



# Mission, identity and ethics in Mark: Jesus, the patron for outsiders

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**Dates:**

Received: 09 Apr. 2013

Accepted: 02 May 2013

Published: 19 June 2013

**How to cite this article:**

Van Eck, E., 2013, 'Mission, identity and ethics in Mark: Jesus, the patron for outsiders', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69(1), Art. #2003, 13 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v69i1.2003>

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In this contribution the relationship between mission, identity and ethics in Mark was investigated by means of a postcolonial and social-scientific reading, with a focus on patronage as a practice that constituted the main bond of human society in the 1st-century Mediterranean world. Mark's narrative world is a world of three kingdoms (the kingdoms of Rome, the Temple elite and God). Each of these kingdoms has its own gospel, claims the favour of God or the gods, has its own patron, and all three have a mission with a concomitant ethics. Two of these gospels create a world of outsiders (that of Rome and the Temple), and one a world of insiders (the kingdom of God proclaimed and enacted by the Markan Jesus). According to Mark, the kingdom of God is the only kingdom where peace and justice are abundantly available to all, because its patron, Jesus, is the true Son of God, and not Caesar. Being part of this kingdom entails standing up for justice and showing compassion towards outsiders created by the 'gospels' of Rome and the Temple elite.

## Introductory remarks

This reading, focusing on mission, identity and ethics in Mark's narrative, takes as point of departure that mission can also be understood as representation. From this perspective, being missional *inter alia* includes to stand up for justice or show compassion in a way God intended. Identity expressed in ethical behaviour (implicit or explicit) is thus missional in the sense that the *participatio Jesu* relates to being taken up in and being an agent of the larger narrative of God's plan of recreation. Mark's narrative typifies this recreation as the kingdom of God, a kingdom available especially to outsiders.<sup>1</sup> In Mark the gospel of Jesus is the kingdom. This kingdom has a patron, and the mission of this patron is the inclusion of outsiders. Being taken up in this kingdom means new identity, an identity that must ethically be enacted through partaking in the mission of Jesus.

To give expression to this understanding of mission, identity and ethics, the narrative of Mark is approached through a postcolonial lens, heeding the call of Jameson (1981:19–20) not to follow the conventional habit of distinguishing between texts that are social and political and those that are not (e.g. religious texts like Mark).<sup>2</sup> Taking up this challenge, this reading of Mark attempts to take seriously 'the reality of empire' as 'an omnipresent, inescapable, and overwhelming sociopolitical reality' (Segovia 1988:56) with its concomitant parasitic economic system (see De Ste. Croix 1980:382–383), depending on a coercive, fear-inspiring dominion achieved through military conquest and enslavement (Parenti 2003:36). By reading Mark 'against the grain' (see Elliott 2008:22), it will be indicated that Mark, from its very first verse, proclaims a gospel of God's justice *vis-à-vis* the suppressing gospels of Rome and the Temple elite.

1. The relationship between mission, identity and ethics presented below is based on what is known as social-identity theory (SIT), a branch of social psychology largely developed by Tajfel (1978, 1981, 1982), Tajfel and Turner (1986) and Turner (1987, 1996). SIT defines social identity as the 'aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging' (Turner 1996:16), and studies the relationship between people's self-concept and membership to groups. SIT argues that most people (especially those who are part of a collectivist culture like the 1st-century Mediterranean world) obtain an important part of their self-concept from being categorised as members of a certain group. As such, social identity includes a cognitive (the sense of belonging to a specific group), an emotional (recognition of the value attached to a group), and an evaluative dimension (attitudes toward insiders and outsiders). SIT also argues that group-boundaries are not static. Leadership in a specific group can transform the perceptions of members of the group to accept and internalise the possibility that different groups can belong to a superordinate identity (Esler 2003). By redrawing group boundaries, *inter alia* because of leadership, those who were once classified as from the out-group can be regarded as part of an in-group based on a larger superordinate category (see Capozza & Brown 2000:xiv). In using the work done by Esler (2003) on Romans, it will be argued below that the Markan Jesus – as Son of God (see Mk 1:1; 15:39) and patron of the kingdom of God – in his proclamation and enactment of the kingdom of God recategorises outsiders as insiders. Because of this mission and a concomitant ethics, identity is established, an identity which is aligned with the justice and compassion of God. For an extensive discussion of the theories on SIT and superordinate identity, see Baker (2012:129–138).

2. Social systems *inter alia* consist of social institutions (Malina 2001:16). According to Parsons (1960), the dominant social institutions in almost all societies are (at least) kinship, politics, economics and religion. Of these four institutions, religion 'forms the meaning system of a society and, as such, feeds back and forward onto kinship, economic, and political systems, unifying the whole by means of some explicit or implicit ideology' (Malina 2001:16). Since the documents of the New Testament antedate the Enlightenment, the authors of these documents did not deal with religion and economics as areas separable from kinship and economics. Instead, in the 1st-century Mediterranean world kinship and politics determined economics and religion, in the sense that one can only speak of domestic (kinship) religion and political religion, and domestic economy and political economy (Malina 2001:16). This means that in 1st-century Palestine a 'religious' statement in essence also was a 'political' statement; to proclaim 'the kingdom of God with God's rule imminent is clearly a political statement in which religion is embedded' (Malina 2001:94). Mark, therefore, is not a mere 'religious' text, simply because 'religious' language and 'political' language in 1st-century Palestine were inseparable.

This postcolonial reading, finally, is supplemented by a social-scientific approach, focusing especially on patronage as a practice that constituted the main bond of human society in the 1st-century Roman (and thus Palestinian) world.

## Three winds, three gospels and three kingdoms

To use the metaphor of Wright (2011:27–56), 1st-century Palestine was the place where three winds met to create the perfect storm. The first wind, blowing from the far west, was that of the superpower Rome, the new social, political, economic reality of the day with its military superiority and exploitative economic program. The second wind, blowing from the temple in Jerusalem, was the indirect rule of Rome, the power-seeking priestly elite with an understanding of the God of Israel that added to the oppression and exploitation of the ruled. The third wind, blowing from Galilee, was the message of a peasant who proclaimed that the kingdom of God has arrived, a kingdom directly opposed to that of Rome and the Temple elite. Each of these three winds had its own gospel, and all three claimed the favour of God or the gods. All three had their own patron, and all three had a mission. Two of these gospels created a world of outsiders, and one a world of insiders. What were these gospels, who were their patrons, and what kind of kingdoms did they create? In which kingdom were peace and justice to be found? Mark's story of Jesus answers this question emphatically: only in the kingdom of God, because of the wind of God.

### The gospel of the kingdom of Rome

The Greek word εὐαγγέλιον is normally translated with 'goodnews' or 'gospel' (see e.g. Rm 1:1, 16–17; Mt 4:23; Mk 1:1, 14; Lk 9:16). The earliest connotation carried by εὐαγγέλιον, however, was political (and by implication economic).<sup>3</sup> This meaning of εὐαγγέλιον became prominent especially after Octavian's victory over Mark Anthony at Actium (31 BCE), a victory that resulted in Octavian being hailed as Augustus (in Greek *Sebastos*, the 'sacred one', and in Latin the 'anointed one' or 'revered one'). In Augustus' victory a new world order appeared, and the 'gospel of Augustus' was born; a gospel taken over and built upon by Augustus' successors in the Julio-Claudian house (Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero).

Augustus, who in essence came into power through the use of force, used different kinds of legitimisation to justify his

3. In the LXX the lemmas εὐαγγέλιον and εὐαγγελίζομαι and their respective declinations are sometimes used in the general sense of proclaiming good news (see e.g. 1 Ki 1:42), but in most cases carry a political meaning. In 1 Samuel 31:9, 2 Samuel 4:10 and 18:20, 26 and 31 it is used in the sense of bringing news of victory or declaring a victory (see also 1 Sm 4:17; 2 Sm 1:20; 1 Chr 10:9; Jr 20:15; Nah 2:1), and in Isaiah 40:9 and 52:7 εὐαγγελιζόμενος is used to describe the expected great victory of Yahweh, Yahweh's accession and his kingly rule, that is, the restoration of Israel, the new creation of the world or the dawn of a new age (see also Ps 40:10; 67:12; 68:11; 96:2; Is 60:6; 61:1). The similarity between the LXX's use of εὐαγγέλιον and its use in the New Testament is evident: 'The ... proclamation of the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ... the link with the terms δικαιοσύνη (Ps 40:9), σωτηρία (Is 52:7; Ps 95:1) and εἰρήνη (Is 52:7) – all points us to the NT' (Friedrich 1964:710). In Greek writings the lemma εὐαγγέλιον (and εὐαγγέλιος) carries the same connotation. The εὐαγγέλιος proclaims the victory of the army, the death or capture of the enemy (*Pausanias*, IV.19.5), and εὐαγγελίζεσθαι is used in political communication that brings joy and in communication that has as context the victory over enemies. The latter is also the case in Philo (*Leg. Gaj.* 231) and Josephus (*Ant.* 5.24), who both use εὐαγγελίζομαι in connection with news of victories and in political communication. Εὐαγγελίζεσθαι is also used in connection with a θεῖος ἄνθρωπος that brings σωτηρία (Philostratos, *Vit. Ap.* VII.21). Thus, as in the case of the LXX, Greek writings also attest to the political meaning of εὐαγγέλιον (see Friedrich 1964:712).

