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Richard Kirk Bryant

THE ANGER OF JESUS IN MARK'S GOSPEL

ABSTRACT

The textual variants in Markan passages depicting the anger of Jesus, coupled with Matthaean and Lukan amendments to and omissions from them, suggest that discomfort at the thought of Jesus' anger is no merely modern phenomenon. Nevertheless its possibility still strikes some as bizarre and some as impossible.

However, in this thesis I argue that, far from being extraneous or peripheral, Jesus' anger is integral to Mark's presentation of the gospel. First, it illustrates Mark's claim that Jesus was the son of God. Many of the themes associated with God's anger in the Old Testament are discernible also in Mark's Gospel. Furthermore, in Mark Jesus alone expresses ὀργή, and, while the indignations of others are invariably condemned, Jesus' expressions of anger are always cast in a positive and even divine light.

Secondly, the anger of Jesus highlights the importance of the various issues which were the subject of intense debate between Christians and Jews, within Judaism itself and among his own followers. The status of the law, the nature and purpose of miracles, the meaning of suffering, the roles of children, outsiders and Gentiles are all very much to the fore in the Markan pericopae which depict Jesus' anger. His anger proclaims their seriousness and the urgency with which they should be tackled.

The notion of Jesus' anger involves, inevitably, some recognition of the mystery surrounding his character and his relationship with God. However, one of Mark's main points seems to be that Jesus is an enigma only to the hard of heart and the blind in perception. In the six Markan passages, which are the subject of this thesis, Jesus lays down clear principles for faith, action and discipline. His anger underlines their importance and his own authority.

THE ANGER OF JESUS IN MARK'S GOSPEL

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in the University of Durham.

Department of Theology in the Faculty of Arts

1990

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## INTRODUCTION

In his comprehensive treatment of anger and its implications for Christian living and service, Alistair Campbell challenges attempts to dismiss or play down the wrath of God, as if it were for modern people a harmful and heterogeneous concept {1}. He cites the Anglican Alternative Service Book as an example of such a trend, finding there only one reference to God's wrath, and at that an optional sentence in the Funeral Service {2}. One reason for and consequence of such dismissiveness lies in a reluctance to face and take seriously the anger which surfaces from time to time in human encounters and relationships.

It is possible that the tide is beginning to turn again. In the 1990 Order of Service for Christian Aid Week one of the prayers includes "anger" alongside "courage" and "love" as a vital tool with which to challenge the self-interests of the mean and strong {3}. An increasing readiness to cry out against such phenomena as consumer greed, child abuse and acts of terrorism suggests that the concepts of divine wrath and human indignation can be viewed as positive and creative expressions of defiance in the face of human perversity.

The origin of this thesis, however, is more personal. Its seeds were sown in some reflections on the place of anger in the life of a minister, prepared for the Lincoln Diploma in Ministry in 1986/87. My concern, there, was to evaluate the source, nature and effects of the anger which had surfaced at particular moments in my own parochial experience. Those moments affected both my own self-esteem and my pastoral relationship with members of the church. The prime questions

I was seeking to answer, there, were : " Is my anger justified, and if so by whom ?" and " Does anger assist or hinder the mission of the Church ?".

Several significant factors emerged in the course of my investigation. First, there was the nature of the anger itself. Was it instinct, in which case the moral question concerned whether and how to express it ? Or, was it in itself a rational attitude of the sort that could be controlled by strength of will ?

Secondly, and of special importance for the minister, there came the need to weigh up personal integrity alongside the perceived wishes of parishioners -- venting wrath may bring short-term relief to the minister in the midst of a particular frustration, but it may also damage seriously his/her pastoral relationships. Equally, to stifle deeply-felt emotion produces additional strains in an already highly-pressured profession and can make for insincere relationships.

Thirdly, an important consideration for the analysis concerned the context in which the anger was expressed. Outbursts of anger occur most frequently among families and in the groups with whom we work most closely. The questions which the minister needs to answer, here, are : " Am I using the people I work closest with to indulge my general frustrations?" and " Is the behaviour of those at the heart of the church's life all the more reprehensible, because they should know better ?". We may often hurt those we are closest to, because we also feel safest with them, and because we presume upon their knowledge and understanding.

Fourthly, the issues in the course of which the anger was provoked were of some significance. It is possible that the anger simply registered a failure to convince others, but it is just as, if not more, likely that the issues themselves were perceived by the

participants to be of crucial importance for an understanding of the Church, the Gospel or the World.

The range of these factors and of the variants involved suggests that there is no one answer or approach which can serve in all situations. However, such an observation should not preclude disciplined attempts to grapple with the subject, in order to offer some criteria by which our feelings and expressions of anger can be checked. These attempts will involve an examination of the physiological, psychological and sociological data {4}, but they will also require the insights which arise from theological investigation and understanding. The theological task will necessitate sooner or later an evaluation of the Scriptural understandings of the place and purpose of anger in both its human and divine manifestations.

The Old Testament features wrath as one of Yahweh's major attributes {5}, and it notes with apparent approval the wrath of Moses and others, when it reflects the divine attitude. However, God's holiness is revealed also in the constraint of his wrath, as Hos.11:9 and Ps.85:5 illustrate, while human expressions of anger are usually roundly condemned, as at Ps.112:10. The New Testament reflects a similar divergence of attitude. Mt.22:7 alludes in parabolic fashion to God's anger at the shameful treatment of his servants and at the rejection of his invitation, but the three parables in Lk.15 emphasise, rather, the compassion of God and his love for the lost, while Mt.5:22 warns against anger on the grounds of its potential destructiveness.

Such a variety of understandings suggests that any evaluation of Scriptural attitudes will involve an enquiry into the causes and contexts in which the anger is set (both historical and redactional). There is some evidence that certain Old Testament texts about the

anger of God caused embarrassment and even offence to some early commentators, as scribes struggled to hold together in creative tension their faith, their obedience to tradition and their observation of reality {6}. The same point may be made about the Lukan and Matthaean adaptations of those Markan passages which comment upon the anger of Jesus {7}. Mark is the only evangelist to refer explicitly to the anger of Jesus, although all the evangelists contain accounts of the temple disturbance and Mt.23 portrays a vitriolic Jesus in his denunciation of Scribes and Pharisees {8}. Any Scriptural investigation will seek to discern the possible reasons for both the accounts of the anger and their later emendations or omissions.

The Markan accounts of Jesus' anger themselves raise important questions for an understanding of Jesus' character and, therefore, of the church's doctrine and mission. If Jesus' anger were in any way vindictive or a display of bad temper, it would be difficult to maintain the doctrine of his innocence (Lk.23:47) or sinlessness (Heb.4:15). If, on the other hand, Jesus' anger was intended to be seen as an expression of divine and righteous indignation, then we are dealing more with theology than with psychology.

We have also to reckon with the apologetic and polemical concerns of the evangelists and with the ecclesiastical, sociological and political realities they were seeking to address. It may be that the accounts of Jesus' anger have been influenced by such considerations, and that in turn they are able to shed some light on our understanding of those concerns and realities.

In this thesis I intend to explore some of the ways in which these considerations bear upon our perception of Mark's treatment of Jesus' anger and indignation. I have chosen his Gospel, because it is generally held to be the closest chronologically to the events it



describes, but mainly because it is more explicit about Jesus' anger than the other evangelists. My hope at the outset is that Mark's Gospel will be able to clarify the ways in which Christians might approach and deal with the anger that surfaces in the course of their life, ministry and experience.

#### THE AIM OF THE THESIS

I venture no opinion as to the historicity of the events which lie behind the Markan text. Important though the issue is, my intention is not to probe the historical likelihood of Jesus' anger on the occasions on which Mark describes it. Rather, I intend to examine Jesus' anger from the evangelist's perspective and to ask questions about the author's use of the concept, its possible meanings and the effects Mark hoped it would have on his readership. It is, then, with the Markan designs, nuances and interpretations that this thesis sets out to grapple.

My aim is to examine the Markan references to Jesus' anger, looking in particular at the contexts, in which the anger is described, the themes Mark associates with Jesus' anger and the functions and purposes Jesus' anger appears to have had in the development of Mark's presentation of him as son of God. I will seek to demonstrate that Jesus' anger :-

- 1) is Mark's way of signifying the anger of God;
- 2) enables the author to hold together the integrity of the

gospel and the reality of suffering and failure;

3) highlights the importance of particular issues, which were the source of debate within the Markan church and between Christians and Jews.

#### **METHOD**

My first task is to survey the Old Testament attitudes to divine and human wrath. It is with the Old Testament, after all, that Mark begins his gospel, quoting at 1:2-3 from Ex.23:20, Mal.3:1 and Is.40:3. His text, in fact, is littered with allusions and references to the Old Testament, mainly in its LXX form {9}. The frequency with which they occur makes it impossible to appreciate fully the claims he is establishing for Jesus without an attempt to understand his own source material.

I shall then include a chapter on Inter-Testamental writings, mainly the Qumran Scrolls, 1 Enoch and Jubilees, to indicate how Old Testament thoughts on anger were being applied and developed immediately preceding and at the dawn of the Christian age. They will also help us to evaluate the distinctiveness of the New Testament in general and of Mark in particular. I will not subject these texts to the redactional investigation I will employ with more rigour in connection with Mark's Gospel itself and, to a lesser extent, the Old Testament. Rather, my concern is to notice some of the important contexts in which the writers use the concept of God's anger and the ways in which they deploy it.

The heart of the thesis is contained in the analysis of the six Markan texts which either comment specifically on Jesus' anger or describe its expression :- 1:40-45 - the healing of the leper; 3:1-6 - the healing of the man with the paralysed hand; 8:11-21 - Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees and of his disciples for not understanding about signs; 8:27-9:1 - Jesus' rebuke of Peter; 10:13-16 - Jesus' welcoming of the children; 11:12-25 - the cursing of the fig-tree and the cleansing of the temple. My method of analysis here will be by redaction criticism, as developed, for example, by Austin Farrer, Dennis Nineham, Joanna Dewey et.al.

In the conclusion I will attempt to relate the Markan themes and understandings to the issues I raised earlier about the anger which intrudes into and is part of the life of a minister and a Christian.

#### NOTES

1. A.Campbell, The Gospel of Anger (SPCK, 1986)
2. Alternative Service Book (1980) p.316
3. Order of Service for Christian Aid Week (1990) p.11. The text of the prayer reads :- " And we give thanks for communities: where the poor have pooled resources to support each other, where those with knowledge have used it to help others learn, where the interests of the strongest have been challenged with anger and courage and love".
4. As A.Campbell, op.cit. chs.2, 4 and 5.
5. J.Fichtner and H.Kleinknecht et al, Wrath (A and C Black 1964), pp.14-18, 22-25.
6. For example, while 2 Sam.24:1 assigns the cause of David's

census, which so outraged God, to God himself, 1Chron.21:1 comments that Satan, not God, instigated the census and omits any reference to God's anger. It is interesting to note that even Irenaeus, in his refutation of Marcion's attempt to divide the Old Testament deity in two and reject from the 'good' God any malign intention, has to admit to some inconsistency in his case. At "Adv. Haer.iv 29", in defending the J account of the plagues and insisting that it was God who hardened the heart of Pharaoh, he adds, to alleviate the apparent harshness of God's attitude, that "Pharaoh would never have believed that anyway".

7. I am assuming that Matthew and Luke had access to a Markan text or the sources which Mark himself used. Whether or not this is the case does not materially alter my view of Mark's distinctiveness. The fact remains, as I shall show, that Mark mentioned or emphasised actions and attitudes, which they either do not include or play down.

8. It is noteworthy that, while most New Testament writers make some reference to the wrath of God (eg. Jn.3:36, Rom.9:22), Mark contains no such explicit reference, although the parable of the vineyard (Mk.12:1-12) and the darkness which accompanied the crucifixion (Mk.15:33) might be taken as expressions of God's annoyance at the rejection of his grace and bounty. On the other hand, while Rev.6:16 does refer to the wrath of the lamb, this is an allusion to the heavenly and majestic Christ, and only Mark of the New Testament writers makes explicit reference to the anger of the earthly Jesus.

9. Unlike Matthew, Mark does not include many specific quotations from the Old Testament, and he frequently ignores their source, as 11:17, 12:10-11 and 14:27 illustrate. Even where a source is identified, as at 1:2-3, it is incomplete: Isaiah is mentioned, but

Exodus and Malachi are ignored. However, his text is punctuated with recognisable if unattributed references, as 4:10-11 quoting Is.6:9-10, 8:18 quoting Ezek.12:2 and 14:62 quoting Ps.110:1 and Dan.7:13 illustrate. Furthermore, as I shall show, some of Mark's major themes and phrases echo those of the Old Testament, eg. hardness of heart as an explanation for the perversity of Jesus' opponents, the need for the elect to be purified, the suffering required of God's agent.

## THE ANGER OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### Introduction

Popular views about the predominance of God's anger or wrath in the Old Testament might be confirmed by a cursory reading of the texts. Grether and Fichtner record over 400 instances in which God's anger is mentioned either in noun or verb form {1}. In this chapter I shall be exploring the significance of the concept for the Old Testament writers and examining some of the themes evoked by their portrayals of it, so that we may discern later the points at which Mark's presentation of Jesus' anger resonates with or departs from the tradition he inherited.

First, I shall consider the nature of the divine anger, its effects upon Israel and other nations, and how the Old Testament scribes encouraged their readers to deal with it.

Secondly, I shall enquire into the likely motivations for the recorded outbursts of God's anger. It is important for the doctrine and mission of the Church to know with what sort of God it is contending. Is it a capricious deity, prone to fits of pique and bad temper, or a God whose patience has been sorely tried by a people who have turned their backs on what he has given them? How is his anger related to other attributes accorded him, such as jealousy, love and mercy?

Thirdly, I shall pin-point the main targets for God's anger, in order to detect any bias in the Almighty's favours and if so the

possible reasons.

Fourthly, I shall examine the functions and purposes which the concept of God's anger seems to have fulfilled in the Old Testament, on the assumption that a matter so frequently and widely recorded held a significance beyond that of a casual or throw-away remark.

Finally, I shall note some of the features in the Old Testament treatments of divine wrath which appear to be particularly significant for Mark.

## 1. The Nature and Effects of God's Anger

### a) Anger as a signal of a personal God

The first point which the Old Testament references to God's anger establish is, perhaps, an obvious one : God has established a personal bond with his people. He can plead with them (as at Is.6:8) and they with him (as at Jer.10:24). His anger is accompanied by other attributes which help to reinforce that bond, such as jealousy and vengeance (as at Nah.1:2). These negative feelings are found frequently in juxtaposition with his steadfast love and mercy (as at Ex.20:5-6), and on occasions they actually express that love for his people, when they are turned against Israel's enemies (as at Mal.1:2-4, Jer.10:25).

Furthermore, the mentalities and events which are described as provoking God's anger are noted in intensely personal ways. At Dt.29:12-20 God's anger and jealousy smote against the man who walked "in the stubbornness of his heart", a phrase we find also applied to

Pharaoh in connection with each of the ten plagues mentioned in Ex.7:4 - 11:10. The heart, in Hebrew psychology, was thought of as the seat of intelligence and reasoning (2): its being made obdurate (Dt.29:19) or fat (Is.6:10) rendered it incapable of sight and insight. God's anger, then, is invoked against those who do not understand (so Is.6:9-10) or know (so Jer.10:25, Ps.79:6) him. Disobedience or ignorance of the commandments and statutes is expressed in the Old testament as a personal affront to God.

This personal nature of sin is reinforced by the frequent use of the Hebrew  $\text{יָדָה}$  and the Greek  $\alpha\sigma\epsilon\beta\epsilon\iota\alpha$  to convey the notion of sin as a turning away from God: it is a theofugal activity (3). It is not just that a code of conduct has been breached or a system of rules broken, but that a person has been disobeyed and ignored. Sinful people are castigated as those who "turn away" from God (Hos.11:7). Israel "forsook" God's covenant (Dt.29:24), thus provoking his wrath. Instead of listening to their judges, the people "whored after" other gods (Jdg.2:17). Solomon "went after" other gods (1 Kgs.11:10). Sin, then, as the root  $\text{יָדָה}$  suggests, was a matter of rebelling against and deserting god.

The decalogue itself was couched in very personal terms, so that the breach of any of its clauses was seen as a breach of the personal relationship with God. The first four commandments witness to the intensely personal bond that knitted together God and his people in a covenant which was to encompass all eventualities. God is described as a "jealous" God at Ex.20:5, and Ex.20:2 reminds the people of his redemptive intervention in liberating them from slavery in Egypt. To transgress this covenant was to reject the one who had saved them, and the consequence was the provocation of God's wrathful and destructive power (Josh.23:16).



b) The Dynamic Effects of God's Anger

The Hebrew God is portrayed usually in dynamic rather than philosophical terms, and it is not surprising, therefore, that accounts of his wrath should refer to displays of intense and powerful activity (4). The variety of nouns and verbs used to convey the sense of wrath and its manifestations illustrates the wide-ranging effects of its force (5). The origins of אף lie in the use of the nostrils to express refusal or haughtiness; חמה and חרה signify heat and burning; כעס indicates grief; קצף suggests breaking, עברה comes from a verb meaning "to penetrate" or "cross"; רוח means "wind". The association of these nouns with verbs suggestive of violent force produces graphic and terrifying pictures of God's anger in the pages of the Old testament. Wrath is "kindled" at Dt.29:20, it "takes hold" at Ps.69:24, it "consumes" at Ps.90:7, it "goes forth" at Num.16:46, it "bursts out" at Jer.30:23, it "is poured out" at Is.42:25, it "burns" at Ps.89:46. In short, it destroys and leaves desolate : the psalmist describes it in its various forms as a "company of destroying angels" (Ps.78:49).

The LXX translation typically converts some of the MT's crudely physical language into emotional terms, as, for example, at Ps.17:8, where the Hebrew "smoke goes up from his nostrils and fire from his mouth" is rendered in the Greek "smoke goes up from his anger and fire from his presence". However, the conversion from anthropomorphy to anthropopathy (6) simply endorses the point that in facing God's anger we are brought into the presence of a fearsome character. That character, when roused, will devastate the whole of creation, man,

beast, trees of the field and fruit of the ground (Jer.7:20). It will dry up the sea and the rivers (Nah.1:4), shake mountains (Is.5:25) and wither Carmel away (Am.1:2). Nahum's rhetorical questions, "Who can stand before God's indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger?" (Nah.1:6) are echoed throughout the whole of the Old Testament and intended to be answered in the negative.

If no-one can stand before the anger of the Almighty, what can be done? To a consideration of some of the Old Testament's answers to this question we now turn.

### c) Dealing with God's Anger by Action

In this section I shall note some of the practical measures which the Old Testament advises its readers to take to prevent God's wrath from bursting out and to alleviate its worst manifestations, when it did. All of them spring from the personal relationship, which had been established between God and his people.

#### i) Prayer

First, people could pray to and plead with God, as Abraham did on behalf of the people of Sodom (Gen.18:16-end), as Moses did for Israel (Dt.9:18ff) and as the psalmists on numerous occasions encouraged their people to do. Prayer and dialogue were to be seen as important ways of sustaining the bond between God and his people. His anger suggested at least that God was on a similar wavelength with his

people , and that he could, therefore, be reasoned with.

ii) Obedience to the Law

Prayer on its own was not sufficient: it had to be supported by action. The Torah emerged to regulate Israel's activities in accordance with the will of God revealed in the Sinai covenant. Our western division of law into the separate categories of the sacred and the secular would have made no sense to the devout Jew of Old Testament times: for him/her the whole of human life was sacral. Consequently, certain ritual offences, such as those mentioned at Num.1:53 and 2 Sam.6:7, were seen to have enormous and disastrous communal implications. Strict obedience to the minutiae of the Law was the way to prevent outbreaks of divine displeasure, and where they did occur a ritual appeasement was required. Ex.12:28,50f explains the success of the Israelite exodus on the grounds not so much of the pressure applied to Pharaoh as of the Israelites' observance of the Passover rite, as laid down by Moses and Aaron {7}.

The very intricacy of the Law, designed as it was, to meet every possible need and eventuality, illustrates how seriously the people of Israel, or at least their leaders, took the threat of divine disapproval. The prophets extended the system of law to cover the nation's moral, economic and social order, and on occasions they pitted what they took to be moral obligations against what they interpreted as purely formal observance of a written code (eg. Am.5:21-24).

In spite of the wide-ranging scope of the Law, however, breaches were still possible and a fact of life. More, then, than prayer and

the Law was required to deal with God's anger.

iii) Punishment of the Guilty

There were moments, then, when the only recourse the people had to alleviate the results of an offence was to punish the offenders. Moses is commanded by God to hang the chiefs in the scorching sun, so that the rest of the community might be spared the full effects of his wrath (Num.25:4). 2 Chron.24:18 and Josh.7:26 explain that it was God's anger that led to the punishment of Judah for her apostasy and of Achan for his taking to himself the forbidden spoils of war. The punishment was both a judgment about what had already taken place and a warning as to the people's future behaviour.

d) Dealing with the Concept of God's Anger

Important though these three courses of action were for helping the people cope with what they understood to be manifestations of God's anger, they did not satisfy all situations, and they were inadequate to deal with the spiritual dilemmas posed by what might be thought to be undeserved and excessive displays of divine indignation. The Old Testament writers used various devices to solve these problems, and I list here what I take to be the most important:- 1) the transference of God's wrath to the Last Day {8}; 2) the use of mediators to convey both the threat and the reality of God's wrath {9}; 3) the hypostasization of wrath, making it almost independent of God's person {10}; 4) the subservience of God's anger to his love

{11}; 5) textual amendments to remove or play down the worst effects of God's anger {12}.

1) The Transfer of God's Anger to the Last Day

The Jewish expectation of God's day of judgment, portrayed robustly in the prophetic writings, was a natural extension of Hebraic theodicy. Despite a reality which suggested the contrary, God's justice and judgment had to be the ultimate arbiters of human performance. If complete justice had not been achieved yet, it would be on the Last Day. For those who imagined themselves to be on the side of the righteous the Day was to be welcomed joyously and awaited with hope. However, one of the more disturbing of the prophetic predictions was that the Day would turn out to be calamitous for Israel and her shepherds as well as for others. Their rebellion against God and failure to express in the ordering of their own society the requirements of his justice meant that for them too the Day would be filled with darkness (Am.5:18). Ezekiel actually describes it as the day of God's anger (Ezek.7:19), and Zephaniah elaborates on that notion, pointing to its expression in distress, anguish, ruination, devastation and darkness (Zeph.1:15,18).

The pastoral and social merit in the concept of the Lord's Day of wrath was to explain current disasters as warnings to the people to reform their ways: there would be worse to come if there were no change in behaviour. Theologically, the concept presented a God of restraint, slow to anger (as Nah.1:3, Ex.34:6, Is.48:9) and determining to discipline not desert his people (as 2 Macc.6:12-16).

This eschatological dimension enabled believers to hold together

both their observation of human misery and dereliction and their belief in God's justice. God's integrity could be maintained: neither his power nor his love was compromised in the delay in implementing the fulness of his justice. Equally, there was no need for humans to despair at what appeared to be only partial justice or complete injustice: all would be put right in the end.

## 2) The Use of Mediators

Delaying the final operation of God's wrath was not the only way of making it more acceptable and tolerable. Another device was to use third parties, divine and human, as the instigators and bearers of anger.

The number of human agents privileged to convey the sense of God's anger was few indeed. The risk of confusion between God's considered judgment and human fits of ill temper led the Old Testament writers to urge their readers to refrain from feelings and actions of anger. One force of anger and vengeance was sufficient for the whole world: wrath was the prerogative of God and no-one else. So Jacob warns against joining the company of Simeon and Levi, because their anger would lead to murder (Gen.49:6-7). At Ps.110:10 the wicked man is blamed for his anger at the generosity of the righteous man. The correct attitude towards enemies was to feed them and quench their thirst, not to take vengeance on them: God would see that they received their due reward (Prov.25:22).

Nevertheless, certain individuals are selected to exercise God's anger, although it is noticeable that action ensuing from their anger is limited and on most occasions confined to verbal statements.

Phinehas' killing of the Israelite man and Midianite woman is contrasted sharply with the 24000 deaths resulting from the plague, which God's anger had sent upon the people (Num.25:1-13); Phinehas himself is applauded as "having been jealous with God's jealousy" (Num.25:11), although the last verse of the episode makes it clear that he was not in any way to be elevated to the status of a demi-god: his jealousy was for God, and he had made a human atonement for an act of human sinfulness. David's indignation, kindled as he listened to Nathan's story (2Sam.12:5), is of a similar order, though here there was no death other than the one David himself had perpetrated, and the irony is that his anger was turned on himself. Jeremiah was bold enough to proclaim that he was full of the Lord's wrath (Jer.6:11). Lastly, and most significantly for this thesis, Moses breaks out in anger at the sight of the golden calf (Ex.32:19-20). Moses is not described as a god in this passage, although earlier he had been accorded this title for the purposes of his negotiations with Pharaoh (Ex.4:16, 7:1-2). However, the phrase which describes his anger is that usually reserved for God himself (יָחַר אֵף), and in this instance action follows immediately, as the idol is burnt and ground to powder (13). Even so, the text stresses that it is God who controls events and not Moses. Ex.32:35 states explicitly that it is God who sends the Levites to carry out the slaughter, and the implication behind the instruction to the Israelites to drink the polluted water is that it is now cursed by God (14). Apart from these considerations, the reports of Moses' exploits portray him as among his many qualities a flawed character, who himself had aroused God's anger (Ex.4:14) and was unable to control the apostasies and idolatries of Israel in the wilderness.

Humans were not the only creatures chosen to carry messages of

God's anger. Angels fulfil a similar role. The angel of the Lord had done well by Israel at the Red Sea (Ex.14:19, Num.20:16), but angels were sometimes harbingers of disaster. Ps.78:49 describes a company of four destroying angels, three of whom are named with the words for "anger" -- אַפַּיִם, חַרְוֹן אַפַּיִם. The slaughter of the first-born sons of Egypt is attributed to the "destroyer" (Ex.12:23). Although it is clear from the contexts that on both of these occasions the destructive angels were acting at the behest of God, there is just a hint that these heavenly forces had an existence and, therefore, power all of their own. In fact they find a focus of opposition to the will of God in the person of the Satan. He is the one who afflicts Job (Job 1 and 2), and according to 1Chron.21:1 it is he, and not God, who incites David to carry out the census, thereby incurring God's wrath (cf.2Sam.24:1).

The dualism which some of the texts mentioning Satan imply was potentially extremely damaging for Israel's monotheistic belief and system, and some Old Testament writers take pains to stress that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, God was in charge of events and responsible for both light and darkness, peace and evil (so Is.45:7 {15}). However, the suggestion that God himself might produce the very evil which would awaken his anger created other difficulties for monotheists. The existence of angels, one or more of whom took up contrary positions to God, made it possible for writers to hold to their monotheistic belief, while acknowledging the seriousness of evil: excesses of anger could then be attributed directly to them, and God could be distanced by one remove from implication in the worst manifestations.



### 3) The Hypostasization of Anger

On several occasions the writers leave the terms for "anger" with no divine predicate {16}. In the exhortations at Num.1:53 and Josh.9:20 to guard the ark of the covenant and fulfil sworn oaths it is "wrath" on its own that the ritual obligations are designed to avert. Similarly, at 1Chron.27:24 "wrath" descends on Israel as a result of the census, and Dan.8:19 reveals the vision of what would happen at the latter end of "the indignation".

By giving to this attribute, as to angels, a semi-independence from God, the Old Testament writers were able to hold together both their belief in God's love and their experience of evil and its consequences. The hypostasization of wrath enabled them also to speak of its threat as something God might allow rather than encourage. Again, then, the sovereignty of God is assured, and the reality of evil together with its consequences is acknowledged. Theologians and philosophers of today may not find the Old Testament very convincing at this point, but within their own lights its writers were able to maintain and promote the monotheistic system which was their heritage.

### 4) The Subservience of God's Anger to his Love

Arguably the most important motif for putting God's anger into a tolerable perspective was the belief that his anger was an expression of and subservient to his love. This belief is visible in the jealousy which is exercised against the nations but operates on behalf of Israel, as at Zech.1:14-15, where God's great anger against the nations is contrasted with his compassion for Jerusalem and the

prophet's prediction that prosperity would return to the city. It is visible also in the dwarfing of the jealousy that would visit the iniquity of the fathers down to the fourth generation by the steadfast love which would be displayed to the thousands who loved God and kept his precepts (Ex.20:5). A similar point is made at Is.54:8, where God's overflowing anger is described as lasting only for a moment in comparison with his compassion and love, which would last for ever.

There are, then, indications that God's nature is essentially loving and merciful, and that his anger is roused only in extremis. Ex.34:6 describes his character as "merciful, gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness", sentiments endorsed by Ps.103, which goes a stage further in praising the God who is "slow to anger" and also is determined to release the sinful from their guilt. God's love is, however, rarely trouble-free: Hos.11:1-9 presents a picture of the dilemma he faces in setting his anger and disappointment at Israel's faithlessness within the context of the love with which he yearns for his people. In the end, his holiness is revealed in the restraint of his anger despite the fiercest of provocations. No doubt the social and political events of the day determined to a large extent the degree of optimism or pessimism about God's state of mind. Some writers were not always as hopeful as those mentioned above. One of the Deuteronomic redactors seems to have supplemented the exhortations to love God with the commandment to fear him, perhaps upset at the failure of the Deuteronomic reforms and the collapse of Jerusalem {17}. The exilic prophets, too, went through miserable phases, when all human enterprise seemed doomed to fail. Yet in the midst of their gloomy prognostications they could still look forward to the triumph of God's grace and love: God would establish a new covenant with his people (Jer.31:31-34), he would himself shepherd

the people to good grazing ground (Ezek.34:11-16), and his sorrowful servant would turn out to be a sign of his ultimate redemption in the face of overwhelming tribulations and tyrannies. The abiding witness of the Old Testament is that the anger of God, though real and impossible to avoid, is determined by his love, which in turn makes it possible for his people to heed the lessons and warnings of that anger.

