

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jbl-01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php)

## THE JEWISH WAR AND THE SITZ IM LEBEN OF MARK

JOEL MARCUS

The University, Glasgow, G12 8QQ

Although most scholars continue to argue that the Gospel of Mark is addressed to a Christian community residing in Rome,<sup>1</sup> a growing minority of recent studies has situated Mark's community in geographical proximity to Palestine,<sup>2</sup> probably in the Roman province of Syria,<sup>3</sup> which included Coele Syria, the Phoenician coast, and (sometimes) the Hellenistic cities on the border of Palestine.<sup>4</sup> Both sides in the debate generally agree that the time

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974; orig. 1959) 8-9; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (3d ed.; THKNT 2; Berlin: Evangelische Verlag, 1965) 18-20; V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966) 32; W. L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 24-25; R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; HTKNT 2; Freiburg: Herder, 1976) 1. 12-14; B. H. M. G. M. Standaert, *L'Évangile selon Marc: Composition et genre littéraire* (Nijmegen: Stichting Studentenpers, 1978) 465-91; J. Gnifka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (2 vols.; EKKNT 2; Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978-79) 1. 34; J. Ernst, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 1981) 21-22; R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1983) 191-97; M. Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) 28-30; F. J. Matera, *What Are They Saying about Mark?* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1987) 15-17; R. A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989) xxix-xxxi.

<sup>2</sup> There has not been much support recently, however, for the "Galilean" hypothesis, on which see below, pp. 460-61.

<sup>3</sup> S. Schulz, *Die Stunde der Botschaft: Einführung in die Theologie der vier Evangelisten* (Hamburg: Furche, 1967) 9; W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 97-98; H. C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 100-105; H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) 2. 166-67; P. J. Achtemeier, *Mark* (2d ed.; Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 125-31; D. Lührmann, *Das Markusevangelium* (HNT 3; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1987) 6-7; and especially C. Theissen, *Lokalkolorit und Zeitgeschichte in den Evangelien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 246-84. The manuscript of this study was nearly finished when I read Theissen's excellent treatment, which anticipates my conclusions in several respects, as will become clear in the notes. I disagree with Theissen, however, on a number of important points, as will become equally clear.

<sup>4</sup> The borders of Roman Syria kept changing, and the status of the Hellenistic cities was especially variable; see M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine* (2 vols.; Ebib; Paris: Lecoffre, 1967)

of the composition of the Gospel is either slightly before or slightly after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, the devastating climax, though not the end, of the unsuccessful Jewish revolt against the Romans in AD 66–74.<sup>5</sup>

This study will support the minority position and argue that Mark's Gospel reflects the pervasive influence on his community of the first Jewish Revolt, an event to which that community stands in both geographical and temporal proximity.

### I. Arguments for Roman Provenance

First, though, a few words need to be said about the case for a Roman provenance. This case rests mainly on the testimony of Papias, as reported by Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15), that Mark became the interpreter of Peter and wrote down accurately, though not in order, the latter's memoirs about Jesus. Though Papias does not specify Rome as the place of the composition, his association of Mark with Peter and his knowledge of 1 Peter (see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.17) lead to the supposition that he thinks Mark was written in Rome, since 1 Pet 5:13 assumes that Peter and Mark are in "Babylon," that is, Rome.<sup>6</sup> In apparent reliance on Papias, Irenaeus and the "anti-Marcionite prologue" locate Mark in Rome.<sup>7</sup>

The reliability of the tradition transmitted by Papias, however, is open to question. Papias's main assertion, the linkage with Peter's eyewitness testimony, is belied by a form-critical analysis of Mark; the Gospel seems to be several steps removed from eyewitness testimony, consisting rather of a collection of traditions that have gone through considerable development in the course of their transmission. There is, moreover, nothing particularly Petrine about these traditions.<sup>8</sup> Papias's account is probably a reflection not of historical information but of two other factors: (1) a knowledge of the

2. 141–71; "Syria," *OCD* (2d ed., 1970) 1030–31, and for the earlier period U. Kahrstedt, *Syrische Territorien in hellenistischer Zeit* (Abhandlungen der Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-historische Klasse n.s. 19; Berlin: Weidmann, 1926). The Hellenistic "ring" cities included all of the cities of the Decapolis except Scythopolis, which lay in Galilee (E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ [175 B.C.—A.D. 135]* [3 vols.; rev. ed. G. Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973–87] 2. 142). For background on these cities, see Schürer, *History*, 1. 85–183; and A. Kasher, *Jews and Hellenistic Cities in Eretz-Israel: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Hellenistic Cities during the Second Temple Period (332 BCE–70 CE)* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> For a brief description of the war, see Schürer, *History*, 1. 484–513.

<sup>6</sup> See Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 194; Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, xxix; contra Theissen (*Lokalkolorit*, 247–48), who thinks that the Papias tradition is neutral with regard to the alternative "Syria or Rome."

<sup>7</sup> See Hengel, *Studies*, 2–3.

<sup>8</sup> See K. Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus und die Frage nach dem Verfasser des zweiten Evangeliums," *ZNW* 58 (1967) 175–77; Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 195–96.

association of the names of Mark and Peter in 1 Pet 5:13, and (2) a desire on the part of second-century "orthodox" church leaders to link the four Gospels with known disciples as a weapon against the Gnostics.<sup>9</sup> If one asked why Papias chose to link the Gospel directly with Mark rather than with Peter, the answer would be that "Mark" was associated with the Gospel from a very early period and may indeed be the name of its author.<sup>10</sup> This Mark who wrote the Gospel, however, was probably not, as Papias seems to have assumed him to be, John Mark, the native of Jerusalem who became a companion of Paul.<sup>11</sup> "Mark" was one of the commonest names in the Roman Empire,<sup>12</sup> and the form-critical argument made above against the linkage of the Gospel with the eyewitness account of Peter would also apply to a linkage with the other apostles who would have been personally known by John Mark.<sup>13</sup>

Papias's tradition about Mark, then, a tradition that implies a Roman provenance for the Gospel, does not seem to be historically reliable. Recently, however, B. Standaert and M. Hengel have revived the argument of T. Zahn and W. R. Ramsay that the frequent Latinisms in Mark testify to a Roman provenance.<sup>14</sup> They focus especially on the mention of the *κοδράντης* coin (the Latin *quadrans*) in 12:42 and of the *πραητώριον* (the prefect's palace, Latin *praetorium*) in 15:16, claiming that the paraphrase ὃ ἐστὶν κοδράντης ("that is, a *quadrans*") "indicates a place where the Greek τὸ λεπτόν . . . had to be interpreted as the Roman *quadrans*" and that the explanation ὃ ἐστὶν

<sup>9</sup> See Niederwimmer, "Johannes Markus," 172–88; Koester, *Introduction*, 2, 167.

<sup>10</sup> See Hengel's chapter on the titles of the Gospels in *Studies*, 64–84.

<sup>11</sup> It is in balance probable that Papias thinks the Mark of 1 Pet 5:13, who wrote the Gospel, is identical with the John Mark of Acts (Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:36–41) and the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline correspondence (Phlm 24; Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11); see Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 191–94. Lührmann doubts this, noting that no one in the ancient church, including Papias, ever links 1 Pet 5:13 directly with the Mark in Acts and the Pauline letters (*Markusevangelium*, 5). As Guelich points out, however, "the mention of both Silvanus and Mark in 1 Peter 5:12–13 makes clear that 'Mark' was the John Mark of Acts and the Pauline corpus who along with Silvanus (Silas) had also been a companion of Paul" (*Mark 1–8:26*, xxix). 1 Pet 5:12–13 may be an attempt to claim known Pauline companions for the pseudepigraphal Peter, thus reconciling movements within the church that were otherwise in tension with each other; see Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1, 8–9.

<sup>12</sup> See Achtemeier, *Mark*, 126–28.

<sup>13</sup> But two other arguments made by Niederwimmer against authorship by the Jerusalem-born John Mark are not compelling ("Johannes Markus," 178–85): (1) *Mark's errors concerning the geography of Palestine* are not inconceivable for a native of Jerusalem, given the poor state of ancient geographical knowledge (see Hengel, *Studies*, 46; and Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 254). They may, moreover, be the result not of ignorance but of a "theological" geography (see below, n. 56). (2) Such *apparent mistakes about Judaism* as the statement in 7:3–4 that "all the Jews" wash their hands before they eat may be the result of generalizing for a Gentile audience, as *Ep. Arist.* 305 shows (see Hengel, *Studies*, 148 n. 51; Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, xxviii, 364).