'divine right' to rule. He used, for example, Virgil's *Eclogues* 4 in crafting an ideology of Roman destiny. Although the *Eclogues* celebrated the rise of Gaius Asinius Pollio (and the short-lived peace between Anthony and Octavian), he seized on the 'realised eschatology' of the *Eclogue* – an effortless paradise, crops yielding their fruits and livestock giving their milk and many-coloured wool spontaneously<sup>4</sup> – to proclaim his gospel as a time of prosperity, happiness and relief from ongoing civil strife (Elliott & Reasoner 2011:109). By means of Virgil's *Aeneid* (commissioned by Augustus himself), Augustus claimed that Rome was chosen by the gods, especially Jupiter, to rule an 'empire without end' (Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.278–279; see also Seneca, *Duties* 2.26–27). The *Aeneid's* message was powerful: Rome with at its helm Augustus as *pater patriae* (Father of the Fatherland) have become 'lords of the world', not just through military power, 'but through divine destiny earned through the virtue they have inherited from their pious ancestor Aeneas'<sup>5</sup> (Elliott & Reasoner 2011:120). After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE, Augustus also seized on the so-called Julian star that appeared during games – organised by the young Octavian in honour of Julius Caesar in spite of senatorial opposition – as the *apotheosis* of Julius. Consequently, on 01 January 42 BCE, the Senate honoured Julius as a divine being, which meant that his adopted son,<sup>6</sup> Octavian, was 'son of god'.<sup>7</sup> Augustus now was *Divi Filius*, second only to Jupiter (Horace, *Odes* 1.12.5–6), a theology that was especially popularised – as documented by numismatic evidence – by depicting Augustus (and later, e.g. Tiberius, Nero and Otho) as *Divi Filius* (and *Pontifex Maximus*) on coinage minted by the Caesars.<sup>8</sup>

Augustus thus was not only *pater patriae*, but also – as proclaimed by Roman imperial theology – 'son of god',<sup>9</sup> 'saviour of the world'<sup>10</sup> and 'lord'. Almost immediately after Augustus' victory at Actium, the tale of Octavian's divine

4. See also Horace (*Epode* 16.49–52) for a similar description of the utopian future of Rome.

5. Cicero also articulated this conviction by stating that 'it was by our scrupulous attention to religion and by our grasp ... that all things are ruled and directed by the gods that we have overcome all peoples and nations' (Cicero, *Har. Resp.* 18–21).

6. For a description of the adoption of Octavian by Julius Caesar, see Nicolaus of Damascus (*Life* 8, 11, 13, 17–19, 29–30), Livy (*Periochae* 116.5), Appian (*Civil Wars* 3.11–14) and Suetonius (*The Lives of the Caesars* 7.2, 83.2, 94.11).

7. See Vitruvius (Preface to *On architecture* [22 BCE], in Elliott & Reasoner 2011:143–144), who takes it for granted that Julius Caesar was abiding with the gods and that the heavenly council had brought Augustus to power.

8. See *inter alia* Theissen (2002:237): 'The historical period of Jesus was full of conflict expressed in political symbols. Herod Antipas called his capital Tiberias, built it on a cemetery, and erected images of animals in his palace. Pilate tried to introduce shields with the emblems of Caesar into Jerusalem, and he minted coins with symbols of Roman cults' (see also Oakman 2008:86).

9. Several sources, some of which date from the Augustan age, attest that Augustus was hailed as son of God. One such source is the following inscription from Macedonia (Acanthus), listed by Ehrenberg and Jones (1955:91, no. 108): [αὐτοκράτορι Καίσαρ] ἀρι θ[ε]οῦ θεοῦ [υἱοῦ] Σεβαστοῦ (= To the autocrat [= emperor] Caesar, Son of God, Sebastos [= Augustus]; own translation).

10. See, for example, Horace (*Ode* 3.5.1–4), who describes Augustus as god on earth (*praesens divus*). As Crossan and Reed (2004:136) notes, it was normal practice to accord divinity to Roman and Greek heroes (e.g. Romulus, Liber, Hercules, Castor and Pollux) after their death. For Augustus it was different: 'upon you, however, while still among us, we bestow honours already, set altars up to swear by in your name, and confess that nothing like you will hereafter arise or has arisen before now' (Horace, *Epistle* 2.1.12–17; see Crossan & Reed 2004:136). Based on Horace's open letter to Augustus, Crossan and Reed (2004:136) remarks: 'Dead divinity is standard, but live divinity is unique in past, present and future. Augustus controls time as well as space.'

conception by Apollo was recorded by Asclepias of Mendes in his *Theologoumena*, later to be repeated and elaborated upon – at the end of Augustus' life – by Suetonius (*The Lives of the Caesars* 94.4) and Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 45.1–2; see Crossan 2007:105–106).<sup>11</sup>

Augustus' gospel – enshrined by the *Ara Pacis Augustae* on 30 January 9 BCE in celebration of the peace brought to the Roman Empire by Augustus' military victories in Gaul and Hispania (modern France and Spain) and the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* towards the end of Augustus' life – in essence was the 'peace of Rome' (*pax Romana*; see Horace, *Odes* 4.15; Ovid, *Fasti* 1.709–722). Augustus was viewed as the divine guarantor of good things, not only to Rome, but to the world. From the Roman point of view, the whole of humanity was the beneficiary of Augustus' generosity and care as *pater patriae*. Even his colonisation of peoples via military conquests was seen as benefitting the conquered – again from a Roman point of view. After all, according to Roman propaganda, Augustus' military conquests were not the result of military force but the result of the favour of the gods that was bestowed on him because of his virtues (Elliott & Reasoner 2011:125). As can be seen from the well-known Priene-inscription<sup>12</sup> (just south of Ephesus, dated 9 BCE), and its preamble<sup>13</sup> written by Paulus Fabius Maximus directed at the eastern provinces of Asia-Minor, support for Augustus' achievements was not only limited to Rome. In the inscription and its preamble Augustus is hailed as the most divine Caesar and saviour whose birth (epiphany) was the beginning of a new creation of the world that brought peace to mankind; he is:

the greatest benefactor of both past, present, and future, so that 'the birthday of the god' is the ultimate 'good tidings'<sup>14</sup> for the world ... Augustus was now Lord of cosmic time as well as Lord of global place. (Crossan 2007:148)

11. See also Peppard (2010:435): 'Just as Caesar's own divinity was supported by divine ancestry, traced to Venus through Aeneas, so would Octavian's be secured as a "son of Apollo". If anyone was to carry on the charismatic leadership of Caesar, it was this young man.'

12. A translation of the Priene inscription in Greek reads as follows (translation taken from Evans 2000:68–69): 'It seemed good to the Greeks of Asia, in the opinion of the high priest Apollonius of Menophilus Azanitus: "Since Providence, which has ordered all things and is deeply interested in our life, has set in most perfect order by giving us Augustus, whom she filled with virtue that he might benefit humankind, sending him as a savior (σωτήρ), both for us and for our descendants, that he might end war and arrange all things, and since he, Caesar, by his appearance (ἐπιφανεῖν) (excelled even our anticipations), surpassing all previous benefactors, and not even leaving to posterity any hope of surpassing what he has done, and since the birthday of the god Augustus was the beginning (ἀρχαίαν) of the good tidings (εὐαγγελία) for the world that came by reason of him [ἦρξεν δὲ τοῖς κόσμῳ τῶν δι' αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίων ἢ γενέθλιος τοῦ Θεοῦ], which Asia resolved in Smyrna' (for the primary text, see Dittenberger 1903, no. 458, lines 30–52). Although this inscription is known as 'the Priene inscription', copies of the inscription have also been found in Apamea, Eumeneia and Dorylaeum (see Elliott & Reasoner 2011:35).

13. Parts of this preamble read as follows (see Crossan 2007:147): '[It is a question whether] the birthday of the most divine Caesar is more pleasant or more advantageous, the day which we might justly set on a par with the beginning of everything, in practical terms at least, in that he restored order when everything was disintegrating and falling into chaos and gave a new look to the whole world, a world which would have met destruction with the utmost pleasure if Caesar had not been born as a common blessing to all. For that reason one might justly take this to be the beginning of life and living, the end of regret at one's birth ... It is my view that all the communities should have one and the same New Year's Day, the birthday of the most divine Caesar, and that on that day, 23rd September, all should enter their term of office.'

14. In the inscription found in Priene there is a gap in the inscription at this point. Ehrenberg and Jones ([1955] 1976), in using an unpublished copy of the decree found in Apamea, have reconstructed the phrase as 'because of him the birthday of God began good news for the world'. The text thus refers to the good news of Augustus in the plural (see Elliott & Reasoner 2011:366, n. 25 and 26).

The roots of the idea that Augustus was the embodiment of divine virtues stem from the political thought of Greece and the Roman Republic (Elliott & Reasoner 2011:124). Augustus' most important virtues, which were given divine honours (deified), were *victoria* (the power to conquer barbarians and rule over enemies), *securitas* [security], *pax* [peace], *concordia* [social harmony], *felicitas* [happiness], *clementia* [mercy shown by the conqueror to the vanquished], *fides* [loyalty], *iustitia* [justice], *salus* [health], *pietas* [religious values and devotion], *virtus* [the common good] and *spes* (hope; see Elliott 2008:29; Elliott & Reasoner 2011:125). These virtues were part of the imperial propaganda<sup>15</sup> to persuade the exploited 'to accept their oppressed situation without protest; if possible, even to rejoice in it' (Elliott 2008:28–29).

Although Graeco-Roman philosophers saw virtue (moral goodness and propriety) as more important than benefaction, the ideology of patronage and benefaction<sup>16</sup> determined the social fabric (class, status and honour) and social cohesion of the Roman Empire.<sup>17</sup> Ancient empires were all about power, consisting of a network of interrelated powers (Horsley 2011:17). Power, either being political, economic or religious, was distributed in almost all cases through the system of patronage and clientism. Soon after coming into power Augustus, as the *princeps* or Patron of patrons, began running the Empire as a vast network of patron-client relationships. In Rome itself he controlled the aristocracy by distributing *beneficia* (e.g. senatorial offices, magistracies and honours as personal favours).<sup>18</sup> Beyond Rome, Augustus

15. Roman imperial propaganda used different forms of legitimization, including coins, buildings (e.g. temples that were, in essence, political buildings), the imperial cult, images, rituals, personnel that honoured the emperor, the control of various forms of communication (e.g. the design of coins), rhetoric (speeches at civic occasions and various forms of writings [e.g. history, philosophy] that persuaded non-elites to be compliant), a legal system that exercised bias towards the elite by employing punishment appropriate not to the crime but to the social status of the accused, and the building of cities 'that displayed Roman elite power, wealth and status, exercised maximum control over surrounding territories and served as the basic unit for the collection of tribute and taxes – thus codifying, conserving and construing "normal" society, producing an "image of an ordered state" and disseminating the ideology and values of the ruling class' (see Van Eck 2012:112–113).

