
Chapter 1

Introduction

Symbols orientate in order to disorientate with
the aim to reorientate (Ricoeur 1975:122-128)

1.1 ORIENTATION¹

An opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in the Gospel of Mark was first identified by Lohmeyer (1936, 1942). Lohmeyer argued that the main reason for this opposition was a difference in focus: Jerusalem focuses on the cult, and Galilee on eschatology, thus a theological opposition: Galilee is the place of the *gospel*, the new 'kommende Gotteshaus', and Jerusalem is the place of the *cult*, the traditional 'Gottestadt'. This insight of Lohmeyer was taken up by Lightfoot (1938), Marxsen (1959) and Kelber (1974). Lightfoot agreed with Lohmeyer that the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark's gospel is one of eschatology: Because Galilee will be the sphere of divine revelation (the seat of the gospel), Jerusalem can be seen as the center of human rejection, the center of relentless hostility and sin. Lightfoot thus argued that the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark can also be seen as geographical.

Marxsen (1959), in his *redaktionsgeschichtliche* analysis of the Gospel, using the insights of Lohmeyer and Lightfoot, argued that at the time of the composition of the Gospel, the eschatological expectations in Galilee were so strong that Mark, by way of his redactional activity, made Galilee the 'home' (present and future) of Jesus. He therefore also understood this opposition in the Gospel as theological and geographical. Kelber agreed with Lohmeyer, Lightfoot and Marxsen that the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark was one of different understandings of eschatology. Kelber, however, laid his emphasis in his study of the Gospel on the differences between the theological leaders of both centers in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple.

These *historical-critical* investigations into the opposition of Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark thus yielded the result that a theological, eschatological and geographical opposition, historically and socially speaking, may have existed between the centers of Galilee and Jerusalem at the time of Mark's composition of his Gospel. It is also clear that historical concerns about the composition of Mark seem to have motivated these scholars' respective approaches, and from theological presuppositions, historical conclusions were drawn.

These insights of Lohmeyer, Lightfoot, Marxsen and Kelber, concerning the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark, served as stimulus for the *literary-critical* study of the structure of space in the Gospel of Mark. Van Iersel (1982a,

1982b, 1983, 1989), for example, argued that Galilee versus Jerusalem is not the only opposition in Mark's story of Jesus: The desert (Mk 1:2-13) stands in opposition to the tomb (Mk 15:42-16:8) and Galilee (Mk 1:16-8:21) stands in opposition to Jerusalem (Mk 11:1-15:39). However, central to Jesus' activity in Mark is his 'way' from the desert and Galilee to Jerusalem, and eventually the tomb. In a very comprehensive study on space in Mark, Malbon (1979, 1982, 1986a) more or less confirmed Van Iersel's analysis. Malbon, however, argued that Mark's spatial structure is much more complex than Van Iersel tried to indicate. She however agreed on the fact that Jesus' 'way' from Galilee to Jerusalem can be seen as the central spatial designation in Mark. This was also the conclusion of Petersen (1980a) and Rhoads & Michie (1982).

One positive aspect of the literary-critical study of space in Mark was that the text of Mark as a literary unit was taken seriously. Because of this, they were able to bring new and important aspects of the structure of space in Mark to the fore: The central aspect of Mark's spatial structure is that of 'the way' of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. Understood as such, the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark serves to highlight 'the way' of Jesus (from Galilee to Jerusalem). A definite shift in the understanding of the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark can therefore be indicated: Where the historical-critical scholars understood and tried to explain the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in terms of historical, theological and eschatological differences in the early church, this opposition was seen by the above mentioned literary-critics as a result of Jesus' way of suffering from Galilee to Jerusalem. Because Jesus' activity in Galilee was questioned by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, conflict arose, and therefore Jesus' proclamation of the arrived kingdom of God became a way of suffering.