<sup>14</sup> T. Zahn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (3d ed.; 2 vols.; Leipzig: Deichert, 1907; orig. 1898) 2, 256–57; W. R. Ramsay, "On Mark xii. 42," *ExpTim* 10 (1898–99) 232, 336; Standaert, *Marc*, 470–73; Hengel, *Studies*, 29. The quotations are from Hengel.

πραϊτώριον ("that is, *praetorium*") "would have been quite unnecessary for Greek-speaking Gentile Christians in the East."<sup>15</sup>

This argument, however, fails to convince. As W. G. Kümmel and H. Koester have noted, Mark's Latinisms are mostly technical military terminology and "could occur at any place where a Roman garrison was stationed and Roman law was practiced."<sup>16</sup> Neither do the specific words *κοδράντης* and *πραϊτώριον* necessarily point to Rome. With regard to *κοδράντης*, it was already noted by F. Blass at the turn of the century that Matt 5:26 suggests knowledge of the Roman term *quadrans* in the East, since Matthew was probably composed in Antioch.<sup>17</sup> K. Butcher, while acknowledging that the Roman denomination *quadrans* did not circulate in the eastern part of the empire, adds that the use of the word *quadrans* in an ancient text may simply refer to a local denomination such as the Greek *χαλκοῦς* and that Greek and Roman monetary terms were probably interchangeable, even though the currencies were not.<sup>18</sup> Thus the term *quadrans* was probably known in the East, even if the Roman *quadrans* coin itself did not circulate there.<sup>19</sup> Mark's translation of two *λεπτά* as one *quadrans*, Butcher concludes, does not necessarily point to Roman usage. "All it implies is that the term *λεπτόν* might have been unspecific or unfamiliar to the writer or his audience." This is especially likely because *λεπτόν* does not seem to have been an official denomination but a general term for lightweight bronze coinage of little value,<sup>20</sup> much like the Elizabethan word "mite" used in the KJV of this

<sup>15</sup> Standaert (*Marc*, 472–73) also repeats Hengel's argument from an earlier work ("Mk 7,3 πυγμαῖ: die Geschichte einer exegetischen Aporie und der Versuch ihrer Lösung," ZNW 60 [1969] 182–98) that *πυγμαῖ* in Mark 7:3 is a Latinism, but the derivation and meaning of *πυγμαῖ* are so obscure that no firm conclusions can be drawn about it (cf. Guelich, *Mark 1–8*:26, 364–65).

<sup>16</sup> Koester, *Introduction*, 2, 167; cf. Kümmel, *Introduction*, 97–98.

<sup>17</sup> F. Blass, "On Mark xii. 42," *Expositum* 10 (1898–99) 287; cf. C. S. Mann, *Mark* (AB 27; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986) 496.

<sup>18</sup> The *quadrans* is not unique in this regard; as Butcher notes, "There is little archaeological evidence to suggest that the denarius circulated freely in Syria under the Julio-Claudian emperors, yet the Gospels mention this denomination." Butcher, who is in the Department of Coins and Medals at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, and whose forthcoming book *Coinage in Roman Syria* will gather together what is presently known about the elusive subject of eastern currency, kindly supplied me with this information in a letter of January 16, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 259: "Der Quadrans ist als Münze nicht bis in den Osten gedrungen, wohl aber als Fremdwort." To give a modern analogy, people the world over know the approximate value of the American dollar, even though it does not freely circulate outside of the United States.

<sup>20</sup> See J. M. Jones (*A Dictionary of Ancient Greek Coins* [London: Seaby, 1986] 132), who defines "lepton" as meaning "light, small," a word which is used in some later Greek texts to describe a bronze coinage in general terms. . . . It is far from certain that the word was ever officially applied to any denomination." He goes on to cite Mark 12:42 as the only contemporary text that comes near to supporting the contrary supposition, but then adds that even this text is "more likely to be an attempt to give an approximate equivalent for the unusual Greek word rather than evidence for an official exchange rate."

passage. It seems likely, then, that the note in Mark 12:42 about the λεπτόν and the κοδράντης should be interpreted not as the conversion of an eastern term into its western equivalent but as the clarification of an imprecise term by a precise one.

Similarly, Mark's comment in 15:16, ἔσω τῆς αὐλῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν πραιτώριον ("inside the palace, that is, the *praetorium*"), is probably a specification rather than a definition. Mark's readers would certainly have known what an αὐλή was. This was a common Greek word for a courtyard; by extension, the term came to denote the "court" of a prince and hence his palace.<sup>21</sup> Mark's clause "which is the *praetorium*," therefore, is not a definition of an unknown word but a clarification that here the ambiguous term αὐλή means "palace," more specifically the prefect's palace.<sup>22</sup> This sort of specification would probably be even more necessary for an audience in Syro-Palestine than it would be for audiences elsewhere, since inhabitants of Syro-Palestine might have known that there were *several* palaces in Jerusalem and might have needed specification of precisely which palace was meant.<sup>23</sup>

Standaert and Hengel contend that, apart from Latinisms, other features such as the note in Mark 7:26 ("Syrophoenician by race") suggest an audience in Rome. In the vicinity of Palestine, they argue, the designation "Phoenician" alone would suffice, and "Syrophoenician" would be superfluous; only in a faraway place such as Rome would it be necessary to specify that the woman was a *Syrophoenician*, that is, a Phoenician from the province of Syria, as opposed to a *Libyphoenician*, that is, a Phoenician from the area around Carthage.<sup>24</sup>

This argument, too, has its problems, one of which has been noted by G. Theissen. In texts of the first two centuries AD, the term "Syrophoenician" is not in fact used to distinguish a Syrian Phoenician from a "Libyphoenician."<sup>25</sup> The latter term, moreover, does not designate a Phoenician living in Libya, as the Standaert/Hengel hypothesis would require, but rather a descendant of Phoenicians who have intermarried with native Libyans.<sup>26</sup> It

<sup>21</sup> See Blass, "On Mark xii. 42 and xv. 16," *ExpTim* 10 (1898-99) 186; see also "αὐλή," BAGD, 121; and M-M, 91-92.

<sup>22</sup> See Blass, "On Mark xii. 42 and xv. 16," 186; see also "πραιτώριον," BAGD, 697; and M-M, 532-33.

<sup>23</sup> As H. I. MacAdam has pointed out to me in a letter, αὐλή could refer to the Antonia Fortress, Herod's palace in the Citadel, or the Hasmonean palace directly east of Herod's palace; see B. V. Pixner, "Was the Trial of Jesus in the Hasmonean Palace? A New Solution to a Thorny Topographical Problem of Jerusalem," in *Jerusalem: City of the Ages* (ed. A. L. Eckardt; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987) 66-80.

<sup>24</sup> Standaert, *Marc*, 477-78; Hengel, *Studies*, 29, 137-38; see also "Συροφονίχισσα," BAGD, 794.

<sup>25</sup> Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 257.

<sup>26</sup> Diodorus Siculus (20.55.4) lists as the first two of the four races (γένη) who have divided Libya "the Phoenicians, who at the time occupied Carthage" and "the Libyphoenicians, who have many cities about the sea and intermarry with the Carthaginians, and who received this

is possible that, analogously, "Syrophoenician" in Mark 7:26 denotes a descendant of Phoenicians who have intermarried with Syrians, especially since Mark calls the woman a "Syrophoenician *by race*" (Συροφονικίσιςσα τῷ γένει).<sup>27</sup> It is also possible, of course, that "Syrophoenician" here means a native of the Phoenician part of Syria.<sup>28</sup> In either case, the term distinguishes Mark's woman not from Phoenicians living in the "diaspora" but from other varieties of *Syrians*,<sup>29</sup> and it would be perfectly at home in the vicinity of Palestine.

Mark's terminology, then, is no unambiguous indication of the Roman provenance of his Gospel, and the main support of that theory, the tradition of Papias, is not a sound starting point for historical investigation. The decks are cleared for the consideration of an alternate theory.

## II. Mark 13

The logical place to begin a study of the Marcan *Sitz im Leben* is the eschatological prophecies in the so-called "apocalyptic discourse" of chap. 13. I will make no attempt here to grapple fully with the complex issues of redaction and historical referent that have been extensively explored in the secondary literature.<sup>30</sup> Rather, I will limit myself to an attempt to show that some of the *ex eventu* "prophecies" in Mark 13 reflect features of the Jewish War that have had a profound effect on Mark's community, and that they

---

name as a result of the interwoven ties of kinship" (LCL trans.). Note the distinction made here between "Libyphoenicians," that is, Phoenicians who have intermarried with Libyans, and "Phoenicians," that is, Phoenicians who have not intermarried, though they also live in Libya. The other two "races" mentioned by Diodorus are the Libyans and the Nomads.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Diodorus's use of γένος to denote the Libyphoenicians (see previous note). The theory that "Syrophoenician" indicates a person of mixed "race" may help to account for its negative nuance in its three other ancient usages (Lucilius, 496–97; Juvenal, *Satires* 8.158–62; Lucian, *Deor. Conc.* 4), on which see Standaert, *Marc*, 475–76.