16. Literary and epigraphic evidence from the Graeco-Roman period abundantly attest to a Roman institution called *clientele*, or, in modern terms, patronage and clientism (Elliott 1987:39), a type of relationship that grew out of the principal of reciprocity (Carney 1975:169–171). Patronage is basically 'a relationship in which, as a special favor, a patron provides for his client access to scarce resources that are not universally accessible' (Moxnes 1991:243). Blok (1969:336) defines patronage and clientism as follows: 'Patron-client relations are social relationships between individuals based on a strong element of inequality and difference in power. The basic structure of the relationship is an exchange of different and very unequal resources. A patron has social, economic and political resources that are needed by a client. In return, a client can give expression of loyalty and honor that are useful for the patron.' Neyrey's (2005:468) definition of patron-client relationships focuses *inter alia* on the reciprocal aspect on these relationships: 'Human benefactor-client relationships tend to be asymmetrical, reciprocal, voluntary, often including favoritism, focus on honor and respect, and held together by "good-will" or faithfulness.' Neyrey (2004:253, 2005:469–470; see also Malina 1986:98–106) identifies three kinds of reciprocity that went hand in hand with these relationships, namely, (1) generalised (extreme solidarity, altruistic extended to kin-group), (2) balanced (midpoint, mutual interests extended to neighbours and villagers) and (3) negative (the unsocial extreme; seeks self-interest at the expense of the 'other'). Although Graeco-Roman philosophers saw generalised reciprocity as the ideal (see e.g. Seneca, *Benefits* 1.1.8–10, 1.2.3, 2.11.2, 2.31.2, 4.1.3, 4.2.4, 4.9.1, 4.11.3, 4.14.1, 4.15.1; Cicero, *Duties* 1.44, 2.21, 2.36, 38, 52–53), negative reciprocity was the most common relationship in the Roman Empire because it was an advanced agrarian (i.e. aristocratic in character, consisting of the 'haves' and 'have nots') and tributary society. Almost all patron-client relationships therefore were asymmetrical (see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 2.9.10), based on strong inequality and difference between patron and client, in spite of generalised reciprocity being the ideal.

17. Seneca (*Benefits* 1.2.1) saw patronage as the practice 'that constitutes the chief bond of human society'.

18. This favoritism was also called friendship. In this regard, Plutarch (*Precepts for politicians* 1.9–20) wrote the following: 'There are favors that involve causing no offence, such as giving a friend preferential help in obtaining a post, putting some prestigious administrative function into his hands, or a friendly embassy.'

established patron-client relationships with client kings (e.g. Herod the Great and Herod Antipas) and the elite of the major cities and provinces. Roman governors aggrandised their family positions and honour and status by competing for clients amongst local aristocrats which, in turn, competed for clients amongst the local populace. These patron-client relationships 'consolidated political-economic power in a network of many pyramids of power, all unified at the top in the person of the emperor' (Horsley 2011:33). With these relationships 'the Romans demonstrated their *fides* (Gk *pistis*) – loyalty in the sense of protection – while the friends of Rome showed their *fides*, that is, their loyalty to Rome' (Horsley 2011:33–34). In essence, however, these relationships in most cases consisted of negative reciprocity, and gave a kinship veneer to an exploitative practice<sup>19</sup>. As put by Elliott (2008):

The codes of patronage effectively masked the deeply exploitative nature of the tribute- and slave-based economy by simultaneously concealing the rapacity of the ruling class and naturalizing fundamentally unequal relationships through routines of theatrical reciprocity. (p. 29)

This then, was the gospel of the kingdom of Rome. Augustus – and the Caesars after him – acted as agent ('son of god' and Patron of patrons) of the gods in a mission to continually expand the borders of the Empire. Conquered peoples were suppressed and exploited by means of military supremacy, social control was built on fear, and power was unevenly distributed through patronage. At its core, Roman imperial theology proclaimed peace through violence (war and victory); Roman religion<sup>20</sup> legitimised violence (war), violence led to victory, and victory to 'peace' (Borg & Crossan 2009:121). As put by Borg and Crossan (2009):

You must first worship to the gods; with them on your side, you can go to war; from that, of course, comes victory; then, only then, do you obtain peace. (p. 106)

This was the *pax Romana*, with mission, identity and ethos intertwined. But is this justice, especially towards outsiders, and 'peace', gained through violence?

## The gospel of the kingdom of the Temple elite

Herod the Great, a client king of Rome, who earlier was governor (47–41 BCE) and tetrarch (41–40 BCE) of Galilee, ruled over Judaea from 37–4 BCE. After his death, Archelaus was appointed as ethnarch to rule Judea, Samaria and Idumea, only to be deposed by Augustus in 6 CE. Augustus incorporated Judaea and Samaria into the Roman province of Judaea (administered by the province of Syria), which was ruled by the priestly aristocracy centered in the temple in Jerusalem under the control of the prefect of Judaea (e.g.

Pontius Pilate). Rome, where possible, favoured 'indirect rule' (local leaders that ruled on behalf of the Empire), allowing the use of temples and the practising of cults or religions.<sup>21</sup> Indirect rule had the advantage that it 'provided a bridge of legitimation that enabled an empire to divide and rule' (Horsley 1993:9). Popular resentment was deflected to the local aristocracy (the Temple elite in Judaea), whilst the imperial rulers remained remote or 'invisible', seemingly not involved. Herod the Great kept the temple and high priesthood intact as instrument of his own interest, and by 36 BCE had replaced the incumbent Hasmonean high priestly family with high priests of his own choosing, some from the Diaspora communities in Egypt and Babylon (Horsley 2011:35).

In terms of ideology, the elite priestly houses understood God in terms of his holiness (e.g. Lv 19:2). God's holiness was embedded in the way God created. The way God created was to separate, as expressed in Genesis 1. For them, God's creation expressed the divine order of the world; 'it encoded various "maps" of lines which God made for Israel to perceive and to follow' (Van Eck 2012:114). Creation constituted the original map of 'purity' (holiness) for Israel. "'You shall be holy as I, the Lord your God, am holy'" (Lv 19:2) became the norm that indicated how things in Israel's world should replicate and express the divine order established by God's creation/holiness' (Van Eck 2012:114; see also Neyrey 1991:277; Van Eck 1995:196–199). To replicate God's holiness was to separate the ritually clean and unclean – a purity code that defined a society centred on the temple and its priests. The high priestly elite favoured the 'Great Tradition',<sup>22</sup> which offered an interpretation of the Torah in service of their own interests, emphasising purity and tithing, a reading that legitimised their economic exploitation of the Galilean peasantry who battled to live at a level of subsistence<sup>23</sup> (Herzog 2005:59).

To preserve their power and privilege, the priestly elite (as Roman clients) always took the side of Rome when conflicts arose between Judeans and Rome. Like the Roman

21. Indirect rule was an 'old and long-standing principle of Roman policy, [to] employ kings amongst the instruments of the servitude' (Tacitus, *Agr.* 14.1, in Horsley 2011:34).

22. The terms 'Great Tradition' and 'Little Tradition' were coined by Redfield (1956:41). The Little Tradition encompasses the culture and traditions passed on amongst the unlettered (peasants) of village communities (i.e. what is important for them), whilst the Great Tradition refers to the learned culture cultivated among the elite in schools and temples. The Great Tradition is always handed down onto the peasant, and the traditions of the peasantry are deemed by the elite as non-existent (or simply taken for granted). The Great Tradition that emanated from the Temple elite in Jerusalem focused on an interpretation of the Torah that emphasised purity and tithing, a reading that served the interests of the elite. As such, the Great Tradition 'justified and legitimated the existing political, social, and economic order' (Herzog 2005:77). The Little Tradition, as practised by the peasantry, focused on the prophetic traditions of prophets like Elijah and Elisha, and emphasised the remission of debt, justice towards the poor and the withholding of taxes and tithes (see Herzog 2005:59–60, 176–177).

23. Peasants who owned and farmed land had economic obligations that severely limited their prospects for moving above the level of subsistence. Obligations were internal and external. Internal obligations were made up of produce for subsistence, seed for planting the next crop, feed for livestock, and the reservation of some produce to use as trade (for acquiring equipment, utensils, or food the family did not produce). External obligations consisted of social (e.g. participation in weddings or local festivals) and religious dues (offerings, tithes, and taxes). With regard to the latter, peasants in Roman Palestine paid taxes of 35% – 40%, and, with all the other obligations factored in, a peasant family most probably only had as much as 20% of their annual produce available for subsistence (see Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:390–391; Oakman 2008:148–149).

19. See, for example, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 2.9, in reaction to Romulus' wish that the patron-client relations in Rome should not resemble the harshness shown earlier by the Greeks: 'The Athenians called their clients "*thetes*" or "hirelings", because they served for hire, and the Thessalians called theirs "*penestai*", or "toilers", by the very name reproaching them with their condition'. So he recommended that the poor and lowly be described by a "handsome designation", namely "patronage".

20. This unifying function of ideology (theology) is described by Malina (2001:16) as follows: '[R]eligion forms the meaning system of a society and, as such, feeds back and forward into kinship, economic, and political systems, unifying the whole by means of some *explicit or implicit ideology*' (my emphasis).

and Herodian elite, the priestly elite accumulated wealth through tithes and offerings (consisting of up to 23% of a peasant's harvest), and added peasant land to their estates by investing in loans (using the wealth they accrued in the temple) to the poor at up to 20% with the clear intention of foreclosing on their debtors when they could not repay their debts. They also denied benefits to those who failed to tithe their produce, rendering them (the so called *am ha-aretz*) unclean and indebted. Even the major pilgrimage festivals were ideologically employed; through liturgy and ritual the 'Great Tradition' was rehearsed and preserved, with the view to renew the ties of the peasantry with the temple, its sacrificial system, tithes and offerings (Herzog 2005:60). In their accumulation of wealth, the priestly elite ignored the widening gap between the rich elite and the poor peasantry and the social tension and hostility generated by the cycle of oppression and exploitation they encouraged through their own interests (Horsley 1993:90–120; Goodman 1982:426). As noted by Horsley (2011:36), the priestly elite even 'maintained private gangs of strongmen, apparently for their own security, as well as to implement their predatory appropriation of people's crops'.<sup>24</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the popular memory of their exploitation of the peasantry and their evil deeds were recorded in the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 57a; *Menahoth* 13:21) centuries later.<sup>25</sup>

This then, was the gospel of the kingdom of the Temple elite. The priestly elite acted as the patron of God and the clients of Rome. As patron of God they emphasised the 'Great Tradition' for their own benefit, and as clients of Rome they emulated the exploitation of their Roman patrons. In terms of *pistis*, their loyalty was to Rome, and not to God.<sup>26</sup> Their covert mission was to enrich themselves, and, as was the case with Rome, their ideology (God's holiness and purity) legitimised violence (in the form of offerings and tithes). Again, we have mission, identity and ethos intertwined. Was this justice?