##### 5) Textual Modifications and Omissions

The evidence that the Old Testament, as we possess it, is a conglomerate comprising several re-workings of original material is manifest and manifold. One example, pertinent to this thesis, concerns the two accounts of the plagues in Exodus, in which the P writers sought to amend the implication of the J strand, that the eventual success of the Israelite expedition was to an extent dependent on the fancies and whims of Pharaoh: the P writers stress that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart and not Pharaoh himself (Ex.4:21, 7:3,9:12) {18}.

To show that God, and not some alien force or human personality, was in charge of things was one concern of the Old Testament writers. To demonstrate that his injured love and pride would issue in justice and not in excessive outbreaks of violence was another. Consequently, the exilic prophets and later writers tend to use substantive rather than dynamic terms in which to depict God's anger. Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Dt.Isaiah find no place for the verb חרה in connection with אף {19}, and P and the Chroniclers tend to use חיה instead of the more dramatic and graphic verbs mentioned earlier in this chapter (as at

Num.1:53, Josh 22:20, 1Chron.27:24) (20). These writers in no way ignore the place and reality of God's anger, but they are at pains to demonstrate that God was not actively priming the pump of his anger unless sorely provoked.

I have noted earlier the use of Satan to deflect responsibility for evil away from God, as at 1Chron.21:1. The LXX goes even further in this direction. Not only does it represent a shift from Hebraic anthropomorphy to Greek anthropopathy, but it also tones down many of the MT's devastating accounts of God's anger and sometimes removes them altogether. At Is.54:8 the LXX removes the participle "overflowing" from its description of God's anger. At Is.57:17 it renders the Hebrew  $\eta\zeta\rho\kappa$  by the milder  $\epsilon\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\pi\eta\theta\eta$ . In several instances it omits "anger" or "God" entirely from the account: at Num.1:53 it replaces "anger" with a reference to the people's sin, and at Job 42:7 it does the same with regard to the sin of Eliphaz. On other occasions it records indicatively what the MT has asserted imperatively, as at Is.6:10, where the Greek passive  $\epsilon\pi\alpha\chi\acute{\upsilon}\nu\theta\eta$  translates the Hebrew command  $\eta\delta\psi\eta$ . Significant also in this last verse is the LXX's conviction that the remnant of the faithful will be multiplied, where the MT expresses despair that the places abandoned by God will be many: a message of judgment has been converted into one of salvation.

These modifications and omissions represent attempts made both within the MT and by the LXX to limit the damage which passages portraying excessive or unnecessary amounts of divine vindictiveness could do to God's credibility among devout and reasonable people. Above all, though, both MT and LXX writers urge their readers to attend to the causes of God's wrath: knowledge of them would bring with it the possibility of taking appropriate remedial action.

## 2. The Causes of God's Anger

I have noted already some of the attitudes and events which the Old Testament writers interpret as having provoked God's anger. My survey has indicated that his anger has both a personal and a mechanistic aspect.

I have suggested that the personal bond which lies behind the Sinai covenant makes it entirely understandable that any breach of its commandments should be interpreted in personal terms. It is not the statutes which are slighted but God himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that the language of strong emotion should be used to convey the seriousness of affront. The relationship between God and his people is described frequently as one of love: as he brought them out of slavery in Egypt so they are to love him (Dt.6:5) and their neighbours (Lev.19:18). To sin was to turn away from (פשו) or fall short of (הטא) the God of love. God could not remain unmoved by such rebellion and failure, because his own integrity had been called into question. Anger was, then, the natural and almost inevitable response.

The inevitability of the response is referred to by James Crenshaw as the 'action-consequence construct' (21), which denotes the sequence in which the love of God is denied or ignored by human sin and issues in some appropriate punishment. Jdg.3:7-12 illustrates the pattern: Israel forgets God and goes after the baals; God's wrath is kindled, and he sells them into the hands of the king of Mesopotamia. The construct is found at work in all strands of Old Testament composition. The Deuteronomic historians explain the whole course of Israel's history under the kings as a reflection of the evil or

righteousness of those kings. Ps.78:12-32, 40-64 sets Israel's wilderness experience into the same construct: God works great signs; Israel forgets and sins, God's anger is excited, and Israel is punished. So well established was the pattern that sometimes the writers omitted any reference to God: punishment or reprisal would follow automatically from the offence, as Ps.7:14-15 and Hos.4:6 illustrate -- the wicked man falls into a pit of his own making, and Israel is destroyed for lack of knowledge.

The construct and the God who is behind it are open to the criticism that the wicked sometimes escape detection and punishment, while the righteous suffer beyond their deserts. The prophetic and Wisdom literatures are well aware of the dilemma, and great men such as Job and Jeremiah cry out in bitter lament. However, their very cries endorse the reality of the construct: their laments are attacks not on the principles of God's working practice but on his failure to work in their favour. Dt.Isa's insight into the value of redemptive suffering might also appear at first sight to challenge the scope of the construct. However, the redemptive feature of the servant's suffering lies in its very uniqueness: he stands out as the one exception to the rule, that the wicked suffer. Were it not for that general experience the servant's suffering would be in no way remarkable.

A further difficulty emerges from those passages in which the expressions of God's anger seem to be totally out of proportion to the original offence: Ex.4:24-26, about circumcision, and 2Sam.6:8, about the ark of the covenant, are cases in point. However, the issues at stake in both these passages were of supreme ritual significance for the people of Israel: Israel's identity among the surrounding nations and her special relationship with Yahweh were threatened by refusal of

male circumcision and illicit approaches to the ark. Strong and punitive action was needed to preserve her distinctiveness and God's sovereignty: the punishment fitted the crime.

It would be misleading to imagine, in the light of the construct, that God's anger was simply an automatic reflex. We need to remember that its origins lie in the intimate and personal bond between God and his people. The plausibility of the 'action-consequence construct' does not cheapen or detract from the personal aspects of sin as expressed in the claims that God is roused by it to anger, jealousy and vengeance. His holiness and righteousness have been impugned, and his anger signals the seriousness of such a slight {22}.

### **3. The Main Targets of God's Anger**

As the causes of God's anger are usually made clear by the content and contexts of the passages in which it is described, so with the targets of his anger. Quite frequently names are not mentioned in the text, and in much of the Wisdom literature it may appear that the whole of humankind is the object of God's anger. However, the Wisdom literature contained in the Old Testament was intended by its editors, first and foremost, for the people of the covenant, and Israel, indeed, is the main focus for God's attention and his wrath. Nevertheless, other nations do not escape the barbs of his anger, and it is with them that I begin this section.

a) The Other Nations

The prophetic oracles against the nations in Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others are evidence of Israel's fierce nationalism, which underlies the expressions of God's anger against them. Some of the later prophets are particularly savage in their portrayals of God's anger against the nations. According to Nah.1:2, the people of Nineveh are God's enemies and, therefore, thoroughly deserving of the full force of his anger's storm and tempest. According to Mal.1:4, the Lord will be angry with the people of Edom for ever and will completely destroy their buildings.

The justifications given for God's anger against the nations are various. Amos complains that Tyre broke a treaty (Am.1:9); Isaiah prophesies against Egypt because of her apostasy (Is.19:1ff, 21ff); Jeremiah criticises Babylon for her oppression (Jer.50:11ff); Ezekiel points to Gog's despoiling and thieving as reasons for God's wrath (Ezek.38:11ff). However, the Old Testament is not a uniform catalogue of complaints against the nations. Israel's intimacy with God was to be shared among them, so that they too could enjoy the light (Is.49:6) and solace (Is.56:7). Is.19:24f goes further in ranking the Assyrians and the recently castigated Egyptians alongside the Israelites as "the work of God's hands" and "my people". Several passages even indicate that some of the nations are themselves agents of God's anger against Israel, as, for example, Assyria, the "rod of God's anger" (Is.10:5).

The Old Testament presentation of God's relationship with the nations is, then, ambivalent. Neither is there whole-hearted approval, nor is there outright condemnation. However, that relationship is usually to be set within the context of his relationship with Israel. God's anger against the nations is aroused largely because of their



oppression of Israel, as in Jer.50, and in turn God reprimands Israel for turning to the nations instead of to himself for succour, as at Is.30:15, Ezek.16:26.

b) Israel

In 'Wrath' J.Fichtner describes Jeremiah and Ezekiel especially as "prophets of Yahweh's wrath against his people" {23}, but he illustrates also how most of the prophets reserve their fiercest denunciations for the people of Israel themselves. The covenant, which Israel viewed as privilege, laid obligations on the people, which if they ignored them would turn to judgment. It is precisely because of their privileged position and, therefore, their greater culpability in defying God's will that the people of Israel will be punished, according to Am.3:1f. Similarly, 2Kgs.17:5-23 claims that Samaria's defeat by Assyria was the direct result of her apostasy. The anger of God signalled the harsh medicine necessary to bring Israel back to the security of the covenant bond, established through Abraham and Moses.

The prophets themselves bore the marks of the judgment they claimed God had in store for his people: Isaiah had to be purged from his own sinfulness (Is.6:6-7), Jeremiah had to withstand imprisonment, and the suffering servant had to undergo extreme torment, in order to convey to their audiences the sense of hurt and anger experienced by God as a result of the breaches in the covenant contract. However, these prophetic passions also serve notice that God's first and final communication with his people is one not of anger but of love and mercy. The prophets suffer abuse and privation vicariously, so that the people will be ready for the redemption and the renewal of the

covenant which, they assure their listeners, God is promising.

c) Israel's Leaders

By implication, many of the vituperative outpourings of the prophets are aimed primarily at Israel's leaders. They are the ones castigated for social injustice, as shown in their lack of concern for the orphan and widow (Is.1:12-17). Jer.5:28 derides those who ignore the needy, and Am.5:7,10-12 rails against those who trample upon the poor. The same theme recurs constantly in the Psalms: Ps.112:6-10 praises the righteous man for his generosity, which the wicked man despises, and Ps.72:12-14 justifies the prayer for God to bless the king on the grounds of his pity for the weak. The Deuteronomic histories evaluate the fortunes of Israel and Judah on the basis of the worthiness or otherwise of their leaders and kings. Indeed, Fichtner maintains that these histories present the story of the period under review entirely in the light of the arousal of God's wrath, citing in support 1Kgs.14:15, 16:33, 2Kgs.17:17, 21:6,22:17 {24}.

In the attacks on social injustice and international politics the targets are clearly Israel's leaders. Sometimes, their precise identity is left unclear, but occasionally they are named. Hos.5:1,6:9, Ezek.34:2ff, Mal.1-2 name the priests as objects of God's wrath, while elsewhere those prophets who sanction a prevailing trend rather than the will of God come in for severe treatment, as in the struggles between Micaiah and Zedekiah (1Kgs.22) and between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer.27-29).

On occasions individuals are marked out as being particularly

deserving of God's anger, because they have led Israel into apostasy or at least not resisted firmly enough. Moses is, perhaps, the most notable example, for his faint-heartedness before God at Ex.4:14 and his transparent weakness in the golden calf episode (Dt.1:37). Aaron at Dt.9:20, Nadab and Abihu at Lev.10:6 and Miriam in Num.12:9 are further examples {25}. As these examples show, the anger of God can be final: Nadab and Abihu are killed for their offence. Alternatively, his anger can play a more symbolic and representative role: Miriam's leprosy is cured after a time, and Moses continues to lead his people, although he is denied access to the promised land.

In my survey to date I have already commented on some of the roles the anger of God seems to have played in the presentation of his relationship with his people and in their everyday affairs. I shall now consider these roles in greater detail.

#### **4. The Functions and Purposes of God's Anger**

I have identified six areas in which the anger of God has been prominent:- a) the portrayal of God as personal; b) the establishing of his holiness; c) the assertion of his control over his creation; d) God's integrity; e) warnings for the future; f) the purifying of the elect.

a) The Portrayal of God as Personal

The depth and breadth of God's anger, as outlined already, indicate God's total involvement with his people: he is not in the wings, waiting to be called upon, but he already holds centre stage. The Old Testament views all human encounters and movements from the perspective of people's relationship with God. The story of Israel is the story of God, and his anger underlines the utter seriousness with which he is perceived to take his creation.

That seriousness, of which his anger is an important expression, enables individuals and communities to approach and appeal to him: however fearful they may be on account of his anger, it is his very anger which gives them confidence to plead with him, because it is a sign of his own vulnerability -- like them he is not unmoved by world events. The Hebrew anthropomorphisms and the Greek anthropopathisms both endorse the view that in Yahweh people are dealing with a personality, who feels, despairs and yearns, as they do.

b) The Establishing of God's Holiness

God's anger establishes his personhood, as I have suggested, but in the Old Testament it also establishes his essential otherness. Human anger is frowned upon, except where it expresses God's own feeling. Job 5:2 states the matter at its starkest: "vexation (וַעֲזָב) kills the fool and jealousy (כַּזְּבִיב) slays the simple". Anger, jealousy and vengeance belong to God alone: it is they which establish his distinctness from his creatures. The wicked man is convicted in his anger at Ps. 112:10, but God is praised for his destructive wrath in

Ps.68. Hab.3:12 asserts that his holiness is revealed in the trampling over the nations. I have referred already to the holiness of God, which is revealed in the opposite way, by the restraining of his anger (most notably at Hos.11:9): at first sight this appears to be in conflict with the point I have been striving to make in this section. However, even in Hos.11:1-9, the anger of God is not denied: it is its reality which makes the restraint all the more noticeable.

God's anger, then, sets him apart from humanity, and his restraint also sets him apart.

### c) The Establishing of God's Control over his Creation

Observation may suggest that the world is subject to forces at best haphazard and at worst hostile. The Old Testament's view is that neither of these interpretations of calamity and tragedy is true, although there is considerable sympathy for those caught up in misfortune, as Job and the Psalmists witness. It asserts that even in the face of defeat and suffering people are in the presence not of a capricious and distant deity but of a God's loving if fearsome judgment, as the final chapters of Job illustrate.

Yahweh is, first of all, a God who knows and understands his people's plight. He hears their cry (Ex.3:7), knows their thoughts (Ps.94:11), and he yearns for his people to know him (Ex.14:18). His anger signals the seriousness of his will and of the writers' claim that the root of all ills lies in a people's faithlessness to and ignorance of his loving-mercy. In their attempts to demonstrate his control over his creation, some writers go further and proclaim that God himself is the orchestrator of evil events (Am.4:6-11), causes

certain false prophets to lie (1Kgs.22) and himself hardens Pharaoh's heart (in the P versions of the plague stories in Ex.7:3-12:36 {26}). The anger underlying these interventions signals God's opposition to human perversity and his ultimate control of human history.

This is not to say that the Old Testament denies humans freedom of choice. In the passage quoted above, Am.4:6-11, God complains that, in spite of all his judgments, the people still show no sign of returning to him. In Hos.11:1-9 the struggle within God's own mind, whether to execute his anger or not, arises from a people's rejection of his will. On the whole, the Old Testament does not deal philosophically with the dilemma between divine might and human choice. No resolution is offered, save the assertion that even human choice is ordained by God, who lays before his people the possibilities of blessing and cursing (Dt.27-28). However, divine anger plays a large part in maintaining the tension and so affirming the reality of human choice without having to jettison the concept either of God's morality or of his might.

#### d) The Establishing of God's Integrity

Is.63:5 claims that, when everyone had deserted him, God was upheld by his anger (גַּןּוּן). It was his anger which preserved his self-respect, when the people he had trusted and for whose love he yearned rebelled against him. On some occasions this anger is simply confined within his own heart, as at Hos.11:1-9; on other occasions it is given verbal expression, as at Ex.4:14, and on other occasions still it breaks out in action, as at Am.3:6.

Even in the face of God's fierce wrath people can still exercise

their freedom to ignore him and go after other gods. In the J accounts of the plagues (Ex.7:3-12:36) Pharaoh hardens his own heart against Moses and God (27). Despite Isaiah's willingness to carry God's message people are still free to resist it, as the prophecy at Is.6:9-10 signifies. God's anger and judgment do not compromise human freedom of choice, but they do enable God to hold on to his principles and to express them without necessarily having to follow the logic of his judgment to its ultimate and destructive conclusion. In Zech.1:12-17 Judah's seventy years' exile in Babylon is described as a period of God's indignation (28), but the author then goes on to show how his anger has been diverted onto other nations, so that the people of Judah have been freed to return home. Similarly, in Ex.4:10-17, the writer tells how Moses was allowed not only to survive after exciting God's anger but also to continue his divine commission. The anger promoted both God's judgment and his purpose, keeping his self-respect intact and releasing Moses to proceed with his leadership of Israel to the promised land: the price Moses would have to pay, and the sign that God's judgment was for real, was his death before the river Jordan. Without the anger God could no longer be God, and human beings would have free rein for their perversity and anarchy.

e) God's Anger as a Warning for the Future

If corroboration were needed that God's anger was intended by the Old Testament writers to be seen not as loss of temper or a fit of pique but as a considered and deliberate, if outraged, response to human perversity, it is provided in the association of his anger with his judgment or justice (משפט). Ps.76:8-10 illustrates the link

between them: not only are they God's responses to those who had ignored or rejected his ways, but they are also the signals of his intention to bring salvation to the poor of the earth (יְיָ). The judgment is warning of his determination to establish his justice.

The purpose of God's anger was to urge the people to repent, to turn again to their God, to acknowledge his faithfulness, to obey his commandments and to claim his promises. Repentance now would prevent further calamity later. If Pharaoh had listened to God's agent, his first-born sons would have lived and his army would not have been destroyed in the waters. If Israel's kings had been true to God, the kingdom would not have been splintered and its two parts reduced to the status of vassal states. If Jerusalem had trusted in God and not in its own partial understandings, it would not have been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The stories of these events were recited not only to convince people of God's condemnation of past misdemeanours but also to prevent further acts of rebellion, which would bring on more displays of divine indignation. The expressions of God's anger are to be understood not simply as reaction to offence: always there is a future at stake, whether it be the salvation of Israel (as in Ps.78) or Israel's prophetic mission among the nations (as in Is.48-49).

God's anger, then, is educative and reformatory, which explains why it is often interpreted as wounded love (29). The prime requirement is for people to see, hear and perceive. Failure in these departments caused the offence in the first place: God's smoking wrath (Is.6:4) is a result of the people's lack of insight and understanding, expressed sardonically in Is.6:9-10 (30). The anger of God is both judgment and sign. The exodus took place so that the Egyptians would know who God was (Ex.14:18). Job's rehabilitation arises from his new knowledge of God's majestic power (Job 42:1-6).



The tussles between true and false prophets were held to be so vital (as in 1Kgs.22) {31}, because a people's understanding of God was the fundamental issue at stake.

The anger of God is to be seen as a sign of his intention to teach the truth to a people who did not know him or who knew him only partially. It was to encourage them to enlarge their own understanding of his grace and ways and to ensure that their children did not fall into their forefathers' faithlessness to the God who had kept covenant with them (Ps.78:5-8).

f) The Purifying of God's Elect

The educative and reformative aspects of God's anger are aimed particularly at Israel and her leaders. As a people who have been given every opportunity to know, learn and understand what God requires, the Hebrew peoples are held to be all the more culpable. Isaiah castigates Israel's lack of knowledge and understanding {32} which provoke God's judgment and vengeance, by contrasting it sharply with the superior knowledge of an ox and ass (Is.1:3ff). Israel had the benefit of the covenant and its statutes: there was no excuse, therefore, for her failure to understand and implement them. Dt.29:17-19 (RSV 18-20) states the case against Israel: those who walked in the stubbornness of their hearts would both provoke God's anger and jealousy and turn the covenant's blessings into curses. Not only would such people be ostracized from their own tribe and nation, but their names would be blotted out from under heaven, and the wastelands that had become their home would be a warning signal to the passers-by.

Amos had made a similar point in a passage, which Von Rad describes as a new development: the day of Yahweh would be a day of darkness for Israel as well as for others (Am.5:18) {33}. Porubcan observes that God's anger was greater when Israel sinned than when other nations erred: 2Kgs.17:7-23 portrays Israel's exile to Assyria as the direct consequence of her apostasy and idolatry {34}. Not only was God provoked to anger (ה'תאנן), but he was provoked greatly (רבה). The Chronicler also describes Judah's enslavement in Babylon in a similar indictment of her leaders and people: Zedekiah had stiffened his neck and hardened his heart (2Chron.36:13), until God's anger, for which "there was no remedy" {35}, broke out upon the people. The contexts in which these stories of exile are recounted make it clear that the severity of God's anger is the way the Deuteronomist and the Chronicler choose to impress upon their readers the urgency of returning to the covenant and its statutes (2Kgs.17:34-39) and, having been purified by exile, of rebuilding the temple (2Chron.36:22-23).

The anger of God against Israel expresses the intensity of his disappointment that his people should turn their backs on the one who had saved them, it warns them to amend their ways immediately, and having been made manifest in word or deed it purifies them for a return to innocence.

## 5. The Significance of the Old Testament

### for Mark's Treatment of Jesus' Anger

The Markan passages which note Jesus' anger contain several allusions to Old Testament characters and themes, as we shall see. Whether or not the author was conscious of all of them is debatable. However, in this respect these passages are consonant with the rest of his gospel, displaying, as it does, a free and widespread use of mainly the LXX.

My aim in this section is not to offer a detailed analysis and description of all relevant cross-references, but rather to pinpoint some of the important issues connected with Jesus' anger upon which the Old Testament has some bearing. I have collected these issues under four headings:- a) the status of Jesus as agent/son of God; b) the targets of Jesus' anger; c) the place of signs and miracles; d) the blindness of Jesus' disciples and opponents.

#### a) The Status of Jesus as Agent/Son of God

The designation of Jesus as son of God at the beginning and end of the gospel has important implications for our understanding of the anger and indignation he displayed in the course of his ministry. We have seen how the Old Testament condemns human anger, except when it is used to convey God's displeasure. The anger of Moses at the erection of the golden calf (Ex.32:19) reflects God's anger (Ex.32:11), and it is on that account deemed acceptable to the

writers. Furthermore, Moses was himself called by God to be "as God", though only to Pharaoh (Ex.7:1). There is a precedent, then, for seeing Jesus' anger as a reflection of the divine and for designating him as son of God. However, Mark's Jesus supersedes Moses in two respects. First, Jesus' sonship is not limited as was Moses' to one particular scene and event. Secondly, Jesus' death, as that of an undeserving sufferer, had a redemptive quality lacking in Moses' death: Moses died as a punishment for his and Israel's rebellion, while Jesus died prematurely as a result of the faithlessness of his executioners and "for the redemption of many" (Mk.10:45).

Not only, then, is Jesus' anger justified: it is, for Mark, part of the divine commission Jesus was called to fulfil.

#### b) The Targets of Jesus' Anger

We have seen already how in the Old Testament God's anger is aimed predominantly at Israel and her leaders. They stand accused of social injustice, of phoney nationalism and, above all, of abusing their privileged status as people of the covenant. Ps.89:38 speaks for most, if not all, of its writers in claiming that "God is full of wrath against his anointed". Jesus, too, directs his anger at the authorities and also at his own disciples, who through their upbringing and his teaching had no excuse for their lack of faith and understanding. It is the Pharisees, the Priests, his disciples and Peter, for whom Jesus is shown to reserve his harshest condemnations: the almost simultaneous effect of his anger is to liberate the victims of their ignorance and injustice, such as the leper, the man with the

paralysed hand, the children and the Gentiles. The pattern had been set in the Old Testament: Is.42:10-17 shows how God's fury, which lays waste mountains, hills, grass and rivers will also lead the blind to light and sight.

For Mark, as for the Old Testament, those who are closest to the truth are those most reprimanded for their weaknesses.

### c) The Place of Signs and Miracles

One noticeable difference between the Markan and the Old Testament treatment of anger, is the restraint of the Markan descriptions in comparison with the Old Testament's vituperative lashings. References to Jesus' anger, in Mark, are confined to a word or phrase and mention of the consequent healing (1:40-45), teaching (10:13-16) or plotting (3:1-6). There is no graphic description of the fire, earthquake and tempest which feature so largely in the Old Testament's presentation of God's anger (eg. Nah.1:4, Is.5, Lam.4:8). The incidents of the fig-tree and the temple, which might at first sight appear to be exceptions, demonstrate the point. The withering of the tree is noticed only by the disciples and is more of a prophetic symbol than an act of earth-shattering proportions. Likewise, in his account of the temple disturbance, Mark makes no reference to any immediate or large-scale reaction to Jesus' overturning of the tables: the determination of the priests and elders to have Jesus destroyed is stated explicitly to be a reaction against his teaching, not against his action (Mk.11:18).

However, the purpose and consequence of miracles in Mark are similar to the cause and effect of divine activity as depicted in the

Old Testament. In both the aim is to open eyes and understanding. Jesus goes to great lengths to reinforce such an interpretation of the feeding miracles in Mk.8:14-21, as Ex.14:18 had explained the exodus of Israel as a sign to the Egyptians that Yahweh was Lord. In both also the consequences are similar: the disciples do not understand the feeding miracles any more than Pharaoh is convinced by the signs of Moses and Aaron. In both instances also the conclusion is that hearts are hardened.

Despite their very different portrayals of the miraculous, then, both Mark and the Old Testament are primarily concerned with the meaning of events. As education and warning are keynotes for an understanding of God's anger in the Old Testament, so they will be for Mark in his presentation of Jesus' anger. The miraculous is not meant simply to impress with its power but to convert because of its meaning.

#### d) The Blindness of Jesus' Disciples and Opponents

The dullness of sight and hardness of heart, which we have noticed in the Old Testament as being largely responsible for provoking God's anger, figure largely in the Markan presentation of Jesus' anger also (as Mk.3:1-6, 8:14-21 illustrate). The disciples fail to appreciate the requirements of their faith and understand the true nature of Jesus' identity. Jesus' anger is provoked by their lack of understanding, and it is expressed to spur them to knowledge and faith.

The link between anger and knowledge is underlined in Mark as it

was in the Old Testament. He contrasts the sight restored to the blind man with the continuing blindness of his disciples to his and their mission (MK.10:46-52), and he draws attention to both his opponents' and his disciples' stubbornness of heart, the phrase which featured so greatly in the Exodus accounts of the plagues and at Is.6:9-10 {30}.

The importance of the sight motif for Mark is endorsed further in the way he introduces it into crucial moments of his narrative. Towards the end of his apocalyptic discourse Jesus urges his disciples to "see, take heed and watch" (Mk.13:29-33) -- in other words to interpret correctly the signs of the times and to be on the alert for the call of God, when it should come. Then, at the end of the Gospel, the assurance is given to the women at the tomb, that the disciples would "see" Jesus in Galilee (Mk.16:7).

Again, then, we notice how the Old Testament provides Mark with the language and images both to describe the waywardness of the Jewish leaders and of the disciples and to explain the origins and purposes of Jesus' anger. The blindness and obstinacy of Israel's leaders are themes already well rehearsed in the Old Testament. The purpose of Jesus' anger in Mark, as of God's in the Old Testament, was to convey the sense of God's judgment and to open the eyes of the spiritually blind to faith in and understanding of the ways of God's kingdom.

The Old Testament has given Mark a framework within which to establish his case about the identity of Jesus and the purpose of the church's mission. Before proceeding to examine in greater detail how Mark uses his references to Jesus' anger to support this case, we will do well to look at some of the literature that just preceded and was

contemporaneous with Mark's Gospel, to see how the themes we have identified so far are sustained or developed in the inter-testamental period.

#### NOTES

1. J.Fichtner, Wrath (A and C Black 1964), pp.14-18.
2. R.E.Clements, Isaiah 1-39 (SCM 1965), p.77.
3. N.Snaith, The Distinctive Views of the Old Testament (Epworth 1944), pp.61ff.
4. Nah.1:2 is a rare instance where anger is attributed to God's nature, and even here the attribution is perhaps poetic and not metaphysical.
5. J.Fichtner, op.cit, pp.14-18,22.
6. J.Fichtner, op.cit, p.51. B.Zlotowitz, The LXX Translation of the Hebrew Terms in Relation to God in the Book of Jeremiah (KTAV 1981), p.25.
7. G.W.Coats, Moses (JSOT Supplementary Series 57 1988), p.90.
8. G.Von Rad, 'The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh', JSS 4 (1959), p.105.
9. G.W.Coats, op.cit, pp.21ff.
10. F.Linstrom, God and the Origin of Evil (CWK 1983), pp.55ff.
11. J.Fichtner, op.cit, pp.47ff.
12. J.Fichtner, op.cit, pp.56f.
13. B.Childs, Exodus (SCM 1974), p.569.



14. M.Noah, Exodus (Philadelphia : Westminster 1962), pp.249ff.

15. A.P.Hayman, 'Rabbinic Judaism and the Problem of Evil', SJT (1976), pp. 475, 463 -- notes how some rabbis, embarrassed by the notion that God would have created evil, altered the text by replacing 'evil' with 'all things' (b.Ber11b). Others, disturbed at any suggestion of dualism, claimed that God must have created at least the possibility of evil: Gen.R.274 claims, "Had I not created the evil inclination within him, he would not have rebelled against me".

16. J.Fichtner, op.cit, pp.24, 32.

17. L.Derousseaux, La Crainte de Dieu dans L'Ancien Testament (CERF 1970), pp. 208ff.

18. The P accounts of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart are characterised by the use of the verb  $\text{קִיַּן}$  (and once  $\text{קָשָׁה}$ ) with Yahweh as subject and Pharaoh's heart as object; on some occasions Pharaoh's heart is itself the subject, but in these instances the sentence concludes with the phrase, "as the Lord has said" to denote Yahweh's involvement. The J accounts use the verb  $\text{כִּבְּדָה}$ , with Pharaoh as subject and his heart as object. The P references are Ex.4:21, 7:3, 13,22, 8:15, 9:12,15, 10:20,27, 11:10. The J references are 7:14, 8:11,28, 9:7,34, with the possibility of 10:1, although this is understood also to be a deuteronomic redaction (so B.Childs, op.cit, p.173).

