiates them from a "relatively coherent character group" of religious leaders,[32] whose opposing "perceptions and behaviours" towards Jesus render them as an out-group.[33] The latter group deem Jesus' relationship with other members of the *motu o tagata* as a threat to their authoritative rule and privilege. They fear such influence and insist on maintaining their control, by attempting to get rid of Jesus. It is important to note that some individuals within such groups (in or out) provide the counter examples that indicate that the groups are permeable and the boundaries not absolute, such as Joseph of Arimathea, Jairus, one of the scribes, Peter, Judas, James, and John within their respective groups.

Nonetheless, these "in-groups" and "out-groups" illuminate Jesus' working relationships with these participants. He is the narrative thread mending together these groups with contrasting motives and his invitation remains open to all people who repent.

These mostly unspecified *motu o tagata* (including the two crowds in Jerusalem – 14:43; 15:8) represented every sector of the population gathering around Jesus (cf. 2:3–6; 3:7–8; 5:21–23). This points to a shared interest in Jesus as his popularity and reputation spread. Such assemblies provide opportunities for vulnerable members of the *motu o tagata* to affect positive changes from the social constraints of suffering, sickness, being possessed, social isolation, neglect, hunger, and so forth. They also provide the leaders with the opportunity to

[32] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 228, citing other narrative critics with similar views such as E. Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Marks Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 149–52; Rhoads, Dewey and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 116; Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 14, 64–5. Also, Kingsbury, "The religious authorities in the Gospel of Mark," 45, labels these Jewish leaders as a "single, or collective character."

[33] Barbara Flunger and Hans-George Ziebertz, "Intercultural Identity – Religion, Values, In-Group and Out-Group Attitudes," *JET* 23 (2010): 3, citing E. Aronson, T.D. Wilson and R.M. Akert, *Social Psychology,* 12th edition. (Garden City: Prentice Hall, 2007). Also, Kuecker, "Ethnicity and Social Identity," 70, points to a personal identity that is "subsumed by the characteristics of a group category," citing both John C. Turner, "Toward a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed., Henri Tajfel, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 15; and Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 246, who both emphasise the relationship between individuals and their membership of a social group.

confront Jesus. These responses reflect Jesus' impact either positively or negatively, which have prompted their movements towards Jesus.[34] They also help to unravel the identities, perceived functions, and purposeful inclusion of the many groups within the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative.

The collective desire for tangible changes provides supporting evidence that signifies the *motu o tagata* in Mark's story as a collective identity.[35] It can be difficult to affix such a concept on sporadic and nomadic relationships, due to the multifaceted fabrics of the Markan narrative. But, the primary need for positive change supersedes such difficulty. Even if this shared interest is spontaneous as different groups and crowds appear at various stages of the story, the essential goal for tangible change sanctions and facilitates interconnected relationships between Jesus and most members of the collective identity, but also between its diverse membership—individuals and other character groupings. Such relationships allow individualised and grouped participations to represent the essence of the collective identity, even when Mark does not use *ochlos* as a reference for their inclusion.

Furthermore, a common hope for tangible change reflects Barbara Flunger and Hans-George Ziebertz's study of in-groups with a "motivational basis."[36] The Markan narrative echoes similar in-groups of individuals, whose personal circumstances provide the motivational factor to seek help from Jesus.[37] The voluntary mobilisations of members of the *motu o tagata* towards Jesus can also be perceived as an act of "self-help" for those pursuing

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[34] Henri Tajfel, "Interindividual Behaviour and Intergroup Behaviour," in *Differentiations between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed., Henri Tajfel (London: Academic, 1978), 52–53, stresses that when members of a social group cannot move beyond their boundaries, their only hope of bringing change is by the group acting as a whole.

[35] Kristian Klippenstein, "Language Appropriation and Identity Construction in New Religious Movement: Peoples Temple as a Test Case," *JAAR* 85.2, June (2017): 356.

[36] Flunger and Ziebertz, "Intercultural Identity," 6–7; See also Henri Tajfel, et. al., "Social Categorisation and Intergroup Behaviour," 172–174.

[37] In Mark's story, these individuals represent a larger group with similar conditions, such as the "lepers," "beggars," "blind or deaf," "those oppressed by illnesses," "physical disabilities," and "those possessed by unclean spirits." See Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 66.

change.[38] They take the initiative to seek healing from this new superior source, Jesus, as their religious practices and leadership have failed them (cf. 5:25–26).[39] They help themselves by going to him in great numbers as his fame as a miracle worker spreads throughout the region. Even those opposing Jesus do so because they are motivated to maintain their privileged lifestyle. They are equally determined to keep the status quo by countering Jesus' influence with the ultimate goal of destroying him.

Such shared characteristics are enhanced by "expressive actions,"[40] which collectively embody the involvement of different members of the *motu o tagata* and their different purposes for gathering with Jesus. Their groups' particular interest and common desire organise their membership of the various groups within the *motu o tagata*. Those seeking positive transformation were drawn to Jesus for cultural changes involving healing and renewal, not only for themselves but for societies, too.[41] Others seeking maintenance of their status and positions went to oppose him. Despite their different intentions, they all gathered with Jesus as a collective identity, the *motu o tagata*, which demonstrates the radically inclusive nature of its composition.

Such inter-connected and complex relationships enable the inclusion of other character groupings in the collective identity, particularly some individuals whose involvements are not explicitly referenced with *ochlos* or other familiar Greek terminologies employed by Mark. As they individually or collectively gathered with Jesus, their particular shared interest informed

[38] David Snow, "Authority in Contention: Interdisciplinary Approaches," *CMB* 26.1 (2001): 2.

[39] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 227.

[40] Haenfler, "Collective Identity," 786.

[41] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 12–13, 27–52. Jesus' actions "renew the lives of individuals and society," which is set against "the ruling institutions and their representatives, the Temple, high priesthood, scribes and Pharisees."

their different senses of belonging to the collective identity and triggered positive or negative social changes, depending on the nature of their involvement.[42]

4.3.1 Collective identity promotes individualised participation and vice versa

The inter-connected relationships between diverse groups amongst the *motu o tagata* enhance the practical application of this collective identity concept and demonstrate its radical inclusivity. The following examples pertaining to some individuals' participation in the Markan narrative illustrate this relationship, where the collective identity promotes individualised participation, while the individuals' responses represent the interests of the collective.

After healing some individuals, Jesus commands them to "go"[43] (Greek, *ὕπαγε*; transliterated as *hupage*) to a priest (the leper, 1:44), their homes (the paralytic, 2:11; haemorrhaging woman, 5:34; and Syrophoenician woman, 7:29), and specifically to tell their friends of the Lord's mercy (the Gerasene demoniac, 5:19). By implication of the collective identity concept, as discussed above, Jesus' commands to these individuals are also directed to the *motu o tagata*, the implied readers then and now, and particularly for members with similar interest and goals.

We have seen already that when Jesus cleansed a certain leper (1:40–44), Jesus told him not to "say anything to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest" (1:44). Instead, the leper went out and freely proclaimed to others his story. We can add here that this positive transformation triggered a positive response, as the stigma of being labelled and isolated from

[42] Esler, "An Outline in Social Identity Theory," 20.

[43] Of the fifteen occurrences of *hupagō* (and derivatives) in the Markan narrative, twelve are commands by Jesus. Eight are directed to individuals (*húpage*, 1:44; 2:11; 5:19; 5:34; 7:29; 8:33; 10:21; 10:52), three to his disciples (*hupagete*, 6:38; 11:2; 14:13), and once to the women disciples (*hupagete*, 16:7).

society was lifted. Such disease is said to have caused aversion and even rejection for its victims, even eliciting no mercy or compassion from others.[44] For the man with leprosy, he appreciated his freedom from a disease and re-inclusion in society by preaching the grace of God to others, despite Jesus' insistence not to.[45] As previously discussed,[46] by going and showing himself to the priest, the transformed leper became an agent of Jesus' ministry. The cleansed leper's appearance before the priest would allow the latter to bear witness to Jesus' healing ministry and verify its occurrence by commanding adherence to their religious-sanctioned traditions of giving sacrifices to the Lord (Lev 14:1–32).

The leper needed a change of renewal and begged Jesus, who transformed him. This shared interest in seeking help from Jesus and with a common goal for tangible change rendered the leper a representative member of one of the prominent sub-groups of the *motu o tagata*, those seeking healing, whose similar interests occasion their gathering with Jesus. By implication, Jesus' command to this healed leper is also intended for the people who witnessed this miracle, radically including the unsuspecting priest (whose response is left open)!

Another example where individualised participation is intrinsic to the interest of the collective, is the healing of the paralytic when Jesus commanded him: "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home" (2:11). Going home afforded the healed person the opportunity to become part of his family set up again, grounding the immediate purpose for going home. Its secondary presumed purpose of proclaiming Jesus' transformative authority anticipated his family members and friends welcoming him back as a complete able person, no longer needing help from others for mobility (cf. 2:3). This transformation would allow his

[44] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 33.

[45] Altrock, *Mark: A Call to Service*, 8, interprets this miracle firstly as the expression of Jesus' compassion for the leper, because Jesus touched him despite his condition. Secondly, by touching the leper, Jesus violated the cultic regulations about leprosy and the purity code (Lev 13:45ff).

[46] See Chapter Three, sub-Section 3.2.1.

family members, friends, and undoubtedly the people from their village and region to know of Jesus and his healing ministry.

The paralytic's participation was promoted by many groups within the *motu o tagata* gathering at Jesus' home (cf. 2:1–4). The friends of this man with paralysis brought him to Jesus seeking a miracle and for him to walk again (2:12a). Their movement towards Jesus seemingly mirrored other members of this crowd (not the scribes) with similar shared interest in seeking out Jesus for help. Subsequently, Jesus' instruction for this transformed man, who no longer has paralysis, to go home (and proclaim) anticipates similar responses from the in-groups of help-seekers amongst the *motu o tagata* as they return to their separate homes. Their amazed reaction and glorification of God (cf. 2:12b) points to this expectation. In that they witness this healing miracle and hear Jesus' command to go, the paralytic's response foreshadows a collective response as well, but not for the scribes, who remain in limbo, "with questions in their hearts" (2:8).

Jesus was even more specific when commanding the man who was possessed by the demoniac Legion: "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and what mercy he has shown you" (5:19). This command exposes the so-called "messianic secret" in Mark (cf. 1:25, 34, 44; 7:36; 8:26), by allowing even Gentiles to have access to God's mercy and to proclaim it openly. As such, the Markan narrative suggests that the man's families and friends are able realise this transformative love for all, including the Gerasenes. This powerful message would be communicated through this man's freedom and restoration as he was now "clothed and in his right mind" (5:15).

Being possessed by the demoniac Legion mostly harmed the possessed man, but also tormented the people around him because of Legion's overwhelming destructive powers (cf. 5:3–5). This highlights the indiscriminatory impact of being possessed as many Gerasenes had experienced. Even their many pigs were lost in the process, an event that has been described

as the cleansing of the whole defiled region.[47] The impact of this cleansing prompted the gathering of this crowd of Gerasenes, whose members included people who came from the city and country and the swineherds (5:14), even others who had seen this miracle (5:16), pointing to the diversity of these Gerasenes gathering with Jesus. Again, this supports the wider understanding of "crowd" in Mark, and the radically inclusive composition of the even wider *motu o tagata*, even though they were all afraid and begged Jesus to leave.[48]

This fear so overwhelmed them that the cleansing transformation became secondary. But the healed man wanted to follow except for Jesus' command—go home and proclaim. Presumably, this man did just that not only to his families and friends, but to the region of Gerasa and probably the whole of the Decapolis, as the narrative indicates.[49] Broadly, his collective function in the narrative is seen to "prefigure the mission to the Gentiles that subsequent believers will undertake," as Byrne concludes of the cleansed man's proclamation of the Goodnews to the Decapolis.[50]

Jesus also commanded the woman whom he healed of her haemorrhages: "Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (5:34).[51] This woman is described as suffering from her condition for twelve years and suffering financially (5:25–26). She was helpless and with no hope until she heard of Jesus (5:27)—no doubt from others. She realised her opportunity and responded accordingly. Despite the cultural and social taboos

[47] Kelly R. Iverson, *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: 'Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's Crumbs,'* Library of New Testament Studies, ed., Mark Goodacre (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 37.

[48] For a historical explanation of this cleansing, see Leander, *Discourses of Empire*, 201–219, who summarises the majority scholarly position relating this demoniac Legion to Rome's oppressive rule and military prowess, with specific reference to Legio X Fretensis, which was stationed in Gerasa with the "boar" as their ensign (203). This Legion episode "introduces an additional dimension: the incredible strength of the dreaded Roman army" (201). See also, Chapter Six, Section 6.2.

[49] Michael Card, *Mark: The Gospel of Passion*, BIS (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 101, proposes that the latter crowds in the Decapolis (7:33; 8:1) possibly heard stories of Jesus from this cleansed man of Gerasa.

[50] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 98 and 128, places the same emphasis for all Gentiles after Jesus heals a deaf man in the Decapolis.

[51] See Chapter Three, Section 3.6, and Sections 4.4 and 4.5 below.

associated with her condition that had marginalised her, she dared to approach Jesus amongst a large crowd with other prominent members of society, such as Jairus (cf. 5:22, 25). In the process, she overcame social, religious, and cultural barriers to reach Jesus and be healed. It speaks volumes of her faith in Jesus which resulted in her own healing and salvation (5:28,34). Jesus' response and extraordinary authority brought that faith into reality when he transformed her physically and spiritually.

Reading between the lines, we might assume that this complete transformation renewed her membership in society once again, and that her boldness and renewal would make her a valuable agent for the proclamation of the *basileia*. She undoubtedly would celebrate her recovery from a persistent disease and the opportunity to reconnect with family (perhaps a new one, as Jesus calls her "daughter") and society, by telling them her story—the story of Jesus.

This woman was a member of this large crowd which also included Jairus, the Twelve, some people (5:35), and a "weeping and wailing" group (5:38b), which illustrate the radically inclusive nature of the *motu o tagata* milling around Jesus. Accordingly, her action and involvement represents the shared interest and common goal of many members of the collective identity, seeking help from Jesus as they congregated with him. This inter-connected relationship anticipates a collective response from these members to reach out and claim healing, salvation and peace (5:34).

Mark also describes a Gentile woman of Syrophoenician origin experiencing this life-transforming power of Jesus when he healed her possessed daughter (7:24–30). Like the woman with haemorrhage and Jairus, this woman's faith in approaching Jesus leads to the healing of her daughter. Jesus crossed into this Gentile region hoping to get some much-needed rest, but the woman's pressing need overshadowed that.[52] Jesus' initial response seems

[52] See also Iverson, *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark*, 47–48.

shocking, to say the least.[53] It contains oppressive and discriminatory overtones, which have been attributed to the historic hostility between Galilee and Gentile regions of Tyre and Sidon.[54] Jesus seems to have personalised these differences when he uttered these words, by reversing the socioeconomic and cultural differences between these regions, while highlighting Jewish priority in God's salvation (cf. 7:27–28).

But this priority also implies that Gentiles, such as this Syrophoenician woman and her daughter, are also privileged to be part of God's salvation plan for all humanity. Brendan Byrne supports this progression of bringing Gentiles into the realm of God's salvation, as exhibited by this conversation between Jesus and the Syrophoenician woman.[55] She did not object to Jesus' seemingly oppressive viewpoint. Instead, she prioritised her daughter's welfare over any social, economic, and political differences, even discrimination. Her willingness to help her daughter enabled her to endure such judgmental views. More importantly, these qualities anchored her faith in Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter, and Jesus obliged by healing her from a distance: "For saying that, you may go, the demon has left your daughter" (7:29).

The stories this woman heard of Jesus (7:25) were becoming her reality, when her daughter was freed of her tormentors. Undoubtedly, this woman too, would tell others of Jesus and his miraculous grace for her and her daughter. Her faith and actions present a common thread that binds her again as a representative member to those seeking healing within the *motu o tagata* who followed and gathered with Jesus. By implication of this working

[53] He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (7:27).

[54] Jane E. Hicks, "Moral Agency at the Borders: Rereading the Story of the Syrophoenician Woman," *WW* 23 (2003): 8, relates the social-economic relationship between Tyre and Galilee. Tyre was a rich city with abundance of food and the citizens kept the best portion of their harvests and sold the left-overs to Galilee. See also Aernie, "Borderless discipleship," 191–194, who corroborates this division due to economic and geographical expansion since the Jewish wars, when the Tyrians killed and imprisoned significant numbers of Jews; Dube, "Reading for Decolonization (John 4:1–42), 368, argues that "Jesus and his disciples are travellers with high authority far above their hosts"; Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 206, observes that women seemed subservient to Jesus and his male disciples.

[55] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 125.

relationship, she signifies the potential within the *motu o tagata's* involvement and anticipates their collective obedience to Jesus' command.

Jesus' last command to go was directed to Bartimaeus after he healed him of his blindness: "Go; your faith has saved you" (10:52). As Jesus, the Twelve, and a large crowd were leaving Jericho for Jerusalem, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar by the roadside, heard and called out: "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me" (10:47). Even the blind people in Mark hear stories of Jesus and they too, long for a miracle to see again. Bartimaeus was not about to forego his opportunity. Despite being discouraged by some people, he keeps on calling out and Jesus heard him.

Jesus then initiates the conversation by asking Bartimaeus: "What do you want me to do for you?" (10:51). Jesus' probing question is answered by Bartimaeus' request: "My Teacher, let me see again." He seeks Jesus' authoritative blessing and permission to allow him to see again. Bartimaeus has faith in Jesus without seeing him, which leads to his healing as Jesus commanded: "Go, your faith has saved you."

After his sight was restored, Bartimaeus did not beg by the roadside again. He joined and became a member of this crowd and followed (*ἠκολούθει*, 10:52) Jesus on "the way" as one of his many followers.[56] Jesus, the Twelve, the crowd, the women (cf. 15:41), and Bartimaeus were all included in this *motu o tagata*, demonstrating its radical inclusivity.[57] This relationship renders Jesus' command to Bartimaeus as a command to the collective identity, to go and proclaim the Goodnews of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and to follow on the way.

[56] Malbon, "Disciples/crowds/whoever," 107, refers to Bartimaeus emerging from the crowd as a representative.

[57] Although some members of this *motu o tagata* are identified, its overall "fuzzy" definition also obscures the final destination of its members. They presumably followed the Twelve's lead by fleeing when Jesus was arrested (14:50), or like Peter followed at a distance (14:54), or like the women watched from a distance (15:40–41).

Such positive impacts and responses on the individual and collective levels support the radical inclusivity of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative as a collective identity for "all" those gathering to Jesus,[58] unless they disqualify and exclude themselves. These inter-connected relationships validate the individuals' membership and representation of the collective identity, while the collective identity promotes and prompts individualised actions and responses. There is further evidence in the Markan narrative setting to support this suggestion.

4.3.2 Mark's narrative setting supports the collective identity concept

Whenever individual identities or some character groupings become the focus of a story plot, Mark includes them within the immediate broader context of an unspecified *motu o tagata*. This can be compared to a movie scene that is first viewed from a wider angle and then the camera zooms in to focus the attention on the individuals concerned. This panoramic transition renders both the groups and the individuals involved as constituting a collective identity, the *motu o tagata*.[59] Following this line of argument, the roles and functions exhibited

[58] See Rhoads, *Reading Mark*, 184, who supports this collective response when performing the Gospel where the "individuals will respond to the story in part in relation to those around them." Also, Rodney Bomford, "Jairus, his Daughter, the Woman and the Saviour: The Communication of Symmetric Thinking in the Gospel of St Mark," *PT* 3.1 (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2010): 43, alludes to such responses as the function of the "unrepressed unconscious," which can be "revealed and expressed in a common spontaneous moment that connects us to a wider perspective."

[59] For examples, Jesus cured a paralytic at home in the presence of a crowd (2:1–12); called Levi after he taught a crowd (2:13–14); cleansed a Gerasene demoniac in the presence of swineherds, and later on, the gathering of people from the city and country (5:1–20); cured the woman with a haemorrhage who emerged from within the crowd (5:25–34) and Jairus' daughter away from the crowd (5:21–24, 35–43). In Bethsaida Jesus healed a blind man outside of the village (8:22–26) and a boy with spirit in the presence of a crowd near Caesarea Philippi (9:14, 29). On the journey to Jerusalem with the Twelve and the *ochlos* Jesus encountered a rich young man (10:17–22), before healing blind Bartimaeus at Jericho. In the Temple, Jesus observed a crowd before commending the poor widow's offering (12:41–44) and at Bethany, he was anointed with an expensive ointment (14:3–9) in the presence of the Twelve and others.

by the individuals (or groups) as they are singled out for special mention, also potentially represent the roles and functions expected of the collective.[60]

Depending on motives and social standing, sociolinguistic descriptions can establish group identities, which are attributed to societies' social structures and status.[61] It is argued that such linguistic expression, as a social phenomenon, reflect social life in a particular historical situation.[62] Thus, the unique personal characteristics embedded in a narrative inform the implied reader of such individuals' social conditions and their awareness of their abilities, limitations, and social standings.

The healing episode of the person with paralysis (2:1–13) again demonstrates this working relationship. Mark's description of this man as a "paralysed man" (2:3) represents the "many who were sick with various diseases" (1:34; cf. 1:32). Reading this from the socially structured environment of Greco-Roman Palestine, the presence of this man with paralysis constitutes an out-group of the "sick" on the edges of the dominant in-group of the healthy elite, represented by the scribes, who were just "sitting there, questioning in their hearts" about Jesus' response and accusing him of blaspheming against God (2:6–7). The opposite also applies when seen from the perspective of a marginalised suffering people. The paralytic forms an in-group seeking help from Jesus, while the scribes are out — bearing in mind Mark's tendency to have some members of the same group defying the shared interest of the group, such as one of the scribes (12:28–34). For the scribes however in this episode, their opposing motives render their temporary disqualification as members of the collective, the crowd.

[60] Howles, "The Undifferentiated Crowd," 768, expresses similar view that a "single individual [is] defined by crowd-existence."

[61] Klippenstein, "Language Appropriation and Identity Construction in New Religious Movement," 353. Other examples of sociolinguistic expressions in the narrative that allude to group identity based on people's conditions include a man with an unclean spirit (1:23), Simon's mother-in-law with a fever (1:30), a "leper" (1:40), tax collectors and sinners (2:15), man with a withered hand (3:1), and many more.

[62] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 10. See also Edwards, *Sociolinguistics*, 31.

The diversity of different groups amongst this *motu o tagata* again demonstrates the radically inclusive nature of its composition, as many people with different agendas gathered with Jesus. In the narrative order of this healing episode, many people (*polloi*) are already present when the paralytic and his friends arrive (2:2–3). This is the contextual background from which the focus on the paralytic and his friends emerges, who are then absorbed back into the crowd (2:4), as the plot unfolds — though their faith remains active (2:5). Their collective inclusion is signified by the plural adjectives "all" (Greek, *πάντων* and *πάντας*), and the plural verbs "saying" and "seen" (Greek, *λέγοντας* and *εἴδομεν* respectively) at the end of this episode (2:12). This whole *motu o tagata*, which includes the crowd, the paralysed man, and his friends, are "all" amazed, saying, "we have never seen anything like this!" (2:12b).

Even though Jesus' instruction at the end is directed to the paralytic himself, the implication of this collective identity concept deems that it is required of the crowd, too. Again, his collective function is seen to model the embodiment of the *βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ* (1:15) in word and deed, beginning at his home. Similarly, Norman Perrin suggests that Jesus' instruction must be heard and acted upon by those participating in the story and the implied readers of that story.[63]

It is through the paralytic's liberation story that "we can hear Jesus missioning us to spread the Goodnews of liberation in our own time and space."[64] The contemporary implied readers, including Samoan Islanders, are also invited to become part of the story and continue Mark's intended purpose—to proclaim and "speak out."[65] Such views fulfil the implications of the radical inclusivity of the *motu o tagata* advocated herewith, which not only include all the characters in the Markan narrative, but also contemporary readers at their various

[63] Norman Perrin, "Historical Criticism, Literary Criticism and Hermeneutics," *JR* 52.4, October (1972): 373.
[64] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom,* 99.
[65] Louise Lawrence, "Exploring the Sense-scape of the Gospel of Mark," *JSNT* 33.4 (2011): 392.

hermeneutical sites. This collective identity is further supported by the "fuzzy" description (or extended understanding) of *ochlos*, to which this discussion is now turning.

4.4 Mark's use of *ochlos* foreshadows radical inclusivity

Mark uses a cluster of related Greek terminologies to indicate the presence of people beside *ochlos*. There are references to "people" or "some people,"[66] "multitude" (Greek, *πλῆθος* (*plēthos*, 3:7, 8), "others" (*ἄλλοι*; *alloi*),[67] "many other women" (15:41), "other boats" (4:36), and "many" (*polloi*).[68] These references correspond to and extend the understanding of *ochlos* as Mark employs it, and they also support the radical inclusivity of the 'umbrella term' *motu o tagata*.

The Greek *ochlos* is defined as "a relatively large number of people gathered together – a crowd … without reference to classification," or the "gathering of people that bears some distinguishing characteristic or status."[69] *Ochlos* also refers to a "casual collection of people who have flocked together in some place."[70] It is sometimes used to describe the gathering of

[66] Of the twenty six references to "people" or "some people," most are identified with the Greek third person plural verbal constructs. Two references in Mark 1 (1:5 (2)) refer specifically to Judeans and Jerusalemites, while *ἀνθρώπων* (1:17) and *ἤρχοντο* (1:45) are general references. In Mark 2, *ἔρχονται* (2:3, 18) refer to people in Capernaum. The first reference in Mark 3 is *ἐξῆλθον* (3:21). The translation "people" in 3:28 (NRSV) is for "sons of men" literally (NA28). In Mark 5, *ἦλθον* (5:14) refers to the Gerasenes while *ἔρχονται* (5:35), *κλαίοντας*, and *ἀλαλάζοντας* (5:38) refer to people in Capernaum. In Mark 6, *ἀρρώστοις* (6:5) refers to Nazarenes; *ἀνακλῖναι* (6:39), *αὐτοις* and *πᾶσιν* (6:41) refer to Galileans; while *ἐπιγνόντες* (6:54) are people in Gennesaret. In Mark 8, *τούτους* (8:4) and *τετρακισχίλιοι* (8:9) are people in the Decapolis; *φέρουσιν* (8:22) and *ἀνθρώπους* (8:24) are people from Bethsaida; and a general reference in 8:27 (*ἄνθρωποι*). *προσέφερον* (10:13) relates to people on the way beyond the Jordan, while (*ἔστρωσαν* 11:8) are the pilgrims from Galilee, heralding Jesus into Jerusalem. *ἐλθόντες, λέγουσιν* and *πρόσωπον* (12:14) are general references while *πολλοὶ πλούσιοι* (12:41) refer to many rich people in Jerusalem putting money in the treasury.

[67] See 6:15 (2); 8:28 (2); 11:8; 12:5 (2), 9; 15:31).

[68] See 1:34 (2); 2:2, 15 (2); 3:10; 5:9, 26; 6:2, 13 (2), 23, 31, 33; 10:31, 45, 48; 11:8; 12:5, 41; 13:6 (2), 14:24, 56).

[69] Frederick William Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature,* third edition, based on Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur,* sixth edition, ed., Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, with Viktor Reichmann and on previous English editions by W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 745.

[70] "Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament," in *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, paragraph 2. Also, "*ὄχλος*," *MGD*, paragraph 10953, adds that *ochlos* can be a "confused multitude of people."

the "common people."[71] These broad definitions generally point to large crowd of unspecified composition,[72] irrespective of any distinctive identifiable characteristics or classifications (cf. 3:7–9). A more narrower definition denotes an armed gathering—army, troop, or a riot[73]—which befits the *ochlos* that arrested Jesus with "swords and clubs" (14:43).

These definitions signify a common purpose—a shared interest, whether negative, positive, or neutral—that prompts and organises such gatherings. In the Markan narrative, this common purpose informs the presence of various sectors of the Galilean and Judean population, including Gentiles within or in regions beyond. Their shared interest—Jesus—attracts them together for one reason or another in forming the various crowds. This commonality then points to "in-groups" of people whose common goal in seeking out Jesus is to affect positive changes in their lives, rendering them members of the collective identity. Alternatively, this commonality also surfaces the existence of "out-groups," whose opposition to Jesus temporarily disqualifies them. Despite this, there is a strong narrative openness to their repentance and return.

These presuppositions inform the basis for identifying the composition of the *motu o tagata* advocated in this work, which includes all people with different shared interests relating to Jesus, as a collective identity.[74] This radically includes various character groupings, such as the individuals discussed above, in-groups with shared interests, the Twelve, and the various *ochloi*, who all gather to Jesus for one reason or another. Even out-groups (who are often in-groups from the perspective of the dominant culture) are included until they disqualify themselves with different motives.

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[71] *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 1082.

[72] Robyn J. Whitaker, "A Failed Spectacle: The Role of the Crowd in Luke 23," *BI-JCA* 25 (2017): 407, refers to Luke's use of the plural *ochlous* as indicating an unspecified collection of different people.

[73] *Key Dictionary of the Greek New Testament: Based upon the Strong's Greek Dictionary, Updated for the Critical Greek Text*, paragraph 1.

[74] See Section 4.2 above.

This inclusive understanding is supported by Mark's use of other similar Greek terminology (which Malbon persuasively discusses),[75] including the undefined "they" and many third person plural constructions. Even some of Mark's commentary remarks support this suggestion, with linguistic expressions such as, "everyone" (*πάντες*, 1:37b) was searching for Jesus; "people came" (*ἤρχοντο*, 1:45) to him from every quarter; and even the "whole city" (*ὅλη ἡ πόλις*, 1:33) is said to have gathered around Jesus. Mark's employment of the third person plural verbal constructions also support this narrative openness to a wider understanding of the crowd/s.[76] These references attest to Jesus' initial healing activities in cleansing an unclean spirit (1:21–28), healing of Simon's mother-in-law (1:29–31), curing all who were sick with various diseases and casting out many demons (1:32–34), and the cleansing of a leper (1:40–45). They reveal in-groups of the "sick" and "possessed," whose shared interest and common goal—to be healed—prompted them to go to Jesus. The presence of these people is not always referenced with *ochlos*.

These references imply a broader audience of people such as those who brought (1:32 – *ἔφερον*) the "sick" and the "possessed." Not only were these people coming to Jesus, but they also brought with them many who were badly affected with sickness or possessed with demonic spirits. These gatherings of many people, the whole city, the sick, and the possessed point to and correspond with the wider definition of *ochlos* as mentioned above, in the direction of understanding all these collective and individual characters as constituting the "island of people" as used in the Samoan translation.

Eklund supports this as she examines Mark's occasional use of *polloi* and *ochlos* for the same *motu o tagata* following Jesus (2:2; 6:31, 33).[77] In the healing episode of the paralytic

[75] See Malbon, "Disciples/crowds/whoever," 126–130.

[76] These include *ἦσαν ἁλιεῖς* (1:16), *καταρτίζοντας* (1:18), *ἀφέντες* (1:20), *εἰσπορεύονται* (1:21), *ἐξεπλήσσοντο*, *αὐτους* (1:22), *ἐθαμβήθησαν*, *συζητειν* (1:27), *ἐξελθόντες ἦλθον* (1:29), *λέγουσιν* (1:30), *εὗρον, λέγουσιν* (1:37).

[77] Eklund, "From "Hosanna!" to "Crucify!"" 26.

(2:1–12), both references—*polloi* (2:2) and *ochlos* (2:4)—seem to refer to this same gathering of the same people in Capernaum. In other words, the Greek *polloi* is another designation for *ochlos* that appears in this episode. The immediate context of the episode supports this.

The presence of *polloi* occupy the entire house such that they block "in front of the doorway" (2:2). The very next sentence tells of the emergence of the paralytic and his friends (2:3), and their predicament of not being able to get him to Jesus because of the *ochlos* (2:4). The proximity of these references occurring close to each other and the context of being in a house, which cannot accommodate both *polloi* and *ochlos* separately, lead to only one conclusion—both *polloi* and *ochlos* refer to the same crowd. This same interchangeable use of *polloi* and *ochlos* is evident in the "feeding of the five thousand" episode (6:30–44), which also agrees with this wider understanding of *ochlos*.

Mark also employs other Greek terminology for the same purpose, such as *plēthos* for example.[78] In Mark 3, its first occurrence (3:7) describes a great multitude from Galilee that gather with Jesus by the sea. The second *plēthos* (3:8) identifies a great number of people from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the regions around Tyre and Sidon. The geographical orientations of the two groups are identified. When these two generally identifiable groups of people (*plēthoi*) merge into a single group, they are then described as an *ochlos* (3:9). This interpretation supports the radically inclusive composition of the *motu o tagata* to include Galileans, Judeans, and Gentile people from other regions. By way of contrast, the five derivatives of ἔθνος (*ethnos*) identify Gentiles (10:33, 42) or nations (11:17

[78] *Plēthos* is defined as "a large number, throng, populace — bundle, company, multitude." See *Key Dictionary of the Greek New Testament: Based upon the Strong's Greek Dictionary, Updated for the Critical Greek Text*, paragraph 1.

(2); 13:8), which specifically differentiate Gentile ethnicities from Galilean and Judean people — but again, all are included in the *motu o tagata*.[79]

The eight occurrences of *alloi* imply the gatherings of a small number of people who are part of the crowd and the wider *motu o tagata* but who act differently in some way.[80] It is only in 11:8 that *alloi* is associated with *ochlos* in identifying "other people" who spread branches on the road as Jesus rode on the donkey entering Jerusalem. These *alloi* were members of the *ochlos* that heralded Jesus into Jerusalem, which Eklund describes as the "pilgrims from Galilee."[81]

These diverse references (with the exception of *ethnoi*) indicate that Mark does not differentiate generally between Jewish or Gentile people, who are all included in the *motu o tagata* gathering together with Jesus. This diversity and plural ethnicity demonstrate the radical inclusivity of the composition of the *motu o tagata* as various character groupings pursue their particular shared interest in Jesus, either to seek help from him to affect positive changes in their livelihoods or maintain the status quo by opposing Jesus' ministry.

For members of the *motu o tagata* seeking help from Jesus, this radical inclusivity extends the boundary of the collective identity to include other character groupings with similar motives, who are identified explicitly by their *roles* (many tax collectors, many physicians), *origin* (from Galilee, Judea, Idumea), *city* (Tyre and Sidon, Gerasa, Decapolis), or *ethnicity* (Syrophoenician woman). Richard Horsley lends support to this assessment as he points to the diverse ethnic composition of many of these Galilean villages, from which the majority of the crowds in Mark's story originate.

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[79] Kuecker, "Ethnicity and Social Identity," 63, citing John H. Elliott, "Jesus the Israelite was Neither a "Jew" nor a "Christian": On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature," *JSHJ* 5.2 (2007): 124.

[80] *Alloi* refers to "other people" and what they were saying about Jesus (6:15 (2)) or who he was (8:28 (2)). Its three occurrences in Mark 12 relate to the parable of the wicked tenants.

[81] Eklund, "From "Hosanna!" to "Crucify!"" 21.

> Mark gives no indication that the Galilee side of the Sea was populated by "Jews," a vague, essentialising translation of the Greek term *Ioudaioi* that obscures historical regional distinctions—… Galileans as opposed to Judeans.… Given the contingencies of its previous history, the villages of Galilee, while predominately Israelite, must have been somewhat ethnically mixed populations anyhow.[82]

This historical perception supports the mostly anonymous nature of these crowds gathering to Jesus, though Mark possibly had first-hand knowledge of the historical composition of Galilean townships, as evident in the two uses of *plēthoi* forming a single *ochlos*, discussed above.

The above analysis demonstrates that Mark uses similar Greek terminology interchangeably to indicate these spontaneous gatherings. Such diverse references correspond to, and overlap with, the meaning of *ochlos*. This agreement also demonstrates that the presence of these other people and the various *ochloi* in the Markan narrative constitute a wider collective identity, including the crowds, which consist of named and unspecified gatherings of the general population as they encounter Jesus. This widest collective identity I read as a Samoan, as the *motu o tagata* (the "island of people"), within which diverse groups, crowds, and individuals are located.

4.5 The composition of the *motu o tagata*

The thirty-eight occurrences of *ochlos* in the Markan narrative constitute the appearances of nineteen crowds in distinct locations in the story (though they may overlap in some ways). Thirteen of these occur in Galilee and the surrounding regions, and six in Jerusalem of which the first three occasions are commentary remarks that show some

[82] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 46–47 (Italics original). Also, Hughson T. Ong, "Ancient Palestine Is Multilingual and Diglossic: Introducing Multilingualism Theories to New Testament Studies," *CBR* 13.3 (2015): 330–331, suggests ancient Palestine in the time of Jesus "was multilingual," and Jesus himself spoke at least Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek in order to communicate; Marianne Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2000), 3–12, alludes to this with the re-mapping and re-landscaping of Galilee with "Babylonian tourist traffic across the Lake and into Galilee." Galilee had also been "multiplied and perversely crossed by imperial incursions before Jesus," as well as "economic and cultural contacts with lands to the east, west, south, and north of Palestine."

continuity between the mainly positive crowds of the Galilee and the crowds in Jerusalem/Judea – at the narrative level, the crowds who cried to "crucify him." In 11:18, Mark notes that the authorities are afraid of Jesus because his teaching held the crowd spellbound. This same fear of the people is again narrated in 11:32 and 12:12.

The first naming of an actual *ochlos* in Jerusalem (after these three instances) is in the temple, where they were taught by Jesus (12:37). Jesus then observes presumably part of the same crowd putting their monetary offerings in the treasury, including the poor widow and many rich people (12:41–42). Other members could include pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the festivals, local Jerusalemites, Jesus and the Twelve (cf. 13:1), and possibly including some Jewish leaders, as implied by the appearances of some Pharisees and some Herodians (12:13), some Sadducees (12:18), and some scribes (cf. 12:28). Two other crowds appear in Jerusalem as agents for the Jerusalem authority. One armed with swords and clubs arrests Jesus (14:43) and the other one of Jerusalemites shouts for his crucifixion (15:8, 11, 15). These diverse memberships demonstrate the great diversity within the *motu o tagata*.

The first occasion of a crowd in the Markan narrative is in 2:4, as they are taught by Jesus (2:2b) who heals a paralytic amongst them (2:1–12). This largely unspecified crowd is an in-group of people sharing a same interest with the paralytic and his friends as they gathered to hear Jesus' teachings and experience the healing transformations from this miracle worker. There is also an out-group of "some of the scribes" (2:6) in attendance, but their different motive of accusing Jesus of blaspheming against God (cf. 2:7) nullifies their membership, until their acceptance of Jesus' invitation. Both groups support the radically inclusive composition of the *motu o tagata*.

A second crowd appears in 2:13 as they gathered around Jesus beside the Sea of Galilee and he teaches them, too (2:13). Nothing much is mentioned of this crowd, but its presence places Jesus by the sea where he comes across Levi, the tax collector, who then hosts Jesus and

the Twelve for dinner at his place (2:15a). They are accompanied by many more tax collectors and sinners (2:15b), who are just a few amongst many who followed Jesus (2:15c). This composite group of various standings were bonding and sharing with Jesus and the Twelve, as they congregated together in this sub-group of "sinners" (from the perspective of the authorities). Collectively, it also included an out-group of the "scribes of the Pharisees" (2:16a), but their ulterior motive (cf. 2:16b) voids their membership as faithful followers, for the same reasons explained above.

The two uses of *plēthoi*, one of Galileans and the other one of many more people from Judea, Idumea, and beyond the Jordan form the third crowd that gathered with Jesus and the Twelve by the sea (3:7–9). Amongst its implied members are the sick and possessed, whom Jesus healed (cf. 3:10). Their diverse orientations, ethnicities, and conditions support the radical inclusivity of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative to include Galileans, Judeans, and Gentiles. Later on that day, the same crowd prevented Jesus and the Twelve from eating at his home (3:20).

Jesus again taught a fourth crowd beside the sea mainly in parables (4:1–2). Their sheer number forced Jesus to teach from a boat (4:1). Membership of this crowd is mostly unknown, but it includes Jesus, the Twelve, and others around him (*οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν*, 4:10). However, Jesus' explanation of the parable suggests potential implied members of other groups, but their different responses lead to their inclusion and exclusion (cf. 4:14–20). This parabolic teaching supports the radically inclusive composition of the *motu o tagata* and the consequences of its members' decisions.

A fifth *ochlos* gathered at Capernaum greeting Jesus' return from Gerasa (5:1, 21). As previously discussed,[83] this mostly anonymous *motu o tagata* included Jairus, members of

[83] See Chapter Three, Section 3.6, and sub-Section 4.2.1 above.

Jairus' household, a "mourning" group, the woman with a haemorrhage, the Twelve, Jesus, and the *ochlos*. Again this diverse membership supports the radically inclusive nature of the *motu o tagata*, which is further enhanced by Jairus' presence as a member of the synagogue leadership (5:22). His willingness to seek Jesus' help for his dying daughter implies an opening for others with similar interest and in similar leadership and authoritative positions, to be included as representative members of the collective identity, as also illustrated by one of the scribes (12:28) and Joseph of Arimathea (15:43).

The sixth appearance of *ochlos* occurs in the miracle of feeding five thousand people (6:30–44).[84] This miracle illustrates Mark's interchangeable use of *polloi* (6:31, 33) and other Greek third person plural verbal constructions to describe this *ochlos* (6:34).[85] Jesus and the Twelve travelled by boat to a deserted place to be by themselves. But *polloi* (6:33) saw them leaving and hurried there before their arrival. This seems possible as Michael Card suggests that one may be able to see the entire sweep of the Lake when standing on the shore.[86] As they came ashore, a crowd of "lost" people had already gathered (6:34), who then became the recipients of Jesus' compassion as he taught (6:34b) and fed them (6:42). These various references point to an unspecified *ochlos* of five thousand men, together with Jesus and the Twelve, that gathered for food and a 'symposium' in the wilderness in Galilee (6:39, the only use of this word in the NT).

