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COURSE: GOSPELS OF MARK & MATTHEW (SPRING 2022)
FINAL ANALYSIS PAPER

Historical criticism is a method that, drawing from different disciplines, interprets the Bible according to the contemporary environment of the time when the text was written. It is “an attempt to reconstruct the historical setting within which biblical texts were produced.”¹ This analysis paper considers the interpretation offered by historical-critical biblical scholars for the *pericope* of Mark 16, 17: “These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages.” There is novelty in the signs described but also in the diversity of the recipients of the message who are now from the whole world. The verse forms part of what scholars call the longer ending of the Gospel of Mark frequently overlooked by biblical commentators thus not many preachers include it on their homilies. In our growing secular society, these signs become ever more necessary to accompany our evangelization efforts. This paper pretends to shine some light on this challenge.

Some historical-critical biblical scholars consider the longer ending of the Gospel of Mark (16,9-20) not authentic material written. Even though the Council of Trent defined as canonical the longer ending of Mark. “Early citations of it by the Fathers indicate that it was composed by the second century, although vocabulary and style indicate that it was written by someone other than Mark.”² For many of them, Mark 16, 8 is the real ending of the Gospel of Mark. Therefore, they do not include the longer ending in their commentaries. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in their website recognizes that Mark 16,8 ending is “found in some less important manuscripts” while the longer ending “verses are found in the overwhelming majority of manuscripts and in all major manuscript families.”³ Based in the authority of the Church, in this paper I accept the longer ending as Word of the Lord Jesus Christ either written by the same author who wrote Mark 1-16, 8 or by different author (s). Maybe the controversy on where the gospel ends is the reason why is not easy to find commentaries on this specific *pericope* and therefore (or probably is the same reason why) priests and deacons do not use the text in their homilies. Some scholars argue that the longer ending does not fit well with the overall style and purpose of the Gospel of Mark therefore their commentaries focus on their disagreement and quickly dismiss its content. The discipline would be enriched if those scholars value the fact that the longer ending has been a canonical text for most of the life of the Church and apply their historical-critical method to interpret the longer ending instead of just ignoring it. On the contrary, I consider the Christological and Theological issues in verse 17 suit well with what we learned at class. The centrality of the Gospel of Mark are the Messianic role of Jesus and the intention of the Father to restore Creation in Christ. Professor Bobertz strongly emphasized these two aspects throughout the course of Mark and Matthew Gospels.

¹ Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "historical criticism." Encyclopedia Britannica, January 13, 2010. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/historical-criticism-biblical-criticism>.

² <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/16>

³ Marcus, Joel. "Postscript: The Markan Ending." In *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 1088–1096. New Haven & London: The Anchor Yale Bible, 2009. Accessed April 22, 2022. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9780300262117.0009.CH007>.

According to professor Bobertz, one of the readings of the story world of Mark “is grounded in an understanding of salvation as the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah that suffers and dies for the forgiveness of personal human sin.”⁴ The Messiah died once and for all, but salvation is not a done deal in the lives of those who have accepted Jesus as their Redeemer. After baptism, a Christian must persevere in the way of Christian living. I consider the act of performing the signs in the name of Jesus, paves the way of perseverance in the Christian living, and at the same time solidify the acceptance of Jesus the Messiah. Here is my reasoning.

Demons bring temptations to the lives of the redeemed and to the recipients of the Gospel message to prevent them from accepting the Messiah. It is not impossible to lose the salvation won for us by Christ. It happens when a Christian chooses sin over God. Sin separates humans from God. A believer must remain “sober and vigilant. Your opponent the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for [someone] to devour.”⁵ Assisted with the grace of God, the baptized are to resist and reject those temptations. Therefore, the need to drive out demons in the name of Jesus arise constantly.

