

***MALAE O LE MA (PLACE OF SHAME) AND
THE CRUCIFIXION AND DEATH OF JESUS
CHRIST IN MARK 15: 21 - 41***

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Bachelor of Divinity (with Honours)

by

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Abstract

Encountering shameful situations is not a good experience. It is degrading and disrespecting of one's dignity. However, in serving God, being humiliated and being shamed is considered an honoured opportunity for any follower of Christ. It is not that we go out there as God's servants and do things that we know we should not do that make people humiliate us. It is when we are being humiliated for trying to do something good for God. How to deal with such situations is important and we can only find that in the Bible according to our Christian belief. I have learned from a young age that the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ is an honourable event came out of shameful situations encountered by our Lord Jesus Christ as shown in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus' crucifixion is widely considered the climax of Marks presentation of Jesus' ministry. In the beginning of Jesus' ministry as told and shown by Mark, Jesus says to his disciples and followers not to tell other who he is. The reason for Jesus' stopping his followers to do that is that his being the Messiah is to be revealed on the cross. This study will explore how Jesus' way to his crucifixion and death could help us deal with shame in our worlds. In doing so, I will use my understanding of one of our Samoan social and cultural stories of shame called *Malae o le Ma* as a hermeneutic to do that exploration.

Declaration

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, Simi and Liupapa Reupena, you were not able to witness this milestone which you both hope for, I thank you for that.

I would also like to dedicate this study to my wife's parents, Fepuleai Muagutu and Ofeira, Faavaoga Eperu and Faafetai. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to serve your family as a chief and to be caring parents for me, my wife and my children. We will forever cherish and remember you in our hearts.

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Introduction

The advice any Samoan parent gives to their children is “*Aua nei e faia se mea le lelei e faamaina ai le aiga lenei*” (Never do anything bad that brings shame to this family). The reality of life is that it is a life full of shame. Different people have different expectations that are socially, culturally, economically, politically and religiously based. There are also certain values considered and recognized by a society and a community for its people to abide with or to live life accordingly. Sometimes, name-calling and mocking occurred as shameful experiences demoralized and colonized some people in a community. Thus it manifests itself, with people experiencing shame in different and various ways. Each and every one of us has his or her experiences of being in shameful situations and some of those experiences cannot be forgotten nor forgiven. We cannot deny the occurrence of being in such situations. It is why the question of “How can we deal with them?” is important in this study. The question came out of my own experiences of shame and my understanding of our Samoan stories and myths about being in shameful situations such as the story of *Malae o le Ma* (The Place of Shame). Interestingly, Jesus’ crucifixion and death were considered in the social, political and cultural world of the Roman Empire in the 1st Century as lowly shameful events. For the Christians, Jesus’ crucifixion and death are honoured events of God’s revelation of salvation of the sinful world. Hence, it is the objective of this study to seek in Jesus’ crucifixion and death some answers of how to deal with shame. It is not only a study to find answers to the aforementioned question but to explore how the death of Jesus on the cross can be understood and applied to the Samoan context in today’s society.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter one will discuss, how this study came about, and secondly, the intercultural approach as the reading approach for this

work. *Malae o le Ma* a Samoan hermeneutic is used to explore the text with the use of sociorhetorical criticism as the interpretational tool is explained in this chapter. Chapter Two will deal with the literature review of scholars' interpretations of the selected text, namely Mark 15:21-41. It is followed by the sociorhetorical exegesis of the text in Chapter Three. Chapter Four is the analysis of the exegesis made in chapter three using the *Malae o le Ma* hermeneutic. Chapter Five gives a conclusion to the study.

Chapter 1

Thesis is and Methodology

Introduction

This Chapter will firstly explain how this thesis came about. It is followed by an explanation of the intercultural approach as the reading approach used in this study. Part of the explanation of the reading approach is the hermeneutic of *Malae o le Ma* as a *taeao* (tomorrow/morning) and sociorhetorical criticism as the interpretational tool. The intercultural approach is used to make an analogical interpretation of the selected text.

Why this study?

People were recognized and accepted in the first century Mediterranean social and cultural society in which Jesus' ministry took place, as the honoured and the shamed¹. For example, on one hand, Jesus as the Messiah was seen and honoured by those who believed and followed Jesus' salvation ministry. On the other hand, there were people who looked upon Jesus' ministry, a shameful ministry, by regarding Jesus' crucifixion and death as the most shameful situations no other human being faced in this world. I have been taught from a young age that the crucifixion and death of Jesus on the cross are not shameful situations. Instead, it is considered as honourable situations. Thus, the main question evoked for me from this traditional belief which determines what this

¹ In the first century Mediterranean society, people receive and achieve honour when their worth and standing are acknowledged in public in accordance with the public social, cultural, economic and religious expectations. On the other hand, a value called 'shame' is the reverse of 'honour'. Despite the sense of negativity entailed in 'shame', it has a cultural acceptance in the Mediterranean world (See, David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2000), 23-94; John H. Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 130, 133-34; Halvor Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard Rohrbaugh (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 31-33.

study is about is: Are there lessons from the shameful situations (according to those who did not believe Jesus' ministry in the first century) encountered by Jesus in his crucifixion and death for the hopeless and the shamed in our world/s today? It is therefore the aim of this thesis to explore if the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ in Mark 15: 21 – 41 could be considered shameful life situations and whether their impacts as such could be life-changing experiences for the so-called shamed and neglected people of society.

The objectives of the study are: First, the thesis should be able to show whether the exercise of reading the Gospel of Mark 15: 21 – 41 using a Samoan reading hermeneutic (which is an understanding of our Samoan stories and histories about the Samoan people encountering shameful situations in their lives) could help produce more meanings about the text that are relevant to our own contexts.² Second, the study should be able to demonstrate that one emphasises of the hermeneutical reading of biblical texts is considering the text as the main focus of the reading exercise. Third, the study should be able to demonstrate in the reading of Mark 15:21-41 whether the crucifixion and death of Jesus as shameful events could bring lessons of hope for the shamed in society.

The focus questions that will guide the study are: How will be the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ as shameful events explored from the Samoan story or history of *Malae o le Ma*? What are the characteristics of shame – socially, spiritually,

² Reading the Bible using Samoan hermeneutics (evoked and developed from life experiences and understanding of the readers as Samoans) is now one of the popular ways of exploring the Bible among the Samoan biblical scholars. It is an attempt to seek in the Bible more answers to their many questions about life. Thus, using the Samoan hermeneutics as emphasized in this study is to seek more answers from the Bible to broaden our dealing with life as Christians in our Samoan worlds or contexts. As examples see Vaitusi Nofoaiga, *A Samoan Reading of Discipleship in Matthew* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017); Peni Leota, "Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud: A Samoan Postcolonial Hermeneutic," (PhD Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2005). Frank Smith, "The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective: Towards an Intercultural Reading of the Fourth Gospel," (PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010).

psychologically, and physically? Who are the shamed in the story of *Malae o le Ma*? Who are the shamed in the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ? How are they labelled the shamed? What are the impacts of the involvements of the characters in the story in these shameful events? What is the significance of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ as shameful events in the ministry of Jesus to the theology of Mark?

This study has chosen to explore the Gospel of Mark's version of the Crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ for the Gospel of Mark emphasizes Jesus Christ the suffering servant, and the cross, the centre of theology. The cross to the Jews is symbolic for the worst and most shameful punishment in the Roman Imperial ruling power, intended for serious crime offenders in the Roman's time. The Romans and Jewish elders crucified Jesus without any substantial evidence of any crime committed. However, Jesus chose that path in order for Him to pay the price for the sinful world and in the end, Jesus came out victorious. In verse 39; *Now when the centurion who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"* For the Romans, Jesus' death on the cross is a shameful punishment. But, not all Romans agreed. A centurion – a Roman leader – in the crucifixion of Jesus confessed and recognized Jesus as the Son of God. Thus, the centurion's confession could be perceived as Romans voicing Jesus the Son of God the honoured. The crowd had been mocking Jesus from the city all the way to the cross in Golgotha – a very shameful situation. And the crowd's role in Jesus' death could be looked at as the crowd's practising one of the social and cultural traditions of the society in the time of Jesus' ministry which was 'public recognition' of the so-called honoured and shamed in society.