19. B.Zlotowitz, op.cit, pp.35ff.

20. J.Fichtner, op.cit, p.32.

21. J.Crenshaw, Theodicy in the Old Testament (SPCK 1983), pp.70ff.

22. W.Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament (SCM 1961), p.262 draws a distinction between God's holiness and his anger: the former he sees as a permanent attribute of God's nature, the latter as a temporary agent conveying messages about that nature. " Unlike

holiness or righteousness, wrath never forms one of the permanent attributes of the God of Israel; it can only be understood as a footnote to the will to fellowship of the covenant God."

23. J.Fichtner, op.cit, p.28.

24. J.Fichtner, op.cit, pp.27,29.

25. J.Fichtner, op.cit, pp.27f.

26. See n.12

27. See n.12

28. cf.CD 1:5-7 in the Qumran Scrolls on the period of time 390 years after the sack of Jerusalem as the "age of God's indignation".

29. J.D.Watts, Isaiah 1-33 (Word 1985), p.11 refers to God as a disappointed father.

30. S.Porubcan, Sin in the Old Testament (Herder 1963), p.29 takes the imperatives in Is.6:9-10 as rhetorical devices for endorsing the indicatives, with which, indeed, they are replaced in the LXX.

31. To the vindication of Micalah's prophecy is now added the fulfilment of Elijah's prophecy to Ahab, the blood of whose body is licked by dogs (1Kgs.21:19 and 1Kgs.22:38).

32. The combination of  $\eta\eta'$  and  $\eta\eta\eta$  is used also at Ps.82:5, and a similar combination of words is used at Mk.8:17 in Jesus' indictment of his disciples: " $\delta\upsilon\pi\omega\ \nu\omicron\theta\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon\ \delta\upsilon\delta\epsilon\ \sigma\upsilon\nu\lambda\epsilon\tau\epsilon\ ;$ "

33. G.Von Rad, op.cit, p.105.

34. S.Porubcan, op.cit, pp.462f.

35. S.Porubcan, op.cit, p.460. The phrase, "for which there was no remedy" occurs elsewhere only at Prov.6:15, 29:1, where in turn it is related to the Chronicler's twin complaints: perversion of heart at Prov.6:14 and stiffness of neck at Prov.29:1.

36. At Mk.8:17-21 stubborn hearts and failure to understand are linked together to explain the culpability of the disciples along the

lines of the J version of the plagues in Exodus, where Pharaoh hardens his own heart. One reading of the quotation of Is.6:9-10 at Mk.4:10-12 might suggest that Mark had the P version of the plagues in mind and was seeking to explain away Jesus' conspicuous lack of success by showing that it was all part of God's great plan. Such an understanding accords with the fore-ordained nature of Jesus' three passion predictions and of the apocalyptic calamities that have to take place (Mk.13:7). However, the quotation at 4:10-12 is capable of another interpretation: Mark may have been attempting to heighten the blindness of the disciples, whose privileged position should have produced in them greater faith and understanding.

## THE ANGER OF GOD IN INTER-TESTAMENTAL LITERATURE

M.Black's claim {1}, that the Essene Community and Christianity were at one in their non-conformity both to the Jerusalem hierarchy and the Pharisaic alternative, suggests that we need to take some account of the Qumran Scrolls and the pseudepigraphical documents also found there, before we examine Mark's Gospel itself.

Commentators have discovered several points of convergence between these writings and the early proclamations of Christianity. Both look to a Son of Man or a Messiah to come to the aid of Israel; both are written from the conviction that the end of all things is at hand; both relate ancient prophecies and illustrations to the socio-political contexts of current experience. However, there are also notable differences between the outlooks and practices depicted in the inter-testamental writings and those of the Christian communities. Strict observance of the solar calendar and of the Sabbath are both absent from the demands made of Christians, and, indeed, the Christian view of the Sabbath was decidedly more liberal than the Pharisaic, from which Qumran also dissented {2}. The messiahship of Jesus is neither the political nor the priestly messiah of Israel and Aaron, mentioned at CD12:23-13:1, 14:19, 19:10-11 and 1QS9:11 {3}. Furthermore, whereas the Scrolls and many of the pseudepigraphical writings are designed, at least in part, to promote the claims of the Zadokite and Levitical priesthood as against that established at Jerusalem, none of the Gospels depicts Jesus as a priest. The composer of the Hymns was one upon whom, as upon Jesus,

the holy spirit had been poured out (1QH7:6-7), and who was afflicted like Jesus as a man of sorrows (1QH3:24-25), but in the Scrolls there is no suggestion that his sufferings were atoning or redemptive.

In this chapter I hope to show how certain aspects of anger are developed further from the Old Testament experience, and how they provide us with some of the viewpoints upon which Mark himself elaborated or against which he reacted. I shall not assume that he was in any way dependent on these writings, or even that he was acquainted with them, although the evidence suggests that the Essenes were found in many towns and cities, and that Mark and/or his sources might have had some knowledge of them {4}. Their importance for this thesis lies both in their chronological proximity to the composition of the Gospels and in the similarity of themes to those treated in the Gospels.

I shall examine the inter-testamental references to anger under four headings:- 1) a description of its nature; 2) an analysis of its causes; 3) an examination of its targets; 4) an investigation into its human expression. In the last section I shall endeavour to identify the particular areas most pertinent to Mark's treatment of Jesus' anger.

I do not claim that the following pages offer a comprehensive survey of all the inter-testamental writings. I have selected those documents whose contents, purposes and date of composition seem closest to the Gospels.

## 1. The Nature of God's Anger

The Scrolls and Pseudepigrapha continue the Old Testament practice of locating God's wrath alongside his vengeance and judgment. The main words are used apparently interchangeably, as in the Old Testament ie. חמה, כעס, זעם, עברה, חרון אף.

I shall explore the nature of anger from three perspectives :- a) as predicate of God; b) a description of its effects; c) its duration.

### a) Anger as Predicate of God

The inter-testamental writings extend the practice, discerned in the later strands of Old testament composition, of using the terms for "anger" on their own, with no reference to God. At 1QS5:12-13 breaking the covenant arouses "anger and judgment" : there is no need to mention God's involvement, because the cause and effect work automatically. It is not so much that God descends in anger as that transgressors bring on themselves the results of a broken contract. A similar point is made more graphically at 1QH3:28-28, where those abandoned by God are greeted by a "destiny of wrath". Jub.36:10 refers to "the day of turmoil, execration, indignation and wrath".

In other passages God's involvement is stated explicitly, and the Old Testament's most frequent phrase, יחר אף, is used repeatedly, as at CD1:21, 5:16, 8:13. Elsewhere, the anger is effected by the angels: 1QS4:12 and CD2:6 both use the phrase, "angels of destruction", of the chastisements and fury which are to visit the perpetrators of evil

(cf.Ps.78:49).

At 1QS4:12 the angels operate clearly at the instigation of God. However, the Writings do not resolve, any more than does the Old Testament, the dilemma caused by the existence of evil. Consequently, we find, on the one hand, a God who himself leads astray those whom he hates (CD2:9,13) and, on the other, attempts to put the blame for evil onto the spirit of falsehood and darkness (1QS3:18f.) or the fallen angels (1En.6). The occasional appearances of the terms for "anger" independent of reference to God, together with the castigation of spirits and angels, add to the apparently dualistic understandings exhibited in some of the Writings. The explicit attributions of wrath to God are, however, just as, if not more, evident and point to the prevailing monotheistic belief.

A further reminder of the divine origin of anger can be discerned in the pleas to God both to restrain his anger (Prayer of Manasseh 13) and to activate it (1QS2:9). The predominant view, underlined by the attributions to him of anger and judgment, is that God is in control of his creation, or at least that he will be in the end. Even in the dualistic passages the existences of angels and the spirit of darkness are attributed to God (1QS3:25). Any prevalence of evil must, then, be seen as temporary and, as 1QS3:23 makes clear, subject both to the mysteries of God and to the end which he has determined.

#### b) Descriptions of God's Anger

Much of the vivid imagery, with which the notion of God's anger is presented in the Old Testament is manifest also in the inter-testamental writings. The association of anger with burning, found in such passages as Is.33:14, Ps.21:9, Jer.15:14, Ezek.38:19, is

found also, among other places, at 1QS2:7-9, 1En.90:24-27 and Test.Zeb.10:3.

The all-consuming nature of God's anger is conveyed further in such passages as 1QS5:13, where its arousal is predicted to lead to "the eternal destruction without a remnant" of all the unjust and wicked apostates. 1En.99:16 associates God's anger with destruction by the sword, and Ps.Sol.7:5 appeals to God's mercy to fend off "the anger which destroys". Again, as in the Old Testament, anger is "poured out", as at CD8:3, which is an almost verbatim record of Hos.5:10. Habakkuk's "cup at the Lord's right hand" is interpreted by 1QpHab.11:10,14-15 as the "cup of God's wrath". God's anger, according to 1En.101:3-6 is like the wind and storm which terrify sailors. Darkness is another familiar image: the wicked sheep in the seer's vision fell into the darkness of the lord's wrath, according to 1En.90:15 (cf. the use of darkness in the accounts of the Jesus' passion to signify God's judgment at Mk.13:24, 15:33).

What we see, then, in the intertestamental writings is an extension of the Old Testament images denoting the scope and severity of God's anger.

### c) The Duration of God's Anger

The dating of the Scrolls' origin to the first half of the second century BC. is due in part to the reference at CD1:5-7 to the "time of wrath" (קץ חרון), 390 years after the exile of Judaeans by Nebuchadnezzar. The same expression is found again at 1QH3:28, where it is associated either with the reign of Belial over the psalmist's life, before he entered the Qumran community, or with the last days of



the conflict between the spirits of light and darkness {5}. The two words occur also at CD20:15-16, where they appear in a different grammatical construction to denote the forty years during which the anger of God was kindled following the death of the Teacher {6}.

Other passages, however, speak of God's wrath and destruction lasting for eternity (1QS2:15, 4:12, 5:13). They may be building on the prospect of "eternal contempt" for some at Dan.12:2, but there are also other Old Testament allusions to the everlasting duration of God's judgments, such as the "everlasting burnings" of Is.33:14 and the "everlasting reproach and shame" of Jer.17:4. 1En.102:3 also continues the theme, with its conviction that sinners are accursed for ever.

The character of God's anger in the Writings is substantially that witnessed to in the Old Testament. As there, we find general condemnations of human performance, but we may also discern an increasing attempt to connect God's anger with events and personalities of the day. We turn now, then, to consider the most important of the activities which excited it.

## **2.The Causes of God's Anger**

The anger of God arises as a response to either a particular event or an attitude, and I shall consider each in turn.

a) Events

The 'action-consequence construct' which we saw in operation in the Old Testament is evident also in the inter-testamental writings. The Prayer of Nabonidus, modelled perhaps on the tale of Nebuchadnezzar's illness in Dan.4 {7}, gives an example of the necessity to be pardoned from sin before healing can commence: the infliction of pain and suffering is seen as a sign of God's judgment and anger. Almost invariably in the accounts of God's judgment the issue at stake concerns the covenant: either members of the covenant have broken it, or outsiders are ignorant of it -- both incur God's wrath. CD5:12 complains at those who have "opened their mouth against the statutes of God's covenant", in the course of a passage, which emphasises that God's anger has been roused particularly by fornicators, the wealthy and profaners of the sanctuary (CD4:12-5:16). Similarly, in Jub.15:33-34 the writer predicts great wrath from God for those who do not have their sons circumcised and so "have left the covenant".

The members of the congregation at Qumran are particularly susceptible to reminders of God's anger (CD1:21-2:1, 3:8-9), no doubt as an expression of the leaders' attempts to control their membership. The anger of God is used to threaten or warn of reprisals if the covenant is not kept. In 4QTestimonia the threats are associated with the community's expectation of a kingly and priestly messiah: each of the three opening prophecies, taken from Old testament passages, is concluded with a threat {8} against those who will not listen to his voice, against the temples of Moab and children of Seth and against Levi's adversaries; those who keep the covenant will find blessings. The contrast between members of the covenant and outsiders is drawn

more sharply still at 1En.60:6, where God's day of judgment is depicted as a day of covenant for the elect and of inquisition for sinners.

Acceptance and rejection of the covenant, then, determine whether God looks on with favour or with wrath. The Scrolls and Pseudepigrapha, like the Old Testament, associate the breaking or ignorance of the covenant with particular attitudes, and to these we now turn.

#### b) Attitudes

The terms used most frequently to account for the exciting of God's anger are those already familiar to us from our reading of the Old Testament: hardness, obstinacy and stubbornness of heart. At 1QS1:6 the community is urged to practice truth, righteousness and justice and "not to walk in the stubbornness of a guilty heart" (9). In CD2:17-18 the same phrase is used of the heavenly watchers, who, according to 1En.6-16, are responsible for the existence of evil on earth through their lust for the daughters of men; indeed, at 1En.16:3 their lust is explained as the product of their hardness of heart. In Jub.1:22 and CD1:13 it is Israel herself who is branded as stubborn.

The authorship of the hardening process is ambiguous in the Writings, as it is in the Old Testament. In the examples I have just quoted the hardening is portrayed as the act of the offenders themselves. However, at Jub.48:17 it is Mastema, prince of the demons, who hardens the hearts of the Egyptians to pursue Israel, as earlier he had masterminded the testing of Abraham (Jub.17:16) and attempted

to kill Moses (Jub.48:2-4).

The punishments for obstinacy were dire: in Jub.1:22 God would cut off the foreskin of offenders' hearts, and in 1En.5:1-10 the hard-hearted wicked would die in God's wrath as an "eternal execration to the righteous": it was only hardness of heart which prevented God's will coming to fruition, according to this last text. Strong action was needed to prevent the spread of the disease. At CD5:21 the land was made desolate as a result of the rebellion by people "of no understanding" (לא עם בינון), a phrase similar in meaning to "stubbornness of heart"; by contrast, God would raise up from Aaron men of "understanding" and from Israel men of "wisdom". He himself is described at 1QS3:15 as a "God of knowledge (אל חוכמות)". It is the very qualities of insight, understanding, wisdom and a constant mind that the people of the community are called to display (1QS4:2-6): these "counsels of the spirit" (1QS4:6) stand in stark contrast to the stubbornness of heart and dim-sightedness which aroused the fury of God (1En.89:32,74). Significantly, another of the qualities mentioned in 1QS4:6 is "concealment of the truth of the mysteries of knowledge" (10), the ignoring of which, according to 1En.9:6, incurred God's judgment on Azaz'el (11). Membership of the elect gave access to privileged insight and information, which, if abused, would turn out to be curses on the covenant-breakers. The covenant is broken by the ignorant, the obstinate and the undiscerning.

The expressions of God's anger were intended to be seen as regulators of community life and order, warnings against disobedience of both the community's and God's rules. They also serve to explain the prevalence of evil in a world created by a God of knowledge and power. God is still to be seen as sovereign, though his will may be flouted, because it is angels' or human stubbornness which has

perverted his creation. The wrath of God is both a signal of his impending judgment and evidence of that judgment's effect now. Furthermore, according to CD5-13, it is the fury of God which itself leads astray those whom he hates, a sentiment echoed at 1QS3:25-4:1, where the dualism of the two spirits of light and darkness is set within the monotheistic claim that it was God who had made both of them {12}.

Their desire to validate their understanding of God and to vindicate the conventions and rules of their communities led the writers of the Scrolls and Pseudepigrapha to target God's anger on particular individuals and sections of society as well as on heavenly creatures, and to a consideration of these we now turn.

### 3. The Targets of God's Anger

Those who provoked God's anger are often referred to in generalised terms, such as "hypocrites" (Ps.Sol.4:20-21), "the workers of wickedness" (Test.Zeb.10:3) and "men of the lot of Belial" (1QS2:4-5). On occasions a particular group or period of time is picked out as the target: at 1En.90:18 the context suggests that the anger of the God who was smiting the earth with his rod was aimed at the Jewish people and their oppressors in the period between the Maccabean Revolt and the coming of the Messianic Judgment {13}. Sometimes, however, it is more difficult to discover which group of people is being castigated. At 1En.84:4 there is no indication from the context as to the identities of the people on whose flesh it is

forecast the anger of God will rest. Usually, however, the contexts are not so obtuse, and commentators can discern with some reliability who the intended targets are. I have grouped them under the following four headings:- a) Gentiles; b) Jews; c) Apostates; d) Angels.

a) Gentiles

"The Gentiles" is the general term used to refer to all the uncircumcised, as at Jub.15:33-34, where they are called also the uncomplimentary "sons of Beliar". 1En.91:9 predicts that these "towers of the heathen" will all perish in wrath. Other passages indicate that the writers have particular nations or people in mind. In Jub.48:2ff. Moses and God are depicted wreaking a terrible vengeance on Egypt. In Ps.Sol.2:22-23 the writer pleads with God to exercise on the Gentiles the same anger they had exercised on Jerusalem: as v.19 appears to allude to Pompey's desecration of the city and temple of Jerusalem {14}, the Gentiles denoted here are almost certainly the Romans, identified as the Kittim of the Commentary on Habbakuk.

Kings and potentates are a common target for God's vengeance, although frequently they are not named. At 1En.54:6 their oppressive deeds earn them the title "messengers of Satan", and they are destined for burning on the day of judgment. 1En.94 indicts all perpetrators of oppression and injustice, especially the rich, who will also be among those destroyed on the day of darkness.

Gentiles, then, in a variety of guises, are guilty of arousing God's wrath because of their oppression and persecution of the people of the covenant, and they will be punished later if not sooner.

b) Jews

I have included under this title the several groupings within Jewish society which come in for special denunciation in the inter-testamental writings.

Both the Pharisees and Sadducees come in for harsh treatment in the Commentary on Nahum, according to M.A.Knibb {15}, who interprets the judgments on Ephraim and Manasseh as indictments on the Pharisees for false teaching (4QpNah.2:8) and on the Sadducees for collaborating with "the furious lion", Alexander Jannaeus (4QpNah.1:5).

At CD8:3ff. the attack is against the "princes of Judah", a term taken over from Hos.5:10 {16}: the wrath of God would be poured out on them on the day of his visitation. Though unidentified, these "princes" appear to be the leaders of contemporary Judaism, and Knibb assumes behind the expressions of God's anger a warning to any members of the community tempted to join non-Essene brands of Judaism {17}.

From the return to Jerusalem after exile onwards the most visible form of leadership within Israel was the priesthood, and the person of the high-priest was particularly significant in the period of the Maccabaeen revolt. The Scrolls are specially damning in their complaints against this "wicked priest", and they highlight the deficiencies of the priesthood centred on Jerusalem as compared with the legitimate and, historically, pure Zadokite priesthood which operated at Qumran {18}. At 1QpHab.11:2ff. the wicked priest, either Jonathan or Simon {19}, is accused of perverting the calendar and the Sabbath, both key issues for the covenanters; in return he would be confused by the cup of God's wrath (1QpHab.11:15-16). The destiny of the wicked priest is mentioned again, though in different terms, at 1QpHab.12:5, in a passage which denounces his economic exploitation

and bloodshed (and, possibly, sexual uncleanness {20}) as the reasons for the destruction which awaits him. At 4QpNah.1:8-11 and at 1QpHab.9:4-7 God's judgment awaits all the Jerusalem priests, accused, as they are, of amassing great wealth.

Clearly, leadership was a fundamental concern of all who were caught up in the disturbances of the Maccabean revolt and its aftermath. It is no great surprise that the inter-testamental writers should focus attention on generals, priests, kings and others in positions of authority. However, behind the denunciations of all these individuals and groups lies the urgent need to encourage, protect and warn the community of the elect, to ensure that it is not led astray. Consequently, much of the fiercest language employed in the Writings is directed against those who had deserted it and now denied the faith they once espoused. Only so could the integrity of the community be upheld.

### c) Apostates

Those who have parted company with a community of which they once were members pose a particular threat to that community. First, they are likely to have some grievance, and secondly, they have access to privileged information and experience. A community wishing to survive apostasies needs to proclaim its own values and at the same time to discredit its former members. The Essene communities and those represented by the pseudepigraphical writings are no exception to either practice. They all talk in terms of "the elect", and they brand as traitors, upon whom the wrath of God will descend, those who have left them (CD8:5,13). There is some evidence that part of the original



text of the Damascus Document has been re-worked to sharpen the emphasis on God's indignation at apostates: CD19:31-33, building on 8:18-19, adds that God loathes as well as hates the "builders of the wall" (ie. the rebels), and that his anger is kindled against not only the leaders of the rebellion but also those who follow them (19:32) {21}. The claim against the traitors, that they are stubborn of heart (CD19:33), is reiterated at CD20:9-10, in a lengthy passage which catalogues the apostates' errors and the divine curses they will thereby bring on (CD20:1-22). A similar warning is issued at Jub.15:33-34 about those who, by refusing to circumcise their sons, have left the covenant: God's great wrath will descend upon them.

A corollary of the sectarians' warning against apostasy is their belief in the special chastisement that was to be Israel's lot. Israel's privileged status made her own shortcomings more unpalatable than the Gentiles', and they were understood, as we have seen, as breaches of the covenant bond between God and his people. Particular attention, then, is paid to the keeping of the Sabbath, as one of the visible signs of membership of the Essene community, and adherence to it was intended to be stricter even than the Pharisaical observance: CD11:13 states that even rescuing a beast from a pit was not permissible on the Sabbath (cf.Mt.12:11, Lk.14:5).

Of course, the stricter the code, the greater likelihood of its being broken. The Writings do recognise on occasions the impossibility of keeping all the commandments: 1QH2:14 speaks of the testing of those who love "instruction" {22} or "correction" {23}. In 1QS11:3 God is referred to as the one who would wipe out people's transgressions. However, on other occasions, it is clear that the members themselves will have to atone for their "guilty rebellion and unfaithfulness" (1QS9:4). Furthermore, the atonement appears to be restricted to

members of the community, to all "those in Aaron, who have freely pledged themselves to holiness" (1QS5:6). The consequence of this distinctness was the need to keep separate from the unjust and wicked, who would not be counted in the covenant (1QS5:10-11).

d) Fallen Angels

As those who had misled human beings, the angels also come under God's judgment and anger, as 1En.68:5 and Jub.5:6 show. 1En.69 explains that their particular sins were in encouraging humans to produce weapons of destruction and to write (so that they could pass on to others the partiality of their knowledge). CD2:18 traces the causes of God's anger against the "heavenly watchers" to their disobedience of his commands. R.E.Brown suggests that the final punishment of the angels, as of humans, is part of the mystery of things, which until the end will remain concealed (1 En.68:4-5) {24}.

These judgments on the angels serve not only to explain and assuage the awfulness of human error but also to highlight God's supremacy in the face of rebellion. However much the references to Satan, Belial, and the spirits or angels of darkness may seem to indicate a dualistic conception of divinity, the Writings emphasise the ultimate supremacy of God. 1QS4:15-19 asserts that God established the two spirits and would in the end destroy the existence of injustice, in the same way as 1En.55 depicts the eventual downfall of Azaz'el and his company.

Our focus now moves back to human beings and the anger they exercised on their own initiative and as agents of God.

#### 4. Human Anger

We have seen how the inter-testamental writers use the anger of God to reinforce the rules of the elect, both by threatening its members with severe judgment, in the case of apostasy, and by forecasting the ultimate and terrible destruction of the wicked and ignorant. The question of human involvement in the transmitting of God's anger now needs to be addressed. The Writings both disapprove of human displays of malice and praise expressions of righteous indignation. We shall attend to them in turn.

##### a) Denunciations of Human Anger

The writer of 1QS5:25 exhorted his readership not to speak to his neighbour in anger: honest reproof was acceptable, but hatred was not. M.Knibb does not discuss the identity of the neighbour in his commentary on this passage (25), but the context strongly suggests that "neighbour" means "fellow member of the community". In case of dispute appeal could be made to "the Many" (הרבים), but only "in humility, truth and kindly love" (1QS5:25). Knibb claims that "the Many" refers to full members of the community, as in rabbinic writings it refers to associations of Pharisees (26). The references to "the Many" and "the sons of Aaron" in 1QS5:20-6:8 suggest that matters of internal discipline are under scrutiny here. There is no hint that the more radical understanding of neighbour in Lk.10:25-37 is intended.

The Scrolls do offer advice for community members on how to proceed when personal aggravations arise. 1QS7:1-25 outlines a system

of penances, which is to apply in the case of particular offences. Many of the offences concern personal grudges and insults against neighbours (1QS7:5-10,12,15-16). It is noteworthy that in the list of offences anger against a priest is second in seriousness only to blasphemy.

Elsewhere in the Scrolls manifestations of human anger and fury are seen only in the community's or Israel's opponents. In 1QpHab.11:5-6 the "furious anger" of the wicked priest against the teacher of righteousness is condemned, and at 11:10-11 it is deemed to merit the "cup of the Lord's right hand", by which is meant the cup of his wrath {27}.

At 4QpNah.1:6-9 Nah.2:12 is interpreted to indicate the "furious young lion", probably Alexander Jannaeus, whom the Sadducees supported in the civil war, which pitted Demetrius iii against Alexander 95-88BC. {28}. The importance of the passage lies in its allusion to crucifixion, but the gaps in the text make it difficult to decide whether this Roman penalty is applauded, as a just and novel end for Alexander's opponents, among whom were the Pharisees, or decried as an abomination {29}. However, Nah.2:13 is interpreted as denoting God's opposition to the furious young lion and his followers, who will be destroyed and "their voices heard no more" (4QpNah.2:1), and the remainder of the Commentary on Nahum proceeds to denounce the activities of both Pharisees and Sadducees.

In 1QpHab.3:12-13 it is the Kittim, ie. the Romans, who are being denounced as a "people of fury, burning anger and fierce rage". They too will meet their deserved end on the day of judgment, when all nations serving wood and stone would be destroyed along with the wicked. It is likely that this generalised prophecy at 1QpHab.13:1-4 was meant to encompass apostates from the community of the elect, but

it also includes the Kittim, who are featured throughout the document as evil and wicked {30}.

Human wrath, then, is treated in the Scrolls as characteristic of Gentiles and apostates. Where it is encountered among members of the elect it has to be confronted with stern measures. However, it is unclear whether the command to refrain from anger extends also to the community's relationships with the outside world. Indeed, 1QS1:9-11 indicates the opposite: the community is instructed to "hate the sons of darkness.....in the vengeance of God". Furthermore, the atonement the sectarians were encouraged to make applied only to themselves and not to the wider world: at 1QS5:6-7 they are described making expiation for those who "willingly offer themselves in holiness to Aaron", and in the same sentence all who transgress the statutes are confirmed in their guilt. As we noticed earlier, there is no suggestion here of the broader vision promoted by Jesus, whose ransom was for "many" (Mk.10:45, 14:24) and who urged his disciples to love their enemies. Rather, the community of the elect is commanded to keep itself separate from those who rebel against the covenant, because they are the ones who are full of anger and wrath (4QpPsa2:1-3).

When we turn to the pseudepigraphical writings, we find the same protectiveness towards the elect as we discover in the Scrolls. There are condemnations here also of those who give way to their angry instincts without checking them against God's will or purpose. At Jub.27:3 Esau's anger against Jacob, while understandable, is also reprehensible, because it represents a denial of God's will. Similarly, the anger of the witness to Moses' murder of the Egyptian is criticised at Jub.47:12, because the man did not recognise that Moses had been established by God as ruler and judge.

b) Agents of Divine Anger

The comparative silence of the Scrolls on this aspect is echoed by the absence in 1En.46-51 of any reference to the Son of Man's vocation as an agent of God's anger. However, Jubilees praises the patriarchs and their contemporaries when their righteous indignation expresses the anger of God. Noah is justified at Jub.8:4, because Cainan had written down the astrological wisdom he had received from the heavenly watchers, which 8:3 had castigated as sin. Similarly, Jacob's revenge on the men of Shechem for the rape of his daughter Dinah is styled an "ordinance of heaven" (Jub.30:3-5), and Moses is praised at Jub.48:2-4 as the one sent by God to execute judgment and vengeance on the Egyptians. At Jub.30:18-20 Levi is chosen to serve God as priest and to "do righteousness and judgment and vengeance against all who rose up against Israel". In these instances the anger reinforces the community rules about astrological knowledge, sexual behaviour and the locus of authority: the human expressions mirror the divine will.

Human expressions of wrath are exonerated, then, and even commanded in support of God's will and the upholding of the community's rules. Restraint is counselled only towards fellow members of the community. Against outsiders, however, and particularly those who have forsaken the covenant community it is legitimate to pray, as the visionary does at 1En84:6, for the destruction of all flesh that has angered God. The anger of God is the standard by which all human anger is to be appraised.

## Conclusion

In this section I will highlight the main functions of God's anger in the inter-testamental writings and identify several themes which converge with Mark's treatment of Jesus' anger.

### a) The Functions of God's Anger

Two aspects of the writers' understandings of God's anger are particularly outstanding.

First, the writings extend the predominant Old Testament view, that sinful action leads to manifestations of God's anger and judgment. In particular, wrath is roused against those who are not part of or have broken with the covenant community, and the writers frequently attribute the causes of this rejection to "stubbornness of heart", "dim-sightedness" and "lack of understanding". God's wrath then is intended to underline the community's view of morality and knowledge: the priests in Jerusalem are condemned for their economic exploitation and for observing lunar, not solar, principles, and they are on these two accounts to be placed with the Gentiles rather than with Israel.

Secondly, and as a corollary of the 'action-consequence construct', the writers emphasise the need for the elect to be purified: suffering was to be interpreted as a sign of God's judgment, which necessitated acts of expiation. Those who were part of the

covenant community had access to the information, the moral precepts and the correct leadership (the Zadokite and Levitical priesthood) to enable them to purify themselves of their sins (1QS3:7f,12) and so avert the wrath of God. For those outside the community and for those who had left it there was no way of escaping the dire consequences of God's anger: the demand for the community's purity went hand in hand with a complete separation from outsiders, branded as the "generations of injustice" at 1QS3:19. The community's attitude towards the "sons of darkness" was to be one of hatred, in order to fulfil the vengeance of God (1QS1:9-11), which might be manifested at a particular moment in history, as CD5:17-19 indicates {31}, or be delayed until the eschaton, the day of "turmoil and wrath" (Jub.36:10).