<sup>28</sup> See Diodorus (19.93.7), who lists the towns razed by Ptolemy I as "Acco of Phoenicia of Syria (τῆς Φοινίκης Συρίας) and Joppa, Samaria, and Gaza of Syria." Later, in AD 194, Phoenician Syria in the south was officially divided from Coele Syria in the north (E. Honigmann, "Συροφονικία," PW IV.A.II, 2nd series, 8th half-volume, 1788–89). Theissen thinks that this official division reflects the earlier de facto division between the regions of Syria (*Lokalkolorit*, 258).

<sup>29</sup> See Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.2: "Some writers divide Syria as a whole into Coelo-Syrians and Syrians and Phoenicians, and say that four other peoples (ἔθνη) are mixed up with these" (LCL trans., altered). Here Phoenicians are distinguished from other peoples living in the province of Syria.

<sup>30</sup> Among the studies, the following are especially noteworthy: L. Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 Par.* (ConBNT 1; Lund: Gleerup, 1966); J. Lambrecht, *Die Redaktion der Markus-Apokalyypse* (AnBib 28; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967); R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13* (Kommentare und Beiträge zum Alten und Neuen Testament; Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968); E. Brandenburger, *Markus 13 und die Apokalyptik* (FRLANT 134; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

therefore attest a provenance in temporal and geographical proximity to that event.

Since within Mark's narrative chap. 13 is staged as a series of eschatological prophecies in the bygone time of the earthly Jesus, it is difficult to tell exactly which of these prophecies Mark believes have already been fulfilled and which are still outstanding. Some conclusions, however, are reasonably secure. The prophecies of cosmic catastrophe and the return of the Son of Man in vv. 24–27 are undoubtedly among the outstanding events. On the other hand, it seems likely that the prophecies of false messiahs, war, persecution, and betrayal in vv. 6–13 (cf. vv. 21–22) are part of the present experience of Mark's community. Certainly the worldwide proclamation of the gospel, a reference to which Mark has interpolated into this context (v. 10), is a matter of present experience,<sup>31</sup> making it likely that the events described in the surrounding verses are current as well. A setting that combines dissension within the community with persecution from the outside, moreover, provides a plausible background for the Marcan Jesus' emphasis on communal harmony and fearless witness (8:34–38; 9:33–37; 10:35–45). It is likely, furthermore, that the urgent reference to the Danielic "abomination of desolation" in 13:14 ("let the reader understand!") calls attention to an event that either has already occurred or is prominently on the horizon, and that event probably has something to do with incidents that occurred in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem during the Great Revolt.<sup>32</sup>

In Daniel, the "abomination of desolation" is an act of desecration suffered by the Temple (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) during the eschatological "time of trouble" (12:1). It is plausible that these and other eschatological prophecies in Daniel played a major role in sustaining the desperate hopes of the Jewish revolutionaries during the Great Revolt.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps partly in response to them, the Temple was occupied by, and transformed into the headquarters of, various revolutionary groups beginning in AD 67–68, as we will describe in more detail in the next section. This occupation of the Temple by revolutionaries precipitated Titus's subsequent destruction of it in AD 70, a destruction that marked the effective end of the revolt. Some scholars identify the "abomination of desolation" of Mark 13:14 with this destruction, while others offer different exegeses of the phrase, but whatever its precise referent—this also will be discussed below—it has something to do with the wartime events in the Temple. The Temple's destruction, moreover, is clearly referred to at the beginning of the chapter, in 13:1–2. As

<sup>31</sup> On Mark 13:10 as a redactional insertion referring to the universal mission of Mark's own time, see A. Suhl, *Die Funktion der alttestamentlichen Zitate und Anspielungen im Markusevangelium* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1965) 21; Gnlika, *Evangelium*, 2, 189.

<sup>32</sup> See already O. Pfeleiderer, "Über die Composition der eschatologischen Rede Matt. 24,4ff," *Jahrbuch für Deutsche Theologie* 13 (1868) 134–49.

<sup>33</sup> See M. Hengel, *The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I Until 70 A.D.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989; orig. 1961) 242–45.

Theissen points out, these verses depart from other NT forms of the “Temple saying” (Mark 14:58; John 2:19) and conform to the actual events of AD 70 in not adding a prophecy of the Temple’s restoration to that of its destruction. Pesch, similarly, notes the correspondence of the “no stone upon a stone” prophecy to Josephus’s report of the razing of the Temple to the ground (*J.W.* 7.1.1 §1–4).<sup>34</sup>

Once this connection between the Jewish Revolt and Mark 13 has been established, other passages from the latter may be seen to reflect the war as well. J. R. Donahue, for example, links the “false Christs” of Mark 13:6, 21–22 with the evidence of messianic pretenders among the Jewish revolutionaries, to which we will return below in our discussion of Davidic messianism.<sup>35</sup> Donahue also calls attention to Josephus’s report (*J.W.* 4.5.4 §335–44) that the Zealots held trials when they took over Jerusalem, and he compares the trials described in Mark 13:9, 11–13. He concludes that Mark’s community has run afoul of the heated nationalism of the Jewish Revolt and has suffered persecution as a result.<sup>36</sup>

A wide variety of evidence from chap. 13, then, supports the theory that Mark’s Gospel arose at least in part as a response to the Jewish War. The war, of course, was known throughout the Roman world;<sup>37</sup> so this evidence does not necessarily point in an unambiguous manner to a community in the eastern part of the empire. But the impact was greatest in the immediate vicinity of Palestine, so that the more the effects of the war on the community can be discerned, the more likely a provenance in that area becomes.

### III. Mark 11:17: House of Prayer for all Nations or Den of Brigands?

These effects are palpable in Mark 11:17, a remarkable verse whose significance for the issue of the Marcan *Sitz im Leben* has often gone unrecognized. This sentence melds a citation of Isa 56:7 with an allusion to Jer 7:11, yet it bears strong traces of Marcan redaction,<sup>38</sup> although Mark has

<sup>34</sup> Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2.271; Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 271. Theissen adds that the limiting word ὧδε (“here there will not be left a stone upon a stone”) may reflect the fact that the Temple itself was destroyed but the foundation wall of its enclosure was left standing.

<sup>35</sup> Contra Theissen (*Lokalkolorit*, 279–81), who thinks that the false Christs of 13:6, 21–22 are not Jewish figures (though cf. p. 278) but Roman rulers such as Vespasian, who was regarded as a savior figure by many in the Roman Empire. This identification is partially dependent on Theissen’s interpretation of 13:14, with which I disagree below, n. 62.

<sup>36</sup> J. R. Donahue, *Are You the Christ?* (SBLDS 10; Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973) 217–24; cf. Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 281.

<sup>37</sup> See Achtemeier, *Mark*, 130.

<sup>38</sup> On the Marcan nature of 11:17, see Gnlika (*Evangelium*, 2. 127) and E. Best (*Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark* [JSNTSup 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982] 217), who argue that καὶ ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς (“and he was teaching and saying to them”) is a typical Marcan introductory formula, that γέγραπται (“it has been written”) is a normal Marcan word to

probably not created the verse *ab ovo* but used OT language to expand an original core resembling John 2:16.<sup>39</sup>

In the more theologically elaborated Marcan version, Jesus charges that the Temple, which God intended to be a house of prayer for all the nations (πάσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), has instead become a den of brigands (σπήλαιον ληστῶν).<sup>40</sup> The latter phrase is often translated into English as “den of thieves,” but the normal word for “thief” is not ληστής but κλεπτής. ληστής, on the other hand, designates one who robs by violence—a highwayman, bandit, or brigand<sup>41</sup>—and is the term commonly used by Josephus for members of the Jewish revolutionary bands that operated in the time leading up to and including the revolt against the Romans in AD 66–74.<sup>42</sup>

---

introduce OT citations, and that the reference to the Temple as a house of prayer for Gentiles goes beyond the situation envisaged in the pericope. I would add that the conflation of two or more OT passages is a typical Marcan technique; see 1:2–3 (Exod 23:20/Mal 3:1/Isa 40:3); 1:11bc (Ps 2:7/Isa 42:1); 12:36 (Ps 110:1/Ps 8:7); 14:24 (Exod 24:8/Zech 9:11/Isa 53:12); 14:27 (Zech 13:7/Isa 53:6, 10); 14:62 (Ps 110:1/Dan 7:13) and see my monograph on Mark’s OT usage, *The Way of the Lord* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992).