1.1 Methodology

1.1.1 Intercultural Approach

The scope of this thesis does not able to discuss in details the intercultural approach of reading. Instead, I will only focus on how I use the intercultural approach of reading as used by two Samoan biblical scholars mentioned below.

One of the problems we always face in our attempts to make sense of what the Bible means in our time is the issue of temporal and cultural differentiation that is encountered when reading and understanding the Bible.³ We often find that the stories in the Bible are historical events that happened a long time ago, a time where the context and societies differs from how we operate and live now. However, the intercultural approach to reading the Bible that uses analogy is one way of bridging that distanciation problem.

Peni Leota and Frank Smith are two biblical scholars from Samoa who used intercultural approach in their studies.⁴ Peni Leota, an Old Testament scholar, engages in an analogical interpretation of the issue of land tenure in the worlds of the texts of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles, and the Samoan world. For Leota, although the two worlds are different, they are similar for they are both socially and culturally based. According to Leota, his concerns about contemporary tensions between Samoan ‘residents’ and ‘migrants’ in defining identity in Samoan society is a driving reason behind his work. Leota utilises ‘cultural pluralism’ as a dialogical approach to engage with the text. Cultural pluralism speaks of smaller groups holding onto practicing their

³ Yoilah K. Yilpet, “Knowing the Biblical Author’s Intention: The Problem of Distanciation,” *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 19.2 (2000): 165-185.

⁴ Leota, “Ethnic Tensions in Persian-Period Yehud,” 2005; Smith, “The Johannine Jesus from a Samoan perspective,” 2010.

cultural identities within in larger society. As such, the dominant culture accepts who they are. Leota as the reader approaches the text with interpretive frameworks made up of certain questions with chosen interpretational tools as the reading process. Thus, Leota's work depends on the plurality of cultures while acknowledging the distance in worlds; his Samoan world, and the world behind the text. Leota's use of the analogical approach bridges the problem of temporal and cultural distancing which I have mentioned above.

Frank Smith, a New Testament scholar, is another example of Samoan scholars who utilizes the analogical approach to make more sense what the Bible means in our worlds today. Smith's study is an exploration of Jesus in John's Gospel from his Samoan perspective. Like Leota, Smith says that one of the problems he encounters as a reader of the Fourth Gospel is that the world that shaped the gospel of John is different from the Samoan social and cultural world. Smith then develops a way to bring these two worlds together. Smith's approach draws on his experience and understanding of the Samoan social and cultural world of the father-son relationship. Smith develops a reading approach that allows him as a reader of the Bible now to engage with the issues of the father-son relationship in the first century. He then makes an analogical interpretation of cultural values or practices from imagery formed by certain parts of the text. Like Leota, Smith through his Samoan experience and understanding as part of an intercultural study, undertakes a dialogue between the plurality of readers and readings which acknowledges the distance in texts, readers and their experiences. It is about comparison of different readings and ideologies which are socially and culturally based.

I will be using the intercultural approach of reading as utilized by Leota and Smith. Furthermore, Leota and Smith in their works firstly talk about their Samoan perspectives that will be used as hermeneutics or guide to raise certain questions to find

answers in the selected texts. The exegesis of the texts is followed and the hermeneutics set in the beginning is brought back to make a comparison or an analysis of the exegesis. It is like a reader-response approach. The difference is that there are times where the reader-response approach imposes the hermeneutic on the text. What this means is that the hermeneutic is considered the main basis of the interpretation. The intercultural approach as exercised by Leota and Smith and is used in this study considers the exegesis of the text as made by using the traditional methods of reading as the basis of the analysis.

1.1.2 Malae o le Ma Hermeneutic

The first Samoan story or historical event that came to mind when I thought about Jesus' crucifixion and death as a shameful event is the story of Malae o le Ma. It is a story that talks about a shameful event that occurred in Savaii⁵. Although the story involves a woman, the characteristics of being in a shameful situation shown in it, brings interesting questions that could be expanded upon when exploring the crucifixion and death of Jesus in Mark's gospel. For example is considering a shameful event as a beginning of unveiling hope for the shamed. Thus, the story of *Malae o le Ma* will be used in this study as a hermeneutic to guide my exploring of shame and its negative and positive impacts in Jesus' crucifixion and death in Mark's gospel.

'*Malae o le Ma*' is a story about a Samoa ancient war held at the "Le Aea i Sasae and Le Aea i Sisifo". It happened when Lilomaiava made Taii a matai from Falealupo climb a coconut tree with his head down. Lilomaiava did not know that he was Nafanua's uncle. Taii then sighed in agony as in the Samoan proverb: "Ua Logo ia

⁵ The field of Malae o le Ma is in the village of Faiaai. Faiaai is my wife's village. The version of the story of Malae o le Ma told in this thesis is the version accepted by my wife's village. This version is widely accepted throughout Samoa. See also Gatoloaifaana Peseta S. Sio, *Tapasa Folauga i Aso Afa (Compass of Sailing in Storm)* (Apia: University of South Pacific Centre, 1984).

Pulotu le mapu a Taii” (Taii’s sigh is heard in Pulotu). Pulotu was a place in Savaii where the ancient spirit lives. Taii’s sigh was heard by Saveasi’uleo, Nafanua’s father.⁶ He then called Nafanua to avenge his brother, and Nafanua cut down a ‘toa’ tree and left it overnight. When she came back in the morning she saw lots of pule (seashells) on the ‘toa’ tree. She said ‘ua gase toa ae ola pule,’ meaning that there is another power needed. Nafanua fashioned three war sticks from the toa tree, which she name Ulimasao (guide with safety), faauliulito (No mercy), ta fesilafai (strike with courtesy). Nafanua then met a couple Matuna and Matuna and they were willing to help her, she gave them the faauliulito but she uses the tafesilafa’i, she instructed the couple they will fight on the other side while she will be on the other side of the road.⁷ Nafanua told them not to cross path, meaning if an enemy crossover do not follow yet they forgot and they cross path, so Nafanua strike them down. The other proverb there is ‘ua ola i fale le laau a Nafanua’, as her war stick was for killing her enemies yet she killed her allies too.⁸ It was a successful battle when Nafanua had defeated Le Aea – i – Sasae, yet she was informed by her father when you reach ‘Le Pa i Fualaga, Sua le Tuli aua le Alii o Aiga.’ The village where her mother’s sister’s son lives and his name is Sealiitu, and when Nafanua’s tiputa was hit by a wind exposing her-self then she remembers her father’s final request. It is when the men that Nafanua was chasing had identified that she is a woman and they were ashamed, so as Nafanua yet it is a victory for the Le Aea i Sisifo.

⁶ Fr. Fred Henry and T.K. Faletose, *Talafaasolopito o Samoa*, (Apia, Commercial Printers, W. Samoa, 1958). 45 - 47

⁷ Peseta says that Saveasi’uleo gave these three clubs to Nafanua with the fourth one called Faamategataua meaning ending the war. These two versions of where the clubs were originally from is not a problem in this thesis. Regardless of where the clubs were from, Nafanua did use them in the war which ended at the place called Malae o le Ma.

⁸ Dr. E. Schutz, *Samoa Proverbial Expressions, Alagaupu FaaSamoa*, (Auckland, Pacifika Press, 2008). 110 – 111

How the people of Nafanua's father's village of Le Aea i Sisifo were treated is inhumane. Climbing coconut trees with heads down can be looked at as a different type of crucifixion. It was a very shameful situation and Saveasi'uleo's willingness for his daughter Nafanua to take revenge is understandable. As the story goes, Nafanua fought the war and won against Le Aea i Sasa'e.