## A view from below

In 109 CE Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.9–10) wrote that 'under Tiberius all was quiet'. But, as Herzog (2005) notes:

to the peasant villagers who labored to survive under the harsh conditions of oppression and exploitation, the situation looked quite different. *History from below rarely looks like history from above.* (p. 173, [my emphasis])

24. In this regard, Josephus (*Ant.* 20.9.2206–2207; in Horsley 2011:36) reports the following: 'Ananias had servants who were utter rascals and who, rallying the most reckless men, would go to the threshing floors and take by force the tithes [meant for the regular] priests; Nor did their refrain from beating those who refused to give. The [other] high priests were guilty of the same practices.'

25. Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 57a reads as follows: 'It was taught, Abba Saul said: There were sycamore tree-trunks in Jericho, and the men of violence seized them by force, [whereupon] the owners arose and consecrated them to Heaven. And it was of these and of such as these that Abba Saul b. Bothnith said in the name of Abba Joseph b. Hanin: Woe is me because of the house of Boethus; woe is me because of their staves! Woe is me because of the house of Hanin, woe is me because of their whisperings! Woe is me because of the house of Kathros, woe is me because of their pens! Woe is me because of the house of Ishmael the son of Phabi, woe is me because of their fists! For they are High Priests and their sons are [Temple] treasurers and their sons-in-law are trustees and their servants beat the people with staves' (Epstein 1952).

26. This can also be seen in the fact that the priests in the temple, besides the traditional sacrifices to God, also performed sacrifices on a regular basis to honour Rome and Caesar.

How did history look from below for the peasant villagers?

Roman Palestine in the 1st-century was an advanced agrarian, and therefore an aristocratic and tributary, society. The ruling class (elite) comprised of only 1%–2% of the population, and controlled most of the wealth (one-half up to two-thirds) by controlling the land, its produce and the peasants whose labour created the produce. As such, the elite shaped 'the social experience of the empire's inhabitants', determined the 'quality of life, exercised power, controlled wealth, and enjoyed high status' (Carter 2006:3). Rome, the Herodian elite, and the aristocratic elite in Jerusalem controlled the land, its yield, its distribution, and its cultivators by extracting taxes, tribute, rents, tithes and offerings.

The Roman tribute consisted of two basic forms: the *tributum soli* [land tax] and the *tributum capitis* [poll tax]. Non-payment of taxes was seen as rebellion 'because it refused recognition of Rome's sovereignty over land, sea, labor, and production' (Horsley 1993:6; see also Carter 2006:4). Next in line in Galilee was Herod Antipas together with the Herodian aristocracy, centred in Sepphoris and Tiberias. Antipas collected tribute especially to support his rule and to finance his extravagant building projects (the building of Tiberias and the rebuilding of Sepphoris). Finally, the temple aristocracy also took their share in the form of tithes and offerings to support the temple as well as Roman rule. Even the peasants of Galilee were subjected to this demand, although they lived outside the jurisdiction of Judaea. In short: Rome assessed its tribute and then left Herod and the temple elite free to exploit the land to whatever degree they saw fit, 'a pattern often found in aristocratic empires and colonial powers' (Herzog 2005:52).<sup>27</sup>

From the side of the ruled this was seen as 'brutal compulsion and oppression' (Oakman 1986:59). Because the Roman Empire was legionary in character, it was possible for the elite to rule by coercion, meeting any kind of rebellion with ruthless military retaliation (see Horsley 1993:6). These armies were costly (food, clothing, housing and equipment), but taxes and special levies extracted from the ruled covered these costs. Put boldly: the ruled paid to be ruled over (see Van Eck 2012:107). The rulers treated controlled (conquered) land as their personal estate to confiscate, distribute, redistribute and disperse as they deemed fit (Herzog 2005:55; Oakman 2008:124, 147–149). This was also the case in Judaea where the priestly elite was in control (see Van Eck 2012:114). Rising indebtedness and the loss of land also led to the loss of the peasant's place in the traditional social structure (see Horsley 1993:11). Because of taxes, tithes and loans, landowners (see Mk 4:3–9) first became tenants (Mk 12:1–12), then day labourers (Mt 20:1–16), and finally ended up as beggars in the cities (Lk 16:19–21).

This was the end result of the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite. Religion legitimised exploitation, whether it

27. The taxation by Rome was so severe that even Roman historians like Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 57.10.5) and Josephus (*Ant.* 18.172–175) at times described the Roman governors as 'bloodsuckers' (see Elliott & Reasoner 2011:163–164). See also Philo (*On the special laws* 2.92–95; 3.159–163) on the ravaging violence of tax collectors as examples of 'the cruel of heart and bestial of nature' (Elliott & Reasoner 2011:165–166).

was political, economic or social. The *pax Romana*, as practised by Rome and its priestly clients – for those at the bottom of society – was not *securitas* [security], *pax* [peace], *concordia* [social harmony], *felicitas* [happiness], *iustitia* [justice], *salus* [health] or *virtus* [for the common good]. Rather, it was *victoria* [the power to rule and exploit]. Patronage, above all, only gave a kinship veneer to an exploitative practice. What was needed was a different patron that could distribute real justice, a different gospel and a different mission with an ethics that could give the exploited and outsiders a new identity. This was the view from the bottom.

## The gospel of the kingdom of God

### The presence of the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite in Mark

The presence and effect of the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite are written on almost every page of the gospel of Mark. The narrative world of Mark was a world of outsiders. The gospel of the Temple elite, focusing on purity and pollution, declared those possessed with unclean spirits (ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ [Mk 1:23; 5:2; 9:25] or τοὺς δαιμονιζόμενους [Mk 1:32]; see also Mk 1:39; 3:22; 6:13; 7:25; 9:17, 38), the sick (τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας; see Mk 1:32, 34; 2:17; 6:55) and those who had been sick for long (εἶχον μάστιγας; Mk 3:10; see also Mk 5:25–36), the lepers (λεπροὺς; Mk 1:40), the lame (παρὰλυτικὸν; Mk 2:3), the tax collectors (τελώναι; Mk 2:15), those with deformities (Mk 3:1) the deaf and those with a speech impediment (κωφὸν καὶ μογιλάλον; Mk 7:32), the blind (τυφλὸν; Mk 8:22; 10:49) and the mute (ἄλαλον; Mk 9:17) as impure, and therefore as outsiders. They were the ‘sinners’ (ἁμαρτωλοὶ; Mk 2:15), not holy or whole as God is holy or whole, and therefore banned from God’s presence in the temple. Also excluded from God’s presence and the temple were non-Israelites (outsiders per se) like the Gerasene demoniac (Mk 5:1–13) and the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:26; see *m. Kelim* 1.6 in Danby 2011:605–606).

Mark’s narrative world also attests to several other features of the gospel of the Temple elite. Think again of the Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 57a, in which the high priestly families are described in terms of their use of staves (with which they beat people), whisperings (secret meetings to devise oppressive measures), pens (with which they write down debts) and fists, their sons as treasurers, their sons-in-laws as temple overseers, and their servants beating people with clubs. Most of these characteristics are present in Mark’s world: financial gain in running the temple (Mk 11:15), using the temple as a den of robbers (σπήλαιον ληστῶν; Mk 11:17) to stack what has been ‘robbed’ from the peasantry (the exploitative redistributing of the offerings and tithes of the peasantry to benefit only a few; see Oakman 2008:195), conspiracy to commit violence (Mk 11:18), ‘whisperings’ to get Jesus convicted on false pretensions (Mk 14:10; 14:55–59; 15:11), and their use of the sword (Mk 14:43, 47) and fists (Mk 14:65). Their use of violence is also evident in their plan to kill Jesus (Mk 14:1–2) and their collaboration with Pilate (Mk 15:1) to get Jesus killed.

The presence of the gospel of Rome is also evident in Mark’s narrative world. The actions of the Herodians (Mk 3:6), Herod Antipas (Mk 6:14, 27) and Pilate (Mk 15:1–15) simulate Jesus’ reference in Mark 10:42 to rulers who lord it over the people by exercising their authority by either using their military strong arm (Mk 15:16; see also Mk 5:9) or by committing or planning to commit violence (e.g. Mk 3:6; 6:14, 27). Mark 12:1–12 (Parable of the Tenants) not only mirrors this violence, but also tells the story of peasants that lost their land because of taxes and rents, and now have become tenants (see Van Eck 2007:909–936, 2012:101–132). The peasantry’s downwards scale of economic mobility because of Rome’s economic policy can be detected in the two feeding stories (Mk 6:35–44; 8:1–9) that describe those who are following Jesus as having close to nothing to support themselves and nothing to eat (Mk 8:2), and in the references in the Gospel to the poor (Mk 10:21; 14:7). Jesus is killed by crucifixion,<sup>28</sup> the Roman way that was used to remove ‘undesirables such as violent criminals, rebellious slaves, and brigands or rebels who opposed Rome’s rule’ (Carter 2013:106), and the many narratives on the demon-possessed indicate the effect Rome’s ‘peace’ had on those at the bottom of the stratified society of 1st-century Palestine.<sup>29</sup>

Clearly the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite did not benefit the people we meet in Mark’s narrative world. In both cases religion (being chosen by the gods or advocating a holy God) legitimised a mission of protecting one’s own interests driven by an ethics of violence. Rome (Augustus and his client kings) and the temple (the priestly elite) as patrons did not employ patronage – as was its common use – to exchange unequal resources (social, economic and political) to the benefit of all (with generalised reciprocity as ideal), but instead used it to enhance their own social, economic and political positions to the detriment of their ‘clients’.<sup>30</sup>

### Gospel and kingdom in Mark: Mission as sensitivity to outsiders and the marginalised

Given the political, social and economic connotations εὐαγγέλιον [good news] carried in the 1st-century Roman Empire (and therefore also in the narrative world of Mark), and given that Caesar was honoured as the son of god (the patron of patrons), Mark’s use of these two terms in the first

28. The following remark of Carter (2013:106) with regards to the reason why Jesus was crucified is especially important in the context of Mark’s gospel that depicts Jesus (and not Augustus) as Son of God proclaiming the gospel (good news = εὐαγγέλιον) of the kingdom of God, a gospel that opposed the gospels (εὐαγγελία) of Rome and the Temple elite: ‘Jesus declarations about God’s kingdom/empire, his conflicts with Rome’s allies in the Jerusalem temple leadership ... all resulted in his being crucified as one who was understood as a threat to Roman rule.’