<sup>39</sup> See R. Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963; orig. 1931) 36; R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB 29, 29A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966, 1970) 1. 119; contra E. P. Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985] 61–76), who seems to regard Mark 11:17, and the implication of Temple corruption that goes along with it, as a pure Marcan invention. The overlap between Mark 11:17 and John 2:16 is against this; both imply the corruption of the Temple, and both refer to it as God’s house. The overlap suggests that these elements go back at least to the pre-Markan stage, and they may be dominical. Sanders, moreover, employs a false dichotomy when he says that Jesus’ action in the Temple was an apocalyptic sign pointing to its imminent destruction *rather than* an attack on perceived abuses. See further the criticisms of Sanders by C. A. Evans (“Jesus’ Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction?” *CBQ* 51 [1989] 237–70); Sanders has, however, performed a service by emphasizing the apocalyptic dimension of Jesus’ action in the Temple.

<sup>40</sup> R. T. Fortna points out that the first phrase is more idyllic than John 2:16 in its vision of the future Temple, while the second is more radical in its criticism of the present one (*The Fourth Gospel and Its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988] 121 n. 270).

<sup>41</sup> This is equally true of the Hebrew original פֶּרֶץ in Jer 7:11; see W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah I* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 246: “A פֶּרֶץ is a brigand; not a thief but a man of violence, who will kill to rob. . . . A robbers’ cave is then a den for brigands.”

<sup>42</sup> On the social phenomenon of brigandage and its relationship to the situation in first-century Palestine, see Hengel, *Zealots*, 24–46; R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements at the Time of Jesus* (New Voices in Biblical Studies; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985) esp. 48–87. Horsley and Hanson, however, downplay too much the theological wellsprings of the revolt in favor of its social causes; see H. Schwier, *Tempel und Tempelzerstörung: Untersuchungen zu den theologischen und ideologischen Faktoren im ersten jüdisch-römischen Krieg (66–74 n.Chr.)* (NTOA 11; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989) 123 n. 22, 149–50, 153 n. 38. On the meaning of ληστής, see BAGD (2d ed., 1979) 473; K. H. Rengstorf, *TDNT* 4. 257–62. On Mark 11:17 as a reference to revolutionary brigands in the Temple during the Jewish War, see G. W. Buchanan, “Mark 11.15–19: Brigands in the Temple,” *HUCA* 30 (1959) 169–77; idem, “An Additional Note to ‘Mark 11.15–19: Brigands in the Temple,’” *HUCA* 31 (1960) 103–5; C. K. Barrett, “The House of Prayer and the Den of Thieves,” in *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für Werner Georg Kümmel zum 70.*

Although *ληστής* does not always denote a revolutionary brigand,<sup>43</sup> it is probable that in this case it does. As C. K. Barrett notes, the two other Marcan usages (14:48; 15:27) are best understood as references to revolutionaries,<sup>44</sup> and the implied contrast in 11:17 with *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* fits this meaning well: "God intended this place for international prayer; you have made it a nationalistic stronghold." The latter is exactly what happened at a crucial point in the Jewish War, as we have already noted. Josephus (*J.W.* 4.3.7–8 §151–57; 5.1.2 §5) describes the way in which, in the winter of AD 67–68, a group of revolutionary *λησται* or Zealots<sup>45</sup> moved into Jerusalem under the leadership of Eleazar son of Simon and set up their headquarters in the inner Temple itself, remaining there until the fall of the city in AD 70.<sup>46</sup> It is likely that there was a link between this action and the anti-Gentile attitude that prevailed among the revolutionary groups.<sup>47</sup> The Zealots

---

*Geburtstag* (ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 13–20; Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 273.

<sup>43</sup> It does not bear this meaning, for example, in Jer 7:11 LXX, the passage from which Mark has drawn it. Marcan extension of the reference of OT terminology he cites, however, is not unusual. The best example may be his extension of the meaning of "Son of God"; see n. 78 below.

<sup>44</sup> Barrett, "House of Prayer," 15–16; cf. Hengel, *Zealots*, 340. In 14:48, the arresting party's weaponry suggests its expectation of confronting an armed band, and Jesus' statement about his open proclamation probably contrasts with the covert plotting of seditious groups. In 15:27, the crucifixion of two *λησται* along with Jesus is most explicable if they, like the "king of the Jews," are being executed for sedition. In John 18:40, moreover, Barabbas, whom Mark 15:7 describes as an insurrectionist, is called a *ληστής*. This tells us more about John's interpretation of *ληστής* than about Mark's, but it nevertheless supports the point that *ληστής* can mean a revolutionary in the NT.

<sup>45</sup> Schwier (*Tempel und Tempelzerstörung*, 131–38) argues convincingly (against M. Smith, D. M. Rhoads, Horsley and Hanson, et al.) that Josephus, *J.W.* 2.17.9 §444 and 4.9.10 §558 attest a broad use of the term "Zealots" to denote the revolutionary movement in general, not just the particular party that formed around Eleazar.

<sup>46</sup> Later, during Passover of AD 70, another group of revolutionaries under John of Gischala wrested control of the Temple from Eleazar's men (see *J.W.* 5.3.1 §98–105), though the latter remained in the Temple until the end of the war. See D. M. Rhoads, *Israel in Revolution: A Political History Based on the Writings of Josephus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 103–5, 109–10.

<sup>47</sup> The immediate cause of the war was the refusal of foreign sacrifices in the Temple (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.17.2 §409), and the anti-Gentile (not just anti-Roman) motivation for this action is apparent in the objection of its opponents that "Jews henceforth would be the only people among whom a foreigner would neither offer sacrifice nor worship" (*παρὰ μόνους Ἰουδαίους οὔτε θύσει τις ἄλλότριος οὔτε προσκυνήσει*; *J.W.* 2.17.3 §414). Cf. also John of Gischala's action in melting down foreign gifts (*J.W.* 5.18.6 §562–64), and on the whole subject, see Rhoads, *Israel*, 168–70; R. Jewett, "The Agitators and the Galatian Congregation," *NTS* 17 (1970–71) 204–5; Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 273; Schwier, *Tempel und Tempelzerstörung*, 119–20. The latter (pp. 55–74) plausibly argues that the revolutionaries' proscription of Gentiles from the Temple was an intensification of the concern for Gentile profanation already evident in the tablet warning any Gentile who went beyond the Court of the Gentiles that he would face the death penalty. This intensification is also seen, for example, in the elimination of the Court of the Gentiles from the Qumran *Temple Scroll*. Schwier traces back to Maccabean times the idea that the Temple was polluted by Gentile presence and control, a profanation that expressed itself in the years

probably saw themselves as purifying the Temple from corrupting foreign influence,<sup>48</sup> and their empirically hopeless fight against the Romans was likely fueled by the conviction that God would give to his purified Israel the victory against the heathen.<sup>49</sup> Hence the Marcan antinomy “house of prayer for all peoples/den of brigands” reflects the revolutionary situation in a remarkable way.

The redactional verse Mark 11:17, then, can be plausibly viewed as the superimposition upon the tradition about Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple of some features of an event that occurred during the Jewish War, the occupation of the Temple by the Zealots in pursuit of their military aims and their theology of purificatory war against the infidel.<sup>50</sup> It is easy to see why such an attitude would be of concern to Mark and his community when we reflect that the community is probably composed predominantly of Gentiles<sup>51</sup> and when we combine this probability with the theory that the community is situated somewhere close to Palestine.

A mostly Gentile Christian community in such a location would have had good reasons to fear the Jewish revolutionary movement. The predominantly Gentile Hellenistic cities on the borders of Israel, for example, had, since Hasmonean times, been engaged in a continuous struggle with the inhabitants of the Jewish state. Under the Hasmoneans, the Jews conquered most of the cities, which were subsequently “liberated” by Pompey. In most, if not all, of the cities, the Jews lived in separate Jewish quarters, a situation hardly conducive to mutual understanding.<sup>52</sup> Tension between Gentile and Jewish inhabitants of these cities escalated after the time of Pompey and was probably a major factor in precipitating the war of AD 66–74. Indeed, as

---

immediately preceding the revolt in the Roman custody of the high-priestly garments, the Roman presence in the Antonia Fortress overlooking the Temple, and the frequent Roman occupations of the Temple (*ibid.*, 90–101).