In the other hand, the speaking of new languages facilitates the sharing of the message so salvation can reach others through each believer. One speak new languages not only when learning languages other than the native language; but also when one learns to address specific groups of people and are able to effectively communicate the Good News to them. For example, Youth Ministers are trained to speak to young people. I have learned to speak in two new languages recently. After I started working for the church as an employee, I became fluently in English, and then, when I began ministering at the county jail, I learned to pray spontaneously in English and in Spanish, that was a new language for me, the language of prayer. Sometimes, people become aware of the capacity of speaking new languages without knowing how or when to use it, like in the case of people with the gift of speaking in tongues. There are not many resources available for the common believer to learn about this specific gift of tongues, as old as the church itself but not widely used. It is important that Christians learn to use the gift of tongues appropriately. This gift could help the believer to produce abundant fruit in their spiritual life and the lives of those around them. It is not just the capacity of speaking in tongues, but the ability to use the capacity. A comparison could help to clarify the point. Take the case of children in elementary school that are learning to spell all type of words without yet understanding their meaning or knowing how and when to use these words. They keep practicing spelling, they keep reading, they see the words in different contexts, and then one day, they begin to use the words to express what they want. There is a woman at my parish who received the gift of tongues many years ago but rarely used it because she did not know how or when to use it. Until she learned that it was a gift of inspiration that serves to inspire people to pray, to open their hearts to God, to believe and a tool to drive out demons in the name of Jesus. Little children make mistakes when they are learning to spell new words, but get better as they practice with each word and read sentences that contain the words. Every child usually has a teacher who review their spelling but not every baptized has someone to guide them in the driving out demons and speaking new languages. In the same way, this woman needs to use her gift of speaking in tongues. Or if the person know how to speak to children, or to couples, or to inmates, or single

⁴ Charles Bobertz’ email to class on April 1, 2022.

⁵ 1 Peter 5,8.

parents or whatever the recipients of the Gospel message are. They deserve to hear the Good News in a language that they are able to understand and connect to their circumstances. This woman will get better as she uses her new language abilities. More people will be moved to accept the Messiah upon witnessing someone in the name of Jesus performs signs to accompany their proclaiming of the Gospel.

Among the different Christian denominations, Pentecostals have a long history of performing signs in the name of Jesus to accompany their proclamation of the Gospel. Biblical scholar Marius Nel offers a Pentecostal hermeneutical reconsideration of the longer ending of the Gospel of Mark. In reference to our *pericope*, Nel affirms amongst “early Pentecostals’ literature is frequent the use of verse 17, the ‘signs following’, “in terms of a restoration of the faith and practice of the New Testament church.” They “did not understand the signs apart from the baptism in the Spirit, with accompanying signs such as glossolalia, prophecy, and effective witnessing to the gospel message. They believed that their initiation into Spirit baptism introduced them to the experience of manifestations and phenomena as delineated by Mark 16:9–20. In particular, they connected these signs (along with Spirit baptism) with the missionary task. Pentecostals emphasized that the apostles had already received the ability to cast out demons and heal the sick during Jesus’ ministry but it would only occur on the day of Pentecost that they would speak in other tongues (Ac 2:17–21 that interprets the events in terms of Joel’s prophecy; J1 2:28–32). It should also be noted that the earliest Pentecostals expected that glossolalia would permit them to address all people in their own languages because the tongues were interpreted in terms of existing languages (xenolalia; Galli 1998:1). This viewpoint opposes the cessationism that characterizes a part of Reformed theology and that argues for the cessation of the ‘supernatural’ gifts, admittedly at times motivated by a fear of charismatic excesses (Keener 2016:5, 9). Reformed theologians refer to the ‘already’ and ‘not yet’ that characterize the promised coming of the kingdom, with forgiveness of sins viewed in terms of present reality and (ultimate) healing of all illness and suspension of death in terms of the coming world.”⁶ In Catholic ministry, believers perform the outlined signs often without referring to Baptism in the Spirit, a term that is mostly known in groups of the Charismatic Renewal, but as with Pentecostals, is usually connected with the missionary task or evangelization efforts. Outside of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal it is not common for believers to accompany their proclamation of the Gospel with any of these signs; those who act and/or speak in that way are seen with suspicion. However, as dechristianized societies become more common, it is convenient to recall Pope Francis exhortation in *Evangelii Gaudium*, “in virtue of their baptism, all members of the People of God have become missionary disciples.”⁷ Therefore, it is imperative to be formed and ready to use the accompanying signs that Jesus gave to baptized believers who proclaim the Gospel.