29. Cultural-anthropological studies have indicated the relationship between demon-possession and social tension and conflict (see Guijarro 2002:164–167; Hollenbach 1981:561–588; Theissen 1983:249). In situations of abusive authority demon-possession was an acceptable ‘social act’ to withstand the vagaries of excessive economic exploitation and the political misuse of power and privilege. In the narrative of the Gerasene demoniac this relationship is clear in that the demon is named ‘Legion’, the name of the key unit in the Roman army normally comprising of six thousand soldiers.

30. ‘Patron-client relationships are commonly employed to remedy the *inadequacies of all institutions, that is, to cushion the vagaries of social inferiors* ... what a patron-client relationship essentially entails is endowing and outfitting economic, political or religious institutional arrangements with the overarching quality of kinship’ (see Van Eck 1995:171).



verse of his gospel (Ἀρχὴ<sup>31</sup> τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ<sup>32</sup>) is highly significant. Mark 1:1 states to its recipients that there is a different gospel from the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite, and that the Son of God is Jesus, not Caesar. What is the content of this gospel, and who is this Son of God? Mark first answers the question on the identity of the Son of God. At Jesus baptism, which can be understood as a status transformation ritual (see Van Eck 1996:119–200), Jesus status is transformed from being ‘the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon’ (Mk 6:3) to God’s Son. Jesus is the appointed Son of God, not Caesar. This replacement of Caesar by Jesus as the Son of God is highlighted by the phrase ‘τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν’ [the Spirit descended on him like a dove] in Mark 1:10. In the Roman worldview birds, especially eagles, indicated ‘providential favor for the accession to power of the person on or near whom they alighted’ (Peppard 2010:445). Peppard (2010) continuous:

[T]he bellicose eagle was the primary symbol of Roman military might and concomitantly of Roman imperial ideology,<sup>33</sup> while the dove was a contrasting symbol of fear or nonviolence. (p. 447)<sup>34</sup>

In Mark 1:10, the dove descending on Jesus is thus used by Mark as ‘an omen and counter-symbol to the Roman eagle ... [the] public portent of divine favor, election, and ascension to imperial power’ (Peppard 2010:433). By using the symbol of the dove, Mark thus depicts Jesus, at his baptism, as a ‘counter-emperor’ (Peppard 2010:450), not in the spirit of the

bellicose eagle, but in the spirit of ‘the pure, gentle, peaceful ... dove’ (Peppard 2010:450).

What is the gospel of Jesus, the real Son of God? This Mark answers in Mark 1:15: *πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ* [the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel]. Several aspects of Mark 1:15 are important: Firstly, this kingdom is already present, as can be seen by the use of *πεπλήρωται* [fulfilled] (perfect passive) and *ἤγγικεν* [near or close] (perfect passive), and not the future tense (see Crossan 2012:161). Secondly, there is only one gospel (τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ [the gospel]; see also τοῦ εὐαγγελίου [the gospel] in Mk 1:1), and not many gospels. Rome had gospels (εὐαγγέλια), namely the accession of a new emperor, annual birthdays of the emperor, births of sons of emperors and the military victories of Rome. All these events were considered as proclamations of ‘good news’, that is, Rome’s gospels. Jesus’ gospel, however, was *the* gospel, *the* good news – the figure of Jesus, and not Augustus, is the announcement of God’s triumph; in Jesus, the Son of God, a new age has dawned – the kingdom of God. Thirdly, to be part of this kingdom *μετάνοια* is necessary. In its Greek root *μετάνοια*, according to Borg (2011:157, 159) means ‘to go beyond the mind we have’ and to ‘embark on a journey of return to God’.<sup>35</sup> What is thus needed is the insight that a new age has dawned, and that loyalty (πίστις) towards this new kingdom is necessary to partake in its mission.<sup>36</sup> Loyalty (πίστις) in future should thus lie with the kingdom of God, and not with the kingdoms of Rome or the Temple elite. Finally, the implicit message of Mark 1:1 and 15 is not only that Jesus is the Son of God – hence, not Caesar – but also that a new patron has replaced the patrons of Rome and the Temple elite. At his baptism Jesus is not only proclaimed as *the* Son of God (σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός [you are my beloved Son], ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα [in you I am pleased]; Mk 1:11), but also as *the* patron<sup>37</sup>. There is

31. Ἀρχὴ has several possible meanings. Because of the absence of the article before ἄρχη, some scholars understand Mark 1:1 as the title of the gospel (e.g. Donahue & Harrington 2002:59). A second interpretation is to read ἄρχη as a temporal clause in the sense of ‘the beginning’ or ‘starting point’ of the gospel (Bratcher & Nida 1961:2; Moloney 2002:30–31), whilst others interpret ἄρχη as echoing God’s original creation in Genesis 1:1 (Anderson 1976:66; Hooker 1991:33). A fourth interpretation is to read ἄρχη as the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecy quoted in Mark 1:2–3, or as an introduction to Mark 1:2–15 (see Focant 2012:26–27, 30). The contention here is that ἄρχη should be read in context, that is, in connection with εὐαγγελίου [good news] and υἱοῦ θεοῦ [Son of God] in Mark 1:1, as well as against the theology/ideology of Rome. Just as the εὐαγγέλια (gospels or good news) tidings of Augustus, the Son of God had a beginning (ἄρχη); see again the Priene-inscription, n. 12), so is the case with the εὐαγγέλιον of Jesus Christ as υἱοῦ θεοῦ. As such, ἄρχη in Mark 1:1 is a temporal clause, indicating the beginning or start of the gospel of Jesus as Son of God. Put differently, Mark 1:1 states that the real gospel starts with Jesus, and not with the gospels of Rome.

32. The variant υἱοῦ θεοῦ [Son of God] is missing in some important manuscripts (κ\*, Θ, 28\*) and some early Fathers, but included in κ\*, A, B, D, K, L, W, Δ, Π and 33 (thus attested by the Alexandrian, Caesarean, Byzantine and Western text types). The arguments for omitting the variant reading are the following, namely, (1) it is omitted by Codex Sinaiticus (Marcus 2000:141), (2) in general the shorter reading is to be preferred (Metzger 1971:xxvii) and (3) the intentional addition of υἱοῦ θεοῦ by a scribe seems ‘more believable than an omission difficult to explain’ (Focant 2012:26; Marcus 2000:141; Painter 1997:25). Arguments put forward for including the variant reading are, (1) the shorter reading is limited to a small number of manuscripts, especially of the Caesarean text type (Focant 2012:26), (2) the usage of the Fathers is difficult to interpret and not very convincing (Focant 2012:26) and (3) the shorter reading can be explained as an accidental omission (*homoioleuton*), that is, because of the use of *nomina sacra*, ΙΧΥΥΥΟΥ (Jesus Christ, Son of God) could have been copied as ΙΧΥΥ (Focant 2012:26; Metzger 1971:73). In following Kazmierski (1979:1–9), Moloney (2002:29), Focant (2012:26) and Metzger (1971:73), the longer reading is preferred, based on the strong textual attestation, the date of the supporting witnesses and the geographical distribution of the witnesses that support the longer reading. This preference also finds support in the study of Evans (2000:67–81), who argues that the anarthrous υἱοῦ θεοῦ in Mark 1:1 is original, setting the theme of Jesus as Son of God across the gospel, climaxing in the anarthrous υἱὸς θεοῦ in Mark 15:39 – a theme in Mark that places Jesus above the claims that Augustus is the Son of God. Donahue and Harrington (2002:60) also argues for the inclusion of υἱοῦ θεοῦ on redactional and theological grounds: ‘The textually undisputed use of “Son of God” in the centurion’s confession at the death of Jesus (15:39) favors its inclusion here since Mark is fond of both foreshadowing and overarching interconnections’ (Donahue & Harrington 2002:60).

33. See also Peppard (2010:447), commenting on Josephus (*BJ* 3.122–124): The eagle leads every Roman legion; it is the ‘king’ (βασιλεύς) and ‘most warlike’ (ἀκμωτάτος) of all birds, a ‘sure sign of empire’ (τις ἡγμονίας τε κμήριον), and an ‘omen’ of victory (κλιθόν).

34. See John Chrysostom (*Hom. on Matt* 12.3) and Horace (*Odes* 4.4.32), in Peppard (2010:441).

35. ‘To repent means to turn, return to God and to go beyond the mind we have and see things in a new’ (Borg 2011:158). See also Mark 1:4, where John’s preaching of a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins has the same meaning, namely not to partake any longer in kingdoms that are built on institutionalised or systemic sin, that is, sin as systemic injustice and systemic violence (see Borg 2011:146–147).

36. In classic Greek the lemmas πιστεύω, πίστις and πίστός and their respective declinations are never used in the sense of ‘to believe in’ someone or something; it thus were not religious terms (Bultmann 1968:179, 203). In classical Greek πίστός most of times refers to ‘trusting’ or ‘worthy of trust’ (e.g. *Theogn.* 283 and Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 37.12.1; Bultmann 1968:175), πίστις to ‘confidence’ or ‘trust’ in the sense of personal relations, and πιστεύω ‘to trust’, ‘to confide in’ or ‘to rely on’ (Bultmann 1968:176–177). This is also the case in the LXX: πίστις refers to ‘the total basic attitude along the lines of “to trust”’ (Bultmann 1968:187). This trust is normally trust in persons (e.g. 1 Sm 27:12; Mi 7:5), and when it is used in the sense of ‘to believe’ (as πιστεύω), this believe is a belief in words, and not in a person (see e.g. 1 Ki 10:7; Pr 14:15; Bultmann 1968 197). In Philo, πίστις is used as commitment or firmness (Bultmann 1968:202). As is the case in classic Greek and the LXX, πιστεύω in the New Testament also means ‘to rely on’, ‘to trust’ or ‘to believe’. In the case of the latter, ‘to believe’ has the connotation of ‘to regard as credible, as true’ (Bultmann 1968:203). In the cases where πιστεύειν is used, the common meaning is ‘to entrust or commit oneself’ (Bultmann 1968:204), which can also be rendered as being loyal to someone or something. In Mark the lemmas πιστεύω and πίστις in most cases have the meaning of trust in Jesus or being loyal to Jesus or the kingdom (see Mk 1:15; 2:5; 4:40; 5:34, 36; 9:23, 24, 42; 10:52; 11:22, 23, 24; 13:21; 15:32). This meaning of πιστεύω and πίστις in Mark as loyalty to Jesus and the kingdom is especially clear in Mark 9:40 (ὁς γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν καθ’ ἡμῶν, ὑπερ’ ἡμῶν ἔστιν). Mark 9:40 is part of a narrative section in Mark that has as topic πίστις and ἄπιστος (see ἄπιστος in Mk 9:19, πιστεύοντι in Mk 9:23, πιστεύω in Mk 9:24 and πιστευόντων in Mk 9:42). In this context the meaning of πίστις and ἄπιστος is clear: those who are loyal to Jesus and the kingdom are those who have πίστις, and those who are ‘against us’ have ἄπιστος.