[84] Josephus, who was a governor in Galilee, estimated its population as fifteen thousand, which would make it the most densely populated province in the Middle East. See Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 88. This could corroborate Mark's account of the two healing miracles of five thousand people in Galilee (6:44) and four thousand at the Decapolis (8:9). However, in Capernaum alone, various population estimates have been proposed. Eric M. Meyers and James F. Strange, *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 58, estimate it to be between 12,000 to 15,000; Jonathan L. Reed and John Dominic Crossan, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 83, 88, downgrade this to about only 1,000 people.

[85] For examples, *ἦσαν, διδάσκειν αὐτους* (6:34), *ἀπόλυσον αὐτους, ἀγοράσωσιν ἑαυτοις, φάγωσιν* (6:36), *αὐτοις* (2) (6:37), *ἀνακλῖναι πάντας* (6:39), *ἀνέπεσαν* (6:40), *αὐτου, πᾶσιν* (6:41), *ἔφαγον πάντες καὶ ἐχορτάσθησαν* (6:42), *ἦσαν* (6:44).

[86] Card, *Mark: The Gospel of Passion*, 34.

At the beginning on Mark 7, an out-group of Pharisees and some of the scribes from Jerusalem gather around Jesus (7:1). They take exception to some of the Twelve, whom these law experts accuse of violating the elders' traditions by eating without washing their hands (7:1–4).[87] Adhering to the purity codes seems more important to them than satisfying a basic human need to eat, and they confronted Jesus about it. They want to be seen as adherents of the purity code that would place them above the ordinary people. And Jesus was right; they were being hypocritical by keeping their traditions and rejecting the commandment of God (7:9).

This interaction prompts the occasion of the first *λαος* (transliterated as *laos*) in the narrative, as Jesus rebuked these hypocrites for their twisted hearts and misplaced priorities (7:6–13). To emphasise his point, Jesus called a crowd (7:14a) to publicly denounce these law experts' false interpretation by teaching them all the physiological aspects of eating and its aftermath (7:14b–16). This is the seventh appearance of *ochlos*, although briefly, as witnesses of Jesus as he reprimanded these hypocrites. Its composition is mainly unknown but includes Jesus, the Twelve, and the Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem, whose opposition disqualifies them.

Jesus then left Galilee and travelled to the Gentile regions of Tyre (7:24), Sidon (7:31), and then the long way around to the Decapolis (7:31), where the eighth *ochlos* appears in the narrative (7:33) and the first in a Gentile region. Its membership is also mostly anonymous but includes Jesus, the Twelve, and a "deaf man" (7:32). Its brief appearance marks an important

[87] This was a pharisaic perception and not everyone conformed to this practice. See Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 167, who clarifies that "maintenance of the purity code was a concern for priests with responsibility for serving in the Temple. Ordinary Judeans and other Israelites were not concerned about their own purity, except temporarily when they headed into the Temple for one of the pilgrimage festivals like Passover." Also, Mattila, "Revisiting Jesus' Capernaum," 104, agrees that even the Sadducees did not strictly follow this tradition as it was not mandated by Torah; Mordechai Aviam, "People, Land, Economy, and Belief in First-Century Galilee and its Origins," in *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, eds., David A. Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins, SBL 11 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 29, concurs that the Galileans resent the Judeans and their religious regulations, and especially the sending of their tithes to the Temple.

paradigm shift, which temporarily excludes similar groups amongst the *motu o tagata* from witnessing the healing miracle. Jesus cured this deaf man "away from the crowd" (7:33). This shift is elaborated on below.[88]

Jesus encounters a ninth *ochlos* without anything to eat (8:1). As with the previous feeding miracle in Galilee, Jesus also showed compassion for this *ochlos* because they had been with him for three days without anything to eat (8:2). Again, mainly third person plural verbal constructs are used to explain this *ochlos* and its membership is unknown, apart from their Gentile origins.[89] Its occurrence in a foreign land illustrates the inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry, but also demonstrates the radical inclusivity of the composition of the *motu o tagata* to include Gentiles.

After a brief period in Galilee (8:11–26), Jesus once again ventures into foreign territory to the villages of Caesarea Philippi (8:27). This results in Peter's false confession (8:29) because he related Jesus' messiahship to "human things" (8:33). Jesus then called both the *ochlos* and the Twelve, teaching them about the true meaning of being his followers. "Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (8:34). It was a life of service that Jesus expected of his followers. This *ochlos* is the tenth in the narrative order. Even though this episode takes place near Caesarea Philippi, the reference *ochlos* points to a general unspecified audience beside Jesus and the Twelve.

Jesus then goes up a high mountain with his innermost circle of disciples—Peter, James, and John, where Jesus was transfigured before them (9:2–8). Upon returning, they see a great *ochlos* around the rest of the Twelve, with some arguing with some scribes (9:14). This

[88] See Section 4.6 below for further discussion on this paradigm shift, where some character groupings within the *motu o tagata* on the narrative level are excluded from witnessing Jesus performing certain miracles, but they can still see and feel the impacts in people's lives due to Jesus' power to transform.

[89] For example, *προσμένουσιν*, *ἔχουσιν* (8:2); *αὐτους*, *ἐκλυθήσονται*, *αὐτων* (2) (8:3); *τούτους* (8:4); *ἔφαγον*, *ἐχορτάσθησαν*, (8:8); and *αὐτους* (8:9).

is the appearance of the eleventh *ochlos*. Seeing Jesus, this crowd is described to be in awe as they run to greet him (9:15). Amongst its members is an unnamed father, whose nameless son is possessed by an unclean spirit, preventing him from speaking and hearing (9:17). The father relays to Jesus how the Twelve had failed to help him (9:18b), prompting Jesus' blunt accusation of a "faithless generation" (9:19). He then casts out the unclean spirit, thus restoring the boy's ability to speak and hear (9:20–27). Membership of this crowd remains unidentified but includes the unnamed father and his anonymous son, Jesus, the Twelve, including the scribes initially until they disqualify themselves for similar reasons previously discussed.

As Jesus and the Twelve leave Capernaum heading for Judea and beyond the Jordan region, with the ultimate destination—Jerusalem (cf. 10:1), they came across another *ochlos*—the twelfth in the narrative order. Jesus teaches them as is his usual practice (10:1). Amongst them are the Pharisees, who, yet again, try to test him with their probing questions, "It is lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" (10:2). As is Jesus' preferred method of dealing with these tests, he answers with a question of his own regarding Moses' certificate of dismissal, the production of which Jesus attributes to "their hardness of heart" (10:3–5). Jesus further reinforces his point by reminding the Pharisees of God's original purpose from creation. When a man and woman are joined together in a union of marriage, they became one and no one should separate them. (10:6–9). In essence, Jesus intensifies his counterattack on the Pharisees for adhering to their traditions while neglecting God's commandments, a position that disqualifies them from being members of the faithful followers.

The story then reaches, and departs from, Jericho, a village along the way to Jerusalem, where the thirteenth crowd gathered, before reaching Jerusalem (10:46). This crowd of pilgrims from Galilee includes some women (cf. 15:40–41), together with Jesus and the Twelve. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus was not originally part of this *ochlos* as he was sitting by the roadside. But his conversation with Jesus leads to the restoration of his sight (10:46–52). This

prompts Louise Lawrence to declare that for Mark's story, "seeing is not believing" by suggesting that the "sensory impairment of blindness does not necessarily correlate with lack of theological insight in Mark's world, for the characters can still hear and speak."[90] Hearing Jesus and the courage to speak with Jesus enabled Bartimaeus' membership of this crowd, alongside many others, including the Twelve, the women, and Jesus himself.

As Bartimaeus regains his sight, the crowd is once again privileged to witness Jesus' extraordinary power, which they have been temporarily excluded from since the healing of Jairus' little daughter.

4.6 The temporary exclusion of some amongst the *motu o tagata*

This exclusion reflects a temporary shift in Jesus' relationship with some members of the *motu o tagata*, as their reaction or (in)action defeats or challenges Jesus' intention of helping those in need. The exclusion however, does not remove them from witnessing the positive impacts on those affected, and they too, with other members are overwhelmed with amazement (cf. 5:42; 7:37). This shift concerns only those healing miracles that relate to critical human faculties of living, seeing, speaking, and hearing. These are said to "characterise the identities of both the faithful and unfaithful," as they respond to Jesus' life of service.[91] In the following discussion, Jesus heals these human incapacities without the explicit presence of the *ochlos*, which places a reality check on their participation in Jesus' healing ministry.

The *ochlos*' temporary exclusion starts when Jesus heals Jairus' daughter. He "put them all outside" (5:40a) because of their inability to truly hear him (5:39). Subsequently, they do not witness Jesus' command to this little girl to get up as he exercises his power over death

[90] Lawrence, "Exploring the Sense-scape of the Gospel of Mark," 309, 391.

[91] Lawrence, "Exploring the Sense-scape of the Gospel of Mark," 391, highlights the importance of these faculties in responding to the Word of God—*logos* (cf. 4:14).

(5:41). They only witness its aftermath when they see the little girl walking about, and they are overcome with amazement (5:42).

The curing of a deaf man in the Decapolis (7:31–37) further supports this shift. Not only is this man deaf, but he has an impediment in his speech. These conditions place this person at a significant disadvantage because he cannot talk and receive verbal instructions, which is said to have rendered him "lonely and isolated."[92] The importance of the faculty of "hearing" prompts Robert Gundry to assert emphatically that "the whole man is concentrated in his ears," and healing such a defect is "so stupendous that claimed instances are extremely rare in antiquity."[93] Mark tells of such rarity when Jesus heals this deaf man "away from the crowd" (7:33), and restores his speech (7:31–35).

This transformation has removed the stigma of being unable to hear, which is said to have characterised those affected as having "no social agency at all."[94] There are also broader cultural implications for those with deaf impairment. Deafness and deaf people are considered to be "incapable of bearing legal responsibility" in ancient times and are sometimes "politically marginalised."[95] These social restraints physically and mentally isolate those who suffer from deafness and muteness.

On the narrative level, Jesus symbolically takes exception to such discriminatory barriers by groaning (*ἐστέναξεν*) and acts physically to heal this person (cf. 7:33–34). By loosening and opening this deaf man's tongue, it has been suggested that Jesus also opens ours to give us the "capacity to hear his life-giving Word."[96] Even though this crowd does not see

[92] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom,* 128.

[93] Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross*, 384.

[94] Lawrence, "Exploring the Sense-scape of the Gospel of Mark," 391.

[95] Amos Yong, *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007), 28, cited by Lawrence, "Exploring the Sense-scape of the Gospel of Mark," 391.

[96] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom,* 128.

the actual healing itself, its aftermath effect leads to a response of "astounded beyond measure" (7:37), and they zealously proclaim this miracle to others (7:36).

Jesus also cures a blind man in Bethsaida by leading him "out of the village" (8:23) to cure his blindness and restore his ability to see (8:22–26). In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus casts out a spirit that had prevented an unnamed son from speaking and hearing (9:14–27). The sequence of events in this healing is unclear, whether Jesus heals this son before or after the crowd reaches him. The unnamed father is included in the initial part of the crowd that greets Jesus (9:15), to which the context of verse 25 points. The rest of the crowd reach Jesus only after he casts out the unclean spirit. But they all witness the aftermath of Jesus' transforming power in enabling this son to stand up, and restoring his faculties of speaking and hearing. It is only during the restoration of Bartimaeus' blindness (the last healing in the Gospel) that the crowds' involvement in Jesus' transformative authority is re-established. They are once again privileged to witness the healing power of Jesus.

It is speculative to apply our theological insights into Jesus' reasons for excluding the crowds in these healings. But common factors exist in these miracles that can help us to discern this shift. All five healings, which corroborate this shift relate to the human faculties of:

- living (Jairus' daughter at Capernaum)
- hearing and speaking (a deaf man at the Decapolis)
- seeing (blind man at Bethsaida)
- hearing and speaking (boy with an unclean spirit in Caesarea Philippi)
- seeing (Bartimaeus at Jericho)

A repeated pattern emerges.[97] It emulates the healing of the blind man, when Jesus has to perform it twice. This pattern suggests that living a holistic life of transformed discipleship

[97] Another pattern that is evident in these healing emphasises the inclusiveness of Jesus' life of service. They take place alternatively between Galilean/Judean regions and those of the Gentiles.

requires full attention to these human faculties of hearing, speaking, and seeing. These sensory receptions potentially lead to actions that Jesus requires of his followers—to repent and believe. To untangle the crowd's unbelief (cf. 5:40), Mark suggests that Jesus needs to focus on these essential human faculties to allow the sufferers (and the crowds) to hear, see, and speak of Jesus. When these senses are fully restored and operative, they ought to transform a person to believe in Jesus, even without witnessing any miracle.

The physical aspects evident in these healings cannot be ignored either. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from death by taking her hand and commanding her to get up (5:41). At the Decapolis, Jesus heals a deaf man by taking him away from the crowd (7:33) as he physically performs the miracle. He puts his fingers into his ears, spits and touches his tongue, and looks up to heaven (7:33), effecting the transformation and allowing him to hear and speak. At Bethsaida, Jesus takes the blind man by the hand and leads him out of the village. He then puts saliva on his eyes and lays his hands on him (8:23). As the blind man's vision is blurred in this first attempt (8:24), Jesus then again lays his hands on the man's eyes and looks intently into them, thereby fully restoring his sight (8:25) — symbolising how hard it is for people to see who Jesus really is (cf. Bartimaeus in 10:46–52). At Caesarea Philippi, he casts out the unclean spirit that had prevented an unnamed boy from hearing and speaking, by taking his hand and lifting him up so he could stand (9:27). Finally, in the presence of the crowd once again, Jesus allows Bartimaeus to regain his sight without even lifting a finger (10:49–52).

Apparently Jesus has the power to just order these miracles to eventuate, such as in the healing of Bartimaeus. But Jesus acts, albeit in private in these instances, by physically affecting these miracles. Jesus demonstrates that by becoming physically and emotionally involved, he sets an example for his followers to act and help the sick, the possessed, the poor, and the marginalised. Faith is not passive. Faith must be active and participative as expressed by Jairus, the haemorrhaging woman, and the Syrophoenician woman. This acquired faith can

transform by imitating what has been heard and seen, and proclaiming this Goodnews to others. It is putting these crucial human faculties into practical use.

4.7 Summary

This part of the narrative analysis demonstrates that Mark's depiction of the *motu o tagata* and its various constituents represent a collective identity for all who gather with Jesus for one reason or another, until they exclude themselves. This suggestion is supported by Mark's use of similar Greek terminology, such as *polloi*, *alloi*, *plēthoi*, *pas*, "they" undefined, and the third person plural verbal constructs, which correspond to and produce a wider understanding of *ochlos*. They linguistically point to the general and inclusive composition of these mostly unspecified gatherings. They also demonstrate the radical inclusivity of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative to include the crowd/s, the Twelve, individuals, the women, many people, the marginalised, those in authoritative positions, and Jesus himself, whose invitation secures the re-inclusion of those who may have excluded themselves due to their negative responses to Jesus.

The people's various afflictions described by Mark—physical sickness and demonic possessions—inform the readers (real or implied) of various marginalised in-groups of people whose courage allow them to take the initiative to help themselves by actively seeking out Jesus. Some, such as Jairus (whose participation defies his association with dominant leaders and structures), the woman with a haemorrhage, and the Syrophoenician woman, boldly take steps to engage Jesus as they seek help for themselves or their loved ones. They have heard compelling stories of Jesus that encourage them to approach him despite the social and cultural constraints erected against them. Their participation and contributions to the story resonate with Mark's own communities and their described traumatic reality of social, cultural,

economic, religious, and political injustices under Roman domination, which will be explored in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Understanding the *motu o tagata* as a collective identity, demonstrates the core objective of these mass movements as most of its members seek tangible changes to improve their tragic circumstances. Jesus provides and transforms them physically and spiritually. Jesus also receives them as faithful members of God's *motu o tagata*, the *basileia,* which extends far beyond any biological kin(g)ship. Furthermore, these social outcasts accept Jesus by believing in him as Jesus Christ, the Beloved Son of God. They then become insiders in the reign of God, unlike many of the dominant Jewish and Roman elites, who turn out to be the outsiders when they oppose and reject Jesus by foolishly adhering to their traditions, positions, and power.

These varied responses then inform our sense of who finds themselves included or deemed excluded in this collective identity, the faithful *motu o tagata*, depending on their motives and purpose for gathering with Jesus. This is a stepping stone to exploring the narrative logic of the *motu o tagata*, which is the objective of the next chapter.

THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF THE *MOTU O TAGATA* SUPPORTS RADICAL INCLUSIVITY

5.1 Introduction

As suggested in the previous chapter, the use of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative constitutes a collective identity for all the people gathering with Jesus. This suggestion precipitates the need for an analysis of the narrative logic for the inclusion of the "island of people" and its close correlate, "the crowd/s", describing its functions and roles. Mark's use of specific narrative techniques, such as repetition,[1] drives home his emphasis, which is not explicitly spelt out in the narrative, as the following analysis demonstrates. These techniques also support the inclusive understanding of the *motu o tagata*, as its various members seek to achieve their own particular goals in their interactions with Jesus. I will use "crowd/s" where Mark uses *ochlos/ochloi; motu o tagata* where Mark is referring inclusively to larger groups or to all people; and "faithful *motu o tagata*" or "faithful followers" to refer to those who strive to follow Jesus faithfully even though they may fail.

5.2 The crowd/s as narrative bridging mechanisms

Mark deliberately inserts the presence of specific *ochloi* at crucial stages of the story as "narrative bridging mechanisms" (cf. 3:20; 8:1; 10:1; 15:13).[2] These insertions (*ochlos*

[1] Dewey, "Mark as Interwoven Tapestry," 221–36. Mark employs repetitions, intercalation, echoes, and foreshadowing to correlate the episodes in the Gospel.

[2] Rhoads, Dewey and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 131, allude to this bridging purpose as they "provide important transitions or signal developments in the plot: the demoniac is freed from a demon just after Jesus has bound Satan in the desert; the Syrophoenician woman is the bridge to a Gentile mission; Bartimaeus' cry to Jesus as son of David sets up the entrance to Jerusalem."

connected with the sequential adverb *palin*) allow for narrative unity and smooth progression.[3] This repetitive combination accentuates this purpose and propels the story forwards to its climactic ending.

These bridging mechanisms allow for a smooth transition at some awkward phases of the story by weaving together unrelated plots, connecting different locations, and allowing directional change to support the narrative's united fabric. These transitional points also facilitate the evolution of some paradigm shifts—theological and spiritual—which Jesus sometimes explicitly expresses or are implied in his teachings and actions. They also mark major directional movements from one place or region to another, especially the major shift of orientation from Galilee to Judea and ultimately Jerusalem, where the story comes to its predicted (8:31–33; 9:31–32; 10:32–34) but still unexpected climax (10:32; 14:18–19. We cannot understand all aspects of Mark's intentions for involving the *motu o tagata* in his story the way he does, but probable causes can be explored, as the following discussion demonstrates.

The first of these bridging mechanisms comes after Jesus called the Twelve on the mountain (3:13–19a), followed by an immediate remark describing Jesus going home (3:19b–20). This would provide an opportunity for some food replenishment and a much-needed rest after a hectic day of activities. Jesus' "humanness" is said to contribute to his physical and mental status after a long day's work,[4] which needs must be satisfied to regain energy and revitalise intellectual processes.

[3] The adverb *palin* is used 28 times in the Greek version of Mark's Gospel (NA28) – four times in relation to the presence of crowd (3:20; 8:1; 10:1 and 15:13); and fifteen times to describe Jesus' movements and responses to the crowd (2:1, 13; 3:1; 4:1; 5:21; 7:14, 31; 8:13, 25; 10:1, 24; 11:3, 27; 14:39, 40). It is used twice in relation to the disciples (10:10, 32) and 6 times for individuals—the high priest (14:61); a servant girl (14:69); Peter (14:70); the bystander (14:70) and twice for Pilate (15:4, 12). It is also used in the parable of the "Wicked Tenant" (12:4). Its English rendering "again" is used 31 times in the NRSV translation.

[4] Radosevic, "Follow Me: Reflection on Internalising, Embodying and Performing the Gospel of Mark," 421.

This particular day—the sabbath (3:2)—started with Jesus entering the synagogue where he heals a man with a withered hand (3:1–6). As usual, the Pharisees are described watching him (3:2; cf. 2:6, 16, 24). Knowing their true intentions, Jesus goes on the offensive by challenging them as to whether it is lawful to heal and do good deeds on the sabbath (3:4) and then proceeds to heal the man (3:5). This prompts the Pharisees to conspire with the Herodians to destroy Jesus (3:6; cf. 12:13). Such power groups (lay religious leaders, and the Roman-endorsed rulers) were seldom in agreement but are now described in the Markan narrative as colluding with deadly intent. They realise that Jesus posed a significant threat to their status and positions,[5] and that they must act "either to destroy him or risk losing their cherished power."[6]

After this encounter, Jesus then heads to the sea, accompanied by his four fishermen disciples (3:7). As previously discussed, this prompts the gathering of a crowd (3:9), which combines two different *plēthoi* of great multitudes from both Galilee and regions beyond (3:7–8). Their significant number forces Jesus to set aside a boat as an escape route, or perhaps to teach from, for fear of them pressing upon him (3:9, but it is not used until 4:1). The crowd gathers because Jesus has performed many healings and cast out more demonic spirits (3:10), but rather than leave by boat, Jesus calls his disciples up the mountain where he selects the Twelve (3:13–19a). These activities and movements throughout the day understandably would have drained Jesus' strength and mental capacity. He needed to rest and eat, and going home would presumably provide for that opportunity.

Unfortunately, this was not to happen because as the second clause of the same statement explains: "and the crowd came together again" (3:20a). The presence of this *ochlos* (defined by *palin*) at Jesus' home is attributed as the cause that prevented him (and the Twelve)

[5] John S. Hanson, *The Endangered Promises: Conflicts in Mark,* SBLDS 171 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2001), 180.
[6] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 237.

from eating (3:20b) and possibly resting.[7] Such a rhetorical combination forms a narrative bridging mechanism that propels the story forward by relinquishing these human needs and bridging between the crowd by the sea to the crowd around the house. This provides the setting for Jesus' first parable in Mark and the following teaching of spiritual importance (cf. 3:29, 34–35).

The gathering of this *ochlos* also hints at these people's desperate need to see Jesus such that they even invade his sanctuary—home. Jesus' safety was no longer guaranteed at home as the security it provided failed to shield him from the pressing needs of the *motu o tagata*. They were willing to seek help from Jesus even if it meant invading his privacy and crossing that boundary from the public arena to a private domain. This progression then connects the story to the concern of Jesus' biological family for his well-being. Some people (perhaps even his own family: "for *they* were saying . . .", 3:21) accused him of being a "madman" ("beside himself", cf. 3:21), which amplifies that concern even more. The concerns of Jesus' family and some people's accusations are compounded when the scribes from Jerusalem accuse Jesus of possessing Beelzebul—ruler of the demons (3:22–30).[8]

The involvement of the scribes from Jerusalem informs the implied audience that Jesus is perceived as crossing the line from being a miracle worker and an agitator for some authoritative figures in Galilee (cf. 3:6), to posing a serious political threat for the Jerusalem authority.[9] His fame had reached Jerusalem's political and religious realms, and its "lords" did not like what they were hearing. Interpreting from their perspective, Jesus' actions challenge

[7] The presence of the adverb *palin* possibly indicates the presence of the same crowd from 3:9 who are now present at Jesus' home, who surrounded Jesus earlier in the day by the sea. Its primary use in this analysis is as a narrative bridging mechanism, albeit one that leaves an empty boat waiting by the shore until Jesus returns (4:1).

[8] Rochester, *Good News at Gerasa*, 126, notes that "madness" is an "abnormal reprehensive behaviour" of being "possessed." Hence, the scribes accused Jesus of being "possessed" by Beelzebul (3:22) because he was "out of his mind" (3:21). See also Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 229–232, who contrasts this accusation with Jesus being possessed by God during his baptism.

[9] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 235.

and oppose God's words spoken through them,[10] so he must be stopped. The inclusion of the representatives of the Jewish leadership radically extends the membership of the *motu o tagata* gathering with Jesus. They too are part of the "island of people" struggling to understand what this Son of Humanity is doing.

So the presence of this *ochlos* (together with the adjective *palin*), not only prevents Jesus and the Twelve from eating and resting when they head home, but its strategic placement connects and compresses the narrative, causing a pressure point that leads to the subsequent episodes as discussed above. That is, the narrative purpose of this particular crowd connects these various unrelated plots by compressing the logical sequence of events. If Jesus and the Twelve were allowed to enjoy the pleasure of home—to eat and possibly rest—it would leave the subsequent events disconnected and stranded at the narrative level.

But with the inclusion of this *ochlos,* the narrative flows and connects uninterruptedly to the end of this story plot, where Jesus counter-charges the scribes of being possessed by the "unclean spirits" (3:30)[11] — in that they cannot discern the difference between Holy and unclean spirit — with potential consequences of eternal condemnation (cf. 3:29). The *ochlos*, the Twelve, Jesus' biological family, even including some scribes from Jerusalem, and the readers then become the beneficiaries of Jesus' heightened theological teaching about his true kindred, that includes those who do the will of God (3:33–35). In the midst of this chaotic gathering of diverse people groups, Jesus describes his true followers in the most simple terms. This potentially diverse membership of the new family of God is mirrored in the radically inclusive composition of the *motu o tagata* surrounding Jesus as he utters these words.

[10] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 165, conveys these religious leaders' self-perspective that they spoke the word of God and because Jesus opposed them, Jesus was opposing God's word.

[11] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 232, argues that the scribes who accused Jesus as having Beelzebul, were themselves possessed by "unclean spirits" as they blasphemed against the Holy Spirit (3:29).

Another example of the presence of *ochlos* as a narrative bridging mechanism connects the end of Mark 7 and the beginning of Mark 8. Jesus' fame had preceded him as he travelled from Tyre and Sidon, passed by the Sea of Galilee, and arrived at the Decapolis (7:31). This is a very unusual way to travel to the Decapolis as it involves going in the opposite direction at first. Some commentators use this as evidence that Mark was writing in Rome and knew nothing about the geography of Galilee! But I think it is quite deliberately describing a huge arc through Gentile territory (following the Syrophoenician claiming the 'crumbs' for Gentiles) down into Gentile land where Jesus will feed then bread/manna (as he did on the other side of the sea). On that side, twelve baskets for all Jews were left over; on this side, seven baskets for all people/Gentile/creation are left over. God's mission is for *all* people, the whole *motu o tagata*!

The spread of Jesus' fame has been attributed to the missional work of the Gerasene man who was possessed by the demoniac Legion, whom Jesus commanded to go and proclaim to his friends (5:19).[12] Jesus was now personally present amongst them, and they brought a deaf man to him, begging him for healing (cf. 7:32). Jesus healed him away from the crowd as this man's condition—both deaf and mute—needed Jesus' full attention.[13]

Jesus' healing of these human impairments has been described as the "summoning [of] the divine power" as he looked up to heaven and groaned and then uttered "an authoritative word of command."[14] Its effect astounded the crowd, who were overwhelmed, saying: "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak" (7:32–37). Jesus' healing power positively transformed these Gentiles when Jesus reclaimed this deaf and mute

[12] Rochester, *Good News at Gerasa,* 206. Also, Card, *Mark: The Gospel of Passion*, 101.
[13] See Chapter Four, Section 4.5.
[14] Byrne, *A costly freedom*, 127.

"person from the grip of the demonic."[15] The Gerasene's transformation has been suggested as "foreshadow[ing] all those Gentiles who will gain access to the riches" of God's Goodnews realised through Jesus.[16] The inclusion of Gentiles, even down to today's Samoan Islanders, dramatically enhances the radical inclusivity of the *motu o tagata*. On the narrative level, the restoration of the deaf man's hearing and speech marks the end of Mark 7. So how will the narrative progress from this episode on foreign land?

Mark 8 starts with a narration: "In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat" (8:1). This introductory remark forms a narrative bridging mechanism between the healing of the deaf man at the end of Mark 7 to the second of the feeding miracles at the beginning of Mark 8.[17] The sequential adverb "again" does not imply just the presence of the same *ochlos* that previously gathered around Jesus at the end of Mark 7. Its occurrence, together with the time expansion of "in those days," may signal the inclusion of other *ochloi* who previously met Jesus in this region of the Decapolis, including the crowd at the end of Mark 7. (cf. 5:1–17; 7:33). Most significantly, the use of this descriptive *palin* (in conjunction with *ochlos*) emphasises the narrative purpose for including this particular crowd at this specific stage of the narrative as a narrative bridging mechanism. This strategic insertion skilfully links these two unrelated miracle stories together in the Gentile region of the Decapolis. It emphasises that these episodes occur in Gentile territory, foreshadowing the Gentile mission (13:10), and progresses the narrative by building towards Jesus' return to the Jewish side of the sea (cf. 8:10).

These people were starving, and some had travelled together with Jesus for three days (8:2), which drew Jesus' compassion to feed them, despite the Twelve's protest (cf. 8:3–4). In

[15] Byrne, *A costly freedom,* 128, describes this healing with "a strongly exorcistic note"; citing Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 475, 478.

[16] Byrne, *A costly freedom,* 128.

[17] This second feeding miracle occurs in a foreign region while the first feeding miracle in Mark 6 takes place at a deserted place near Capernaum on the more Jewish side of the sea (6:30–44).

situating this second feeding miracle in a foreign territory, Mark demonstrates the inclusive nature of Jesus' life of servanthood and his ability to perform miracles for the people in need. If God could enable Jesus to feed five thousand in Galilee, in a symbolic re-enactment of the manna in the wilderness, the feeding of four thousand in the Decapolis indicates that the Gentile mission (begun by the Gerasene and the Syrophoenician woman), has now become a reality. Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons within Galilee, which he was now also extending to people in foreign regions, such as the Decapolis and beyond. This inclusiveness establishes the radically inclusive composition of the *motu o tagata* gathering with Jesus both in Galilee and regions beyond — in the lands surrounding the sea, as well as the islands surrounded by sea.

So clearly in Mark's account, Jesus' ministry of renewal and transformation was not limited just to Galileans or Judeans. It was also available and benefited all people, regardless of their social location. His proclamation of the reign of God helped all, not just a privileged few.[18] This suggestion supports the borderless nature of Jesus' ministry that is open to all, inviting everyone to be part of his faithful *motu o tagata*. It also highlights the transcendent divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose transformative power brings "God's will for fulness of life" into reality.[19] God's grace through Jesus knows no boundary or shows any favouritism to a particular group. Mark demonstrates these crucial aspects of Jesus' ministry, with the inclusion of this second feeding miracle in foreign lands. This suggestion is also consistent with Jesus' absence from some prominent Roman cities within Galilee and surrounds (Sepphoris, Tiberias, Scythopolis), as their elite rulers and residents do not seek or need Jesus' help.

[18] Byrne, *A costly freedom,* 128, also argues that this second feeding miracle was for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Gentile region, which Jesus visited.

[19] H.C. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Sociopolitical Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 88.

The story's progression to this second feeding miracle reaffirms a profoundly spiritual and theological dimension of Jesus' intimate connection to the crowd—he had compassion for the people (6:34; 8:2; cf. 1:41; 9:22).[20] Jesus' gut-wrenching feeling toward this particular crowd reflected their dire situation of having no food for several days (cf. 8:2). Jesus also expresses this deeply felt compassion to another gathering of five thousand that he miraculously fed with only five loaves of bread and two fish (6:34–44), who "were like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34b).

These feeding miracles highlight these people's experience as leaderless (6:34) and without food (8:1). They are deprived of a basic necessity of life—food—that others could have taken for granted (cf. 7:27–28). In including both these feeding miracles in his narrative, Mark clearly highlights Jesus' intention to include and benefit all from his ministry of servanthood. The Israelites, Gentiles, and even contemporary readers of Mark's story (including Samoan Islanders) are all included. They are all welcomed to share and benefit from this Goodnews.[21] Politically, and economically, Jesus models a *basileia* that enables the people to eat in the wilderness, rather than being at the mercy of exploitative markets in the big cities, where the wealthy grow richer by controlling food supplies.

[20] The four variations of *σπλαγχνίζομαι* (compassion) in the Markan narrative are all attributed to Jesus. Such gut-wrenching feelings personify Jesus' being, and were expressed specifically to those in need—twice for the crowd (lost, 6:34; hungry, 8:2), the leper (1:41), and the boy with an unclean spirit (9:22). See also Kevin B. McCruden, "Compassionate Soteriology in Hebrew, 1 John, and the Gospel of Mark," ATLAS collections, 42, who defines this as a "compassionate presence," which explains the "early Christian experiential conviction in the exalted Christ's self-commitment to, and solicitous care for, the believer"; Loader, *The New Testament with Imagination*, 22–26, perceives Jesus' mission as part of God's compassion for the people, which must be reflected in "what we say and do … for the poor in our world, if we truly mean to follow Jesus"; David C Tolley, "Aesthetic Christology and Medical Ethics: the Status of Christ's Gaze in Care for the Suffering," *SJT* 61.2 (2008): 160, characterises compassion as that which "compels people to suffer with those in need," which truly describes Jesus' life of service for the people.

[21] Byrne, *A costly freedom,* 129, links both miracles to the institution of the Eucharist, when Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, then broke it and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. The satisfied crowd at the end suggests the "fulness and satisfaction of the final banquet of the Kingdom, to which both the feeding and the Eucharist point to."

Another example of this narrative logic of *ochlos* as a bridging mechanism comes in Mark 10. Jesus is heading towards the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and "crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them" (10:1). The second occurrence of "again" describes Jesus' habit of teaching the crowd whenever they gathered around him. It speaks volumes of the constant presence of various crowds gathering with Jesus and his usual teaching response. However, the first occurrence of "again" describes the presence of these crowds (10:1b), which verifies Jesus' popularity beyond Galilee and in the surrounding regions.

Mark 10 starts with a narration that Jesus left that place—Capernaum (9:33)—and headed for Judea and beyond the Jordan (10:1a). If that was Mark's primary intention, then the narrative should have jumped straight to Mark 11, which describes Jesus and his followers approaching Jerusalem (11:1–11). This would make most of the sub-plots in Mark 10 redundant. However, this is not the case in the received order of the narrative, as crowds "again" gathered around Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. In this in-between space between Galilee and Judea, the pressure from the patriarchal religious leadership begins to mount.

The strategic inclusion of *ochlos* described by *palin* at this part of the narrative weaves together the episode of Jesus leaving Galilee with subsequent episodes "on the way,"[22] which fill the gap between leaving Galilee and arriving in Jerusalem. The presence of these *ochloi* allows for these sub-plots within Mark 10 to come into focus, from the question of the right of men to divorce their wives (10:2–12), to the exclusion then blessing of the little children (10:13–16), and the encounter with the rich man (10:17–31), Jesus addresses issues of patriarchal power and wealth, and the marginalisation of women, children and the poor. This is followed by Jesus' final reminder to the Twelve about his suffering, imminent death and

[22] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 186–195, views these episodes in Mark 10 as combining "traditional materials with social concerns … inviting characterisation such as a 'manual of discipleship' and a 'community rule.'"

resurrection (10:31–34), emphatic teaching that in the *basileia,* to lead is to serve (10:35–45), and then the healing of Bartimaeus (10:46–52).

Jesus' interaction with the Twelve beside the road presents a final chance to prepare them for what awaits him in Jerusalem (10:32–34) before they actually arrive there in Mark 11. Unfortunately, despite Jesus' constant teachings and reminders for the Twelve to be servants for all, they are still seeking earthly honours and positions of status (10:35–45). Jesus' followers, then and now, are also given another opportunity to hear his proclamation and heed his teaching before these events eventuate in his "last week" in Jerusalem.[23]

The presence of these *ochloi* also facilitates a major transitional shift of geographical orientation for Jesus' activities as he nears Jericho and then Jerusalem. Mark's insertion of *ochloi*, the Twelve, the children, the rich young man, and the outcasts (Bartimaeus) mark this momentous shift of Jesus leaving Galilee for Judea and Jerusalem, the seat of religious and political authority. Not only do such gatherings ensure continuity of the story, and an ominous sense of foreboding as Jerusalem is approached, but they also further demonstrate the inclusive nature of the *motu o tagata* who encounter with Jesus, including the Twelve, the Pharisees, the open encounter with the rich man (the only person in the Gospel that Jesus is said explicitly to love, 10:21), and the people bringing with them little children (10:13). The idea that Jesus is the only rounded character and all others in the Gospel are flat stereotypes is simply not an adequate reading of Mark's narrative.

Going to Jerusalem heightens the suspense as Jesus leaves his base of operation in Galilee, where he was mostly received with positive admiration and astounded amazement by

[23] Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week: The Day-by-Day Account of Jesus' Final Week in Jerusalem* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), ix, describe Jesus' last eight days in Jerusalem as a Solemn Week that goes from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. Sunday – "When they were approaching Jerusalem" (11:1); Monday – "On the following day" (11:12); Tuesday – "In the morning" (11:20); Wednesday – "It was two days before the Passover" (14:1); Thursday – "On the first day of Unleavened Bread" (14:12); Friday – "As soon as it was morning" (15:1); Saturday – "The Sabbath" (15:42; 16:1); Sunday – "Very early on the first day of the week" (16:2).

the crowds. He now heads towards Jerusalem to come face to face with those opposing him to confront their authority and exploitive powers. In Jerusalem, Jesus encounters in the end the crowds who collaborate with the authorities—Jewish and Roman—to ensure his death (cf. 14:43–50; 15:6–15).

The momentous occasion of the crowds gathering again with Jesus as he transited from Galilee to Jerusalem continued the Pharisees' involvement with their testing question about divorce and Jesus' censuring answer (10:2–9). Their ongoing attempt to discredit Jesus since the beginning in Galilee (cf. 2:6–7, 16, 24, 3:6; and so on) continues into Jerusalem, where eventually the Sadducees and scribes take over the challenge. This is not the last time for them to question and test Jesus. They persist in their challenges and in their uneasy alliance with the Herodians when together they tackle Jesus over the question of paying taxes to Caesar (12:13–17), and are totally amazed by his answer. It seems that they cannot resist being part of the crowd around Jesus, even though their motives are adversarial.

Throughout the Markan narrative, the Pharisees always ask questions of Jesus in the presence of either the Twelve, the *ochlos*, or some other witnesses.[24] They question Jesus as he extends his fellowship meal with tax collectors and sinners (2:15–17). The local population despised the tax collectors because they worked for the oppressive regimes—Rome and their local beneficiaries—which added to the people's financial burden.[25] The Pharisees particularly resented such groups of tax collectors and sinners because of their ritual impurity and employment status, which competed against the Temple's tithe system in Jerusalem.

[24] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 70–71, discuss these public and private settings in Mark, which are the "two main plotlines of the story: Jesus' interactions with authorities and Jesus' interaction with the disciples." Jesus used some of these public settings to teach the crowd, while sometimes, his "public actions trigger opposition from the authorities."

[25] Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 787.

However, as Jesus sat and ate with these alleged sinners and collaborators, he extended a bond of friendship in table fellowship. Jesus was embracing these fellow human beings as worthy recipients of his Goodnews, as evident in his saying, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (2:17). Jesus' life of service is inclusive of all, regardless of their cultural, religious, and economic standings. These tax collectors (alleged sinners) accepted Jesus with their hospitality (2:15) and followed him (2:14b). In return, Jesus reciprocated their thoughtful response and welcomed them as members of his faithful *motu o tagata* when they sat and ate together (2:15–16). In this incident, the tax collectors and sinners exhibited similar "shared interests" with the collective identity of those known publicly as 'habitual sinners', opening them up to new possibilities as they gathered with Jesus. At the same time, the "scribes of the Pharisees" disqualified themselves from such *basileic* hospitality.

Other examples of the Pharisees questioning Jesus relate to the Twelve's alleged violation of the sabbath law (2:23–28) and not conforming to the traditions of the elders (7:1–13). In this latter encounter, as Jesus' disciples were seen eating with defiled hands (7:1–13), Jesus turns the tables and calls a crowd to hear his teaching against the Pharisees (7:14), who were inclined to adhere to the traditions of their elders, but deliberately manipulated the commandments of God to their own advantage. By calling the crowd, Jesus expands his audience beyond the presence of the Pharisees and the Twelve, and references the Prophet Isaiah's prophecy to criticise the Pharisees for their hypocritical way of lip service to God while their hearts were far from serving him (7:6–9). The Pharisees also defiantly asked Jesus for a sign from heaven (8:10–13), but they could not even accept the evidence already presented of his authority and extraordinary deeds, such as restoring a paralytic's ability to walk again (2:10–11). They even tried to force Jesus to censure paying taxes to Rome (12:13–17).

In this location between Galilee and Judea, they were now questioning Jesus if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, to which Jesus responded by accusing them of hardness of hearts to God's plan, just as their forefathers showed, which led to the issuance of a divorce certificate (10:2–9). Perhaps they tested Jesus with their questions in the presence of others so that they could acquire witnesses in their quest to trap and kill him (cf. 3:6; 11:18). It is also quite conceivable that Mark's concealed intention is for the Pharisees to ask their questions of Jesus in the presence of others, to prove the innocence of Jesus, despite their attempt to provide false testimony against him (14:55–59).

The last occasion where this combination—*ochlos* described by a sequential adverb *palin*—is used as a narrative bridging mechanism comes in 15:13. A crowd of Jerusalemites shouted "again" for Pilate to crucify Jesus.[26] This crowd gathered to ask Pilate for his custom of releasing any prisoner they asked (15:6–8). Mark, however, has left the audience in suspense regarding the identity of this prisoner, with Jesus the only alleged suspect brought before Pilate (15:2–5) on account of the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, and the whole council (15:1). Would it be him? Mark then conveniently comments at this very point about a certain man called Barabbas,[27] who was in prison with other rebels for committing murders during the insurrection (15:7). There were now two "prisoners" whom Pilate could choose from—Barabbas the murderer, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God. One would be released, and the other crucified.