The men of Le Aea i Sasa'e, were ashamed when they have found out that the warrior they fought was a female. Although, it was a shameful experience it became a recognized event of woman power or woman bravery in the eyes of men. Their reaction is recognition and acknowledgment of woman's power and ability to do anything even a war that is considered for men only. Thus, being in a shameful situation has significances in breaking down boundaries that hold back the disadvantaged because of social, cultural, political and economic boundaries from reaching their potential. Nafanua on the other hand fought not to prove that she was a woman but to fulfil her father's wish to get freedom for his people. Feeling ashamed when she knew that the men had found out that she was a woman is a natural feeling of a woman. But, she was happy that she had done what she went to her father's village to do. She went back to her father's village a victorious woman.

1.1.3 Malae o le Ma event as a Taeao

Taeao as an auspicious occasion is a special moment that marks a particular event that has a very significant historical impact and influence on the lives of a group of people such as a village or a family in the Samoan social and cultural world⁹. *Taeao* is the Samoan word for the morning time of the day. *Taeao* is also a term referred to as “tomorrow”. *Taeao* as morning and tomorrow has a significant meaning in expressing the importance of the time in the future and this sense is reflected in the use of *taeao* as a word to call an important event or occasion in the history of the Samoan people. G. B. Milner defines the word *taeao* through its components meanings – *taeao* is from *tae* and *ao*. *Tae* means “pick up, gather, collect” and *ao* means “gather; collect; day; daylight; cloud; head.”¹⁰ *Taeao* as in these meanings is collection or gathering of things in daylight. Metaphorically this meaning reflects *Taeao* as a consideration of an important historical event as an event where good and great things collected and gathered that will be very useful in the future. *Taeao* is always one part of an orator’s speech (*matai tulafale*) when welcoming guests. In this part of the speech, he usually begins with mentioning the historical social and cultural *taeao* of Samoa – *Taeao nai Saua* and *Taeao nai Samana*. They are some of the special events in ancient history of the people of Samoa.

Taeao nai Saua is a special historical event that took place at the beach called Saua near the village of Fitiuta in Manu'a. This *taeao* remembers the first 'ava ceremony in Samoa between Pava and Tagaloa. Pava's son was interrupting the ava ceremony. Tagaloa said to Pava to tell the boy to go away from the tanoa. Pava did not do anything

⁹ *Taeao* is a part of a Samoan chief’s lauga or speech as words of praising the importance of a particular day in which an occasion is held. There is saying, a Samoan chief’s is not complete without mentioning *Taeao*.

¹⁰ G. B. Milner, *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan-English, English-Samoan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993), 21, 224.

and Tagaloa angrily sliced the boy in two with a coconut rib. Pava, was shocked and outraged. But Tagaloa quickly saved the situation by re-joining the boy. Pava's son was alive and well again. The significance of this event is that despite difference between Tagaloa and Pava that have ended differently, Tagaloa and Pava re-conciliated and become united. Thus, *vafeiloa 'i* or proper relations is crucial.¹¹

Taeao nai Samana comes from the event that took place in Samana, a place in Satupa'itea, Savai'i. There are many versions of this *taeao*. However the most common version is referred to as the *taeao* or day the skulls came rolling. This version says that Salevao's child would not stop crying for his father Salevao.¹² The people of the village could not console or make him stop crying. Then, Salevao's shaman caused human skulls to emerge from the ground and roll and tumble about, which made the child laugh and stopped him from crying. The skulls are the dead who emerged to help the child. Only the collective head of the past or our ancestors could console our unhappiness and the pain we encounter in the present. Thus, to continue on in the future it is important to remember what our ancestors' taught us advice of how to encounter the world we now live in.

Manifestly, *taeao* as very important events of our ancient history, bringing forth lessons for our people today. We now add the arrival of the Gospel as brought in by the early missionaries as other *taeao* – they are considered the most important *taeao*. *Taeao* as a very important auspicious occasion that marks an important historical event is the fundamental characteristic of *taeao* used in this study. What happened at *Malae o le Ma* is considered a *taeao*, for it embodies important lessons from encountering shameful

¹¹ Dr. E. Schutz, *Samoan Proverbial Expressions, Alagaupu FaaSamoa*, (Auckland, Pacifika Press, 2008) 100 - 101

¹² Fr. Fred Henry and T.K. Faletoese, *Talafaasolopito o Samoa*, (Apia, Commercial Printers, W. Samoa, 1958). 40

situations. It will be treated as an analogy of the event of the crucifixion and death of Jesus on the cross as told and shown by the Gospel of Mark. No event can be compared to the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. However, the task of this study is to seek in the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ as shameful events to the Romans in the time of Jesus' ministry, more understanding of how to deal with encountering such situations as shown in the event of *Malae o le Ma*. Thus, the reading exercise is an analogical interpretation of being shamed in light of Jesus' crucifixion and death. In doing so, sociorhetorical criticism will be used as the interpretational tool to help with that analogical reading.

1.2 Sociorhetorical Criticism

Sociorhetorical criticism focuses on the language of the text.¹³ It explores what the text says and how the language it is written, taking into account the social setting the reader is in. As such, sociorhetorical criticism invites people with different insights from diverse readers' locations to interpret the text.¹⁴ Thus, it emphasizes not only the characters and their movements in relation to each other and the setting but also how the language rhetorically reveals that story.

Sociorhetorical criticism has five stages,¹⁵ for this thesis I will be using three stages which are: innertexture, intertexture, and social and cultural texture.¹⁶ The

¹³ Vernon K Robbins, *Exploring the Texture: A guide to the Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation*. (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1996), 1-2.

¹⁴ Vernon K Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 5, says: "...a socio-rhetorical interpretive analytic applies a politics of invitation, with a presupposition that the people invited into the conversation will contribute significantly new insights as a result of their particular experiences, identities, and concerns. In other words, a socio-rhetorical interpretive analytic presupposes genuine team work: people from different locations and identities working together with different cognitive frames for the purpose of getting as much insight as possible on the relation of things to one another."

¹⁵ The other two are the ideological texture and sacred texture

¹⁶ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 71.

innertexture explores the world in the text looking at the progression¹⁷ of the story in terms of its characters, setting, and placement. It also explores how the word patterns and the flow of the story in its progression textures portray what the story means. The intertexture explores how the recitation from the Old Testament are reconfigured and recontextualized in the text. The social and cultural textural interpretation that follows will look at the culture of honour and shame and how it is reflected in the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The sociorhetorical interpretation will be analysed using the *Malae o le Ma* as a *taeao* hermeneutic.

Conclusion

This chapter explains how this study came about. It describes why the Gospel of Mark is chosen which is followed by the explanation of the intercultural approach as the reading approach which is applied as an analogical reading of the text. The sociorhetorical criticism is the reading criticism used which will explore what the text says and how the language of the text reveals the story that is portrayed in the text. The following chapter is the literature review of the selected text.

¹⁷ “Progressive texture resides in sequences (progressions) of words and phrases throughout the unit.” by Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 9.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter 2 will provide a literature review of the text; namely; Mark 15:21-41 focusing on the main parts of this text as considered by scholars. Thus, the review will be carried out in accordance with those parts which are: (i) Darkness on the whole land or an unusual event; (ii) Bystanders views and actions on Jesus' crying; (iii) Jesus' death and the torn of the curtain of the temple; (iv) The confession of the centurion; and (v) Women followers. The conclusion will state areas of this passage which the following exegesis will go after.

2.1 Literature review – Interpretations of Mark 15:21-41

2.1.1 Darkness on the whole land or an unusual event

John Henry Burn interprets that darkness in the moment of Jesus' death shows nature sympathizing with their Lord. It is seen in darkness all over the whole of the land.¹ For James Brooks, darkness in Jesus' crucifixion and death is an apocalyptic sign because the darkness comes in the sixth and ninth hour which is noon at 3.00pm.² Brooks adds also that darkness is a sign of evil and as such could be looked at as a sign that shows the triumph of evil. Brooks refers to a sign of judgement mentioned in Amos 8:9 – 10; Isa. 60:2 and Jer. 15: 9. Brooks also stated that an eclipse is not possible at this

¹ Rev. John Henry Burn, B.D., *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2001), 590.