37. According to Malina (1988:2–32) and Moxnes (1991:241–268) the role of Jesus in the Synoptics should be seen as broker of God patronage, and not as patron. The cue taken here is that the mission of Jesus in Mark, on the basis of the parallels in Mark 1:1, can also be understood as being the patron of God’s kingdom. In Mark 1:1 the gospel of Jesus is compared with or replaces the gospels of Rome, and Jesus is depicted as *the* Son of God, and not Caesar. Implicit in these parallels, therefore, is that Jesus is also the broker of a new age and kingdom, and not Augustus.

only one gospel, one patron and one kingdom, a *μετάνοια* that should become visible in *πίστις*.

Jesus, as God's agent and patron of his kingdom, immediately after his pronouncement of the dawn of this new reality, starts his mission by making the kingdom visible. God's kingdom is a kingdom directed at outsiders with a patron that, in his patronage, cushions the vagaries of social inferiors (outsiders or marginalised) by endowing those who are loyal to his kingdom with the overarching quality of kinship. Moreover, the gospel of this kingdom proclaims and enacts God's justice<sup>38</sup> *vis-à-vis* the injustices of the gospels and kingdoms of Rome and the Temple elite. This becomes clear in the patronage the Markan Jesus endows without distinction to outsiders in Mark's narrative world. Different from Augustus, Antipas, the Herodians and Temple elite, the patronage of Jesus does not have ulterior (political) motives (see Mk 8:29–33), and his mission is not aimed at protecting self-interest through violence; rather his patronage enacts justice and peace.

This can be seen in Mark from the following: those labelled by the Temple elite as outsiders or deviants<sup>39</sup> – elements of chaos that violate the set order of the world (holiness) as perceived by the ideology of the Temple elite – are healed by Jesus without exception (see Mk 1:30–34, 40–43; 2:3–12; 3:5, 10; 5:22–42; 6:5, 53–56). The demon-possessed – most probably as a result of Roman occupation and patriarchal exploitation<sup>40</sup> – are healed by exorcism (esp. Mk 5:1–20, see also Mk 1:23–26, 34; 3:11; 7:25–30; 9:20–27). In these healings and exorcisms, *victoria* (the power over enemies who know that Jesus is the Son of God) belongs to Jesus, and by forgiving sins (see Mk 2:5), Jesus usurps the right of Caesar and the Temple elite to show mercy (*clementia*) and create *salus* [health]. Tax-collectors and sinners are called to show their loyalty towards the new kingdom (Mk 2:13–14), and by eating with tax-collectors and sinners (Mk 2:15), the Markan Jesus emphasises the inclusive character of the kingdom *vis-à-vis* the exclusive character of the kingdoms of Rome and the Temple elite.<sup>41</sup> Jesus, as patron of the outsiders and the

inclusive kingdom of God, even goes so far as to extend his patronage to non-Israelites. He appoints Thaddeus (most probably non-Jewish because of his Greek name; Donahue and Harrington 2002:12) as one of his closest followers (Mk 3:18), heals the daughter of a Roman official (Mk 5:22–23, 35–42), the daughter of a Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:24–30), and a deaf in the region of the Decapolis (thus most probably a non-Jew; Mk 7:31–37). The Markan Jesus, himself being treated as an outsider (see Mk 2:6, 18; 3:2, 6, 21–22; 5:17; 6:1–3; 7:5; 12:1), has become the patron for outsiders.

Another example of Jesus extending patronage and justice to Jewish and non-Jewish outsiders is the two feeding narratives in Mark 6:30–44 and Mark 8:1–10. The gospels of Rome and the Temple elite resulted in a peasantry that battled to live at the level of subsistence because of these gospels' exploitative injustices. Jesus, on the other hand, extends justice to the exploited by feeding the crowds, feedings that can be depicted as redistributive justice, that is, what is available – five loaves and two fish in Mark 6:38 (ἄρτους ... πέντε και δύο ἰχθύας) and seven loaves (ἄρτους ... ἑπτὰ) and a few small fish (ἰχθύδια ὀλίγα) in Mark 8:5 and 7 – is distributed fairly and equitably amongst all present. Because of this patronage of justice, in both these feedings all present receive enough to eat and are satisfied (και ἔφαγον πάντες και ἐχορτάσθησαν [Mk 6:42] and και ἔφαγον και ἐχορτάσθησαν [Mk 8:8]). So abundant is the justice of Jesus that those who ate were five thousand (only the men; Mk 6:44)<sup>42</sup> and four thousand (Mk 8:9), and after both feedings there were leftovers (twelve baskets [δώδεκα κοφίνων] in Mk 6:43 and seven baskets [ἑπτὰ στυριδᾶς] in Mk 8:8).

A close reading of these two feeding narratives indicates several differences between Mark 6:30–44 and Mark 8:1–10, differences that are important to grasp Mark's intention in narrating the feeding of the crowd as a doublet. With this doublet, Mark indicates that Jesus' patronage and extension of justice is not only available to Jews, but also to non-Jews. The first feeding narrative (Mk 6:30–44) takes place in Galilee (Jewish territory; see Mk 6:1, 6, 30, 32–33), and more specifically, in a 'desolate place' (ἐρημον τόπον [Mk 6:31, 32] and ἐρημός ... τόπος [Mk 6:35]). Mark's use of ἐρημον τόπον, as the place of the feeding of the crowd, resonates with ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ [in the desert/lonely place] in Mark 1:13, the place where Jesus, after his baptism, prepared for his mission and was ministered to (fed) by angels (as representatives of God). Mark's linking of Mark 1:13 with Mark 6:31, 32 and 35 (in his use of ἐρημός [desert/lonely place]), most probably draws the following parallel: as Jesus, God's designated patron, was ministered to by the angels in a time of need, Jesus now extends his patronage to a crowd who was like sheep without a shepherd (ὅτι ἦσαν ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα; Mk 6:34). Jesus' mission, received at his baptism,

38. Justice here is understood, based on Israel's biblical tradition (see e.g. Am 5:21–24; Hs 1:11–17; Mi 6:6–8; Jr 7:5–7; 58:5–7), as redistributive and not retributive. As put by Crossan (2010:2, 3): 'To be just means to distribute everything fairly ... The ... phrase proclaims that God's world must be distributed fairly and equitably among all God's people... Do all have enough? Or, on the contrary, do some have far too little while others have far too much?' Justice, understood as redistributive justice, 'summarizes the character and Spirit of God the Creator and, therefore, the destiny and future of God's created earth' (Crossan 2010:14).

39. The social game of name-calling is a type of interpersonal behaviour and is technically called labelling (Malina & Neyrey 1991:100). Behaviour is deviant 'when it violates the sense of order or set of classifications which people perceive to structure their world' (Van Eck 1995:185). Deviants are thus designated with negative labels such as sinners, prostitutes, lepers or tax-collectors (Van Eck 1995:185).

40. In the world of Jesus were two social domains: the public (political) and private (familial), and in both were people under constraints of abusive authority. In the kinship context, persons subject to the authority of the *paterfamilias*, and especially women, were more likely to recur to demon possession to soften the tensions of the patriarchal family (Guijarro 2002:165).

41. Meals, from a social-scientific perspective, can be understood as ceremonies with the function of confirming values and structures in the institutions of society (see Van Eck 1995:180). Institutions 'are patterned arrangements, sets of rights and obligations (called roles), of relationships among roles (called statuses), and of successive statuses or status sequence which are well-recognized and are regularly at work in a given society' (Van Eck 1995:180). This is why Jesus, when he eats with tax-collectors and sinners (Mk 2:15), is also labelled as a sinner, since likes only ate with likes.

42. The use of ἄνδρες [men] in Mark 6:44 seems strange since the crowds that followed the Markan Jesus also included women and children (see e.g. Mk 10:13 and 15:40–41). Mark's use of ἄνδρες most probably reflects the 'biblical way of counting families by the heads of the households [e.g. Ex 12:37 – E.v.E.] and also the grouping of males at Qumran for the eschatological meal' (Donahue & Harrington 2002:207; see also Focant 2012:131). See also Lohmeyer (1967:125), who argues that Mark's use of ἄνδρες reflects the patriarchy of 1st-century Palestine with no malice intended.

is now extended by means of redistributive justice. God's compassion towards Jesus in a time of need becomes Jesus' compassion (ἐσπλαγγισθη) to those in need.

For the Markan Jesus, patronage received must become patronage extended; being part of Jesus' mission implies partaking in Jesus' mission. This is why Jesus, as was the case in Mark 6:7–12 – in spite of the disciples' request to send the crowd away (Mk 6:35–36) and their excuses in Mark 6:35 and 37b (the lateness of the hour and the loneliness of the place) – challenges the disciples to feed the crowd (Mk 6:37a). The disciples' failure to enact Jesus' mission, contrary to the report of their successful extension of Jesus' mission in Mark 6:30, does, however, not bring Jesus to exclude them from patronage being extended: the disciples are ordered to have the crowd sit down on the green grass in groups of a hundred and fifty, and the multiplied loaves and fish are given to the disciples (as intermediaries) to distribute amongst the crowds (Mk 6:41b). Finally, the abundance of Jesus' patronage is described in Mark 6:42–44: more than five thousand were fed (see again note 41), and after everyone ate and was satisfied, twelve baskets of leftovers (κλάσματα δώδεκα κοφίνων) were collected (Mk 6:43).