Mark's narrative intention is revealed in the immediate interactions between Pilate and the crowd. It seems that Pilate did not intend releasing the prisoner Barabbas or any of the

[26] The Greek construction *πάλιν ἔκραξαν* is rendered in the NRSV translation as "they shouted back" (15:13).

[27] Gardner, "The Concept of Beloved Son in Mark," 19, provides an interesting twist to Barabbas' introduction into the narrative: "In another artful touch, Mark reported the name of the insurrectionist: Barabbas, which means (son of Abba) "son of father," a multiple allusion and wordplay, which could mean "son of Abraham" ("Isaac,") and "son of Abba" ("Jesus"). In this scene, Barabbas corresponds to Isaac and Jesus corresponds to the ram that was sacrificed, or the new Isaac that is sacrificed.

rebels, as implied by his question to the crowd whether they wanted the "King of the Jews" released to them (15:9), upon realising it was out of jealousy that the Jewish leadership handed Jesus over (15:10). Neither the crowd nor the chief priests answered him. However, Pilate's provocative question prompted the chief priests into stirring up this crowd to have Barabbas released instead (15:11). This implies that the high priest and the religious leaders' intention of having Jesus judged and executed (cf. 14:64b) by the imperial power was now in jeopardy.[28] So the chief priests made clear their dissatisfaction with Pilate by stirring up the crowd to shout for Barabbas' release (15:11). Pilate's ensuing response reflected the unsettling mood of the crowd and the tense atmosphere. During the festivals, the nationalistic patriotism of the people was high, and Pilate probably realised this and opted to satisfy the wish of the vocal crowd.

This marks the turning point in the narrative where Jesus' fate was determined and sealed. It has been suggested that Pilate knew of Jesus' innocence and that the Jewish leaders were jealous when they trumped up false accusations against him.[29] He wanted Jesus released (cf. 15:9–10) but realised the consequences of a possible riot amongst the crowd if their wish was not granted, even though they were coerced into shouting again and again to crucify Jesus.

Pilate's authority and decision-making capacity were influenced by the crowd leading him to grant their wish (15:15). Releasing a murderous Barabbas who rebelled against Roman authority defeats his duty as a loyal Roman governor to protect Roman interests. This suggestion is supported by his agreement with his imperial subjects to release a Roman insurgent while crucifying an innocent man. But recruiting a crowd to achieve their evil quest proved to be a masterstroke from the Jewish leadership. They stirred up a patriotic crowd to

[28] The Jewish leadership did not have the legal authority to have anyone killed, only the Roman authority could authorise such decision.

[29] Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 226.

release a known insurrectionist, Barabbas, while shouting to crucify someone they did not even know — one Son of Abba dying in place of the other Son of Abba.

Can Pilate's decision be explained from his perspective as the dominant authority in Jerusalem controlling the crowd and Jewish leaders? Pilate represents Roman domination. But the crowd, including the Jewish leaders, seem to have successfully subverted Pilate's official duty and loyalty to Rome when a known rebel insurrectionist, Barabbas, is released under Pilate's authority instead of being promptly dealt with. In this instance, the decision to crucify Jesus can possibly point to Pilate's suspicion of Jesus as another hopeful messianic figure, as implied in his question: "Are you the King of the Jews?" (15:2). On the narrative level, Pilate's decision is described as satisfying the crowd's wish because of possible troubles from the people. But perhaps another messianic contender under Pilate's watch from this troublesome region would not be received well by the emperor in Rome, hence this also is a possible reason for his decision to crucify Jesus, with the aid from this persistent crowd.

Whether this was a forced decision or a calculated one by Pilate, the strategic placement of this *ochlos* facilitates it by consolidating the opposition to Jesus and bridges these various aspects of the Markan narrative by putting into motion events that bring the narrative to its traumatic end—the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Jewish leaders and Pilate probably thought they succeeded (cf. 15:31–32), but from a heightened theological perspective, they, including the crowd, are collective participants in the fulfilment of God's Goodnews for all humanity in Jesus' death and resurrection. This salvific event also invites back those who rejected him to become, or again become, members of his faithful followers (cf. 16:7).

So the crowds (understood as a major part of the *motu o tagata* in the Samoan translation) are used by Mark as strategic narrative bridging mechanisms to interweave seemingly different and isolated episodes in the narrative to form a united, coherent, and continuous account. They provide the major referent to the *motu o tagata* — the sense that the

wider and sometimes unknown impact of Jesus' ministry on diverse people groups remains open throughout the Gospel of Mark, providing a coherent insight into the mysterious growth of the *basileia* and the faithful, though failing, followers of Jesus. The above examples may not provide absolute proof for this logic, but they highlight probable connections and amplify defensible evidence as the analysis suggests. There are also other purposes and roles for the crowd/s as portrayed in the narratives.

5.3 The crowd/s as agents of the religiopolitical authorities

Even though most groups within the crowd/s in Galilee and Gentile regions have predominantly positive relationships with Jesus, in Jerusalem the *ochloi* and religiopolitical authorities bring about the tragic end of the main protagonist of the Markan narrative—Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They play crucial roles at these later stages of the story and they are brought into prominent focus when an armed *ochlos* arrests Jesus (14:43–49) and an *ochlos* stirred up by the religious authorities greatly influences Pilate's decision (15:11,15). Their participation and involvement in these climactic scenes render these *ochloi* as agents of the religious authorities. If these occurrences of *ochloi* are seen in continuity with the crowds of Galilee, then this is evidence that even the crowds who are amazed at his teaching and who welcome him into Jerusalem eventually fail to follow to the cross and turn against him. At the narrative level, this seems most likely. But if the crowd with clubs and swords that arrests Jesus consists of the Temple guards (the *ochlos,* see below), then it would seem unlikely that they would need any further inciting by the Chief Priests (as described in 15:11, 15). Does this suggest yet another crowd at the trial? Given that all members of the *motu o tagata* fail to follow Jesus all the way, and either oppose, flee or watch from a distance, it seems most likely that this is the fate of the crowds too — no matter how positive they may have been at the beginning.

At the historical level, the *ochlos* under orders from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders who came with swords and clubs to arrest Jesus and lead him away under guard (14:43–44) oppose Jesus as their job.[30] They arrive with Judas, the betrayer, during the night as Jesus was praying and resting with the rest of the Twelve at Gethsemane (cf. 14:30–42). The appearance of this armed mob startled one of Jesus' companions, and he struck "the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear" (14:47). This disciple possibly interpreted this as an armed incursion, which threatened both theirs and Jesus' lives.[31] Under such circumstances, it was a spur-of-the-moment reaction to a violent situation.

This armed *ochlos* conforms with another meaning of *ochlos* as an army, linking this mob with the Temple militia or guards as suggested above (*ὑπηρέται*, 14:65b), who were accountable to the Temple authorities—the high priest, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. Their primary purpose in arresting Jesus differentiated this particular *ochlos* from the many other crowds/*ochloi* in the Markan narrative, who have mainly positive affiliations with Jesus as they gathered with him. This armed *ochlos* had a strict mandate from the authorities to arrest Jesus "by stealth" (14:1) in the middle of the night. The secrecy was possibly to avoid any encounter with the people (members of other crowds), some of whom came with Jesus from Galilee (cf. 10:1, 52; 11:1, 8–9), causing fear for the Jerusalem leaders (cf. 11:18, 32; 12:12), even though the narrative is silent on their whereabouts since entering and heralding Jesus into Jerusalem (11:1–11).

[30] Matthew also describes this crowd as having "swords and clubs" and they were from the "chief priests and the elders of the people" (Matt. 26:47). Luke, however, identifies this crowd as the "chief priests, the officers of the temple police and the elders" (Luke 22:52), who came with Judas (Luke 22:47). John adds "soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees" (John 22:3). All four Evangelists, especially Luke and John, have identified this *ochlos* as coming from the leaders of the Jewish establishment, implying that this 'crowd' has a specific function in relation to the Temple authorities.

[31] Whitaker, "A Failed Spectacle: The Role of the Crowd in Luke 23," 407, refers to the Lucan crowd's appearance during his arrest as "threatening to Jesus."

Jesus' objection to Judas and this armed *ochlos* supports this view. "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day, I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me…" (14:48–49). Jesus clearly pointed out the obvious—they could have arrested him at any time in the Temple if they had reasonable cause. They did not. Instead, they came under cover of darkness at an isolated place where they knew, through Judas, Jesus would be alone with the rest of the Twelve and without the supportive crowds. They did what was required of them as agents of the religious authorities to arrest Jesus and turned the wheel of tragic events that followed. Although this armed mob were briefly together with Jesus and the rest of the Twelve at Gethsemane, the nature of their involvement excluded them from the collective identity of those following Jesus, as did even the Twelve and others when they fled (cf. 14:50–52).

The religious leaders did not care about the truth or the innocence of Jesus. They just wanted him gone. They exhausted religious and traditional tactics to discredit him but to no avail, as previously discussed. They even exploited immoral and unethical ways to secure their purpose by promising money to the betrayer (14:11). They broke their own laws just to get rid of Jesus because of his influence upon the people and his perceived threat to their positions and authority, as B.W. Johnson observes:

> The accused was deprived of rights belonging even to the meanest citizen. He was arrested in the night, bound as a malefactor, beaten before his arraignment, and struck in open court during the trial. He was tried on a feast-day, and before sunrise. He was compelled to incriminate himself, and this under an oath of solemn judicial adjuration; and he was sentenced on the same day of conviction. In all these particulars the law was wholly disregarded.[32]

Indeed, the Jewish leadership also incriminated themselves just to rid of Jesus. To this effect, they unashamedly coerced another *ochlos* of Jerusalemites by stirring them up to shout for

[32] B. W. Johnson, *The People's New Testament*. 2 vols. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 1999), paragraph 1549.

Jesus' crucifixion (cf. 15:11–14).[33] After arresting and interrogating Jesus during the night, the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, and the whole council had another consultation in the early hours of the morning before they led Jesus away to Pilate (15:1). It has been said that the Jewish authorities accused Jesus of many things,[34] and yet, he did not defend himself, which amazed Pilate (15:5). Jesus, however, implicated himself by indirectly confirming Pilate's query whether he was the "king of the Jews" (15:2–5).

Also coming before Pilate that fateful morning was an *ochlos* of Jerusalem residents, as discussed above.[35] It could have been a coincidence that these two groups—*ochlos* and the Jewish leaders with Jesus—came together at the same time before Pilate. But, the Jewish authorities took full advantage of this excellent opportunity to advance their purpose by stirring up the crowd. Their persistence in shouting together repeatedly to crucify Jesus forced Pilate's hands as he submitted to the pressure. If the crowd's passion translated into a violent confrontation, Pilate realised that he did not have the required military presence to deal with it, especially in this crucial Roman province of Judea.[36]

The Jewish religious leaders realised this dent in Pilate's armour and, by inciting the crowd towards unrest, they could "elicit Pilate's fears of an uprising."[37] Pilate fell right into their trap, and after yielding to the wishes of the crowd, he flogged Jesus and handed him over to be crucified (15:15). He ultimately granted the Jewish authorities their wish. This all happens as Jesus had foretold in his passion predictions, but the whole process is fraught with

[33] See Section 5.3 above, and Chapter Four, Sections 4.4 and 4.5.

[34] William Loader, *Jesus and the Fundamentalism of His Days* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2001), 23, describes Jesus' treatment as an insult when they accused him of being a liberator.

[35] Eklund, "From "Hosanna!" to "Crucify!"" 21.

[36] Brian Messner, "Pontius Pilate and the Trial of Jesus: The Crowd," *SCJ* 3, (2000): 195–207, proposes that Pilate chose to execute Jesus because a riot was beginning in the gathered crowd.

[37] Eklund, "From "Hosanna!" to "Crucify!"" 36.

uncertainty and illegalities, as if each member of the *motu o tagata* could have acted differently if they chose.

Nevertheless, in all these episodes, the *ochloi* are portrayed as the ultimate agents of change that orchestrated Jesus' demise. The Jewish authorities wanted Jesus arrested in secrecy (cf. 14:1–2) and an armed *ochlos*, led by one of the Twelve, made that a reality (14:43, 46). They wanted Pilate to sanction Jesus' death, but Pilate had other ideas (15:1, 9). Then another *ochlos* prominently becomes the real agent of change that forced Pilate to comply with the authorities' wish (15:13–15).

During these momentous events in the Markan narrative, fear of the crowd of faithful followers drives both these responses from the authorities. It was fear that prompted the religious leaders to arrest Jesus by stealth. It was fear that ultimately swayed Pilate's decision-making capacity and sealed Jesus' fate by handing him over to be crucified. This fear of the crowds also plays in Jesus' favour in Jerusalem by prolonging his time there, even if it was only for a week longer.

5.4 The crowd/s prolong Jesus' presence in Jerusalem

From the beginning of the Markan narrative, the political and religious authorities conspire together to destroy Jesus (3:6; 12:13).[38] The leaders plan it within their ranks (cf. 11:18a), however they are prevented from doing so because they were afraid of Jesus as the crowds were spellbound by his teachings. It is this fear of the people that temporarily prevents the authorities from carrying out their plans. In effect, this fear also prolongs Jesus' presence in Jerusalem for a few more days before he was tried and crucified.[39] The public setting of

[38] This collaboration amongst Jewish religious leaders as Jesus' opponents is evident throughout Mark's story (cf. 7:3, 5; 8:31; 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1).

[39] Borg and Crossan, *The Last Week*, ix.

Jesus' activities in Jerusalem, mainly during daytime (cf. 11:11–12, 20, 27) and in the presence of the *ochlos* (11:18; 12:12, 37, 41: cf. 10:46; 11:1), protect Jesus from getting arrested.[40]

Since Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, the Jewish religious leaders' plans were being developed. Jesus was intruding into the realm of their authority, and he must be stopped at any cost. His popularity amongst the crowds could spell an end to the privileges of their authority. Jesus did not help his survival either, but directly confronted the injustices he saw. He cleansed the Temple by driving out the merchants and money lenders operating there (11:15). He accused them of turning God's house into a den of robbers (11:17), as their economic activities within the Temple (merchandising and changing monies) allegedly robbed the people.

From the viewpoint of the economic welfare of the Temple, such traders and money changers are said to have played vital roles in the Temple's commercial operations, on which its fiscal and sacrificial systems were heavily dependent.[41] However, Jesus did not see it like that. The religious leaders monopolised such activities to their advantage while the majority of the people suffered. This drew Jesus' accusation of turning the house of God into a place of daylight robbery. This made the leadership even more determined to kill him, but they could not because they feared the crowd (11:18).

This did not stop the religious leaders from seeking ways to counter Jesus' popularity and further their cause. On the morning of the third day (cf. 11:20), as Jesus was in the Temple when the religious authorities confronted him: "By what authority are you doing these things?" (11:28). Jesus countered with a question of his own: "Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" (11:30). They were unable to answer because of their fear of the crowd, who regarded John as a true prophet (11:32). They again failed to trap Jesus in their quest to be rid of him. Jesus then immediately told a parable against them about the

[40] Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story,* 69.
[41] Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 199.

"wicked tenants" (12:1–11), which made them more determined. But they still could not arrest him because they feared the crowd (12:12).

The prime objective of their plan was to kill Jesus before the festival because if they carried it out "during the festival," there would be a "riot among the people" (14:2). They had to change tactics to avoid a confrontation with gathering crowds. They now planned to "arrest Jesus by stealth" (14:1b) as the only way. Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' chosen Twelve, became the crucial part of their evil plan when he turned traitor against Jesus by offering to betray him for a monetary price (14:10–11). But the implied readers already know this because Mark exposed it right from the beginning of the narrative when Jesus chose the Twelve with Judas undesirably labelled: "Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him [Jesus]" (3:13–19a).

The authorities were immensely pleased with this unexpected ally, offering money to secure his service of betrayal. They were elated because Judas knew Jesus (cf. 14:44) and where Jesus stayed with the Twelve, away from the public eye and without the presence of the crowds. Judas' involvement fitted perfectly with their wish of arresting him by stealth. The plan was set to capture Jesus during the night, to be executed by their own *ochlos* "with swords and clubs" with Judas as their leader (14:43).

In Mark's account of that final week, it took the authorities six days to bring their plan to reality and only when Judas offered his help. It had taken that long because of their fear of the crowds, whose impact on the Jewish leadership prolonged Jesus' presence in Jerusalem, even if it was only for a few more days. From this perspective, the crowds unknowingly also became agents for Jesus' ministry and proclamation. Where does the emphasis lie in Mark's narrative: on the crowds as faithful followers (agents of Jesus' ministry), as failed followers (agents of the authorities), or as unwitting participants in a much bigger drama (pawns in the politics of the day)?

5.5 The *motu o tagata* as agents of Jesus' ministry

As discussed in the previous chapter, Mark employs other linguistic expressions such as *ochloi*, *polloi*, *plēthoi*, *alloi*, and the third plural verbal constructions to refer to people congregating around Jesus. In the first three chapters of Mark's Gospel, Mark uses other expressions to refer to people, such as "the whole city was gathered round" (1:33); "everyone is searching" for Jesus (1:37); "people came to him from every quarter" (1:45); "many gathered around" (2:2); "some people came" (2:3); "there were many who followed him" (2:15); "people came" (2:18); "great multitude from Galilee followed him" (3:7); and "they came to him in great numbers from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon" (3:8). In a short period, Jesus' fame has spread quickly, and the Goodnews of the *basileia* is taking root in unlikely and unexpected places.

After Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (1:12–13), he began his life of service by proclaiming the need to repent and believe in the Goodnews (1:14–15). He then called his first four disciples of fishermen along the Sea of Galilee (1:16–20), who accompanied him as he taught at the synagogue (1:21) and cast out an unclean spirit (1:23–26). Jesus' activities amazed all those present (1:27). He healed Simon's mother-in-law (1:29–31) and many more sick people, as well as casting out many demons (1:32).

The next day, they ventured on a preaching tour to the neighbouring towns (1:38) and throughout Galilee (1:39), where he cured the leper (1:40–45). After a few days, they returned to Capernaum (2:1), and Jesus healed a paralytic (2:3–12) before calling Levi to follow him (2:14). Presumably, he stayed in Galilee preaching and teaching (2:18–4:34) until he crossed over to the other side of the Sea (4:35), to the country of the Gerasenes (5:1). Mark portrays all these events at a dizzying speed, hastened by repeated use of *εὐθὺς* (immediately, straightaway) some 41 times throughout his narrative, and particularly in the Galilean ministry of Jesus.

Jesus had only been around Galilee thus far. How then did the people from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordon, and the regions around Tyre and Sidon (3:8) hear of Jesus? Who was telling and spreading his stories that his fame reached these regions beyond? As advocated in this analysis, it is the various members of the *motu o tagata*, including other people, the healed individuals, their families, and friends, who did so as a collective identity (cf. 7:36).[42] This wider cloud of witnesses, the "island of people" including the crowds, provide the constant backdrop to Mark's account and the growing network of those (mainly ordinary) people impacted by the *basileia tou Theou* embodied in the ministry of Jesus.

This constitutes an enthusiastic and positive corporate response on an unprecedented level to Jesus' authority to heal the sick, cast out demonic spirits, feed the hungry, and perform other miraculous deeds that improved the people's livelihoods (those seeking help from Jesus), regardless of their cultural and geographical contexts. Jesus responded with compassion by renewing and transforming them from their complex afflictions. The consequence of these positive transformations prompted such groups within the *motu o tagata* to proclaim the story of Jesus wholeheartedly wherever they went (cf. 7:36). They were the very vessels of transmission that enabled Jesus' Goodnews to reach other people far and wide — often unnamed but always present in the background of the narrative ("other boats were with him," 4:36b).[43]

Not only that, but the very presence and appearances of these transformed individuals as completely healed and renewed members of society amongst their peers, friends, and families would visibly demonstrate their testimonies to Jesus' ministry. In essence, this important function in spreading Jesus' fame and the transformative power of the *basileia* to others and regions beyond Galilee fall on the *motu o tagata* and its diversified constituents.

[42] See Chapter Four, Section 4.3.

[43] See Williams, *Other Followers of Jesus*, 11–14.

Their invaluable contributions allow for Jesus' ministry and popularity to be heard and proclaimed throughout these regions.

Spreading this Goodnews is an enthusiastic response from a grateful people to their positive transformation. It becomes far more than a rumour,[44] which thrives on unsubstantiated reports and is fuelled by personal opinions. But the proclamation and the personal presence of these witnesses amongst their own people and regions testified and demonstrated Jesus' divine authority. Accordingly, many more people witnessed and heard stories of Jesus, prompting them to seek out him in person and be transformed themselves, as they gathered with Jesus in great numbers.

Mark's narrative supports this as is evident in Jesus' healing of a deaf man in the Decapolis (7:31–35). Its effect upon the *motu o tagata* in that area is portrayed as beyond measure, prompting them to say that he did everything well, even making the deaf hear and the mute speak (7:37).[45] Despite Jesus' insistence on non-disclosure, the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it (7:36).[46] It was not a sign of disobedience but an expression of their astounding amazement beyond measure, and of the impossibility of containing and limiting the Goodnews of the *basileia*. They had witnessed a powerful demonstration of Jesus' transformative power that reaffirmed the stories they heard.[47] If this kind of healing is said to be rarely reported in antiquity,[48] let alone being witnessed by this appreciative crowd in the Decapolis, who would not want to proclaim it, especially when it

[44] Suh, "Discipleship and Community in the Gospel of Mark," 77.

[45] English, *The Message of Mark*, 150, views the crowd's reaction as summarising their own unconscious reflection upon the person of Jesus and the arrival of the reign of God in their locality, through their confession that Jesus had done everything well.

[46] Jesus' command here is *διεστείλατο* which has the force of continuity, meaning "to keep on commanding." See "*διαστέλλω*," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, 146.

[47] This presumption assumes the man from Gerasa's proclamation to his own people and possibly beyond to the Decapolis at large.

[48] Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on his Apology for the Cross*, 384, argues such healing was very "rare in antiquity."

happened to one of their own? This *ochlos* did just that by enthusiastically announcing this Goodnews to others. This appreciative crowd in a Gentile region radically expands membership of the *motu o tagata* to include other ethnicities outside of Galilean and Judean borders.

Mark employs this positive response by these Gentile outsiders within their own space as a basis for proclamation as people come into contact with Jesus' tangible, transformative impact.[49] Such responses reflected personal tributes and appreciative reactions as Jesus' compassionate and transformative power positively impacted them irrespective of nationalities, cultures, and social locations. To this effect, the *motu o tagata*, especially the man whose speech and hearing had been fully restored, are portrayed as zealously proclaiming Jesus' healing and transformative power to other people.

Proclaiming this Goodnews to others is Mark's purpose from the beginning (cf. 1:1). Jesus himself states this objective right from the onset of the narrative—"to proclaim the message" (1:38; cf. 1:14, 39, 45). Even his disciples are instructed to do so (16:15; cf. 3:14; 6:12; 13:10; 14:9; 16:20). The collective response from the deaf man and the people of the Decapolis (7:36) demonstrates that the *motu o tagata*'s participation in this proclamation, which was triggered when one of their own was transformed by Jesus' ministry of servanthood, has already been happening amongst the ordinary people surrounding Jesus.

This primary purpose grounds Jesus' instructions to other individuals to go (*ὕπαγε*) to their families, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. They represent the collective interests of the *motu o tagata,* and their responses indicate a collective response. This directive is also for the contemporary readers at their respective social locations to hear, obey, and proclaim. In

[49] There are fourteen incidents in the Markan narrative that reflect this response to proclaim – twice for John the Baptist (1:4, 7); three times for Jesus (1:14, 38, 39, 45); four times specifically for the Twelve (3:14; 6:12; 16:15, 20); twice in a general sense for all followers of Jesus (13:10; 14:9), once for the leper (1:35), and once for the *ochlos* (7:36).

Mark's account (as in Matthew), there are also formal directives to the inner circle of disciples to proclaim the Goodnews (13:10 for example), but this task has already been happening throughout the Gospel in an uncontrollable and dynamic way amongst the countless *motu o tagata* who have been impacted by the Goodnews of the *basileia.*

5.6 The *motu o tagata* demonstrate the inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry

Jesus' healing ministry facilitated tangible changes that positively transformed those members of the *motu o tagata* who sought out Jesus for help irrespective of ethnicities, beliefs, and localities. Their responses demonstrated the positive transformation they experienced. Other members of the *motu o tagata* negatively responded as they opposed and rejected Jesus and his ministry. Even though there was rejection and opposition, the transformative possibilities of the *basileia* in Mark's narrative remains open as illustrated by the invitation to repent (1:15) that is repeated to Peter and other failing and fearful followers (cf. 16:7). These different responses establish both the inclusive nature of Jesus' ministry and the radical inclusivity of the *motu o tagata*.

The miracles of raising of Jairus' daughter from death and the stopping of the blood flow from a nameless woman (5:21–43) further support this, with this particular *motu o tagata*'s diverse membership, which included Jesus, the Twelve, Jairus and his daughter, members of Jairus' household, the people wailing and weeping, and the woman with a haemorrhage. This diversity represented nearly every sector of Galilean society who gathered with Jesus, many of whom are said to have fallen through the redistribution cracks of the synagogue, unemployed, desperate to feed and provide for families, with women who may even have turned to prostitution for survival.[50]

[50] Loader, *The New Testament with imagination*, 3.

The experience of the woman who bled (5:25–26) reveals the social and religious constraints that existed in her community,[51] particularly the personal and economic burdens on the sick. Nonetheless, this nameless woman decided to overcome these cultural restrictions that stigmatised people like her and marked their "social death" in society.[52] God's Goodnews manifested in Jesus transformed her from suffering to being comforted, from being isolated to being restored (physically, spiritually, and socially), and from fear to joy as Jesus received and honoured her courage, honesty, and truthfulness.

The revelation of the grace of God realised through Jesus' ministry knows no boundaries and inclusively purifies all, unlike the legalistic application of the purity law (Lev 15:25–27), which renders her and all those who come into contact with her unclean, rather than the best intent of the law as providing respite for women when they need it. It may well be that keeping the general health of the population and the holiness of worship are the intent of Leviticus 15, by isolating both men and women with bodily discharges.[53] Yet, this particular woman with a constant blood flow was amongst this *ochlos*, waiting for Jesus and touching his cloak (5:27–28).[54] Interestingly, Jesus was not made unclean by her touch. He is the Son of God, the Holy One of God, whose holiness is not threatened by human ailments.[55]

In Mark's story-world, Jesus' divine presence sanctifies the cultic contamination of the leper (1:40–44), the impurity of Jairus' dead daughter, and this infectious haemorrhaging

[51] The Purity Laws rendered those she touched as unclean, including Jesus. She would be aware of the social isolation that sick people like her had to endure. She might also be aware of the crowd's negative reaction and the implications for them if they realised she was amongst their midst.

[52] Carey, "Women in Action," 437.

[53] S.K. Sherwood, *Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 69–70.

[54] R.W. Swanson, "Moving bodies and translating Scriptures: Interpretation and incarnation," *WW* 31.3 (2011): 274, compares the presence of this woman as "swimming through the crowd," thus bringing all those around her as coming into contact with blood.

[55] Branch, "A study of the woman in the crowd," 7. Also, Rhoads, *Reading Mark,* 159, points to this interesting fact in Mark's Gospel that Jesus cannot be made unclean as he came into contact with these impure individuals throughout the narrative. Instead Jesus changed these impurities into purity with a contagious holiness.

woman.[56] They underwent incredible transformations far beyond their anticipated hope when they first approached Jesus.[57] They were revitalised, and their needs met, regardless of their social contexts. Inadvertently, their story of renewal also becomes the story of transformation for the *motu o tagata*, as amazement overcomes them all (cf. 5:21–22, 24–25, 42b).

Accordingly, Jesus' instructions to both Jairus (cf. 5:43b) and this woman (5:34) were also intended for members of the collective identity, as well as readers of Mark's story. Byrne supports this suggestion by concluding that both these stories provide a "rounded instruction … of the kind of faith required if human lives are to be grasped by the transforming power" of God as inaugurated by Jesus' inclusive ministry.[58]

Another example supporting this inclusiveness is the Syrophoenician woman, whose boldness and persistence allowed Jesus to heal her possessed daughter (7:24–30).[59] As previously discussed, this healing miracle prompted by this Gentile woman broke down cultural and national barriers,[60] which Mark interweaves into the fabric of his narrative. Despite her "otherness" as a Gentile woman in Gentile territory, it did not prevent her from seeking out Jesus, the Jew, on behalf of her possessed daughter. By going to Jesus, her action facilitates her membership of the in-group of people who sought help from Jesus, albeit in a private setting. Even though Mark does not refer directly to this incident as a gathering of a *motu o tagata*, the commonality in seeking help from Jesus rendered her a representative member of the collective identity of "foreigners" as indicated by the broad sweep of Gentile lands that follows (7:31). Jesus' ministry included ethnic plurality, not just Judeans and Galileans. These

[56] F.J. Matthew, "Jesus and the purity system in Mark's gospel: A leper (Mk 1:40–44)," *IJT* 42.3 (2000): 104.

[57] F.J. Gaiser, "In touch with Jesus: Healing in Mark 5:21–45," *WW* 30.1 (2010): 8.

[58] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 99.

[59] See Chapter Three, Section 3.6.

[60] Basker, "Orientalist tendencies in the portrayal of gentiles," 2, alludes to biblical writers' tendency to highlight the "superior status of Jews over Gentiles."

are some examples in the Markan narrative which illuminate how the *motu o tagata* validates the inclusiveness of Jesus' ministry.

5.7 The *motu o tagata* highlight the realities of daily life

Mark uses the story of the *motu o tagata* to retell the social and economic suffering, neglect, isolation, marginalisation, and other negative impacts faced by the majority of Galilean and Judean people (and that of his own communities), as I will argue in the next chapter. The inclusion of various miraculous deeds performed by Jesus testifies to this. Such suffering was not limited to Galileans and Judeans only but affected everyone subjected to oppressive regimes, which are represented on the narrative level by the religious leadership and Roman administration—Herod (6:14–29) and Pilate (15:1–15).

This highlights a real and shared life of struggle for the affected people regardless of regional or political affiliations, as exemplified by the Gerasene demoniac (5:1–20). This possessed man lived among the tombs and was "restrained with shackles and chains" (5:4). No one "could restrain him" (5:3) or had "the strength to subdue him" (5:5). His actions caused injury to himself and disrupted others (5:5). Such linguistic expressions are full of military overtones, which further demonstrate that the people's reality of struggle is also connected to Roman occupation, as implied by the demoniac's name, Legion.

The plot's setting at a graveyard immediately alerts the readers to what the Jews consider unclean (Num 19:16–22), which also includes touching "a grave" (Num 19:16).[61] It presents this man as the "very image of self-destructiveness and social isolation,"[62] which was

[61] Rochester, *Good News at Gerasa*, 126. He also describes this man's appearance (5:3a–5b) as a "parenthesis that interrupts the action with background information the audience needs in order to grasp the immense extent of the man's eventual transformation."

[62] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, 96, points out Mark's emphasis on "binding," which he links to the image of "Satan as a 'strong one,' whose house can only be burgled if a 'stronger one' succeeds in binding him first."

intensified by his status as a person subjected to foreign conquerors. This helpless man pleaded with Jesus (cf. 5:6), while the evil spirits controlling his bodily functions (cf. 5:3–5) tried to adjure Jesus by invoking the holy name of God as a means not to torment them (5:7). Yet Jesus' authoritative power overwhelmed the evil spirits and cleansed this man of his tormentors. It transformed this man mentally (in his right mind) and physically, as he regained his humanity by being clothed so he could live among his people once again (5:15).[63]

The unceremonious expulsion of the unclean spirits enhances the didactic nature of Jesus' teachings and activities, some of which indirectly target some Jewish traditions. For example, the drowning of the "herd of swine" (5:13), which the Jews considered unclean (Lev 11:7; 1 Macc 1:47; cf. Isa 65:4), can be interpreted symbolically as Jesus putting an end to such traditions. This line of thinking finds further support elsewhere in the narrative when Jesus declares all foods clean (7:19b). According to Levitical laws, some foods are considered unclean, detestable, and not to be consumed (cf. Lev 11:4–8, 10–20, 23). In this respect, in cleansing the demoniac Legion and the subsequent drowning of the pigs, Jesus declared the people and the land cleansed from oppressive traditions and regimes, such as Rome and her local collaborators, including client rulers and Jewish leaders.

The connection between the demoniac's name—Legion—and the presence at the time of a Roman legion in the region points to Roman occupation.[64] This historical interest

[63] Augustine Stock, *The Method and Message of Mark* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 49, 168, comments that the demoniac's nakedness invalidates his "personal identity" as one's clothes evoke, extend, and express the person, and function as an important element in one's self communication. Also, Klaus Berger, *Identity and Experience in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 40–43, states that clothing was a strong indicator of personal identity and social status in the ancient world.

[64] Richard Dormandy, "The expulsion of Legion: A Political Reading of Mark 5:1–20," *ExpT* 111 (2000): 335–337. See also Myer, *Binding the Strong Man*, 191–194; Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 351–352, who both identify this episode with the Roman military occupation not only in Syria but the known world at the time. J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Contributions to the Study of the Gerasene Demoniac," *JSNT* 3 (1979): 5, draws attentions to other terms in the passage that have military connotations, such as restrain, chain, shackles and chains, strength to subdue; D. B. Saddington, *The Development of the Roman Auxiliary Forces from Caesar to Vespasian (49 BC–AD 79)* (Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1982), 98–104, suggests that legions comprised of "Roman citizens only," in contrast with light infantry, which were often specialty troops like archers and slingers and may include locals. One legion unit consisted of 10 cohorts, each with 360 heavy infantry soldiers. Thus, a regular legion infantry had

highlights the people's fear and suffering under the brutal regimes of Roman client-rulers, their violent alien force, and military might.[65] With the incredible strength of their dreaded army,[66] such rulers lorded and exerted their authority over the people (cf. 10:42) so that fear paralysed them into submission in their own land.[67] It is the combination of all these actors — the demonised man, the swineherds and the fearful townspeople (the *motu o tagata*) — that conveys the reality of life under occupying forces. Nevertheless, Jesus sends the former demoniac back into that cauldron as an agent of change (5:19–20).

5.8 Summary

This chapter demonstrates the purposeful inclusion of diverse groups amongst the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative and highlights their valuable contributions to Mark's retelling of Jesus' ministry. Mark's insertion of some specific *ochloi* (in direct association with the descriptive adverb *palin*) at particular parts of the story functions as narrative bridging mechanisms, allowing for a coherent narrative and enabling smooth progression at various sticky points. They also accommodate significant thematic motifs and paradigm shifts that Mark embeds in his narrative. This is achieved by connecting together the background witness of the crowds around Jesus, providing a wider perspective on the in-breaking *basileia tou Theou.*

3,600 men, and with support by cavalry and light infantry, its ranks could swell to 6,000 soldiers. See "Legion: Military unit," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/topic/legion.

[65] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 18, 50, especially 140–141, argues the "Roman army as the cause of the possessed man's violent and destructive behaviour, but the man is also symbolic of the whole society that is possessed by the demonic imperial violence to their persons and communities."

[66] Leander, *Discourses of Empire*, 203, relates this demoniac Legion to Rome's oppressive rule and military prowess, with specific reference to Legio X Fretensis, which was stationed in Gerasa with the 'boar' as their ensign.

[67] English, *The Message of Mark*, 110, describes the overwhelming impact of the man's condition that he "seems unable to distinguish himself from the army which occupies his territory. Yet neither can he break their hold over him, even to asking for them to remain" (cf. 5:10).

The *motu o tagata*'s contributions authenticate Jesus' divine authority and illustrate the inclusive nature of his ministry. As "agents" of Jesus' ministry, various members of the *motu o tagata* enable the spread of his proclamation of God's Goodnews to and for the benefit of the people, whose personal circumstances and social locations were impacted by social, political, economic, and religious structures controlling them. Such accounts also support the radically inclusive composition of the *motu o tagata*.

Mark's depiction of the *motu o tagata* resonates with his own communities under Roman occupation. This historical location provides an opening to explore how Mark's own faithful *motu o tagata* could have lived within a wider society under Roman imperialism and why they desperately needed encouragement as they were impacted (positively and negatively) by various processes and structures of different layers of imperial administration.

Mark's emerging communities of faithful followers of Jesus and the broader early Church communities that developed later were persecuted for many reasons, such as being cannibals (misunderstanding the eucharist), atheists (with no visible temples), and outsiders (because of their monotheism), as their faith was a minority religion in a pluralistic, pagan society. Despite being outnumbered (an out-group) in the pluralistic world in first-century Greco-Roman Palestine, these small communities were strong internally as they continued the legacy of the Risen Christ in their communal sharing and the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. 13:11). They were a smaller *motu o tagata* in a broader ocean of people as they established their sense of belonging in the world. Mark retells such struggles via the story of the *motu o tagata* and *why* these diverse groups of people gathered to Jesus in great multitudes, for one reason or another.

This focuses the need to revisit this sociohistorical context to understand Mark's story of the *motu o tagata* and the conditions that created it. The historical interest in Mark's Gospel is the subject of the next chapter. It explores a descriptive account of the lived experiences of

the people under dominant forces, and the emerging Christian *motu o tagata* amidst a wider unbelieving world.

MARK, THE CROWD, AND THE *MOTU O TAGATA* IN THE FRIST-CENTURY

6.1 Introduction

The historical context of Mark's Gospel is difficult to determine, of course, and depends greatly on its provenance, which has also proved impossible to determine with any certainty, although this thesis leans towards a post-70 dating. We do not even know who 'Mark' was for sure, nor where and when he wrote, even though Southern Syria/Galilee maybe a possible location for his network of faithful communities. But note here that I am seeking a plausible description of dating and context, not a definitive one. The text of 'Mark' itself, regardless of who wrote it, is a primary source of evidence to map out a space for a believing *motu o tagata* (Mark's implied readers) amongst a wider *motu o tagata* in Greco-Roman Palestine. Both groups were greatly influenced (positively or negatively) by oppressive rulers—Rome, the Herodians, and the Jerusalem Jewish leaders — whose thirst for power and prestige blinded them from seeing and hearing the people's realities (10:42–45).[1] Understanding something of this general historical and social location is essential for discerning the Markan narrative of the *motu o tagata* and its various character groupings as it relates to implied readers then and now, allowing them to locate themselves in the narrative and make informed interpretations that are relevant and useful in their own contexts.[2]

[1] Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 136, present a gruesome view with a "range of possibilities confronting individuals and groups in a century that opened in 4 B.C.E. with two thousand rebels crucified in Jerusalem and ended with five hundred a day crucified there in 70 C.E." Also, Simon Samuel, "The Beginning of Mark: A Colonial/Postcolonial Conundrum," *BI-JCA* vol X.4 (2002): 417, https://www.academia.edu/36110572/Markan_Priority_and_the_Synoptic_Problem?auto=download&email_work_card=download-paper, argues Mark has two cultures to negotiate—Roman colonial and native Jewish, from which he interprets Jesus as either a colonist or an anti-colonial nationalist figure.

[2] Ben Witherington, *New Testament History: A Narrative Account* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 17, observes that a "thick description of the social and religious setting can help provide the necessary context for the proper interpretation of the various words and deeds of Jesus." Also, C. Black, *The Quest of Mark the Reader: Why Has It Been Pursued, and What Has It Taught Us?* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 22, relays the importance of historical information to evaluate the meaning of texts.

However, our perception of the lived experiences of the general population during the middle decades of the first century can only be informed to a certain degree of accuracy from our interpretation of the texts dating from that period, and from continuing archaeological research into biblical and ancient sites. The increasing availability of such information and the development of various interpretive tools allow the readers to examine these biblical accounts and suggest plausible reconstructions of societies and the lives of the people involved.[3]

Accordingly, this chapter explores a brief but defensible description of the impacts of Roman rule and the continuing influence of Jewish leaders around the time when Mark's Gospel became a written text. The corruptive attraction of power and wealth is apparent throughout history, and particularly in colonial and imperial settings. Hence, the inclusion of some prominent historical figures in the Markan narrative dictate the parameters of this examination, limiting it to descriptive accounts of King Herod (6:14–22; 8:14), the Herodians (cf. 3:6; 12:13), Pilate (15:1–15), and Roman soldiers (15:16–24, 39), who represented Roman imperial rule. There were also the Jewish leaders whose religious influence reached beyond Samaria and Galilee. Although these historical characters existed at the time of Jesus, the way they are portrayed in Mark's narrative is shaped also by the ongoing significance of their successors for the network of Markan communities. The interaction between them and Jesus in Mark's narrative is indicative of the ongoing relationships and questions of Mark's implied readers — wherever and whenever we might locate them. So some awareness of historical conditions and events in the Eastern Roman Empire at the time of both Jesus and 'Mark' (20–80CE) will helpfully inform (rather than determine) our interpretation of the text.

These different layers of culture and politics (Roman and Jewish) dominated the sociohistorical landscape of the region and adversely impacted the people, including Mark's

[3] John H. Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 13, understands this as the "interrelation of texts and contexts."

emerging communities of believers.[4] This was also the social location of their mission field to continue the proclamation of the Goodnews of God (13:10) and spread the reality of God's reign to an unbelieving audience, so that Mark embeds connections to similar social and political conditions in his portrayal of the *motu o tagata* to those which his own communities of faithful believers experience.[5] This is said by some scholars to have contributed to a Markan narrative framework controlled by the historical event of the cross (Jesus' suffering) and the similar responses by his faithful followers in their own calling and suffering.[6]

Imperialism and competing ideologies affected everyone differently at the time, of course, and some more than others. So Mark's account of Jesus exhorts this believing *motu o tagata* to courageously proclaim this Goodnews amidst different layers of domination and opposition. Empowered and encouraged by the Holy Spirit (13:11), they earnestly continued their call to serve by overcoming various obstacles and opposition and inviting all, beginning with the marginalised, into the inclusive community of Jesus' "island of people."