² James A. Brooks, *The American Commentary – An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture NIV Text, Mark* (Nashville, Broadman Press, 1991), 49.

time and is shown in the use of the Greek word *ge* which refers not to the whole world but to Palestine and Judea. There was no ancient report of an unusual darkness in that time. Another scholar named R. T. France stated the importance of the interpreting of darkness in the event of Jesus' crucifixion and death in relation to the third hour which is a time before noon. France argues that it is shown in the passage no event happened at the time from noon to the ninth hour. France like Brooks suggests that no eclipse existed at this time. Thus, darkness in Egypt during the Passover covered the whole land of Palestine and Judea, not the whole world.³ William Lane's view of the darkness is similar to Brooks and France. Lane adds that there was significance of darkness in the interval between the crucifixion and death of Jesus. The darkness envelopes Jesus in his death which makes visible what the cry of dereliction declares, and throws into sharp relief the breadth and depth of the passion.⁴ The above interpretations of darkness in the time of Jesus' crucifixion are important in two ways. Firstly, they have shown that darkness occurred only at that moment in Palestine and Judea. This interpretation emphasizes the significance of the crucifixion and death of Jesus as special events in that time in that space and place. Secondly, their interpretations have shown that darkness could be looked at as a sign of evil. The exegesis that will be made in this study will explore how darkness is looked upon from the point of view of honour and shame.

³ R.T. France, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary – The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 2002), 651.

⁴ William L. Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament - The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 572.

2.1.2 Bystanders views and action on Jesus' crying

According to Brooks the interpretation of Jesus' cry, "Eloi," sounds like Elijah but it is not Elijah. It is Elohim as shown in Psalm 22:1. Brooks adds that the translation "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me", shows the end with a thought that it is not a complaint about abandonment by God in time of trouble, but a confidence that God will deliver the sufferer from trouble. Brooks therefore said that Jesus was abandoned by God at one time, yet he had confidence that God will restore him. People's considering of Jesus' calling out to Eloi as Elijah according to Brooks is understandable. The calling of Elijah by a Jew makes sense to the Jews for them only understand about Elijah. Brooks interprets the giving of the sour wine or the cheap wine as the act done only by the Roman soldiers for the Jews were nowhere near the cross at that time. The wine given to Jesus was the wine the soldiers used to ease their pain. It is a cheap wine that is bought mainly by the common people.⁵ France' view on the use of Aramaic is the same with Brooks, yet France further detailed the importance of the cry so that we can feel the agony Jesus went through rather than explaining it.⁶ Frances' view of the act of giving the vinegar wine to Jesus in verse 36 is similar to Brooks, but France adds that the context in which that event happened is the context of mockery. Ben Witherington III sees Jesus' cry a mockery gesture in which the importance of Elijah, as Elijah appeared in the transfiguration of Jesus and as a forerunner for Jesus is shown.⁷ Lane stated that the cry has a ruthless authenticity which provides the assurance that the price of sin has been paid in full. Yet Jesus did not surrender his faith in God

⁵ Brooks, *The American Commentary*, 261.

⁶ France, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 653.

⁷ Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark – A Socio – Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 397.

but expressed his anguished prayer in a cry of affirmation, “My God, My God.”⁸ For Lane, the interpretation of Jesus’ cry by bystanders as the coming Elijah is expected from the Jews and the giving of the sour wine is to keep Jesus conscious for as long as possible. Michael Flowers interprets the giving of the sour wine (οξοζ) different from Lane. For Flowers, it is an act of sincerity not a mockery.⁹ This interpretation by Flowers relates to his interpretation of Elijah, a well-known prophet, as a forerunner to the Messiah. According to Matthew A. Rich, the reaction of the bystanders and the soldiers is a false interpretation of the cry of Jesus which is why they react in such a way.¹⁰

2.1.3 Jesus’ death and the torn of the temple’s curtain

Brooks interprets the rending of the temple curtain as the second apocalyptic sign in the death of Jesus – there are two curtains in the temple, the one in the front and the one before the holy of holies, yet there is a question on the one that Mark referred to. Brooks stated that both curtain are torn in the Markan story and the appearance of a real darkness, is simply Mark’s way of conveying theological truths.¹¹ France had the same view with Brooks on whether this second cry was possible yet France stated that the time of Jesus’ death was not specified may be soon after the ninth hour. The torn of the curtain was a sign of a divine action as no human can torn this curtain yet there is not historical record of this event.

⁸ Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 573.

⁹ Michael Flowers, “The Bystanders at the Cross and Their Expectations about Elijah, CBQ vol. 80 (2018): 448-469.

¹⁰ Matthew A. Rich, “Between Text and Sermon Mark I 5:25 Interpretation”, *Journal of Bible and Theology* (2016): 201

¹¹ Brooks, *The American Commentary*, 262

2.1.4 The centurion's confession

John stated a testimony of a non-Christian soldier in relation to the centurion's view of the cross and how powerful the cross is.¹² Brooks elaborates that this verse constitutes the second climax of Mark's Christology the other being 14: 61. Brook also mentions that at the beginning of the Gospel of Mark we see this and this is the second time this had been mentioned again by the centurion one of many Gentiles who confesses at the cross as Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God.¹³ France stated the tearing of the curtain intervenes with the death of Jesus and the centurion's reaction. The centurion's confession is the climax of the crucifixion scene and one of the Christological high points of the gospel. According to France, whether or not they realised that the centurion was unlikely to have grasped the theological significance of his words he uttered, for them is the final declaration, at the moment of his apparent failure, that Jesus is the true Son of God, fulfilling on the cross his Father's will.¹⁴ Lane had stated Jesus remains conscious until his last breath; in the moment of death, an inarticulate cry burst from his throat. The strength of his cry states that he did not die an ordinary death of those crucified who normally suffered a long periods of complete exhaustion and unconsciousness before dying.¹⁵ According to Lane there is no firm conclusion on whether the curtain outside or the curtain inside before the holy of holies has been torn. He also gave an explanation of incident happens when these two curtains are torn.¹⁶ According to Rich, given the irony with which Mark tells his passion story, readers might hear the centurion's words differently. Consistently throughout Mark's

¹² Burn, *The Preacher's Complete Homiletic Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, 590.

¹³ Brooks, *The American Commentary*, 200.

¹⁴ France *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 651.

¹⁵ Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 572.

¹⁶ A tearing of the exterior curtain would have character of a public sign, comparable to the darkness that covered the land. The rending of the interior veil would be visible, presumably, only to a few priests and could have been concealed from public knowledge by the Jewish authorities.

Gospel, those who are in power speak against the threat Jesus poses to that power. The centurion's words might be a taunting declaration of victory over an insurgent who threatened the peace of Rome. Sharyn Dowd suggests, as quoted by Rich in his article. "On the level of the story it is a sarcastic comment on the lips of a jaded professional executioner who has just watched one more Jewish peasant die calling on his God." In this reading, the centurion's voice is a final blasphemy. The centurion confesses that the one who died is "the Son of God," in which he is referring to the emperor in Rome. Unbeknownst to the centurion, his confession is ironically true about Jesus.¹⁷ Lane had clearly stated that the confession of the centurion after seeing how Jesus died. He knows exactly that Jesus did not die in a normal way as most crucified men died. Lane also stated that the using of "Son of God" give an assurance of a divine man who accepted humiliation and death as an act of obedience to a higher mandate.¹⁸ He then further explained that with this saying it was not pointing to the emperor but to Jesus. His words provide a discerning Gentile response to the death of Jesus.¹⁹

Megan also stated the cry out of Jesus and compares it to the cried of John the Baptist in the wilderness proclaiming Jesus, which Megan stress that Jesus did not say any word, just a cried out and he died, but the recognition of who Jesus is, comes from the lips of a centurion. Megan stated that these are the words that began the Gospel of Mark. This is the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.²⁰ According to Megan the moment of Jesus' death is the beginning of the good news. This is also what was reflected in the lips of the centurion and then came to realise that

¹⁷ Rich, *Between Text and Sermon*, 201.

¹⁸ Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 576.

¹⁹ Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 576.

²⁰ Megan McKenna, *On Your Mark Reading Mark in the Shadow of the Cross*, (New York, Orbis Books, 2006), 211.