#### b) Relevance to Mark's Gospel

One of the distinctive features of Mark's Gospel is the imputation to Jesus of anger. Unlike the indignation of his disciples and others, his anger is always justified as righteous indignation, whose causes are explained or alluded to in the contexts in which they are recorded, as we shall see. In this respect Jesus resembles the faithful hero, whom we have encountered, especially in the pseudepigraphical writings: unlike them, however, he does not indulge in any act of destruction or vengeance, with the possible exception of the incident in the temple.

I shall consider the convergence of the Markan and inter-testamental presentations of anger under three headings:- i) the causes; ii) the targets; iii) the issues at stake.



i) The Causes of Anger

There are grounds, as I shall maintain, for viewing Jesus' anger in Mark's Gospel as an expression of divine anger: much of the Markan language about his anger and its causes and aftermath echoes that used so widely in the Old Testament and inter-testamental writings of the anger of God. Jesus looks with anger on the Pharisees' "stubbornness of heart" (Mk.3:5), and he complains bitterly of their and his disciples' inability to understand the feeding miracles (Mk.8:11-21). As we have seen in the Qumran documents, God' anger is kindled as a result of the same human weaknesses, and they are particularly marked in those who have broken the statutes of the covenant. However, in Mark Jesus' anger is directed not so much at particular breaches of the covenant as at the failures to recognise the meaning and implications of the covenant relationship. The 'action-consequence construct', then, is evident in Mark as in the Old Testament and inter-testamental literature, and it can be inferred from the apocalyptic statements in chapter 13 and from the references in the accounts of Jesus' crucifixion to the darkness and the rending of the temple curtain (Mk.15:33,38). However, it does not apply to Jesus himself, who suffers not as one who has deserved the judgment but as one whose suffering is interpreted as a redemptive and vicarious bearing of the guilt which properly belonged to others.

In Mark the disciples play a similar role to that of the elect in the Scrolls. Jesus' exasperation with them echoes the condemnation reserved in the Scrolls for the elect who have broken the covenant. Also deserving of judgment in both Mark and the Scrolls are the religious leaders, based in Jerusalem, whose basic error is a lack of

insight and, therefore, the moral weakness conveyed by the term "stubbornness of heart".

ii) The Targets of Anger

The purifying of the elect, noted in the previous section, applies, then, both to the inner circle of Jesus' disciples and the sectarians and to the wider people of Israel. However, where the inter-testamental writers instruct Israel to observe a strict separation from the Gentiles and from certain heterodox elements of Jewish society, Jesus, in Mark's Gospel, seeks to open his disciples' and his opponents' eyes to the extending of God's will and purpose beyond the confines of their own membership and constitutions. The narrow parochialisms, which characterise the Qumran documents, give way in Mark to a broader vision, in which all people can enter freely into God's presence and, therefore, one another's company, regardless of social or physical barriers {32}.

iii) The Issues at Stake

A similar difference of approach between Mark and the inter-testamental writers is discernible in their approaches to the issues which give rise to the expressions of God's/Jesus' anger.

Both share a concern for the law and the covenant between God and his people, but, where the sectarians uphold a rigid understanding and application, Jesus in Mark's Gospel argues for the upholding of the intention behind the law rather than for the keeping of all its

specific stipulations (as Mk.3:1-5).

Both also involve the Gentiles in God's scheme of things, but, where the sectarians treat them as "profane enemies" (Ps.Sol.17:45), Jesus feeds them, and Mark has a Gentile make the only human assertion of Jesus' divine sonship (Mk.15:39).

Both view disease and uncleanness with some seriousness, but, where the sectarians eschew from their congregation all who are blemished (1QS2:3-11a), Jesus welcomes them into his company and, indeed, uses them to express his anger at those who would exclude them (1:40-45, 3:1-5).

Both also denounce the priesthood at Jerusalem, but, where the sectarians do so to exalt their own Zadokite priesthood, Mark's Jesus criticises the Sadducees (12:18-27) and performs a prophetic sign against the temple and its practitioners (11:12-25).

Both look to the eschaton, but, where the sectarians do so in terms of the continuing hierarchy, in which the priests would have the best places, the Markan Jesus vigorously asserts that status in the Christian community is to be defined by service and a willingness to die (Mk.10:45).

This survey has revealed a number of contact points between the inter-testamental writings and the themes treated in Mark's Gospel. The difference in approach and content, however, is significant. It may be, though it cannot be proved, that Mark's distinctive presentation of Jesus' words and deeds was fuelled, at least in part, by an awareness of the limitations of Essene and other exclusivisms, when set alongside Jesus' radical and broader vision.

## NOTES

1. M.Black, The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins in M.Black, The Scrolls and Christianity (SPCK 1969), p.99.
2. F.F.Bruce, Jesus and the Gospels in the Light of the Scrolls in M.Black, op.cit, p.73. notes that CD11:13f. forbids the rescuing of a beast from the pit on the Sabbath, unlike Mt.12:11.
3. It may be of some significance that in Mark's Gospel Jesus' superiority to both Levi and David is established, in that he calls the one (2:13-17) and puts claims about the other firmly in their place (12:35-37).
4. M.Burrows, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls (Secker and Warberg 1958), p.79.
5. M.A.Knibb, The Qumran Community (CUP 1987), pp.180f.
6. M.A.Knibb, op.cit, pp.73ff.
7. G.Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English (Pelican 1962), p.229.
8. M.A. Knibb, op.cit, p.263.
9. M.A.Knibb, op.cit, p.30 traces the source for such phrases to the Deuteronomic layers of Jeremiah, as at Jer.11:8, 9:14.
10. M.A.Knibb, op.cit, p.100 notes Josephus' observation (War 2.8.7), that Essenes were "to conceal nothing from members of the sect and to report none of their secrets to others".
11. R.E.Brown, The Semitic Background to the Term 'Mystery' in the New Testament (Fortress 1968) p.14.
12. M.A.Knibb, op.cit, p.98.
13. J.H.Charlesworth, The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Vol.1 (DLT 1983), p.69.

14. J.H.Charlesworth, op.cit. Vol.2, p.653 n.q.
15. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., pp.212,216.
16. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.67.
17. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.67.
18. Cf. 1QS2:19, 5:2-3, 7:2.
19. M.A.Knibb, op. cit., p.69.
20. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p. 246. connects the "blood of the city" and the "defiling of the sanctuary" (1QpHab.12:7-9) with the themes of bloodshed in Ezek.22:1-12 and of menstrual uncleanness in Lev.15:19-24,31 (cf.also CD5:6-7, Ps.Sol.8:13).
21. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.69.
22. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.165.
23. G.Vermes, op.cit., p.164
24. R.E.Brown, op.cit., p.17.
25. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.115.
26. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., pp.106,115 points to the similar use of the Greek term  $\pi\lambda\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$  in Christian circles, as at Acts 15:30.
27. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., pp.244f. suggests that the text points to the identity of the wicked priest as Simon, who was killed in a drunken stupor (1Macc.16:11-16).
28. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.211.
29. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., pp.212f.
30. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.246.
31. M.A.Knibb, op.cit., p.46 sees this as a reference to Jannes and his brother who incited Israel to revolt and build the golden calf.
32. B.E.Thiering, The Qumran Origins of the Christian Church (Theological Explorations Australia 1983), p.14.

## THE ANGER OF JESUS IN MARK'S GOSPEL

### Introduction

Most explicit references to anger in Mark are confined to the words and actions of Jesus: 1:40-45, 3:1-6, 8:11-21, 8:27-9:1, 10:13-16, 11:12-25. There are in Mark no parallels to the Matthaean parables of the Unforgiving Servant and of the Marriage Feast, in which God, through the person of the master, is presented as "angered" ( $\delta\acute{\rho}\gamma\lambda\omicron\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\acute{\varsigma}$  at Mt.18:34,  $\acute{\omega}\rho\gamma\acute{\iota}\sigma\theta\eta$  at Mt.22:7). Nevertheless, as I hope to demonstrate, Mark presents the anger of Jesus as an expression of divine anger, Jesus being his prophetic agent and son. Furthermore, on several occasions Mark hints at the activity of divine wrath, by appeal to Old Testament judgments on people's blindness, as at 4:10-12, by parable, as in the story of the vineyard and its tenants at 12:1-12, in the forecasts of destruction in ch.13 and through allusion at various points in the account of the passion of Jesus in chapters 14 and 15 (1).

In this chapter I will examine the texts which portray most explicitly Jesus' anger. First, I will present an analysis of the six texts mentioned above, looking in particular at their context in the Gospel, any matters of textual interest, the Matthaean and Lukan parallels (2) and the significance of both the pericope and the anger attributed to Jesus for Mark's understanding of Jesus and his gospel.

Secondly, I will consider the functions of Jesus' anger and how it relates both to other features of Mark's Gospel and to Old Testament and other literature.

### 1. Mk. 1:40-45 The Healing of a Leper (Mt.8:1-4, Lk.5:12-16)

The healing of lepers is featured in all the Synoptic Gospels, and Mt.11:5 suggests that it was viewed in the 1st century AD. as one of the messianic signs. That this particular story was significant for all of the evangelists is demonstrated by its location in their accounts. In Matthew it is the first of the cycle of healing and miracle pericopae, which occupies chapters 8 and 9. Luke, too, has it at the beginning of a round of healing and disputation stories, which act as a bridge between the missionary call of Peter (Lk.5:11) and the Sermon on the Plain (Lk/6:17-49). For Mark, on the other hand, the story is placed at the end of the first series of Jesus' encounters and healings, and it appears to look both backwards, to exorcisms and preaching already carried out, and forwards to debates about the keeping of the law and to the silence motif.

The first task, then, as with the other passages, is to examine some of the important contextual details into which Mark injects his references to Jesus' anger.

#### a) Context

Scholars {3} have commented on the building-block edifice which

Mark uses to develop his account of Jesus and his gospel, and the healing of the leper provides a good example of this practice.

There are several connections with the preceding material in ch.1, and many of them will be continued in ensuing chapters. Also, we find some new material and developments of earlier themes.

The heart of the story concerns the healing of the leper. In fact, the language Mark uses strongly suggests that he is dealing with exorcism, to which he has introduced his readers at 1:21-28. In both episodes Jesus instructs the man or the spirit to keep silence (1:25,44); in both the rebukes are fierce (ἐπετίμησεν at 1:25, ἐμβριμησάμενος at 1:43), and both passages also contain three references to cleansing (the three-fold mention of unclean spirits at 1:23,26,27 being matched by the three-fold use of the verb καθαρίζειν at 1:40,41,42).

The prominence of demons and exorcisms in the first part of Mark's Gospel is underlined by the further references to them at 1:34,39, in both of which Mark uses the verb ἐκβάλλειν as he does at 1:43. The subject recurs in dramatic form in ch.3, when the sandwiching of the debate about demons between stories of Jesus' relationship with his family highlights both the ironic charge of the Scribes at 3:22 and the misunderstanding of his identity by his family. Further, Jesus instructs the twelve to exercise authority over unclean spirits (6:7) in a passage which concludes with the verdict, that they "proclaimed the need for repentance and cast out many demons" (6:12-13). In 1:40-45, similarly, exorcism and missionary activity (the same verb κηρύσσειν is used at 1:45 and 6:12) are juxtaposed.

Two further features of exorcism stories in general and of 1:40-45 in particular are worthy of comment. First, it is the demons



alone who recognise Jesus as the son of God, until the centurion does so towards the end of the Gospel (15:39). Secondly, and linked with their knowledge, is Jesus' command that they should keep silence: at 1:34 this command is made specifically on the ground that "they knew him" (cf. 9:2-8, where the disciples are sworn to silence until after the resurrection). In 1:40-45 the leper's recognition of Jesus' authority (1:40) is greeted by Jesus' instruction to him to "say nothing to anyone" (1:44). The recognition of Jesus' identity is to play an important part in the whole of Mark's Gospel, and it has a distinctive bearing upon Jesus' outbursts of exasperation against his disciples at 6:52 and 8:17-21. The so-called 'Messianic Secret', while not perhaps the dominant theme it was once thought to be (4), is, nevertheless, a major factor in the presentation of Jesus' enigmatic character and in establishing the impossibility of seeing his true identity until after the crucifixion and resurrection (5).

The bridge-like quality of 1:40-45, visible in Mark's treatment of demons, is discernible also in his presentation of Jesus' authority as teacher, first mentioned at 1:21. Along with exorcisms, preaching is referred to as the main sphere of Jesus' activity at 1:39. The same two activities characterise the missionary expeditions of the disciples at 6:12-13, and they are in evidence in the story of the leper. 1:45 depicts the healed man, or possibly Jesus himself, preaching and speaking the word (κηρῦσσειν and διαφημίζειν τὸν λόγον, the same expressions as are used of the church's mission at Acts 8:4f, 9:20, 10:42, 2Tim. 4:2). The story of the leper, however, introduces us to a new aspect, which we shall meet again in the stories of Legion, the Syrophenician Woman and Bartimaeus: the healed leper's missionary zeal, even though against Jesus' instruction, is in ironic and sharp contrast with the disciples' tardiness. Simon and

others had already attempted to restrain Jesus, at 1:37, and Jesus had to urge them to move onwards and outwards, so that he could teach and exorcise in other towns and villages (1:38-39). The leper is an ironic model of discipleship, and as the Gospel proceeds, we shall see how sharply the disciples' lack of understanding is contrasted with the awareness and commitment of outsiders.

Another remarkable feature of the pericope is that Jesus touched the leper. He had taken Simon's mother-in-law by the hand (1:31), and now he risked contamination with disease and with an unclean spirit. Later on he touches women (5:21-43) and a deaf and dumb man (7:31-37) {6}. These episodes demonstrate both Jesus' power over disease and the forces of evil and his radical re-appraisal of Jewish law and practice. The exorcism at 1:21-28 had taken place in the synagogue; the healing of the leper is set in the open, but the focus in the second part of the story is on the priest and, by association, therefore, on the temple and the Mosaic law. The block of material in 2:1-3:6 and 7:1-23 will make more explicit Jesus' attitude towards the law and its rituals, but, already, in 1:40-45 we can detect both a conformity to the law, in that the leper has to have his cleansing validated by the priest, and a sense of superiority to it, in that, while the law could only pronounce clean, Jesus could actually perform works of cleansing. Again, then, the story of the leper moves the reader on and prepares him for the later debates and confrontations over the interpretations of the law.

The conclusion to the episode also fits the pattern I have outlined. Jesus departs for the wilderness (1:45). He had been there before (1:35) and for the duration of his testing (1:12-13). He will be there again (6:31 and 8:4) for the two feeding episodes. From 1:35,45, it appears that Jesus was using the desert regions to retreat

from the crowds, but with the exception of the initial wilderness experience he is quite unsuccessful: "they came to him from everywhere", declares the evangelist at 1:45 and in the two feeding accounts. Two features of the wilderness are especially important for this thesis. First, it is associated with the testing of vocation, for Israel and now for Jesus. Mark's Gospel is an attempt to explore the nature and effects of Jesus' vocation, and, as we shall see, Jesus' anger is targeted particularly on those who fail to see in his words and deeds any evidence of divine activity. Jesus frequently repairs, then, to the place of his call and testing (7). Secondly, the wilderness was viewed as a region of acute discomfort, as the mention of wild beasts at 1:13 suggests (8). It was the locus of opposition for both Moses and Jesus: it was in the wilderness that Moses struggled to bring Israel back to faith after the people's rebellions, and it was there that Jesus first confronted and defeated Satan (1:13).

Finally, 1:40-45 is notable for its descriptions of Jesus' state of mind. Again, the first insights into Jesus' personal involvement with his mission can be glimpsed in the preceding pericopae. Behind the evangelist's use of ἐπετίμησεν at 1:25 is evidence of strong reaction, as at 8:30,33. At 1:35 Jesus went away into the desert and prayed, possibly to distance himself from the pressures which were crowding in upon him or suggesting the closeness of his relationship with God.....or both. 1:40-45 extends the reader's knowledge of Jesus' mind. The participles ὀργισθεὶς or σπλαγχνισθεὶς and ἐμβριμησάμενος highlight Jesus' vigorous response to the plight of the leper, but they may also be Markan attempts to illustrate the divine agency of Jesus' cleansing and teaching activity. Either way, they prepare the reader for subsequent insights of a similar nature

into Jesus' identity and the fierce oppositions and serious misconceptions they aroused.

b) Text

Our main concerns in this section are with the textual variation at 1:41 between ὀργισθεῖς and σπλαγχνισθεῖς and with the combination at 1:43 of ἐμβριμησάμενος and ἐξέβαλεν.

i) Anger or Compassion?

In favour of the σπλαγχνισθεῖς reading are the following considerations:-

1) It is supported by most manuscripts.

2) It makes Jesus respond warmly to the leper's wholehearted trust in him at 1:40, where he comes to Jesus on bended knee (9), and so prepares the way for the healing, in the same way as Jesus' compassion at 8:2 led to the feeding of 4000 hungry people and at 9:22 to the granting of a father's desperate request for help.

However, ὀργισθεῖς too has support from the following points:-

1) The Matthaean and Lukan omissions of Jesus' emotion in the parallel passages suggest that they were omitting ὀργισθεῖς : both refer elsewhere to Jesus' compassion, and there appears to be no good reason why they should omit σπλαγχνισθεῖς. Neither evangelist attributes ὀργή to Jesus, and, indeed, Mt.5:22 condemns the man who is ὀργιλός.

2) It is easier to assume that a scribe would alter from ὀργισθεῖς to σπλαγχνισθεῖς than vice-versa, although the other is

possible if a scribe felt that Jesus' powerful exorcism was the controlling element and so prepared the way for ἐμβριμησάμενος by replacing σπλαγχνισθεῖς with ὀργισθεῖς (10).

3) Mark does not shrink elsewhere from imputing to Jesus attributes of anger and indignation.

Some scholars have sought refuge in possible Aramaic and Syriac originals in order to explain the variation in the Greek texts (11). The Syriac 'ethraham' means 'he had pity', while 'ethra'em' means 'he was enraged'. Others have argued for the originality of ὀργισθεῖς but made it apply to the leper and not to Jesus: ἐμβριμησάμενος then becomes Jesus' corresponding retort (12).

Much of the difficulty in accepting ὀργισθεῖς is not so much that the emotion of anger was outside Jesus' character as that the evangelist does not clarify the target for the anger, unlike the other passages highlighted in this thesis. The reader is not told whether Jesus' anger was excited at the leper's self-deprecatory and yet loud approach ( Ἰουδαίων and παρακαλῶν ), or at the nature of his disability or at the conventional and legal attitude towards lepers, or at the leper's later and ironic disobedience.

#### ii) Healing or Exorcism?

Interest in this sentence is focussed on two aspects :- 1) the precise relationship between this verse and the rest of the pericope; 2) the force of the participle and the verb.

#### 1) Relation to the rest of 1:40-45

1:42 informs the reader that immediately after Jesus' spoken

response to the leper the leprosy departed. We should then move logically to the aftermath of the story. Instead, 1:43 takes us back to a position before the man was healed, so that Jesus can, again immediately, give the man a stern warning before dismissing him (NEB).

D.Nineham (13) argues that the text could be a conflation of two incidents or be offering two interpretations of the same incident: what was first of all a healing became later an exorcism. The use of the verb καθάρειζεν to describe the healing certainly makes possible the development of the story into one of exorcism.

## 2) The Participle and the Verb

At 1:25 the act of exorcism is conveyed by ἐπιτιμᾶν, while at 1:34 ἐκβάλλειν is used. At 1:43 the exorcism is in two parts. H.Kee (14) has noted that the Hebrew גלגל can be translated by either ἐμβριμάσθαι or by ἐπιτιμᾶν, and that when the former is used instead of the latter it usually requires the translation "growl" or "roar". Such appears to be the case at 1:43, where the actual exorcism is expressed by ἐξεβάλεν.

1:43 is the only instance where ἐμβριμάσθαι is used of Jesus in Mark's Gospel, although it is attributed to the narrow-minded guests in Simon's house at 14:5. The same verb is used of Jesus at Mt.9:30 and Jn.11:33,38, where it also carries the sense of strong emotion, as in Mark. Indeed, in the Matthaean passage the verb is followed, as in Mark, by a prohibition on spreading the news of a healing. However, there is a marked difference between the Synoptic and the Johannine uses of the word: in Matthew and Mark the verb is followed by the dative, αὐτοῖς and αὐτῷ, denoting the target of Jesus' agitation as outside him (namely the two blind men and the

leper), while John, on the other hand, uses the verb to signify Jesus' own inner feeling ( ἐν ἑαυτῷ ).

The verb ἐξεβάλεν conveys the sense of exorcism. However, the masculine pronoun αὐτόν, which follows it in Mk.1:43, makes this interpretation difficult to sustain. Exorcism usually requires the neuter pronoun αὐτό (for πνευμα ἀκαθαρτὸν or δαιμονίον), but in 1:43 it is the man who is being expelled. The awkwardness is compounded, when in 1:44 Jesus, having expelled him, addresses him! Possibly Mark intends the reader to find in ἐξεβάλεν the force not only of exorcism but of commission. At 1:12 he tells us that the holy spirit sent Jesus out ( ἐκβάλλει ) into the wilderness, and at Mt.9:38 the same verb is used in Jesus' prayer that God will "send out" labourers into his harvest. ἐξεβάλεν, then, would convey Jesus' power not only to cast out evil and unclean spirits but also to involve other people in his own divine commission. The latter interpretation has in its favour the claim that the man went out "preaching and proclaiming" (1:45).

It is not my intention to attempt a resolution of the textual difficulties in this pericope but rather to note their implications for interpreters. Whether or not ὀργισθεὶς should be retained in the text, to what extent the story should be understood as an exorcism, whatever the precise meaning and force of ἐμβριμησάμενος may be, Mark presents his readers with a Jesus who expresses deeply felt emotion. Further, both the content and context of the episode depict an atmosphere of opposition, in which important issues are at stake. We will consider them in more detail after a brief reminder of the distinctive features of the Markan account, when set alongside the Matthaean and Lukan versions.

c) Matthew 8:1-4 and Luke 5:12-16

Matthew and Luke highlight the story of the leper in ways different from Mark and find significantly different details to emphasise. In Matthew the story heads up a section of healings and miracles, whereas for Luke the healing of the leper is the first incident to follow Jesus' missionary charge to Peter.

For both the evangelists the story of the leper is one of healing rather than exorcism. The Markan ἐμβριμησάμενος and ἐξεβαλεν do not occur. Also, there is no reference to any emotion on the part of Jesus, either of anger or of compassion.

All three evangelists record Jesus' instruction to the healed man to say nothing to anyone and to present the prescribed offering to the priest. However, Matthew's account ends with the instruction and makes no mention of the man's disobedience in spreading the word, while in Luke the word about Jesus goes about impersonally (the middle διήρχετο being used), so that again there is no question of the man's defiance.

Finally, Matthew and Luke both include at the beginning and end of their accounts notes of explanation, which are lacking in Mark. Mt.8:1 informs us that crowds "followed" Jesus, a word signifying both the success of Jesus' ministry and the crowd's credentials as disciples (who are bidden to "follow" Jesus as at Mt.4:22, 8:22). For Luke, on the other hand, it was important to establish Jesus' cosmopolitan outreach (15), and he tells us that the incident took place in one of the cities. At the conclusion Luke adds to the Markan record, that crowds came out to Jesus, that they came to "hear him and be cured of their illnesses", and he notes that Jesus was not just in



the desert (as Mk.1:45), but that he was there "praying" (Lk.5:16).

For Matthew and Luke, then, the story of the leper is essentially optimistic about Jesus and his ministry. It establishes Jesus as a healer, who can be trusted and whom it is good to follow. There is no hint of aggravation or opposition.

d) The Meanings of 1:40-45

Our particular concern, here, is with the possibility of Jesus' anger in this episode and its likely targets : the leper and leprosy on one side and the priest and legal system on the other.

i) The Leper and Leprosy

In Mark's Gospel the leper is the first person to seek healing for himself. Jesus had been informed by his associates of Simon's mother-in-law's illness (1:30). The leper, however, seeks Jesus out himself, as if to acknowledge his power. This recognition is deepened if the reading  $\gamma\omicron\nu\nu\pi\epsilon\tau\omega\nu$  at 1:40 is retained. By making such an approach the leper flouts the convention that lepers, being unclean, must stay at a distance from the rest of humanity: Miriam was banished outside the camp until she was cured (Num.12:14f.). Jesus, too, flouts convention and propriety by touching the leper. There may be, then, in the boldness of Jesus' action a sign of the God who in the Old Testament sided with the weak and oppressed people, whom the rest of society scorned (Pss.76:9, 112:9-10).

Secondly, the healing of leprosy was viewed as one of the signs which would herald the messianic age (Mt.11:5). Two Old Testament

passages are particularly pertinent here. First, in Ex.4:1-9 God is shown both inducing and curing Moses' leprosy as a sign for Moses himself to perform in the presence of the people. Significantly, the passage warned that the people might still not believe. Similarly, in Mark we find opposition to Jesus and incomprehension even among his disciples in spite of the signs and wonders (especially at Mk.8:11-21). In this respect the ministry of Jesus followed very much the pattern of Moses' leadership of Israel: the signs of godly activity are manifest, but the people, nevertheless, do not understand their significance. The possible allusion in 1:40-45 to Ex.4:1-9 might, then, be seen as an early warning of the passion that is integral to Jesus' messiahship (cf.Mk.8:31, 9:31,10:33f.). Secondly, the account of Miriam's leprosy in Num.12:1-15 may also have been in Mark's mind as he gave the story of the leper its final shape. Miriam's story was set near the "tent of testimony" (σκηνή τοῦ μαρτυρίου in the LXX) to which Mark may have been alluding at 1:44 in his use of the term εἰς μαρτυρίον): the priest, as the locus of authority, fulfils a similar role in Mark's episode, . Miriam's leprosy was caused by God's "burning wrath" (ὀργή θυμοῦ) and might relate to the appearance of ὀργισθεῖς at Mk.1:41. Furthermore, her healing was accomplished by Moses, with whom God had a unique relationship (Num.12:7-8), of the kind which Mark claims for Jesus (16).

The third significant feature about the leper is his response in publicising what Jesus had done and spreading the word (1:45), activities which were the hallmarks of discipleship, characteristic of the ministry of John the Baptist (1:4), of Jesus (1:14), of his closest followers (6:12) and of the church (13:10). The leper is the first person to extend Jesus' mission, and two ironies are involved in

his positive response. First, it was an unclean outsider who acknowledged Jesus' authority, and secondly, the man's missionary activity was in defiance of Jesus' command to keep silence. The irony of recognition from outsiders has already featured in Mark, at 1:24, where an unclean spirit proclaimed Jesus as "the holy one of God": there, too, as in 1:40-45, Jesus' response was in the form of a reprimand (ἐπετίμησεν). It will feature again in the persistence of the Syrophenician woman (7:24-30) and in the healings of the blind men (8:22-26, 10:46-52), which are contrasted so sharply with the continuing blindness of the disciples. There are also echoes of the leper's disobedience in the ironic claims of the false witnesses (14:58) and the mockery by the soldiers (15:16-20): none of these characters appreciates the real significance of what he was saying, not even the cured leper, because Jesus was still to face his passion and crucifixion. However, each of them has, unwittingly, expressed part of the truth about Jesus' person: the leper asserts Jesus' authority over unclean spirits, the witnesses foretell the resurrection, and the soldiers reveal Jesus' kingship.

#### ii) The Priest and the Law

Mark's Gospel shows a Jesus who from time to time came into conflict with the law and its teachers. However, it is debatable whether Mark presents Jesus as a law-breaker, and at 1:44 Jesus enjoins the healed leper to follow the letter of the law about leprosy and its cure, as outlined in Lev.chs.13 and 14. Jesus then adds that the leper's adherence to the law will be "as a witness to (or against) them", εἰς μαρτυρίον αὐτοῖς (1:44), a phrase repeated also at Mt.8:4 and Lk.5:14. These three Greek words have excited much comment,

and their vagueness precludes our being certain as to their meaning and application here. However, their possible relationship with the dismissive αὐτῶν of 1:23,39 suggest that for Mark they carry a hint of protest on the part of Jesus as well as or instead of a desire to conform to the legal and ritual code. At 1:23,39 αὐτῶν referred to the unidentified "their" synagogue, as if to suggest that Jesus was standing over against "them"; indeed, the sense of opposition is stressed in 1:21-28 through Mark's comment that the authority of Jesus' teaching was contrasted with that of the Scribes. At 1:44 also the man's witness is to "them", and the possibility that the preposition carries the force of "against" rather than "to" is underlined by the contexts in which the same phrase recurs at 6:11 and 13:9. At 6:11 the disciples are to shake off the dust from their feet at those who rejected their ministrations εἰς μαρτυρίον αὐτοῖς , and at 13:9 the followers of Jesus are promised that they, too, will be arrested and brought before leaders and kings εἰς μαρτυρίον αὐτοῖς. In the story of the leper, then, the phrase might suggest that the healed man is to demonstrate to the priests the superiority of Jesus' ministry to their system: they could only pronounce clean, while he could make clean. This episode, then, would represent the beginnings of the confrontation between Jesus and the priests, which would erupt publicly in the temple incident (11:15-18) and ultimately secure his condemnation (14:58). The rending of the temple curtain would represent, again publicly, the triumph of Jesus' gospel over their system.