6.2 Mark's believing *motu o tagata* amongst a diversified society

Jesus' crucifixion and promised resurrection (8:31; 9:31; 10:34; 14:28; 16:7) in the Markan narrative holds the hope of opening the blindness and reconciling the failures of the remaining Eleven and other followers, and freeing them from the grip of fear (cf. 16:8). The extraordinary ending of Mark (at 16:8) promises, but leaves open, the transformation of these fallible followers such that they will go out and proclaim the Goodnews everywhere amidst opposition from a largely unbelieving world.

[4] Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics and the World of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 54, classifies these into three categories – socio-economic, socio-ecological, and socio-cultural impacts.

[5] The distinction between these two historical moments is difficult to determine.

[6] John R. Donahue, "Windows and Mirrors: The Setting of Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 1–26.

The contents and substance of their proclamation—the Risen Christ—would naturally invite hostility from some Jewish adherents in defence of their religion, the Jewish laws, and the traditions of their elders, for example. Their particular Jewish ethnicity was threatened by the faithful believers' practice of sharing with their Gentile members (both the Goodnews and resources), based upon the eucharistic sharing of bread and wine initiated by Jesus (14:22–25, cf. 6:40–44, 8:6–9).[7] In addition, the pluralistic preferences of Greco-Roman idol worshippers were set against the monotheistic belief of this believing *motu o tagata*.

Foreshadowed on the narrative level by the inclusion of the Syrophoenician woman (and other outsiders) in Jesus' field of mission, the remaining Eleven, Galilean, Judean, and Gentile followers and believers are called to continue proclaiming to the broader world this Goodnews realised through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Markan Jesus prepares them for this moment, even forewarning them of the suffering they were expected to face in their testimonies and proclamation (cf. 13:9–13). They were spiritually equipped to engage a world divided by processes and structures, conflicts and persecutions, and even divisions amongst familial and communal members (13:12–13 cf. Acts 20:29–32). Such difficulties have been described as serious risks for this *motu o tagata* of faithful followers, potentially causing their mission to falter because of "dissenters from within [and] opposition from without."[8] Amongst a chaotic world, this minority *motu o tagata* pressed to establish their presence amidst different religious priorities and systems. That the narratives forewarn of such opposition, rejection, and persecution (13:9–13; cf. 4:15–19) testify to this difficult but not impossible calling.

Despite the internal divisions and external opposition and their insignificant beginning (cf. 4:1–41), the collective effort of this believing *motu o tagata* amongst dominant and

[7] Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific approaches to New Testament interpretation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994; Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003), 15.

[8] Esler, *The First Christians in their Social Worlds*, 9.

established communities (with diverse theological understandings and social privileges) made their servanthood approach more effective and potent. Their personal and collective determination and unwavering faith in Jesus encouraged them to continue their service to save the sinners and the lost in the world as practised by Jesus (2:17). But despite the personal costs they suffered and their non-violent approach amidst hostile responses, they gladly and faithfully proclaimed the Goodnews to outsiders (Gentiles),[9] and established their presence amongst a vastly diversified and disconnected world. Their persistent effort occasionally eliminated such divisive boundaries and transformed an increasing number of this wider group of non-believers to partake in the blessings and "inclusivity of the gospel."[10]

6.3 The religiopolitical impact on Mark's implied readers

As with all NT texts to some extent, Mark's Gospel is shaped by the economics, politics and religious assumptions of Roman culture.[11] It is also considered to be a story about the "reordering of power including the religious ones"[12] and a provocation against the "omnipotent claims of empire (14:62; 15:2)."[13] This complex web of various forms of domination implemented by Rome led to the reappropriation of conquered lands and adversely impacted many of the people concerned.

[9] James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making*, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 297, identifies these as "proselytes."

[10] Aernie, "Borderless Discipleship," 202, in relation to Jesus' encounter with this Gentile woman. See also Sharon Betsworth, *The Reign of God Is Such as These: A Socio-Literary Analysis of Daughters in the Gospel of Mark,* Library of New Testament Studies 422 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 142 and Miller, *Women in Mark's Gospel*, 94, who both emphasise others' inclusion.

[11] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 237. Also, Etienne Trocme, *The Formation of the Gospel According to Mark* (London: SPCK, 1972), 32; and J. Davidson, *The Gospel of Jesus: In Search of his Original Teachings* (Queensland: Element, 1995), 82.

[12] Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Sociopolitical Reading of Mark's Gospel*, 3.

[13] Ched Myers, *Who Will Role Away the Stone: Discipleship Queries for First World Christians* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), 17. See also Appendix 6, which surveys a hundred-year period of domination by Rome of Greco-Roman Palestine, to which Mark alludes to with some Roman historical figures included in his story (cf. 3:6; 6:14–28; 15:1–39).

Rome's political control of Greco-Roman Palestine impacted the Galilean and Judean people differently, particularly the vulnerable people who desperately needed hope and transformative change. Some were dislocated from their communities and traditions, searching for an alternative space and identity, as the discussion below will demonstrate. Perhaps, Mark alludes to such people movements (migration or displacement) when referring to some crowds that follow Jesus as being "like sheep without a shepherd" (6:34) and "having nothing to eat" (8:2), or even in the itinerancy of the disciples (10:28).

Rome's imperial control was carried out via client-kings, their own administrators, and through collaboration with local religious leadership structures.[14] Tensions between these layers of authority led to ongoing power struggles between those "claiming to rule" (10:42) and to frequent outbursts of opposition from the people.[15] The Markan Jesus is clear that such relationships should differ between divisive worldly and human kingdoms, and God's reign and the Goodnews realised through Jesus, who welcomed everyone, even inviting back those lost to such human tendencies.

This daunting task entrusted to the faithful *motu o tagata* against the compelling forces of various controlling institutions is evident at each level of the tradition insofar as they can be discerned. Some are mentioned here to demonstrate their diverse impacts on the people and the need to face and overcome such negative consequences collectively, by participating as members of the faithful *motu o tagata* of Jesus' followers and believers.

[14] Pontius Pilate administered Judea (26–36 CE) as a "prefect," not an inferior "procurator." Judea was a troublesome part of the greater Roman province of Syria. See Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 2, 4.

[15] Keith D. Dyer, "Paul, Matthew, Israel and the Nations," *ABR* 68 (2020): 10. See also Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 32; R.S. Sugirtharajah, "Orientalism, Ethnonationalism and Transnationalism: Shifting Identities and Biblical Interpretation," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed., Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 419.

6.3.1 Roman domination

Rome's imperial footprint in the region created lasting rippling effects for both the land and the people, as the following discussion illustrates. Mark reflects such realities in his presentation of the *motu o tagata*, where diseases, demonic possessions, and other common personal afflictions were common (cf. 1:26; 5:3–13; 6:13; 9:17–18). Also, Mark's messianic presentation of Jesus as the Son of God clashed with Rome's emperor worship with significant implications for Jesus and the *motu o tagata* on the narrative level.[16] These tensions, and their implications for Mark's implied readers, often lie beneath the surface of the text, since for obvious reasons Roman power is rarely directly alluded to (5:9; 8:27; 10:42–45; and 12:13–17 are the closest exceptions).

Nevertheless, Joy argues convincingly that Mark counters Roman domination through his portrayal of Jesus questioning the "imperialistic tendencies of the worldly powers and structures."[17] This may have provided some comfort for Mark's implied readers as Rome exerted pressure upon a people who had just lost the symbols of their existence and hope—the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Mark's re-casting of the Temple's destruction (13:1–8), persecution (13:9–13), and desolating sacrifices (13:14–23) provide powerful reminders for the believing *motu o tagata* to remain steadfast and maintain their watchfulness (13:24–37), as they encountered such difficulties in their social, economic, and political lives.[18]

[16] Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, 209, states that Julius Caesar was worshiped as a god after his death. See also C.M. Pate, *Communities of the Last Days* (Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 126. The location of an Augusteum at Omrit, amongst "the villages of Caesarea Philippi" (8:27), provides the general location for Peter's confession and the turning point of the Gospel.

[17] Joy, "Markan Subalterns," 68.

[18] Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian*, 57. See also, Manno, "The Identity of Jesus and Christian Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark," 625.

This was the described reality for Galilean communities who experienced devastation during numerous incursions by the Roman armies (with support from their client kings).[19] Many people were reportedly killed, and properties and villages destroyed by the conquering armies.[20] Others were uprooted from their traditional settings and culture, resulting in displacement and landlessness, not just in Galilee but for many of the inhabitants throughout the Province of Syria in the last decades of the first century.

Rome's conquering armies were also accused of burning towns and slaughtering, crucifying, and enslaving people simply because of their tardiness in raising taxes.[21] Forced tributes were imperial and military strategies to bring provinces into line and demonstrate Rome's domination.[22] They were control mechanisms to crush the spirits of the people, such that Judea and Syria reportedly applied to Rome for tribute relief from 6–26 CE.[23] Mark's inclusion of the Herodians and the Pharisees' attempt to test and trap Jesus regarding payment of taxes to the emperor (12:14–15) reflects such ongoing political and economic issues faced by his communities of faithful believers.

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[19] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 33. See also Aviam, "People, Land, Economy and Belief in First-Century Galilee," 36, who suggests that those killed by the Roman advance during the first revolt were left unburied to generate fear in people of other fortified towns; Witherington, *New Testament History,* 77, relates six legions surrounding the Holy Land because it was a strategic hot spot in the empire under Augustus' reign (31 BCE–14 CE).

[20] Miriam Kammer, "Romanisation, Rebellion and the Theatre of Ancient Palestine," *Ecumenica* 3.1 (2010): 10, relays that successive revolts in Galilee precipitated the presence of a sizable Roman military there. Also, Aviam, "People, Land, Economy and Belief," 44, concludes that the presence of fortified constructions in Galilee showed their support for the revolt against Rome.

[21] Josephus, *War* 1.180, reports people being killed or their properties destroyed. Also, Josephus, *War* 1.219–222; *Jewish Antiquities: Books XII–XIV,* transl., Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1933), 14.271–275, relates Cassius' enslavement of the people of Gophna, Emmaus, Lydda, and Thamna for not paying taxes at all; Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 113, explains that failure to pay taxes to Rome was tantamount to rebellion.

[22] John Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 150. Also, Witherington, *New Testament History,* 76.

[23] J. Hayes and S. Mandell, *The Jewish People in Classical Antiquity: From Alexander to Bar Kochba* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 36–37. However, Hayim Lapin, "Feeding the Jerusalem Temple: Cult, Hinterland, and Economy in First-Century Palestine," *JAJ,* January 1 (2018): 430, argues that only some parts of Palestine paid taxes to Rome directly and that others were relieved of any military or administrative expenses.

Rome interpreted their successful military campaigns as bringing "peace" (*Pax Romana*) to conquered lands and certainly not as "slavery, subjugation, and exploitation."[24] However, at the grassroots level, the subjected people could only sense fear and submission to their political masters, as illustrated by the fearful Gerasenes (cf. 5:1–13). This episode seems to be a symbolic cleansing of a land abused and a people suppressed by a foreign entity. It also illuminates the people's fear of anyone purporting to subvert Roman domination and demonstrates the dreadful impact of Rome's occupation on conquered people.[25] Rome's control over its vast territories was made possible by its administrative system of governance. Some acquired territories were categorised as Senatorial provinces controlled by the senate, which appointed governors as administrators, such as Pilate. Imperial provinces were under the direct control of the Emperor, and military legions were deployed there for security reasons, such as the *Legio X Fretensis* in Gerasa.[26] Such control mechanisms are described to have secured Rome's "power, resiliency and dynamism."[27]

Rome also exerted its rule through a system of client kings as exemplified by the reigns of King Herod and his sons and with the ruling elites of different ethnic groups, such as the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.[28] These political arrangements extended Rome's control and

[24] Warren Carter, "Sanctioned Violence in the New Testament," *IJBT* 71.3 (2017): 288.

[25] See the discussions above in Chapter Four, Section 4.2 and sub-Section 4.3.1. See also Leander, *Discourses of Empire*, 2019–219, explores the connection between the Gerasene legion and Rome's oppressive rule and military prowess.

[26] Leander, *Discourses of Empire*, 203. Also, Christopher B. Zeichmann, "Military Forces in Judaea 6–130 CE: The *status quaestionis* and Relevance for New Testament Studies," *CBR* 17.1 (2018): 88, explains such arrangement undergirded security protocol where Rome and Italia were protected by Senatorial provinces. They were in turn protected by Imperial provinces, and with client kings and tribes protecting the outer periphery; Sean Freyne, *The World of the New Testament* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 52–53, explains the ranking order and supervisory powers of Roman governors. In reality, the Emperor had sole authority to bestow upon any Roman the right to rule any province.

[27] J. Fears, "Rome: The Ideology of Imperial Power," *Thought* 55.216 (1980): 98. See also Erich S. Gruen, "The Expansion of the Empire under Augustus," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, eds., Allan Bowman, Edward Champlin, and Andrew Lintott, second edition, volume 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 194–197.

[28] Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus*, 13. Also, Zeichmann, "Military Forces in Judaea," 94. Martin Goodman, *The Roman World 44 B.C.–A.D. 180* (London: Routledge, 1997), 110, explains that Rome had sole authority to remove any of these client kings whenever it became necessary.

imposed her ideologies onto various aspects of local aristocratic life while degrading and humiliating the people.[29] It has been said that such an approach was a "psychological weapon" aimed at defeating local hope and resistance and subjecting the people to fearful submission in their own land.[30]

Construction developments, such as the founding of cities and theatres, constituted further imperial appropriations and transformations of native space. Grand buildings, which were dedicated to Roman deities, reshaped Palestine's landscape, such that their overall impact is said to be a loud and visible proclamation: "*Rome Rules!*"[31] Their authority and control encompassed everything and everyone, including Mark's implied readers. In Palestine, that political domination was exerted through client-kings, Herod the Great and his sons, who were enthusiastic initiators of Imperial infrastructure.

6.3.2 King Herod and the Herodians

The Herodians mentioned in the Markan narrative (3:6; 12:13) are most likely members or associates of King Herod Antipas (6:21), the client-king ruler of Galilee (4 BCE–39 CE). They are described as conspiring with the Pharisees to destroy (3:6) and trap Jesus (12:13) because of Jesus' influence upon the 'crowds'. Jesus also cautioned the Twelve about the "yeast" of both the Pharisees and Herod (8:15), suggesting the corrupting influence of Pharisaic piety and Herodian power as agents for the Jerusalem leadership and Roman political power.[32] Adversely, their unusual collaboration also posed an "immediate threat to Jesus."[33]

[29] For example, Josephus records a soldier destroying a Torah scroll. See *War* 2.229; *Ant* 20.115. Another soldier exposed himself to a temple crowd. See *War* 2.224; *Ant* 20.108.

[30] Kammer, "Romanisation," 7.

[31] Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus,* 61.

[32] Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 148.

[33] Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels*, 137.

Historically, "King" Herod Antipas (6:14) and his brothers—Philip (6:17) and Archelaus—were sons of Herod the Great, whose father was Antipater, the Edomite.[34] Herod the Great was half-Jewish of Arab origin, whose unchallenged rule for over thirty years has been described as "murderous violence" against opposition.[35] To ensure his survival against power struggles, Herod has been accused of systematically executing traditional aristocratic families and confiscating their land.[36] His violent response to Jews who sided with the Parthians against him demonstrates this. After securing his throne with help from Mark Anthony, the Judeans on Herod's side endeavoured "not to leave a single adversary alive" by slaughtering many of their fellow Judeans, and no pity was shown to infants, the aged, and weak women.[37] His disregard and contempt for other people's lives are shockingly demonstrated in Matthew's Gospel, when Herod ordered the slaughter of the infants during Jesus' birth (cf. Matt 2:7–23). His son, Herod Antipas, followed the same path of brutality as demonstrated by his ordering of the beheading of John the Baptist (6:16, 25–28; cf. Matt. 5:5–11).

Such historical recollections of barbaric acts perpetuated by Herod the great and his sons, and which are corroborated by biblical accounts, do demonstrate their inhumane contempt for people's lives and disregard for others' welfare. These examples also reaffirm

[34] Julius Caesar appointed Antipater as a procurator of Judea in 47 BCE. His son, Herod the Great, made his political debut the same year, when Antipater appointed him governor of Galilee. Witherington, *New Testament History,* 55, recalls that Antipater was granted Roman citizenship with exemption from taxes. See also Josephus, *War* 1.194; *Ant* 14.127–137; Steward Henry Perowne, "Herod, King of Judea" (2018), https://www.britannica.com/biography/Herod-king-of-Judaea, defines Antipater as a man of great influence and wealth, who increased both by marrying the daughter of a noble from Petra in southern Jordan, the capital of the Nabataean kingdom.

[35] Carter, "Sanctioned Violence," 286, describes how Herod executed forty-five of the Jerusalem elite who opposed him.

[36] Sean Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London, New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 146.

[37] Josephus, *Ant* 14.480. Also, Josephus, *War* 1.250, describes how many Jews volunteered to fight with the Parthians who besieged Herod and his family in Jerusalem.

their oppressive nature as they abused their status and position to silence any attempt to overthrow their authority and control, as further emphasised by the following discussion.

Herod is said to have infuriated the Jewish population by corrupting their old ways.[38] In Galilee, his dominant influence translated into changes in communal rules, 'reforming' traditional collective structures, and oppressing the people.[39] Herod's building program dedicated magnificence structures to honour his patrons—the Greco-Roman emperors and deities.[40] This indicated his preference for Roman ideology and way of life while seeking to appease insults to faithful Jews, as epitomised by the image of a golden eagle at one of the temple gates[41] (cf. 13:14). Such major constructions placed enormous burdens and hardship on the people via taxes and forced labour.[42] Galilean and Judean Jews resented these developments as destabilising their custom, culture, and in particular, "the deterioration of their traditional kinship structures," which resulted in some people being relocated or displaced from their traditional communities.[43] Similar corrosive imperial and colonial practices as these occurred

[38] Josephus, *Ant* 15.267. Also, Sean Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel: Collected Essays* (Boston, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 93.

[39] F. Watson, "Why was Jesus Crucified?" *Theology* 88.722 (1985): 105–112.

[40] Josephus, *War* 1.401–421. See also Achim Lichtenberger, "Jesus and the Theatre in Jerusalem," in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed., James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 288. This extensive building program included the cities of Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste to honour his Roman patron, the fortresses of Herodium and Masada to protect the Judean frontier, and the Fortress Antonia in Jerusalem overlooking the Temple precinct. The most grandiloquent was the restoration of the Jerusalem Temple; Ehud Netzer, *The Architecture of Herod, the Great Builder,* Paperback Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 243.

[41] Josephus, *War* 1.650–655. Also, *Ant* 17.151–176, but the exact location of this is unknown. See also Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee*, 112–113, who provides an example of city baths built by both Herod the Great and his son, Herod Antipas, as reminders of Roman life.

[42] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 34–35, suggests that Herod and his tax collectors had bases within striking distances of every village in the country side. Also, Witherington, *New Testament History,* 55, agrees with Hayes and Mandell, *The Jewish People*, 125, that Herod was ruthless enough to extract an on-going source of revenues for Rome from both the people and aristocrats.

[43] See Annette Yoshiko Reed and Natalie B. Dohrmann, "Rethinking Romanness, Provincializing Christendom," in *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire: The Poetic of Power in Late Antiquity*, eds., Natalie B Dohrmann, and Annette Yoshiko Reed (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 5, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt4cgh5d.4, discuss the influence of Greek architectural style, language, culture, and knowledge in the making of Roman elites and their impact on the ordinary people. Also, Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee,* 113, discusses the negative effects of these foreign concepts for Galileans, in relation to water usage and building constructions. James Crossley, "Class Conflict in Galilee and the Gospel Tradition: A Materialist Suggestion," *ASE* 36.1 (2019): 46, attributes this to extensive building program in Sepphoris and Tiberias in Galilee, and Temple renovation in Jerusalem.

during the successive waves of foreign dominance in Samoa, as I will describe in the next chapter.

Other negative impacts also tarnished the reign of Herod Antipas' reign in Galilee. Chronic and seasonal diseases are said to have indiscriminately ravaged the population.[44] High mortality rates, frequent pregnancies, and forced migration weakened family networks, putting the elderly, especially women, in the most vulnerable situations.[45] Mark echoes such real life struggles in his story of the crowds with the inclusion of accounts such as the healing of a woman with blood (5:25–34), the story of the poor widow's offering (12:42–44), and the two feeding stories in the wilderness.

Antipas is accused of offending many pious Galilean Jews by building his new capital, the city of Tiberias, on a Jewish cemetery using forced labour.[46] To make matters worse, he forcefully coerced Galilean Jews (who considered Tiberias unclean due to its location) and uprooted impoverished people from his territories to populate his "Roman-esque site."[47] Antipas' unethical behaviour is illustrated in the Markan narrative when the Baptist criticised him for marrying Herodias, his brother Philip's wife (cf. 6:17–20; cf. 8:15).

After Herod Agrippa II's reign (40–44CE), Judea became a region of instability and violence due to the chaotic ramifications of economic hardships and famine.[48] Internal divisions between different religious sects further destabilised the region, which led to the prohibition of sacrifices for the emperor and Rome by Eleazer, son of the former High Priest, Ananias, in 66 CE.[49] This was the beginning of the first revolt against Rome.

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[44] See sub-Section 6.5.2 below.
[45] Jonathan L. Reed, "Instability in Jesus' Galilee: A Demographic Perspective," *JBL* 29.2 (2010): 345.
[46] Witherington, *New Testament History,* 84.
[47] Kammer, "Romanisation," 10. Also, Josephus, *Ant* 18.23.
[48] James W. Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 12.
[49] Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament*, 12.

The Herodian dynasty in Palestine can be characterised as an "aristocratic empire,"[50] which benefited a few privileged aristocratic rulers who seemed to enjoy living off the labour of many agrarian peasant families. This reshaped Palestine's social and physical landscape by encouraging social stratification and supplanting indigenous practices.[51] Economic exploitation and political corruption were considered normal practices, with the sale of political and religious offices and judicial decisions allegedly going to the highest bidder.[52] Such abuses of power had the making of a minority group of the prosperous elite and the majority of the poor and suffering people. Ensuring the continuation of such oppressive practices in Judea fell on Roman governors and administrators, such as Pilate.[53]

6.3.3 Pontius Pilate

In the Markan narrative, Pilate plays a passive yet highly significant role in Jesus' crucifixion.[54] 'Passive' describes Pilate's reluctant conclusion to crucify Jesus, which was greatly influenced by the crowd's persistent shouting. It is also 'highly significant' because Pilate had the final say and probably enjoyed seeing the Jewish leadership begging for it, even though they used the crowd to convey their wish to crucify Jesus.

Crucifixion was a slow, excruciatingly painful death reserved for the worst criminals, insurrectionists, and rebels who committed crimes against Rome's imperial control.[55] Josephus

[50] K.C. Hanson and Douglas Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), 67.

[51] Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee,* 117, charts this "Herodian-Roman landscape strategy."

[52] Josephus, *Ant* 20.213, refers to this as the "buying of the high priestly families."

[53] Witherington, *New Testament History,* 61, concludes that Herod desired to be seen as a Hellenistic monarch who fully participated in the Greco-Roman world.

[54] Tacitus, P. Cornelius. *Annals, Book XV*, transl., Alfred J. Church and William J. Brodribb, ed., Robert Maynard Hutchins (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1952) 15.44, records "Christus … had suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius, by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate."

[55] Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 22–38, discusses the history of crucifixion from its barbaric forms to the Roman punishment. Also,

describes it as "the most wretched of deaths."[56] The Roman statesman Cicero refers to it as the "most cruel, disgusting, [and] extreme penalty."[57] Hanson and Oakman agree:

> Crucifixion was an institution of humiliation, torture and execution, designed to deal with the people considered most threatening to the establishments … [and] to strike fear into the hearts of any who would dare pose a threat to the status quo.[58]

This humiliation shamed a person's identity in such a fashion as to eradicate it in full view of the public, as exemplified by Jesus' crucifixion in the Gospels.[59] According to Horsley, Mark represents Jesus as a rebel executed by the military governor of the Roman occupying forces in Judea, Pilate.[60]

This historical interest sums up Pilate's legacy in Judea, a region most Roman officials considered a minor and less desirable provincial assignment.[61] As a prefect of Judea, he commanded an auxiliary force, entitling him to "military, financial and judiciary powers."[62] Pilate is said to have abused such privileges by repeatedly executing people without trial, especially with lowly non-citizens of Rome.[63] This was a highly discriminatory and psychologically demoralising punishment, which is said to have emphasised the offender's social status rather than the seriousness of the crime committed.[64] Two Jewish testimonies—

Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, eds., Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 710.

[56] Josephus, *Jewish Wars: Books IV–VII,* ed., G. P. Goold, transl., J. Thackeray (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1928), 7.203.

[57] Cicero, *Verrem* 2:5.165, 2:5.168, cited by Andrew Ruth, "A Bit More History Regarding Crucifixion," http://www.oaklandpresbyterianchurch.org/a-bit-more-history-regarding-crucifixion.

[58] Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 90–95.

[59] Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 272–273. Also, Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 50, 58, relays that Jesus' crucifixion took place near a major access road, in full view of the travelling public.

[60] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 41–42. Also, Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 173–174.

[61] Witherington, *New Testament History,* 108. For examples of Greek and Roman hegemonic positions on the Judeans' low status on the ethnic ladder, see Harland, "Climbing the Ethnic Ladder," 670.

[62] Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People at the Age of Jesus (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, revised and edited by Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973), 1.359, 1.362–64. See also Zeichmann, "Military Forces in Judaea," 93, who differentiates auxiliary forces from legionaries. Auxiliary forces had both an infantry and cavalry soldiers who were awarded Roman citizenship after their military service.

[63] Justin J. Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus: Why was Jesus Put to Death, but his Followers were not?" *JSNT* 29.4, eds. David G. Horrell et al. (London: SAGE Publications, 2007): 379–413. Also, Philo, *Embassy to Gaius,* 310–302.

[64] Carter, "Sanctioned Violence," 290.

Josephus and Philo—have allowed biblical scholars to describe Pilate's demeanour of unjust condemnations, brutal mistreatment of protesting crowds, and harsh treatment of the Jews.[65] These accounts portray a cruel man that may have not necessarily been reflected in the Gospels.[66]

Pilate exhibited a high degree of insensitivity to Jewish religious and social customs and used brutal force to accomplish his way.[67] His honourary tributes to Roman deities were considered intentional and provocative, and as motivated mostly by the desire to annoy and infuriate the Jewish multitude.[68] Secretly bringing into Jerusalem imperial standards during the night (cf. 13:14) caused alarm, outrage, and the people stood ready to be sacrificed for their belief as a form of protest. It allegedly forced Pilate to back down, a decision that appears uncharacteristic of the historical Pilate, but accords with the Gospel accounts of a dithering ruler. Mark's retelling of Jesus' crucifixion echoes this casual vacillation when Pilate satisfied the wish of the crowds by releasing Barabbas, the insurrectionist, and handing over an innocent Jesus to be crucified (15:8–15).

It has been argued that Pilate promoted Roman religion in the form of an "imperial cult" in his coinage and inscription.[69] This historical preference is countered in the Markan narratives with the messianic presentation of Jesus as the Son of God (1:1). These different realms and opposing ideologies collided both on the narrative and historical levels when Pilate authorised Jesus' crucifixion (15:20).[70] From the shadow of the cross, an all-encompassing

[65] Warren Carter, *Pontius Pilate: A Portrait of a Roman Governor* (Collegeville: Michael Glazer, 2003), 54.

[66] Norman H. Young, ""The King of the Jews:" Jesus before Pilate (John 18:28–19:22)," *ABR* 66 (2018): 31, relates this to a "misunderstanding of the Fourth Gospel's purpose in having Pilate interrogating Jesus inside the praetorium while disputing with his accusers outside of it."

[67] Witherington, *New Testament History,* 108. Also, Josephus, *War* 2.169–171; Hayes and Mandell, *The Jewish People*, 156.

[68] Joan E Taylor, "Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judaea," *NTS* 25.4, October (Cambridge: United Kingdom, 2006): 575.

[69] See Taylor, "Pontius Pilate," 556–575.

[70] Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44.

transformation was taking place within Galilee and Judea (16:6–7) and beyond Palestine, as illustrated by the centurion's confession: "Truly this man was God's Son" (15:39). This potential for transformation has since enlightened every corner of the globe, even Oceania and the Samoan Islands, although more urgent work needs to be done to invite back those still blinded to this Goodnews.

This can also be said of the Jewish leaders who were the custodians of the most sacred institution in Israel and the Jewish belief system, the Temple. For the people and Jesus in the Markan narrative, the Temple symbolises an exploitative system, espoused by its corrupt custodians—the Sadducean leaders.

6.3.4 Jewish leaders and the Jerusalem Temple

The Jewish leadership in Jerusalem represents another layer of controlling institutions in Mark's Gospel. They seem to have negated their responsibility to the people (cf. 6:34, 8:2) by exploiting their roles and functions to legitimise their claim to authority. Throughout the narrative, Jesus reveals such contradictions as he accuses these leaders of abandoning God's commandments in favour of their traditions (7:1–13), their hardened hearts to change God's purpose in creation (cf. 10:2–9), their pretences (cf. 12:38–40), evil plans (cf. 14:1–2), unethical conduct (cf. 14:10–11), and so forth.

Even God's house, the Temple, does not escape such abuse. Notably, the Jerusalem leadership seems to have turned a blind eye regarding the economic side of sacrificial processes. Selling and buying (of sacrificial animals) and changing money (11:15) by their economic nature involve profit extractions which the people have to pay while piously adhering to their religious obligations.[71] This is implied in Jesus' accusation that God's house of prayer

[71] See Appendix 7 for pilgrim's obligatory contributions to the Temple.

had been turned into a den of robbers (11:15–17).[72] The chief priests and the scribes' reaction (11:18) adds some validity to Jesus' accusation that some sort of corrupt collusion allegedly exists between these market operators and the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

Such exploitive tendencies contribute to an expanding economic divide between wealthy leaders and the marginalised people. Mark captures this by reference to the scribal extravagance that devours the widows' houses (12:38–44), which is said to be a characteristic feature of first-century Judea.[73] Jesus' teachings (cf. 8:15; 12:1–12, 18–27) and activities (11:15–18) confront this leadership group and expose their abuses and oppressive behaviour against the people. In response, the leaders deem Jesus' actions dangerous, and a threat which could encourage rebellious movements from the people (cf. 11:18, 32; 12:12; 14:1–2), and repercussions from Rome.

The Temple was the central focus of Jewish life and was cultically respected as the house of God (cf. 1 Kgs 8:12–53; 1 Chr 9:11, 13, 26; Zech 8:9; Neh 6:10) and the locus of divine presence. These sentiments constituted the essence of a collective holy and prayerful life for all Jews. The Temple was considered the central focus of their attention, desire, fulfilment, and an identity they were willing to die for.[74] Such emotional attachments are said to define their belief in Yahweh's presence amongst his people, regulating their lives and sharing their religious and emotional experiences in a collective manner.[75]

For Mark's emerging communities of believers, the Temple may have remained at one level a place symbolic of teaching (cf. 12:38, 41; Acts 3:1, 11–26; Acts 4:1–2) despite Jesus'

[72] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 240. Also, Timothy Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 23–27, argues that these operations made the Temple an economic centre as well as a religious one; English, *The Message of Mark*, 190, describes such operations as a "trade and profit," a particular attitude of these Jews towards Gentile pilgrims.

[73] Martin Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 59–66.

[74] Barton, "Why Do Things Move People?" 356–358.

[75] Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity*, 1.

condemnation and judgement of it before its destruction (13:2). For these faithful followers, the Temple is said to provide an "orientation on holiness" and a "profound focus on eschatological hope" for all,[76] irrespective of ethnicities and preferences and despite their minority status.

Jesus' so-called cleansing of the Temple can then be considered a symbolic cleansing (judging!) of its custodians and people with selfish ambitions, as Jesus recalled Jeremiah's prophetic condemnation of a people who departed from God's commands for justice (cf. Jer 4:11). Their ill-conceived faith that the Lord's temple would provide them with a safe haven was false. The Temple would not shield them from God's judgement (cf. Jer 7:4–15). Ira Driggers fittingly correlates this with Jesus' denouncement of the arrogant scribes' false piety (12:38–40) against the background of the poor widow's devoted offering (12:41–44). For Driggers, it provides a "small but disturbingly clear window into … scribal extravagance at the expense of poor and helpless people."[77]

Such abuses contravened the Temple's purpose as a house of prayer and a symbol of hope for both Jewish faithful and Jesus' followers collectively. These abuses no longer rendered the Temple a place of oneness with God and one another but a symbol of wealth, division, and stratification.[78] Jesus exposed these deceptions (not just within the Temple) and revealed elsewhere the Jewish leaders' false theological beliefs and leadership because they knew neither "the scriptures nor the power of God" (12:24). Even personal greed and individualistic ambitions facilitated this separation, as alluded to in Mark's narratives with the rich young man's decision not to share his many possessions (10:21–22). Nevertheless, this

[76] Barton, "Why Do Things Move People," 364. Also, Geir Otto Holmas, "'My house shall be a house of prayer': Regarding the Temple as a Place of Prayer in Acts within the Context of Luke's Apocalyptical Objective," *JSNT* 27.4 (2005): 400.

[77] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 240.

[78] Barton, "Why Do Things Move People," 358.

young man is the only one in the Gospel that Jesus is said to love (10:21), again evoking the truth that the invitation into the loving reign of God remains open to all the *motu o tagata.*

The Temple became an economic and political centre of local collaboration with Rome,[79] and thus associated with the "defining features of ancient domination systems: *ruled by a few, economic exploitation,* and *religious legitimation.*"[80] Its custodians seemed to misuse the people's admiration for the Temple to facilitate a centralised control system over the collection of tithes, redistribution, payments of taxes, and even the economic side of its religious functions. Its treasury is said to be a store of extraordinary wealth, which the religious leaders selfishly accessed for themselves while neglecting the needs of the people.[81] To protect the Temple's economic wealth and in collaboration with Rome, the leaders willingly and gladly obeyed their worldly lord, Rome, instead of adhering to Yahweh's commands (cf. 12:24). It is not surprising then that the economic politicisation of the Temple led Jesus to predict its destruction (13:2), which history subsequently confirmed.

Archaeologists have discovered lavish mansions on the upper city overlooking the Temple that the high priestly families built for themselves.[82] Even Jewish literature recalls a wicked priest, who, upon attaining rule over Israel, became proud in his heart and acted faithlessly for the sake of riches. He robbed and collected the wealth of men and heaped sinful

[79] Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament*, xiii.

[80] Borg and Crossan, *Last Week,* 15–16, (italics original) talk about a two-layered domination system: "the local domination system centred in the Temple is subsumed under the imperial domination system that is Roman rule."

[81] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2016), 264, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt17mcs1x, relays the "pietists" complained about the Hasmoneans using Temple money for "other things." See also Horsley, "Introduction: Jesus, Paul, and the 'Art of Resistance', 1, who argues that paying taxes benefited the elites only and not the people; Loader, *The New Testament with imagination*, 3, argues that the majority of the people fell through the redistribution cracks of both synagogue and the Temple.

[82] Richard A. Horsley, "Moral Economy and the Renewal Movement in Q," in *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q,* ed., Richard A. Horsley, (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 152. See also Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus,* 201; Mattila, "Revisiting Jesus' Capernaum," 103, lists, among other luxurious items excavated in priestly family homes in Jerusalem, a number of expensive finer red-slipped table wares, imported from Tyre, which only the rich could afford. This extravagant lifestyle could not be supported by their portion of the tithe alone.

iniquity upon himself.[83] These examples explain the people's sustained attacks against the high-priestly families and their mansions at the beginning of the first revolt.[84] Josephus tells of another Jesus, son of Ananias, who warned against temple corruption for seven years before the Romans destroyed it in 70 CE.[85]

From this evidence, John Elliott rightly describes the Temple as the "centre of political and religious control … [which] is both the scene and object for conflicts – arrests and imprisonment," which led to much criticism of its "leadership, lynching and murder."[86] The Temple and its custodians were effectively oppressing the people. Their collaboration with Rome and enculturation of its ideologies led to hardship and protests from the people.

The temple leadership was headed by the high priest, who is not named in the Markan narrative. Other Gospel accounts name Caiaphas as the high priest (cf. Matt 26:3, 57; Luke 3:2; John 18:13; Acts 4:6).[87] He was assisted by a council of chief priests, the elders, and the scribes (14:53; cf. Matt 26:57–59; Luke 22:66), including the Pharisees and the Sadducees (12:18).[88] Caiaphas had the difficult task of being accountable to Rome and accommodating the needs of the local population. However, the Gospel of John suggests that Caiaphas was more concerned with keeping Rome happy. He prophesied Jesus would die for the people rather than the

[83] Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition,* Volume One: 1Q1 – 4Q273 (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 17.

[84] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 115.

[85] Josephus, *War* 7.301–309.

[86] John H. Elliott, "Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed., Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 211–240.

[87] Craig A. Evans, "Excavating Caiaphas, Pilate, and Simon of Cyrene: Assessing the Literary and Archaeological Evidence," in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed., James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006): 327–328, doubts the discovery of an ossuary with the inscription of Caiaphas' mane. This discovery has generated interest and disagreement.

[88] See Kingsbury, "The religious authority in the Gospel of Mark," 44, for summaries of the various connections between these religious authorities. Also, Witherington, *New Testament History*, 45–48, briefly summarises the Pharisees' position. They were generally of a lower station in terms of social position than the Sadducees. They lacked political power and although they had members in the Sanhedrin, they did not control it. That was the provenance of the high priest and his closest allies—the Sadducees. Major philosophical differences marked Jesus' relationship with the Pharisees as they each sought to reform God's people in light of their profoundly held convictions.

Romans destroying the entire nation (cf. John 11:49–52), the first part of his claim ironically being fulfilled in the death of Jesus.

These Gospel accounts suggest Caiaphas prioritises pleasing Rome via tribute payments and maintaining order. Such actions are considered idolatrous in serving a different master, which contradict his divinely-sanctioned responsibility of serving God.[89] Unfortunately, their different priorities and political stance had led to them silencing the cries and ignoring the people's suffering as an illegitimate religious exercise. Any sign of opposition that threatened this had to be monitored and suppressed, as exemplified by their monitoring of Jesus' activities (cf. 3:22, 7:1, 5; 12:13), as he started his mission in Galilee. In Jerusalem, Mark describes Jesus making his views known to the authorities (cf. 11:15–17, 11:27–12:44). They confronted him. He had to be stopped.

The Jewish religious leaders effectively neglected their covenant with Yahweh when they conformed and obeyed their foreign masters via its most sacred institution—the Temple. It is said to be the most powerful and oppressive institution in the Markan narrative.[90] Its custodians are accused of exploiting and controlling its cultic and economic practices and privileges for their own "indulgence."[91] They even reject God's presence in Jesus, who charges them with oppressing the people in their pursuit of the abundance of wealth they receive and derive from the Temple's religious and economic operations.

Unfortunately, these imperial authorities—King Herod, the Herodians, Pilate, and the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem—sought opportunities to "advance their own position vis-à-vis

[89] Evans, "Excavating Caiaphas," 329, observes the penetration of pagan culture into Jewish life, even within priestly circles of the highest rank. He agrees with L.Y. Rahmani, "A Note on Charon's *Obol*," *Atiqot* 22 (1993): 150, who argues that the pagan practice of placing coins in the mouth of the deceased "may well have been seen, by standards of Jewish law, an act of idolatry."

[90] Driggers, "The Politics of Divine Presence," 247, whose conclusion does not relate to the Temple and its system of offering and sacrifices, but how the temple leaders exploited these for their personal gain.

[91] Josephus, *Apion,* ed., H.J. Thackeray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), 2.195, warns that temple sacrifices were not occasions for drunken indulgence.

each other" in their "shared interest of maintaining ruling power."[92] These arrangements impacted an entire people in different ways. The elite enjoyed and indulged themselves, with notable exceptions (10:21; 12:28–34; 15:43), but for the many negatively impacted people, their reality was just to survive physically, mentally, and spiritually. The people were in need of hope, which they did not get from their leaders and which was made worse by economic processes and political structures. These abuses of power impacted the poor and marginalised more than the elite (the majority of the 'crowd' in Mark), but the hope for transformation and justice is extended to everyone in the *motu o tagata,* both then and now.

6.4 The socioeconomic impact on Mark's implied readers

As different forms of leadership affected the people differently, there were also influences upon the wider *motu o tagata* in Greco-Roman Palestine driven by socioeconomic factors. A centralised market economy had created an economically prosperous society for some, but not everyone benefited equally.[93] Particularly in Galilee, various authorities (and those with privilege) took full advantage of its fertile plains, lake resources, and the people.[94] The opposite was life's reality for the many, who are said to be synonymous with varying degrees of poverty.[95] The consolidation of smaller landholdings into big estates strained relationships between rural peasant families and wealthy urban dwellers, including landlords,

[92] Carter, "Sanctioned Violence," 291.

[93] J. Andrew Overman, "Jesus of Galilee and the Historical Peasant," in *Archaeology and the Galilee*, eds., Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 67–74.

[94] Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel,* 95. Also, Moshe Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy in Palestine under Roman Rule," *JESHO* 49.3 (2006): 308, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25165150, argues that the fruits of labour of the innocent, pious, and humble farmers mostly ended up in warehouses and coffers of the treasury, or in the pockets of the interest-taking operators. Archaeological remains do indicate some prosperous towns in Galilee, but until recently there has been little interest in excavating what, if anything, remains from the majority population—the subsistence and below-subsistence workers and slaves.

[95] Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels,* 160. Also, David A. Fiensy, "Introduction," in *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, eds., David A. Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins, SBL 11 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 2.

with the former showing greater hatred and suspicion towards the latter.[96] Mark echoes such historical friction between these groups with the inclusion of the parable of the 'wicked tenants' (12:1–12) in his narrative. These changes were increasingly evident throughout the first century, and intensified in the aftermath of the Jewish revolt.