Jesus is the true King.²¹ James states the way Jesus was crucified and how the people further said mockery words about him. The incident that happens during the time of the crucifixion and the death of Jesus was also included. In the end the Roman soldier who was facing Jesus confess that this is the Son of God.²² This clearly indicates that the Roman soldiers had confessed of the wrong doing they had done to Jesus as his death comes early can they expected. Witherington stated that when the centurion saw Jesus died he confessed that truly this man is the son of God, a confession which raises some questions of his symbolic function in relation to Marcan Christianity.²³

2.1.5 Women followers

The women were true followers of Jesus as they appeared in the burial and the tomb and this time at the cross. They are called disciples as they followed Jesus everywhere he went they devoted themselves to Jesus according to Brooks.²⁴ France stated the important role these women plays in Mark's narrative, their earlier role in Galilee and now in the cross is a pointer to something new in the movement Jesus has begun which contrasts strongly with the male dominant of the society of his time.²⁵ Lane had explained clearly the role of these women and how they help Jesus with his ministry, so as how Jesus helped them. This shows that these women were seen in Jesus' ministry, his death, burial and his resurrection a sign of true discipleship according to Lane.²⁶ Rich also comment on the women who were there in the morning

²¹ McKenna, *On Your Mark Reading Mark in the Shadow of the Cross*, 211.

²² James R. Edwards, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary - The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 2002). "While Jesus is alive, humanity wills his death; only in his death can humanity see him as the way to life. The death of Jesus Christ of the cross is thus not a defeat but the consummation of his mission and the climactic revelation of his identity as the Son of God.

²³ Witherington III, *THE GOSPEL OF MARK*, 401.

²⁴ Brooks. *The American Commentary*, 263 – 264.

²⁵ France, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, 663.

²⁶ Lane, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 576 – 577.

to anoint Jesus body at the Tomb were watching from a distant which he stated that the true sign of discipleship. They were there in Galilee to provide for Jesus when in need yet this time they were not able, as Rich suggests that according to Mark's story no one can provide for Jesus at this time on the cross as he had to do it on his own.²⁷

Conclusion

The literature review has shown traditional interpretations of Jesus' crucifixion and death in Mark's Gospel. The darkness marks the significance of those particular events in Palestine and Judea. The cry of Jesus is interpreted as a cry in different contexts – a context of mockery, a context of misunderstanding, and a context of revealing the reality of suffering. The centurion's confession is predominantly interpreted as showing a Roman acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Lord. Thus, the confession shows Jesus Christ as Lord's superiority over the Roman ruling empire. The woman's role in the death and crucifixion of Jesus is important as well. Their appearance reminds the readers their loyalty and commitment as mothers of Jesus and his disciples. The following exegesis will look at the crucifixion and death of Jesus in the context of shame and how they could be considered as events of honour.

²⁷ Rich, *Between Text and Sermon*, 201.

Chapter 3

Innertextual Reading – Mark 15:1-41

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 focuses on exploring the innertexture of the text – looking at how the language of the text shows the movement of the characters in the text and their relationship to each other as an experience or experiences of encountering shameful situations and how they are being dealt with either directly or indirectly. The innertextual analysis will begin with the interpretation of the literary and theological significances of the placement of the chosen text (Mark 15:21-41) in Markan presentation of Jesus' ministry followed by the exegesis of the chosen text as a rhetorical and narrative unit. The Chapter ends with a conclusion.

3.2 Placement of Mark 15:21-41

There are many structures of Mark's gospel that show the literary and theological significances of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry. I have chosen to use Black's structure¹ of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry, shown below.

- I. Prologue: Introducing Jesus (1:1–15)
- II. The Early Days (1:16–10:52)
- III. The Final Days (11:1–15:47)
- IV. Epilogue: The Resurrection (16:1–20)]

The prologue (1:1-15) of Black's structure is the beginning of Mark's telling and showing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ introducing Jesus. According to Black, the

¹ C Clifton Black, *Mark, New Interpreter's Bible One Volume Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 965.

prologue is followed by the early days of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and Judea. The final days of Jesus' ministry which is Jesus' time in Jerusalem is in part three of Black's structure. This part is the passion narrative which ends with the story of the resurrection of Jesus, and Black considers this part the epilogue.

Black's structure is geographical and theological. That geographical and theological emphasis is considered important in the placement of the text 15:21-41 as a rhetorical and narrative unit in this study. It reveals that the whole ministry of Jesus that begins in Galilee and ends in Jerusalem could be looked at as a challenging journey. It is a journey of many encounters with shameful experiences faced by Jesus and his followers such as women who have been following him from Galilee. What this means in relation to the interpretation explored in this study is that 15:21-41 as a rhetorical and narrative unit has a literary function that relates the crucifixion of Jesus to the previous events of Jesus ministry and to the following events which includes Jesus' burial and resurrection. This significance event has an important link to the characterisation of Jesus, the soldiers, the crowd, and the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee. In this way, I consider the beginning of the good news taking place in Galilee as a demonstration of how Jesus and his followers encounter the shameful experience of being instruments of the proclamation of God's salvation which in the end are considered the honoured servants of God. Thus, what is important to this study is that Jesus is examined not only in relation to the proclamation of good news as a task facing shame but also as a task putting into practice being honoured in the Kingdom of God. The following exegesis will explore whether this really happens in Jesus' ministry according to Mark.

3.3 Mark 15:21-41 as a rhetorical and narrative unit

It is the task of this section to explore the textures of Mark 15:21-41 as a rhetorical and narrative unit. The focus, which aligns with the purpose of this thesis, is to explore how the characters shown in this unit, and their relationship to each other, and the places these interactions occurred as embedded in the language of the text, might reveal what Mark is trying to show to the readers about transitioning from shame to honour, in this part of the story.

Before delving into the chosen text as a rhetorical and narrative unit, it is important to state other examples of Jesus' experiences of being shamed in the passion narrative of Mark. It is to show that what happens in Mark 15:21-41 is the climax of Jesus' encountering of shame in his ministry. The passion narrative is widely considered to have been started from chapter 14. Two shameful situations in which Jesus encountered before crucifixion include the betrayal by one of his own disciples and Jesus' handing over by Pilate to be crucified. Jesus' betrayal by Judah whom he had a very close relationship with as a friend and a fellow worker is a very shameful experience. Jesus might have asked what he could have done wrong which made one of his own disciples turned against him. Did he do his job well as a leader? It is always very sad from a leader's point of view to have experienced such situation. Jesus as a leader might have also wondered what his other disciples could be thinking of his leadership given the shameful situations that took place. Jesus' reputation as a leader in the eyes of his disciples and his followers is on the line when Jesus was taken before Pilate and the decision was made to crucify him. Jesus has been facing public humiliation and his reputation as the Messiah to the crowd was surely ruined. But this is all part of the honoured way of Jesus' action of fulfilling God's will of saving the world from sin. The following interpretation will show whether that honoured way is

embedded in the language of the chosen text – Mark 15:21-41 as a rhetorical and narrative unit.

Mark 15:21-41 as a rhetorical and narrative unit is shown below. It is in three parts – the beginning, middle, and ending.

Beginning (vv. 21-32):	Jesus on the shameful cross
Middle (vv. 33-39):	Jesus' crucifixion as an honoured event
Ending (vv. 40-41):	Women as witnesses of shamed to honoured

There are opening and closing signs of this unit that are looked upon as an *inclusio* that form a literary and rhetorical frame around the unit. Inside this frame is the picture of events of shame encountered by Jesus while witnesses looked on. The unit is introduced with the mentioning of the name of one of Jesus followers of Jesus who was present during the time of Jesus' crucifixion. He was a passer-by named Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Simon of Cyrene is shown as the person who helped carry Jesus' cross to Golgotha. The closing sign of the unit makes reference to other followers of Jesus who were present at the crucifixion of Jesus. They include women who had followed Jesus from Galilee. The question of who Simon of Cyrene is continues to be a debated subject among scholars. What is important though is the consideration of Simon of Cyrene as someone from another place representing a mixed-race people who also play a very important part in Jesus' proclamation of God's kingdom. Simon of Cyrene, women who were not well-known, as well as the disadvantaged people of the society were the kinds of people who followed Jesus Christ at the time of his ministry – they are people of society on the margin or in need.