Mark presents Jesus, both here and in other parts of his Gospel, as having authority over disease and also over the legal practices and practitioners of his day. The divine origin of such authority, given to Jesus at his baptism, is further suggested if the text of

Mic.7:18-20 was in Mark's mind as he wrote the story of the leper. One of the qualities attributed to God in that passage was his capacity not to nurse his anger but to display his mercy, οὐ συνέσχεεν εἰς μαρτυρίον ὀργὴν αὐτοῦ ὅτι θελητῆς ἐλέους ἔστιν (7:18). The use of εἰς μαρτυρίον is interesting, but the main significance of the passage lies in the assertion that God was moved from anger to mercy: if ὀργισθεῖς is read at Mk.1:41, Mark's account of the story of the leper would show Jesus moving between the same two emotions. Micah's 7th chapter takes on further significance for our understanding of Mark, as it emphasises both the vision of the peoples ("they shall see wonders" at Mic.7:15) and their fearful reaction to God's presence (ἐκστήσονται καὶ φοβηθήσονται at Mic.7:17). The importance of sight and insight for the development of Mark's presentation of Jesus and his encounters with disciples and opponents has already been noted and will receive further attention in the section dealing with Mk.8:11-21; it is sufficient here to recall that the Gospel's last words for the disciples were also about sight (αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε at 16:7). Similarly, reactions to Jesus' miracles are often expressed in terms of wonder and amazement (eg.2:12), but most significant of all is the record of the women's reaction at the tomb: the very last words of the Gospel echo the reactions mentioned in Mic.7:17 -- the women are seized with "trembling and excitement" (τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις) because of their "fear" (ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ at 16:8).

There is also a linguistic link between Mk.1:40-45 and Lam.2:6, in that the roots ὀργ and ἐμβριμ are found in both passages (if ὀργισθεῖς is read at Mk.1:41). Lam.2:6 conveys the sense of God's acute displeasure in the phrase ἐμβριμῆματι ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ. Furthermore, Lam. 2:6 mentions priests among the kings and rulers with

whom God is vexed. In view of this possible allusion, then, we may detect behind the Markan reference to the priest at 1:44 something of the authority of Jesus to confound the Priests, as he will later confound the other leaders, Herodians, Pharisees, Scribes and Elders.

The function of Jesus' anger, then, is to reveal him as God's agent. I have shown how four Old Testament passages have a bearing on the meaning of Mk.1:40-45 in this respect (Num.12, Ex.4:1-9, Mic.7:18-20 and Lam.2:6). They concern the power of God to cause and cure leprosy, express anger and replace it with compassion. Such anger as may have been expressed in Mark's story of the leper serves to establish Jesus' credentials as God's son, in accordance with the title accorded him at his baptism (1:9-11). The anger may have been aroused because of the offence which caused the leprosy in the first place, or because of the law's ostracism of the leper as an outcast, or because of the man's foreseen disobedience in spreading the word, or because of the satanic nature of the disease, or because of the incompleteness of priestly authority. Whichever of these options were in Mark's mind, the anger ascribed to Jesus is to be seen as akin to God's anger.

## **2. Mk.3:1-6 The Man with the Withered Hand (Mt.12:9-14 Lk.6:6-11)**

As with the story of the leper, this incident is recorded by all three evangelists, and again we can notice the different feel the

story has for each of them from the contexts in which they set it and the details with which they describe it. For Mark the story concludes the section 2:1-3:6 (17), which ends, as it began, on a note of controversy. Luke includes the whole complex of stories in 5:17-6:11, but his collection of healings and conflicts is sandwiched between the accounts of the calling of the first disciples (at 5:1-11) and of the twelve (at 6:12-16). Matthew, on the other hand, has divided the Markan block between 9:1-17 and 12:1-14; the story of the man with the withered hand follows the controversy over the plucking of grain on the Sabbath, the point at which he resumes the Markan arrangement. Matthew's re-arrangement means that the cohesion and the dramatic force of the Markan catena of episodes are dissipated, while for Luke they are smothered between stories of the disciples' calling. For Mark, however, 2:1-3:6 extends the notes of controversy already sounded in ch.1 and prepares the reader for the further conflicts between Jesus and the Scribes and his own family in 3:20-35.

a) Context

Even though there are good reasons for supposing that Mk.2:1-3:6 existed before Mark's redaction, as an independent cycle of conflict-cum healing stories, yet Mark has ensured that the reader find links both with preceding and succeeding parts of his Gospel.

First, we notice that the healing of the man with the withered hand takes place in the synagogue. We have seen already that the synagogue was the locus for Jesus' first exorcism and encounter with Scribal opposition (1:21-28). It will be in the synagogue also that he is confronted by opposition from even his own kinsfolk and townsfolk

(6:2ff.) At 13:9 synagogues are mentioned alongside sanhedrins as places where followers of Jesus will be called on to account for their faith before rulers and kings. The reader, then, is being prepared for the verbal conflict recorded at 3:4f. Indeed, if Mark's Gospel was written or circulated in the northern part of Israel, including Samaria and Galilee, then Christians already caught up in conflict with their Jewish contemporaries and adversaries would recognise in Mark's reference to the synagogue a connection between their own disputes and those of their master.

Secondly, Jesus performs the healing, as with the paralytic in 2:1-12, in full view of his opponents. No attempt is made to conceal the event; in fact, in 3:1-6 Jesus goes out of his way to provoke a scene. There is no mention here or in the whole of 2:1-3:6 of the messianic secret, although there is plenty to suggest in the five stories, including 3:1-6, Jesus' messianic credentials.

Thirdly, Jesus' reference to his opponents' hearts at 3:5 picks up the Scribes' debating ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν of 2:6, and the hardness of heart receives further attention at 6:52 and 8:17, where it is ascribed to Jesus' own disciples. We noticed in the chapter on the Old Testament how hardness of heart was to be seen as both cause and effect of God's anger (especially in the Exodus accounts of Moses' conversations with Pharaoh and in Isaiah's explanation of Israel's obstinacy at Is.6:9-10). For Mark, too, Jesus' opponents are accused of stubbornness, like their counterparts in the Old Testament. It is possible, also, that the phrase "hardness of heart" signifies for Mark, as it did for parts of the Old Testament, the pre-ordained nature of the oppositions Jesus was to face.

Fourthly, the opposition to Jesus, manifested in Mark's first two chapters, is hardened at 3:6 into the plot between Herodians and



Pharisees to destroy him. J.Dewey has detected in 2:1-3:6 a rising tempo, which reaches its climax in the plot between these two unlikely bed-fellows (18). The two rival parties are seen together again at 8:15 in Jesus' warning against the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod's Party. More menacing still is the use in 15:1,3f. of the two words which describe the plot against Jesus in 3:1-6: κατηγορήσωσιν (3:2) and συμβουλίον (3:6). At 15:1,3f. the plot is hatched by a different set of conspirators: Chief Priests, Elders and Scribes. Both passages convey the universalism of opposition to Jesus from within Judaism.

Fifthly, Mark's use of ἔξεστιν at 3:4 is, as S.H.Smith has pointed out (19), very much in line with the other five occasions on which it occurs in Mark's Gospel, 2:24,26, 6:18, 10:2, 12:14. All six uses relate to controversies, the first five to matters of the Torah and the sixth to political allegiance. The uniqueness of its appearance at 3:4 is that it is the only occasion on which it comes from the lips of Jesus as a direct question to his opponents.

Sixthly, the debate about the Sabbath in 3:1-6 is a continuation of the disagreement, which had already emerged at 2:23-28, between Jesus and the Pharisees over sabbath observance. Jesus' striking leap in that incident, from pointing out the right to procure food on the sabbath to claiming that the son of man was lord of the sabbath, is matched in 3:1-6 by his equally astounding implication, that in curing the man's hand he was saving him from death. In 3:1-6 his hyperbole becomes ironic, when his salvific act for the disabled man is followed by the plot to destroy him (3:6) (20).

Seventhly, the descriptions of the man's hand as withered (3:1,3), ἐξηράμμενην and ξηράν, connects this passage, possibly, with the withering of the seed in the parable of the Sower (4:6) and with the withering of the fig-tree at 11:20f, where similarly there

are two references, ἐξηράμμενην and ἐξηράνται. In the Matthaean parallels the withering is mentioned only once, and the force of the Markan doublet is lost. For Mark, Jesus confounds the Pharisees by healing a withered hand, while, in reverse, he will demonstrate the bankruptcy of the temple and its priesthood by causing an apparently healthy tree to wither. If Mark had in mind the judgment on Ephraim of Hos.9:16 and on Israel of Am.4:7 (in both of which the LXX includes constructions of the verb ξηραίνειν) (21), then we are dealing in 3:1-6 not just with observance of the sabbath but with Jesus' divine accreditation.

Eighthly, and lastly, the reader's attention is drawn to what V.Taylor refers to as Jesus' "searching gaze" (22). The menace implied by the unnamed subjects of παρετήρουν at 3:2 finds a sharp retort in Jesus' angry surveillance of his opponents at 3:4 (περιβλεψάμενος μετ' ὀργῆς). This is the only instance in which the noun ὀργῆ occurs in the Gospel of Mark and may serve to underline Jesus' uniqueness in the eyes of Mark, especially as it is used in conjunction with the seer-like quality suggested by the participle περιβλεψάμενος. With the exception of Mk.9:8, where the disciples are its subject and the context demands a translation denoting physical sight, the other four occasions on which it is used in Mark all have Jesus as its subject. On each occasion the context indicates the presence of controversy, and the participle heralds an important announcement, as V.Taylor has shown (23). At 3:34 Jesus surveys the crowd seated round him and then pointedly identifies them as his true mother and brothers. At 5:32 he senses what the disciples fail to notice in the crowd and identifies the woman who has touched him, before sending her away, forgiven and healed. At 10:23 his intent consideration of his disciples, in the wake of the disappointment of the rich young man, leads him to

proclaim the difficulty which riches present to those who would be members of God's kingdom. At 11:11 his survey of all that is going on in the temple is followed by the acts of judgment against Israel and the temple implicit in the cursing of the fig-tree and the cleansing of the temple. Similarly, then, at 3:4 the participle anticipates Jesus' judgmental interpretation of his opponents' stubbornness, his power to make whole a deficient limb and the plot by the Pharisees and Herodians to destroy him. Jesus' "silent looking round with anger" is both a reaction to his opponents' rejection of his argument about sabbath observance and an expression of divine judgment on their obstinacy. Jesus sees both the hearts of his opponents and the purposes of God.

b) Text

There are no major textual difficulties in 3:1-6. The chief hermeneutical problem, which has led some commentators (24) to suggest that these verses are a conflation of two separate incidents, a healing and a teaching about the sabbath, is that the restoration of the man's hand hardly appears to be the matter of life or death it is presented as. Matthew's presentation of the cure as an example of  $\kappa\alpha\lambda\omega\varsigma\ \pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\iota\upsilon$  (Mt.12:12), as opposed to Mark's  $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta\grave{\nu}\ \sigma\omega\sigma\alpha\iota$  (Mk.3:4), seems a more appropriate description. Perhaps Mk.3:1-6 is yet another example of the author's ironic juxtapositions: no sooner has Jesus established that saving lives is allowed on the sabbath than his opponents set out, on the same sabbath, to destroy his life.

c) Matthew 12:9-14 and Luke 6:6-11

Matthew and Luke make no reference to Jesus' anger, and they both ignore Jesus' judgment about his opponents' hardness of heart. In Matthew, typically, it is the Pharisees who take the initiative, and not Jesus: they ask openly, ἐπηρώτησαν (Mt.12:10) rather than watch furtively, παρετήρουν (Mk.3:2). In Matthew the issue of sabbath observance is resolved: Jesus proclaims that doing good on the sabbath is permissible (Mt.12:12), where in Mark's account Jesus' question is pointedly left unanswered. Luke follows Mark in these two respects, but he transfers Jesus' anger on to the Pharisees: they are the people "full of annoyance" (Lk.6:11) {25}, and Luke then relates their annoyance to the plot to "do something" about Jesus, a noticeably milder expression than that recorded at Mk.3:6 and Mt.12:14, where the plot is about the killing of Jesus.

Neither Matthew nor Luke mention the Herodians in the plot to kill Jesus, possibly because the title "Herodians" was meaningless at the time of their compositions {26}. It is possible that Mark's inclusion of them in the plot served to illustrate the comprehensiveness of opposition to Jesus from both political as well as religious authorities and to reflect the social antagonisms which Herod's policies were perceived to have created in Galilee.

d) The Meaning of Mk.3:1-6

This episode brings to an end the cycle of controversies between Jesus and the Scribes and Pharisees over forgiveness, table-fellowship, fasting, sabbath observance and disability. In all

of them Jesus' authority is demonstrated by his power to heal and to teach. This particular story establishes also the hardening of opposition to Jesus: his own parabolic allusion to his passion (2:19) begins to find concrete expression in the plot to kill him, announced at 3:6. In fact, the entire Gospel is written against a backcloth of opposition and resistance to the good news: at 1:14 the Baptist is "handed over" to the authorities (Mark uses the same word, παραδοθῆναι, of the betrayal of Jesus at 14:10 and at 14:4 ) as a foretaste of the passion Jesus is to experience himself. Also, the quotation of Mal.3:1 at Mk.1:2 proceeds to interpret the message to be delivered as one of judgment (Mal.3:2-5).

The anger of Jesus in 3:4 reinforces this sense of judgment, with particular reference to the controversy about the sabbath, the opponents' hardness of heart and Jesus' passion. We shall look at them in turn.

#### i) The Sabbath

The location of this pericope in the synagogue is, as we have seen, suggestive of opposition, as at 1:21-28. It is also linked with the story of the leper, in that one of the points at issue concerned the law and its interpretation.

In the preceding pericope, 2:21-28, on the right of Jesus' disciples to pluck grain on the sabbath, Mark has established Jesus' authority over the sabbath (2:28). In 3:1-6 Mark illustrates further Jesus' authority not only to stave off hunger but also to heal disability. In both cases Jesus does not flout the law but appeals to tradition (as in 2:21-28) and to current rabbinic practice (as in 3:1-6) {27} to support his interpretation of the sabbath commandment.

T.A.Burkill (28) has suggested that both pericopae have an eschatological element, 2:21-28 prefiguring the Eucharist, as the disciples anticipate the great sabbath of the messianic era, and 3:1-5 replacing the old sabbath by the new one of the messianic age, in which "doing good" would match the sabbath's title as "the good day". Even if such an assessment seems far-fetched, Burkill is surely correct in wishing to underline the significance of the title accorded Jesus, "lord of the sabbath", because the two pericopae establish not only the priority of human need over ancient tradition but also the authority of Jesus to redefine the commandments. Far from overturning them, Jesus asserts their importance: the sabbath is for feeding the hungry and healing the sick, for doing good and saving life. His anger expresses both the importance of the issue and his anguish that his opponents, schooled as they were in the tradition, do not acknowledge the truth of his words and actions.

The use of the participle περιβλεψάμενος at 3:4 underlines Jesus' anguish, as it does at 10:23, where it expresses the keenness of Jesus' disappointment, that one whom he loved (10:21) could not follow him and that his disciples did not understand his statement about riches. Significantly, in the list of commandments, which the rich young man had kept, there is no mention of the sabbath, an omission which Jesus and the scribe repeat at 12:28-34, where they emphasise that the two essential commandments are love of God and of neighbour.

#### ii) Hardness of Heart

Mark has already mentioned the murmurings in Scribal hearts (2:6), on the occasion of Jesus' healing of the paralysed man, and at

7:21 he will refer to the heart as the source of all evils. At 3:5, as at 6:52, 8:17 and 10:5, he comments on its obstinacy, using in the first three instances constructions of πῶρσις and in the fourth the word σκληροκαρδία. The phrase "hardness of heart" carries the sense of spiritual weakness: either people cannot see the truth, as at 3:5, 6:52, 8:17, or they cannot practice it, as at 10:5. The link between heart and sight is made explicit at 6:52 and 8:17f, where the disciples' hardness of heart explains their lack of understanding (οὐ συνήκαν at 6:52 and οὐ νοεῖτε οὐδὲ συνίετε at 8:17). The phrase also recalls Is.6:9-10, which Mark actually quotes at 4:12 in connection with the disciples' failure to understand the parable of the Sower, and the Exodus accounts of Moses' attempts to persuade Pharaoh to let Israel leave Egypt.

Mark's use of this expression may be intended to point in the same two directions as its Old Testament references: towards God's sovereignty as the one who himself hardened hearts (as at Ex.9:12) and towards human culpability (as at Ex.9:34, where Pharaoh hardens his own heart). There is a grim inevitability about the outcome of Jesus' ministry: he has to suffer and die, as at 8:31, where the verb δεῖ suggests the divinely ordained nature of his passion. Equally Judas, the Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders are all to blame for his death. At 14:21 both divine economy and human responsibility are placed side by side: Judas' act of betrayal is acknowledged implicitly to be part of the divine plan, as the phrase καθὼς γέγραπται indicates (29), but he will also have to bear his punishment for his part in Jesus' death, as the exclamation οὐαὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ shows. Mark's use of the phrase "hardness of heart" at 3:5 convicts Jesus' opponents of spiritual blindness, but it also establishes that even in their rejection of him God was at work and in control.



The phrase also links Jesus with Moses, as the agent of God. Like Moses he observes his opponents' stubborn hearts at close quarters. In Ex.4:1-9 (30) Moses' prophetic credentials are to be established in the restoration of a leprous hand, as Jesus' are confirmed in the healing of a man with a withered hand. Furthermore, the word with which Mark describes the restoration, ἀπεκατεστάθη, is the same word the LXX uses to describe Moses' healing of the leprous hand (Ex.4:7). Again, just as Moses' signs failed to convince Pharaoh and led to the death of Egypt's first-born sons and soldiers, so 3:1-6 registers the determination of Jesus' opponents, unconvinced by his miracles, to kill him.

In 3:1-6, then, Jesus acts as a Moses redivivus, provoking opponents to hardness of heart, performing signs and wonders and destined to be rejected. He also acts as God, initiating the dispute, seeing into the shallowness of human hearts and himself performing the restoration of the man's hand (unlike Moses, who acted only at God's instigation and never on his own authority).

### iii) Jesus' Anger as a Link between his Ministry and Passion

A.B.Kolenkow (31) has noticed, among several linguistic and thematic similarities between Mk'3:1-6 and Jn.5:1-18, that both passages connect Jesus' miracles with his passion. She rejected the suggestion that for Mark Jesus' passion was a direct result of his healings, on the grounds that healing controversies cease with the Beelzebub story in 3:22-30, and that the passion does not begin until chapter 14. However, she concluded (32) that the controversies associated with healing are the first of the challenges Jesus has to meet. The story of the man with the withered hand contains several



oblique references to the passion: Jesus' question at 3:4 about the propriety of saving life is thrown back at him in mockery at 15:30-32; his grief at his opponents' stubbornness and blindness at 3:5 is mirrored in his anguish in Gethsemane (14:34), and the plot to kill him at 3:6 is eventually carried out.

Jesus' anger, mingled with his grief, is an expression of exasperation at the failure of people to read the signs of God's activity and presence. Here is no wonder worker, who simply effects cures and conquers the elements, but rather a man caught up intimately in both human ignorance and divine compassion. The anger establishes God's complaint against his unbelieving people and fuels their resentment against his appointed agent; the healing speaks of his mercy, which already begins to triumph over injustice and ignorance but will only do so completely after Jesus' passion and resurrection.

3. Mk.8:11-21 The Demand for a Sign (Mt.16:1-12, 12:38-42,  
Lk.11:16,29, 54-56)

Two pericopae are involved in this section: the Pharisees' foolhardy demand for a sign and the disciples' failure to understand about the feeding episodes. Strictly speaking, there is no explicit mention here of Jesus' anger, but there is, clearly, a powerful emotion behind the use of ἀναστρέναξας τῷ πνεύματι at 8:12, and his frustration with his disciples is expressed at its sharpest at

8:14-21.

The two stories are connected together, in that verbally Mark does not alter the focus from the Pharisees to the disciples, although the content assumes that the subject of the verbs in 8:14,16 and the indirect objects of the verbs in 8:15,17 are the disciples and not the Pharisees. They are linked also in that both the Pharisees and the disciples fail to understand the signs: the Pharisees do not even acknowledge the feeding of 4000 people in the desert as a sign, and the disciples do not see its significance.

The centrality of these two stories for Mark's presentation of Jesus as God's holy one and son can be seen from three angles. First, they address the desperate misunderstandings of both friends and foes alike about Jesus' activities and person. Secondly, they occur, on a verse count, at almost the half-way point in Mark's text; more importantly, perhaps, is S.H.Smith's suggestion {33} that 8:11-13 is at the centre of a symmetrical pattern of controversies, which originates with 2:1-3:6, ends with 11:27-12:40 and has 3:20-35 corresponding with 11:12-25 and 7:1-23 corresponding with 10:2-9. Thirdly, the strength of the denunciations and the repeatedly exasperated nature of the questions to the disciples indicate that the underlying issue is of the utmost importance, both for our understanding of Jesus' identity and for the life of the early Christian communities.

We shall look further at these matters under the headings used in the previous two sections, except that in 8:11-21 there are no specifically textual details that bear on the nature and purposes of Jesus' emotion.

a) Context of 8:11-13

The Pharisees' demand for a sign is located at a most ironic place in Mark's Gospel. Jesus has just fed 4000 people and healed a Syrophenician woman's daughter and a deaf and dumb man. He will proceed to heal a blind man at 8:22-26. To the question "Why should Jesus refuse a sign?" Mark's answer appears to be that signs have, indeed, been freely given, but that their significance has eluded some at least of the beholders. The Pharisees direct their gaze at external show, when for Mark Jesus' prophetic utterances are aimed at people's inward sight and attitude. They are, therefore, convicted of testing (πειράζοντες Jesus, as Israel tested God in the wilderness (Ex.17:7, where the LXX uses πείρασμος and πείραζειν). Mark's verdict is that it was their perversity and blindness that prompted their demand for a sign in 8:11-13; they will test Jesus further, this time on the subject of divorce, at 10:2.

Secondly, and following on from the last point, the curse at 8:12, unique in the Gospels (34), echoes Ps.95:11, where in the LXX translation εἰ followed by the verb in the future tense carries the force of "certainly will not". Mark adds to the vehemence of the sentence by preceding it with the words ἀμην λέγω ὑμῖν, with which he introduces Jesus' most momentous utterances. The allusion to Ps.95 puts the reader in mind of Israel's desert wanderings under Moses' leadership. Significantly, in the psalm it is God who delivers the oath at v.11, and the oath is made ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου in the LXX. In 8:12, then, Jesus is repeating a divine oath. Mark does not repeat the psalmist's reference to anger, but he does ascribe to Jesus the powerful emotion expressive of extreme discontent, ἀναστέναξας τῷ πνεύματι.

The third contextual feature of note in 8:11-13 concerns this emotive reference. ἔστένναξεν occurs at 7:34 in the story of Jesus' healing of the deaf and dumb man, although here the context suggests that Jesus is invoking God's help. E.Schweizer (35) sees in both 7:34 and 8:12 evidence of 'prophetic gesture'. However, the word also occurs at 2 Macc.6:30, where it is ascribed to Eleazar, who groaned (ἀναστένναξας) before going to his heroic and noble passion and death. It is possible that Mark is using this episode to cast further over Jesus' life the shadow of his passion and death. This likelihood increases with the quotation at Mk.8:18 of Ezek.12:2, which itself was the prelude to the son of man's being lifted high on men's shoulders as a spectacle for Israel. The two parts to Mk.8:11-21 are important, then, not only for establishing the validity of Jesus' message but also for preparing the reader for a view of messiahship which had rejection and suffering as its base.

b) Context of 8:14-21

The disciples fail to see in the two feeding miracles anything other than impressive displays of power. They had already shown their ignorance after the feeding of the 5000 (6:52), and, as there, they are now accused of hardness of heart (8:17). The first signs of their failure are evident in their murmurings at 8:16, which echo similar whispers of discontent by the scribes at 2:6. The same verb, διαλογίζεσθαι is used again at 9:33f, where the disciples are again displaying their ignorance by debating among themselves, which of them was the greatest. Again, at 10:26 they talk among themselves (λογίζοντες πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς) because they do not understand Jesus' teaching about riches. Jesus' repetition of the rhetorical questions

(8:17f,21), picking up a similar expression used at Ps.82:5 and Is.1:3, reinforces his estimate of their unawareness: they are likened to the recalcitrant people of Israel, who accompanied Moses and Isaiah with stubborn hearts. A similar rhetorical question is asked of the disciples at 4:13, where they fail to grasp the meaning of the parable of the Sower (36), and at 4:40, where the question is about their faith in the midst of the storm on the lake. Furthermore, their lack of faith is exposed, when they fail to heal the boy with the unclean spirit (9:14-29) because they did not pray, and, therefore, as 11:22-24 shows, lacked faith. It is lack of vision which lies behind their attempts to keep children away from Jesus (9:38-42, 10:13-16).

The accusation of hardness of heart suggests that, like Israel in the Old Testament, the disciples had little excuse for their rebellion and dullness of vision. The long litany of their shortcomings, especially highlighted in chs. 9 and 10, was intended both to support the case against them and to exhort Mark's readers to hold fast to their faith amid the storms of persecution and to avoid the misunderstandings associated with aretalogy and hierarchies.

I have suggested that Mark's use of Ezek.12:2 may have been intended to prepare the reader for Jesus' passion, which resulted from his opponents' misunderstanding and rejection of his teaching. 8:14-21 shows that the disciples are no better than the Scribes and Pharisees: indeed, they are more reprehensible because of their apparent adherence to Jesus' cause. The lack of sight and insight displayed by Jesus' associates and interlocutors is the pivot on which Mark's explanation for Jesus' passion turns. He illustrates the point at 4:12, in his use of the quotation from Is.6:9-10, whose order he amends, to place sight before hearing, and in the contrast implicit at 8:25 between the recently healed blind man, who now sees clearly, and

the disciples' continuing blindness. Their dullness will accompany Jesus to the end: at 14:41 Mark comments on the lack of understanding, which led to their falling asleep despite Jesus' instruction to watch and pray (14:38). At 8:15, similarly, his exhortation to them to "look and watch out" is not heeded. They persist in Pharisaic obstinacy (37).

The precise failure in 8:14-21 concerns the two feeding episodes and, in particular, the baskets of crumbs (38). Characteristically, Jesus does not spell out the significance but only raises the question. The disciples are left to draw their own conclusions about the missionary perspectives conveyed by the respective number of baskets, twelve suggestive of Jesus' mission among the Jews and seven suggestive of his mission among the Gentiles. Again, the reader's attention is drawn towards the prelude to the passion: at 13:10 Jesus proclaims that the gospel has to be (ὅτι again) preached to all nations, and at 14:9, immediately before the reference to Judas' act of betrayal, he alludes again to the spreading of the gospel throughout the world. Doubtless, the feedings also provided Mark with a graphic background against which to warn his readers about the evil teaching, ie, the leaven, of the Pharisees and Herodians (8:15) and so to commend his own mission (39), but the disciples just could not comprehend the difference.

c) Matthew 16:1-12, 12:38-42 and Luke 11:16,29, 12:54-56

As in their treatment of the first two episodes we have considered, so here Matthew and Luke make no reference to Jesus' agitation. Furthermore, they attempt to play down the ferocity of his

refusal to grant the Pharisees a sign. At Mt.12:39 and Lk.11:29 Jesus offers the sign of Jonah, as a prophecy of judgment on a wicked people, but Matthew also adds (12:40) that the sign of Jonah was also a prefiguration of the resurrection. Also, where Mk/8:13 has Jesus dismissing (ἀφείθ) the Pharisees, Mt.16:4 concludes his account with the gentler καταλιπὼν...ἀπῆλθεν, and Lk.11:29 makes no reference at all to the manner of the parting.

On the performance of the disciples Luke includes only the warning of Jesus about the leaven of the Pharisees (Lk.12:1). Matthew follows the Markan outline, without labouring so intently the disciples' blindness, and omitting the phrase "hardness of heart". Also, where Mark ends the pericope with a repetition of the question "do you not yet understand?", Matthew, having replaced it with the more amenable question "how is it that you do not understand?", ends by assuring his readers that, at last, the disciples do understand (τότε συνῆκαν at 16:12).

#### d) The Meaning of 8:11-21

The demand of the Pharisees for a sign was not unreasonable. Expectations in Jewish society were that the Messiah would be revealed by signs, among them his appearance on the roof of the temple (40). Mark's Jesus goes part way towards fulfilling these expectations. He performs signs and miracles, although their significance is not so much in their impressive displays of power as in the doctrine and belief they expose. He also enters the temple, but his action is far from magic. In 8:11-21 Jesus confronts head on the issue of signs and their interpretation. His agitated exasperation with the Pharisees and

vigorous condemnation of his disciples heighten the importance of this act in Mark's drama in at least three ways.

First, they sharpen the reader's focus on Jesus' identity in preparation for Peter's confession at 8:29 and Jesus' subsequent corrective in 8:31-38. Jesus had already labelled the scribes' and his family's misunderstanding and rejection of his exorcism and teaching as "blasphemy against the holy spirit" (3:29). Such a charge is reminiscent of the prophet's complaint (Is.63:10) that the people's disbelief provoked the holy spirit. The two preceding verses in Isaiah's text refer to the salvation God had brought his people by redeeming (ἐλυτρώσατο in the LXX) them: in Mark Jesus is portrayed as the redeemer (λυτρὸν at 10:45). The opponents' and disciples' misunderstandings of Jesus' identity are akin to blasphemy, as Mark attributes to Jesus the qualities assigned by the Old Testament to God. Jesus' anguish in 8:11-21 reinforces the sense of his divine agency as well as heightening the tragic quality of his passion (41).

Secondly, in 8:14-21 the spotlight is turned onto the disciples. They are bracketed with the Pharisees in their lack of understanding and insight, but Jesus' verbal assault on them is unrelenting in Mark's Gospel. For the remainder of ch. 8 and throughout chs.9 and 10 (with the possible exception of 10:2-9 (42) ) the validity of Jesus' objections in 8:17-21 is pressed home. They misunderstand the nature of his messiahship (8:31-end) and the relationship between Jesus and the two Old Testament figures on the mount of transfiguration (9:2-8). They fail to heal the boy through lack of prayer (9:14-29). They do not understand Jesus' further predictions of the passion (9:31f, 10:32-34). They argue over positions of supremacy (9:33-37, 10:35-45). They misconstrue the place of outsiders (9:38-42). They do not reflect deeply enough on God's intention in respect of marriage (10:1-12).