This situation had to be endured nonetheless, to ensure the survival of rural families in the realm of a "political economy of market exchange."[97] It required increasing agricultural production to meet the extra demands of a broader market beyond local agrarian communities. This contributed to the disintegration of familial and communal living, in turn contributing to increased tensions, malnutrition, and illness amongst village communities.[98] For these reasons, people were forced into more complex, diversified, and highly stratified societies.[99] As the market economy developed and expanded (cf. 4:19), it pressured already struggling agrarian communities. Mark alludes to such realities in his Gospel with references to family divisions (13:9–13), diseases and demonic possession, and people being stigmatised by their conditions (cf. 3:1; 5:25; 7:32) and roles (cf. 2:15–16).

6.4.1 Agrarian communities and the market economy

The Romanisation of Palestine highlights the strategic importance of this otherwise relatively insignificant region,[100] situated between two of Rome's critical provinces—Syria and Egypt. This prominent location necessitated secure trade routes and networks, enabling access

[96] Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 170–196. Also, Reed, "Instability in Jesus' Galilee," 344.

[97] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 48.

[98] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 117. Also, Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People*, 39, 201, states that living in close quarters could quickly spread infectious diseases.

[99] Dever, *Beyond the Texts,* 466. Also, Avraham Faust, *The Archaeology of Israelite Society in Iron Age II* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012), 222.

[100] Kammer, "Romanisation," 7, describes this as a deliberate acculturation program where provinces were bestowed with marks of Roman civilisation as forms of control. See also Edd S. Noell, "A "Marketless World"? An Examination of Wealth and Exchange in the Gospels and First-Century Palestine," *JMM* 10.1, Spring (2007): 93.

to local and various foreign markets.[101] As a result, the development and diversification of local agricultural and fishery enterprises in Galilee intensified, particularly with monetary values as exchange measures.[102]

At the top echelon of this economic hierarchy, the Herodians quickly strengthened their position by diversifying their involvement into various industries, which they mainly controlled with other powerful family interests with large estates.[103] Income produced by these economic activities and taxes collected from the people afforded Herod with an abundance of wealth (and forced labour) to continue his building programme, such as his Roman-like city of Tiberias on the shores of Lake Gennesaret (or the Sea of Galilee, as Mark prefers). In a similar way, influential holders of large landholdings, such as one John of Gischala, whom Josephus describes as having monopolised the olive oil industry in Upper Galilee, raked in a considerable profit.[104] Such a disproportionate distribution of wealth at the time is demonstrated by the discovery of industrial-scale oil presses in the wealthy quarters of Gamala and a well-constructed building with a *miqweh* (ritual bath).[105] This extravagant lifestyle is alluded to in

[101] In Palestine, this was connected more with the immediate lucrative markets in Phoenician cities and ports (Tyre and Sidon) rather than the East-West traffic, though Caesarea Maritima provided some opportunity for military movements and control. See R. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 48–58.

[102] Sean Freyne, "Herodian Economics in Galilee," in *Modelling Early Christianity*, ed., Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 41. Also, Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People*, 39; Witherington, *New Testament History,* 113–114, suggests Galilee supplied many of the regional markets with grains, corn, olives and olive oil, and fish with their famous fish sauce—*garum*, favoured by Rome.

[103] Noell, "A "Marketless World," 94, highlights some flourishing industries in Galilee, such as the development of a number of trades, specialisation in agriculture, handicrafts such as tanners and pottery, and the thriving olive and fishing industry. However, Dominic J. Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (New York: Harper-One, 1998), 155, claims that giving up a life as a peasant farmer to become a peasant artisan was a step down, not up, in the pecking order of status and wealth.

[104] Josephus, *War* 2.591–592.

[105] Mattila, "Revisiting Jesus' Capernaum," 107. Also, Ronny Reich and Marcela Zapata-Meza, "A Preliminary Report on the *Miqwa'ot* of Migdal," *IEJ* 64.1 (2014): 70, points out such structures were uncommon for villages around the Sea of Galilee since the lake could be used for ritual immersion. However, Yonatan Adler, "Toward an 'Archaeology of Halakhah': Prospects and Pitfalls of Reading Early Jewish Law into the Ancient Material Record," *AT* 1 (2012): 30, argues the excavations of these ritual baths at many Jewish archaeological sites indicate the prominent use of these by the time of the early Roman occupation of Palestine.

the Markan narrative with the denouncement by Jesus of the Scribal class (cf. 12:38–40, but again, note the prior exception in 12:34).

At the lower end of this economic disparity, a poor harvest due to various reasons (cf. 4:3–9) could force small family farmers to sell their land.[106] And quite often, similar small parcels of land were manipulatively taken as debt payments by the wealthy creditors.[107] Subsequently, these former owners became indentured servants or land tenants who then had to cultivate these landholdings on behalf of the absentee landlords (cf. 12:1–11).[108] To rub salt in the wound, these people of the land (traditional owners) then became taxpayers for activities performed on these lands, which they had previously owned all their lives as a perpetual gift from their God, Yahweh.[109]

Numerous agrarian families who were still fortunate enough to keep and work their own land, and even many Jews in the region operated on a barter system of exchange to meet their needs.[110] In contrast, the ruling elite focused more on maximising product extraction from their landholdings for their indulgence and securing "power and influence" through controlling coinage and taxation.[111] This meant tightening their control over production flow for their own

[106] Netzer, *The Architecture of Herod*, 244.

[107] Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 285. Also, "Baba Mesia 5:3," in *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, ed., Jacob Neusner (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1988), explains that the Mishnah appears to support this fictitious act of mortgaging (as a form of sale), where the sale became absolute for non-payments.

[108] Philip F. Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," in *The Early Christian World*, ed., Philip F. Esler, Volume I (London and New York: Routledge; Taylor and Francis Group, 2000), 11.

[109] Scott Korb, *Life in Year One: What the World Was Like in First-Century Palestine* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), 163. Also, Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 287, 290, shows that when Pompey conquered Jerusalem, he claimed Judea as property of the Roman people. Julius Caesar then allowed the inhabitants to lease land from the state on which they had to pay rental fees.

[110] Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels,* 114. Also, Dever, *Beyond the Texts,* 463.

[111]Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis, Book I: Moral Goodness,* transl., Walter Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), http://www.constitution.org/rom/de_officiis.htm#book1. See also Santiago Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed., Halvor Moxnes (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), 45; Aristotle, *Politics,* 1.9, argues that the invention of coinage led to the art of wealth accumulation and gaining the greatest profit that could be made; Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," 11, terms this development "advanced agrarian" with the use of the plough to allow cultivation of a much large area of land, thus facilitating the production of agricultural surpluses.

benefit.[112] Mark alludes to such industries with references to fishing (cf. 1:16–20), farming (cf. 4:1–8), manufacturing (cf. 12:1), and livestock (cf. 5:14). Yet despite all the references to crossing the Sea of Galilee in Mark, there is not one mention of the city of Tiberias—the centre of trade and taxation. The locus of Jesus' mission and engagement with the 'crowds' is elsewhere, in the villages and wilderness.

Mark's narrative logic cannot prevent a reality-shift to a wider market network traversing regional boundaries, which placed Galilean (and Judean) peasant farmers under duress as they struggled to meet the extra demands.[113] This forcefully dictated their work ethic to produce more, despite space constraints and limited resources.[114] A competitive approach to be more proficient ensued for survival, which meant that when one gained, it was necessary that someone else had to lose, and the losers were always those with less privilege and power.[115] They could resort to credit borrowing to survive, but this meant risking falling into a permanent situation of dependence.[116] Such conditions are congruent with the involvement of the hired men (1:20), leased tenants (12:1), and crowds of the lost (6:33–44) and hungry people (8:1–10) in the Markan narrative. They also describe the sorts of pressure emerging in Samoa with the alienation of customary landholdings as the former Government approved long-term leases, as I will describe in the next chapter.

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[112] Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus,* 106–112, explain that besides agricultural produce, the fishing industry was also an important part of life in Galilee. Fishing was controlled by the elites who sold fishing rights to brokers (tax collectors or publicans), who in turn contracted with fishers. The fishers received capital investment (for boats and nets) along with fishing rights and were therefore indebted to these brokers.

[113] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 45.

[114] Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd edition. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 89. See also Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People*, 74, who describes Palestine as a rough hilly countryside with thin rocky soils and scant and unpredictable rainfalls, which severely limited agricultural production.

[115] P. Perkins, "Does the New Testament Have an Economic Message?" in *Wealth in Western Thought: The Case For and Against Riches*, ed., Paul G. Schervish (Westport: Praeger, 1994), 47.

[116] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Form of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 236–240, provides an example where peasant households required a certain level of resources to meet their ceremonial and social obligations as well as the demands of taxation.

For the Palestinian agrarian farmers, borrowing exposed them and other peasant families to the risk of debts that must be honoured.[117] Such an arrangement forced a struggling farmer into two potentially disadvantageous scenarios: lose his plot of land and become land tenants or indentured labourers (cf. 12:1), or, pay principal and interest for a loan to keep it. Meanwhile, the wealthy lender gained from either eventuality. The existence of debt archives burnt at the beginning of the Jewish war testified to this and demonstrated heavy indebtedness in the pre-70 CE period.[118] This reaffirms the inequality of people's experience, some of whom risked their lives fighting against paying taxes to Rome at the outset of Roman occupation, such as Judas the Galilean and his followers.[119]

For the landlords and local wealthy families, the developing market economy necessitated moving from rural to urban centres or cities for protection from the disgruntled land tenants at the country side.[120] This urbanised migration improved interconnectivity between villages and greater mobility.[121] Nonetheless, this people movement (and uprootedness) created consumption centres,[122] where wealthy residents lived parasitically off the surrounding countryside while not engaging much in production (or productive reinvestment) themselves.[123] This forced migration benefited the landlord elites as it meant

[117] Noell, "A "Marketless World," 89, explains that Hillel introduced a system (*prosbul*) which ensured payment of debt. Also, Horsley, "Moral Economy," 148; Martin Goodman, "The First Jewish Revolt: Social Conflict and the Problem of Debt," *JJS* 33 (1982): 417–427, argues that peasant family debt was one of the main catalysts for the Jewish Revolt.

[118] Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day* (Lewiston, Queenstown: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 73. Also, Korb, *Life in Year One*, 173.

[119] Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament*, xiv, 11.

[120] Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels,* 147, 149, 151. Most of the prized land in Herodian territories were owned by people in either Sepphoris or Tiberias, or even some wealthy Jerusalemites.

[121] C. Thomas McCollough, "City and Village in Lower Galilee: Excavations at Sepphoris and Khirbet Qana (Cana) for Framing the Economic Context of Jesus," in *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, eds., David A. Fiensy and Ralph K. Hawkins, SBL 11 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 76.

[122] Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People*, 73, argues these cities organised the countryside—outlying towns, villages, and agricultural areas—in order to feed themselves. Also, Korb, *Life in Year One*, 35, contends the rebuilding of Sepphoris by Herod Antipas was made possible and "paid for on the backs of the rural poor," just like Tiberias, which was supported by "local farmers and fishermen."

[123] Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy,* 2nd edition (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 126. See also Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel,* 98, who argues that the wealthy elites had little interest in re-

severing once and for all any obligated assistance to the needy rural communities.[124] The people who depended on these relief services in times of extreme threats were thus alienated and left to fight for their own survival.

It is highly plausible these conditions fostered sociopolitical movements of people seeking cultural change, as reflected in various *ochloi* in the Markan narrative. Such responses highlighted the people's lived reality and hostility towards the wealthy elites and city authorities, who controlled their lives socially and economically. This was demonstrated by the many Galileans who joined the impoverished classes in Tiberias in destroying Herod's palace during the revolt of 66 CE.[125] Mark alludes to such hostile resentment with the inclusion of a rebel insurrectionist, Barabbas (15:7).

Hence, economic development does not necessarily translate to social equality. This difficulty has been attributed to different economic structures linked together by a "common thread of economic inequity and oppression, and a common thread of struggle against needless economic suffering."[126] For agrarian societies in ancient Palestine, economic development replaced familial and communal concepts, such as reciprocity, which was significantly reshaped by market trade and redistribution.[127]

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investing into the economy of the countryside. He also reiterates that local elites vied with each other for available resources without much sensitivity for the deprived peasantry (192).

[124] James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 175. However, Donald Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 42, argues that similar centres, such as Corinth, did support their surrounding districts.

[125] Josephus, *Life* 66, cited by Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels,* 139, 148. Also, Crossley, "Class Conflict in Galilee," 44–45, reports of great hatred levelled at Sepphoris and Tiberias during the first revolt.

[126] Norman K. Gottwald, *Hebrew Bible in Its Social World and Ours* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 346.

[127] Noell, "A "Marketless World,"" 93.

6.4.2 Reciprocity and redistribution

Reciprocity encompasses a mutual exchange of goods, services, or privileges. These economic activities within familial and communal settings are governed by "dyadic contracts" of "social give and take."[128] Thomas Carney explains its basic mechanics:

> Among members of a family, goods and services are freely given (full reciprocity). Among members of a cadet line within a clan, gifts would be given; but an eye would be kept on the balanced return-flow of counter-gifts (weak reciprocity). Outside the tribe, mutuality ends (negative reciprocity).[129]

In the ancient world, reciprocity is said to be "perhaps the most significant form of social interaction," structured and embedded in social relations.[130] People intimately understood one another, treated each other like family members, and sharing was "personal."[131] Adversely, refusing to share with others was tantamount to regarding them as outsiders.[132] On the narrative level, such opposing relationships form the basis of "in-group" and "out-group" formations that determine their inclusion or temporary exclusion from the *motu o tagata*.

Reciprocity supported families and societies collectively, especially those whose members lived in primitive conditions which caused frequent illness and short life expectancy.[133] This was mutually enriching in both directions when both giver and receiver supported each other in need and generosity.[134] Not only did such support systems provide for

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[128] Douglas Oakman, "The Ancient Economy," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed., Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 129.

[129] Thomas F. Carney, *Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquities* (Kansas: Colorado Press, 1975), 176. See also Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 124, who classify this differently. General reciprocity constituted borrowing now and repaying sometime later, and balanced reciprocity was to borrow now and repay shortly.

[130] Malina, *The New Testament World*, 94. Also Noell, "A "Marketless World," 88.

[131] G. Stansell, "Gifts, Tributes, and Offerings," in *The Social Setting of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds., Wolfgang Stegemann, Bruce Malina, and Gerd Theissen (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), cited by Noell, "A "Marketless World," 88. Also, D.C. North, "Markets and Other Allocation Systems in History: The Challenge of Karl Polanyi," in *Economic Sociology*, ed., Richard Swedberg (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996), 165.

[132] P.J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, and M.M. Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapid: Eerdmans, 2001), 172.

[133] Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels,* 153. Also, Reed, "Instability in Jesus' Galilee," 344.

[134] John M.G. Barclay, "Paul, Reciprocity, and Giving with the Poor," in *Reflections on Paul and the Practices of Ministry in Honor of Susan G. Eastman*, ed., Presian R. Burrough (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018), 21.

each party's prospective households, but they enhanced communal sharing. Profit gain was never entertained and indeed "barred," as exchange prices were not motivated by personal gain.[135] Social solidarity was improved, which prioritised a collective interest for everyone's benefit, not just those with means.

This reciprocated relationship also accounted for the constraints of limited space and available resources.[136] Living in such confined communal settings could explain some traditional practices reflected in the Markan narrative. People impacted by certain illnesses were expelled from societies to promote safety and adhere to purity concerns, such as leprosy (1:40), and to maintain social relations and harmony (cf. 5:1–6, 25–34). In contrast, the competitive and exploitive nature of a market economy could easily ignore the weak (cf. 3:1; 10:46–52). Without the benefits of these reciprocated relationships, daily life in a Galilean village was never easy, sometimes brutal, and certainly "bad enough."[137] For some, working their inherited land in a diversified manner was the only means of sustaining their subsistence existence while trying to meet the various demands on their produce from political taxes and religious obligations.[138]

Land constitutes an essential resource in any setting, now and then. The ancient Israelites had a special relationship with the land as their perpetual holding, a Promised inheritance from their God Yahweh (cf. Gen 17:8). They were prohibited from selling the land as it belonged to God, and humans were mere aliens and tenants (Lev 25:23). According to

[135] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944), 49, cited by Noell, "A "Marketless World," 89.

[136] McCollough, "City and Village in Lower Galilee," 58–60, states most Galilean villages comprised of small terrace type houses. Cana, for example, was located on a seven hectare plot with a population of 1,200 people, or 171 people per hectare.

[137] Sanders, *Judaism*, 261, agrees with this overall assessment of life in Greco-Roman Palestine, although he argues that other New Testament scholars, such as Horsley, Hanson, Borg, and Grant have exaggerated it.

[138] This meant cultivating different varieties of fruits, such as vines, olives, and grains. See Sean Freyne, "Jesus and the Urban Culture of Galilee," in *Texts and Contexts: Biblical Texts and Their Textual and Situational Contexts*, eds., Tord Fornberg and David Hellholm (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 609.

their traditional inheritance law (cf. Lev 25:25–28), family members were responsible for the land and to each other by redeeming the land of a relative who had fallen into debt, thereby restoring it to its owner or heirs.

As the substance of the domestic economy,[139] land ownership in Greco-Roman Palestine was considered an essential determinant of a family's wealth and social standing in the community. Wealthy absentee landlords increasingly controlled prized portions of land for profit generation to maintain their luxurious lifestyle.[140] The land was also captured and expropriated during military expeditions, and Rome occasionally awarded such land to native dynasties or gave them as compensation, pay, or pensions for the influx of veterans settling in Palestine.[141] Even rulers stole land for themselves and benefited from it, as Josephus describes of Herod Antipas receiving 200 talents a year from his land properties in Galilee.[142] Such "social oppression and land theft" has been suggested as contributing to "poverty and bankruptcy."[143] To survive, some people rebelled and joined bands of bandits, forcing them into crimes of desperation,[144] such as the story of the rebel Barabbas and other murderer insurrectionists in Mark's Gospel (15:7, 27).

Reciprocity could also be manipulated to mask "self-interest," potentially enhancing power and domination for its perpetrators.[145] This possibility increased when goods and

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[139] Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," 43.

[140] Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel,* 89. Also, M. Feinberg Vamosh, *Daily Life at the time of Jesus* (Herzalia: Palphot, 2000), 66, observes that wealthy landlords were frequently mentioned in the writings of Josephus, the New Testament, and other sources.

[141] Myers, *Binding the Strong Man,* 51. Also, Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 286.

[142] Josephus, *Ant* 17.317–320. Also, Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 304, interprets property expropriations, especially land, by wealth-accumulating usurers as an act of robbery, citing the Palestinian Talmud *Gittin* v:46d.

[143] Yizhar Hirschfeld, "Ramat Hanadiv and Ein Gedi: Property verses Poverty in Judea before 70," in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed., James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 389, concludes that well-built dwellings excavated at Ramat Hanadiv were inhabited by wealthy landlords, whose slaves and servants cultivated the land. Also, Halvor Moxnes, "What is a Family," in *Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor*, ed., Halvor Moxnes (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), 25, argues changes in land ownership affected peasant households who were forced off the land into an existence as wage labourers.

[144] B. Isaac, "Bandits in Judaea and Arabia," *HSCP* 88 (1984): 176–184.

[145] Barclay, "Paul, Reciprocity, and Giving with the Poor," 23.

services were collected at a central distribution point and redistributed to whomever the controlling party wished.[146] Archaeological excavations have discovered large storehouses, silos, and similar facilities within several administrative centres, which existed primarily for such purposes.[147] Institutionalised redistribution negated the essence of reciprocity by taking away from the peasant producers the control and enjoyment of their produce. Instead, surpluses were removed and stored in facilities owned and controlled by a few. Only a tiny portion is redistributed to those who did not farm and is given in exchange for their specific services.[148]

Control of these redistribution systems rested on the ruling aristocracies and is often characterised as "hierarchical oppression and economic dispossession."[149] It has been described as legalised exploitation and political domination to secure profit generating activities, such as "land ownership, taxation, indenture of labour through debt, and so forth."[150] These exploitive systems ensured that a high percentage of society's wealth ended up with the wealthy and powerful while the ordinary people struggled. In Palestine, these redistributive institutions enforced taxation levies at local, regional, and national levels.

6.4.3 Taxation, the ultimate form of control

In its modern sense, taxation imposes compulsory levies on people by controlling institutions in order to finance operational expenditures and essential services. However, for agrarian societies in Roman-occupied Palestine, paying taxes and other contributions were regulatorily enforced burdens upon the people, especially the peasant farmers, primarily to

[146] Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus,* 113.

[147] Dever, *Beyond the Text,* 463. Also, Josephus, *War* 3.516–520, explains that the surplus was stored in large estates that Herod Antipas and his family owned.

[148] E. R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), 3–4.

[149] Tat-siong Benny Liew, "Tyranny, Boundary and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark's Gospel," *JSNT* 74 (1999): 7.

[150] Borg and Crossan, *Last Week,* 7. Also, Horsley, "Moral Economy," 149–150.

meet Rome's compulsory tributes. The wealth moved from the margins to the centre. This is considered the "most burdensome of the many taxes pressing upon the people of Palestine."[151]

Other compulsory payments (to local aristocratic rulers and elites and the Temple) included agricultural products, rental incomes (from rental activities and tenants of imperial estates), or precious metals in a monetised economy.[152] It is said that these compulsory levies reflected a "proprietary understanding" that everything on land and sea belonged to the "ruling elite" to enhance their wealth and was not "for the common good."[153] In Galilee, the expanding tax base from a growing population of increasingly wealthy people and Herod Antipas' building programs increased revenues. It boosted his personal wealth and facilitated numerous developments, administrative functions, and more taxes for Rome.[154]

The benefit for ordinary people was minimal if any. Despite these developments, some peasant families from rural and even some urban Galilean centres still remained peasants. They had to provide for themselves and their families while setting aside some seed for the next season. With a poor harvest, they resorted to buying provisions from surpluses stored in redistribution centres, which ironically could have come from their farms in the first place. Some even opted to sell their land.

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[151] Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 295–300, explains that these tributes were distributed to Roman citizens, who were exempted from paying taxes. Other uses included financing state apparatus and supporting Rome's huge army. Also, Josephus, *Apion* 1.60; Appendix 7.

[152] Korb, *Life in Year One*, 36, refers to the increasing availability of coins such that even peasants had to have them. Also, Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 290–291, describes Julius Caesar requiring a fourth of the grain from Jews as an agricultural tax to Rome. One example of these rent-seeking activities was "fishing rights" which were controlled by the wealthy aristocrats, who contracted others, such as Levi (cf. 2:14), to collect fishing taxes for a fee (rental income), making a fortune from their activities. See Peter Garnsey, "Grain for Rome," in *Trade in the Ancient Economy*, eds., Peter Garnsey, K. Hopkins, C.R. Whittaker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 118–123.

[153] Carter, "Sanctioned Violence," 290.

[154] Korb, *Life in Year One*, 36.

Various estimates have been proposed regarding the amount of taxation paid. Gerhard E. Lenski estimates that the top five per cent of any agrarian society controlled fifty to sixty-five per cent of their territory's goods and services via taxation and tributes.

> On the basis of the available data, it appears that the governing classes of agrarian societies probably received at least a quarter of the national income of most agrarian states, and that the governing class and ruler together usually received not less than half. In some instances their combined income may have approached two-thirds of the total.[155]

Other accounts corroborate this information. Herod the Great is said to have claimed twenty-five to thirty-three per cent of Palestinian grain within his realm and fifty per cent of the fruit from trees, while Herod Antipas was allowed two hundred talents in personal income from his combined territories.[156] There were other direct poll taxes and indirect taxes, such as the "economic violence" attributed to the taxing structures involved with fishing, which included purchasing leases to fish, a tax on transporting fish, sales tax on fishing supplies (wood, sail linen, flax for nets, clay vats, and so on), and sales tax on fish and related products.[157] Another form of taxation was "regime-demanded forced labour," which facilitated developments on state-owned or controlled estates.[158]

Although varying amounts of taxes paid are hard to verify, compulsory levies added tremendous burdens, especially for peasant families and poor people who struggled to survive during difficult times. Taxation impoverished and oppressed the people, while only a few benefited from their imposition.

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[155] Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification,* 2nd edition. (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 228. Also, Korb, *Life in Year One*, 37, estimates two per cent of Galilee's population consumed sixty-five per cent of what was produced in the field; Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," 11–12.

[156] Freyne, *Galilee and Gospel,* 97.

[157] Carter, "Sanctioned Violence," 290.

[158] Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 301.

6.5 Effects on the crowd and the *motu o tagata*

The grave social, economic, and political injustices of being a subjected people described above were described as equivalent to suffering "under the burden of slavery."[159] The religious and political leaders exacerbated this with their corrupt manipulation and exploitation of traditional and religious practices to advance their status and wealth while ignoring the people's wellbeing.

Unfortunately, the extensive power and suppressive control exercised by foreign conquerors and local collaborators inflicted the majority of people (the Markan 'crowd') with fear that their personal lives and values were considered worthless.[160] The economic and financial lure of such exploitive systems even influenced religious leaders that their authority, moral and ethical consciousness, and responsibilities to the people were incapacitated and eroded, with negative consequences upon familial and communal relationships (cf. 13:9–13). The common humanity and common good of the *motu o tagata* was thus destroyed by setting the elite, and those who cooperate with them, against the rest—those powerless to resist. The transformation of this situation, in Mark's narrative, comes not from the 'crowd' revolting against the elite (as had recently happened for his implied readers), but by the repentance of *all* members of the *motu o tagata* and their acceptance of the reign of God.

6.5.1 Impacts on relationships and structures

A common characteristic that embraces and transcends humanity is the need for a home and a family (or a fictive kinship group, 10:28–31), which is said to be a place for "refuge and safety."[161] It is an intimate component of communal living, which is shaped by the environment

[159] Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium,* 30.199, cited by Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 297.
[160] Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 298.
[161] Trainor, *The Quest for Home*, 1.

its members develop and the forms of their ideals and social life.[162] The reciprocated interactions between individuals, families, and communities mould one's characters, values, beliefs, and way of life in a communal setting.[163] It is also quite possible that these values can be eroded and possibly lost when influenced by outside impact. These intrinsic human values resonate with familial and communal life in Greco-Roman Palestine, where kingship, duty, and family loyalty were priorities.[164]

The influence of a market economy certainly advanced economic prosperity for some and enhanced interconnectivity with improved transport infrastructure. Its negative impact resulted in numerous sociopolitical movements, which sometimes displaced people from their traditional families, communities, and land. Some were forcefully relocated to urban areas or other regions. Increased migration resulted in increased mobility and contributed to a mixture of different nationalities, customs, and belief systems within Greco-Roman Palestine.

By the time Mark's Gospel became a written document, Galilee was a melting pot of "different nationalities and cultures" brought in during the Assyrian, Babylonian and Hellenistic periods and later by the Romans.[165] This mixture had negative repercussions on Jewish way of life with its cultural and religious norms reshaped or uprooted altogether (cf. 11:17). They left lasting social, physical, and emotional scars and transformed both landscape and people. This humiliating oppression and the violent outbursts of imperial masters facilitated a long tradition of local resistance (both violent and non-violent), in attempting to

[162] Dever, *The Lives of Ordinary People*, 35. Also, Cahill, *Family,* 19; Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 38.

[163] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story,* 39. Also, Trainor, *The Quest for Home,* 19.

[164] Rochester, *Good News at Gerasa*, 18; John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986), 91; Robert Maynard Hutchins, ed., *Great Books of the Western World: The Works of Aristotle – Volume II: Politics* (Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney, Tokyo: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 447, who describe ancient families from a two dimensional emphasis, where it extended vertically to include ancestors and descendants and horizontally to include relatives, slaves, freed persons with legal bonds to the family, servants, and even properties.

[165] Moreland, "The Jesus Movement in the Villages of Roman Galilee," 162, 167–173.

regain their cultural and religious values.[166] Worst of all, being dispossessed and displaced from their inherited land was equivalent to being outsiders in their own land, which had been controlled by dominant intruders. This psychological impact is alluded to in the episode of the fearful Gerasenes and the impact of the possessed demonic spirit (cf. 5:1–20), which reflected the violation of their inter-personal connections and reciprocated relationships, and with dynamic impact on their personal lives.

6.5.2 Impacts on personal and communal lives

Various socially and culturally defined processes and political-economic factors had tremendous negative impacts on the personal and communal lives of those affected. These were felt almost in every aspect of life where various diseases, illness, sickness, and demonic possessions further compounded the people's everyday struggle.[167] Personal and communal afflictions, such as diseases, were directly attributed to the neglect, abuse, and failure of leadership to provide and care for the people. Demonic possession could also be described in terms of social responses to the impacts of exploitative domination.

For Greco-Roman Palestine, Horsley rightly suggests that disease and illness were "not entities and labels *in themselves* but culturally constructed explanatory concepts."[168] In this sense—"health" and "sickness"—are also understood to be linked to "fortunes and misfortunes."[169] Their impact could lead to isolation and neglect (misfortune) for members of

[166] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 36. Also, Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, 86, reaffirms that "where there is power, there is also *creative* resistance" (italics original).

[167] Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, 81. Also, Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 29–39.

[168] Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, 84 (italics original). Also, J.J. Pilch, "A structural-functional approach to Mark 7," *Forum* 4 (1988): 61, links human illness and sickness to society's deep semantic and value structure.

[169] P. Worsley, "Non-western medical systems," *ARA* 11 (1982): 330.

societies, who were unfortunately judged as displaying signs of any disease (sickness) based upon pre-determined conditions and observations.[170]

The people responsible for making such judgments ultimately decided the fate of those affected, which has been interpreted as a "form of social control."[171] Imposing pre-prescribed actions, such as confinement and isolation for a confirmed leprosy for example, did not provide a cure for the symptoms themselves but a reflection of the uncleanliness of the victim (cf. 1:40–44; 5:25–35).[172] Such decisions can be seen as suppressing and violating a person's right to be with family and community for the support needed and social interactions. It is then not surprising that almost every request to Jesus at the narrative level is said to be a request for "compassion, mercy and pity" to be restored to "full membership in the community" (cf. 1:40–42; 5:23, 28; 7:32; 8:22; 10:48), from which they were ostracised.[173] Jesus' compassionate response is then described to have eliminated the "*social stress*" experienced by the sick, in addition to their physical, mental, and spiritual transformation.[174]

These social dynamics can also be attributed to demonic possession, which some have ascribed to political factors. Van Eck and Van Aarde argue that demonic possession can be caused by "social tensions … rooted in economic exploitation … and colonial domination."[175] Horsley supports this as "spirit possession and exorcism … are related … to the impact of colonial rule, as indigenous societies make cultural adjustments to cope with this impact."[176]

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[170] Pilch, "A structural-functional approach to Mark 7," argues a patient's symptoms and identified illness may represent personal and group values and are not simply biological reality. For example, see Leviticus 13 and 14 for signs and treatment of leprosy. Also, Korb, *Life in Year One*, 112, describes a leper as the most disgusting person in first century, whose social status was one of an outcast (114) and living life as an exile (116). For a leper, this was much worse than the actual symptoms themselves.

[171] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 38.

[172] This reflects a Jewish perspective that Jewish people are expected to be pure and holy, just as God is holy.

[173] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 34.

[174] A. Kleinman, *Patients and healers in the context of culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 82 (italics original).

[175] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 37.

[176] Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine*, 81, makes this correlation based on recent medical and anthropological studies of African societies.

Such stressful conditions could contribute to mental illness, expressed and experienced in demonic possession. In light of this, Theissen proposes a correlation between the mythological occupation of the body and the political occupation of the land by an alien power for the first-century Mediterranean world,[177] which is clearly illustrated in the Markan story of the cleansing of the Gerasene demoniac and its perceived political implications for the fearful Gerasene townspeople (cf. 5:1–17). Mark even alludes to this similar power struggle earlier in the narrative, when Jesus explained that the "strong man" (conqueror?) must first be tied up before plundering his house (cf. 3:27). Only then could his captives be released.[178]

Van Eck and Van Aarde describe demonic possession as a "socially accepted form of oblique protest against, or escape from, oppression" and that it can also be "employed by socially dominant classes as a means of social control."[179] The former acts as an escape mechanism to deal with social conflicts and political and religious domination. The latter illuminates a strategic ploy to maintain dominance and sustain the controlling parties' social, economic, and political wealth and status. These aspects of demonic possession are said to "discredit, sever, deny links and ultimately assert separate identity" in a highly stratified society such as Greco-Roman Palestine.[180]

The above discussion demonstrates this correlation between disease, sickness, demonic possession, and first-century Palestine's sociohistorical landscape. In the Markan narrative, this connection is influenced by the belief in unclean spirits (1:23; 3:11; 5:2; 9:17), demons (1:34; 6:12; 7:26; 9:38), and Beelzebul, ruler of demons (3:22), all occurring within the Galilee region. In healing and defeating these cosmological forces, Jesus demonstrates his superior

[177] Gerd Theissen, *Urchristliche Wundergeschicten: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1974), 76, cited by Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 37–38.

[178] Witherington, *New Testament History*, 119–120.

[179] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 38.

[180] Van Eck and Van Aarde, "Sickness and Healing in Mark," 38.

authority over the demonic world, representing imperial and controlling powers. It is also a transformation of renewal for both land and people, whose earthly struggle would be rewarded in this life and the next (cf. 3:33–35; 8:34–9:1; 10:23–31).

On the socioeconomic front, a poor harvest and natural disasters had detrimental effects on agrarian families. Any available food supplies were then hoarded up by the "well-to-do," leaving many people desperate and hungry, particularly the poor.[181] Extreme circumstances such as famine had a devastating impact on people's health. Even in normal times, a large percentage of the population was seriously infected with "parasitic infections" which could "indirectly lead to death," as the host competed with the infestation for less and less food.[182]

In the Markan narrative, curing such health and social illnesses demonstrates Jesus' transformative power to heal, liberate, and renew society's impacted members by restoring them to their families and communities. Jesus encounters people without food (6:34–44; 8:1–10). He is represented as being aware of the economic wealth and fine clothing enjoyed by the elites (cf. 10:21–23; 12:38–41), in comparison to the needy and poor members of society (cf. 10:21; 12:42). These examples present a stark contrast between wealth and poverty (cf. 10:17–31). Although Mark does not explicitly mention the theme of debt, other Synoptic writers provide references (cf. Matt 5:25, 40–42; 6:12; 18:23–35; Luke 6:35; 12:57–59; 16:1–8).

These examples from Mark's Gospel reflect the reality of first-century Greco-Roman Palestine and beyond, which Mark's implied audience experienced. They encountered the turmoil of a people and nation in crisis, as the symbols of their identity, faith, and personal devotion—Jerusalem and the Temple—were destroyed by the might of Rome's imperial

[181] Witherington, *New Testament History*, 226, provides an example during a "one-hundred-year-flood" in Egypt, 45 CE, which caused poor harvests and record prices for grain, which only the rich could afford. To make matters worse, it happened during the sabbatical year in Judea, and its effects lasted a few years.

[182] Fiensy, "Archaeology and New Testament Studies," 228–229, particularly 229, citing Karl J. Reinhard and Adauto Araújo, "Archaeoparasitology," in *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, ed., Deborah M. Pearsall (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008), 498, who links this to poor hygienic practices and overcrowding.

power. Mark embeds this historical reality in his story of the *motu o tagata*, who struggled against various manifestations of demonic, social, economic, religious, and political domination. As countermeasures, Mark describes Jesus' activities as transforming and renewing the people from the devastating impacts of imperialism and local elites, and even, on occasion, the transformation of representatives of higher class members of society—a scribe, a member of the Sanhedrin, and a centurion. There is clearly an emphasis on the crowd as underclass (*minjung* and subaltern) in Mark's narrative, but just as clearly the invitation to transforming repentance extends to the whole *motu o tagata.*

6.6 Summary

Life for the ordinary people in Greco-Roman Palestine can be characterised as a struggle for survival. This assessment reflects their reality, which was driven by corrupt and exploitative rulers—the Herodians and Jewish leadership—under the overwhelming political control of imperial actors—Pilate and Rome. These oppressive regimes inflicted land and people with hardship and suffering. Their influences re-shaped Jewish traditional and religious practices and economically exploited their limited resources. Such circumstances drove people crazy (demonic possession), led to health-related issues (diseases), disadvantaged the poor, and created a society of the lost and sheperdless crowds, as they were displaced from, and held captive in their own lands.

Such sociohistorical causes and effects point to a majority within the *motu o tagata,* generally described by Mark as the crowd/s (*ochlos/ochloi*), who needed redirection and renewal after the devastation of Jerusalem's destruction and defeat by Rome's military might. The destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple (structures of great sentimental and

spiritual attachment) has been described as the collapse of Israel's existence.[183] Mark's community of Jesus' followers did not escape such turmoil. They all needed a source of strength to encourage them to face such dire circumstances, as their immediate destiny was out of their control.[184] This believing *motu o tagata* needed encouragement to continue their faith journey in Jesus, even though his imminent coming, as previously thought (cf. 13:30), had not eventuated during their times of suffering.[185]

This discussion has invoked deep personal emotions. As a Samoan reader, I can relate to the emotional empathy and sociohistorical stress exhibited by Mark's own communities of believers (and the wider society of unbelievers) as retold in his narrative. This understanding expresses similarities with my own context as a Samoan Islander, although vastly different in space and time. This Samoan context is examined in the next chapter, and how Mark's story of the *motu o tagata* can provide assurance and hope for Samoan Islanders as we face our own "devils" in our present context.

[183] Werner Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1.

[184] Byrne, *A Costly Freedom*, xii, says that the people of the ancient biblical world found themselves "captive from within by forces and compulsions over which they had no control."

[185] Manno, "The Identity of Jesus and Christian Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark," 625, believes that this is Mark's concern, to correct a "gross misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the question of place and time by the early community," in particular a "false understanding of what the future holds for those who believe in Jesus."

MARK, THE CROWD, AND THE *MOTU O TAGATA* TODAY

7.1 Introduction

As a Christian nation founded on God, Samoans have long believed in God's Goodnews for "all" humanity, regardless of their varied responses.[1] Local exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological discussions have since expounded this knowledge and assimilated biblical stories to the experience of Samoan Islanders. Continuing this tradition, this chapter relates the present context of Samoan Islanders to the crowd and *motu o tagata* in Mark's narrative by completing the hermeneutical circle. The translation *motu o tagata* (on one level) explicitly implicates *all* Samoan Islanders in Mark's narrative. Samoan Islanders have then unequivocally incorporated the Gospel values (Mark being the first written form of that Gospel) into their National Constitution. Here I take these two realities seriously, having explored the relationship between *ochlos,* crowd, and *motu o tagata* in Mark and shown that at the narrative level the Samoan translation affirms the Markan emphasis on both the crowd as the common people (especially in the Galilean villages and wilderness), and the crowd as all people who go out to encounter Jesus (3:7–8, 22), whatever their motives. In this sense then, both the biblical text and the Samoan Constitution require me to explore the implications of this for all Samoan Islanders, despite their many shortcomings as followers of Jesus.

The previous chapter illuminated the many similarities between the Markan narrative of the "island of people" which resonates with the experiences of Mark's implied readers, and the lived realities of Samoan Islanders. This chapter calls Samoan Islanders to re-examine their commitment to following Jesus and the continuing the proclamation of God's Goodnews by

[1] Samoa is officially stipulated in the Samoa Constitution as a Christian nation. See GoS, *Constitution of the Independent State of Samoa,* Article 1 (3) (Apia, 2019). Christianity has been in Samoa since 1830 with more than ninety-eight percent of its population identifying themselves as Christians.

re-evaluating their responses to Jesus' command to repent, believe (1:15) and accept the implications of *basileia* values breaking in to present realities (1:15; 4:26–32). It also calls those who have denied this truth and excluded themselves to heed this invitation (16:7) and collectively reconsider their call to serve others rather than for personal gain.

Unlike Mark's believing *motu o tagata,* however, who emerged and engaged a mostly unbelieving world dominated by Rome, Samoan Islanders were colonised by Christian countries and evangelised by Christian missionaries, sometimes with the use of violent approaches. Despite such historical differences, this discussion incorporates a postcolonial lens to critique the grave injustices of the impact of colonial and economic development on Samoan Islanders, just as Galilean and Judean people (including Mark's communities) encountered difficulties under Roman occupation. Such similarities provide analogies that relate Mark's story of the *motu o tagata* directly to the lived experiences of Samoan Islanders.[2]

Samoan Islanders' collective experience personifies the indiscriminate effects of introduced and domestic forces that have influenced their livelihoods. These effects call for a reinterpretation of the Samoan context, which is continuously encroached upon by foreign and domestic influences and the individualistic motives of the powerbrokers. Such operatives form out-group of Samoan Islanders, whose selfish desires temporarily disqualify them as members of the collective working for the common good. But they remain part of the "island of people" that Mark's narrative addresses, and they are all therefore challenged to repent and change their ways, by following Jesus' example of serving the needs of others and sharing their resources for the benefit of all. This is the "island of people" engaging with the Jesus traditions in what

[2] Jione Havea, "Postcolonize now," in *Islands, Islanders and the Bible: RumInation*, eds., Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed V. Davidson, SBLSS 77 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 10. Also, Joy, "Markan Subalterns," 56, calls for a postcolonial understanding of Mark's Gospel in local contexts.

has been described as the "historical and material experience" of the people socially and collectively.[3]

7.2 The *motu o tagata* in Mark embodies the experiences of Samoan Islanders

Mark's telling of the *motu o tagata*'s story illuminates a collective response towards Jesus by the crowds, as well as the oppressive leadership and social injustice that has stigmatised many (cf. 12:38–40). Mark subverts this discriminatory status quo by engaging the collective in encounters with Jesus' ministry of servanthood, which transforms the ruled and challenges the rulers to be members of the faithful *motu o tagata*. The inclusion of Jairus (5:22), one of the scribes (12:28), the centurion (15:39), and Joseph of Arimathea (15:43–46) illustrates the scope of this potential transformation, which at the end of the narrative is then extended to all those who have excluded themselves, as represented by the special mention of Peter the denier (cf. 16:7).