Referenced in the beginning of the unit is the setting of the crucifixion which is Golgotha. The time of the crucifixion is also stated in this part which is nine o'clock in the morning. It is followed by the death of Jesus on the cross mentioned which is culminated in the centurion's confession. The ending part to the unit which is women

looking on from a distance sums up the whole unit. It is witnessing the crucifixion as both a shameful and honoured event. The following interpretation will elaborate on the progression of the unit as explained above from its beginning to end.

3.3.1 Beginning (vv. 21-32): Jesus on the shameful cross

In the beginning of the unit, the name of the main character is mentioned (v. 22). He is Jesus Christ.² What is important about Jesus is that he is the Son of God as revealed in the beginning of Mark's presentation of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' name in Greek is *Iesous* meaning 'Yahweh saves' whose task is 'to save' God's people from sin.³ The name Christ in Greek is *Christos* meaning 'anointed'.⁴ The name Jesus Christ itself, according to the meanings stated here, exhibits what the good news is: to save the sinful world. The name Jesus Christ as described also reveals Jesus as an honoured person. But, he puts himself into facing shameful situations to fulfil the purpose of saving the sinful world.

The shameful situations in this unit are shown in the beginning of the unit. One example is the compelling of Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross. Other examples include: First, the crowd and soldiers take Jesus to the place called Golgotha. Golgotha – the place of skull – can also be called a place of shame. It is a place of death where skulls and bones of dead people are scattered. Second, they crucified Jesus – the most humiliated and shameful punishment in the first century Roman Imperial ruling. Third, they divided his clothes among themselves casting lots to decide what each should take.

² Kingsbury using narrative criticism speaks of the character of Jesus Christ in Mark as the protagonist and this is shown in the beginning of Mark's gospel. Kingsbury writes: "Mark uses the beginning of his story (1:1-13) to set the stage." See Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 31.

³ W. Forester, "Iesous," *TDNT*, 360-361.

⁴ W. Grundmann, "Christos," *TDNT*, 1322.

Fourth, they charged against him the inscription named – “The King of the Jews.” It is a way of mocking Jesus whether he could react as a King to his punishment by using his power to save himself. Fifth they crucified Jesus with two bandits placing Jesus in the middle of the two prisoners. Sixth, they laughed at him saying, save yourself. Seventh, the Jewish leaders do likewise – they mock Jesus calling Jesus if he is the Messiah come down from the cross.

But Jesus’ response shows a literary transition from shame to honour by refusing to do what they demanded. It is to fulfil being a suffering Messiah and to withstand and endure the shame of being mocked and belittled in front of the world. For example, Jesus does not accept the offer to drink the wine with myrrh. The wine with myrrh is to be drunk to ease pain and suffering. Instead, Jesus wants to feel the pain and the suffering of being the one sacrificed to save the world. It is a feeling of honour to suffer for the will of his Father. It is not hard for the Son of God to deny the cross, but he decided to stay on the cross so that his Father’s will is fulfilled. Thus, the honoured way to respond to forced-actions of humiliation in shameful situation is not to retaliate but to stay firm in faith. God will respond after all, on the behalf of his loyal and committed servants – those shamed by this world as revealed in the middle part of the unit.

3.3.2 Middle (vv. 33-39): Jesus’ crucifixion as an honoured event

The middle part of the unit shows God’s response to the crucifixion of his Son. The response begins with Jesus’ voicing the reality of pain and suffering received from being humiliated and being shamed by this world. It is to show that the reality of being shamed is undeniable. It is part of being a true follower or servant of God as shown by Jesus in this part of his ministry. The words: “*Eloi, Eloi lema sabachthani?*” which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me” reveals that the pain and

suffering encountered during shameful and humiliated situations while serving God, are like moments of God leaving or abandoning us. But, the tearing of the temple curtain in two from top to bottom which occurred when Jesus had his final breath his last shows why the pain and suffering of a true servant of God is all worth it. It is to show that everyone regardless of who they are has access to salvation. Thus, being in a shameful situation in order to help to save another person is sacrifice. Also, being humiliated and being shamed by those holding power and authority in society as a way of entrenching their authoritative status will turn out to be an honoured experience for the shamed. More importantly, that way of being honoured will be at times witnessed and accepted by those who are the cause of shame. This is seen in the confession of the centurion: “Truly this man was God’s Son!” The Roman centurion as the representation of the honoured in society has now publicly made the consideration of Jesus the honoured. Thus, the Roman Imperial power is considered the shame. The confession therefore could be looked at as the result of all the events that led up to Jesus’ crucifixion. It shows that Jesus’ death on the cross is not a shameful event but an honoured moment for Jesus and his followers to show that the will of God to save the world is now fulfilled. All these events as occurred are witnessed by the women shown in the ending part of the unit – vv. 40-41.

3.3.3 Ending (vv. 40-41): Women as witnesses of shameful yet honoured event

The ending part of the unit has shown that like other parts of Jesus ministry, the women have never missed anything about Jesus’ crucifixion. These women continued on with their loyalty and commitment to their role as mothers is shown in their attendance to Jesus’ burial and resurrection. Verse 40 says that the women were also looking on and witnessed everything that happened to Jesus in this part of the story. The

dedication of these mothers shows their deep caring for their children revealing that they are never far away from their duties and roles of caring for their families. The names of the mothers who look on are mentioned. They are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome and other women. These women are mothers and associates of Jesus and his disciples who have been following Jesus' and his ministry. Women are other members of society on the margin, who witnessed the shameful and humiliated situations encountered by Jesus. Their first-hand experience of Jesus dealing with shameful and humiliated situations has helped their journey forward as servants of God.

3.4 Conclusion

This Chapter gave an exegesis of Jesus' crucifixion as a shameful and humiliated event in Jesus ministry. The exegesis has shown that there are many shameful situations encountered by Jesus in that event. They are shameful in the eyes of the people of society who are used to considering crucifixion as a form of punishment for shame. But, those who understand the importance of being a servant of God, will consider those shameful situations as opportunities to sacrifice their life by enduring pain and suffering of those situations for God's will. Thus, shameful situations could be looked upon as honoured ways of serving God. The following exegesis of the intertextual, and social and cultural textures of Mark 15:21-41 will broaden that claim

Chapter 4

Intertextual, Social and Cultural textual reading

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, is the intertextual analysis of Mark 15:21-41 which is exploring the phenomena from outside found in the text Secondly, is analysing the social and cultural texture of the text finding whether the social and cultural values of the 1st century Mediterranean world are reflected in the language of the text.

4.2 Intertextual Analysis of Mark 15:21-41

The intertextual analysis examines Mark's recitation and recontextualization of Psalm 22: 1 (v34), 7 (v29), 18 (v24); Psalm 69: 21 (v3, v36); Amos 8: 9 (v33) as amplification of meaning in dealing with shameful and humiliated situations encountered in one's life while serving God. In the beginning of the unit (15:21-32), Mark stresses the importance of Jesus the Son of God being brought to Golgotha the place of the skull or the place of shame. The reference to Golgotha anticipates the humiliated suffering and pain that will be encountered by Jesus. And that suffering and pain can be endured by drinking the wine with myrrh (v. 23). The intertextual analysis of Mark 15:21-41 will show how Mark's recitation¹ of Psalm 22: 1 (v34), 7 (v29), 18 (v24); Psalm 69: 21 (v3, v36); Amos 8: 9 (v33) affirms that shameful situations encountered in the work of serving God are considered as honoured experiences.

¹According to Robbins, "[r]ecitation is the transmission of speech or narrative, from either oral or written tradition, in the exact words in which the person has revealed the speech or narrative or in different words." Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 41.