<sup>48</sup> See Rhoads, *Israel*, 107, 168–70; contra Horsley and Hanson (*Bandits*, 229–30), who see the Zealots’ presence in the Temple as largely a function of circumstance. Horsley and Hanson do not deal with Rhoads’s plausible argument that Josephus is engaging in reverse polemics when he charges that the revolutionaries polluted the Temple while the Romans purged it.

<sup>49</sup> See the discussion of the motif of God as ally against the heathen by Rhoads, *Israel*, 110, 168; cf. Schwier, *Temple*, 74–90, 156–70.

<sup>50</sup> I am not arguing that the whole incident in 11:15–18 is a Marcan fiction; Jesus *did* act against the Temple, and he may even have uttered a word that justified his action by denouncing perversions of God’s will for the holy place (see n. 39 above). It is only the particular *shape* given to this appeal in Mark 11:17 that would have alerted Mark’s readers that here a contemporary event was superimposing itself on a past one, and even here it would be more accurate to speak of an extension of the meaning of Jesus’ action than of a displacement of it. The tradition as it came down to Mark recorded that Jesus protested against the perversion of the Temple through its commercialization; Mark expanded the protest to include what was in his eyes the contemporary perversion of revolutionary occupation.

<sup>51</sup> The explanatory comment in 7:3–4 makes most sense if Mark’s audience is predominantly Gentile; see also the stress on Gentiles in the passages cited below in n. 56.

<sup>52</sup> See Kasher, *Jews and Hellenistic Cities*, 281–82.

U. Rappaport points out, most of the fighting in the first year of the war was not between Jews and Romans but between Jews and inhabitants of the Hellenistic cities.<sup>53</sup>

The situation may be illustrated by the case of the city of Strato's Tower (later Caesarea), which was conquered by the Hasmonean king Alexander Janneus around 96 BC, liberated by Pompey in 63 BC, then given to Herod the Great by Augustus, who renamed it Caesarea in Augustus' honor. After Herod's death the city was ruled in succession by Herod's son Archelaus, the Roman prefects, Herod's grandson Agrippa I, and the Roman procurators, an alternation between Jewish and Gentile hegemony that inevitably exacerbated tensions between the two groups. Josephus tells us, for example (*Ant.* 19.9.1 §356–59), that the Gentile inhabitants hated Agrippa for his judaizing tendencies. The new edition of Schürer sums up the events leading to the war as follows:

As the population was chiefly Gentile (*J.W.* 3.9.1 §409), yet included a considerable Jewish element, disputes easily arose, especially since both parties enjoyed equal civic rights and were therefore called on to manage the city's affairs together. Neither the Jews nor the Gentiles were satisfied with this situation. Each party claimed exclusive rights to citizenship. Towards the end of Felix's term of office the quarrel erupted in violence, whereupon Nero, whose *ab epistulis* had been bribed by the Gentile party, deprived the Jews of their rights and in A.D. 61 declared the Gentiles to be sole masters of the city (*Ant.* 20.8.7 §173–78; 20.8.9 §182–84; *J.W.* 2.13.7 §266–70; 2.14.4–5 §284–92). At the outbreak of the war in AD 66, the Jews as a minority fell victim to the fury of the Gentile mob. All twenty thousand Jewish inhabitants are said by Josephus to have been massacred within an hour (*J.W.* 2.18.1 §457; 7.8.7 §362).<sup>54</sup>

As this example illustrates, when the revolt broke out many of the Gentile inhabitants of the Hellenistic cities joined enthusiastically in the fray by slaughtering their Jewish neighbors. The massacres were not, however, all on the Gentile side. In *J.W.* 2.18.1–2 §457–61, for example, Josephus paints a harrowing picture of the Jewish reaction to the bloodbath in Caesarea:

The news of the disaster at Caesarea infuriated the whole nation; and parties of Jews sacked the Syrian villages and the neighboring cities, Philadelphia, Heshbon and its district, Gerasa, Pella and Scythopolis. Next they fell upon Gadara, Hippos, and Gaulanitis . . . and advanced to Kedasa, a Tyrian village, Ptolemais, Gaba, and Caesarea. Neither Sebaste nor Ascalon withstood their fury. . . . Then they razed Anthedon and Gaza. . . . The Syrians on their side killed no less a number of Jews.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> U. Rappaport argues that this tension was the primary cause of the war ("Jewish-Pagan Relations and the Revolt against Rome in 66–70 C.E.," *Jerusalem Cathedra* 1 [1981] 81–95).

<sup>54</sup> Schürer, *History*, 2. 117 (enumeration of Josephus passages altered to reflect the style of this article).

<sup>55</sup> Cited by Rappaport, "Jewish-Pagan Relations," 94 n. 36.

This situation of sociopolitical tension between Jews and Gentiles provides a plausible *Sitz im Leben* for the Marcan emphasis on Jesus' openness toward Gentiles<sup>56</sup> and the generally negative verdict on Jews, especially Jewish leaders.<sup>57</sup> This combination is most sharply expressed in the "replacement motif" of Mark 12:9: "The lord of the vineyard will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others." Harmful as this motif has been in the depressing chronicle of Christian anti-Semitism, the Marcan use of it becomes more comprehensible when viewed in its probable *Sitz im Leben*. Mark is confronted with an Israel that has taken up the cudgels against the non-Jewish world in a desperate fight for survival. In the heat of the war, and fired by apocalyptic visions of victory by a purified Israel, some Jews are prepared to take drastic steps against Gentiles and against Jews who advocate coexistence with them<sup>58</sup>—that is, the sorts of people who make up Mark's community. Zealots take up residence in the Temple, attempt to purify both it and the country as a whole of pagan influence, and even strike out against

<sup>56</sup> Several passages emphasize Jesus' concern for Gentiles or their positive reaction to him, and many of them appear to be redactional. See Best (*Following*, 218), who refers to 7:24–30; 8:1–9; 11:17; 12:9; 13:10; 14:9; and 15:39 among other passages. Of these, at least 11:17; 13:10; and 14:9 are probably redactional. On 11:17, see n. 38 above. Verses 13:10 and 14:9 use the absolute τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, which is a Marcan characteristic, and 13:10 is disruptive in its context. 14:9 gives the impression of being a secondary elaboration of the original "pronouncement" in 14:7, which perhaps was already elaborated by the addition of 14:8 in the pre-Marcan passion narrative. 12:9 may also be Marcan (see Suhl, *Zitate*, 140).

The Gentile theme may help to explain the historically implausible notice in 7:31 about Jesus returning from the region of Tyre to the Sea of Galilee via Sidon and the Decapolis. All of the intermediate destinations are predominantly Gentile areas; Mark, therefore, may be deliberately constructing a tour of Gentile areas rather than inadvertently revealing his ignorance of Palestinian geography; see F. G. Lang ("Über Sidon mitten ins Gebiet der Dekapolis: Geographie und Theologie in Markus 7,3," *ZDPV* 94 [1978] 145–60) and Theissen (*Lokalkolorit*, 255), who point to the strikingly similar itinerary described by Pliny in *Nat. Hist.* 5.17.77. This "theological" type of geography was common in the ancient world; it is exemplified, for example, by the Madaba mosaic map and the recently discovered mosaics from Umm Resâs, as H. I. MacAdam has pointed out to me in private correspondence.

<sup>57</sup> On Jews and Jewish leaders in Mark, see M. Cook, *Mark's Treatment of the Jewish Leaders* (NovTSup 51; Leiden: Brill, 1978); J. Koenig, *Jews and Christians in Dialogue: New Testament Foundations* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979) 60–81; D. Lührmann, "Die Pharisäer und die Schriftgelehrten im Markusevangelium," *ZNW* 78 (1987) 169–85. Theissen (*Lokalkolorit*, 281–82) also emphasizes the tension between Jews and Gentiles during the war as background for Mark, referring to Josephus, *J.W.* 2.18.2 §461–64. He puts relatively more stress than this study does, however, on the possibility that Mark's community not only was persecuted by Jews because of its Gentile component but also was persecuted by Gentiles because it was perceived to be Judaistic; he cites in support of this suggestion the prophecy in 13:13 ("hated by all"). This is possible but hard to prove, since there is little if any polemic against Gentiles in the Gospel itself (10:42? 13:9?), whereas there is much anti-Jewish polemic.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Josephus's reports about violence in Jerusalem between revolutionaries and advocates of peace with Rome: *J.W.* 2.17.3–7 §411–32; 4.3.2. §128–34; 4.3.5 §143–46; 4.3.11–12 §193–207; 4.5.4 §334–344; on the latter passage, see above, p. 448.