They try to keep children away from Jesus, again ignoring their place in God's kingdom (10:13-16). They do not understand Jesus' attitude towards riches (10:17-31). Unlike Bartimaeus, they do not see where they are going or why (10:46-52). In 8:11-13 Jesus identifies the root of the problem as a refusal or inability to see the point and purpose of his actions and teaching. In 8:14-21 he identifies his disciples as part of that problem. To the end he persists in his message "watch and pray" (14:38): the disciples' inability to see and persevere is depicted as all the more blameworthy for their having been rebuked and warned at 8:14-21 and in the succeeding episodes.

Nevertheless, in spite of the catalogue of their errors, there is hope for the disciples, and, by implication, for later followers of Jesus, who find themselves repeating the pattern of the disciples' blindness and cowardice. "You shall see him" is the assurance the women are to take to the disciples (16:7). Jesus' condemnation of the disciples is not final or absolute: rather, it is intended as a warning, and his anger is roused, like God's in the Old Testament, to service, not replace, his compassion (cf. Mic. 7:18).

Thirdly, then, Jesus' reprimands in 8:11-21 serve a missionary purpose. We have noticed already that proclamation was at the heart of Jesus' ministry (1:39, 45, 6:12). At 8:19-21 Jesus reminds his disciples of their missionary vocation and impresses upon them that it is to both Jews and Gentiles that they are being called. His warning about the leaven of Pharisees and Herodians and his frustration at his disciples' ignorance may reflect an initial reluctance in the early days of the Church's life to welcome Gentiles into membership, as suggested also in 9:38-42, where his disciples seek to prevent an outsider from exorcising, and in 10:13-16, where they seek to prevent children from enjoying Jesus' company. The anguish of Jesus reflects

the necessity for the prospering of the Church and its gospel of being open to outsiders.

#### 4. Mk.8:27-9:1 Peter's Confession and Jesus' Rebuke

(Mt.16:13-28, Lk.9:18-27)

This set of two pericopae, 8:27-30, 8:31-9:1, is important for our consideration of Jesus' anger for two reasons. First, it records what D.Nineham {43} referred to as the "blistering severity" of Jesus' rebuke to Peter at 8:33. Secondly, it brings into the open some of the major themes associated elsewhere with Jesus' anger, notably the nature of his relationship with God and the demands made of his disciples.

Our first task is to trace the connections with other parts of the Gospel, Old Testament themes and the Matthaean and Lukan parallels. There are no textual matters significant for our purpose.

##### a) Context

The resonances between 8:27-9:1 and other parts of Mark's Gospel can be traced through linguistic and thematic associations.

i) Language

Two words require special consideration. The first is ἐπιτιμᾶν, which Mark uses three times in this passage, twice with Jesus as subject (8:30,33) and once with Peter (8:32). Both here and elsewhere the word is capable of two different translations, depending on sentence construction and context. At 8:30, as at 3:12 and 10:48, the verb is followed by a clause beginning with ἵνα and so properly bears the translation "warn" or "charge". At 8:32f, as at 1:25, 4:39, 9:25 and 10:13 the verb is complete in itself, though it is sometimes followed by an explanatory participle, and carries the meaning "rebuke". At 1:25, 4:39 and 9:25 the verb denotes Jesus' exorcism of an unclean spirit and calming of a storm. At 10:13 the disciples rebuke those who would bring children to Jesus. Only, then, at 8:32f. and at 10:13 is the verb targeted on human beings. In two of these three instances Peter and the disciples are rebuked or criticised by Jesus, because their rebukes betray a complete misunderstanding about his messiahship and their discipleship.

Jesus' rebuke of Peter at 8:33 is quickly given the force of an exorcism, as he says to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan". The rebuke further establishes Jesus' conquest over satanic power, as illustrated previously in the expulsion of an unclean spirit (1:21-28), the healing of the leper (1:40-45), the dispute over demon possession (3:20-30) and Jesus' triumph in the wilderness (1:12-13). The demand of the Pharisees at 8:11-13 is also to be seen as satanic, in that they test Jesus as did Satan. At 8:33, then, Peter joins the Pharisees in being denounced for his incomprehension, which was as satanic as the unclean spirits and the Pharisees' blindness.

In fact, Peter's failure to understand the nature of Jesus'

messiahship was to be interpreted as worse than all the other misunderstandings because he was explicitly branded as satanic and because Jesus spoke to him "in plain language" (παρρησία).

παρρησία is the second word to command our attention. Mark is underlining the clarity of Jesus' meaning, as he had done at 4:34, when he described Jesus explaining everything to his disciples in private, in amplification of his claim at 4:11 that they would be given "the mystery of God's kingdom". His disappointment at their manifest failure to understand both the parable and the mystery (4:13) (44) is echoed at 6:52 and 8:17-21, and now it is directed at Peter.

#### ii) Messiahship and Discipleship

Peter had been instructed in the mystery of God's kingdom (4:11) (45) and yet had been unable to understand Jesus' forecast of the passion. Jesus' severe retort to Peter's remonstrance with him indicates the importance of the two issues underlying this episode, Jesus' messiahship and Christian discipleship.

The first of the three passion predictions (8:31) brings together two important features. First, Jesus asserts the necessity of the son of man's suffering. There is about δεῖ not only an air of inevitability, as Jesus approaches his final confrontation with the authorities in Jerusalem, but also a sense of the divinely pre-ordained nature of his suffering. As with Judas' betrayal (14:21), so here Jesus' death is attributed to a combination of divine will and human perversity. He has to suffer to fulfil the Scriptures and establish his status as a man sent from God (cf. the parable of the vineyard, in which the owner eventually sends his son, 12:1-12), and he has to suffer because of the dogmatic blindness and insecurity of

his opponents.

Secondly, 8:31 is the first occasion on which Mark refers to the triad of opponents who will be largely responsible for Jesus' death, the Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders. Scribes are the only group seen consistently in opposition to Jesus throughout the Gospel. The Pharisees, with some help from the Herodians at times, challenge Jesus in the Galilean and early Jerusalem phases of his ministry. The Sadducees appear only at 12:18. It is the high-priest who finally condemns Jesus to death (14:63f.), and it is to the Chief Priests that Judas betrays him (14:10-11). The Chief Priests join forces with Scribes (11:18, 14:2) and with both Scribes and Elders (14:43,53), but it is clear that they take the leading role in securing Jesus' death. They head the lists of Jesus' antagonists, and they are mentioned alone at the key moments. We shall pay more attention to them in our consideration of 11:12-25. For now it is sufficient to note that Jesus has come into conflict with the supreme representatives of the God whose kingdom he proclaims.

All three passion predictions lead into major statements on the nature of discipleship. In 8:27-9:1 the emphasis is placed on "following Jesus" (8:34), picking up the initiatives of Andrew and Simon (1:18). Simon, with Andrew, was the first person to follow Jesus, and he was the first to try to constrain him (1:35-38). As there, Jesus feels the need now to remind the disciples of that calling, hence the reference at 8:33 to the disciples. The accompanying **ἰδὼν** conveys Jesus' awareness of their unbelief, as at 10:14,23. Mark goes on to establish that following Jesus will necessitate suffering (8:34). They, too, would be called to take up their cross. Mark's ironic observation in this pericope is that the first one to follow and recognise Jesus' messiahship was also the

first to misunderstand and deny him. The subsequent desertion by the rest of the disciples shows that the same charge applies to them as a group: the first to be called to Jesus' mission are the first to fail.

However, 8:27-9:1 does not end on a note of failure and suffering. Jesus directs his disciples to the future, which will be as full of glory as it will be of judgment. Mark's statement of hope may have been influenced by, or itself have influenced, the story of the transfiguration, which follows (9:2-8). Significantly, there too Peter does not know how to respond to the vision of Jesus' glory (9:6), as, in conjunction again with James and John, he does not know how to respond to Jesus' passion (14:40). Peter's confusion is total. Jesus' sharp rebuke at 8:33 confirms and condemns it.

b) Matthew 16:13-28 and Luke 9:18-27

The rebuke of Peter by Jesus finds no place in either the Matthaean or the Lukan parallel. Luke proceeds from Jesus' passion prediction to his teaching on discipleship. Matthew, on the other hand, follows Mark's pattern and content but reduces the sharpness of the altercation. First, Jesus praises Peter for his confession (Mt.16:17-19) and announces that he will build the Church on his life and example, neither of which motifs appear in Mark. Secondly, Peter rebukes Jesus with an oath signifying his (Peter's) protectiveness towards his master (ἰλεὺς σοι κυρίε 16:22). Thirdly, Matthew makes no reference to Jesus' plain speaking.

It is noticeable also, that, whereas Mark mentions the crowd alongside the disciples as the people Jesus addresses about discipleship (8:34), Mt.16:24 refers only to the disciples. Lk.9:23

has πάντας which could mean "all the disciples" or "all the people". Matthew's restriction of the audience suggests that he was wanting to heighten the role of the disciples, and in particular of Peter, while Mark's concern was to involve in Jesus' mission more people than just the twelve. Similarly, on other occasions, where Mark deliberately records the disciples' errors, Matthew pointedly omits them or diminishes their blameworthiness.

c) The Meaning of 8:27-9:1

We have seen how Jesus' angry rebuke of Peter at 8:33 links his statement on messiahship at 8:31 with his outline of discipleship at 8:34ff. The rebuke signals a decisive turning point in the unfolding of Mark's drama. From now on the author will reiterate the centrality of suffering both to Jesus' messiahship and to his followers' discipleship.

Several commentators (48) have detected in this Markan emphasis an attempt to counter a gospel based on signs and wonders, developing the principle, established in 8:11-21, that the importance of such miracles as Jesus did perform lay in their theological significance. Jesus' explicit warning against those who based their mission on signs and wonders (13:22) is a further endorsement of their claim. Jesus' plain speaking at 8:32 underlines the importance of the suffering that is to come and the disciples' culpability in rejecting it.

Mark gives expression to both these elements at 8:33 in the dichotomy he draws between God and humans: Peter thinks not as God does, but as humans do. P.G.Davis (49) sees in this and other similar expressions in Mark's Gospel the essential dichotomy which moulded the

confrontational character and content of his text. Jesus is declared by the centurion to be a man (ἄνθρωπος), but he is also the only man who transcends human categories and so can be called "son of God" (15:39) {50}. The same dichotomy explains the disagreements between Jesus and the Pharisees in 7:1-23 over ritual observances, the Corban controversy and the locus of evil: at 7:6-7 he quotes Is.29:13, to the effect that the heart of people who honour God with their lips is often far away from him. The Isaiah passage goes on to describe God's work in terms of freeing the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the poor to rejoice (Is.29:18f.) -- all familiar themes which Mark uses to substantiate Jesus' messiahship. Furthermore, the prophet claims that the turning point, at which those who have erred will begin to understand, will be when children see God's works (Is.29:23-24): Mark takes up this theme also in 9:36f, 10:13-16. Mark's indictment of the disciples at 8:33 is that applied to Jesus' opponents at 7:8: they "dismiss the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men".

The same point is made in Jesus' statement about marital discipline at 10:2-9. Divorce had been permitted by Moses because of the people's "hardness of heart", but the essential feature of marriage was God's original intention, expressed at 10: 6f. in terms of Gen.1:27, 2:24. The relationship between God and humans is expressed precisely at 10:9: what God has joined together they are not to separate.

Ironically and unwittingly the Pharisees acknowledge the truth of Jesus' claim at 12:14f. by agreeing on his single-mindedness in teaching the way of God without regard for the approval of humans. In response Jesus rounds on them, as he had done at 8:11-13, and condemns their hypocrisy by meeting their challenge over the payment of taxes.

The inability of the triad to reply to Jesus' question about the



source of John the Baptist's authority (11:27-33) further underlines the distinction between God and man: the implication is that Jesus is the only one who can answer the question.

Peter's misunderstanding of all this and his rebuke of Jesus (8:32) align him with the Pharisees and Priests. Jesus' stinging rebuke to him is a call both to dissociate himself from a signs-based gospel and to follow him on the way that leads to the cross. It is the only path to glory.

#### **5. Mk.10:13-16 Jesus welcomes the Children (Mt.19:13-15, Lk.18:15-17)**

This episode occurs in the middle of a series of pronouncements on matters of domestic discipline and arrangement. At 10:1-12 Jesus explains his view of marriage and divorce, and at 10:17-31 he teaches about the handling of property and riches. It also forms part of the section from 8:34 to 10:52 which deals with the nature of discipleship and depicts the disciples squabbling among themselves, failing to comprehend the substance of Jesus' mission and unable to continue their earlier missionary successes. These failures are highlighted in this passage by Mark's reference to Jesus' indignation (ἠγανάκτησεν) against them (10:14). His anger at his disciples' restrictive practice is contrasted with the warmth of his own welcome for the children (10:16), which is extended in the succeeding pericope to his love for the rich young man (10:21). Those who brought the children and the rich young man sense, unlike the disciples, where

Jesus' authority lies, even if the rich man in the end rejects Jesus' counsel.

a) Context

10:13-16 gives further vivid expression to the incident narrated in 9:33-37, in which Jesus' responds to the disciples' internal wrangle over supremacy by placing a child in their midst, as an example of those who genuinely welcome him and his God. Jesus' action in embracing (ἐναγκαλισάμενος) the children at 9:36 is repeated at 10:16, where he also blesses them. His indignation (10:14) is, in part, a reaction against his disciples' misreading of the situation and, in part, an expression of exasperation at their persistent misunderstanding. Despite the lessons imparted in 9:35-37 about children and in 9:38-41 about the place of outsiders, the disciples still fail to understand on both counts at 10:13-16. They had either ignored or never understood the text of Is.29:23, which linked the acknowledgment of children with the hallowing of God's name.

In contrast with the disciples, Jesus is characterised as the one who both sees and understands what is happening. The participle ἰδὼν at 10:14 fills the same role as at 8:33 and (as εἶδεν) at 1:16 and (as περιβλεψάμενος at 3:5, 10:23). It expresses both physical and spiritual sight. His perception at 10:14 leads him to round on his disciples in fury.

The verb ἀγανάκτειν occurs in Mark also at 10:41, where it denotes the disciples' indignation at James and John for making their special request, and at 14:4, where it expresses the indignation of several unidentified people at the woman's wasting of a jar of

ointment in anointing Jesus. The succeeding verses of the former episode show that Jesus both sides with the ten, in their annoyance at the elitism of James and John, and accuses all of them of failing in their diaconal functions: the ten's indignation was misplaced because it was based on envy rather than on the gospel of service. In the second instance the indignation of the bystanders, who probably included the disciples, betrays their ignorance: it is the woman who recognises Jesus as God's anointed one, while they persist in their blindness.

Apart from the Matthaean parallels to these two incidents (Mt.20:24, 26:8), the verb is used also at Mt.21:15 of the priests and scribes in the temple and at Lk. 13:14 of the synagogue ruler, who objects to Jesus' healing of a cripple on the sabbath. Mk.10:14 is the only instance in the Gospels where the verb has Jesus as its subject. At Mk.10:41, 14:4 it expresses people's blindness; at 10:14 it expresses Jesus' response to that blindness.

That blindness at 10:13 consisted of the disciples' refusal to let children be brought for Jesus to touch. The frequency with which Mark has Jesus either touch or being touched is noticeable: it is mentioned at 1:41, 3:10, 5:27,28,30,31, 6:56 (twice), 7:33, 8:22 and 10:13, all except the last reference in connection with healing. By contrast, Matthew has only nine such references and Luke eleven. In the account of the woman with the haemorrhage Jesus corrects the disciples' dismissal of his discernment by looking about him to see and identify the woman (5:31f: Mark uses the same two words, περιεβλέπετο ἰδεῖν which, we have noted already, indicate Jesus' special insight. Similarly, in 10:13-16 ἰδὼν represents Jesus' acknowledgment that those who brought the children, and the children themselves, recognise his authority in a way the disciples do not.

Jesus' indignation confirms his continuing exasperation, that his disciples had still not learned their lessons.

The term with which Jesus instructs his disciples to let the children come to him, μή κωλύετε (10:14), may be an allusion to an early baptismal rite (51). Even if this connection cannot be established with any certainty, Mark does seem to be using this incident to impress upon the reader the inclusive nature of the Christian community. It is for lepers (1:40-45), for Gentiles (7:24-30), for those who have been possessed by demons (1:21-28, 9:14-29), for the blind (8:22-26, 10:46-52), for the poor (12:41-44) and for children. All are to be welcomed, in contrast with the Pharisees, who complained about Jesus' disciples over the issue of fasting and plucking grain on the sabbath (2:18-28), and with the disciples, who sought to prevent outsiders and children from approaching Jesus.

The disciples' blindness required the full force of Jesus' annoyance, the clearest of his instructions (μή κωλύετε) and the directness of one of his pronouncement sayings (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν at 10:15) to bring home to them the error of their ways.

#### b) Text

Two textual matters are of some significance. First, B.Metzger (52) points out that in some texts the αὐτοῖς of 10:13 is clarified to show that the disciples' rebuke was aimed at those who were bringing the children and not at the children themselves. Such a reading would present the disciples in a slightly better light. However, Jesus' statement and instruction (10:14f.) imply that behind

the disciples' rebuke of the adults lies their dismissal of the children as well.

Secondly, some texts have Jesus rebuking (ἐπιτίμησας) as well as being indignant with the disciples. Mark has already used the verb to describe Jesus' personal rebuke of Peter (8:33), and there is no good reason for not using it again. However, Metzger's conclusion (53) is that its appearance in some manuscripts of 10:13-16 is due to the reference in 10:13-16 to the disciples' rebuke: its inclusion twice in this episode would then match its two appearances in 8:32f.

c) Matthew 19:13-15 and Luke 18:15-17

There are several differences from the Markan text in the Matthaean and Lukan parallels which are of only minor significance for this thesis (54). All three evangelists record the disciples' rebuke, Jesus' instruction and his counsel on how to enter the kingdom. Matthew adjusts the meaning of Jesus' counsel from a matter of perception (welcoming the kingdom like a child) to a matter of behaviour (turning and becoming like children).

Neither Matthew nor Luke mention Jesus' indignation, and both play down the Markan contrast between the disciples' off-hand rejection of the children and Jesus' warm embracing of them, Luke by omitting the embrace altogether and Matthew by recording only that Jesus touched them. Furthermore, neither of them refers to Jesus' sight (ὄψων), thus ignoring the Markan stress on both Jesus' supernatural insight and his disciples' spiritual dullness.

d) The Meaning of 10:13-16

The interesting question about the precise meaning of 10:15a (does ὡς παιδίον mean "as a child welcomes the kingdom" or "as you welcome a child"?) does not affect the general view of this passage as one that further denigrates the disciples and further enhances the notion of Jesus' divine sonship. The indignation of Jesus at 10:14 underlines three aspects of this double perspective.

First, the children provide Jesus with a human and tangible illustration of his claim at 8:33, that Peter and the disciples think differently from himself and, therefore, by implication, from God. They should have known better: not only had Jesus made the same point in 9:33-37, but the Old Testament is full of references to the people of Israel as God's children, beloved of God, eg. Hos.3:1, 11:1, Is.54:13, 63:8f, Ps.8:2. The last two texts have a particular bearing on Mk.10:13-16. In Is.63:8-9 the prophet talks of God as one who would deliver the children from all tribulation (as in the Markan passages Jesus' touch was intended to be seen as a sign of his power to protect and save from illness and tormenting spirits), and who would take and lift them up (ἀνέλαβεν and ὑψώσεν in the LXX) as Jesus did at Mk.10:16 (ἐναγκαλισάμενος and κατευλόγει). Furthermore, Is.63:9 refers to God's redeeming activity (ἐλυτρώσατο in the LXX, as at Is.29:3) in the same way that Jesus is depicted at Mk.10:45 as a redemption (λυτρῶν). In Ps.8:2 it is the children who lead God's praises, as in Mk.10:15 it is they who lead the way in welcoming God's kingdom. On all sides, then, the disciples stand convicted of culpable ignorance: having been closest to Jesus, they might have been expected to be first in understanding his person and mission. As it is, outsiders like the leper, the woman with a haemorrhage, the

Syrophoenician woman, Bartimaeus and now the children lead them in faith and enthusiasm.

Secondly, Jesus' relationship with the children echoes God's relationship with the children of Israel, as we have seen. Mk.10:13-16 is another example of the ways in which Old Testament allusions reinforce not only divine approval for Jesus' words and deeds but also the divine origin of them. In 9:37 that origin is made explicit, as Jesus talks of "the God who sent me". Jesus' love for the children is as God's. As at Hos.11:9 God's holiness is expressed in the restraint of his anger, so in Mk.10:13-16 the distinction is drawn between Jesus' warm embrace of the children and the disciples' cold and harsh rejection of them: they are only too human. Jesus' stern rebuke of the disciples expresses God's anger at their lack of understanding. However, the aorist tense of ἠγανάκτησεν suggests that Jesus' anger was not an all-consuming emotion: rather it was directed at a particular group on a particular occasion. The disciples are still given opportunity to repent and see the truth, as God is also prepared both to express and set aside his anger (Hos.11:1-9).

Thirdly, the opportunity, which Jesus affords his disciples, and his persistence with them, in spite of their obvious failings, match the openness he displays to outsiders and people in need. His indignation at 10:14 alerts his disciples to the nature of the community which was forming about him. There were to be certain principles and values, as Mk.10:1-12 on marriage and 11:22-25 on prayer, faith and forgiveness show, but the community's first attitude towards outsiders was to be one of openness and welcome. Wherever the disciples seek to restrict Jesus' activity, as at 1:35-38, 5:31, 9:38-41, Jesus has to correct and, as 10:13-16 illustrates, sometimes reprimand them.

In Jesus' rebuke to the disciples Mark seems to be signalling Jesus' distinctness from both the closed monastic communities, such as at Qumran, and the company of itinerant preachers who trod the same path as he, south from Galilee {55}. Both the communities and the preachers presented a moral and social challenge to the established authorities, and Jesus' teaching and values converge at times with theirs. However, unlike the communities, he encourages an openness to the world, and, unlike the itinerant preachers, he encourages the role of children {56}.

The matter merited Jesus' indignation, because the disciples' behaviour at 10:13 was a sign of their total ignorance about Jesus and his mission, and because the future of the communities who looked to Jesus for their inspiration was at stake. The Church had to decide whether to remain as yet one more of a number of exclusive sects within Judaism or to exercise its ministry among Gentiles as well as among Jews. The various outsiders and "little people" who are won to Jesus' cause and his own expressions of anger at his opponents' and companions' failures to recognise the nature of his work combine to keep those two aims in focus.

**6. Mk.11:12-25 The Cursing of the Tree and the Cleansing of the Temple (Mt.21:12-22, Lk.19:45-48)**

The intercalation of the temple incident within the two parts of the episode of the fig-tree suggests that we should treat these two stories as one unit {57}. In neither of them does Mark make any



explicit reference to Jesus' anger. However, from the verbal actions, which characterise the two events (ἐκβάλλειν at 11:15 and ἐξηράμμενην at 11:20), we may assume that the anger of Jesus was present and active (58).

The significance of this passage in the unfolding of the drama is that the withering of the tree is the only miracle which Jesus performs in Jerusalem, and that the temple features largely in the charges laid against Jesus at his trial (14:58) and crucifixion (15:29). It also follows on from his entry into Jerusalem and so constitutes his first activity in the capital city.

#### a) Context

The περιβλεψάμενος of Mk.11:11 prepares the reader for a significant perception, and the combination of the cursing of the fig-tree and the cleansing of the temple constitutes one of Jesus' sharpest judgments against his opponents, in this instance the Chief Priests and Scribes. Both fig-tree and temple were symbols of Israel's worth in the Old Testament; Jesus turns them into signs of judgment.

W.R.Telford (59) has identified five Old Testament passages which used figs and fig-trees as expressions of God's wrath -- Jer.8:13, Is.28:3f, Hos.9:10-16, Mic.7:1, Joell:7,12. The closest of the five, linguistically, is Hos.9:10-16, where the prophet records God as "driving out" (ἐκβάλλειν in the LXX) the rulers of God's house, because of their wickedness: he describes the withering of Ephraim's roots ( τὰς ῥιζὰς ἐξηράνωθη in the LXX), so that it will no longer bear any fruit. Mark, too, uses ἐκβάλλειν (11:15), ἐξηράμμενην ἐκ ῥιζῶν (11:20) and a declaration on the tree's fruitlessness

(11:14). Jesus' condemnation of the temple practices echoes the prophet's charge of disobedience, as the quotations of Is.56:7 and Jer.7:11 at Mk.11:17 indicate. Furthermore, Jeremiah's denunciation of Judah (Jer.8:13), as a fig-tree with no figs, occurs in the same temple sermon which contains the complaint that God's house has become a den of thieves.

It is clear, then, that the central features of Mk.11:12-25 echo well known parts of the Old Testament {60}, although Mark uses the allusions in his own distinctive way and to target Jesus' judgment particularly on the Priests. Other features of the passage resonate similarly with the Old Testament and Rabbinical writings, as Telford has shown {61):-

i) Mal.4:6 prophesied that God would smite the land if the message of Elijah was not attended to. Mark has made it clear at 6:14-29, 9:11-13 that the authorities had already worked their perverse will on the Baptist. The cursing of the fig-tree heralds the destruction of the temple and the smiting of the land, which are foretold in the apocalyptic discourse (Mk.13:3-34).

ii) Is.2:2 predicted that God's house would be placed on the top of the mountains and be lifted high above the hills, for the nations to come to it. Mark refers to the temple as a place of prayer for all the nations (11:17 quoting Is.56:7) and at 11:23 associates the removal of mountains with the power of prayer.

iii) A targum on Job2:11 {62} sees in the withering of trees an omen of misfortune, which in Mark's Gospel Jesus' passion amply fulfils.

iv) Zech.3:11 connects the paradisaical picture of the people of Israel seated in peace under their vine and fig-trees with God's instructions to the high-priest, Joshua/Jesus, and with his impending

judgment. Mark's juxtaposition of the fig-tree story and the parable of the vineyard (12:1-12) might suggest that he had the flavour of such a passage in mind.

v) Mal.3:1ff. looks forward to God's visitation of the temple to cleanse the sons of Levi, and Jesus' visit to the temple is frequently referred to as a cleansing. The irony of this allusion is that, while in Mal.3:1 God is hailed as the one whom people seek (ὅν ὑμεῖς ζητεῖτε in the LXX), at Mk.11:18 the priests and scribes seek (ἐζητοῦν) Jesus, but to kill and not to welcome him.

It is worth noting also that the cleansing of the temple was a central part of the Maccabaeian campaign, as 1Macc.4:36-61, 2Macc.10:1-8 testify.

The temple, which figured by implication through the person of the priest in the story of the leper and by reference in the controversy over the disciples' plucking grain on the sabbath, now becomes the central focus of Jesus' condemnation. At 13:2 he forecasts its destruction; at 14:58 the charge, that he himself was intending to destroy it, turns the trial before the Sanhedrin against him; at 15:29f. it features in the mockery of Jesus by the passers-by; at 15:38 the temple curtain is torn in two, as both a judgment on the failure of the temple to live up to its calling and as a signal that from now on access to God was to be direct and devoid of hierarchical and ritual obstacles (63).

Lastly, it may be significant that the verb ξηραίνειν and its derivatives occur twice in 11:20f. It had occurred twice also at 4:16f, where, as at 11:20, Mark emphasises that the roots have withered away. In the parable of the Sower, as in 11:12-25, the expression signifies the judgment on those who do not keep faith. By way of contrast, in 3:1-6 a withered limb is healed, and at 5:29 the woman's flow of blood is quenched (ἐξράνθη). In the light of these

two healings the withering of the fig-tree is to be seen as stern and ironic judgment: whereas unhealthy limbs and bodies could be healed, apparently healthy bodies, which actually were sick at heart, could be condemned. The Jesus who had power and authority to heal had the same power and authority to convey God's judgment.

b) Text

The main textual interest revolves round the verses which seek to explain the withering of the tree, i.e. 11:22-25. As Telford has pointed out (64), 11:25 could be influenced by the Matthaean emphasis on forgiveness (Mt.6:15), especially as the phrase *πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς* is Matthaean rather than Markan. Furthermore, Telford has suggested (65) that the grammatical constructions of 11:24-25 are also un-Markan. It is possible, then, that these verses were added partly because of their loose connection with the temple (being on the mountain as at Is.2:2 and as a place of prayer as at Is.56:7) and partly because Jesus' savage attack on the fig-tree was difficult to explain. However, it is noticeable that these verses do bring together three of the main characteristics of Jesus' ministry and, therefore, of the messianic communities: faith, prayer and forgiveness. Jesus has been portrayed as master of all of them: through faith he quelled the storm on the lake (4:35-41), exposing the disciples' lack of faith; through prayer he healed the boy (9:14-29), again highlighting the failure of his disciples; with authority he forgave the paralysed man his sins (2:1-12), shaming the murmurings of the Scribes.

Commentators have struggled to make sense of the cursing of the fig-tree and have suggested that it could be a later and graphic

adaptation of an original parable, such as that found at Lk.13:6-9. However, it is just as, if not more, likely that the Lukan parable was itself intended to replace and correct the Markan story by suggesting that the fig-tree be given another chance to bear fruit. The point of the Markan account is that Israel has had plenty of opportunities already and has spurned them, as it will soon turn its back again on its saviour by crucifying him. The sharp and uncompromising nature of 11:12-25 was intended to be evidence of God's judgment at work.

c) Matthew 21:12-22 and Luke 19:45-48

Luke omits the story of the fig-tree altogether, and his account of the temple incident is shortened considerably; as Telford has shown {66}, Luke's references to the temple are both more frequent and more positive than Mark's.

Matthew retains both parts of the Markan passage but has the fig-tree episode follow on from the temple incident, with the consequence that the withering of the tree is effected instantaneously (Mt.21:19). He omits the Markan prohibition on carrying equipment or vessels through the temple precincts, possibly because he found the Markan meaning imprecise or because he shied away from denouncing all temple ritual. He also alters the point of Jesus' action in the temple. In the Matthaean account the antagonism of the Priests and Scribes is to Jesus' healings and to the cries of "Hosanna" from the children, while in Mark their reaction is to Jesus' teaching.