In comparison to the first feeding narrative, Mark goes to great lengths to portray the second feeding narrative as taking place in non-Jewish territory.<sup>43</sup> Patronage is not only extended to marginalised Jews, but also to non-Jews excluded from God's presence as propagated by the Temple elite. Except for explicitly situating the second feeding narrative in non-Jewish territory (see Δεκαπόλεως in Mk 7:31 and ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις in Mk 8:1), a comparison of Mark 6:30–44 with Mark 8:1–10 shows that Mark 8:1–10 can be understood as a 'non-Jewish-version' of Mark 6:30–44. In the words of Moloney (2002:156) as: '[a] deliberate reprise of 6:31–44, where Jesus fed a Jewish crowd, 8:1–9 is a carefully located story of Jesus' feeding of a Gentile crowd.'

In this regard, the following differences between the two feeding narratives can be noted: Firstly, Mark 8:1–10 follows two miracle narratives in non-Jewish territory (Mk 7:24–30 and 7:31–37). Typical of Mark's preference for 'threes',<sup>44</sup> these two miracles are followed by a third miracle narrative, also in non-Jewish territory. Secondly, contrary to Mark 6:33 where the crowd comes from towns located close to the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, the crowd in the second feeding narrative is described as coming from afar (ἀπὸ μακρόθεν), a term used in LXX Joshua 9:6, 9 and LXX Isaiah 60:4 (see also Ac 2:39; 22:21; Eph 2:12, 17) to describe non-Jews (Donahue & Harrington 2002:244; Pesch 1984:402–403). Mark, finally, in using ἤδη ἡμέραι τρεῖς (Mk 8:2), is indicating that Jesus is still

43. The use of πάλιν [again] in Mark 8:1 clearly links the two narratives and, in a certain sense, highlights the similarities and differences between the first and second feeding narrative. See also Focant (2012:312): with the use of πάλιν '[σ]t once the continuity and discontinuity [between the two narratives] is emphasized.'

44. See Mark 3:35 (brother, sister and mother), Mark 5:37; 9:2 and 14:33 (Peter, John and James), Mark 8:31; 11:27; 14:43 and 15:1 (priests, scribes and family heads), Mark 1:16–20; 3:13–19 and 6:7–13 (three calls or commissioning of the disciples), Mark 8:31; 9:31 and 10:33–34 (three passion predictions), Mark 14:32–42 (Jesus addresses the disciples in Gethsemane three times), and Mark 14:66–72 (three denials by Peter).

on non-Jewish soil, with a crowd that has accompanied him during the miracle narratives that are narrated in Mark 7:24–30 and 7:31–37 (see also μέσον τῶν ὀρίων Δεκαπόλεως [within the region of Decapolis] in Mk 7:31). Whilst the feeding in Mark 6:30–44 takes place in Galilee (Jewish territory), the feeding in Mark 8:1–10 thus clearly takes place in non-Jewish territory.

Mark's use of numbers in the two feeding narratives further highlights the non-Jewish setting of the second feeding narrative. The five loaves of Mark 6:38b become seven (ἑπτὰ) loaves in Mark 8:5, and the twelve (δώδεκα)<sup>45</sup> baskets of Mark 6:43 become seven baskets in Mark 8:8. The use of the number seven in Mark 8:5 and 8, when compared with Genesis 9:4–7 (the seven Noahic commandments; see Pesch 1984:404), Acts 6:3 (the seven Hellenists chosen as 'deacons') and Acts 13:19 (the seven pagan nations of Canaan) may indicate a non-Jewish number (Donahue & Harrington 2002:245; Focant 2012:313, 314).<sup>46</sup> Mark also turns the κοφίνων of Mark 6:43 into σπιρίδας (Mk 8:8). Whereas σπιρίδας refers to a more elegant basket, κοφίνων refers to a 'wicker basket', which Roman authors saw as characteristic of the Jewish people (Donahue & Harrington 2002:245)<sup>47</sup>. Mark also changes the five thousand (πεντακισχίλιοι) being fed in Mark 6:44 to four thousand (τετρακισχίλιοι) in Mark 8:9. The use of the number four thousand may refer to the association of the number four thousand with the four corners of the earth, 'suggesting the ingathering of the Gentiles' (Donahue & Harrington 2002:245; Pesch 1984:404).

Mark further highlights the non-Jewish setting of Mark 8:1–10 by replacing εὐλόγησεν [blessed] (Mk 6:41) with the Greek εὐχαριστήσας [give thanks] (the formula of thanksgiving used in Hellenistic believing communities) in Mark 8:6. Although these two verbs are at times interchangeable (Gnilka 1978:303), and may simply indicate a stylistic variation (Moloney 2002:154), the use of εὐχαριστήσας most often suggests the taking up of a Hellenistic tradition (Focant 2012:312–313; Gnilka 1978:303; Moloney 2002:154).<sup>48</sup> Mark's focus on non-Jews in Mark 8:1–10 may also account for the use of ἰχθύδια ὀλίγα [little fish] in Mark 8:7, instead of the ἰχθύας [fish] of Mark 6:38, 41 and 43. Mark's use of ἰχθύδια ὀλίγα may refer to the crumbs eaten by little dogs as evoked by the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:28. If, in Mark 7:28, the children (παιδίων) is understood as the house of Israel,

45. According to Donahue and Harrington (2002:207), the use of twelve in Mark 6:43 'symbolises Jesus' sharing of bread and sustenance with the Jewish people.'

46. This, of course, does not exclude the fact that the number seven is also an important Jewish number (see e.g. Gn 7:2–3; Ex 2:16; Lv 15:9; Nm 23:29; Jos 6:15). The number twelve, however, is typically Jewish (e.g. the twelve tribes of Israel).

47. According to Juvenal (*The Satires* 3.14, 6.542) *cophinus* were a kind of basket used especially by begging Jews belonging to the poorer classes. *The Satires* 3.14 and 6.542 respectively read as follows: 'To the Jews, who're equipped with straw-lined baskets', and '[n]o sooner does he give way, than a palsied Jewess will leave [h]er hay-lined begging-basket to mutter her requests in an ear' (see <http://www.poetrytranslation.com/klineasjuvenal.htm>). See also Moloney (2002:155) who describes a κοφίνων as 'a small basket used as a regular part of the apparel of Jewish people in the diaspora.'

48. In this regard, Moloney (2002:154–155) makes the following remark: '[7]he former [εὐλόγησεν – E.v.E.] reflects a Hebrew idea of blessing, while the latter [εὐχαριστήσας – E.v.E.] a more Greek-Christian idea of blessing and giving thanks. Although one must be careful not to push these hints too hard, Mark 8:1–9 may be written in a way more closely reflecting the words used at the Eucharistic celebrations of a Greek-speaking, Gentile world.'

and the little dogs (κυνάρια) as those not part of the house of Israel, Mark's use of ἰχθύδια ὀλίγα may refer to yet another non-Jewish aspect of the second feeding narrative.

The second feeding narrative, in emphasising its non-Jewish context, also omits certain Jewish traits that are part of the first feeding narrative. In the first feeding narrative, the crowd is described as ὡς πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα' [like sheep without a shepherd] (Mk 6:34), and ordered by the disciples to sit on the green grass (ἐπὶ τῷ χλωρῷ χόρτῳ; Mk 6:39) in groups of one hundred and fifty (ἀνέπεσαν πρασιαὶ πρασιαὶ κατὰ ἑκατὸν καὶ κατὰ πεντήκοντα; Mk 6:40). These three aspects of the first feeding narrative allude to Old Testament or Jewish imagery. The crowd described as sheep without a shepherd has its origin in Numbers 27:17 (see also Ezk 34:5–6; 1 Ki 22:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Jdg 11:9), the green grass of Mark 6:39 alludes to Psalm 23:1–2 (see τόπον γλῶσς in LXX Ps 22:2), and the groups of one hundred and fifty to Exodus 18:21, Numbers 31:14 and Deuteronomy 1:15 (Moloney 2002:13–131). Because of its non-Jewish setting, all these Jewish elements are consistently absent from the second feeding narrative.

These two feeding narratives, apart from explicitly showing the extension of Jesus' patronage to all outsiders (exploited Jews and non-Jews), also functions in Mark to highlight the difference between the patronage extended by the gospels of Roman and the Temple elite, and that of Jesus. The feeding of the crowds in the two feeding narratives 'is dramatically juxtaposed to the macabre banquet of Herod in 6:14–29' (Donahue & Harrington 2002:209). Donahue and Harrington (2009) continues:

Herod's banquet is a birthday celebration for the select upper classes and held presumably in a palace; the banquet offered by Jesus is for ordinary people and held on the green grass for those who come on foot from various towns, Herod's banquet begins with Herodias' grudge against John, and Jesus' banquet starts with his compassion on the hungry crowds. Herod gives orders that John should be executed, whereas Jesus gives orders that the crowd should be fed. (p. 209)

However, the two feeding narratives not only highlight the difference between the gospel of Rome and that of Jesus, but also the difference between the gospel Jesus and that of the Temple elite. Earlier a reference was made to meals as ceremonies with the function of confirming values and structures in the institutions of society (see fn. 41). For the gospel of the Temple elite (also practised by the Pharisees and scribes) ritual purity was important, especially when it came to eating and drinking. Mark 7:1–5 is clear on the content of this gospel: eating food with unwashed (defiled) hands and drinking from unwashed cups, pitchers and kettles renders one impure. According to the gospel of the Temple elite, purity was important to receive the patronage of the God of Israel. Impurity meant exclusion, becoming an outsider. In the two feeding narratives the Markan Jesus and those being fed transgresses these purity rules without hesitation. No hands are washed and no utensils (if any were available) are purified. As such, the feeding stories not only align with Jesus' point of view of Mark 7:6–23, but also challenge the gospel of the Temple elite. What is important is not the

traditions of the elders (παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων; Mk 7:3, 5, 8, 9, 13), but that people in need receive something to eat. As such, the feeding narratives can be seen as an 'attack' on the patronage of the Temple elite. In Jesus' mission an ethics of compassion replaces the tradition of the elders; put differently, inclusivity replaces exclusivity.