Gentile communities in “Greater Israel” beyond the borders of Judea and Galilee.

I would like to propose that in its Marcan context<sup>59</sup> the reference to the “abomination of desolation standing where he should not” (13:14) reflects this series of events, specifically the occupation of the Temple by Eleazar son of Simon in the winter of 67–68. The masculine participle ἐστηκότα suggests a reference to a *person*,<sup>60</sup> so that an allusion to the fact of the destruction of the Temple<sup>61</sup> or to the anticipated erection of a pagan temple on its site<sup>62</sup> seems unlikely. If we are to think of a person “standing where he should not,” the only real candidate for the job besides Eleazar is Titus, who according to Josephus went into the “holy place” of the sanctuary after it had already been set afire (*J.W.* 6.4.7 §260)<sup>63</sup> If the “abomination” were Titus, however, the timing implied in 13:14 would be puzzling; what sense would it make to wait until *after* the fearful carnage in Jerusalem, the climactic event of the war, to flee from Judea?<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, it *would* make sense to flee from Judea during the winter of 67–68, after Eleazar had moved into the Temple but before Vespasian completely conquered the area around Jerusalem and thus isolated the city in June of 68 (see *J.W.* 4.9.1 §486–90).

A Zealot leader such as Eleazar occupying the Temple, moreover, could well be described as an “abomination of desolation” from Mark’s point of view. The following descriptions of revolutionary activity in the Temple from Josephus’s *Jewish War* are worthy of note in this regard:

Is it not lamentable that, while the Romans never overstepped the limit fixed for the profane, never violated one of our sacred usages, but beheld with awe from afar the walls that enclose our sanctuary, persons born in this very country, nurtured under our institutions and calling themselves Jews, should freely perambulate our holy places, with hands yet hot with the blood of their countrymen? (*J.W.* 4.3.10 §182–83)

<sup>59</sup> In the putative pre-Markan apocalyptic discourse, however, the reference may very well have been to Caligula’s plan to erect an image of himself in the Temple in AD 40; see G. Hölscher, “Der Ursprung der Apokalypse Mrk 13,” *TBl* 12 (1933) 193–202; Gnlika, *Evangelium*, 2. 193–94; Brandenburger, *Markus* 13, 49–54; Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 167–76.

<sup>60</sup> See Taylor, *Mark*, 511–12; Gnlika, *Evangelium*, 2. 195–96. Even so, Mark probably sees a strong linkage between the desecration of the Temple = the abomination of desolation in 13:14 and the Temple’s anticipated destruction in 13:1–2; he may interpret the latter as a punishment for the former.

<sup>61</sup> Contra, e.g., Pesch, *Naherwartungen*, 139–44.

<sup>62</sup> Contra Theissen (*Lokalkolorit*, 275–77), who can adduce no positive evidence of a Roman plan to build such a temple in the years immediately following the revolt (such a project was not executed until around AD 130 under Hadrian; see Schürer, *History*, 1. 540–41) or of Jewish fear of such a plan.

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., Brandenburger, *Markus* 13, 82; Lührmann, *Markusevangelium*, 222.

<sup>64</sup> See already Pfeleiderer, “Composition,” 136. After the destruction of Jerusalem, it only remained for the Romans to reduce the isolated Judean fortresses of Herodium, Machaerus, and Masada; cf. Schürer, *History*, 1. 508–13.

Any Zealot who was struck climbed into the Temple, staining with his blood the sacred pavement; and it might be said that no blood but theirs defiled the sanctuary. (*J.W.* 4.3.12 §201)

For there was an ancient saying of inspired men that the city should be taken and the sanctuary burnt to the ground by right of war, whensoever it should be visited by sedition and native hands should be the first to defile God's sacred precincts. (*J.W.* 4.6.3 §388)

[Titus exhorts the revolutionary leader John of Gischala] that he should no longer pollute the Holy Place nor sin against God. (*J.W.* 6.2.1 §95)<sup>65</sup>

In all of these passages, Josephus uses the language of defilement to speak of the presence of the revolutionaries in the Temple, and in the first he implies that they went where they should not. In a very similar way, Mark probably thinks that Eleazar defiled and desolated the Temple by filling it with violence and unlawfully entering the inner sanctuary, as well as by depriving it of the Gentiles whom God intended to find in it a house of prayer (cf. Mark 11:17). For Mark, therefore, he fits the description of "the abomination of desolation standing where he should not."<sup>66</sup>

In response to the Zealot occupation of the Temple and similar acts of "purification" of the holy land from Gentile influence, Mark tells his community—which perhaps has experienced at first hand the drastic effects of these acts—that the revolutionary purge is actually a defilement, that it will precipitate divine judgment,<sup>67</sup> and that the inheritance of Israel will be taken away from the Jewish leaders<sup>68</sup> and turned over to a new people that prominently

<sup>65</sup> All translations here are from LCL; see already Pfliederer ("Composition," 140), who mentions the second and fourth of the *Jewish War* passages.

<sup>66</sup> Although the expression "abomination of desolation" refers, in its Danielic context, to a desecration by a Gentile ruler (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), a Marcan reapplication directed against *Jewish* leaders is not unexpected, given the similar reapplication of Danielic imagery in 14:62 and of holy war imagery in general in 12:9. See O. Michel and O. Bauernfeind (eds., *Flavius Josephus, De Bello Judaico/Der jüdische Krieg. Griechisch und Deutsch* [3 vols. in 4; Munich: Kösel, 1959–69] 2.1.214 n. 51), who note a possible comparison of the Zealots to Gentiles in *J.W.* 4.3.10 §182.

<sup>67</sup> Sanders correctly sees 11:15–16 as implying a proleptic destruction of the Temple (see n. 39 above); I would add that *in the Marcan context* this destruction is at least in part a judgment on the Temple's occupation by *ἡγῆται*. It is true that in 12:1–12 the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth, with which the Temple's destruction is linked, is directly related to the murder of the "son" rather than to the persecution of Christians, but in Mark's mind these two phenomena are connected; cf. 8:34–35; 10:29.

<sup>68</sup> Theissen points out in discussing 12:9 that the ruling Jewish elite was indeed destroyed in the Jewish War (*Lokalkolorit*, 274). In Mark 12:1–12 the addressees threatened by Jesus are the chief priests, the scribes (with whom the Pharisees are closely linked elsewhere in the Gospel: 2:16; 7:1, 5; 9:11), and the elders (cf. 11:27). This lineup of opponents may partly reflect the leadership of the Jewish Revolt. See Schwier (*Tempel*, 128, 139, 162, 176–77, 190–201), who points out that some priests, including members of the high-priestly families, and some Pharisees were influential supporters of the revolt.

includes Gentiles in its ranks (12:9)<sup>69</sup> Or, to use other vocabulary, the Temple made by hands, having fallen into the clutches of brigands who deny its universal purpose and turn it into a desolating abomination, has now been replaced by the church, a building not made by hands, which restores God's vision of a house of prayer for all nations (11:17; 13:14; 14:58).<sup>70</sup>

#### IV. Davidic Messianism

Mark's contact with the Jewish revolutionary movement probably helps to explain not only his development of the Jew-Gentile theme but also his curiously ambivalent attitude toward Davidic messianism. As G. Schneider and C. Burger have noted, the material on Jesus as a "son of David" is not strewn throughout the Gospel but concentrated in three passages in chaps. 10-12.<sup>71</sup> The first two of these, 10:47-48 and 11:9-10, manifest a positive linkage between Jesus and the title "Son of David."<sup>72</sup> A positive relationship with Davidic messianism is also presented by the way in which Jesus' Davidic sonship is redactionally linked in this section with the themes of Jerusalem and the Temple (11:9-11; 12:35-37; cf. 10:46-52);<sup>73</sup> this linkage corresponds to the juxtaposition of the three themes in first-century Jewish texts.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, the third "Son of David" passage in Mark, 12:35-37, implicitly challenges the adequacy of this title as a designation for Jesus.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>69</sup> It is also possible that an ideology such as that in 12:9, which challenges Judaism's root conviction of its *heilsgeschichtlich* privilege, would have precipitated Zealot attacks. Perhaps the Marcan community already had an incipient replacement theology, but this theology was intensified by the events of the Jewish War.

<sup>70</sup> On the ironic truth of the "Temple charge" in Mark, see D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1973) passim.