Both Matthew and Luke, in quoting Is.56:7, omit the reference "for all the nations", which Mk.11:17 includes. Mark seems to be drawing special attention to the place of the Gentiles at this point.

In permitting the court of the Gentiles to be used only for commercial activity, the Priests were offending one of the cardinal features of Israel's tradition, that their faith and temple were to be for all the peoples (67). Their refusal to facilitate this amounted to disobedience and faithlessness. The incident in the temple and the cursing of the fig-tree express God's judgment in vivid and graphic form, endorsed ironically at the crucifixion, when it is a Gentile soldier who recognises Jesus for what he is, the son of God.

d) The Meaning of 11:12-25

Mark's account of the temple incident reminds us of the astounding and terrifying effect Jesus had on his audience: the Priests fear and the crowd is awe-struck (ἐφοβοῦντο ἔ, γρ ... ἐξεπλήσσετο) at 11:18, neither of which reactions is recorded in the Matthaean and Lukan parallels, but both of which occur in other parts of Mark's Gospel (4:41, 16:8, 1:22). The focus of Jesus' challenge is now narrowed down to his assault, verbal and physical, on the temple and its officers. The ferocity of his challenge, coupled with its social and ecclesiological implications (68), served to maintain Jesus' integrity and initiative, in the face of the most powerful of his opponents, and to place the Priests at the forefront of the plot to have Jesus killed.

His vigorous action, then, establishes two principles, which we have encountered already, and which will dominate the account of his passion: first, the nature and target of God's judgment on the house of Israel in general and the Priests in particular, and, secondly, the enigmatic character of Jesus who comes close to his companions and

interlocutors but remains distant at the same time.

i) God's Judgment

The severity of the judgment, expressed in the cursing of the fig-tree and the disturbance in the temple, is emphasised in Mark by the evocative nature of the two symbols. The tree could stand for the prosperity of the people of Israel (Dt.8:8, Is.36:16), and the temple was the visible expression of the Jews' faith and outlook. In the space of twenty four hours Jesus undermined the imagery of the one and violated the precinct of the other. The offensiveness of his action is increased by the details, that it was not the season for figs anyway, and that no equipment was to be carried through the temple (thereby prohibiting either the temple's commercial activity or its very ritual (69)). The harshness of Jesus' action reflects the Markan view, that because of the perverse stubbornness of the Jewish authorities there could be no reform of the system: there had to be complete change. In 11:12-25 there is no hint of compromise: the fig-tree is destroyed, and Jesus' symbolic action in the temple is later seen as evidence of his intent to destroy it also, as the false witnesses observe (14:58).

The verbal links with the parable of the Sower further endorse the element of judgment, as the appearance of ῥιζᾶ and ξηραίνεῖν in both accounts suggests. Like the seed on rocky ground, which perished after a promising and enthusiastic start, Israel is convicted, in the story of the fig-tree, of failing to bear fruit. The reference in both episodes to "seasons" (καίροι) suggests also that the failure of the tree to produce figs out of season is a graphic illustration of the rootless people's stumbling in a time of persecution (4:17).

On whom, then, was the judgment targeted? The temple incident indicates that, above all, Jesus was aiming his words at the Priests, who from this moment onwards become his chief antagonists and the prime movers in securing his execution. It is likely also that the national identity of the fig-tree with Israel encompasses all of Jesus' opponents in his denunciation. However, at this particular point in Mark's narrative, it is the Priests and Scribes who are mentioned explicitly. The disciples, too, as Jesus' companions may also be included in the judgment: Mark makes a point of informing the reader that both the disciples and the Priests heard what Jesus had said (11:14,18), and the reasons for the judgment apply, as we shall see, to both the disciples and the opponents. Jesus exposes their deficiencies in three main areas.

First, Mark, alone of the evangelists, registers the quotation from Is.56:7 in full (11:17): the temple is to be a house of prayer for all the nations. Matthew and Luke omit the second part of the statement. The commercial activity in the court of the Gentiles made it impossible to fulfil the requirement, thus calling into question the whole basis and ethos on which the temple was being run. Mark emphasises not only that Gentiles should be included in the temple's liturgical function, but that already they have taken leading roles in the presentation of Jesus as the Christ: the centurion's claim (15:39) about Jesus' divine sonship will confirm Mark's assertion and his judgment. Furthermore, the "many" ( πολλῶν) for whom Jesus' life was ransomed (10:45) and his blood shed (14:24) denoted sinners and Gentiles (70). Mark's complaint is that the Priests acknowledged the Gentiles only for the commercial and economic benefits they could bring. The disciples, too, found it difficult to accept people who were not of their particular background and ilk, as 9:38-41, 10:13-16



have demonstrated.

Secondly, in his explanation to his disciples (11:23), Jesus raises with them the importance of a faith in which the heart shows no hesitation ( μὴ διακριθῆ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ ). The disciples and the opponents of Jesus have already been convicted of stubbornness of heart, and it is this persistent refusal to perceive the truth about Jesus which will result in his crucifixion, which in turn will express God's judgment on their blindness. The fig-tree and the temple episodes announce the head-on confrontation that will now work its relentless course. Jesus, like all true prophets, will eventually be vindicated, as the sack of Jerusalem and the temple in the Roman war 66-70 AD. will demonstrate. For now, however, that assurance is a matter of faith and perception, in which both disciples and opponents are lacking.

Thirdly, the three great qualities referred to in 11:22-25, faith, prayer and forgiveness are implicitly contrasted with the fruitlessness and faithlessness of the fig-tree and with the blatant hypocrisy of temple worship. A similar point is made in Jesus' conversation with the scribe (12:28-34), where Jesus agrees with the scribe's assertion, that love of God and of neighbour are far superior to burnt offerings and sacrifices: again, the temple is made insignificant by the qualities of faith. Both the Scribes and the disciples had failed in matters of forgiveness (2:1-12, 9:33-37, 10:35-45), and the Priests failed to establish the temple as a place of prayer, as the disciples were unable to heal also because they did not pray (9:14-29). On all three counts, then, Jesus' disciples and opponents stand convicted. Jesus' uncompromising condemnation of both the fig-tree and the temple underlines the central importance of the same three points for an understanding of his gospel and of the

communities he brought into being.

ii) Jesus' Enigmatic Character

At each point of conflict Jesus is distanced from either his friends or his opponents or both. In 11:12-25 his distinctness from Priests, disciples and Israel is proclaimed in the strangeness of his cursing of the tree and the directness of his attack on temple practices. Ascriptions of "numinosity" {71} and "transcendence of categories" {72} have been accorded by commentators seeking to do justice to the enigmatic characterisation of Jesus in Mark. The Jesus of 11:12-25 illustrates well the validity of such claims. Jesus comes expectantly to the tree (11:13) and then shatters the expectations of his disciples by cursing it. He visits the temple, as the Messiah was expected to do (according to 1En.90:28f, Ps.Sol.17:30f), and even cleanses it, as Judas Maccabaeus had done (1Macc.4:36-41, 2Macc.10:1-18), but then he confounds the optimism by bringing its activity to a halt (11:16) and dies forecasting its destruction (13:2, 14:58, 15:38).

Jesus' action on the fig-tree and in the temple was an extension of the use of prophetic gesture, such as we see in Isaiah's running naked through the streets of Jerusalem (Is.20:3). He was, therefore, an enigma only to those who could or did not see the divine nature of his mission. His actions in 11:12-25 were warnings to all who had eyes to see of the consequences of their faithlessness, which, as the quotation from Is.56:7 indicated, was tantamount to apostasy. The prophetic nature of these actions is confirmed by the eventual destruction of the city and the temple, establishing his prophecies,

now fulfilled, as true. The savage judgment, implied in the withering of the fig-tree and the furore in the temple, is also an extension of the fierce rebuke administered to Peter (8:33) and of the oath sworn against the Pharisees (8:11-13). 11:12-25 represents not a departure from but a deepening of Mark's presentation of Jesus' prophetic and enigmatic character.

### **The Functions of Jesus' Anger in Mark's Gospel**

My consideration of the six Markan texts has led me to notice that the anger imputed to Jesus establishes his status as agent of God and highlights some of the fundamental characteristics of discipleship, which both his disciples and the authorities fail to see. However, anger is only one of several emotions ascribed to Jesus in Mark's Gospel, and we now have to examine the role it played in Mark's overall development of his character. I shall then consider the function of Jesus' anger in relationship to his adoption as God's son, to the tension between God's will and human culpability and to the Christian community.

#### a) The Development of Jesus' Character

Mark takes the reader on a journey from Jesus' vocation, outlined at his baptism (1:9-11), through a series of conflicts with both opponents and companions, to his death (15:37) and its aftermath.

The insights the author gives into Jesus' character and the state of his mind are intended to justify his vocation, as one who brings close God's kingdom and his righteousness. Consequently, while all the emotions ascribed to Jesus promote his "reliability" {73} and, therefore, trustworthiness as a person, his opponents are seen only in a resentful and bitter light, and his disciples, though starting as enthusiastic adherents to Jesus' way, soon find themselves being castigated for spiritual blindness and moral weakness. Only the individuals Jesus encounters on the way, who come to him for healing or counsel, show any trace of understanding who he is and what he is about.

Jesus, then, has powers of perception, where most others are blind and confused. He is prophetic {74}, speaking of God's kingdom with authority, unlike the Scribes, exposing hypocrisy and error, exercising control over satanic forces and diseases, and predicting events which, indeed, take place. He has compassion on the crowds and attends to the needs of individuals, both of which his opponents refuse to acknowledge. Jesus is grief-stricken at their failure to see or follow his teaching and at the destiny which awaits him.

Through all these glimpses into Jesus' character Mark encourages the reader to admire Jesus' teaching and perception, to be moved by his tenderness and to sympathise with his frustrations. Where, then, does his anger fit into Mark's understanding of his person?

I have identified four points at which the anger of Jesus' converges with other important features of Mark's development of Jesus' story.

i) Jesus' Anger demonstrates his Compassion for the "Little People"

In the six episodes under scrutiny in this thesis Jesus either sides with marginalised people or targets his judgment on authorities and individuals, whose main concern is to preserve their own status and power and so keep the "little people" in their place (75).

In 1:40-45 Jesus demonstrates his own fearlessness in the face of leprosy by touching the leper and so healing him. The force of his emotion both expresses his power over the wasting disease, as he drives it away, and signals his readiness to go beyond convention and law to touch and cure. In the process the inadequacy of the priestly system is exposed. Later on, at 14:3ff, Jesus will again be seen in close contact with leprosy, as he visits the house of Simon, the leper. In the controversy over the woman's anointing Jesus exposes the shallowness of his detractors' apparent concern for the poor, by reminding them that they could help the poor whenever they wished to (14:6), thus thrusting responsibility firmly back to them.

At 3:1-6 Jesus confronts the hypocrisy of the Pharisees' interpretation of the law on sabbath observance, which ignored the plight of the disabled man. At 8:11-13 it is the Pharisees again who are in Jesus' firing line, as they fail to see in the feeding incident on Gentile territory the activity of God. The disciples, too, fail to acknowledge the importance of the Gentile mission, in spite of the healings and feedings which took place among them (8:14-21).

10:13-16 shows how the "little people", in the shape of the children, in fact lead the way in understanding God's purposes, in contrast with those who thought themselves to be closest to the seat of divinity.

The rightful place of Gentiles in God's economy is underlined in

Mark's use of the quotation from Is.56:7 at 11:17: the temple is to be a light "for all the nations". Israel in general and the Priests in particular had forgotten or laid aside this part of their vocation.

All of these texts, then, illustrate the revolution of values, envisaged in Isaiah's apocalyptic vision (Is.24-27), in which God is praised (Is.25:4) for being "a help to the lowly", "a shelter for the poor" and "a deliverance from the wicked". H.Kee (76) sets Jesus' concerns for the poor, lowly and outcast in the context of 1st century Palestine, in which Hellenisation had led to the growth of great landowners, money-lenders, day labourers, speculators and debtors. He notes that Jesus' personal contacts are almost entirely with people from the artisan and unfavoured sections of society, and that the twelve also seem to be drawn from their ranks. It is, then, quite possible to see how Jesus' movement was perceived by the authorities to be a threat: they saw him undermining their authority and fuelling the aspirations of the disenchanting and disenfranchised.

The anger of Jesus operates against those in positions of power and on behalf of the poor and lowly. His belligerence, on occasions, is determined, as Rhoads and Michie have suggested (77), by the scale of the authorities' oppression.

ii) The Anger Of Jesus expresses the Urgency of his Message

H.Kee (78), among others, has noted the immediacy in Mark's style of writing, as in eg. the frequent uses of εὐθὺς, καὶ and historic presents. If, as is generally supposed, Mark's Gospel achieved its present shape and content 66-70 AD, then the writer was possibly working with some urgency. Jesus' prophecy about wars and devastation

was, actually, being fulfilled: the signs of the end were close at hand. The command to the disciples to go to Galilee (16:7), takes on added significance if Mark's writing is set in the midst of that war and its attendant turmoil: the end, or the beginning, was expected quickly.

Jesus' exhortation to the disciples to "watch and pray" assumes an urgency for Mark's readership as well as for an understanding of the dynamics of the Gethsemane experience. His anger also reinforces the urgency of getting a right perspective on both world events and the particular issues of healing, the law, mission, membership and leadership which are at stake in the six passages we have considered.

iii) The Anger of Jesus reinforces his Distinctness from both Friend and Foe

Mark presents Jesus as ἄνθρωπος, explicitly in the words of the centurion (15:39), and clearly also in the various descriptions of his state of mind throughout the Gospel. However, in the course of his ministry his separateness from the people who clamour for his presence or blood is continually emphasised. Unlike the Scribes, he teaches with authority (1:22); he attends to the heart of matters and not just to their superficialities, unlike the Pharisees and the Jerusalem Scribes (7:1-23); he heals the epileptic boy, which was beyond his disciples (9:14-29); he thinks as God and not as people, unlike Peter and the disciples (8:33); he traps the triad in their deceit (11:27-33).

In Mark's Gospel Jesus' anger reinforces his isolation and uniqueness. It is true that his disciples rebuke, as he does, at 8:32,

10:13, and that guests in Simon's house become indignant (ἀγανακτοῦντες) at 14:4 and rail against (ἐνεβριμῶντο) the woman who anointed him at 14:5. However, it is only Jesus' rebukes and indignations which are justified: wherever they are ascribed to others they are always corrected or reprimanded. Furthermore, it is Jesus alone who expresses ὀργή, who accuses others of "hardness of heart", and who utters a divine oath against the Pharisees. Others may exorcise and heal, as his disciples do at 6:11 and others as at 9:38-41, but it is Jesus alone who challenges the temple and legal authorities by appeal to the very Scriptures they hold sovereign.

iv) The Anger of Jesus endorses his Vocation to Suffer

Jesus' isolation from family, friend and foe becomes more pronounced in the Markan narrative as it approaches its conclusion. Jesus forecasts the desertion of his disciples and even of Peter (14:27-31), and he dies abandoned by God and people (15:34).

There is a "tragic inevitability" (79) about the final outcome of his ministry, from the moment of Peter's recognition of his messiahship onwards; indeed, that confession is followed by the first of the passion predictions. Rhoads and Michie (80) describe a Jesus who "knows the inevitability of his death and moves inexorably towards it", and they go on to bring out the graphic and tragic features of Mark's passion account: at every turn there is just the possibility of rescue, which in the end proves forlorn.

Jesus' anger is a major contribution to his isolation, as I have suggested, in that he attacks his own companions and the authorities with a passion that challenges their status and power and threatens to



undermine his own. His anger contains also a tragic element, in that it suggests a wounded love: behind his anger is a keen disappointment that those who should have been his allies in proclaiming the values of God's kingdom should turn out to be so faithless. Jesus goes to his death as "the one who broke no law and spoke no deceit" (Is.53:9), yet he is convicted by law-breakers and hypocrites and he is betrayed by a "trusted friend who had eaten his bread" (Ps.41:9). His anger expresses his huge disappointment that all this should happen, and right to the end, as his feverish struggle in Gethsemane illustrates (Mk.14:32-42), he prays that his disciples may turn from their ignorance and weakness, and that he may not have to fulfil his destiny.

Jesus' destiny is, in the end, beyond his control. He operates within the divine necessity (81) and at the behest of the God who sent him. In going the way of the heroes in Greek Tragedy, he conforms also to the obedience of the suffering servant (Is.53:2), who like Jesus was handed over (παρέδοθη) to death because of a people's iniquities. Jesus' anger speaks of his resistance to his fate, as the quotation of Ps.22:1 at 15:34 might indicate (82), and of his attempts to alter the course of events. He did not "go gentle into that good night but raged and raged against the dying of the light" (83).

Nevertheless, as we have seen, Jesus' anger was determined not only or even largely by his own plight. It registered his alignment with divine consciousness and judgment.

#### b) The Anger of Jesus as the Anger of God

In my analysis of the six texts I indicated how the expressions

of Jesus' anger could be seen as reflections of divine wrath. In the Old Testament the right to ὀργή is reserved to God alone and, on a few occasions, his agents. It is God who curses (ἐπιτιμᾶν in the LXX), as at Zech.3:3, Ps.9:5, and who becomes indignant, as at Wis.5:22, 4 Macc.4:21. It is God who swears the oath in his anger at Ps.95:11, and who will visit the temple, as at Mal.3:1.

The divine nature and origin of Jesus' anger are further underlined in the words and phrases, which Mark uses in conjunction with his descriptions of the anger. Jesus' sight at 3:5, 11:11 (περιβλεψάμενος), at 8:17 (γνοῦς) and at 8:33, 10:14 (ἰδῶν) is the seer-like vision characteristic of all the prophets (Is.6:1, Jer.:11f, Ezek.47:6) and of God himself (Is.29:15, Jer.7:11, Ps.33:13). His perception of both his disciples' and his opponents' hardness of heart (made explicit at 3:5, 8:17-21) is reminiscent of God's perception of the people of Israel at Is.6:10 and of Pharaoh's attitude towards Moses' requests in Exodus (where the obstinacy is attributed both to Pharaoh's moral weakness, at Ex.9:34, and to God's intervention, at Ex.9:12).

The content of our six passages provides another link between Jesus' anger and divine wrath. The leprosy in Mk.1:40-45 was treated as an evil spirit, which had to be exorcised and could only be exorcised by a power stronger than Satan, namely God (3:23ff.). We saw how in Num.12:1-15 (as, also, in 1Kgs.13:1-6), the disease both resulted from and was an expression of divine anger. It is possible that Jesus' anger in the story of the leper fulfils the same role in establishing Jesus' supremacy over both the disease itself and the legal practitioners, who could only confirm and not perform a cure.

In 3:1-6 it was the Pharisees' ignorance of the divine law which excited Jesus' anger. They had forgotten that behind the sabbath law

lay the covenant relationship between God and his people, through which they were offered salvation. The stubbornness of their hearts, which aroused Jesus' anger, consisted of their unwillingness to acknowledge Jesus' healing of the man's hand as an expression of such divine salvation.

In 8:11-21 Pharisees and disciples fail to understand Jesus' signs, just as the people of Israel forgot the wonders of God (Ps.78:43). The Pharisees were also testing Jesus at Mk.8:11, as Israel tested God at Ex.17:7. Again, the point at issue is not so much Jesus' power to perform signs and wonders but, rather, the origin and intention of the signs. For Mark they represent the activity of a God who would incorporate Israel in his mission, and their divine inspiration is underscored in Jesus' sharp retorts, which echo God's response to their testing of his patience (Ps.95:11) and to a people's stubbornness of heart (Ezek.12:2).

In 8:27-9:1 the rebuke Jesus administers to Peter and, by implication, to the disciples arises from their failure to understand how suffering had any role to play either in Jesus' messiahship or in their discipleship. Hints had already been dropped about Jesus' passion: at 2:20 he had talked of the bridegroom's forced removal ( $\alpha\pi\alpha\rho\theta\eta$ ), and his quotation at 8:18 of Ezek.12:2 might have reminded his hearers of the son of man's destiny to be lifted on men's shoulders as a spectacle to Israel (84). However, the disciples, for all their closeness to Jesus, did not understand the mystery of redemptive suffering (as contained in Is.53), just as they did not understand the mystery of God's kingdom and the various reactions to it in the parable of the Sower (especially at 4:13). The liberal smattering of allusions in Mark's account of Jesus' passion to Old Testament texts concerning the nature of innocent and redemptive

suffering {85} establishes both the eschatological significance of Jesus' desolation and the disciples' moral and spiritual blindness. Jesus suffers as the one God has handed over (παρέδωκεν) for our sins (Is.53:6), whom he will also justify for having served many well (Is.53:11).

In 10:13-16 it is again the Old Testament allusions which reinforce the divine origin of Jesus' approach to the children. To destroy the children was a most heinous offence (as Ps.137:9, Jer.6:11 indicate). Rather, children had the capacity to lead adults in the way of faith (as Ps.8:2, Is.63:8 show). Jesus' anger at the disciples preserves the centrality of the children's position in the life of faith and illustrates graphically the promise of Is.11:6 that a little child (παιδίον) should lead the people. His gesture is that of the prophet of God, speaking up on behalf of those who had no voice.

It is an even more pronounced gesture that we find in 11:12-25. Jer.20:16 referred to the "overturning" (κατέστρεψεν in the LXX) of cities in God's anger (ἐν θυμῷ in the LXX), and at Mk.11:15 Jesus similarly "overturns" (κατέστρεψεν) the tables of the vendors and money-changers. In his expulsion of them from the temple Jesus also echoes the action of God (Hos.9:15) in "driving out" (the same word ἐκβάλλειν is used in both texts) from his house the perpetrators of wickedness.

The six passages which denote Jesus' fury and displeasure support Mark's contention, that in Jesus we can see the activity of God. Along with the revelations of Jesus' divine vocation at his baptism and on the mount of the transfiguration, together with Jesus' declaration ἐγὼ εἰμι (14:62) and the centurion's claim (15:39), they show how that sonship is expressed in the face of faithlessness and perversity. The anguish he expresses towards Israel's leaders and his own

companions is mirrored in his own inner struggle, as he strives to avoid drinking the cup of wrath (86), addressing God as ἄββα (14:36): his prayer highlights both the price that God has decreed should be paid for human failing and the reality of his own divine sonship.

The darkness, which was forecast at 13:24f. and which coincided with the crucifixion at 15:33, confirms the divine origin of Jesus' indignations and judgments, echoing such passages as Ex.10:21, Ps.18:11, which depict darkness as a sign of God's punishment and wrath.

### c) God's Will and Human Culpability

The outcome of Jesus' inner struggle is that he submits to God's will. Mark makes a point of establishing that, despite appearances to the contrary, God is in control of events. The darkness and the rending of the temple curtain at the crucifixion are fulfilments of Jesus' prophecy in his apocalyptic discourse in ch.13; they are signs of God's judgment, and they are perpetrated by God.

J.R.Donohue (87) has commented on Mark's use of verbal passives to suggest the activity of God. The temple curtain was torn (15:38 ἐσχίσθη), the leper was cleansed (1:42 ἐκαθάρίσθη), the man's hand was restored (3:5 ἀπεκατέσταθη), a sign would not be given (8:12 δοθήσεται), the disciples' hearts were hardened (8:17 πεπωρόμενην). God's control is further emphasised, as A.J.Hultgren has shown (88), by reference to the Scriptures (καθὼς γέγραπται) concerning John the Baptist (1:2, 9:13), the hypocrisy of Jesus' opponents (7:6), the suffering of the son of man (9:12), his death (14:21) and the desertion by his disciples (14:27). Hultgren sees the

use of  $\delta\epsilon\tau$  in the same light (89): it establishes the notion of divine necessity concerning the passion (8:31), the coming of Elijah (9:11), the coming woes (13:7) and the proclamation of the gospel to all nations (13:10).

The assertion of God's initiative in sending Jesus (9:37) and raising him from the dead (16:6) was for the writers of the New Testament an apologetic necessity. The Old Testament writers had faced a similar difficulty in attempting to explain the devastation of Israel and the apparent success of godless and wicked people. For Mark, the issue was how to present as agent of God one who had met with only fragmentary success in his earthly life and who died the death of a blasphemer and revolutionary.

An important part of the answer in both instances was the ascription of anger to God in the Old Testament and to Jesus in Mark's Gospel. The anger of God explained the destruction of Jerusalem: his wrath had been incurred by the people's constant breaching of the covenant and spurning of his love. His anger also enabled him to hold the moral high ground, even when, as at Hos.11:9, action did not ensue: the anger preserved the principle, while the suppressing of it highlighted his love and allowed the people the opportunity to reform their ways. The anger of Jesus operates in a similar fashion: it preserves the integrity of his faith and understanding, and, by serving as a warning, it gives the authorities and the disciples a chance to reconsider their own faith. Only once does Jesus' anger issue in any physical action (11:15-18), and even there the action is token and by way of foretaste.

Jesus' anger, then, establishes his position as one who represents God's judgment on human failings; his restraint in anger invites people to consider again the will of God and reform their

ways. For all that God is in charge of events, humans are also responsible for them. The son of man's destiny is mapped out by the Scriptures, but the betrayer will still have to pay the price for his apostasy (14:21). Jesus' passion is pre-ordained, but the Priests are still held responsible for his death, and they, together with their system and the building they have corrupted, will perish in God's judgment.

Viewed from the human angle, Jesus' anger is an expression of extreme regret at the various contrary attitudes he encounters. It is a natural emotion, flowing from the misunderstanding and suspicion which confronted him, and it suggested that his opponents and the disciples were capable of better perception and performance.

Mark places his two interpretations side by side, as we have seen, and does not attempt to harmonise them. Ambiguity over interpretation is matched by uncertainty as to outcome. Are the women's flight and silence at the end of the Gospel evidence of the awe-inspiring effect of the resurrection {90}, or are they a further and final reminder of the failure of even Jesus' closest associates to comprehend his ministry and his death {91}? Similarly, Jesus' anger is capable of the two interpretations we have considered: it affords insight into God's inscrutable will, and it affirms human culpability in moral and spiritual shortcomings. The phrase 'hardness of heart', which has appeared in two of the texts we have been considering (3:5, 8:17), illustrates the point, with its allusions to the two accounts of Pharaoh's hardness of heart in Exodus: on occasions it is God who does the hardening as a demonstration of his sovereignty, and on occasions Pharaoh hardens his own heart as a sign of his moral weakness. Mark does not seek to resolve the tension between these two possibilities, because for him both are true. Both lie behind Jesus'

anger and his cross, as W.Kelber put it succinctly, "The cross is both the will of God and the fault of man. Human weakness and divine necessity belong together in inscrutable logic" (92).

d) The Anger of Jesus and the Christian Community

The final words in Mark's Gospel are addressed to the women for the attention of the disciples, who are assured that they will see Jesus in Galilee. In the course of this thesis I have attempted to show how the motif of sight is a recurring theme in Mark, and how frequently the disciples are presented as lacking in it. Even at the end of the Gospel there is no guarantee that they will see Jesus, because they still have to take for themselves the road to Galilee: in other words, they have to return whence they came, but now with a new insight into the matters in which Jesus has been instructing them.

The powerful signals which Mark has transmitted, particularly in the second half of his Gospel, suggest that he was writing to encourage followers of Jesus to begin to take those first significant steps. The route would not be easy; there would be trials and agonizings along the way, and there could be no absolute certainty as to the outcome. There was, however, Jesus' assurance that their pilgrimage would end in glory, and there were several indications of the effect on human lives and destinies of faith and trust in the purposes of God: after all, the kingdom and gospel of God were said to be close (1:14f.).

Mark's Gospel was composed, then, to highlight for church members and aspirants the benefits and struggles they could expect in following Jesus and to alert them to the values and qualities demanded of those who were seeking God's kingdom.



We shall now look again at the six passages which have portrayed Jesus' anger, in order to discern from them the features Mark was seeking to promote in his readers' discipleship. The sprinkling of allusions and references to the disciples' missionary and other endeavours suggest that Mark's purpose was apologetic and hortatory rather than purely historical.

i) 1:40-45

As indicated in my examination of this pericope, we cannot be sure of the precise target(s) of Jesus' anger in this incident. However, the two main possibilities are the satanic nature of the man's leprosy, as suggested by the exorcistic language (1:43), and the inadequacies of the ritual and social authority invested in the Priests (1:44).

On both these counts Jesus' anger, allied to his compassion for the leper, signalled to the Christian community the need to be open to all comers and to the cleansing activity of God. This is underlined further by the man's missionary enterprise in proclaiming the word about Jesus (1:45): defying the instruction of Jesus he might have been, but he was also fulfilling the role of a disciple. The silence demanded of him can be interpreted as a sign that a full revelation of Jesus' identity would not be possible until after his death, as the centurion's declaration (15:39) affirms. Mark's readers, standing like the centurion on the other side of Jesus' death, were now in a position to follow and take further the leper's lead, but they would need to broaden the narrow and restricted vision contained within the Jewish legal and ritual system.

ii) 3:1-6

The specific cause of Jesus' anger in this pericope is the dispute concerning sabbath observance. Jesus' complaint at the Pharisees' hardness of heart is a further reminder to would-be followers to keep their minds open to God's possibilities. The Pharisees were trained in the minutiae of the legal system, but they had forgotten the original intention of the sabbath law, which was to hallow the God of creation (Ex.20:8-11). What could be more respectful to God than to make whole what was diseased and so "do good"? As God made life, so Jesus was preserving it. The sabbath was also for recollecting God's mighty act of liberation at Israel's exodus from Egypt (Dt.5:12-15): the commandment of Dt.5:15 exhorts Israel to remember how God led the people out with a "mighty hand" and "an outstretched arm": at Mk.3:5 the man's outstretched and withered hand is made strong {93}.

Far from breaking the sabbath law, Jesus invites people to follow its original purpose even more intently. The anger is a warning to those in authority, that their attempts to hold on to power at all costs are likely to pervert the very system which upheld them: they will then be as guilty as Pharaoh in flouting God's saving purposes. The Christian community needed to avoid the legalism of the Pharisees and their associates.

iii) 8:11-21

In this pericope Jesus' anger is focussed on the signs which the Pharisees failed to acknowledge and the disciples failed to understand. 8:14-21 makes it clear that Jesus is referring in

particular to the two feeding incidents: he fed the people as God had fed Israel in the wilderness, and he established himself as the shepherd who would look after his people (6:34), as God had promised to do for Israel (Ezek.34:11-16).