4 2.1. Mark's recitation of Psalm 22: 1 (v34), 7 (v29), 18 (v24); Psalm 69: 21 (v3, v36)

The Book of Psalms is subdivided into five smaller books. Each book is a compilation of several ancient collections of songs and poems. Psalm 22 is part of the series of songs considered Book One (Psalms 1-41) attributed to David. They were compiled before the death of David and the collection is largely personal psalms which reflect David's own experiences. Psalm 22 is also considered the messianic psalm that focuses on the suffering of the Messiah (vv. 1-18) and the exaltation that follows (vv. 19-31). Psalm 69 is considered part of Book Two (Psalm 42-72), added in the days of Solomon, is a collection of songs by, of, or for the sons of Korah, Asaph, David, and Solomon.² Psalm 69 is also a messianic psalm is a quiet sharing of David's personal distress and disappointments, mixed with frequent expressions of trust in God.

Psalm 69:21 (NRSV)

They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink

Mark 15: 23 & 36 (NRSV)

And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it...

And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

Psalm 22:18 (NRSV)

they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots

Mark 15:24 (NRSV)

And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take

² Jack W. Hayford, ed., *Hayford's Bible Handbook: The Complete Companion for Spirit-Filled Bible Study* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 138-139.

Psalm 22:7

All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads....

Mark 15:29

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build in three days...."

Psalm 22:1 (NRSV)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

Mark 15:34 (NRSV)

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Mark's uses of these Psalms shows his familiarity with Jewish Wisdom. The whole story of Jesus' crucifixion including the events which happened before and after it in which Psalms 22 and 69 are used in simply bring not only a Jewish understanding but also a historical and theological affirmation (is related to God's relationship to Israel) into Mark's explanation of suffering and pain in shameful situations as honoured experience. This is the emphasis of this intertextual analysis.

Mark as a Jew writing to Christians who know and understand the Scriptures does not have to tell them the source he gets some of the references to a suffering servant from. Mark's audience knew that the type of Messiah described refers to the messianic words of Psalm – the words about the type of Messiah the people of Israel in their history have been talking that will come. He will be given poison for food and vinegar to drink. He will be offered wine mixed with myrrh. His clothes will be divided among some people who will cast lots to decide what each should take. He will be mocked at by those who will shake their heads. He will be crucified and considered forsaken by

God. All these recitations from the Old Testament amplify Mark's explanation of the secrecy of Jesus the Messiah – he is a Suffering Messiah or Suffering Servant of God.

The above recitations from the Psalms are also used by Mark as recontextualization of the Suffering Messiah mentioned in the Old Testament in the context of the Persecution of the Church. It was time of the Early Church's encountering of shame in the eyes of the Roman Imperial Empire and the Jewish Particularism. The pain and suffering the church is facing is an experience of how a servant of God as a follower of Christ lives life – it is a life of a suffering servant of God.

So Mark's reference of the characteristics of the suffering servant from Psalm 22 and 69 draws the attention of the readers to those Psalms in order to help them understand that the sacrificing of life to God regardless of situations is an honoured service or a blessing. In Psalm, the person/s who gives their life to God are considered to have endured righteousness forever, are those who offer themselves to be servants of God.

1.1.Amos 8: 9 (v33)

Amos came from the southern kingdom of Judah and delivered his prophecies against the northern kingdom of Israel and the surrounding nations. The prophet Amos was different from other prophets of the Old Testament. He was not from a family of prophets. He did not even call himself a prophet. He was a farmer and a shepherd (Amos 7:12). He knew the life of being an oppressed and voiceless in the community and society he grew up in. It was this life that influenced his prophecies. Most of his messages were for the people in higher status and the rich who did not bother to help those in need. In doing so, God was forgotten as results.

Amos in Chapter 8 speaks of God's judgment of the world and is compared to a basket of summer fruits. A basket of summer fruits symbolizes the coming of the end of the Israel's people for their disobedience. Amos speaks from his experience as a farmer. The basket of summer fruits is a basket of ripe fruits that have just been harvested and will be used. It is an illustration of judgement at the end of the world – a time of harvesting where the obedience will be in paradise and the disobedience in Sheol or Hades. It was that day in the context of Amos's prophecy that the Lord God makes the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad day light. This prophecy is used in the context of the death of Jesus on the cross as showing the arrival of not the judgment day but the arrival of the salvation of the world. Interestingly, in the context of the crucifixion of Jesus in Marks gospel, fruits are also mentioned as in the wine with myrrh and sour wine. Thus, the event of the crucifixion can be also looked at as a harvesting day – not of fruits but of the world as those saved by God after all.

Amos 8: 9 (NRSV)

On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad day light

Mark 15: 33 (NRSV)

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.

In the contexts of Psalm and Amos, the Israel's relationship with God is the main subject. In this relationship, despite Israel's disobedience God continued to have mercy on them. It is about bringing hope to something that is hopeless. More importantly they reveal that God is in control. God who provides for the people of Israel will provide salvation as a fruit of life for everyone including those who do not understand Jesus' ministry. Thus, Jesus' crucifixion is harvesting of the righteousness of those who have sacrificed their lives for God's purpose in this world. This is the honoured actions from the experience of being humiliated and being shamed for God's will.

4.3 Analysing the social and cultural texture of Mark 15:21-41

In the analysis of the social and cultural texture, I will explore how the social and cultural nature of Mark 15:21-41 presents Jesus' relationship with the people who crucified him and witnessed his crucifixion as giving them honour. It will also reveal how the positive response of the various people present in Jesus' crucifixion can be seen as a response of honour. It is to give all the people regardless of who they are and what they do opportunities to begin, from where they are situated in the local society, their being given honour.

The values of honour and shame were very important values of antiquity influencing the way people related to each other socially and culturally in the first century Mediterranean world³. They are social and cultural practices first learned in the

³ In the first century Mediterranean society, the person with 'honour' was a person with high status either in the external or internal government. He or she had abundance of land and was born to an elite family. People receive and achieve honour when their worth and standing are acknowledged in public in accordance with the public social, cultural, economic and religious expectations. (See, David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove:

family unit but carried into all other levels and spaces of society. The analysis of the social and cultural texture will reveal that Mark 15:21-41 is part of a Markan presentation of an honoured follower of Christ in Jesus' ministry.

Jesus as the main character in the story is a person with ascribed honour in the Markan story. It is revealed in the consideration of the good news proclaimed in Mark as the Gospel of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is the Son of God (1:1). The sending of messenger ahead of Jesus to proclaim who is Jesus is another reference to Jesus as the honoured person in the story. God's declaration of Jesus as his son in Jesus' baptism (1:9-11), Jesus' victory over the devil's temptation revealed in the angels' waiting upon Jesus (4:11). These references demonstrate Jesus' ascribed honour giving him the authority to undertake God's salvific mission. But an overriding problem with Jesus' ascribed honour is that it is not always recognized by other characters such as the Romans and Jewish leaders.

In the first century Mediterranean social and cultural world, one's honour became convincing and acceptable when acknowledged and recognized publicly⁴. Thus, in order for Jesus' ascribed honour to impart the proclamation of salvation on earth, it has to become an acquired honour. In other words, Jesus needs to acquire the honour of being the one to do that in the eyes of the people.

Intervarsity, 2000), 23-94; John H. Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 130, 133-34). On the other hand, a value called 'shame' is the reverse of 'honour'. Despite the sense of negativity entailed in 'shame', it has a cultural acceptance in the Mediterranean world (Halvor Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard Rohrbaugh, 31-33). For example, with regard to gender difference, the man's place was treated as public and woman's as private, with woman's role considered to carrying 'shame' in terms of her housework. Being shameful in that sense was accepted as a normal way of life (Moxnes, "Honor and Shame," 21-22). For the loss of honor in relation to loss of wealth, see Jerome Neyrey, "Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family and Loss of Honor: The Cultural Context of the Original Makarisms in Q," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Philip E. Esler (New York: Routledge, 1995), 139-58.

⁴ See Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?*, 130, 133-34.

In doing so, Jesus must publicly demonstrate his authority to undertake that mission. This is shown in Jesus' putting forward a challenge through his enduring of suffering and pain to the people witnessing it for a response. In the first century Mediterranean social and cultural world, this is one way of claiming honour which considered as the social communication of challenge-response in public⁵. This is where "messages are transferred from a source (challenger) to a receiver."⁶ The narrator shows that Jesus has been offered wine to drink to ease the pain of crucifixion suffering but does not accept it. The words he says on the cross and his cry as a way of voicing the message of glory is received by the centurion who responds in a confession – "Truly this man was God's son."