Professor Bobertz affirms another reading of the story world of Mark is “an understanding of salvation as the restoration of the creation, including human community as part of creation, in right relationship with the intention of God for that creation. The success of Chaos’ attack upon Jesus as the Creation, the Jesus who had brought both Gentiles and women into the community. The very fact of that attack, and its success in bringing about the death of Jesus, reveals that Jesus’ foundation of the inclusive Church

⁶ Nel, Marius. "Pentecostal hermeneutical reconsideration of the longer ending of Mark 16:9–20" *Verbum et Ecclesia* [Online], Volume 41 Number 1 (28 September 2020)

⁷ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of the Holy Father Francis, 120

was indeed the intention of God for Creation (Chaos is always only opposed to that which is the intention of God for creation).⁸ There are two issues around this *pericope* that support Bobertz view of the inclusive Church intended by God. One is the inclusion of Gentiles and women in the proclamation of the Gospel and the other one is their capacity to perform signs in the name of Jesus to accompany their proclamation of the Gospel. These new type of believers (in the beginning Jesus had only chosen Jewish people and only men) are characteristics of a restored Creation in Christ.

The words of Jesus in v.17 were pronounced after His Resurrection and right before He ascended into Heaven. In the verses prior to 17, Jesus instructed His people to go into the whole world (v.15). In a previous missionary trip Jesus had made very clear the apostles were “not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town” (Mt. 10,5). Their mission was restricted only to Judean territory. Now the order is to go into the whole world, into each territory outside of Judea at any point forward. This last time, they were sent to all nations. Not only countries that existed at the time of the historical Jesus but also countries that were to be created in the distant future like the United States or Mexico established 18-19 centuries later. The inclusive Church that Jesus founded transcended the time and age of the first apostles. It was the desire of the Father to restore in Christ men and women of all time, even the races that did not exist yet, (think of all the *mestizos* born of the union of Europeans and naturals of the Americas starting in the 15th century, who are now the racial majority in Mexico, Central and South America and remain mostly Christian.) The inclusion of people is something hard to do. Some have preferred to include only those who look like them. It was the case of the *conquistadores* in the New Spain to the point that in the 16th century bishop Zumaraga had to write to the authorities asking them to officially recognize Mexican Indians as human beings, worthy of salvation in Christ, and not animals of service incapable of receiving the faith. Forty-five years had to pass from the arrival of Spaniards to what is now Mexico until the Pope of the time wrote a bull declaring indigenous people “truly [human] men and capable of understanding the Catholic Faith.”⁹ On this extreme case, the Mother of God, Our Lady of Guadalupe had to appear in person to lead the driving out demons and to teach Spaniards and natives to speak new languages (the language of inclusion, for example), but it is not rare. This world community of men and women of all backgrounds and paths of life is under constant attack by the demons (Chaos) as Christ was. The commissioning was to proclaim the Gospel to every creature.¹⁰ Still there are all type of creatures around us whom we need to recognize as human beings worth of receiving the faith. Families and churches must be attentive to the way they pass and share the faith to all current and potential members to make sure they reach out to all. We don’t honor Jesus’s command of proclaiming the Gospel if we don’t share the Good News with someone because of their race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, parental status, age, language, or any other personal characteristic. Those are some demons to drive out of the lives of believers and Elect¹¹, either by the believers themselves or with the help of other believers around them. Moreover, it is necessary to learn the right language to reach out to people who are different of the mainstream believer. Parishes with

⁸ Charles Bobertz’ email to class on April 1, 2022.

⁹ *Sublimus Dei* On the Enslavement and Evangelization of Indians by Pope Paul III, 1537. URL: <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/paul03/p3subli.htm>

¹⁰ Cf. Mark 16, 15.

¹¹ The Elect are people preparing for the Sacrament of Baptism.

parishioners who speak a language other than English need to learn to speak the right language to reach out to them, not only in linguistic terms but also of body language.

Bobertz's "human community in the right relationship with the intention of God" becomes a great witness for the world. The commentator of this passage in the Didache Ignatius Bible Edition has an explanation: "The signs and wonders performed by Christ and his disciples provide evidence of the Kingdom of God and of the healing power of Christ working through his ministers. The disciples were able to perform such works because they acted in his name. <Thus, the miracles of Christ and the saints...are the most certain signs of divine Revelation...they are 'motives of credibility', which show that the assent of faith is 'by no means a blind impulse of the mind'> but rather is quite reasonable."¹² This is the process to transform the world, with the Gospel, one person at a time, one community at a time, making use of signs when necessary to make sure all are included no matter their color, size or appearance.