Several other aspects of the Markan Jesus' patronage can be seen as direct 'attacks' on the patronage of Rome and the Temple elite. By calling fisherman as his followers (Mk 1:16–20), and by multiplying loaves of bread and fish, the Markan Jesus covertly undermines the flow of taxes to the coffers of Rome. Also, by healing the demon-possessed, he cushions the vagaries created by the gospel of Rome and breaks the control this gospel had on Rome's subordinates. Interestingly, the exorcised demons exactly know who Jesus is – the Son of God (see Mk 1:24; 3:11). In defeating the demons or evil spirits, the Markan Jesus is defeating Rome, and because of this, is being hailed as the Son of God, the one in whom real power and influence reside. The same can be said with regard to the gospel of the Temple elite. By ignoring the purity rules (ideology) of the temple (Mk 1:41; 2:18; 2:23; 3:5), by forgiving sins (Mk 2:5), by healing on the Sabbath (Mk 3:10), by touching the death (Mk 5:41) and 'impure' (Mk 1:41; or allowing the 'impure' to touch him, see e.g. Mk 6:56) and by using 'impure' spit to heal (Mk 7:33; 8:22–23), the Markan Jesus establishes himself as the true patron of God, and declares the temple and its ideology as obsolete. Again, authentic power and influence reside in Jesus. The kingdom of God is for outsiders; it is like a mustard seed that grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.<sup>49</sup>

Jesus' patronage, finally, is also extended to the most vulnerable and marginalised persons in 1st-century Mediterranean society, namely women and children. Because of its patriarchal social structure, women and children in the 1st-century Mediterranean world were treated as property.<sup>50</sup> The status of the male head of the household was based on the conviction that life was embedded in male semen, and that the female 'provided nothing beyond a place for the seed's growth until birth' (Malina-Jacobs 1993:1). Because of this conviction, males were seen as superior to females. This position of males was expressed in terms of honour, whilst that of women in terms of shame,<sup>51</sup> and as a result, women

49. The Parable of the Mustard Seed questions religious respectability as proposed by the kingdom of the Temple (see Miller 2001:113–114) and undermines the imperial interests of the kingdom of Rome. The parable tells of a kingdom where God is associated with uncleanness, where boundaries are porous, and where separation cannot and should not be maintained. The kingdom of God spreads effortlessly, takes over and pollutes, bringing along its unwelcome inhabitants, and subverts the kingdoms of the Temple and Rome. The mustard seed has medicinal properties; it can heal the causes of exclusive, exploitative and domineering kingdoms.

50. '[I]n ... a ... culture, where the principal symbolization of social relations was in terms of kinship the social structure was patriarchal. The father was the head of the family, in no uncertain terms; ... in such traditional patriarchal societies ... wives and children ... are treated as the property of the male head of the household' (Horsley 1993:232); See also Van Aarde (2000:226): 'Mediterranean family life was patriarchally oriented, with the father the most important figure within the first-century family. The male head of the family enjoyed absolute authority over his wife(s), children, slaves and other dependents.'

51. 'Unlike the male whose gender made him whole and complete, the female was raised with a sense of shame which made her as dependent on the male for her own "completeness" as she was dependent on him for children, support and honor. The woman whose modesty and strictly controlled behavior in public manifested this sense of shame brought honor on the males to whom she was attached' (Malina-Jacobs 1993:1).

and children were seen as mere property. The position of children in the 1st-century Mediterranean was even worse than that of women. Children were seen as 'nobodies' (Crossan 1991:269), 'the weakest, most vulnerable members of society' (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:336) with little status within the community or family. Minors, for example, had a status on a par with that of slaves, and orphans were the stereotype of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:336).

Given the status of women and children, the Markan Jesus' patronage extended to these most vulnerable and marginalised persons of society is exceptional and went against the grain of the norms of the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite. In Mark's narrative world women are part of Jesus' followers (Mk 15:40–41), and several women are healed by Jesus (Mk 5:21–43; 7:24–30). The Markan Jesus does not treat women as symbols of impurity (Mk 5:21–43), he allows a woman to pour perfume on his body (Mk 14:3–9), and refuses to become involved in a piece of androcentric humour regarding a woman who has been married seven times (Mk 12:18–27). The Markan Jesus also uses women as examples of true discipleship (Mk 5:34; 7:24–30), and at the end of Mark's narrative it is the women who are present at Jesus' crucifixion (Mk 14:41–44) and those who visit the grave (Mk 16:1–2). In the last few verses of the narrative it is also the women who are asked to convey a message to the male disciples who have deserted Jesus earlier (Mk 16:7). In short, the Markan Jesus' attitude towards women is inclusive, non-sexist and egalitarian, and women are typified as true participants of the kingdom of God, as can be seen in their compassion (ethics) towards Jesus.

In the narrative world of Mark, Jesus also extends patronage to children. Jesus heals the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:22–24, 35–43),<sup>52</sup> and associates with street children (Mk 10:13–16; see Van Aarde 2001:135–154, 2004:132–136). The Markan Jesus even goes so far as to state that only those who are willing to be as vulnerable as children can be part of the kingdom of God (Mk 10:15).<sup>53</sup>

Apart from the content of Jesus' patronage, Mark also describes the result of Jesus' patronage. Jesus has become the patron that everybody is talking about (Mk 1:28; 3:7–8) and wants to see (Mk 6:56), the one that has authority (Mk 1:27, 44; 2:12, 28). As such, Jesus bounded the strong men (the patrons of Rome and the Temple elite), entered their houses, and plundered their property (Mk 3:27). The kingdom of God has turned the world upside down: the official patrons have been replaced by a new patron, and the 'sinners' are not the outsiders created by the gospels of Rome and the

Temple elite. The sinners are those who ransack the temple (the priestly elite; Mk 11:17) and those in whose hands Jesus is delivered to be killed (Mk 14:41). Above all, the pretentious 'son of god', Augustus, has been replaced by Jesus as the only and true Son of God, ironically proclaimed by a Roman centurion after Jesus' death on the cross (ἀληθὺς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν; Mk 15:39).

To summarise: In Mark's narrative, Jesus, through his patronage, creates an inclusive community for outsiders by remedying the inadequacies of Rome and the Temple elite within the overarching quality of kinship. Being part of this fictive kinship (kingdom of God) is not hereditary or based on blood; to be part of the kingdom is to do the will of the Father (Mk 3:35) which follows from being loyal to its patron and his mission (to have πίστις). Those who have πίστις are taken up in the mission and kingdom of the patron (see Mk 2:5; 4:40; 5:34; 10:52; 11:22, 24; 13:21), and those with ἀπιστία [unbelief or disloyalty] (Mk 6:6; 9:19) exclude themselves from the kingdom. Those with πίστις will be able to tell the mountain (the temple mount, and thus by implication the kingdom of the Temple elite) to be cast in the sea (Mk 11:23), but those who are open to the yeast of the Temple elite and Rome will not understand what real justice entails (Mk 8:15–21).

Being part of the kingdom of God turns outsiders into insiders. This new identity entails the willingness to be taken up in the mission of its patron by standing up for justice and showing compassion in the same way as the patron of the kingdom of God. In Mark's narrative of Jesus this means the same κηρύσσειν [proclamation] (Mk 3:14) as Jesus (Mk 1:14), the same call to μετάνοια [repentance] (Mk 6:12), the same resistance towards the Temple elite and Rome (Mk 3:15; 6:7), as well as an ethos that participates in the ethos of the patron. In Mark being part of the kingdom entails, (1) the willingness to deny oneself and to take up one's own cross (i.e. the willingness to lose one's life for the sake of the patron and his gospel (Mk 8:34–35), (2) to be a servant of all (Mk 9:35; 10:45), (3) not lord it over others but to serve (Mk 10:42–45) and (4) to expect nothing in return (i.e. to practise generalised reciprocity).

A life that enacts this set of ethics is identity concretely expressed, and is missional in the sense that the *participatio Jesu* relates to being taken up in and being a broker of Jesus' patronage, especially towards outsiders.

## Concluding remarks

Rome's imperial theology claimed that Rome was chosen by the gods to rule an empire without end (mission). To show these gods' rule, will and blessings, Rome claimed sovereignty over sea and land, and all its inhabitants: the 'right' to domination, power and violence (ethics). Rome was 'the lords of the world', with Caesar as main benefactor or patron (identity). The result of this ideology was the *pax Romana*, a peace gained through violence. This was Rome's gospel.

52. With regard to Jesus' healing of the haemorrhaging woman (Mk 5:25–34) and the daughter of Jairus (Mk 5:22–24, 35–43), Horsley makes the following remark: '[7]the woman who had been haemorrhaging for twelve years and the twelve-year old woman (whose father is head of a village assembly) are not simply individuals, but figures representative of Israel, which is bled under the Roman imperial order and indeed is virtually dead' (Horsley 2003:303).

53. In this regard, Countryman (1988:188) states the following: 'By making the child and not the father the model for entry into the reign of God, Jesus again negated the family structures of the society and reversed the hierarchical assumptions that governed all life.'



The ideology of the Temple elite was based on the understanding of God as holy, expressed by creation as the divine order of the world. To replicate God's holiness was to separate the ritually and social clean and unclean, a purity code that defined a society centered on the temple and its priests (mission). Acting as God's 'appointed' patrons (identity), the priestly elite preserved their power and privilege by always taking the side of Rome, accumulating wealth through tithes and offerings and adding peasant land to their estates by investing in loans (ethics). The result of this ideology was 'peace', gained through systemic violence by drawing boundaries to exclude the impure and social expendables. This was the gospel of the Temple elite.

The gospel of the kingdom of God, however, proclaimed peace through justice. Mission and ethics went hand in hand. To be part of this mission – embodied by the Markan Jesus, God's appointed patron – μετάνοια [repentance] from the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite and πίστις [loyalty] towards the gospel and mission of God's kingdom was a prerequisite. Enacting this mission was to stand up for justice and to show compassion towards outsiders created by the gospels of Rome and the Temple elite, thus by being patrons of the God of this kingdom (identity). Because of this mission, identity and ethics, *pax* [peace], *concordia* [social harmony], *felicitas* [happiness], *clementia* [mercy], *iustitia* [justice], *salus* [health], *virtus* [the common good] and *spes* [hope] was available to all.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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