Jesus' way of suffering in Mark was translated into sociological terms by the respective *ideological-critical*² reading of Mark by Belo (1981), Myers (1988) and Waetjen (1989)³. Belo (1981), Myers (1988) and Waetjen (1989) analyzed Mark's story of Jesus (his 'way' in the Gospel) in terms of their respective understandings of the socio-economic background of first-century Mediterranean society (as a stratified agrarian society). Belo argued that Jesus was committed to subvert Palestine's economic system. Myers analyzed Mark's story of Jesus as a 'war of myths' between Jesus and the ruling elite (Pharisees, scribes, chief priests and elders). According to Waetjen, the Gospel of Mark tells the story of Jesus' construction of the way from Galilee to Jerusalem. On this way, Jesus reorders power in and on behalf of the new community of God, and because of this, is opposed by the ruling elite. As a result of their respective analyses of Mark's story of Jesus, these three scholars concluded that the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark can be seen as a political opposi-

tion. Their respective analyses of Mark's gospel from an ideological-critical point of view yielded especially three positive results: First, they gave attention to both the text and its social setting. Second, because they took the social setting of the Gospel seriously, they were able to translate Jesus' way in Mark into social terms. And finally, their respective readings of Mark have the possibility to make the interpreter aware of the pragmatical dimension of interpretation, as well as the fact that the object/target of communication has to be taken more seriously.

Therefore, what started out as a theological opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in Mark, became a political one: Jesus' way in the Gospel was a way between Galilee and Jerusalem, and in Jerusalem Jesus was killed because of the political implications of his way in Galilee (and Jerusalem).

1.2 QUESTION POSING AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH GAPS IN THE CURRENT DEBATE

In regard to the current debate of Galilee versus Jerusalem described in the very concise manner above, the following methodological questions can be asked (see section 2.5): Did the respective historical-critics who studied this opposition in Mark (see sections 2.2.1.1 to 2.2.1.4) take the social setting of Mark's story of Jesus seriously? Were their respective historical-critical analyses of space in Mark overplayed and controlled by their theological understanding of the Gospel, that is, without a grounding in socio-economic, cultural, political and religious reality? Second, did they take the literary unity of Mark (as narrative) seriously?

Turning to the exponents of the literary-critical school's analysis of space in Mark (see sections 2.3.2 to 2.3.6), the following questions can be posed: Although they took the text of Mark as a literary unity seriously, can it be said that Mark's story of Jesus, as a narrative act of communication, got its rightful attention? Did their respective literary models enable them to study space in the narrative of Mark comprehensively? Also, did their respective literary models enable them to analyze the ideological perspective and interest of the narrator in terms of its intended effect in the narrative of Mark? And finally, can their respective literary-critical readings of space be complemented by a reading that also takes the social setting of the intended addressees of the Gospel into consideration?

The ideological-critical readings to be discussed in section 2.4 did take the social setting of Mark's story of Jesus seriously. However, can it be argued, as Belo and Myers implied (see respectively sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3), that the institutions of economics and politics indeed were so dominant in first-century Mediterranean society? Can one say, as it is sometimes argued, that because in modern society economics is

the most dominant institution, this was also the case in first-century Mediterranean society? Did Belo, Myers and Waetjen read the text as an example of a simple agrarian society, or as that of an advanced agrarian society? The latter seems to be the case in regard to Waetjen's reading of Mark (see section 2.4.4). Furthermore, can it be argued that the institution of kinship can be seen as the most dominant in both simple and advanced agrarian societies? If this is the case, how should the relationship between the institutions of economics, politics and kinship in both simple and advanced agrarian societies be understood? Did a shift occur in regard to this relationship in terms of a simple and an advanced agrarian society? In other words, can it be argued that certain aspects of some of above mentioned ideological-critical works fall prey to the fallacies of *anachronism*, *ethnocentrism* and *reductionism*⁴?