This chapter connects this hope for transformation to the experience of Samoan Islanders. It highlights the diverse effects of lingering colonial impacts, the social and economic influences of globalisation, and Samoa's highly hierarchical societies.[4] Such factors are evident in Samoa's recent economic history, transforming Samoa's sociohistorical journey over the last fifty years.[5] Overseas assistance (grants, loans, and remittances) combined with domestic reforms in the public sector and improved internal controls within government

[3] Sugirtharajah, "Introduction" to *Stories of Minjung Theology*, xv. Also, Ahn Byung-Mu, "Jesus and People (Minjung)," *CTC* Bulletin 7.3 (1987):10.

[4] Tuimaleali'ifano, "*Matai* Titles and Modern Corruptions in Samoa," 79, claims Samoa is a "product of all the forces of globalisation."

[5] See WTO, "WTO membership of Montenegro and Samoa approved," 17 December (2011), https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news11_e/acc_wsm_17dec11_e.htm. Also, "Developing Countries," https://www.worlddata.info/developing-countries.php, in which the author claims that the standard of living, incomes, and economic and industrial developments in developing economies remain below average.

enterprises have revitalised Samoa's economy,[6] and transformed its financial position from *mativa elo* (dreadfully poor) during the turbulent years of the 1980s.[7] It progressed to "disappointing" during the first half of the 1990s before becoming Oceania's role model with sound economic management.[8] This was mirrored by improvements in many Samoan Islanders' livelihoods while others still struggle.

This progression stagnated at the turn of the millennium due to corruption, exploitation, and manipulation, as discussed below. Currently, with the ongoing devastating impact of a global pandemic (Covid-19) and with zero tourist revenue, the economic progression has nose-dived and this is set to continue for the immediate future.[9] The political impact of the new

[6] Iati Iati, "Samoa's Price for 25 Years of Political stability," *JPH* 48.4 (2013): 443, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00223344.2013.841537, contributes this to the melding of Samoa's traditional political system, the *fa'amatai,* with the Westminster system of democracy adopted at Samoa's independence. See also Soo, "More than 20 Years of Political Stability," 349, 351, who associates this with the absence of "drastic social and political upheavals" and "disorderly behaviour and lawlessness." GoS, *A New Partnership: a statement of economic strategy* (Apia: Samoa, 1996), 3, details tremendous reforms to this effect. The World Bank, "Samoa: First Fiscal and Economic Reform Operation," iv, discusses the impacts of overseas contributions in strengthening this transformation.

[7] "*Mativa elo*" literally translates as "stinking poor." This was Samoa's former Prime Minister (PM), Tuilaepa Malielegaoi's preferred description of that period. However, it is full of derogatory connotations as *mativa elo* is often used to stigmatise a struggling poor person or family. See also James Robb, "Returning to Samoa after 38 years – A Reflection on the growth of capitalist relations," in *Capitalist Economy*, November (2019), https://convincingreasons.wordpress.com/2019/11/19/returning-to-samoa-after-38-years-a-reflection-on-the-growth-of-capitalist-relations/, who observes that the UN ranked Samoa as one of the ten most poorest nations in the world by per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1981. The 1980s began with the biggest political action since independence when the Public Servant Association (PSA) went on strike due to extremely low wages and high cost of living.

[8] For the 'disappointing' description, see ADB, "Reforms in the Pacific: an assessment of the Asian Development Bank's assistance for reform programs in the Pacific" (Manila: ADB, 1999), 101, for an assessment of Samoa's economic performance despite its relatively well-educated work force. Hurricanes Ofa and Valelia (1990–1991) were contributing factors also. For praise of Samoa's economic recovery, see AusAID, "Samoa sets the standard for stability," *Focus*, June (Canberra 2001), 11–12. Also, Cherelle Jackson, ""Samoa is a pinup star," says Peters," *New Zealand Herald*, July 13 (2007).

[9] Samoa's "high incidence of noncommunicable diseases" and a relatively "weak health system" prompted an early closure to its borders as safeguards for the people. But this led to other negative impacts, such as limiting tourism, which employs about one-third of Samoa's labour force. See James Webb, "Tonga and Samoa: opportunities in the storm," *Pacific Economic Monitor*, ADB December (Mandaluyong City: Philippines, 2020): 19, https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/662406/pem-december-2020.pdf. Also, SBS, "Cross Domestic Product: March 2021 Quarter," https://www.sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/Finance/GDP/2021/GDP-Report-March2021quarter.pdf, reveals consecutive declines in Samoa's economic growth of (minus) 15.4% and (minus) 8% for the respective quarters ending September and December 2020, and the economy contracted by a further 7.0% in March 2021, following an 8.0% contraction in 2020. With limited natural resources, Samoa's economy is largely driven by tourism and remittances.

government elected to office after more than forty years of a one-party state may either contribute to this trend or reverse it, with some refreshing changes in their manifesto.[10]

These dynamics in an island context have contributed to the difficulties in negotiating fair trade on the global market, which adds to the lagging national economy and thus a growing dependence on foreign influences, which seem to render ordinary people and limited resources expendable. They have contributed to wealth disparity, poor social protection, a decline in Samoan Islanders' mental health,[11] and a widening socioeconomic gulf between Samoa's wealthy elites and the greater portion of the population, who have not fully realised any tangible economic benefits from these recent developments.[12] The analogies between these problems and those faced by the Galilean crowds outlined in the last chapter are clear. There are growing gaps in the *motu o tagata* between the wealthy elites (foreign and local) and the people of the land and villages, outside the centres of power.

The Samoan Islanders' struggle is also exacerbated by the blatant abuse of power and sporadic corruption at various levels of institutionalised administration.[13] Misusing of traditional protocols, such as *fa'aaloalo* (respect), *va tapu'ia* (sacred space in-between), *alofa*

[10] After three months of political impasse and many court challenges since the country's general election on 9th April, 2021, Samoa's Court of Appeal (CoA) ruled to officially recognise the Faatuatua i le Atua Samoa ua Tasi (FAST) political party as the new government. The Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) had governed Samoa politically for the last forty years, with Tuilaepa Malielegaoi as PM for twenty-two years.

[11] Desmond Amosa and Michael Samson, "Samoa country case study," *AusAID Pacific social protection series: poverty, vulnerability and social protection in the Pacific* (Canberra: AusAID, 2012), https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/samoa-case-study.pdf, relate this to some people's lack of access to education, healthcare, water, sanitation, and other vital services.

[12] Steed Vernyl Davidson, "Building on Sand: Shifting Readings of Genesis 38 and Daniel," in *Islands, Islanders, and the Bible: RumInations,* eds., Jione Havea, Margaret Aymer, and Steed Vernyl Davidson, SBLSS 77 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 37, describes this as the "the nexus of global power" within which island space is often defined not in "terms of gain but in terms of lack."

[13] Jack Corbett and Ronnie Ng Shiu, "Leadership Succession and the High Drama of Political Conduct: Corruption Stories from Samoa," *PA* 87.4, December (2014): 762, conclude both "abuse of power" and "corruption" stem from the "use of public office for private gain" as illustrated by the assassination of a government minister (1999) because he upset some who were "unsuccessful in getting what they wanted." Two other ministers of cabinet were jailed for life for this historic crime because their "threats and misconducts … weren't checked or reprimanded," and they thought they were above the law. See Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o, "Introduction," in *Governance in Samoa: Pulega i Samoa*, ed., Elise Huffer and Asofou So'o (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, ANU; Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, USP, 2000), 5.

(love/compassion), *tautua* (selfless service), further aggravate this, especially for a highly hierarchical society such as Samoa.[14] These traditions are observed with reverence under *fa'aSamoa* (Samoan customs and practices), but sometimes have been abused for selfish ends.[15] Mark alludes to such exploitive tendencies when Jesus accuses the money changers, the merchandisers, and temple officials of turning God's house of prayer into a den of robbers (11:15–17). Jesus' accusation suggests some misuse of temple economic operations for personal gain are prevalent within Temple walls at the expense of pious pilgrims who faithfully adhere to their obligations to the Temple, as discussed in the previous chapter.[16] This judgment of the Temple and its rulers (and so also of some Samoan leaders) is more serious than just fiddling with exchange rates—it goes to the heart of institutionalised privilege, corruption of worship, and abuse of power to protect an ethnic elite ("My house shall be called a house of prayer for *all* nations" 11:17).

Furthermore, climate change and natural disasters have severely impacted Samoa's ecosystems and environment. Numerous items of infrastructure have been destroyed by flooding and the higher sea levels have eroded land and threatened to force relocation or ultimately extinction for the people. Mark's narrative shows awareness of the potential devastating impacts of environmental threats when the Twelve beg Jesus for their survival during a stormy crossing (4:38, cf. 7:47–50), and Jesus' warning about "famines" (13:8).[17] Perhaps the hope in these contexts is for a return to the economy of exchange and reciprocity—

[14] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 26, argues that although Samoan society is based upon "unequal rank, this inequality was not economic" as everyone has access to food and other necessities of life.

[15] Saleimoa Vaai, *Samoa Fa'aMatai and the Rule of Law* (Vaivase: NUS, 1999), 29–30, describes *fa'aSamoa* as a "generic terms for everything Samoan or Samoan way." Also, Iati Iati, "Controversial Land Legislation in Samoa: It's not just about the land," 10, https://devnet.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/IatiIati.%20Controversial%20Land%20Legislation%20in%20Samoa%20It%27s%20not%20just%20about%20the%20land.pdf, views *fa'aSamoa* as the "norms, values, principles, practices, and institutions that constitute their way of life."

[16] See Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple and Early Christian Identity*, 1; Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament*, xiii; Borg and Crossan, *The Last Week*, 15–16.

[17] See Appendix 1, which ranks Samoa number one in the Pacific in terms of natural disasters and their impact on economic development, environmental damage, and people.

a sharing in the wilderness (6:34–44; 8:1–10)—rather than being at the mercy of outside market forces and the *legion* of foreign agribusinesses (5:1–20).

In addition, fragmented and contradictory interpretations of Christian beliefs and biblical texts are dangerously taken out of context to "buttress the imbalance of power,"[18] create confusion, or even worse, reject the Goodnews of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.[19] In the Markan narrative, Jesus points to similar contradictions as the reasons for the Sadducees' false interpretation of scriptures, and hence their preference for their own traditions instead of obeying God's demands (cf. 12:18–27). Similar misrepresentations of God's Goodnews for personal gain are evident in the Samoan context. As discussed below, these can be used to legitimise exploitation, corruption, and oppressive conditions in the quest for economic prosperity and individual wealth.[20]

There are many other examples of the connection between the Samoan Islander context and that of the crowd and *motu o tagata* in Mark. The sad episode of a rich young man (loved by Jesus, 10:21) and his refusal to share his wealth (and love?) with those in need (10:21–22) reflects an individualistic priority that has emerged in Samoan society. This has contributed to a growing number of Samoan Islanders who are falling through the cracks of fractured relationships and are struggling without proper shelter or access to life's necessities.[21] This is

[18] Mercy Ah Sui-Maliko, "A Public Theology Response to Domestic Violence in Samoa," *IJPT* 10.1 (2016): 58, https://doi-org.divinity.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/15697320-12341428.

[19] The former Prime Minister, Tuilaepa, and some of his colleagues enjoyed citing biblical texts to legitimise their governing authority as from God, and whoever rejected their authority resisted God's appointed (cf. Rom 13:1–2).

[20] See The Editorial Board, "Democracy's rule non-negotiable," *Samoa Observer*, 6 June (2021), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/editorial/85238?fbclid=IwAR0zOnIpJJ1JDumys7_MlrSe3R-K_SELSdjIriS-mahbIWtxrxByZaZlx-M, which highlights Tuilaepa's refusal to accept several court decisions that confirmed his political party lost the general election, because he viewed his office as "appointed by God" and the "judiciary has no authority over his appointment."

[21] For examples of this Samoan reality, see "Village Voice," *Samoa Observer*, http://www.samoaobserver.ws, which has over the years profiled some Samoan families' struggle without life's basic needs, such as a lack of water and electricity, living in improper shelters with very limited revenue, and so on. For another example, see Sialai Sanerivi, "Mother-of-six strives for better home for her children," *Samoa Observer*, March 3, (2021), who laments this mother's financial struggle, exacerbated by "having no access to clean running water and electricity."

also evidenced on the narrative level with the poor widow's small offering, which Jesus compares favourably to many wealthy people who put in plenty (12:41–42), and whose indulgence comes at the expense of the poor (cf. 12:38–40). These parallel economic impacts highlight separations within societies (regardless of space and place), where people are classified and identified by their socially conditioned status: rich or poor; healthy or sick; prominent or marginalised; insiders or outsiders; *palagi* (white man) or fob,[22] and so forth. In each case such as these within Mark, Jesus sides with the marginalised within the *motu o tagata* over against the rich and self-righteous—but not in an anti-rich, anti-colonial, anti-foreigner way, rather, in a way that invites and demands the transformation of all who fall short.

These socially constructed identities illustrate the various forces contributing to similar struggles faced by the *motu o tagata* on the narrative level and Samoan Islanders in their current reality. This Samoan context is encapsulated by an "all-encompassing" globalised economy, which has been attributed to the continuation of "the nineteen-century contest over empire."[23] This has contributed to many faceless and voiceless Samoan Islanders falling through the net of economic prosperity as they struggle from such socially structured institutions and injustices.[24] Such interconnected causes and effects are fused in this discussion to demonstrate that Samoan Islanders (including those who have temporarily disqualified themselves) are indeed embedded as members of the Markan narrative.

From this perspective, the various character groupings on the Markan narrative level are all represented analogically in the Samoan context. Their contributions and responses have

[22] These two binaries summarise the perception that differentiates the wealthy white man (*palagi*) and a poor "fresh off the boat" islander.

[23] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 80–81.

[24] K. Jesurathnam, "Dalit and Subaltern Hermeneutics in conversation with Reader Response Method: 1 Kings 22, A Case in Point," *BTF* January 1 (2016): 48, http://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?T=P&P=AN&K=ATLAiB8W170327001942&S=R&D=lsdah&EbscoContent=dGJyMMTo50SeqLY4v%2BvlOLCmsEieqLFSrq64Sa%2BWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMOzpsEuwq69NuePfgeyx43zx, explains that such conditions are shaped by the social context—local and global, in which one lives.

diversely organised Samoan Islanders' sociohistorical journey since the arrival of other islanders to the Samoan Islands (from early traders, missionaries, political colonisers to current economic developers and others). They have all contributed (positively or negatively) to the development of the Samoan Island landscape and greatly influenced Samoan Islanders' intellectual thinking and sensescape.

This understanding and analysis empowers Samoan Islanders to control their own "theological discourse" not only against the tides of foreign influence but also against their "own indigenous elites."[25] It anticipates that the Goodnews of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can be meaningfully re-examined in this Samoan context,[26] which has been influenced by various determinant factors.

7.2.1 Foreign influence and indigenous traditions

Samoa's historical journey has been extensively documented and is beyond the scope of this examination. Nonetheless, I will give here a brief description of the Samoan context that explores the inherited and foreign influences that have shaped Samoan Islanders' sociohistorical journey from colonial domination to current economic developments, interspersed with insights from my analysis of Mark. These foreign interventions have further stratified Samoan societies between dominant political and cultural leaders, economic and religious elites, and the rest of Samoan Islanders. Similar historical developments are reflected in the Markan narrative with references to King Herod (6:14), Pilate (15:1–15), Jewish elites (cf. 10:22), and exploitative leaders (cf. 12:38:40). Together with the dominant power of Rome

[25] R.S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1994), 2.

[26] Kamu, *The Samoan Culture and the Christian Gospel*, 3. See also Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*,i 139, who argue Mark's story enables the audience to believe that God's reign is also possible for the world we live in. Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 69, views these Christian beliefs as being "absorbed" into the Samoan culture and "Samoanized."

and its Caesars, they represent the layers of rulers who "lord" it over the people and become "tyrants" over them (10:42; cf. 13:9), and who relocate and trample on the lives of the dispossessed and slaves as if they owned them.

Similarly, a post-contact Samoan context highlights the convergence of imperial influences and local cultures (Samoan, American, European, and Chinese), which led to an existence of mutually suspicious civility for co-existence and survival. The continuing arrival of many other groups (who can be defined by their ethnicity, status, employment, vocations, and so forth), collectively necessitates this hermeneutic, *motu-o-tagata*, which emphasises a common need to maintain harmonious relationships despite their differences. This resonates with the collective purpose and shared and competing interests of the various constituents of the *motu o tagata* in the Markan narrative in seeking out Jesus, which led either to tangible and meaningful transformations that improved the daily reality of those in need, or temporary disqualification of others' membership with different motives, amongst the faithful followers.

Samoa's history of foreign subjugation can be traced back to around 1200 CE, when all the Samoan Islands (Tutuila, Upolu, and Savaii) were enslaved by Tongan rulers for hundreds of years and who subjected the people to harsh treatment.[27] Samoans eventually freed themselves through a united effort under the leadership of two brothers, Tuna and Fata, whose bravery elicited the chiefly title Malietoa (brave warrior).[28] This occasion propelled the Malietoa title into national prominence in addition to existing traditional sacred titles—Tuiā'ana (king of A'ana) and Tuiātua (king of Atua).[29] These Samoan leading families and

[27] Krämer, *The Samoa Islands*, 13–15. This brutal treatment of Samoan people is demonstrated by a proverbial saying, *Ua logo i Pulotu le mapu a Ta'i'i.* (Pulotu (the spirit world) has heard Ta'i'i's sigh of anguish), when the Samoan chief Ta'i'i was made to climb a coconut tree, up-side-down.

[28] As Tongans retreated into the sea, the departing Tongan King shouted back to Tuna and Fata, *"Ua malie toa, ua malo tau…* (brave warriors, splendidly fought). The Malietoa lineage produced two other prominent titles—Gatoaitele and Tamasoalii. See Krämer, *The Samoa Islands,* Volume One, 12–15, 262, 330–332.

[29] Krämer, *The Samoa Islands,* Volume One, 11–13, discusses the sacred origin of these titles. See also Appendix 3 for the political divisions of Samoa.

titles are at the pinnacle of Samoa's traditional hierarchical order, whose relevance to Samoa's sociohistorical journey is demonstrated below.

Oral traditions and genealogical records support the cultural significance of these royal titles.[30] In ancient Samoa, their absolute authoritative and political importance was when all four titles—Tuiātua, Tuiā'ana, Gatoaitele, and Tamasoālii, were simultaneously conferred or taken by an individual, who was then referred to as the Tafa'ifa (protector of the majestic four).[31] The Tafa'ifa was the Samoan equivalent to a king (queen) whose absence was significant during foreign interventions. With royal power over Samoa, the Tafa'ifa enjoyed support and recognition of every district authority in Samoa, which is said to have empowered its bearer and supporters with considerable influence.[32]

This prerogative was dismissed, however, by the last Tafa'ifa, Malietoa Vainuupo (who accepted Christianity on behalf of Samoans),[33] when he controversially redistributed these titles to their traditional custodians. This decision could have contributed to the consequent continuation of tribal wars between Samoa's leading families and their political allies in futile pursuance of the Tafa'ifa prestige.[34] It also encouraged outside intrusion as interest from foreign political empires was apparent and the presence of *papālagi* is said to be "increasingly numerous and influential."[35]

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[30] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 31–32.

[31] I am indebted to Ape Leulumoega Sofara, whose profound knowledge of Samoan culture has led to this translation of Tafa'ifa. See also Tuimaleali'ifano, "Titular Disputes and National Leadership in Samoa," *JPH* 33.1 (1998): 92, http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=ce6f027a-146e-4e7d-affb-cccfe19fc0a1%40sessionmgr4007, who interprets it as "four-in-one," and argues that by 19th century, only two leading families—Sa Tupuā and Sa Malietoā have contended for the Tafa'ifa title. For discussions relating to the Tafa'ifa traditions, see Krämer, *The Samoa Islands,* Volume One, 13–15, 262–264; Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 74; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 11; Penelope Schoeffel, "Rank, gender and politics in ancient Samoa: The genealogy of Salamasina *O le Tafaifa*," *JPH* 22 (1987): 185.

[32] Tuimaleali'ifano, "Titular Disputes," 92. Also, Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 11.

[33] John Williams may have deliberately targeted Malietoa as a point of initial contact, presuming him to be the king of Samoa.

[34] For discussions about some versions of these tribal wars, see Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa*, 21–45; Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 73–107, with re-collections of eyewitness accounts from Thomas Trood (79–81), Robert Louis Stevenson (93–98), and a plea from Matā'afa to the three powers (102–105).

[35] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 77.

Such chiefly warring factions impacted both people and land. Augustin Krämer describes such wartime savagery when Malietoa avenged his relative Leiataua Tamafaiga's death,[36] thereby inheriting for himself Tafa'ifa status. It is said that as a "way of expiation," many prisoners from the Aana district were burned in a fearsome blaze, including aged men, women, and children.[37] Robert Louis Stevenson is reported to have personally witnessed the savage bestiality of these tribal wars, which marked the country with burned houses and severed heads publicly paraded and displayed before the chiefs as trophies of victory.[38] The arrival of a foreign invasion force of *papālagi* added a lethal dimension to local tribal warfare with the introduction of guns and ammunition.[39]

Similar brutality summarises the Roman conquest of Galilee by Roman soldiers who mistreated Galilean people with many killed and their houses and properties burned.[40] Both historical contexts illustrate the indiscriminatory impact of armed conflicts on both lands and people, which Mark's briefly alludes to with Jesus' reminder to his followers (then and now) to be prepared for such devastating effects. Jesus' warning of "wars and rumours of wars," and nations rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (13:7–8), foreshadows the negative impacts of such divisive confrontations. The exhortations of Jesus (10:42–45; 13:14) make it clear that faithful followers flee from such violence, and do not use it themselves.

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[36] Krämer, *The Samoa Islands,* Volume One, 274–275. Tamafaiga was the most feared leader with Tafa'ifa status. According to John Williams' journal, cited by Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 56, Williams considered Tamafaiga as possessing the "power to inflict disease and death … [and] property, pigs and all the women on the island were at his command."

[37] Krämer, *The Samoa Islands,* Volume One, 17, 275.

[38] Robert Louis Stevenson, "The War of 1893," cited by Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 96, describes this "bestial practice" of mutilating and severing victim's heads as an indefensible tradition during times of war rather than evidencing an everyday occurrence.

[39] Patricia O'Brien, *Tautai: Samoa, World History, and the Life of Ta'isi O. F. Nelson* (Wellington: Huia Publisher and University of Hawai'i Press, 2017)*,* 11. See also Field, "Tales of Time," who details the thousands of Samoans killed, including women and children, by the shells and machine guns of Anglo-Americans in 1899.

[40] See Aviam, "People, Land, Economy and Belief in First-Century Galilee," 36; Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 165.

As imperial representatives and Jewish leadership orchestrated the suppression of Galilean and Judean people in first-century Greco-Roman Palestine, colonial powers and internal fighting between Samoa's national elites impacted many Samoan Islanders. Despite such negative influences in the Samoan context, this penetration brought together the new islanders and native Samoans in their collective effort to made the Samoan Islands their home and challenge themselves to create a better Samoa.[41] Such ethnic plurality echoes the mixed population of Galilean Jews and other ethnic groups, who combined as the *motu o tagata* in Mark's story (cf. 3:7–8; "for all nations" 11:17) and their reality under Roman domination.

During the early 1800s, the new islanders established a society—"the beach"—transforming Apia's harbour with stores, hotels, and liquor saloons and with a minimal code of law to govern their affairs.[42] Together with Samoa's ability to offer provisions to whaling and merchant ships, this settlement provided onshore recreations with alarming moral and ethical implications due to the mixture of drunken and sexual behaviour.[43] Such encounters brought infectious diseases against which the native islanders had no immunity, resulting in a significant population reduction.[44]

Lawlessness and trouble-making increased such that by 1850, the chiefs of Apia no longer had any control within their traditional jurisdiction.[45] Furthermore, disorderly behaviour contributed to a concerted push by the settlers for a central government to create laws and establish courts. A centralised system of governance would negate Samoa's traditional

[41] Sophia Foster, *Samoa, Island Nation,* https://www.britannica.com/place/Samoa-island-nation-Pacific-Ocean, 21 February (2018). These newcomers included European and American settlers, and Chinese and Melanesians labourers brought to work on European farms.

[42] O'Brien, *Tautai,* 7. Also, Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 76.

[43] Caroline Ralston, *Grasshuts and Warehouses: Pacific Beach Communities of the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1978), 94–96. This can be compared with the consequences of Roman and Herodian invasions and battles throughout Palestine. Slavery and prostitution were inevitable outcomes.

[44] Meleisea, *Lagaga,* 24–25. Also, Crocombe, *The South Pacific,* 9–12. Highly contagious diseases, like the Spanish influenza, are estimated to have killed about one fifth of Samoa's population.

[45] Meleisea, *Lagaga,* 77.

decentralised politics, which centred around chiefly authorities (*fa'amatai*) within their district and village territories. Similar imperial influences impacted Galilean and Judean villages with the re-appropriation of resources, changes to communal and traditional structures, and the relocation of people, as discussed in the previous chapter. Such movements are captured in Mark's story, with the ever present *motu o tagata* following Jesus in Galilee from all directions. The hope for new communities, new fictive kinship groups (10:29–31) and the avoidance of the centres of power in the cities of Galilee and Judea, represent the possibilities for a renewal of traditional communal structures.

The presence of wealthy *papālagi* resulted in the questionable sales of prominent landholdings by many native combatants, who mortgaged or sold their land cheaply for firearms and meagre food supplies. Thomas Trood lamented such injustices as the life-giving capability of the land had been "bartered away for a rifle or a few tins of biscuits."[46] Victorious chiefs sold prized lands cheaply around Apia, which the new islanders took advantage of to expand their beach settlement "outside of the traditional Samoan village system."[47] According to Malama Meleisea, there was "chaos and confusion" regarding the authority and rights of the chiefs to receive these land payments.[48] The United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and Germany exploited this confusion by acquiring large amounts of land cheaply for coconut plantations to produce Samoa's first export commodity, coconut oil.[49]

The effects of these land transactions echo analogous impacts in Greco-Roman Palestine when land ownership was removed from agrarian families and transferred to urban

[46] Thomas Trood, "An account of the Civil War of 1869," cited by Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 79.

[47] O'Brien, *Tautai,* 7. Also, Trood, "An account of the Civil War of 1869," cited by Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 80.

[48] Meleisea, *Lagaga,* 76.

[49] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 26, reports that both American and British interests acquired 185,000 hectares of land. Germany, through the company Godeffroy, had over 61,000 hectares in Upolu alone, of which only a quarter was purchased with cash (debased Chilean dollars) and the rest with "guns and kind at enormous, inflated prices." Also, Paul Kennedy, *The Samoan Tangle: A Study in Anglo-American Relations 1878-1900* (Saint Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011), 6.

landlords. In conjunction with political rulers, these landlords extracted maximum profit margins from their landholdings, despite the "debt-trap" means of acquiring them. These resulted in resentment and divisions between Galilean farmers (their paid labourers) and their absentee landlords. Similar circumstances prompted many Samoan Islanders, mainly traditional custodians of customary land, to complain against colonial landholdings. Even in present times, some Samoan families of mixed descent are fighting to remain on land gifted to their ancestors for services rendered to the state, while some villages are still advocating for the return of their customary land, which colonial rulers appropriated for public use.[50]

These land disputes can lead to confrontation, as was the case with commercial settlers in Samoa (who behaved more like the egotistic landlords of Greco-Roman Palestine era). When native Samoans questioned their rights to their land and properties, intimidation was employed, such as approaching their foreign representatives who resorted to calling in the naval vessels of their nationalities. Such actions resulted only in one-sided outcomes, where *papālagi* rights were "usually upheld."[51] As recounted in the last chapter, 'land rights' in Galilee— particularly in the aftermath of the Jewish War when I think Mark was written—were beyond the hopes of the 'crowd' and indeed, most of the *motu o tagata.* Rome ruled supreme through its armies and agents. This is a salutary warning to us as Samoans as we wrestle with the heritage of our precious islands.

[50] For an example of Samoan families' fight to maintain their land, see Radio New Zealand, "'This is our home': Samoa court issues eviction order for Sogi families," February (2020), https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/410063/this-is-our-home-samoa-court-issues-eviction-order-for-sogi-families, which reports on this Samoan family with Rotuma ancestry and their struggle to keep their land. Also, Lagi Keresoma, "Satapuala Village Disputes Government Land Claims In Samoa," *Pacific Islands Report*, 13 July (2012), http://www.pireport.org/articles/2012/07/13/satapuala-village-disputes-government-land-claims-samoa, reports that this dispute became increasingly violent when Satapuala youths blocked the main public road to protest a proposed hospital on disputed land. A subsequent potential confrontation between Satapuala chiefs and villagers against an armed police contingent was only resolved through traditional discussion and respect. See Radio New Zealand, "Samoa Police clear Satapuala roadblock," 16 August (2012), https://www.rnz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/206610/samoa-police-clear-satapuala-roadblock.

[51] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 77, 101. See also Felix M. Keesing, *Modern Samoa: Its Government and Changing Life* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1934), 259. Due to widespread fraud, a land commission was established in 1893, which recognised only eight percent of Euro-American claims to Samoan lands, or 135,300 acres.

The three colonial powers exploited the Samoan situation by manipulating traditional rivalries and arming Samoans against themselves, which is said to have advanced their agenda for conquest and colonisation.[52] They became so entangled over the Samoan Islands that Germany and the USA cemented treaties to secure naval rights in Upolu (1872) and Tutuila (1874).[53] Meanwhile, the British also demanded a mandate over the islands. Meleisea humorously but appropriately describes this imperial scrambling "like three large dogs snarling over a very small bone," which was eventually broken up between them.[54]

In 1889, the Treaty of Berlin between the three powers ushered in an era of "shared rule" of the Samoan Islands, marking the end of Samoan autonomy.[55] After several attempted compromises to avoid further conflict, the Tripartite Convention was signed in 1899 in Washington, DC, giving control of Western Samoa to Germany, and Eastern Samoa to the USA, while the UK withdrew—for a little while. I simply note here that we so often think of important history as the story of these great powers and battles. The Markan Jesus begs to differ—and focuses on the crowds, the people of the land, and those who suffer the consequences of human abuse of power. Who can tell the story of the Samoan villages and the women and children who suffered in these years? Who can ensure that such things will never happen again?

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[52] Holger Droessler, "Copra World: Coconuts, Plantations and Cooperatives in German Samoa," *JPH* 53.4 (2018): 420, http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.divinity.idm.oclc.org/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=4e53e488-23be-460c-9f48-442a5c8fa5f0%40sessionmgr4008. See also Michael Field, "Tales of Time – The Samoan War you didn't know about," *The COCONET.tv,* https://www.thecoconet.tv/know-your-roots/tales-of-time/tales-of-time-the-samoan-war-you-didnt-know/, who reports the Australian Catholic Cardinal, Patrick Moran's objection that arming Samoans was "not warfare, but deliberate murder." Field describes a graphic account of such atrocities when British and American warships indiscriminately bombarded coastal villages on the northern side of Upolu for three months, during Malietoa Tanumafili I and Mata'afa Iosefo's tribal war of 1899. According to Field, they did not even bother to "account for those they killed or wounded," including many "women and children."

[53] Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny," 100.

[54] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 101.

[55] O'Brien, *Tautai,* 13. However, that uneasy peace Treaty broke down in 1898, when war erupted again between supporters of Mata'afa Iosefo who had just returned from exile (with support from Germany), and the forces of Malietoa Tanumafili I, with support from Britain and USA.

7.2.2 Colonisation and resistance

Mark's story of the crowds contains an allusion to political domination and authoritative power and their oppressive impacts on the people. Mark's reference to "Legion" (5:9) supports this and symbolically illustrates Rome's political and military domination. Jesus also warns of such authoritative behaviour both by foreign powers and local leaders, who "lord" over the people and are "tyrants" over them (cf. 10:12,15,42), compounding their suffering (cf. 1:32–34; 3:10; 5:3–13), neglect (cf. 6:34; 8:1–4), and oppression (cf. 13:7–13) of the people.

Unfortunately, such oppressive impacts were not isolated to ancient imperial domination. Samoan Islanders also experienced political subjugation and its profound effect on transforming many aspects of their livelihoods. This historical reality was guaranteed with the increasing numbers of the newly arrived 'islanders' (foreigners of different political origins) during the late 1800s and early 1900s and their hidden motives of expansion and colonialism in Samoa, together with the fatal attraction of the native Samoans to the material possessions and way of life of the new-comers in order to support and secure local supremacy. Unfortunately, the settlers then became occupiers, when Samoa was first colonised by Germany (1900–1914) and then by New Zealand (1914–1961) with a League of Nations mandate from 1920.[56] A repeat of this history of Samoa is not offered here, but just some incidents to demonstrate the diverse impacts of political colonialism.

During this period of colonisation, the voices of the Samoan Islanders were ignored during the political breaking up of the Samoan Islands, which evokes a connection with the people of Palestine when Rome automatically annexed the region by taking control of Syria.[57] In effect, 'Christian' Empires acted in the same way as the Roman Empire, but twenty centuries

[56] Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny," 105, 111.
[57] See Appendix 6.

later when it might have been expected that some lessons had been learnt from history. Both groups of people were left out of crucial decisions which directly affected their livelihoods. They became voiceless as political empires dictated that for them. This ignorance caused significant resentment in both contexts. For Samoan Islanders, it re-kindled a local patriotic desire to regain control from political colonisers, just as many Galileans and Judeans fought against foreign occupation of their land, as exemplified by numerous resistance groups forming to harass Rome and its various forms of domination.[58] Mark alludes to such confrontations with the inclusion of the insurrectionist Barabbas and some rebels in his story (15:7). Jesus also reminds the Twelve of such conflicts between nations and kingdoms and their dreadful consequences (cf. 13:7–23).

When Germany gained sole control over (Western) Samoa, Samoan Islanders anticipated hope for "peace and security" after the tragic tribal fighting of the late nineteenth century.[59] A consensus at the highest level heightened this expectation, with Samoa being governed according to Samoan customs and ideas.[60] However, that beacon of hope dissipated with Governor Solf's crafty diplomacy, which seemed to appease that expectation, on one level, whilst concealing his ambition for absolute authority as the colonial delegate of the German emperor.

Solf's attempt to "preserve" Samoan culture is said to have been conditioned upon a German ambition of assuring its own "colonial power and prestige."[61] He personified German

[58] Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 34. Horsley also alludes to the Israelites' history of resistance against empires (33).

[59] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 113. Also, O'Brien, *Tautai,* 27.

[60] "Mata'afa to German Emperor, 9 March 1900," *German Colonial Administration* (*GCA*) 2/74 (Wellington: National Archives), pleaded that "the laws of the Samoans be made in conformity to the rules and customs of the Samoan." Solf replied two days later reaffirming such "conformity." See "Solf's address, 11 April 1900," *GCA* 2/74, both are cited by Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 47.

[61] O'Brien, *Tautai,* 25, explains that Solf introduced changes to "law, cultural practices, and economics," which invited consistent opposition from Samoans.

colonial rule, prioritising "profit and power at any cost to the people they subjugated."[62] Dominating conquered lands and people and appropriating local resources to benefit the conquerors and local collaborators facilitated this priority. In hindsight and unbeknown to Samoan Islanders then, annexation effectively stripped them of control and use of some of their limited resources.[63]

Solf demonstrated this shrewdness with his treatment of Mata'afa Iosefo[64] and his supporters,[65] who emerged victorious against Maleitoa Tanumafili I. They set up a new *malo* (government) at Mulinu'u. Solf did not recognise this despite being warned that failure to acknowledge Mata'afa as *Tupu Sili* (supreme king, Tafa'ifa) would be construed by his followers as un-traditional and may endanger the peace.[66] Forced to decide (just as Pilate was before a patriotic crowd of Jerusalemites (cf. 15:8–15)), Solf instead placed the Kaiser as the *Tupu Sili*. This proclaimed loudly throughout Samoa that the emperor of Germany was the only "source of authority … and not Samoan custom,"[67] whereas even Pilate was able to disguise his motives by agreeing to a local custom by releasing Barabbas (15:8,15). In effect, Germany ruled just as Rome's domination transformed Galilee's landscape and appropriated its space.[68]

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[62] Arthur J. Knoll and Hermann J. Hiery, eds., *The German Colonial Experience: Select Documents on German Rule in Africa, China, and the Pacific, 1884–1914* (Lanham: Universities of America, 2010), cited by O'Brien, *Tautai,* 23.

[63] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 113.

[64] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 98–99, recalls Iosefo's prominent position against Malietoa Tanumafili I, who was given legal kingship status by the three powers and enjoyed artillery support from British and American warships. Germany supported Mata'afa to arrest the decline of her influence in the Samoan Islands.

[65] Mata'afa had the backing of *Tumua*—the three prominent seats of traditional authorities in Upolu, namely Leulumoega from Aana district, Afega from Tuamasaga, and Lufilufi from Atua, and *Pule*—the six traditional authorities from Savaii—at Safotulafai, Saleaula, Safotu, Asau, Satupaitea and Palauli. For additional explanation on both these collective authorities, see Te'o Auvale, *An Account of Samoan History up to 1918*, New Zealand Electronic Text Collection (Wellington: Victoria University), http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-TuvAcco-t1-body1-d54.html. Mata'afa was also supported by the "kingmaker"—Lauaki Namulau'ulu Mamoe—and his pro-Malietoa Savaiian chiefs to increase the likelihood of Samoan unity against foreign intervention. See Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 71.

[66] "Copy of Solf dispatch, 9 April 1900," *Solf Papers,* 20, cited by Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 33.

[67] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 53.

[68] Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 61, express similar view regarding Rome's authority over Palestine.

Mata'afa was installed in a subordinate role as *Le Ali'i Sili* (the highest chief), a mouthpiece through whom the occupying government conveyed their orders to the "island of people."[69] This resembles the political arrangement in Greco-Roman Palestine as Rome used local Jewish leadership to exert their control.[70] Mark alludes to such suspiciously delicate cooperation when Jewish leaders brought Jesus before Pilate. The Jewish leaders had no authority to condemn Jesus to death, and they manipulatively stirred up a crowd of Jerusalemites to force Pilate's decision to crucify Jesus.

Solf employed similar manipulatory tactics during his administration. Mata'afa's inferior role effectively ended local attempts to re-institute a Samoan monarchy—the Tafa'ifa.[71] The councils of *Faipule* and *Taimua* supported Mata'afa as similitudes of "coincidental resemblance" of traditional political structures.[72] Peter Hempenstall concurs that these arrangements disguised Solf's ideal plan for Samoan politics, which he hoped to disempower altogether.[73] Hempenstall suggests that the establishment of a council of *Faipule* was to disarm the native chiefs who were armed to the teeth with Western firearms.[74] The house of *Taimua* was to impede as "meaningless" any more competition for the great titles while encouraging the leading families to aspire to serve a national government.[75] More alarmingly, Solf intended to replace all Samoan institutions and to consolidate German authority further,[76]

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[69] "Governor's address to the Chiefs, 11 April 1900," *Solf Papers,* 20, cited by Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 34.

[70] See Chapter Six, especially sub-Section 6.3.4.

[71] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 51, highlights Solf's insistence that Mata'afa was not to be referred to as *tupu* (king) or as Tafa'ifa, when his families formally acknowledged his appointment as *Alii Sili* with the presentation of *ie toga* (fine mats) according to Samoan custom.

[72] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 48. *Faipule* was a bipartisan council of chiefly advisers, made up of 36 representatives from sub-districts. *Taimua* consisted of principal contenders to royal titles, which collectively represented the paramount descent group—*tama-a-aiga*—the leading families of Samoa.

[73] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 34.

[74] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 32, estimates this force about 2,500 soldiers against Solf's "largely-decorative force of thirty Samoan police."

[75] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 37.

[76] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 34; Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 50.

though he fully anticipated opposition by a "body of indolent intriguers" of *Tumua* and *Pule* chiefs, who were still scheming around the Tafa'ifa title.[77]

For economic reasons, a small group of European and German planters campaigned for a military regime in Samoa. They advocated for a resolution to compel Samoan Islanders to provide free labour to "benefit industrious settlers."[78] These dragooning ambitions prompted strong opposition as Samoans were not expected to "perform servile labour."[79] Samoan employees were also disadvantaged by "broken contracts and labour exploitation," in addition to tax policies imposed upon all Samoan Islanders.[80]

Solf reluctantly agreed with these local concerns as he knew the potential repercussions, particularly that the Samoans could rise in armed rebellion. Pilate was possibly of the same mindset when he reluctantly agreed to satisfy the crowds' wish by authorising Jesus' crucifixion, knowing that he did not have the required military support for an uprising. Similar conditions of forced labour existed in Greco-Roman Palestine as many Galilean and Judean people were required for Herod the Great and his sons' construction programme, especially with rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem and their Greco-Roman cities, Tiberias and Sepphoris in Galilee. Such projects required enormous financial resources which were mainly funded from oppressive taxes extracted from struggling people,[81] whose grievances spilt out into support of insurrection against the ruling elites.[82]

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[77] "Solf to Colonial Dept, 6 February 1901," *RKA* (Reichskolonialamt Records, Potsdam), 3060, cited by Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 34.

[78] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 40–41. Also, Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 51.

[79] "Taimua and Faipule to Solf, 25 June 1903," *RKA*, 3063, cited by Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 40. Labour for European plantations on the islands was provided by thousands of cheap Melanesian and Chinese labour imports.

[80] Droessler, "Copra World," 418.

[81] See Chapter Six, Section 6.3, especially sub-Section 6.3.3. Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 297–301, suggests that force-labour was a form of taxation.

[82] Ermatinger, *Daily Life in the New Testament*, xiv, 11. Also, Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story*, 115.