The second issue around this *pericope*, the fact that Gentiles and women proclaiming the Gospel will now have the capacity to perform signs to accompany their proclamation, comes from the word "believe" in v.17. Jesus says: "These signs will accompany those who believe." In verse 16, Jesus, joins the act of believing to the act of receiving baptism; with this action, Jesus, gives every believer, every baptized, the capacity to drive out demons and speak new languages in His name. It is now a capacity given not only to the apostles and disciples but every member of his Church without making any difference if it is women, Jews or gentiles; with this sign of inclusiveness in Jesus' Church, every member has the same abilities in varying degrees corresponding to their own personal vocation and mission in the Church.

For the commentator on this *pericope* in the *Biblia Latinomaericana*, some of those signs and miracles are still happening today in every place Christians want to evangelize with the Gospel,¹³ which is in stark contrast to the commentary made by Daniel Durken. For him the "emphasis on 'signs' undermines, Mark's repeated suggestion that God's kingdom is accessible in ordinary ways."¹⁴ Durken's concern disappears when believers understand the signs do not have to be loud and dramatic all the time; but adjusted to the needs of everyday life. A gentle smile to the mailman delivering your mail could drive out the demon of anger carried out from the previous household where she was mistreated. A hug to the worried spouse for the raising price of eggs and gas could drive out the demon of despair. A cup of coffee and an afternoon with a widow could drive out the demons that torment her in loneliness. Inviting over the orphan teenagers could drive out the demons of drug abuse and promiscuity.

In other less frequent cases, believers need to engage in occasional spiritual warfare to drive out bigger demons. For example, when one is attacked by perverse thoughts (i.e., desires of revenge or adultery). In those cases, sometimes just the pronunciation of the name of Jesus drives out those demons.

¹² The Didache Bible with commentaries based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Ignatius Bible Edition. Midwest Theological Forum. Ignatius Press, USA, 2015.

¹³ Bernardo Hurault, *Biblia Latinoamericana*. Coeditors: San Pablo & Editorial Verbo Divino. Netherlands, 2004.

¹⁴ Durken, Daniel. 2017. *New Collegeville Bible Commentary: One Volume Hardcover Edition*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. Accessed April 25, 2022. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Another example is when one's ministry is stuck, like in the case of Saint Paul (Acts 16, 16-18) to whom an oracular spirit in the slave girl hindered his preaching ministry.

Jesus' gift of the accompanying sign to drive out demons in His name has two dimensions one is exclusive while the other is common. The powers of exorcism, as in the official ministry of the church, were given exclusively to bishops but they could name their delegates which are usually priests but in occasion could be catechists like those in charge of catechizing catechumen in the RCIA process,¹⁵ especially in areas where pagan or diabolic cult are prevalent. This is the official church ministry of exorcism.

However, as there is a priestly ministry for some chosen men and a common priesthood for all the baptized, I consider there is also a capacity to drive out demons and speak new languages in Jesus' name common to all the baptized. The use each of us will make of these capacities will depend on the specific vocation and mission received by each baptized to go into the world and proclaim the Gospel which is the centrality of Jesus' command. Some people are called to lead the evangelization of countries or entire nations while others are called to evangelize just family and friends. Some people will need to use only their native language while others must learn new languages.

Because of the unbelief and hardness of heart of the first generation of believers, which has been so common in believers of all ages, but before ascending to heaven, Jesus wanted to assure his presence in all those who were to proclaim the gospel into the world to every creature. A way to see Jesus presence in the proclamation of the gospel is in the signs made in his name. If you believe, there is no need to be afraid, be assured that those signs are there for you to perform them in the name of Jesus. When you feel your evangelization efforts are not producing the expected results. When you see the recipients of the Gospel do not understand you or you are not able to communicate the message you want to give. Or when there are obstacles preventing the growth of the seed you are planting. When people struggle to accept the salvation of the Messiah. When your family, parish or community is not living in the right relationship with the intention of God for them, when they are not an inclusive community, remember the signs Jesus wanted to accompany those who believe. Leave doubts aside, in his name, you can drive out demons and speak new languages and experience live in a restored family, a church, a community as it is possible in the Resurrected Christ, in him we are new creation.

¹⁵ Misal Romano, Rito de la Iniciación Cristiana para Adultos, 16.