The failure of the Pharisees and disciples was, first of all, one of faithlessness: they did not see or understand the hand of God at work in the feeding of the crowds. Secondly, there was a failure in mission. The Christian community needed to be constantly refreshed by new members. Jesus' exasperation with his disciples and the Pharisees on this occasion is an expression of judgment on the tendency of religious people to retreat from the pressures of life into like-minded clubs: such people could not bear the fruit expected of those called to seek the lost, bind up the broken and feed the hungry.

This new community of Jesus-followers was to consist, as 8:17-21 shows, of Gentiles as well as Jews. Mark underlines this complementarity at the end of his Gospel, where he applauds the courage of a Jew (Joseph of Arimathaea) at 15:43-47 and the perception of a Gentile (the centurion) at 15:39 {94}. Jesus' annoyance in 8:11-21 is caused by the unwillingness of both Pharisees and disciples to envisage a harmony between Jew and Gentile. The same point will be made, more graphically, in the account of the temple disturbance.

iv) 8:27-9:1

The rebuke to Peter highlights both the divine origin and nature of Jesus' ministry and the role of suffering in Jesus' messiahship. The Christian community is called to extend both aspects in their mission. The sharpness of Jesus' reprimand signals the immediacy of the task.

Jesus is the only person in the Gospel who consistently reflects

the thoughts of God. Others respond intermittently, like the disciples (1:16-20, 6:7-11), the crowds (3:30-35, 6:35-44, 8:1-10) and various individuals such as the leper (1:45) and Bartimaeus (10:46-52). Jesus' rebuke to Peter (8:33) declares both the extent of Peter's ignorance and Jesus' disappointment that what was possible for others seemed to be beyond Peter's grasp. The Christian community was to follow the examples of the crowd and those individuals rather than Peter.

The rebuke is also to be seen as an exhortation to the community to follow the way of Jesus and, therefore, to suffer. The significantly different approach to signs and wonders in Matthew and Luke sharpens the Markan perception, that discipleship consists, first and foremost, in suffering. The miracles in Mark are important more for the learning they bring of God's ways and the identity of Jesus than as mere demonstrations of power. Indeed, at 13:22 Jesus warns his disciples against false christs and prophets who would mislead people with "signs and wonders". Rather, they are to follow him in his passion. The exhortation to suffer (8:34-38) is repeated at 13:9: disciples will be handed over (*παράδωσουσιν* as Jesus was; they will experience family rejection (13:12), as he did; they will be hated by all (13:13), as Jesus was forsaken by all. The reward for following this road of anguish and pain is "to be saved" (13:13), as Jesus was raised: the passive voices indicate in both instances the initiative of God. The ambiguity of *σωθήσεται* at 13:13 is confirmation that the disciple, like Jesus himself, is to enter hostility and suffering with no obvious sign or guarantee of triumph, epitomised in Jesus' cry of abandonment from the cross (15:34). The only assurance which Mark gives the disciple is that Jesus has entered into the persecution and pain ahead of him: it is only in the suffering that his eyes will be opened.

v) 10:13-16

Jesus' indignation against his disciples in this episode heightens not only his frustration at their obstructiveness but also the role of children in the community of the redeemed.

The children serve two main purposes in Mark. First, they emit a signal to the Christian community about the importance of family obligations. Jesus' ministry had been itinerant, and many of his followers had given up the comforts and securities of home life to journey with him, as Peter reminds him (10:28). In ch.10 Jesus outlines the conduct expected of disciples in their domestic life. They are to honour God by maintaining their marriages {95} and upholding the importance of children. The gospel takes precedence over family commitments, as 10:28-30 shows, but it is noticeable that the reward for adherence to the gospel is expressed in terms of an increase in family joys (cf. Mt.19:29, Lk.18:29f, which both omit this aspect).

Secondly, the children are to be aligned with other "little people" as occasional actors in the Markan drama who, though outside the recognised authorities and parties, exercised the insight and leadership which were so woefully absent in the acknowledged power bases. Such a point may signify the social constitution of the Markan churches, and it may also have been meant as a warning to those churches to be alert to the faith and insights of people they were tempted to dismiss.

Yet again, then, Mark is calling the Christian community to be open-minded both towards those who were potentially its members, from whichever social classification they came, and towards the surprising

values of God's kingdom, which were likely to be in opposition to those of conventional practice.

vi) 11:12-25

Jesus' opposition to the values encouraged and enshrined by the priestly and legal system reaches its climax in his encounter with the Priests in the temple.

The issue for the Christian community concerns membership. By quoting the last part of Is.56:7, with its mention of the place of the nations in God's scheme of things, Jesus establishes the right of Gentiles to be admitted into membership of his community. The Priests restricted Gentile activity in the temple to commerce, just as the disciples also sought to keep out of their circle those who were not formally part of their group (9:38-41). The ferocity of Jesus' action in the temple and the devastation of the fig-tree signal the central and immediate importance of this issue in the life and development of the Church.

It is also possible that Mark is using this episode to counsel his community against dependence upon the Jerusalem leadership of the Church {96}. Jesus goes to Jerusalem only out of necessity; he prophesies its destruction; he undermines its social and commercial establishment; it is the Jerusalem authorities (the Priests, Scribes and Elders) who finally secure his death. Mark's account of Jesus' and his companions' departure from the city at 11:19 may have a metaphorical as well as geographical meaning: the Church's most fertile recruiting ground was to be away from the city and in the towns and villages of the north {97}. The negative light in which Jerusalem is cast would represent, then, the author's way of urging

his readers to dissociate themselves from both its Judaic origin and the Jerusalem leadership of the Church (cf. Luke-Acts, in which the Gentile mission and the Jerusalem leadership are maintained together).

If Mark wrote his Gospel in the midst of or shortly after the Jewish-Roman war of 66-70 AD, the social and political turmoil of those times gave an added sharpness to the Markan emphasis on faith in 11:22-24. Mark contrasts the faith, which is to be the hallmark of the Christian community, with the arid faithlessness of the temple Priests and the blindness of the disciples. Rhoads and Michie {98} have noticed how the first two types of ground in the parable of the Sower characterise Jesus' opponents and disciples: the opponents are likened to the seed along the pathway, hearing the word, but having its meaning snatched away from them, while the disciples are like the seed on the rocky ground, having no root and in time of crisis falling away. By way of contrast, those who hear the word of God and welcome it will bear fruit (4:20). The ruthlessness of Jesus' action in the temple and on the fig-tree exposes the faithlessness of his opponents and disciples, and it alerts the Christian community to the demands faith makes of it as well as to the rewards expected from it.

My review of these six passages has suggested that Mark uses Jesus' anger to highlight some of the predominant aspects of discipleship. The Christian community was called to heal, exorcise, proclaim, do good, open its doors to Gentiles as well as to Jews, have compassion on the lost and broken, seek and trust in the will of God, follow the way of the cross, be humble enough to learn from the children and the younger in faith and look for authority not so much to Jerusalem as to Galilee. The effect of Jesus' anger on Mark's readership was to highlight the importance of these aspects of

Christian discipleship and warn against their neglect.

#### NOTES

1. For example, the darkness mentioned at 15:33 echoes the plague of darkness at Ex.10:21ff, which was to last three days, and the darkness which was part of God's anger and judgment in Ps.18:7-15. The tearing of the temple curtain at 15:38 may echo the rending (same word,  $\sigma\chi\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ , in the LXX) of the Mount of Olives at Zech.14:4 in a passage (Zech.13-14), which refers also to the withdrawal of light (Zech.14:6), the rejection of the prophet by his parents (Zech.13:3), the cutting off of false prophets and unclean spirits (Zech.13:2), the panic ( $\acute{\epsilon}\chi\sigma\tau\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$  which would seize the people (Zech.14:13) and the strife between neighbours (Zech.14:13) -- all themes from the Markan apocalypse and passion.

2. I shall be attempting to establish not so much any chronological priority or dependency among the Synoptic evangelists as the different Matthaean and Lukan perceptions, which will serve to highlight the distinctively Markan emphases.

3. For example, A.Farrer, A Study in St.Mark (Dacre 1951), pp.65ff.makes out a case for Mark's developing each pericope on the basis of the last but one.

J.Dewey, The Literary Structure of the Controversy Stories in Mk.2:1-3:6 in W.Telford, The Interpretation of Mark (Fortress SPCK



1985), pp.109ff. examines the chiasmic arrangement of the five pericopae contained in those verses.

4. W.Wrede, Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien (Eng.transl. J.C.Greig Cambridge/London, James Clarke 1971).

5. F.J.Matera, Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies (Paulist Press 1986), p.65 has observed that the centurion's declaration at 15:39 was a result of his standing on the other side of Jesus' death. Now that Jesus has died his disciples, too, will be able to see, as 16:6 indicates.

6. D.Nineham, St.Mark (Penguin 1963), p.204.

7. Jesus finds himself being tested (πειραζόμενος) at 8:11, 10:2 and 12:15, on all occasions by the Pharisees (if they are included in the text of 10:2). The satanic testing at 1:12-13 is carried over into the other three texts, where at 8:13 it is met by Jesus' oath, at 10:5 by Jesus' comment on their hardness of heart, and at 12:15 by his complaint about their hypocrisy.

8. F.J. Matera, The Prologue as the Key to Mark, JSNT 34 (1988), p.8 notes the influence on Mk.1:12-13 of Ezek.14:15's reference to wild beasts as the bearers of terror and desolation.

9. B.Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (United Bible Societies 1971/5), p.76 assumes that the similar expressions in Mt.8:1, Lk.5:12 argue for the retention of γουυπετων in Mark.

10.T.Budesheim, Jesus and the Disciples in Conflict with Judaism, ZNW 62 (1971), p.194.

11.B.Metzger, op.cit, pp.76f.

12.K.Lake, ΕΜΒΡΙΜΗΣΑΜΕΝΟΣ and ΟΡΓΙΣΘΕΙΣ, quoted in W.Lane, The Gospel according to Mark (Marshall, Morgan and Scott 1974), p.84 n.141.

13.D.Nineham, op.cit, pp.86ff.

14.H.C.Kee, The Community of the New Age (SCM 1977), p.35.

15.It is noticeable that Luke's Gospel begins and ends in Jerusalem, unlike Mark's, which starts by the Jordan and concludes looking towards Galilee. Luke-Acts' concern is to commend the gospel of Jesus to the cities of the Roman Empire, and the urban setting for the first of Jesus' healings after his missionary charge to the first disciples establishes that principle.

16.Num.12:8 states that God has spoken with Moses "mouth to mouth and not in riddles", a declaration echoed at Mk.4:11, where Jesus announces that the disciples have been given the mystery of things while other people are given only parables, and at 8:32, where Mark informs the reader that Jesus spoke "plainly".

17.Most scholars accept the independence and inner cohesion of 2:1-3:6, among them J.Dewey, op.cit, who argues strongly for the self-contained chiasmic structure of the five pericopae as a reason for considering them as parts of a single unit.

18.J.Dewey, op.cit, p.113 traces the linear development from the internal murmurings of the Scribes at 2:6f, via the Scribes' and Pharisees' questioning of Jesus' disciples at 2:16 and their direct questioning of Jesus himself at 2:18, to their attempts to trap him at 3:2. Such development accounts for Jesus' strong reaction at 3:5, which then becomes his response to the rising tide of criticism and misunderstanding, which itself reaches a climax in the plot to kill him at 3:6.

19.S.H.Smith, The Role of Jesus' Opponents in the Markan Drama, NTS 35 (1989), p.168.

20.S.H.Smith, op.cit, p.169.

21.W.R.Telford, The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree

(Sheffield 1980), p.135:

22.V.Taylor, The Gospel according to St.Mark (Macmillan 1952), p.222.

23.V.Taylor, op.cit, pp.222f.

24.S.Johnson, The Gospel according to St.Mark (A.and C.Black 1960), p.70.

25.Similarly, Luke refers to the indignation (ἀγανακτῶν) of the leader of the synagogue in the story of the crippled woman, who was healed on the Sabbath (Lk.13:10-17).

26.E.Schweizer, The Good News according to Mark (SCM 1971), p.74.

27.T.A.Burkill, Anti-Semitism in St.Mark's Gospel, Novum Testamentum 3 (1959), p.47 n.2 has shown that Rabbis permitted healings to take place in emergencies (as S-B vol.1 p.623).

A.B.Kolenkow, Healing Controversy as a Tie between Miracle and Passion Material for a Proto Gospel, JBL 95 (1976), p.636 notes that Jesus' command to the man to "raise his arm" was not an infringement of the law, unlike the deed of healing itself.

28.T.A.Burkill, op.cit, p.47 n.2.

29.J.R.Donohue, A Neglected Factor in the Theology of Mark, JBL 101 (1982), pp.564ff. has shown how the phrase καθὼς γέγραπται indicates divine origin and inspiration. he adds that the use of the passive voice in verbs is a similar circumlocution, citing, among other examples, ἐκαθάρισθη at 1:42, ἀπεκατέσταθη at 3:5.

30.A.Farrer, op.cit, pp.73ff. among others has commented on the relationship between Mk.3:1-6 and Ex.4:1-9.

31.A.B.Kolenkow, op.cit, pp.623f.

32.A.B.Kolenkow, op.cit, p.63.

33.S.H.Smith, op.cit, p.179.

34.W.L.Lane, op.cit, p.278 notes that the only other occurrences

of a curse in the New Testament are at Heb.3:211, 4:3,5, which all quote Ps.95:11.

35.E.Schweizer, op.cit, pp.154ff.

36.Significantly, in the Matthaean parallel to the parable of the Sower, the motif of misunderstanding appears not in Jesus' aside to the disciples but as part of the explanation of the parable (Mt.13:19).

37.S.Johnson, op.cit, p.143 quotes S-B vol.1 p.728 and notes Mark's menacing lack of explanation for the term ζυμῆ, in comparison with Matthew's clarification of its meaning as "teaching" at Mt.16:12. He goes on to connect it with the use of unleavened bread at the Passover in Ex.12:15, 13:7, where the use of leaven is banned and leads to expulsion: leaven, then, in Mk.8:15 could carry with it an evil connotation.

38.H.C.Kee, op.cit, p.92.

39.See n.37 above.

40.S.Johnson, op.cit, pp.142f quoting the commentary "Pesikta Rabbati" in H.L.Stack and P.Billerbeck, Kommentar zum NT aus Talmud und Midrash vol.1 (Munich 1922-28), p.641.

41.S.H.Smith, op.cit, pp.161ff. has sensed the tragic inevitability of Jesus' passion: from the moment of the first controversy in 1:21-28 Jesus has been on a collision course with his companions and the authorities. Smith has noted also (p.180) that Jesus' first passion prediction follows the occasion of Peter's recognition of his messianic identity, in the same way that in Greek Tragedy the moment of recognition is followed by the execution of the inevitable destiny.

42.In 10:2 there is in most manuscripts a reference to the Pharisees as the ones who put the question to Jesus.

43.D.Nineham, op.cit, p.225.

44.Mt.13:19 transfers the incomprehension motif from the disciples to the people in the parable who are represented by the seed along the pathway.

45.J.Marcus, Mark 4:10-12 and Marcan Epistemology, JBL 103/104 (1984) pp.564f. claims that the mystery at Mk.4:11 is about God's kingdom, and he links the mystery with Qumran and pseudepigraphical texts, which refer to God's division of humanity into 'blind' and 'illuminati' (cf.1QH5:36, 1En.41:1).

46.D.Nineham, op.cit, pp.227f. notes the eschatological framework within which the necessity of Jesus' suffering is cast. He cites 2Chron. 36:16, Is.53, 2Macc.7:37f. and 4Macc.6:27 as texts warning of the mockery and suffering of God's agents.

47.Luke does, however, have Jesus rebuking James and John after their stated wish to punish the Samaritan village for its refusal to welcome them (Lk.9:55).

48.V.Robbins, Jesus the Teacher (Fortress 1984), p.210, among others.

49.P.G.Davis, Mark's Christological Paradox, JSNT 35 (1989) pp.6f.

50.P.G.Davis, op.cit, p.14 notes that, unlike the title 'son of man', the title 'son of God' and its analogues are always predicates; he claims that this establishes 'son of God' as the definitive title for Jesus, which transcends all others.

51.H.C.Kee, op.cit, p.92 cites Acts8:36, 10:47 in support of this association because of the phrase  $\tau\acute{\iota}$   $\kappa\acute{\omega}\lambda\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$ ; in connection with baptism.

52.B.Metzger, op.cit, p.105.

53.B.Metzger, op.cit, p.105.

54. For example, Mt 19:31's addition of προσεῦξῆται to the request for Jesus to put his hands on the children and Lk. 18:15's use of βρέφη for παιδία

55. G. Theissen, Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity (Fortress 1977), p. 10ff. has noted the itinerant and charismatic nature of Jesus' and the early Church leaders' ministries.

56. Of the three passages suggesting Jesus' hostility towards family life, 3:31-35 concerned only his own family and 10:28-30, 13:12-13 were making the general point that the call of the Gospel took priority over all other claims.

57. D. Nineham, op.cit., pp. 298ff. and W. R. Telford, op.cit., p. 40.

58. As both words convey God's judgment and anger at Hos. 9:14-17, Ps. 80:8 (ἐκβάλλειν), Jer. 12:4 (ξηραίνειν).

59. W. R. Telford, op.cit., pp. 140-155.

60. W. R. Telford, op.cit., pp. 14ff. comments on the links between Mk. 11:12-25 and Jeremiah's temple sermon in Jer. 7-8.

61. W. R. Telford, op.cit., pp. 116-140, 177-192.

62. W. R. Telford, op.cit., p. 192.

63. D. Nineham, op.cit., p. 430 notes the impossibility of being certain as to which of the curtains is meant: the one before the holy place, or the one before the holy of holies. If it is the former, then Mark would be emphasising the breaking down of the barrier between Jew and Gentile; if it is the latter, then he would appear to be approving the replacement of the temple and its system altogether. 14:58 suggests that Jesus' behaviour in the temple was ruthless enough to indicate he was seeking not just the reform of the temple but its removal. On the other hand, the explicit reference to the Gentiles in the quotation from Is. 56:7 at 11:17 and his extended presence in the temple after his cleansing visit suggest a less extreme strategy.

64.W.R.Telford, op.cit, p.40.

65.W.R.Telford, op.cit, p.55.

66.W.R.Telford, op.cit, pp.232f.

67.S.Johnson, op.cit, p.190 has pointed out that Mark's use of  $\sigma\chi\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\varsigma$  at 11:16 could refer to the Mishnah's prohibition (Berakhoth ix 5) on carrying vessels through the court of the Gentiles and so using it as a short cut and thoroughfare through the city.

E.Schweizer, op.cit, p.233 has noted also that Josephus' description of Jewish holiness in the temple conforms very much with the Mishnah instruction ("Contra Apion.ii 106").

If Mark has such thinking in mind at 11:16, then we have another example of Jesus not so much urging a new system as recalling people to the essential and original spirit of the old.

68.G.Theissen, op.cit, pp.47-57 has shown how Jerusalem as a city was dependent economically and socially on the temple and its servants/proprietors, and how the Jesus movement threatened to undermine the system and, therefore, the livelihoods of those working in it and in its infrastructure.

69.F.J.Matera, op.cit, p.68 has noted the possibility that  $\sigma\chi\epsilon\upsilon\omicron\varsigma$  refers to the ritual vessels, instead of or in addition to secular equipment: this interpretation suggests that Jesus' action did, in fact, herald the downfall of the temple and its eventual replacement by a different system.

70.F.J.Matera, op.cit, p.21 links  $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omega\upsilon$  with Is.53:12, where its reference is to sinners.

D.Nineham, op.cit, p.386 prefers to understand by  $\pi\omicron\lambda\lambda\omega\upsilon$  the inclusive nature of the gospel: it is for all the nations and not just for Jews.

71.A.J.Hultgren, Christ and his Benefits (Fortress 1987), p.60.

72.P.G.Davis, op.cit, p.7.

73.D.Rhoads and D.Michie, Mark as Story (Fortress 1982), p.40.

74.H.C.Kee, op.cit, p.45 reckons that half of the allusions in Mk.11-16 to the Old Testament and over half of the actual quotations are from the prophetic writings.

75.D.Rhoads and D.Michie, op.cit, pp.130ff.

76.H.C.Kee, op.cit, pp.79ff.

77.D.Rhoads and D.Michie, op.cit, p.111.

78.H.C.Kee, op.cit, pp.48ff.

79.S.H.Smith, op.cit, p.180.

80.D.Rhoads and D.Michie, op.cit. p.112f.

81.A.J.Hultgren, op.cit, p.63.

82.A.Campbell, The Gospel of Anger (SPCK 1986), p.48 refers to the words of Ps.22:1 quoted at 15:34 as words "of bitter anger and despair".

83.Adapting slightly Dylan Thomas, Do not go Gentle into that Good Night.

84.As in the LXX version of Ezek.12:6, which appears in the MT as "you shall lift the baggage on your shoulder".

85.For example, Mk.14:27 quoting Zech.13:7, Mk.14:62 quoting Ps.110:1, Dan.7:13, Mk.15:24 quoting Ps.22:18, Mk.15:34 quoting Ps.22:1.

86.If texts such as Is.51:17 and Jer.25:15 lie behind the Markan text.

87.J.R.Donohue, op.cit, pp.564ff.

88.A.J.Hultgren, op.cit, p.59.

89.A.J.Hultgren, op.cit, p.59.

90.A.J.Hultgren, op.cit, p.62.

91.J.D.Crossan, Empty Tomb and Absent Lord (Fortress 1976),



p.149.

92.W.Kelber, The Hour of the Son of Man and the Temptation  
(Fortress 1976), p.57 n.40.

93.The linguistic parallel is not substantial: only  $\chi\sigma\tau\omicron$  is common to both Dt.5:15 and Mk.3:5. However, Mark frequently reproduces themes from the LXX, though in words and phrases different from the LXX versions known to us, as H.C.Kee, op.cit, p.47 has noted, referring to Mk.1:1,11:1,14:62 as examples.

94.D.Rhoads and D.Michie, op.cit, p.114.

95.Lk.18:29 includes "wife" in the list of relatives the follower of Jesus is to leave behind.

96.J.D.Crossan, op.cit, pp.93ff.

97.G.Theissen, op.cit, pp.10ff.

98.D.Rhoads and D.Michie, op.cit, pp.119, 128.

## CONCLUSION

A. Baird has estimated that the Synoptic Gospels refer over twice as much to God's wrath and judgment as they do to his love and mercy (1). Mark's distinctive contribution to this picture, in giving his readers more knowledge of Jesus' state of mind than all the other evangelists, is to present Jesus' emotions as those of God himself. In Mark alone of the evangelists is  $\delta\omicron\rho\gamma\eta$  attributed to Jesus, and in the Markan presentation it is only Jesus' expressions of rage and indignation which are justified. On rare occasions others, too, become indignant and enraged, such as the guests in Simon's house (14:4f.), and deliver rebukes, as Peter (8:32) and the disciples (10:13), but their outbursts are immediately reprimanded. Jesus' anger, on the other hand, is used to uphold his principled and prophetic stand against the faithless and ignorant and to support Mark's presentation of him as agent and son of God.

Jesus' anger denotes God's judgment against all manifestations of godlessness and against those who would pervert and thwart his purposes. However, more is involved here than a simple reflex against sin. The 'action-consequence' construct applies in Mark, as in the Old Testament, in that eventually Jerusalem and the temple pay the price of the people's apostasy. However, the anger of Jesus reflects the heart of God's wounded love and suggests that sin is no impersonal breach of contract but, rather, the impugning of God's grace and favour. Consequently, it is no surprise that in Mark, as in the Old Testament and, even more noticeably, in the Qumran documents, much of

the anger is targeted on the insiders, who through their misrepresentations and misperceptions have betrayed the privileges of their position: in F.Kermode's chilling sentence, "Mark with his usual severity makes Jesus angry and disappointed and also turns insiders into outsiders" {2}. The insiders are both his own disciples and the opponents from within the ranks of his fellow Jews.

Mark also uses Jesus' anger to show that, in spite of his manifest lack of success and eventual humiliation, his judgments and challenges have been inspired by God. Jesus' failure is presented as a failure of human will and perception. However, because Jesus' anger emanates from a divine perception of reality, Mark can show how Jesus' ignominious death, far from signalling faults in his own performance and understanding, as in Israel's case in the Old Testament, is, rather, the result of and a judgment upon his opponents' and friends' smallness of mind. His anger upholds his integrity and points towards his eventual vindication and their eventual downfall, as we might expect in a Gospel full of antagonisms.

Such a juxtaposition of opposites, characteristic of Mark's Gospel as a whole {3}, is much in evidence in the six passages which portray Jesus' anger. In the stories of the leper and the man with the paralysed hand, anger is placed side by side with healing, the will to save life with the determination to destroy it. In the disputes with the Pharisees and the disciples, the performance of signs is followed by a refusal of signs, and the feeding episodes by a warning about leaven. Jesus' warm welcome for the children stands in stark contrast with the disciples' hasty rebuke and rejection of those who brought them. Jesus' savage attack on the faithlessness of Israel, epitomised in the barrenness of the fig-tree and the corruption of the temple, is followed by an urgent call to faith and prayer.

These opposites have two functions in Mark. First, they explain in human terms how Jesus, for all his authority and integrity, came to be crucified. It was his very authoritativeness which threatened the rulers and authorities and was in conflict with much established custom and practice. Jesus is presented as a man with access to privileged information (4:10-12), whose distance from his challengers and supporters established his numinous and enigmatic character {4}. However, Mark's point is that Jesus was an enigma only to those who did not see or understand (the hard of heart), when they had been given every opportunity and encouragement. His anger was constantly directed not at moral lapses but at failures in perception and understanding. The crucifixion is the ultimate example of such blindness, but it is also treated as divinely ordained.

Secondly, the series of opposites had an educative function, which in the case of Jesus' anger is akin to admonition. In the episodes we have been considering attention has been focussed on a variety of issues, all of which were important for both Jews and the Church: the place of the law in respect of disease and healing, the instruction to do good and save life, the value of signs and their interpretation, the centrality of suffering in the nature of discipleship, the role of outsiders, the corruption of institutions. Jesus' anger in these instances, coupled with the sharpness of his teaching, serves to give direction to the elect and to warn them against false and worldly standards. It also alerts the Church to the urgency with which the issues need to be tackled. Jesus' forecast of impending persecution (in ch.13) spells out the likely implications for his followers of his angry encounters with both disciples and opponents.

For today's disciples and ministers, as for those of the 1st

century, both encouragements and warnings can be elicited from Mark's treatment of Jesus' anger. I have identified four features of this exploration into Jesus' anger which are particularly apposite.

First, it is those in positions of greatest authority who are most likely to be found lacking in understanding and vision. Jesus' anger was aroused at those who ignored both God and their fellows in their quest to preserve their own privileged status. Absolute power corrupts in the sense that it removes from its occupants a sense of mortality. Jesus' angry exchanges with the disciples and his religiously-minded opponents illustrate the Markan claim that the Christian enterprise is to be defined in terms of service, not domination (10:42-45). The followers of Jesus are to be servants of God and of humanity.

Secondly, the anger of Jesus is treated in Mark as unique. The angry outbursts of others, at best, fall short of the justice and scope of God's anger and, at worst, totally contradict it. The value of attending in some detail to the particular expressions of Jesus' anger in Mark's Gospel is not, primarily, to be able to point to precise parallels in our own experience and so justify our own indignation. I do not rule out the possibility of what F.Kermode refers to as "momentary radiances" {5}, when a particular light is shed on a particular situation. However, more lasting benefit is to be gained from reflecting upon and dialoguing with the insights and resonances underlying the passages in question. Without such attention we risk hastening with too much speed to implement our own limited knowledge, for which we, like Peter in Mk.8:27-9:1, shall deserve Jesus' sound castigation. Caution, then, is to be observed before we assume that our anger is an expression of righteous and divine indignation.

However, thirdly, the expressions of anger in the course of Jesus' encounters do suggest that anger forms a proper part of christian ministry in a world ignorant of or hostile to the values of God's righteousness. Such anger is not to be confused with bad temper or loss of control at failing to get our own way. Jesus' anger, as we have seen, arose out of his disciples' or opponents' disregard for the needs of others or out of his awareness of their failure to detect the will and purpose of God. Such anger is not a loss of control but the expression of a wounded love, which believes in and expects better performance from faith's practitioners.

Fourthly, and associated directly with the third point, is the suggestion behind the portrayals of Jesus' anger that mute acceptance of the status quo and a quiescent laissez-faire attitude are not divine responses to suffering and ignorance. The anger of Jesus registers the need to attend to a fault and is, therefore, to be seen as the prelude to action. Without the capacity for being moved there is only apathy, which leaves things as they are. If Jesus had not been moved by the plight of the leper, the lame, the hungry, the little people, the fragile and the Gentiles, there would have been no confrontation with opponents, from either outside or within his following, no temple disturbance, no threat to the authorities, no message of judgment and no cross -- and, we might add, therefore, no hope or love. The Old Testament references to God's wrath and Mark's to Jesus' anger are signs that God has been moved to warn believers, convict oppressors and uphold the causes of the fallen and the seekers.

## NOTES

1. A.Baird, The Justice of God in the Testing of Jesus (SCM 1963), p.72.

2. F.Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy (Harvard University Press 1979), p.47.

3. M.Hengel, Studies in the Gospel of Mark (SCM 1983), p.39 refers to this juxtaposition as coincidentia oppositorum. F.Kermode, *op.cit*, p.143 cites as examples of such opposites "mystery and stupidity", "denial and recognition", "silence and proclamation", "clean and unclean", "lake and mountain".

4. F.Kermode, *op.cit*, p.122.

5. F.Kermode, *op.cit*, p.145.

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