<sup>71</sup> C. Burger, *Jesus als Davidsson: Eine traditions-geschichtliche Untersuchung* (FRLANT 98; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 59; G. Schneider, "Die Davidssonfrage (Mk 12 35-37)," *Bib* 53 (1972) 87-88.

<sup>72</sup> See Burger, *Davidsson*, 59-62; and J. D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 105-6.

<sup>73</sup> In 11:9-11 Mark links the Davidic thrust of the crowd's acclamation (11:9-10) with Jerusalem and the Temple by juxtaposing the acclamation with the redactional verse 11:11 (see Lührmann, *Markusevangelium*, 187). In 12:35-37, Mark takes pains to situate the *Davidssonfrage* in the Temple through the redactional introduction 12:35a (see Gnllka, *Evangelium*, 2. 169). Mark also emphasizes the location of 10:46-52 in Jericho, on the way to Jerusalem (see  $\delta\delta\acute{o}\varsigma$  in 10:46, 52) by the redactional repetition of the city's name in 10:46 (see Burger, *Davidsson*, 43-45, 62-63).

<sup>74</sup> These include *Psalms of Solomon* 17 and the fourteenth of the Eighteen Benedictions; see Schneider, "Davidssonfrage," 87-88.

<sup>75</sup> The implicit logic of 12:35-37 is that no father refers to his own son as "my lord"; therefore it is a misnomer to speak of Jesus as David's son. This plain sense is recognized even by some who assert that it *cannot* mean that in its Marcan context; see, e.g., F. J. Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus: Composition and Theology in Mark 15* (SBLDS 66; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 86-89.

This challenge to the adequacy of the title Son of David is a problem not only because the previous chapters of Mark seem to affirm the title but also because the Davidic descent of the Messiah is extraordinarily well attested in the OT and in first-century Jewish texts.<sup>76</sup> In early Christian sources outside of Mark 12:35–37 pars., moreover, this descent is scarcely contested;<sup>77</sup> on the contrary, the Messiah's Davidic sonship is presumed in early christological formulas (e.g., Rom 1:3) and is used as a known fact upon which other arguments may be based (Acts 2:30–31; 13:22–23). The apparent claim in Mark 12:35–37 that the Messiah is *not* a son of David, therefore, represents a puzzling piece of Christology that is at home neither in first-century Judaism nor in first-century Christianity. To paraphrase Mark 12:35b, how can our author say that the Messiah is *not* the Son of David?

One aspect of Mark's reserve is that for him Jesus is not just the Son of David; another title, "Son of God," does more justice to his identity.<sup>78</sup> Related to this christological point, however, is one that is more immediately relevant to our study, the observation that the Jewish revolt against the Romans appears to have been led by messianic figures of Davidic stripe. In spite of Josephus's apologetic whitewashing of this element,<sup>79</sup> its important role can be gleaned from Josephan passages such as *J.W.* 6.5.4 §313, where we read that what more than all else incited the Jews to war "was an ambiguous oracle, likewise found in their sacred scriptures, to the effect that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world." Although the scriptural basis of this oracle is unclear,<sup>80</sup> it at least shows the vital role played by messianic expectation in fueling the revolt.

<sup>76</sup> On the OT texts, see E. Lövestam, "Die Davidsohnfrage," *SEÅ* 27 (1962) 72–73; on the Jewish texts, see B. Chilton, "Jesus *ben David*: Reflections on the *Davidsohnfrage*," *JSNT* 14 (1982) 100. Even at Qumran, where two Messiahs are expected, a Davidic one ("the Messiah of Israel") and a priestly one ("the Messiah of Aaron"), the term "the Messiah," used absolutely, refers to the Davidic figure; see J. Marcus, "Mark 14:61: Are You the Messiah-Son-of-God?" *NovT* 31 (1988) 128 nn. 10–11.

<sup>77</sup> Even John 7:42 may not be an exception, since this may be a case of "Johannine misunderstanding." The reader of the Gospel may know that Jesus really was a Davidide and hence that the crowd's objection to his messiahship is invalid (see Brown, *John*, 1. 330).

<sup>78</sup> See D. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1973) 119; Gnlika, *Evangelium*, 2. 171; Marcus, "Messiah-Son-of-God," 135. In the OT, later Jewish traditions, and some NT passages (e.g., Rom 1:2–3), these titles complement rather than compete against each other. In Mark, however, and in other early Christian writings such as *Barn.* 12.10, the title "Son of God" has outgrown its OT roots and taken on nuances of quasi divinity; see Marcus, "Messiah-Son-of-God," 138–41.

<sup>79</sup> See L. Feldman ("Josephus' Portrait of David," *HUCA* 60 [1989] 130–31, 173), who points to Josephus's tendency to avoid the concept of the eschatological scion of David and the word *χριστός*.

<sup>80</sup> See the differing opinions of Billerbeck (*Str-B*, 4. 1002) and R. Meyer (*Der Prophet aus Galiläa: Studie zum Jesusbild der drei ersten Evangelien* [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1970; orig. 1940] 52–53), who argue for Dan 7:13–27, and Hengel (*Zealots*, 237–40), who argues for Num 24:17.

Elsewhere Josephus inadvertently permits us to see that Davidic hopes crystallized around two revolutionary leaders, Menachem the son of Judas the Galilean and Simon bar Giora.<sup>81</sup> Menachem is the more shadowy figure, but it is sufficiently clear that he aroused messianic expectations. In *J.W.* 2.17.8 §433–34 Josephus describes the way in which Menachem broke into Herod's arsenal at Masada in August of 66 and armed a group of brigands, adding that he then "returned to Jerusalem as a king" and became a leader of the insurrection. In *J.W.* 2.17.9 §444, moreover, Menachem appears in the Temple in royal robes. The language and imagery of kingship link Menachem with the Davidic hope,<sup>82</sup> and we may note also the association with Jerusalem and the Temple that is evident in the portrait of the "Son of David" in *Pss. Sol.* 17 and the fourteenth of the Eighteen Benedictions.

The Davidic hope is even closer to the surface in the case of Simon bar Giora, whose rise to power paralleled that of David in some remarkable ways, a fact probably not lost on his contemporaries.<sup>83</sup> Josephus, as is his custom, reinterprets Simon's Davidic image polemically, writing that "it was clear from the start that he was bent on tyranny" and that his entourage "included many citizens who obeyed him like a king" (*J.W.* 2.22.2 §652; 4.9.4 §510).

That Simon also viewed *himself* in a messianic light is demonstrated by the manner of his capture by the Romans (*J.W.* 7.2.2 §29–31). After the destruction of the Temple and the looting of the city, Simon, in a last, desperate move, "put on white tunics with a purple cape fastened over them, and popped up out of the ground at the very place where the temple had once stood." Simon's royal garments here imply a messianic claim,<sup>84</sup> and Josephus's phrase "popped up out of the ground" (ἐκ τῆς γῆς ἀνεφάνη) suggests a miracle.<sup>85</sup> In response to Simon's "epiphany," the Romans were temporarily dumbfounded, but they quickly recovered their composure and took him into custody. Although Josephus presents Simon's action as an attempt to deceive the Romans by creating consternation, it is more likely that this move was not just a ruse; Simon may have hoped that at the last moment God would act through his anointed one (himself) to save the city and miraculously restore the ruined Temple. This incident suggests not only Simon's messianic self-consciousness but also its intimate connection with a

<sup>81</sup> See the treatments in Rhoads, *Israel*, 114; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 118–27; R. H. Horsley, "Menachem in Jerusalem: A Brief Messianic Episode among the Sicarii—Not Zealot Messianism," *NovT* 27 (1985) 334–48; Theissen, *Lokalkolorit*, 278.

<sup>82</sup> See Horsley and Hanson on Josephus's propensity to avoid distinctively Jewish messianic language but to use kingship language as a substitute for it (*Bandits*, 114–15). Translations of Josephan passages in this section are from *Bandits*, 118–27.

<sup>83</sup> The Davidic features include a career as an outlaw, an appeal to discontented Israelites, and the capture of Hebron; see Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 121–22.

<sup>84</sup> Simon's messianic self-consciousness may also be reflected by the bronze shekels of the fourth year of the revolt; see Schwier, *Tempel*, 154 n. 40.