Jesus' last words and cry on the cross is Jesus' public appeal for repentance that is a challenge to the people who do not understand his mission. The mothers' looking on from a distance is another positive response to Jesus' challenge from upon the cross. Thus, the centurion's confession and the mothers' looking on to Jesus as positive responses to Jesus' words, as a challenge from the cross affirms Jesus' ascribed honour. On the other the centurion's confession and the mothers' response make them honoured. Hence, the analysis of the social and cultural texture of the text also shows the claim made in the above interpretations.

The encountering of humiliated and shameful situations in doing the work of proclaiming the gospel makes the servant of God honoured. It also shows the reversal of honour in light of Jesus' crucifixion. Thus, Jesus' ministry is an honourable service that gave honour to those in need in and through his proclamation of the kingdom of God. The people who responded positively to that ministry acquired honour. It reveals that

⁵ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 80. See also Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 44-52.

⁶ Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 80.

Jesus' vision of salvation gives the disadvantaged the opportunity to begin from where they are recognized within society their way out of oppression. Thus, the analysis shown above has revealed that being a follower of Christ or being a disciple may at times bring shameful and humiliating experiences but it is all worth it after all – for it is acquiring and ascribing honour in the kingdom of God

Chapter Five:

Conclusion of the Study

One of the reasons that brought me the desire to carry out this study was the story of *Malae-o le – Ma* (Place of Shame) originated from Faiaai, my wife's village. Her family had honoured my tautua in the family by bestowment two chiefly titles of the family on me. The intercultural approach as used by two Samoans scholars mentioned above in their study is the approach used in this study.

I have mentioned my reasoning behind the use of the Gospel of Mark. Mark is considered the main source of the Gospels. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how Jesus' encountering of shame in his ministry particularly in the time of his crucifixion, could help us in our experiencing of such situations in our community and society. More importantly, it could help instil strength and courage to those of our community and society being neglected and oppressed because of the many challenges of life.

The Literature Review in Chapter Two highlighted most of the events took place during the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. The mockery and confession made by people so as their actions with the hope of shaming and humiliating Jesus. However, as evident, those demeaning actions were in turn revered moments for Jesus who sacrificed his life for the sinful world. This is shown in the torn of the Temple curtain which reassured that the death of Jesus opened up hope for all the people regardless of who they are to be included in salvation. The confession of the centurion signified that hope, showing that the so-called shamed in our world for doing God's will are the honoured in God's kingdom. The centurion's confession also showed that Jesus as the Son of God is more praise worthy than the emperor of Rome.

The presence of women in the story has historical and theological significance in relation to honouring and shaming culture in the first century Mediterranean world and similarly in the Kingdom of God. It showed that women as the victims of the shaming culture in the social and cultural world of the first century Roman imperial power are the honoured in the Kingdom of God. They fulfilled the good work of being followers of Christ. They have shown their commitment and loyalty to Jesus' Ministry despite their status they were recognized with in their society. Although they were considered to shy away from public spaces, they showed that they could still be witnesses from such spaces. As the interpretation confirmed, their recognized status as the shameful made them honourable in the eyes of God for they have been with Jesus from the beginning to the end. So how can Jesus' experiencing of shame and encountering death on the cross in relation to the story of *Malae o le Ma* gives us any lessons in facing situations where are being shamed, neglected or oppressed in our very own societies?

I can relate Jesus shedding tears on the cross to the crying of one of the members of Nafanua's family that was heard from Pulotu. In this context, the coconut tree he climbed could be perceived as a cross. That crying was interpreted as a sign of pain to show the reality of suffering encountered in such shameful punishment. The crying of Jesus was heard by God which led to the torn of the Temple curtain. It marked the beginning of salvation given to the sinful world – the people oppressed by sin. It is a similar situation although in a different context with Saveasiuleo's response to the cry from Falealupo. He sent Nafanua to give their people hope of salvation. Nafanua did that and saved the people of her village. It was a task executed timely that in the end, caused shame to those, especially men who oppressed the people of Nafanua's village. They witnessed that the warrior who fought the war against them when a wind blew at *Malae o le Ma*, was a lady. They confessed that indeed, the warrior was a lady. Their

words echoed the feeling of shame upon them and their people. This similar experience is seen in the centurion's confession when he said Jesus is truly the Son of God. His confession implicitly revealed shame upon the Roman Imperial power for what they did to Jesus. Furthermore, it fulfilled the will of God to save the sinful world.

How do these two experiences of transforming shame to honour could help us deal with encountering shameful situations in our lives? Firstly, they have shown us that shame or being caught in shameful situations is part of our life. We cannot deny these as they occur in life. But, beyond those types of situations there is hope. We need to have courage to face the challenges with faith that God has his ways to help us in difficult times. They have also shown that putting others into such situation will not do any good to us. Instead, it will make us face the consequences one way or the other. What about the women that follow Jesus from Galilee?

The mothers that follow Jesus all the way from Galilee could be looked at as having their own significance to Jesus' crucifixion as the story of shame. These mothers could be related to Nafanua in the story. They have their own war to fight – the war against many systems in society that have been oppressing and shaming them such as the patriarchal system and Roman imperial system. But their fight by following Jesus from the beginning to end made them conquerors. They look on from a distance – the look of mothers or the look of Nafanua which continued on to the resurrection of Christ. They were the only ones present. Their presence from a distance could be interpreted as the look on that goes beyond them being considered shameful in society from being honoured. They were honoured for their belief and commitment to Jesus' ministry.

Nafanua in the story of *Malae o le Ma*, went and asked the people of her village to aid her fighting the war. They refused except a couple who offered to help. Similarly, these mothers who knew that no one was going to help them were present beside Jesus

in the shameful time of encountering pain in his ministry. Even the twelve disciples, no one of them was in sight. The mothers, from where they were recognized in society made their response to Jesus' crucifixion – they looked on as mothers – the honoured watch of the committed and loyal followers of Christ. For the Church, despite the many good deeds by women in the Church, their recognition is still nowhere that of men. Is it now a good time to re-look the consideration of women to be ordained ministers in our Church?

Above all as mentioned in chapter one the importance of Taea in our Samoan context, as it marks an important event that was happening during that time. This is why it is included in an orator language, in remembrance of those events which will help in explaining the event of that gathering. This is seen in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as a shameful event in the eyes of non-believers and the executioners. Yet, this is a dawn of a new era for Christians when the centurion confesses the true identity of Jesus. This is the fulfilment of salvation for all the oppressed and the neglected in the community. This is also reflected in the *Malae o le Ma* story, as we see Nafanua exposing herself as a shameful event, not only for her but for her enemies, yet Nafanua brings hope and salvation for those who were oppressed and finally made a peaceful agreement in the end. In other words we can consider that in every shameful situation there is hope beyond it.

The Church can play a very important part in dealing with the many of our people who have been and still experiencing encountering pain from shameful situations they faced in their lives. Sadly to say, some of these experiences happened in our churches. The young generation in their fight against identity crisis and confusion needs attention because one of the many causes of such problems is the issue of being humiliated and

shamed by the very people who are supposed to take care of them. Thus, the subject of shame and honour needs to be discussed and talked about in our Churches to date.

Glossary

Malae o le Ma	Field of shame
Faauliulito	strike with no mercy
Tafesilafa'i	strike with courtesy
Ulimasao	guide with safety
Gase toa ae ola pule	toa tree is dead but sea shells are alive
Faamategataua	ending the war
Ola I fale le laau a Nafanua	she accidentally strike down her allies
Pulotu	place for ancient spirit
Logo ia Pulotu le mapu a Taii	Taii's sighed had been heard from Pulotu
Pa I Fualaga	Ancient fence identifies village boundaries
Ali'i o aiga	Boy related to royal family/ the first born
Sua le tuli	stop the killing
Vafeiloa'i	proper relationship

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