From the above questions two research gaps can therefore be indicated in the past and present debate regarding the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem in the Gospel of Mark (see also section 2.5):

- * The need for an interpretation of the text in terms of an association of a narratological and social scientific explanation; and
- * the need for an analysis of the text which is aware of the fallacies of ethnocentrism, anachronism and reductionism.

1.3 AIM, INVESTIGATIVE PROGRAM AND MAIN HYPOTHESIS

The aim of this study is twofold: First, to address the two above identified research gaps (methodologically speaking). Second, to study focal space as symbolization in Mark's story of Jesus by using an exegetical model that, on the one hand, associates a narratological with a social scientific reading of the text, and, on the other hand, tries to avoid an ethnocentric, anachronistic and reductionistic reading of the text.

This will be done as follows: In chapter 2 the current debate in regard to the study of the opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem will be given. In chapter 3 the first research gap will be addressed, and chapter 4 the second. In chapter 3 attention will especially be given to a methodological consideration of an association of a narratological and social scientific reading of texts. In this regard, a methodological reconsideration will be done of the concept ideology, and the analysis of space on the topographical level of the text in terms of the ideological perspective (and interest) of the narrator. This will enable the second research gap to be addressed when the text is analyzed in chapter 6. The methodological conclusions reached in chapters 3 and 4 will thus be used, first, for an emic⁵ (chapter 5) and, second, an etic reading of the text (chapter 6) in terms of the spatial opposition between Galilee and Jerusalem as focal space/symbols in Mark's story of Jesus. The final conclusions of this study will be drawn in chapter 7.

The main thesis of this study can be defined as follows:

The aim of this study is to indicate that topographical references in Mark's gospel, such as Galilee, Jerusalem, house, the temple and 'the way' can be seen as not only denotations of social interests and/or institutions, but also as metaphors/symbols that reflect a specific understanding of the symbolic universe. It will also be indicated that the way in which Galilee and Jerusalem (as focal space) are structured in the narrative of Mark, seen from the narrator's ideological point of view, has certain political undertones. It will thus be shown that the narrator conveys his ideological perspective and interest also by means of symbols. In Mark, some of the most important symbols that carry the ideological perspective and interest of the narrator is the way in which he structures space in the narrative. Space, in Mark, as symbol(s), to use the words of Paul Ricoeur, is used to orientate in order to disorientate in order to reorientate.

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 1

¹ This section only serves as a general and broad orientation towards the study of Galilee and Jerusalem as focal spaces in Mark's story of Jesus. The current debate in regard to the study of space in Mark will be discussed in full in chapter 2. Because of this, no detail of the debate in this section is given. Also, for example, no reference is made to the subsequent sections in which the scholars referred to in this section, respective analyses of space in Mark will be discussed.

² According to Van Luxemburg, Bal & Weststeijn (1983:97), the sociology of literature is the discipline that encompasses the different interests in literary science which studies literature and its relationship to social reality within which it functions. They distinguish three main approaches:

- * The *empirical sociology of literature*, which is not interested in literature itself, but in aspects associated with literary production, such as the composition of the reading public and the social position of the author;
- * the *historical materialistic sociology of literature* which seeks to locate literary text in their historical contexts, thus the much debated subject of the relationship between a work of literature and its socio-historical reality. The description of this relationship has mostly been dominated by the mechanistic Marxist concept that relations of production in the economic base of society determine the social, political and cultural superstructure, that is the whole question of the so-called 'false consciousness'. It has been realized, however, that the base and superstructure have a certain autonomy over and against one another, so that 'the superstructure is ... determined by the base in a weak sense' (Goldberg 1987:30), which really means that the influence of the economical is not directly casual as some Marxists assert; and

- * *ideology critique* as the approach within the sociology of literature which is concerned with the analysis of the ideologies within the literary text itself and in its reception, that is, the ideologies of texts in terms of their intended communication. The analysis of the text is the main purpose of this approach, and the methods of analysis used are those developed in literary criticism and in the social sciences.