The impractical application of Solf's policies emerged very early, as their European-based foundations were not compatible with Samoan customs. They created an atmosphere of suspicion and of "continuous misunderstanding," as the colonists and the colonised had a different "worldview, assumptions and aspirations."[83]

A drop in world prices for copra with direct impacts on the local economy illustrates this, in a manner that is reminiscent of the unexpected individuals that emerge from the crowds in Mark's Gospel. Inspiration from a young *afakasi* (half-caste) Samoan Islander led to the establishment of a locally owned and operated copra-marketing company—the *Oloa Kamupani*—to break the Europeans' monopoly on trade.[84] This initiative benefited Samoan growers by stabilising local copra prices and emancipated them from their slave-like treatment by the white copra traders, who were cheating Samoans with their "exorbitant" asking prices and by using "false weights."[85] Unfortunately, in the wake of this local initiative, events were unleashed, which not only negated the Samoan Islanders' fight for sovereign control but cemented Solf's ambition as the supreme ruler in Samoa.[86] Nevertheless, this courageous initiative coming from an unexpected source continues to serve as an inspiration to everyone in Samoa, regardless of the circumstances of their birth.

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[83] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 48.

[84] Droessler, "Copra World," 419. See also Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 115–117, who examines the effect of this local initiative, and the implications of being an *afakasi* in a Samoan context; O'Brien, *Tautai*, 21, argues that Germany was worried about the demographic increase of this mixed-race of *afakasi* Samoans, whose loyalties might not lie with the Kaiser. Marriages between Samoan women and European men required prior approval from the governor and their *afakasi* children were granted "European" or "white" status, to cancel out their Samoan heritage; Damon Salesa, *Racial Crossings: Race, Intermarriage, and the Victorian British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), explains such practices were based on a false ideology that "mixed-race people were both an improvement on Indigenous people *and* a degeneration of the white race"; Paul Weindling, "German Eugenics and the Wider World," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, eds., Alison Bashford and Phillipa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), expresses similar sentiments.

[85] "Solf to von Koenig, 30 April 1904," *Solf Papers*, 25, cited by Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 44. Also, Droessler, "Copra World," 431, recalls Samoan farmers were cheated as much as "30–50 pounds in every 100 pounds of copra" that they delivered to Euro-American traders.

[86] For detailed discussion on this incident and other significant local events that led to the removal of chiefly power and the public humiliation of Mata'afa by Solf, see Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 43–50.

This power shift illustrates Samoan Islanders' difficulties in "coping politically" and "competing economically" with the colonists.[87] Discrediting the *Kamupani* exposed a false colonial perception that Samoan Islanders did not have the necessary expertise for such undertakings. It was an audacious challenge to "one of the platforms of colonisation—the white trader and the European monopoly of commerce," to which the governor was wholeheartedly committed.[88] Solf also perceived this as a united drive by the chiefs at Mulinu'u against German authority while advocating for a Samoan administration under Mata'afa Iosefo. Unfortunately, internal stresses within Mata'afa's side gifted Solf with a golden opportunity to permanently remove the Mulinu'u government while implementing new changes that finally secured his control.[89]

Solf's intentions of centralising all authority with him as well as uprooting *fa'aSamoa* were finally exposed.[90] In an ironic twist, Solf's employment of many prominent Samoan chiefs within his governing structure inadvertently nurtured traditional influence. Their viewpoints and traditional knowledge were conditioned by *fa'aSamoa*, which also legitimised their chiefly rank and status. This patriotism led to an opposition movement—the *Mau a Pule* (Opinion of *Pule*) in 1908, with Lauaki at the forefront. Some of their demands related to land loss, taxation, the reassertion of traditional authority, the imprisonment and the threatening of

[87] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 117.

[88] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 44.

[89] Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders Under German Rule,* 47–48, provides some examples, which include Solf ordering the chiefs at Mulinu'u to vacate that symbolic place of traditional government, and his decision to abolish the house of *Taimua*. He forbade the use of traditional *faalupega* in any gathering, which signalled the end to traditional authority. Also, Chiefs within the *Faipule* advisory group, who were not supporters of Mata'afa Iosefo, openly opposed and resisted any attempt to increase financial support for the *Kamupani.* They supported Solf's plans to discredit and dissolve it.

[90] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 61–62, citing "Solf's letter to the matai of Leulumoega, 28 November 1900," *Pacific Manuscripts Bureau Microfilm* 479, XVII B5, vol. 1, no. 1–35, which confirms Solf's blatant disregard for Samoan custom when he dismissed the traditional political authority of Leulumoega—the prominent seat of *Tumua*, by overruling their village decision, and declared that "*fa'aSamoa* …[was] in the past, but you cannot do it now."

Samoan Islanders by a foreign power, the exclusion of Samoan Islanders in all aspects of national development, and so forth.[91]

Such criticisms highlight the "erosion of Samoan self-governance" due to Solf's interference in cultural protocols.[92] But after the governor called in military reinforcements—German warships and soldiers—Lauaki and nine of his chief supporters surrendered to avert any more bloodshed. They were sent into exile to Saipan in the Mariana Islands. A few years later, a New Zealand (NZ) Expeditionary Force, at Britain's invitation, landed in Samoa at the outbreak of the First World War.

The forced occupation of Samoa by NZ is said to have crystallised a perception of Oceania as her "domain."[93] It legitimised her government's long-held designs for the Samoan Islands to be part of her territories and extended the "British sphere of influence" in Oceania.[94] NZ prided herself as well suited to civilising Oceania Polynesians,[95] albeit with military force and without any experience. For this discussion, only some incidents during NZ's administration are included to demonstrate other colonial impacts that have not been mentioned before.

Suffice to say, and in hindsight, the smooth transfer of power from Germany to NZ's military regime, and Samoans' passive obedience possibly prompted subsequent NZ governments to interpret their wartime administration of Samoa as "relatively peaceful," despite the oppressive impacts on many Samoan Islanders.[96] Such ignorant mentality can be compared to the claims of *pax Romana* when Rome dictated peace with its military domination

[91] See Meleisea, *Lagaga,* 118, 117–121.
[92] O'Brien, *Tautai*, 26.
[93] Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny," 89–99.
[94] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 126.
[95] Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny," 99.
[96] See New Zealand Foreign Affairs & Trades, "Apia, Our Story," 1, https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/mfat75/75-our-story/apia/.

of the Mediterranean world (including Greco-Roman Palestine), with their oppressive tributes and lording over conquered lands and people.[97] Similar biased claims could be made of Herod Antipas' reign in Galilee, although Jesus' absence from its main cities could have contributed to a relatively successful and unhindered ministry there.

Contrary to NZ's claim, her government's negligence to protect Samoan Islanders during an influenza epidemic in 1918–1919 struck deep emotional distrust and shaped Samoan Islanders' dissatisfaction towards the NZ administration. Their failure to quarantine the *Talune* ship with infectious passengers onboard resulted in the death of more than 7,500 people (around 22% of Samoa's population at the time) who needlessly perished as a result.[98] Unfortunately, such is the nature of infections and diseases, as we are now experiencing again with Covid 19 as I have been completing this thesis.

Another NZ Administrator—Brigadier General George Richardson—tried to change Samoan culture by reforming the land tenure system and centralising the bestowal and removal of chiefly titles.[99] Richardson's approach renewed NZ's effort to replace the authority of the village leadership by discouraging "traditional and cultural practices … individualising land holdings …[and] remodelling" traditional village structures.[100] He encountered opposition from many Samoan Islanders who opposed these reforms. Chiefs who resisted these colonial demands were banished into exile, and their chiefly titles removed under the statutory power of the 1922 Samoa Offenders Ordinance. However, other NZ policies improved Samoan Islanders' livelihoods, such as the establishment of *Komiti Tumamā* (village women committees) to enhance public health; improvements in copra production, quality, and

[97] See Carter, "Sanctioned Violence," 288.

[98] The ship *Talune* arrived from NZ with people infected with pneumonic influenza. The passengers were permitted to disembark without restrictions (as was the case when the ship stopped over in Fiji), allowing the disease to spread indiscriminately with devastating results.

[99] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 127.

[100] New Zealand Foreign Affairs & Trades, "Apia, Our Story," 2.

quantity; better coordination of government and mission educational programs; and a scholarship scheme to educate boys in NZ.[101]

NZ commercial enterprises built up their reputations and profits from their investments in the islands to their north.[102] Such profit extraction contributed to some grievances from local businesses and people, mainly about the "economic effects of the expropriation of German businesses, export taxes, and stricter labour laws."[103] These economic policies devastated the local business community and added to the ordinary Samoan Islanders' suffering due to the rising prices of consumable goods.

In response, Samoans Islanders re-ignited a nationwide resistance movement—the *Mau a Tumua ma Pule* (Opinion of *Tumua* and *Pule*), in a united stand against Richardson's policies. The *Mau* provided an avenue for Samoan Islanders (particularly the native Samoans who were easily identified by their uniform of a dark blue *lavalava* (sarong) and a single white stripe at the bottom) to express their categorical resistance to any attempt to alter their traditional institutions. Olaf Frederick Nelson (an *afakasi* with a Samoan mother and German father) led this with support from two *tama-a-aiga* (sons of the families)—Tupua Tamasese and Tuimaleali'ifano Si'u.[104]

In this incident, this collaborative effort supports the inclusive nature of this Samoan expression—*motu o tagata*—to include many Samoan Islanders whose shared-interest of seeking change prompted their cooperation. But in arrogant defiance (just as in Solf's reaction previously), the NZ administration outlawed the *Mau* movement, claiming Nelson and other

[101] K. Eteuati, "Evaevaga a Samoa: Assertion of a Samoan Autonomy" (PhD diss., Australian National University, 1982), 64.

[102] Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny," 99.

[103] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 129.

[104] *Tama-a-aiga* is a collective reference to four descent groups of Samoa's leading title holders. See Tuimaleali'ifano, "Titular Disputes," 92, who argues that by mid-19th century, only four of these titles had survived – Matā'afa, Tupua Tamasese, Tuimaleali'ifano from the Tupuā family, and Malietoa of Sā Malietoā lineage. All are descendants from Queen Salamasina.

"evil Europeans" were misleading Samoan Islanders while exploiting the movement for their "economic ambitions."[105] NZ troops were deployed to quash this uprising, and Nelson, Tupua Tamasese, and others were exiled to NZ. This heavy-handed approach only encouraged an increasingly vocal but passive protest against NZ rule, which continued to ignore local contributions to the decision-making process.[106]

The continuous frustration culminated with Samoa's own "Black Saturday," which commemorates the many unarmed Samoan Islanders whose peaceful demonstration was ambushed by a rally of bullets from a NZ army machine gun on 28 December 1929. One of the leading paramount chiefs, Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, succumbed to his bullet wounds while leading that demonstration.[107] This incident could have triggered an all-out civil war between the supporters of the *Mau* and the NZ regime, had it not for Tupua's dying wish: *Samoa, fifilemu* ("Samoa, remain calm").[108] His personal sacrifice for the freedom of Samoa only strengthened the *Mau*'s determination for Samoa's independence from NZ domination.

This incident initiated changes that led to a new beginning for Samoa's political future with some bilateral improvements in relationships. A Samoan council of state and a legislative assembly were established in the late 1940s, and a constitutional deliberation was held in 1954. Finally, NZ acknowledged Samoa's independence as inevitable and even desirable. A formal constitution was adopted, and on 1 January 1962, Samoa's sovereignty was ultimately achieved through blood, personal sacrifice and devotion, and a united collective determination by all Samoan Islanders, seeking a common goal of an independent and better Samoa.

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[105] Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa,* 142.

[106] Meleisea, *Lagaga*, 132. Also, Foster, *Samoa, Island Nation*; O'Brien, *Tautai*, 45. Many armed supporters of the *Mau* went into the jungle from which they conducted guerrilla warfare against NZ troops.

[107] Ten other marchers were killed and sixty injured.

[108] My own translation.

Solf's position as the governor of the German Kaiser and NZ's military administrators of colonised Samoa possibly render them as Samoa's equivalent to Pilate in Mark's story (15:1–15). This suggestion emphasises Pilate's role in Judea in the historical context of Roman domination and Mark's retelling of that history. For Mark's implied audience then and Samoan Islanders now, such rulers represent earthly political authorities and their oppressive impact. Mark's story of the *motu o tagata* then provides a powerful reminder that despite facing the brutality of political domination and economic exploitation, the faithful followers of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can courageously endure such struggles.

7.2.3 Independence and corruption

Samoa's independent sovereignty has privileged Samoan Islanders with the executive honour of developing their limited resources to improve their livelihoods in close cooperation with overseas friends and development partners. Cultural traditions, belief systems, and controlling mechanisms are intertwined with appropriate introduced concepts for the benefit of all "island of people" in Samoa and have shaped their sociohistorical journey of adaptation since independence.[109]

Samoa's national government structure has upheld the esteem for its leading traditional families (which were mainly inactive during colonial periods), with *tama-a-aiga* appointed as *Ao o le Malo* (Head of State, HoS).[110] The same cultural reverence was accorded to the prime-

[109] See Asofou Soo, "More than 20 Years of Political Stability in Samoa Under the Human Right Protection Party," in *Globalisation and Governance in the Pacific Islands*, ed., Stewart Firth (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/state-society-and-governance-melanesia/globalisation-and-governance-pacific. Samoa has adopted a Westminster system of parliament. From independence, only *matai* could vote and be eligible to be members of parliament but universal suffrage in 1990 allowed Samoan citizens over twenty-one years of age to vote (only if you reside in Samoa).

[110] HoS is a constitutional appointment, and Samoa's equivalent to the Queen or Governor General in commonwealth countries. Malietoa Tanumafili II and Tupua Tamasese Meaole were jointly chosen as HoS until their passing away in 1963 and 2007 respectively. Malietoa II was the son of Malietoa Tanumafili I, who was defeated by Mata'afa Iosefo during the German administration. Another *tama-a-aiga*, Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Tupuola Efi, served two consecutive terms (2007–2017) before he was unceremoniously replaced by another,

ministership when *tama-a-aiga* served consecutively as Prime Ministers (PM)—Mata'afa Fiame Mulinu'u II (1962–1970, 1973–1975) and Tupua Tamasese Lealofi IV (1970–1973 and as acting PM in 1975 when Mata'afa passed away).

Tupuola Efi was the first non-*tama-a-aiga* then to be the PM (1976–1982) breaking with this respectful tradition,[111] before he was conferred the *tama-a-aiga* titles Tupua Tamasese and Tuiatua in 1986 and 1987 respectively, after confirmation from the Land and Titles Court.[112] Political instability and economic unrest followed Efi's prime ministership, a period some have interpreted as an opportunity to fulfil personal desires for power.[113] In its aftermath, other non-*tama-a-aiga* titleholders have been elevated to prime-ministership—Tofilau Eti Alesana (1985–1998) and Tuilaepa Sailele Maleilegaoi (1998–2021). The introduction of political parties to Samoa's political landscape possibly facilitated this shift and enabled the HRPP party to continuously control Samoa's government since 1985.

The 2021 general election brought an unexpected result. It mandated the people's wish for a change of government with the installation of a newly formed political party—*Faatuatua i le Atua Samoa ua Tasi* (FAST)—to govern Samoa's XVIIth Parliament. It was a historical moment for Samoa (and Oceania) with the selection of the first female PM—Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, amidst many court challenges and a political stand-off.[114] This election result

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Tuimalealiifano Vaaletoa Sualauvi II, the current HoS. The use of "unceremoniously" reflects the argument that the five-year term for the HoS diminishes and demeans the sacredness and dignity of the *tama-a-aiga* institution. Others advocate for the HoS appointment to be for life and the prerogative of the *tama-a-aiga* group of descendants only.

[111] Tupuola Efi is the grandson of Taisi O. F. Nelson who led the *Mau a Tumua ma Pule* against the NZ administration.

[112] See Tuimaleali'ifano, "Titular Disputes," 98-103, who discusses these conferrals and the influence of the court decision amidst opposition from other traditional custodians.

[113] Corbett and Ng Shiu, "Leadership Succession," 744, describe some politicians as "self-interested," "power hungry," and out of touch with the people's need. See also Section 7.2 above.

[114] Fiame is the daughter of Samoa's first ever PM—Mata'afa Fiame Mulinu'u II, and heir-apparent to the *tama-a-aiga* title—Mata'afa. A brief description of this stand-off is provided here. Tuilaepa, for nearly three months as the caretaker PM, refused to accept the election results when two independent elected members declared their allegiance to the FAST party, giving it a one-member majority in a fifty-one seat parliament. Tuilaepa hijacked and abused government resources to justify his hold on power, which led to the Supreme Court of Samoa ordering Parliament to convene on 24th May, as mandated by the Constitution. Unfortunately, this did not happen

expressed voters' dissatisfaction with Tuilaepa's leadership, who had utilised every avenue at his disposal during the political impasse to defy the people's will, and assault and reject the democratic processes.

Tuilaepa and his HRPP supporters' defiant reactions can be interpreted as "jealous fear" due to FAST's popularity and swift rise to power, which suddenly replaced their more than forty-year reign. Without evoking messianic claims for Mata'afa, this suggestion reminded me of some episodes in Mark's story, which describe the mesmerising effects of Jesus' teachings and transformative deeds on the crowds such that they were astounded and spellbound (cf. 1:22; 6:2, 51; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18). Jesus' popularity caused such grave "fear" for the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem that they looked for ways to kill him (11:18), even approaching Pilate, who realised that they brought Jesus to him because of their jealousy (15:10). The leaders then used an agitated crowd and stirred them up to force Pilate's decision to satisfy their evil intention (15:11).

Killing may seem to be a far-fetched analogy in Samoa's current political crisis, though threats of similar nature have been directed at FAST's leadership.[115] FAST's sudden rise to power caused jealous fear in Tuilaepa and his HRPP supporters, who publicly exploited every

as the 'people's house' was locked. In extraordinary circumstances, FAST (using the doctrine of "legal necessity") continued with the swearing-in of its elected members and a newly elected PM—Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, and her cabinet. The then Attorney General challenged the constitutionality of the swearing-in ceremony in the SC.

On the 2nd of June, the Court of Appeal (CoA) decided that a minimum number of female representatives in Parliament was six, but Section 44 (1A) should only be activated after any legal court challenges and by-elections. The CoA re-affirmed the SC's decision to invalidate the appointment of the additional female member, and re-affirmed the results of the general election: FAST 26; HRPP 25. Tuilaepa continued to ignore this fact by prolonging the convening of Parliament. On 28th June, the SC ruled that the swearing-in ceremony on 24th May was unconstitutional, and ordered Parliament to convene within seven days, otherwise, the SC itself would activate this legal necessity principle if its orders were not followed. On Friday 23rd July 2021, the CoA ruled that it activated the doctrine of legal necessity, and declared the 24th of May swearing-in ceremony in front of Parliament House (in the tent) to be in effect, forthwith! On Monday 26th July 2021, FAST became the ruling government in Samoa after forty years of HRPP rule, and nearly four months after the general election. Tuilaepa and his HRPP supporters continued to attack the courts and its decisions as unconstitutional, which resulted with "contempt of court" cases filed against eight of their members and supporters, including Tuilaepa.

[115] See Sialai Sanerivi, "La'auli confirms threats against him," *Samoa Observer*, 13 September (2021), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/samoa/91404. Although, the assassination of a cabinet minister by his fellow ministerial colleagues in 1999 reminds that this is a possibility.

possible avenue to support their cause. They even demanded cultural and religious leaders to act as peacemakers when HRPP members were the instigators by disobeying the rule of law. These circumstances illuminate such parallels between Tuilaepa and HRPP's crying-foul and the jealous fear of Jewish leaders in the Markan narrative. These disruptive impacts are reminders of Jesus' warning about divisions at the personal, familial, and collective levels (cf. 13:7–14).

Samoa's present crisis illustrates the impacts of adopted institutions such as the courts, political parties, and a national government, which have demonstrated different "battlegrounds" for Samoa's political leadership.[116] Some recently passed controversial legislation has also considerably swayed the political autonomy of district and village authorities and their support for individual human rights, and is sowing division amongst Samoan Islanders.[117]

The influence of some domineering overseas investors with excessive demands is contributing to this changing environment, particularly some recent Chinese foreign investments.[118] The former HRPP-led government embraced such economic penetration, which has forced many Samoan family enterprises to close because they could not compete.[119]

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[116] Tuimaleali'ifano, "Titular Disputes," 103.

[117] Maina Vai, "Only Time Will Tell the Impacts as Parliament Passes 3 Controversial Bills," *Samoa Global News,* 16 December (2020), https://perma.cc/E84F-4X7C, highlights some grave concerns from Samoan parliamentarians, the Samoa Law Society, the Office of the Ombudsman, and various sectors of the population in response to major amendments to the Constitution, the Judicature Act, and the Land and Titles Act that the former HRPP-led government passed into law.

[118] Samoa's limited economic-base could be easily exploited by wealthy foreign investors with exorbitant demands on local resources. It can lead to counter-productive investments with consequential impacts. For examples of such possible exploitation, see Claire Ferrell, "Samoa: Will the island be 'exploited' by Chinese firms?" *The Foreign Report.com*, June (2013), http://www.theforeignreport.com/2013/06/13/samoa-will-the-island-be-exploited-by-chinese-firms/. See also Stewart Firth, "Introduction," in *Globalisation and Governance in the Pacific Islands*, ed., Stewart Firth (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/state-society-and-governance-melanesia/globalisation-and-governance-pacific, who discusses the vulnerability of independent island nations in Oceania who are "on their own" against aggressive foreign demands.

[119] These Chinese newcomers are very different from Samoan Chinese, whose ancestors were brought as labourers during colonial periods.

Some Samoan village leaders are forced to make "sink or swim" decisions to secure these Chinese investments despite the predatory nature of their demands.[120] Even the recent opening of the "Pandora" papers has exposed a hangover of economic (imperial) colonialism and possible corrupt practices between some foreign investors (Australian) and some Samoan government officials and agencies.[121] Such transactions and tax dodges are reminiscent of similar abuses of power and patronage under Roman rule, where local elites would vie for Roman favours to give them an advantage in the economic exploitation of the struggling Galilean and Judean population. Many of Mark's accounts of the marginalised can be set in the context of such difficulties, some of whom were struggling with life's basic needs (without food), social marginalisation and isolation (leper and woman with blood), economic disparity (poor widow), and religious abuse (cf. 12:38–40).

These adverse impacts are evidence of actions requiring repentance. Their undesirable impacts underlie the negative fallout associated with success, as some Samoan Islanders have yet to enjoy the benefits of economic development.[122] This struggling portion of the population can only interpret such progression as meaningless and irrelevant as they still have no access to piped drinking water (19%), electricity (3%), or proper shelter (9%).[123] Some are neglected

[120] Jonathan Barrett, "Sink or Swim: Chinese port plans put Pacific back in play," *Reuters,* 7 August (2019), https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pacific-samoa-china-insight-idUSKCN1UX01I, citing former US Defence Secretary, Mark Esper's reference to China's lending practices as "predatory economics," despite Chinese President, Xi Jinping's insistence that they are not "traps." Barrett points out that local Samoan leaders are accepting Chinese investments, despite their draconian demands. Also, Graeme Smith, et al, "The Development Needs of Pacific Island Countries," Australian Aid and UNDP, September (2014), 10, https://www.cn.undp.org/content/china/en/home/library/south-south-cooperation/the-development-needs-of-pacific-island-countries-report-0.html, explains that China's foreign aid to Oceania has shifted towards "concessionary loans" from interest-free loan and grants.

[121] See Liam Fox. "Samoan connection unearthed in Pandora paper leaked," *ABC Pacific Beat*, 6 October 2021, https://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/programs/pacificbeat/pandora-papers-show-links-between-aunstralian-and-samoan-govt/13572162.

[122] See Moustafa Ahmed, *Samoa: Hardship and Poverty Report* (Samoa National Statistic Office and UNDP Pacific Centre: Apia, 2016), 13.

[123] Ahmed, *Samoa: Hardship and Poverty Report*, 19. See also "Village Voice," *Samoa Observer*, https://www.samoaobserver.ws/, which has for many years highlighted these family struggles amidst economic developments.

and abused,[124] while school-aged children sell merchandise on the streets during school hours and late into the night. These examples demonstrate that some Samoan Islanders are falling through the cracks of the much-vaunted economic development. Also, it has been said that Samoa's graduation to a developing economy has not generated changes to accelerate sustainable development to improve people's livelihoods.[125] This is not endemic just to Samoa, but it raises concerns that despite the many positive benefits of globalisation and economic progression, many others are being left behind in least-developed and developing economies, as these Samoan examples demonstrate. It is a sad reminder that many people in their various contexts, including Samoan Islanders, are struggling to cope, just as experienced by many Galilean peasant families over two millenniums ago, which Mark embeds in his story of the *motu o tagata*.

There are numerous possible causes and effects, but the performance of many government officials (former and present) and their priorities are significant issues in Samoa. During the last three decades, the indefensible failure of political leadership and the public sector to manage prudently national resources and international assistance has tarnished Samoa's success story. This incompetence places Samoa again in a compromised financial position, with its debt distress level at the high-risk end.[126] The former HRPP-led government's aggressive development agenda in its eagerness to conform to a globalised phenomenon is said

[124] Sui-Maliko, "A Public Theology Response to Domestic Violence in Samoa," 54–55, argues that women were often abused physically (41%) and sexually (20%). There has been an alarming increase in the number of people begging on the streets in Apia town centre in recent years.

[125] Tina Mata'afa-Tufele, "Samoa's upgrade from L.D.C. status unfruitful: experts," *Samoa Observer*, 1 September (2021), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/samoa/90660.

[126] See SBS, "Government Finance Statistics," 1 September (2021), https://drive.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://www.sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/Finance/GFS/2021/Government-Finance_Statistics_Report_June_2021.pdf, which reveals that as of 30 June 2021, Samoa's foreign debt stands at 1.0 billion, of which $403.1 million is owed to China. This was set for a substantial increase, had it not for the new PM Fiame Mata'afa, scrapping an expensive new wharf project approved under the former government, which she deemed "excessive" and not necessary for Samoa. See Jonathan Barrett, "Samoa to scrap China-backed port project under new leader," *Yahoo Finance*, 20 May (2021), https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/samoa-shelve-china-backed-port-003018296.html?guccounter=1.

to have become "immaterial to the needs of Samoa's modern society," while accumulating foreign debt.[127] Such factors compound the state's struggle to meet its needs and responsibilities to satisfy the proliferation of social demands due to limited resources and a relatively "small remote economy."[128]

Past and recent failures at the government level and public officials' abuse of office have contributed to wealth disparity and an imbalanced social wellbeing for the "island of people." This is illustrated by state-owned enterprises (SOEs) being "managed to serve political and social interests" instead of meeting the needs of the people.[129] Many are battling against the high cost of living, which is exacerbated by a low minimum wage and limited employment opportunities.[130] Such selfish acts enhanced the perpetrators' wealth at the expense of many Samoan Islanders.[131] They have plagued Samoan society, especially when undertaken by those within the government, as exemplified by the 1994 Auditor-General's

[127] Desmond Uelese Amosa, "An overview of public sector management report in Samoa," *PEB* 18.2, November (2003): 42, https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/bitstream/1885/157689/1/182_overview.pdf.

[128] The World Bank, "Samoa: First Fiscal and Economic Reform Operation," 1.

[129] Australian International Development Assistance Bureau, "The Western Samoa economy: paving the way for sustainable growth and stability," *International Development Issues* 38 (Canberra: AIDAB, 1994), cited by Amosa, "An overview of public sector management report in Samoa," 42, with reference to Polynesian Airlines' loss of $125 million Tālā.

[130] The minimum wage for the private sector as of 1 January 2020 was $3.00 ST (equivalent of $1.20 USD). See SBS, "Project Strategy: Developing Social Protection Indicators for Samoa under the Strengthening Resilience of Samoa through Social Protection Programme," November (2020), 7, https://www.sbs.gov.ws/images/sbs-documents/social/Social_ProtectionReport.pdf. Also, the average monthly wage for Samoan workers in 2017 was $1,268 ST. See SBS, "Samoa Labour Force Survey 2017," 8, https://www.sbs.gov.ws/digi/2017-Social%20Statistics-Samoa%20LFS%20Report%202017.pdf. In terms of employment opportunities, these are limited internally, which is demonstrated by thousands of Samoan youths (21–40 years) flocking to register for Seasonal Work overseas. See Staff Reporter, "Uncontrollable Crowd Break Down Doors to Register for Seasonal Work," *Samoa Global News*, 22 June (2021), https://samoaglobalnews.com/uncontrollable-crowd-break-down-doors-to-register-for-seasonal-work/?fbclid=IwAR26KCMQKX1ZSv5K54FsHJ6BNGN3nXxqnCK3kQZ4OgK39-YBd_3InlL15Kc.

[131] Savea Sano Malifa, "Gagging the Samoa Observer," *Pacific Journalism Review*, 6.1 (Oceania Press Councils 5, 2000): 72.

report, revealing "massive official corruption."[132] This explains why no audited accounts for these SOEs were presented before parliament for the eight consecutive years prior.[133]

The Controller and Chief Auditor's report (2009–2010) also reveals similar expensive mistakes costing millions and millions, which the former government again ignored.[134] Despite the evidence of such corrupt practices, not one person has been charged while many Samoan Islanders are burdened with increases in various forms of taxation, service charges, and user-pay policies. A Samoan-version of the "pandora papers" (which substantiate such corrupt practices by former government ministers and heads of public enterprises but which were totally ignored by the previous administration) have recently been released to the Samoan media by the leader of the political FAST party (and current Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery), with the aim of bringing the perpetrators to face legal proceedings.[135]

Other reports of corruption, mismanagement of public assets and misappropriation of public finance have confirmed these claims. Corbett and Ng Shiu dissect three examples involving former government ministers, whose personal ego, stupidity, and "conduct unbecoming" have cost Samoan Islanders dearly.[136] Other examples implicated former

[132] Malama Meleisea, "Governance, development and leadership in Polynesia: A microstudy from Samoa," 79, http://pressfiles.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p99101/pdf/ch0516.pdf.

[133] Malifa, "Gagging the Samoa Observer," 64, lists other acts of corruption allegedly carried out by government ministers, SOE officers, diplomatic offices, and so forth, including corruption and theft by government ministers; management failures and losses at the government's Polynesian airline; a government minister who was awarded a road contract, and charged the government for $47,000 USD per mile for a twenty-six mile road, despite all labour and resources being provided by the government; the sale of an $8,000 generator by the same minister to the Public Power Authority for $89,000 ST; and a passport scandal involving the illegal sale of Samoan passports and citizenship via Samoan diplomatic offices overseas.

[134] See GoS, *Report of the Controller and Chief Auditor to the Legislative Assembly: Report on the Operations of the Audit Office. July 2009 – June 2010*, 30 April (Apia, 2012).

[135] An example of such "papers" released to the media include a personal letter from Papaliitele Niko Lee Hang (former Associate Minister for MCIT, Member of Parliament OPC Select Committee, Chairman of the Parliament Finance and Expenditure Committee) to the then Attorney General, regarding "allegations against Samoa Land Corporation" on 19 August, 2014, (sighted, 25 November 2021).

[136] See Corbett and Ng Shiu, "Leadership Succession." One minister spent over ST $600,000 just to renovate his office; the deputy PM obstructed a police officer from doing his duty, who stopped an associate minister for a traffic violation. Both public servants were under the influence of alcohol; another associate minister became abusive during an official gathering.

ministers and heads of government departments forming companies operated by close relatives, which received uncontested government contracts involving substantial public finance.[137]

It seems the rot has not been contained and has become the norm within the walls of power. In 2017, the contract for a new prison complex was awarded to a local construction company headed by the brother of the previous minister for Prison and Rehabilitation Services. It cost Samoan taxpayers 25 million Tālā compared to a budgeted allocation of 18 million.[138] Similar circumstances have come to light regarding a new prison in Savaii, which was not tendered and without the required regulatory permits, with estimated costs of more than $800,000 Tālā.[139] It seems the whole project was carried out with the full knowledge of the former PM and cabinet when they attended a ground-breaking ceremony. These examples highlight such abuses of power in totally ignoring prescribed policies and regulations by top-level government officials (who think they are above the law). Still, the same rules are forcefully applied to ordinary Samoan Islanders trying to feed and educate their families.[140]

These examples illuminate the troubles that have plagued Samoa's economic progress. They demonstrate corruption, nepotism, conflict of interest, and numerous abuses of power by many government departments and senior officials.[141] Incredibly, some of these fraudulent

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[137] Meleisea, "Governance, development and leadership in Polynesia," 79.

[138] Joyetter Feagaimaali'i, "P.M. to open $25 million Tala Tanumalala prison," *Samoa Observer*, 27 June (2019), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/samoa/44600?fbclid=IwAR0coayRt9rQUkamUaaRQWFaQKT_hX3JV5m63Mg7D4ZauUV0l9SZpyOWy1k.

[139] Soli Wilson, "Vaiaata Prison transaction "highly unusual,"" *Samoa Observer*, 5 October (2020), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/samoa/72062?utm_content=buffer10ecf&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer&fbclid=IwAR1Ng0wpggrTdpNIJzncoELnLYToFNN48uYUYSHiUCuMRgK3U3FuGx8kNoI.

[140] See The Editorial Board, "Government should lead the way in respecting their own process, systems," *Samoa Observer*, 14 October (2020), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/article/72616.

[141] For examples, the former PM's son was the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Samoa's Ministry of Finance, his son-in-law is the current Chief Auditor, and the former Attorney General is the sister of another son's wife, even though these appointments went through the proper processes. Also, see the report by the Editorial Board, "A.G. should investigate her own management," *Samoa Observer*, 15 March (2021), https://www.facebook.com/samoaobserver/posts/4363509207011192, which laments a perceived conflict of interest from Samoa's former Attorney General and her department's ongoing contracts with her husband's private practice.

activities were public knowledge and, when questioned, have been swiftly swept under the carpet. Their exploitative nature has benefited only the elites, while many Samoan Islanders are robbed of the benefits of public resources and economic developments. At the same time, numerous public servants and the public are fearful of possible repercussions for disclosing such corruption.[142] It is encouraging that the FAST-led government is committed to establishing a 'fraud office' to investigate such exploitative practices, when they tabled their 2021/2022 national budget before parliament for approval.

The rippling effects of such abuses are exemplified by many Samoan Islanders living below the poverty line,[143] despite progression in economic development and numerous foreign assistance packages. Samoan Islanders' health has also deteriorated as dependence on overseas cheap and fatty foods has increased non-communicable diseases, making up eight of the top ten local causes of death in 2019.[144] Some families are struggling without life's basic needs such as water, shelter, and food. This warrants immediate attention from relevant agencies (including churches) to cater to the people's needs and for their voices to be heard. In addition, thefts and break-ins in homes and business premises have risen dramatically. Too many young adults are being sent to prison for various offences—drugs, break-ins, theft as servants, assaults, incest, domestic violence and so forth, while government officials are turning a blind eye to unprecedented criminal acts at the top.

These social issues have disrupted the core aspects of Samoan culture, family, and society. Their adverse impacts on the "island of people" and the unchecked misuse of power

[142] For example, see Malifa, "Gagging the Samoa Observer," 65, 66, who reveals his personal fear for himself, his family, and staff due to death threats, public assaults, and properties burned. Even public servants have obediently adhered to government pressure for fear of losing their jobs.

[143] See Lizbeth Cullity, "Foreword by Undp Resident Representative," in *Samoa: Hardship and Poverty Report* (Samoa National Statistic Office and UNDP Pacific Centre: Apia, 2016), 9, who highlights Samoa's position at 18.8% of the population in 2013/2014, an improvement from 26.9% in 2008.

[144] Country Report – Samoa, *Global Health Data Index*, http://www.healthdata.org/samoa, which includes ischemic heart diseases (#1); stroke (#2); diabetes (#3); COPD (#4); kidney diseases (#6); hypertensive heart diseases (#7); cirrhosis (#9); and Alzheimer's disease (#10).

for personal gain at the top reveal the many failures of Jesus' followers in Samoa presently. This calls Samoan Christians to re-evaluate our lack of faith and action to proclaim and perform the Goodnews of God in Samoa. Our selfish ambitions show a dire need for repentance and call Samoan followers of Jesus to understand and implement Jesus' servanthood role which focussed on those in need.

On the narrative level, Jesus prioritises such marginalised people and expresses compassion towards them by providing for their needs socially, physically, and spiritually. Mark also alludes to some of these social problems in Jesus' parable about the wicked tenants (12:1–12), the inclusion of a paralytic who depends on others (2:3), the feeding stories (6:34–44; 8:1–10), and a poor widow (12:42), all of which circumstances could possibly be attributed to their leaders' selfish and individualistic motives (cf. 12:38–40; 8:15).

The impact of some controversial legislation has driven a sword of mistrust, uncertainty, and general confusion for the people. For example, the Land and Titles Registration Act (LTRA) 2008 has allowed customary lands to be leased for development purposes for up to ninety-nine years, effectively alienating family members from their land. More alarmingly, it could enable a *matai* titleholder (with associated land to that title) to register these customary family lands under his (her) name, thereby rendering him (her) sole ownership of that land while traditional heirs are left out.[145]

Future uncertainties concerning lease defaults remain. These untested concerns will only be resolved in the Court dealing with traditional matters—The Land and Titles Court—

[145] See Ruiping Ye, "Torrens and Customary Land Tenure: A Case Study of the Land Titles Registration Act 2008 of Samoa," August, 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327815305_Torrens_and_Customary_Land_Tenure_A_Case_Study_of_the_Land_Titles_Registration_Act_2008_of_Samoa?enrichId=rgreq-a154c40a4f2f912c9d5ec4bd3a4a9c45-XXX&enrichSource=Y292ZXJQYWdlOzMyNzgxNTMwNTtBUzo3ODY5NjIxODk0MTQ0MDBAMTU2NDYzNzgxNTAzNQ==&el=1_x_2&_esc=publicationCoverPdf.

which is now independent of Samoa's Supreme Court.[146] This has prompted conflicts between communal rights of village councils allowed under the Land and Titles Act 2020, and individual human rights guaranteed under the Constitution. As such, some village councils have abused their new authority to cause fear and harm to families and individuals, which demonstrate this friction.[147]

These negative impacts have also affected familial and communal relationship commitments, which are integral to *fa'aSamoa*. Such interdependent and reciprocated connections highlight Samoan values of sharing, helping each other, and the collective contribution of material, emotional, and spiritual wealth when needed. These values epitomise the sacredness, the blessings, and sacrifices of belonging to a family and the unity of communal living. Unfortunately, these finely woven traditional fabrics are slowly unravelling because of outside influences as greed and individualism threaten to dismantle this foundation. The financial burden of maintaining and preserving these commitments has led to separation and division, as some parents, children, and relatives are severing traditional relationship ties. Some have opted to relocate (urbanisation and migration) to seek wealth, security, and a better future, especially in foreign lands.[148]

Issues of separation, dislocation, and the uprooting of traditional and religious values were evident in Greco-Roman Palestine, as discussed previously, as Roman armies suppressed rebellions and extended borders. Jesus accepts the inevitability of such dislocations and

[146] GoS, *Judicature* 23, (2020), https://www.palemene.ws/wp-content/uploads/Judicature-Act-2020-Eng.pdf, effectively establishes an autonomous Land and Titles Court (LTC). See also Law Council of Australia, "Proposed constitutional amendments in Samoa concerning," 8 May (2020), https://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/publicassets/0c30aa55-eb90-ea11-9434-005056be13b5/2018%20--%20Proposed%20constitutional%20amendments%20in%20Samoa%20concerning.pdf, which has voiced its concerns regarding these proposed amendments to Samoa's Judicature Act, especially the separation of powers, the government's influence upon the LTC, and individuals not having a right to appeal to the Supreme Court.

[147] Joyette Feagaimaali'i, "Chiefs' new power being abused: Minister," *Samoa Observer*, 3 September (2021), https://www.samoaobserver.ws/category/samoa/90801.

[148] The majority of diaspora Samoan have maintained contact with their traditional roots. Their financial support through remittances to the islands have become the number one source of funds for families and development.

itinerancy (10:28–31), and Mark describes such movements with many people following Jesus, including individuals, such as Peter, who complained about leaving everything (10:28). Others also followed such as the tax collectors and sinners (cf. 2:15), the women (cf. 15:41), and the *ochloi* (cf. 3:7; 5:24; 10:32; 11:9), whose circumstances were structured and controlled by the political, economic, and cultural opportunities and constraints of their societies.

From a theological perspective, the influence of corrupt leadership, personalised religious beliefs and distorted scriptural interpretations have led to an increasing separation between God's will and many Samoan Islanders' selfish actions, which calls for repentance. Mark points to similar blasphemies advocated by some Jewish religious leaders, whose human understanding blinded them from knowing Jesus and following God's commands (cf. 7:8–13; 12:24). Two millennia later, Samoan Islanders are still trapped and confused by similar misrepresentations of God's Goodnews.

7.2.4 Religious diversity and renewal

The arrival of Christianity and the Christian God neither eliminated Samoa's warring factions nor brought peaceful relief for Samoa's "island of people" at first. On the contrary, the violence associated with the arrival of Christianity and some missionaries' political affiliations and personal ambitions contributed to continuing intermittent and fierce tribal fighting in Samoa.[149] Historians have also attributed the "materialistic and technological" appeal of Christianity as attractive determinants in the acceptance of the Gospel by the Samoans.[150] Such material attractions continue to plague Christian churches' policies and missions. Distorted

[149] O'Brien, *Tautai*, 4–6.

[150] Feiloaiga Taule'ale'ausumai, "Pasifika Churches Trapped in the Missionary Era: A Case in Samoa," in *Theologies from the Pacific*, Postcolonialism and Religious Series, ed., Jione Havea (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 140, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-74365-9_10.

interpretations of biblical texts in support of personal gain exacerbate this problem in the Samoan context.