It is in terms of these distinctions of Van Luxemburg, Bal & Weststeijn (1983:97) that the respective works of Belo, Myers and Waetjen are termed as ideological-critical. The term ideological-critical therefore must not be understood in a pejorative sense.

³ The works of Belo, Myers and Waetjen have been selected for different reasons: Belo's analysis of Mark is the first materialistic reading of the Gospel. His book is also dedicated to the oppressed masses in Brazil, Chile and South Africa (Belo 1981:v), which makes his work of special interest as this book is written by a South African scholar. The work of Waetjen was also selected for two reasons: First, he combines a literary and sociological analysis, which is one of the methodological points of departure of this study. Second, Waetjen's analysis of Mark 'has been formed, partially at least, by the experiences of three sabbatical leaves in the so-called Third World' (Waetjen 1989:xiv), of which South Africa is one. Finally, Myers' book is dedicated to the oppressed that stand on the 'periphery' of society (Myers 1988:6). According to Myers (1988:9), a political reading of Mark's gospel is the only way to show 'the privileged strata of society' that the Bible has practical implications for everyday life, including the relationship between those in the 'center' and those on the 'periphery'. Myers also, as is the case with Waetjen, employs both sociological and literary analysis in the reading of Mark's gospel, that is, one of the methodological points of departure of this study. My evaluation of the above mentioned works as 'a privileged South-African', as well as my own political reading of Mark, therefore could prove to be interesting.

⁴ The concept *ethnocentrism* was first introduced by Sumner, and, according to him, refers to a 'view of things (i.e. the understanding of how society works — EvE) in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others (i.e. other societies being studied — EvE) are scaled and rated in reference to it' (Sumner 1940:13). Following Sumner, Van Staden (1991:56) sees ethnocentricity as referring to the very common and universally found inclination 'of any individual or group to interpret the properties ... or behavior of any 'alien' individual ... or group in terms of the norms, values and characteristics of the own group'. Noel (1971:33) defines ethnocentrism as follows: 'The values of the own group, as the *in-group*, are equated with abstract, universal standards of morality and practices of the in-group, and are exalted as better or more 'natural' than those of any *out-group*' (my emphasis). In the same vein, Catton (1964:930) states that 'ethnocentrism makes us see out-group behavior as a deviation from in-group mores rather than as adherence to outgroup mores'. In this regard Bossman (1990:2), commenting on the benefits of a cross-cultural study of the Bible, states the following in regard to the concept of ethnocentrism:

A benefit of cross-cultural studies has been their role in helping readers recognize the differences among peoples and cultures. Not recognizing such differences supports a fanciful theology of universal oneness, espousing a common norm applicable, resulting in a failure to acknowledge diverse ... cultural systems [and lead to] the perilous outcome of ethnocentrism.

(Bossman 1990:2)

The term ethnocentrism, or anachronism, therefore relates to the problem of not recognizing the 'distance' between the culture embedded in the text and that of the reader of the text, or in the words of Papajohn & Spiegel (1975:19), 'to assume that generalizations based on observations of one culture have universal applicability' (see also Hollenbach 1986:68, 1987:50-52; Elliott 1987c:40; Pilch 1988b:60; Horsley 1989:3-4; Fiensy 1991:viii; Rohrbaugh 1991:73, [1993]a:13; Vorster 1991c:128; Robbins 1992b:313 for the same understanding of this term). *Reductionism*, on its turn, refers to a sociological model that only opens the way for one or two of the four social instances in reading texts. According to Van Aarde (1991b:6-7) the concept reductionism refers to two ways of reading ancient texts: First, all four social institutions (i.e. politics, economics, religion and kinship) are reduced to either the political or the economical. Second, economics, for example, is not studied in terms of the relationship between economics and the other social institutions that may have existed in a specific society (see also Freyne 1988:222).

⁵ The meaning of terms like emics, etics, ideological point of view and symbolic universe used in section 1.3 will all be attended to in later sections.