These problems problematise the role of early church mission societies in promoting colonialism, capitalism, and exploitation in Oceania, including Samoa.[151] Have they embedded in the "island of people" a false interpretation of God's Goodnews, which prioritises wealth and status? Such concerns challenge the three mainstream churches in Samoa—the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), Roman Catholic, and Methodist, to re-examine whether they are operating for financial reward or serving the spiritual needs of their faithful adherents.

Mark's depiction of the *motu o tagata*, which reflects similar problems faced by his emerging communities of believers under Roman domination, can help this urgency by reminding Samoan Islanders of the peril of similar selfish concerns, which can only lead to divisions (cf. 13:9–13). The desire for special privileges that corrupts even members of the Twelve in Mark's Gospel (10:35–40), as discussed previously,[152] are also leading astray many Samoan Islander believers today, particularly some wealthy, church-going Samoan Christians and even some church leaders.[153]

On the narrative level, some of the Twelve's requests to Jesus point to such egocentric ambitions when they argue about the greatest amongst themselves (9:34). A similar request from the Sons of Zebedee—James and John—who ask for prominent places by Jesus' side, prompts a thundering rebuke from the other ten (cf. 10:35–37, 41). Even Peter's understanding of a Jewish messiah (an identity he attributes to Jesus) does not assign human suffering to Jesus

[151] See *Talanoa: Legacies of Slavery and Colonisation in Oceania* (virtual seminar presentations and discussions, March 2021), https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=207583664479343&ref=search.

[152] See Chapter Three, especially Section 3.5.

[153] Particularly for the CCCS, a number of its ordained ministers have been temporarily stripped of their ministerial duties due to such human weaknesses as misused of funds, unethical and immoral conduct, or adultery. They can be reinstated after several years when they can demonstrate repentance by changing their ways.

(cf. 8:29, 32), which contradicts Jesus' call to suffer as the Son of Humanity (cf. 8:29–33; 9:31; 10:33–34).

Such self-centred motives miss the mark regarding Jesus' being and that of his Father (cf. 9:37; 14:36), and Jesus' calling to serve and not be served and to give his life as a ransom for many (10:45). It is a servanthood role that calls all followers of Jesus (including Samoan Islanders) to such a radical way of following by being "servants of all" (9:35). It is not a call to seek selfish benefits or to focus on personal ambition. Peter's culturally structured viewpoint similarly reveals false interpretations that have blinded many followers of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This contradiction defines the problem of servanthood, which is lost on many Christian leaders and believers, even in the Samoan context. The attraction of wealth and power have negated the call to imitate Jesus' example of having compassion for those in need. Many Samoan Islander followers have failed to preach and carry out this imperative, as they ignore or turn a blind eye to the various traumas suffered by some of their fellow Christians.

But this negative assessment of the collective can only lead to hope and an opportunity to heed Jesus' invitation for all Christians for a reconciled transformation. Mark's presentation of the *motu o tagata*, which includes the participation of some exceptional individuals, illuminates a beacon of hope that can transform such failures and selfish purposes. Many positive and appreciative responses to Jesus' ministry call all followers of Jesus Christ, including Samoan Islanders, likewise to respond by not only "spreading" this Goodnews to others but by "doing" it for those in need.

When this primary purpose and objective of being a faithful believer is embedded within all Samoan Islanders, they can become the agents of change that overcome personal differences and distorted interpretations of the Gospel Truth. Doubts and confusion due to individualistic tendencies can be eliminated by bringing together all followers of Jesus to

present a united front to counter and eradicate intrusive evil forces which have divided God's household, as experienced in the Samoan context.

Samoan Islander believers have migrated from one denomination to another to satisfy lifestyle ambitions and to be involved with others of similar interests. This personal preference has been justified (with some truth) by pointing to numerous "voluntary" contributions to the church, earnestly practised by the three mainstream churches as reasons for leaving.[154] These contributions are in addition to their traditional obligations to families that the Samoan culture demands. These mainstream churches are accused of continuing such oppressive measures by allegedly abusing Samoan traditions and Christian beliefs to justify the need for such contributions to the church (monetary and in-kind). But for the steadfast believers, such sacrificial offerings represent their participation in Jesus' suffering on the cross. They happily endure such sacrifices because they believe in the "heavenly riches" awaiting them. Such offerings epitomise their total devotion to God's Goodnews. It is a cost that embodies their call to serve God and help others.

Sadly, a small number of Samoan Islanders have become so disillusioned with this whole idea of a Christian God that they have adopted other religions and different gods. Their rejection of God's Goodnews is an important reminder that other people are still blinded or have been led astray (cf. 13:5–6) from the richness of God's salvation for all, just as others rejected Jesus in Mark's Gospel. This calls for all Jesus' followers, including Samoan Islanders, to heed Jesus' warning to repent and change our ways of acquitting wealth and power. This

[154] Some examples of such church contributions in CCCS follow. For each CCCS parish, church members are responsible for providing the needs of their chosen minister, his wife and children with weekly or fortnightly monetary collections. Members can also contribute gifts occasionally. Parish members are also responsible for parish developments, particularly a house of worship and an abode for the minister and his family. There are also annual offerings to the "mother" church in Samoa to finance its various operations—administration and operational matters, colleges, missionary works overseas, helping Samoan Islanders during natural disasters, donations to government hospitals and private organisations caring for the elderly and abused mothers and children, and so forth. The church's annual operational budget is in excess of ten million Tala, which is mainly funded from donations by CCCS parishners in Samoa, NZ, Australia, USA, Hawaii, and Fiji, and with occasional contributions from the government and overseas partners, such as Council of World Mission (CWM).

divisive reality calls for re-interpretation of Jesus' proclamation of the reign of God, the *basileia*. Mark's story of the *motu o tagata* and their collective goal of seeking tangible transformation and positive changes from Jesus provides the necessary biblical and theological guidance.

Members of the *motu o tagata* in Mark, who heard stories of Jesus and sought him out for help, were transformed by Jesus' ministry of servanthood. The Samoan "island of people" ought also to imitate this by seeking out Jesus and committing to such difficult ways of following by serving others instead of satisfying only our own individualistic desires. This requires changing our un-christian ways through repentance—a radical change of mind and direction.

To this end, Samoan Islanders are clearly not just the implied reader/hearer of Mark's narrative—as if an "island of people" surrounded by sea could fit in a narrative occurring largely by and on a sea surrounded by land—but the Samoan translation of *ochlos* repeatedly embeds us as a people within Mark's narrative (just as surely translating *ochlos* as "people of America" would do for Americans). *Motu o tagata* allows for no ambiguity on this point, and no exclusions from its embrace. It is no surprise then, to find Christianity within the Samoan Constitution, for everyone on the Islands of Samoa is embedded in the Gospel narrative, and the Gospel demands an ongoing response from everyone on the island.

7.3 Conclusion

The radically inclusive implications of the use of *motu o tagata* to translate Markan collective terms (especially *ochlos*), embeds the Samoan "island of people" in the Markan narrative. It embraces *all*, including Samoan Islanders, as present-day participants in the Gospel story—the Goodnews of the *basileia* of God revealed by Jesus. This interpretation is

informed, firstly, by the colloquial and inclusive understanding of the Samoan translation, *motu o tagata*, which collectively includes *all* Samoan Islanders, whose diverse socially-conditioned members are paralleled in some ways by various character groupings at the narrative level. Secondly, this implied embedding is affirmed by the fusion analogically of the historical realities of both Samoan Islanders and Mark's implied readers in their respective milieu, which are reflected in the lives of the various character groupings.

For the Samoan "island of people," their sociohistorical journey resonates with many of the tragic impacts of imperial and colonial influences encountered by the Markan *motu o tagata* in a way that identifies us implicitly with Mark's implied audience. Such events and processes move and shape the *motu o tagata*'s responses in Mark's Gospel as many of its members collectively sought out Jesus for renewed transformation. Other members also went to Jesus for individualistic reasons and were accorded the opportunities to change their negative ways and invited to repent. Analogously, groups of Samoan Islanders have experienced similar impacts in our recent history, which call us to re-evaluate our current trajectory and re-interpret our calling as followers of Jesus.

The fusion of the narrative and sociohistorical nuances of the *motu o tagata* (with the Samoan *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutical framework) organises this interpretive understanding. It is not a static, one-off opportunity to repent and accept a new identity, but a dynamic process, whereby the *motu o tagata* continue to follow Jesus' way, continue to ask questions and explore what it means, and even continue to get it wrong at times—as very recent Samoan events have demonstrated! But despite the many failures and individualistic ambitions exhibited by the various character groupings on the narrative level (both in Mark and in Samoa) which temporarily leave us falling short of the *basileia,* there is an open and ongoing invitation to change our ways and follow the ways of Jesus. This is the essence of this radical inclusivity,

which continually embraces inclusive participation by *all* to benefit everyone instead of divisive differences and individualistic desires.

This inclusivity also embodies Jesus' life of servanthood on a borderless plain, which transcends and encompasses different localities, ethnicities, orientations, affiliations, and genders. Jesus' compassionate approach overwhelms such differences, breaks the divisive influence of dominant forces, and invites all followers (and others) to become members of his household, as they serve God and others through their continuation of the proclamation of God's Goodnews in the world.

This servanthood role calls Samoan Islanders to re-examine their responses to the Gospel message and re-direct their actions accordingly. It requires that every stakeholder in this "island of people"—political, cultural, and religious leaders, theologians, and the laity (the people, the 'crowd')—participate inclusively in overcoming their allegedly inferior complex as islanders. This can be done by deconstructing the colonial and corporate language that serves individualism and increasing profits at the expense of traditional and Gospel values. This is a call for unity in a creative and collaborative effort to improve Samoan Islanders' livelihoods and strengthen their position on the global stage by presenting their own interpretive narratives ("parables") and theological discourses (engaging with culture) that reflect their uniqueness as "islands of people." Such unity can generate local ownership, foster communal living and values, and encourage socioeconomic equality.

This collective engagement and sharing can transform dominant political, economic, and religious powers to become agents of change for love and justice. To this end, as I write this conclusion (12/12/2021), it is encouraging and heartening that the newly installed FAST-led government has passed a national budget that prioritises "social and human" development to improve Samoan Islanders' livelihoods. The previous government largely neglected such priorities in pursuance of economic development and private wealth. Hopefully our religious

and cultural leaders will take notice and respond similarly. Such empathetic leadership and emphasis reflect a servanthood call that mimics Jesus' compassion for the people, especially those whose crying voices have been neglected and ignored for so long. Their voices need to be heard, and their needs met.

This thesis has highlighted some determinant factors contributing to many Samoan Islanders' suffering amidst the attempted economic developments. Samoa's political, religious, and cultural politics, together with the negative impacts of foreign intervention and environmental threats, have been implicated. They have facilitated various forms of dislocation, marginalisation, and uprootedness, such that people are now assessed by their financial success, not their value as human beings.

Jesus' opposition to the negative impacts of a monetised economy provides an approach to effectively overwhelm such discriminatory impacts in the Samoan context, which we can imitate. He views hoarding money as futile (cf. 10:21–22; 12:41–42) and encourages his followers to act hospitably and share the responsibilities of caring for each other (cf. 6:8–11). The exploitative grip of corrupt practices, such as providing tax havens for foreign criminals, cannot be left unchecked, just as Jesus opposes the accumulation of wealth from those who can least afford it (cf.11:15–17; 12:41–44).[155] Jesus' explosive action in the Temple is much more than just cleansing, it is an emphatic protest against the "financial profiteering" of temple processes under the auspices of its hierarchical leadership.[156] Such abuses and misuses (regardless of context) can only benefit the rulers, not the ruled.[157] They culminate in wealth

[155] Jesus' reaction and anger is more violent in the Fourth Gospel: "Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables" (John 1:15). In Mark, he praises the selfless offering of the widow, but laments her wasting it on the Temple and the religious leadership (12:40).

[156] Barton, "Why Do Things Move People," 369.

[157] Richard Bauckham, "Jesus' Demonstration in the Temple," in *Law and Religion: Essays on the Place of the Law in Israel and Early Christianity*, ed., Barnabas Lindars (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1988), 81.

disparity, as evident in Jesus' observation of a poor widow's devoted offering (12:44). Although others give generously, they incur minimal personal costs (cf. 12:41).

This drive for wealth and worldly riches is also the target of Jesus' command to share with the poor (cf. 10:21); since the elites are prevented from gaining riches in heaven (cf. 8:36) as they have already received their reward. This path of servanthood and sharing is much more challenging for those who indulge in their earthly riches and makes it harder for them to enter the *βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ* (cf. 10:23). Mark's story is littered with evidence of adverse economic impacts on the people, whose reality consisted of neglect and sickness (cf. 1:40; 3:1; 5:25–34), hunger (cf. 6:34–44; 8:1–9), poverty (10:21; 12:42–43; 14:5–7), and lack of agency, such as the hired men (1:20), the slave (13:34), and the paralytic (2:3–5).

These adverse impacts on the narrative level point to Mark and Jesus' disapproval of societies that employ domination and exploitation for personal gain. Even in the Samoan context, such behaviour has re-shaped long-held traditions, influenced Christian teaching, and facilitated the slow death of interdependent relationships. It has also led to inequality due to greed and abuse and fostered stratified Samoan communities based on economic exploitation, political domination, and religious manipulation. Such negative impacts illuminate the exploitation of available resources for selfish ambitions while neglecting the needs of the people.

Samoan Islanders with such individualistic goals are in danger of rejecting Jesus' invitation for reconciliation and forgiveness. In their current trajectory, they are excluded from being members of the faithful Markan *motu o tagata* and Jesus' household (cf. 3:31–35) and risk being condemned to the greatest punishment (cf.12:40) unless they heed the warning to repent and believe. Such a warning acts as an impetus to refrain from similar selfish ambitions. Even worse, it appears that some Samoan Islanders have blindly rejected God's Goodnews and turned to other religious beliefs and gods. They have lost their discernment and are in danger

of blaspheming against the Holy Spirit (whose presence empowers and embodies the essence of Jesus) with potential eternal consequences (cf. 3:29). Even so, they can still change their ways and repent.

Hence, Samoan Islanders and all followers of Jesus can courageously face our current reality, even though with fear (cf. 16:8). Mark's Gospel provides a humanised response that encountering traumatic changes can instil fearful reactions (cf. 16:8), until "the unsettling features" of Mark's narrative provide assurance to move and follow Jesus' command.[158] This will allow us to respond obediently to Jesus' call to serve and extend an invitation to reconciliation.[159] As inclusive members of the Markan *motu o tagata*, we, Samoan Islanders, can draw inspiration from Mark's retelling of their stories, particularly the courage to demonstrate faith over fear and generate a meaningful local response to their servanthood calling.

Like Peter and the followers at the end, Samoan followers have been authorised to proclaim the inclusivity of God's reign for the benefits of all (cf. 16:15–18) instead of manipulating it for selfish ambitions. We are empowered with the strength to act and participate faithfully and collectively under Jesus' leadership, whose compassionate and inclusive approach has transformed desperate members of the Markan *motu o tagata* to become exemplary members of societies and God's household (cf. 3:31–35).

To this end, Samoan Islanders can rediscover their values of total devotion to families, country, and God,[160] which this *motu-o-tagata* hermeneutic exemplifies. It facilitates a review of our lived realities by weaving them together with the responses from the Markan *motu o*

[158] Elizabeth E. Shively, "Recognising Penguins: Audience Expectation, Cognitive Genre Theory, and the End of Mark's Gospel," *CBQ* 80 (2018): 276.

[159] See Norman R. Petersen, "When Is the End Not the End? Literary Reflections on the Ending of Mark's Narrative," *IJBT* 34 (1980): 156.

[160] Jim Wallis, *Rediscovering Values in the City, Our Towns and in Your Community: A Moral Compass for the New Economy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010), 1.

tagata to produce a revitalised and meaningful re-interpretation that can complement other worldviews. The willpower exercised by many members of the Markan *motu o tagata* despite the overwhelming barriers raised against them, together with Jesus' act of selfless servanthood, can provide that transformative empowerment for Samoan Islanders. At the same time, we can maintain a balanced passion for our heritage as Samoan Islanders and Jesus followers and participate in a co-existent manner in this global conversation.

This call to serve raises a crucial challenge that the Samoan "island of people" (including the state and the church in the Samoan context) are asked to consider inclusively. Whose interest are we serving as followers of Jesus and embedded members of the Markan *motu o tagata*? The majority of Samoans are Christians presently. Collectively, they are the in-group because of their distinctive history and Constitution. But amongst this collective, numerous migrants, adherents of other religious persuasions, and many of Samoa's own elites, who have acted corruptly and exploitatively, still need repentance to re-join the majority of faithful followers among the "island of people."

If many desperate members of the Markan *motu o tagata* seek out Jesus for help on the narrative level, so too the Samoan "island of people" need the state and church leaders (whose leadership is ordained by God) to lead and promote transformative change and hope for the Samoan "island of people."

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Samoa's Vulnerability to Natural Disasters

Samoa's Vulnerability to Natural Disasters			
	1990–2014		1950–2014
	Probability of a Disaster in a Year	Average Annual Damage	Ranking by Vulnerability
	(in percent)	(in percent of GDP)	
Samoa	24.4	12.36	1
Vanuatu	69.4	0.12	4
Tonga	30.2	1.62	11
Solomon Is	53.2	0.08	14
Fiji	66.0	0.67	19
Micronesia Fed States	24.4	0.01	20
IMF staff calculations, combining rankings on the frequency of disasters and effects of those disasters. Source: IMF Board Paper 2016 "Small States' Resilience to Natural Disasters and Climate Change."			

Appendix 2: Occurrences of *ochlos* in the Greek NT (NA28) and corresponding translations in both English (NRSV) and Samoan (*O le Tusi Paia*)

	Greek	English Translation			Samoan Translation		
NT Books	***Ochlos***	**Crowd**	**Net Difference**	**Notes**	***Motu o tagata***	**Net Difference**	**Notes**
Matthew	50[1]	50	0		50	0	
Mark	38[2]	38	0		37	-1	***(d)***
Luke	41[3]	42	+1	***(a)***	40	-1	***(e)***
John	20[4]	20	0		18	-2	***(f)***
Acts	22[5]	19	-3	***(b)***	21	-1	***(g)***
Revelation	4[6]	0	-4	***(c)***	4	0	***(c)***
Total	**175**	**169**	**-6**		**170**	**-5**	

This analysis compares the occurrences of the Greek term *ochlos* in the Greek NT (NA28)[7] and its English translations—crowd (NRSV)[8] and Samoan—*motu o tagata* (*O le Tusi Paia*)[9] as summarised in the table above. It highlights the problem for Samoan translators as no specific Samoan term could possibly express the meaning of the Greek *ochlos*. But the proficiency of LMS missionaries in Greek, the realisation of the influx of foreign nationals to Samoa, and Samoa's context as an island nation may have contributed to this Samoan expression, *motu o tagata*. It seems to reflect a Samoan reality at the time when both native Samoans and foreign residents began to exist together on these Samoan Islands. This

[1] Matt 4:25; 5:1; 7:28; 8:1, 18; 9:8, 23, 25, 33, 36; 11:7; 12:15, 23, 46; 13:2 (2), 34, 36; 14:5, 13, 14, 15, 19 (2), 22, 23; 15:10, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 39; 17:14; 19:2; 20:29, 31; 21:8, 9, 11, 26, 46; 22:33; 23:1; 26:47, 55; 27:15, 20, 24.

[2] Mark 2:4, 13; 3:9, 20, 32; 4:1 (2), 36; 5:21, 24, 27, 30, 31; 6:34, 45; 7:14, 17, 33; 8:1, 2, 6 (2), 34; 9:14, 15, 17, 25; 10:1, 46; 11:18, 32; 12:12, 37, 41, 43; 15:8, 11, 15.

[3] Luke 3:7, 10; 4:42; 5:1, 3, 15, 19, 29; 6:17, 19; 7:9, 11, 12, 24; 8:4, 19, 40, 42, 45; 9:11, 12, 16, 18, 37, 38; 11:14, 27, 29; 12:1, 13, 54; 13:14, 17; 14:25; 18:36; 19:3, 39; 22:6, 47; 23:4, 48.

[4] John 5:13; 6:2, 5, 22, 24; 7:12 (2), 20, 31, 32, 40, 43, 49; 11:42; 12:9, 12, 17, 18, 29, 34.

[5] Acts 1:15; 6:7; 8:6; 11:24, 26; 13:45; 14:11, 13, 14, 18, 19; 16:22; 17:8, 13; 19:26, 33, 35; 21:27, 34, 35; 24:12, 18.

[6] Rev 7:9; 17:15; 19:1, 6.

[7] (GNT28-T) https://accordance.bible/link/read/GNT28-T#.

[8] (NRSV) https://accordance.bible/link/read/NRSVS#.

[9] *O le Tusi Paia, O le Feagaiga Tuai ma le Feagaiga Fou,* Uluai Lomiga Fou Muamua (Tamaligi: Malua Printing Press Press, 2005).

translation agrees with and extends the boundaries of the meaning of the Geek *ochlos* and the interpretation of the English translation 'crowd'.

Appendix 2 shows great overall consistency in all three translations—Greek, English, and Samoan, especially in the Gospel According to Matthew with a 100% consistency. The same can almost be said of the Greek-English correlation in both Mark and John's Gospels. However, minor variations are also evident from Greek to English with a 92% consistency, which are explained in Notes (***a***) to (***c***) below. Of particular significance for this thesis, an 86% consistency in the NA28-Samoan translations is derived from twenty five variations altogether (Mark (5), Luke (9), John (2), and Acts (9)) as explained in notes iv–vii below. These variations stem from different Samoan expressions being used for *ochlos*, or where different Greek constructions are translated as *motu o tagata*. For example, additional occurrences of *motu o tagata* in Samoan originate mainly from the Greek *plēthos* (Mark 3:7; Luke 1:10; 6:17; 23:27; Acts 2:6; 5:1, 16; 14:4; 15:30; 21:36). Other Samoan terms which are alternatively used instead of *motu o tagata*, include *nuu* (village, Mark 11:32; Acts 19:30; 24:18); *vao tagata* (grass/jungle of people, Mark 12:12; 12:41; John 7:49; Acts 19:26), but mostly *tagata* (people, Luke 5:29; 9:18, 23:48; Acts 11:24, 26). These alternative Samoan renderings do also reflect the sense of "many," "large," or "numerous" numbers of people congregating together in a particular location, just like the more inclusive understandings of the Markan use of *ochlos*. These variations are explained as follows.

Notes to English variations from the Greek

Note (a): The extra occurrence of "crowd" in the NRSV occurs in Luke 5:19b, where the second reference to "crowd" in this same verse translates the Greek adjective *meson* (middle). This repetition in the NRSV translation makes the inclusion of the Greek adjective

meson clearer and more meaningful in the context of the Greek sentence, by relating it to the crowd—the object of the sentence.

Note (b): The Book of Acts provides the greatest number of variations, even though the net result shows only three occasions where "crowd" does not appear as a translation of *ochlos,* as indicated by the difference of minus three (-3). However, there are nine variations altogether. On six occasions, *ochlos* has not been translated as "crowd," but once as "many" (6:7), four times as "people" (11:24, 28; 17:8; 19:26), and once as a "mob" (21:35). In addition, there are three other instances where the English translation "crowd" is derived from different Greek constructs—twice from *plēthos* (2:6 and 21:36) and once from *dēmos* (19:30).

Note (c): In the NA28 Greek NT, *ochlos* occurs four times in the Book of Revelation (7:9; 17:15; 19:1, 6). They are all translated in the NRSV as "multitude" not as "crowd," hence, the non-appearance of the word "crowd" in Revelation and a difference of minus-four (-4). In the Samoan Bible, these four occurrences of *ochlos* are all translated as "*motu o tagata*."

Notes to Samoan variations from the Greek

Of the 175 occurrences of *ochlos* in the NA28 Greek NT, the Samoan Bible translates only 170 as *motu o tagata*, resulting in a difference of minus five. However, this is only the net effect of twenty-five different variations in Mark (5), Luke (9), John (2), and Acts (9). These are analysed below—in notes ***d–g***.

Note (d): The five translation variations are the result of two extra occurrences of *motu o tagata* in the Samoan Bible, and three other occasions where this Samoan expression has not been used, hence, the net effect of minus one. *Motu o tagata* is used 35 times out of 37 as a translation for *ochlos*. It is also used to translate *plēthos* (3:7) and *polloi* (6:33), which account for the two extra occurrences and the overall total of 37. However, three occurrences of *ochlos*

are not translated by *motu o tagata,* but once as "*nuu*" (village, 11:32) and twice as "*vao tagata*" (grass/jungle of people, 12:12, 41). Both these Samoan renderings also refer to the presence of an unspecified number of people in a particular location, and thus, correspond in meaning with "*motu o tagata*," and they also demonstrate an awareness by the translators that *ochlos* in Mark is associated particularly with village and rural people.

Note (e): Of the 41 occurrences of *ochlos* in Luke's Gospel, only 40 are translated as *motu o tagata*, a difference of minus one. However, this difference is a net result of nine variations altogether. On five occasions (5:29; 6:17; 7:12; 9:18; 23:48), different Samoan expressions have been used: "*tagata*" (people, 5:29, 9:18, 23:48); "*tagata o le aai*" (townspeople, 7:12); and "*ona soo*" (his disciples, 6:17). Again, these different Samoan expressions do reflect many people, and also Luke's particular emphasis on the *polis* (city). In four instances (1:10; 6:17, 23:18, 27), "*motu o tagata*" has been used to translate different Greek constructs: *plēthos* (1:10; 6:17; 23:27) and *anekragon* in 23:18. The net result of these nine variances (-5 and +4) is minus one as indicated.

Interestingly, in incidents where *ochlos* points to a known group of people, the Samoan translators tend to use that known reference as a translation, instead of *motu o tagata*. For example, in the Greek construct: *ὄχλος πολὺς μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ* (6:17), *ochlos* has not been translated at all, but only the reference to a known group of people—"his disciples" (*ona so'o*). This is the same in 7:12: *ὄχλος τῆς πόλεως ἱκανὸς* where *ochlos* points to people from town, hence the translation "*tagata o le aai*," not "*motu o tagata*."

Note (f): In John's Gospel, the 20 occurrences of *ochlos* are only translated 18 times as *motu o tagata*, hence the difference of minus two, as indicated. These differences result from two incidents where *ochlos* has been translated differently. In 7:12b, the second *ochlos* in this same sentence has been translated as "*nuu*" (village), while in 7:49, *ochlos* has been translated

as "*vao tagata*" (grass/jungle of people). These are the same alternative Samoan expressions as used in the Gospel According to Mark.

Note (g): Appendix 2 indicates a minus one difference in the Book of Acts between the Greek *ochlos* (22 times) and its corresponding Samoan equivalent of *motu o tagata* (21 times.) In fact, there are nine variations altogether. There are five occasions where *ochlos* has been translated differently as "*o ē na i ai*" (those who were there, 1:15), twice as "*tagata*" (people, 11:14, 26), once as "*vao tagata*" (grass/jungle of people, 19:26), and once as "*nuu*" (village, 24:18). There are four occasions where the Greek *plēthos* has been translated as *motu o tagata* (5:16; 14:4; 15:30; 21:36).

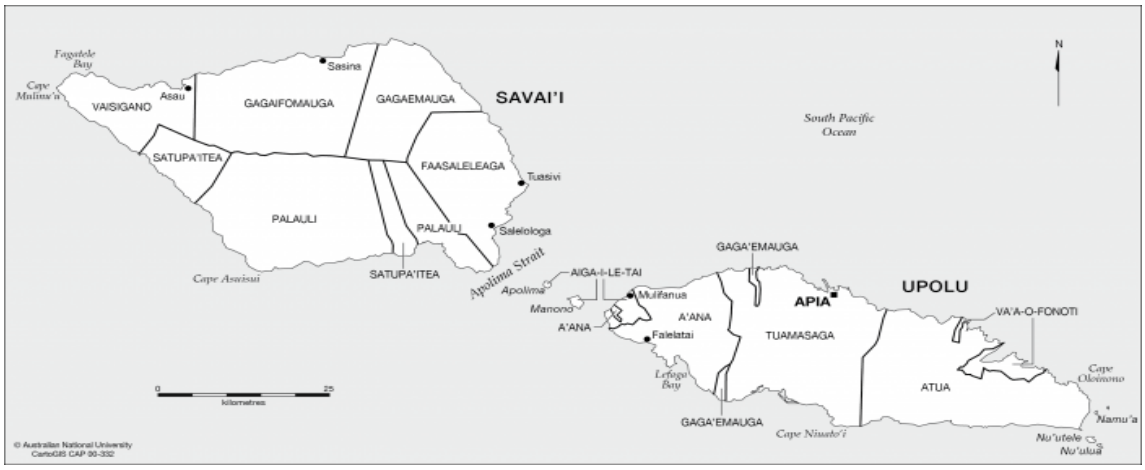
Conclusion

In light of this exercise, there has been a great consistency for the Samoan translators in trying to adhere to a meaningful translation of the Greek word *ochlos*, generally as that of a number of people, gathering at a particular location. Even though the actual usage of *motu o tagata* as a translation of *ochlos* has an 86% rate of consistency, the other alternative terms used—"*tagata*," "*nuu*," or "*vao tagata*"—have also been thoughtfully applied to reflect the corresponding meaning of *ochlos*, as the gathering of a large number of unspecified people.

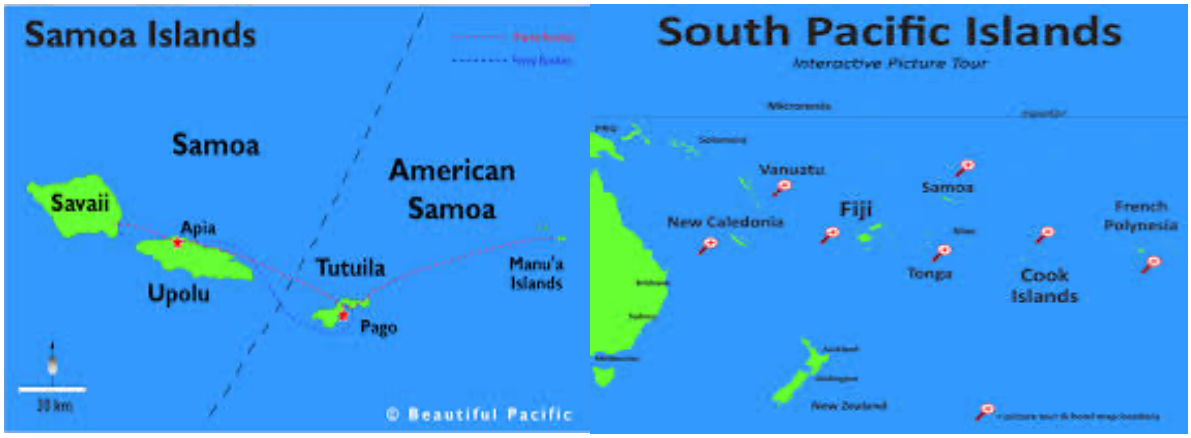
Of significant relevance, when *ochlos* relates directly to an identifiable group of people, the Samoan translators tended not to translate *ochlos* as *motu o tagata* in that general sense, but used the identifiable element as a translation, as the above examples demonstrate. This is also evident in the Book of Acts 1:15, when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas. The Greek construct: *ἦν τε ὄχλος ὀνομάτων ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ὡσεὶ ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι·* refers to the numbers of believers that were present when Peter spoke. The Samoan translation does not translate *ochlos* but instead the translation refers only to the known number of people present—the believers

(1:15a): "*o le aofai o igoa o ē na i ai po ua toaselau ma le toaluafulu*" (the number of names of those there, were about hundred and twenty). These examples indicate that when *ochlos* is used in conjunction with an identifiable group of people, the Samoan translators preferred to use that known reference as a translation instead of the general expression *motu o tagata*, indicating that they saw such groups as emerging from the *motu o tagata,* in a way that I have argued is consistent with the Markan use of named and unnamed characters as exemplars from the larger gatherings.

Appendix 3: The Samoan Islands and their political divisions[10]



Appendix 4: The Samoan Islands with other Islands of People within Oceania[11]

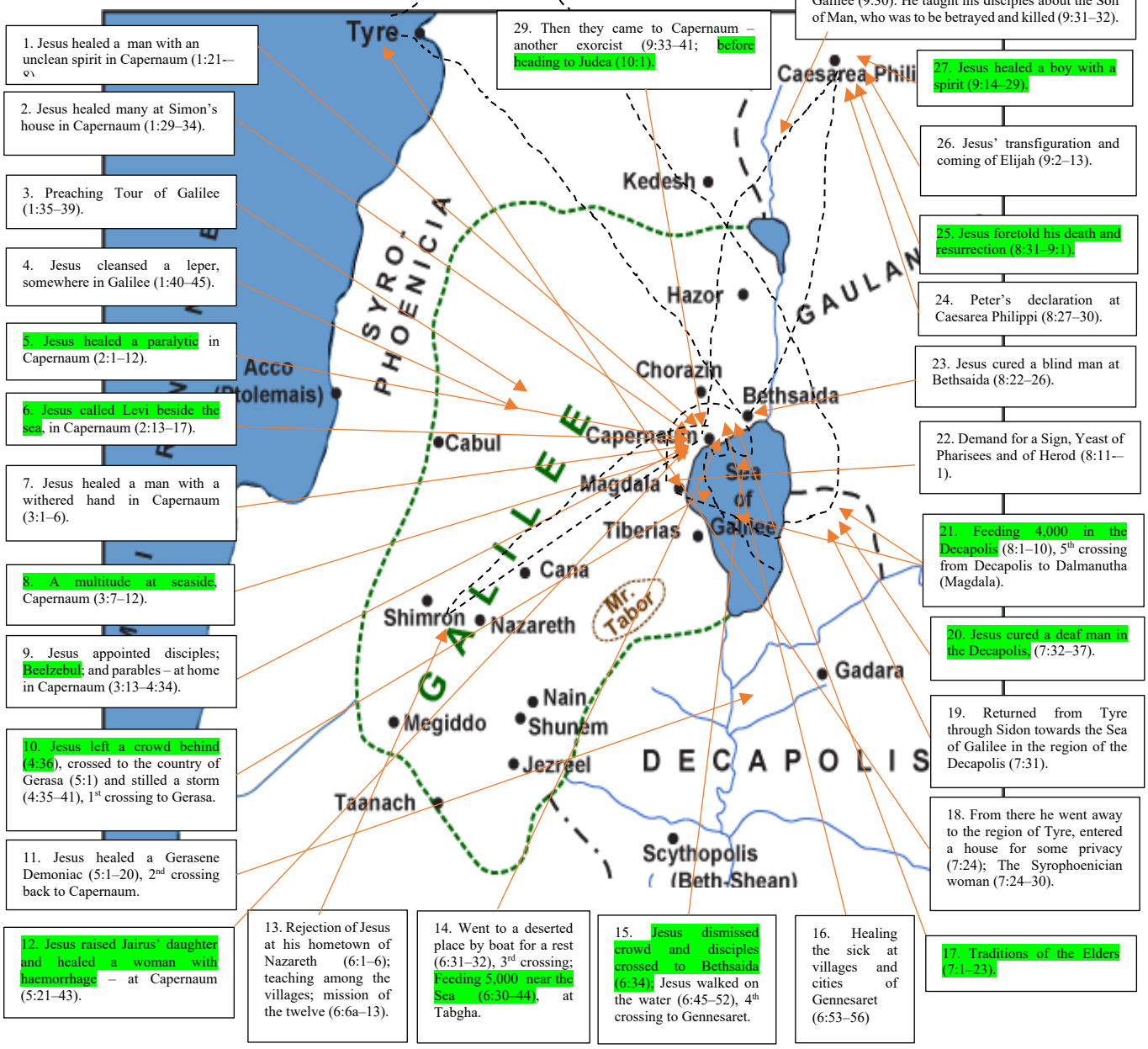


[10] The dull greyscale image of Samoa's traditional political divisions has been chosen as a reminder of the tragic impacts of its tribal warfare, and of the realities of recent and future ecological threats. https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fasiapacific.anu.edu.au%2Fmapsonline%2Fbase-maps%2Fsamoa-traditional-districts&psig=AOvVaw2HugTUhilTMK8fv-4y4FOY&ust=1603174821805000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=2ahUKEwi_ubPfgcDsAhUCDbcAHQp8B8IQr4kDegUIARDtAQ.

[11] The colourful image of the Samoan Islands in relation to other island nations in Southern Oceania is used here as a representation of its bright and hopeful future. https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Ftravelgudier.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2019%2F09%2FScreenshot_5-1.png&imgrefurl=https%3A%2F%2Ftravelgudier.com%2Fsouth-pacific-islands%2F&tbnid=dMrimMDtXDwLgM&vet=12ahUKEwiBjYGIh8DsAhVLFCsKHX2zAnEQMygBegUIARDJAQ..i&docid=A2Xpc22W5zlhuM&w=647&h=614&q=south%20pacific%20islands&hl=en-US&client=safari&ved=2ahUKEwiBjYGIh8DsAhVLFCsKHX2zAnEQMygBegUIARDJAQ.

Appendix 5: Jesus' movements and miracles in Galilee and the surrounding regions.

Map of Galilee and Northern Israel.[12]



[12] Map from "Bible History Online," https://www.bible-history.com/maps/Map-Galilee-Northern-Palestine.gif. The descriptive text boxes, directions, and localities are mine, and numbered in order according to Mark's narrative sequence. Episodes where crowds are involved are marked with green highlights.

Appendix 6: One Hundred Years of Roman Rule over Palestine 69 BCE–70 CE[13]

<table>
<tr><th><u>Judaea</u>[14]
(Judaea, Samaria, Idumea)</th><th><u>Galilee and Perea</u></th><th><u>Northern Territories</u>
(Iturea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, Auranitis)</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">69 BCE
Syria became a Roman province
Palestine automatically came under Roman rule</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">63 BCE
General Pompey entered Jerusalem, Roman domination of Palestine began</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Antipater
47–43 BCE
Procurator of Judea, Father of Herod the Great</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Herod the Great
37–4 BCE
Client King of Rome (who restored the Temple, beginning in 19 BCE)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Archelaus
4 BCE–6 CE
Ethnarch</td><td rowspan="2">Herod Antipas
4 BCE–39 CE
Vassal King – Tetrarch[15]</td><td>Herod Philip
4 BCE–34 CE
Tetrarch</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Roman Prefects and Procurators
Coponius 6–9 CE; Marcus Ambivius 9–12 CE; Annius Rufus 12–15 CE; Valerius Gratus 15–26 CE; Pontius Pilate 26–36 CE; Marcellus 36–37 CE; Marullus 37–40 CE.</td><td>Herod Agrippa I
37–40 CE</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Herod Agrippa II
40–44 CE</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Roman Procurators govern all of Roman Palestine
Fadus 44–46 CE; Tiberius Alexander 46–48 CE; Ventidius Cumanus 48–52 CE; M. Antonius Felix 52–60 CE; Porcius Festus 60–62 CE; Albinus 62–64 CE; Gessius Florus 64–66 CE</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">66–70 CE
Judean Revolt</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">70 CE
Destruction of Temple</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Post-Fall 70
The Gospel According to Mark</td></tr>
</table>

[13] Rome ruled Palestine from 69 BCE onwards. However, Appendix 7 focusses on a hundred-year period (69 BCE – 70 CE), which relates to this work. This reconstruction relies heavily on Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 68.

[14] E. Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees. Foundations of Post-Biblical Judaism* (New York: Shocken, 1962), 43, argues that Judaea/Judea emerged as a province separate from Samaria, during the conquests of Alexander the Great. However, M. Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land from the Persian to the Arab Conquests*. *A Historical Geography* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 1966), 13, holds that these provinces—Judea and Samaria—were separate provinces from the beginning.

[15] Herod Antipas was raised in Rome, which informs his structural re-programming of the Sea of Galilee into a little Aegean Sea, and the River Jordan into a little Tiber. See Sawicki, *Crossing Galilee*, 4.

Appendix 7: Taxation in Greco-Roman Palestine[16]

Rome and Herod[17]	Tax (if known)
○ Soil tax ○ Head tax ○ Market taxes (cities) ○ Transit polls (*custom duties*)[18] ○ Port taxes (shipping) ○ *Building taxes* ○ *Purchase and Sale taxes* ○ *Wreath taxes (gift of precious metals to the king on special events)* ○ Access rents (city-controlled resources) ○ Labour for state projects (roads, aqueducts, building projects, etc.)	➢ 1/4 - 1/2 (grain, orchards) ➢ 1 denarius per year ➢ ➢ *1/4 value of goods*
Jerusalem Temple	**Tax (if known)**
○ Soil tax ○ Head tax ○ Sacrifice ○ Vows	➢ Tithe (support for priests)[19] ➢ 1/2 shekel (2 denarii) per year[20] ➢ Animals, agricultural products ➢ Dedicated material goods

[16] Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus,* 114, but amounts vary, as below, according to other scholars.

[17] Both Witherington, *New Testament History,* 55, and Hayes and Mandell, *The Jewish People*, 125, agree Herod forcefully extracted taxes from both ordinary people and aristocrats to pay Rome. In contrast, Sanders, *Judaism*, 259–277, fiercely defends this inadequate view by pointing out Herod himself paid this tribute to Rome out of his many revenues (266). The local leaders also paid Rome (267) not the people; also, Lapin, "Feeding the Jerusalem Temple," 430, concurs as only some part of Palestine paid taxes to Rome, and recipient of relatively few Roman administrative and military expenditures.

[18] Netzer, *The Architecture of Herod,* 244–245, provides these other taxes and amounts paid (in italics).

[19] See Sanders, *Judaism*, 241–255, for biblical, mishnaic, and historical interpretations.

[20] Barton, "Why Do Things Move People," 369. This legal annual tax (every male Jew aged 20+) was to cover heavy expenditure involved in financing temple functionaries and sustaining a massive level of animal sacrifice. In addition, purchasing animals for sacrifices supported both Temple and Jerusalem economies; However, Gil, "The Decline of the Agrarian Economy," 296, argues this tax was paid directly to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, later on. It increased fourfold and also applied to women, children, and slaves of Diaspora Jews.