<sup>85</sup> See Michel and Bauernfeind, *De Bello Judaico*, 2.2.225–26 n. 20; Schwier, *Tempel*, 155.

hope for a divine action with regard to the Temple, the same combination of ideas that we have noted in connection with Menachem and have linked to first-century Jewish texts—as well as to Mark 10–12.<sup>86</sup>

Indeed, it is easy to imagine that at least some of Mark's hearers would have seen his description of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the antitype to Simon's entry in April–May 69.<sup>87</sup> Josephus (*J.W.* 4.19.11–12 §574–78) describes how the inhabitants of the city implored Simon to enter Jerusalem and how he, “arrogantly consenting to rule,” entered it “and was greeted as savior and guardian by the people,” thereafter becoming master of the city and attacking the Temple to drive out the rival Zealots under Eleazar. The parallels with Mark's account of Jesus' entry are striking. In both, the Davidic figure makes an implicit claim to kingship by entering the city, is hailed as one who saves (cf. “Hosanna” = “save us” in Mark 11:9–10), and immediately drives home his claim by launching an attack upon the Temple that has fallen into the hands of a group he perceives as corrupting it.<sup>88</sup>

Given our understanding of the Marcan *Sitz im Leben*, these parallels suggest that Mark has fashioned the “Davidic” section of his narrative (10:46–12:37) with the claims of figures like Simon and Menachem before his eyes. Such a background would go a long way toward explaining the ambivalent attitude his Gospel displays toward Davidic expectations. On the one hand, it is important for him to affirm that the true “Son of David” already appeared in Jerusalem many years before Menachem and Simon, manifesting his kingship to the acclaim of the crowds and the accompaniment of miracles. On the other hand, partly because he knows, perhaps through bitter experience, that the revolutionary claimants to the Davidic hope have channeled some of their nationalistic religious fervor into purges of foreign elements

<sup>86</sup> It is even possible that Simon and/or Menachem could trace their ancestry to David and thus proclaim themselves sons of David in a genealogical as well as a typological sense. See Hengel (*Zealots*, 299–300), who mentions evidence from Hegesippus (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.12.1; 3.19.1–3.20.2; 3.32.3) that Vespasian, Domitian, and Trajan persecuted descendants of David and concludes that this persecution was based on the fear that such descendants might renew the revolt.

<sup>87</sup> Chronologically, of course, it is the other way around; Jesus' entry prefigures that of Simon. But if, as this study argues, the events of the Jewish Revolt were fresh in the minds of Mark's readers, that more immediate event would provide the background for Mark's narration of the historically more distant one. On the redactional nature of Mark 11:11, see n. 73 above; thus the linkage of the entrance pericope with the Temple theme (“he entered into Jerusalem *into the Temple*”) is heightened by Mark's own editing. Contra Horsley (“Menachem,” 347), who argues that the basic memory of Jesus' actions in the triumphal entry and the cleansing of the Temple was already fixed before the outbreak of the Jewish Revolt and that therefore the NT accounts of those events do not reflect events in the revolt. The traditions may have been *basically* in place, but redactional insertions such as 11:11 and 11:17 indicate that Mark actively shaped them.

<sup>88</sup> A paper delivered by V. K. Robbins in the Passion Narrative Consultation of the SBL annual meeting in Anaheim, November 1989 (“A Social-Rhetorical Analysis of the Crucifixion Narratives in Mark”) first drew my attention to possible links between Simon's action in the Temple and Mark's account of Jesus' last days in Jerusalem.

such as the Gentile members of his community,<sup>89</sup> he sees that there is a negative potentiality in Davidic messianism. Because of this potentiality, his embrace of that sort of messianism cannot be unequivocal. Where messianism is defined dominantly by the militantly nationalistic features of the Davidic image, those who have felt the sting of the zealotry such messianism provokes and feeds upon will naturally be inclined to deny the ultimacy of that image and to ask with the Marcan Jesus how it can be claimed that the Messiah is David's son.

Thus both Mark's affirmation of Jesus' Davidic sonship in 10:46–52 and 11:10–11 and his deemphasis of it in 12:35–37 are plausibly explained by his contact with the Jewish Revolt in which Davidic expectations played an important role.

### V. Situating Mark's Community in Space and Time

The contention of this study has been that Mark's Gospel arose in temporal and geographical proximity to the events of the Jewish War, probably in Syria. Evidence for this thesis has been found in the "prophecies" of chap. 13, in the contrast in 11:17 between "house of prayer for all nations" and "den of brigands," in the Jew–Gentile theme throughout the Gospel, and in the ambivalent attitude toward Davidic messianism. Assuming that this accumulation of evidence has been sufficient to establish the probability of the thesis—as we believe it has—can we be any more specific about the "when" and "where" of Mark's Gospel?

As for the "when," Theissen is probably right in suggesting a date shortly after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. Although, admittedly, farsighted people in the late sixties of the first century might have been able to guess that the Temple would be destroyed, the precision of the "prophecy" in 13:1–2 indicates that it has been written after the event.<sup>90</sup>

As for the "where," our findings would at first seem to cohere with the influential theory of E. Lohmeyer, W. Marxsen, W. Kelber, and others that Mark is written to a Christian community in Galilee.<sup>91</sup> Galilee, however, was

<sup>89</sup> Although there is no direct evidence of an anti-Gentile theology of purgation on the part of Menachem and Simon, it is unlikely that they differed significantly from other revolutionaries on this point. See Horsley and Hanson (*Bandits*, 124–25), who view Simon's execution of various members of the aristocracy (*J.W.* 5.13.1 §530–33) as a reflection of a theology of purgation similar to that of *Pss. Sol.* 17; the latter passage expresses the anti-Gentile theme.

<sup>90</sup> See above, pp. 448–49. Contemporary critics are about evenly split between those who think that Mark was composed shortly before the destruction of the Temple (e.g., Guelich, *Mark*, 1. xxxi–xxxii) and those who think it was composed shortly after that event (e.g., Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 1. 14).

<sup>91</sup> E. Lohmeyer, *Galiläa und Jerusalem* (FRLANT 52; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936); W. Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969; orig. 1956); W. Kelber, *The Kingdom in Mark: A New Place and a New Time* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974).

an overwhelmingly Jewish area in the first century, and in such a setting it is hard to imagine Mark's predominantly Gentile community or, if one *can* imagine it, to see why people swimming in such a Jewish sea would need the information Mark provides in 7:3-4 about what "the Pharisees, and all the Jews" do (cf. 14:12; 15:42). Similar remarks would apply to the Golan area, which was geographically and culturally continuous with Upper Galilee.<sup>92</sup> Galilee is important to Mark, but not necessarily because his community is situated there; his emphasis on the region may result from a combination of historical memory (Jesus actually *did* perform much of his ministry there) and theological utility (e.g., Galilee is a setting in which, and from which, the Marcan Jesus can plausibly interact with Gentiles, since it is contiguous to Gentile regions).<sup>93</sup>

Rather than Galilee, I would favor a location in one of the Hellenistic cities that Josephus tells us were attacked at the beginning of the war, since in such places it is easy to imagine a predominantly Gentile Christian community with bitter feelings toward non-Christian Jews.<sup>94</sup> If there is some historicity in the tradition related by Eusebius and Epiphanius that the Judean Christians, warned by a divine oracle, fled to Pella before the siege of Jerusalem,<sup>95</sup> and if this event is linked to the warning in Mark 13:14 to flee from Judea to the hills<sup>96</sup> when the "abomination of desolation" appears, we might even think specifically of Pella.

The following is a plausible scenario, though I do not claim any certainty for it. Mark himself is a Jewish Christian from Judea<sup>97</sup> who thinks that the

<sup>92</sup> On the Pharaesic presence in Galilee and the generally Jewish character of the region, see S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) 167-75; 198-212. On Upper Galilee and the Golan, see E. M. Meyers, "The Cultural Setting of Galilee: The Case of Regionalism and Early Judaism," *ANRW* 2.19.1 (1979) 686-701.

<sup>93</sup> See G. Stemmerger, "Galilee - Land of Salvation?" Appendix IV in W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974) 435-36; Freyne, *Galilee*, 54-58; 167-68.

<sup>94</sup> Marxsen similarly locates Mark's community in Pella, but he argues that such a location is compatible with a Galilean setting because (a) the primitive Christian community may have fled first to Galilee, then to Pella, and (b) Galilee can include Pella (*Mark*, 115 n. 176). Cf. Kelber, who stretches the definition of Galilee to include the Decapolis and the area around Tyre and Sidon (*Kingdom*, 130). For a convincing refutation of such elastic definitions of Galilee, see Stemmerger, "Galilee," 415-421. Neither is there any evidence for Marxsen's two-stage migration.

<sup>95</sup> Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.5.3; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.7.7-8; 30.2.7; *Weights and Measures* 15. The historicity of this tradition has been defended recently by C. Koester ("The Origin and the Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition," *CBQ* 51 [1989] 90-106) but disputed by J. Verheyden, most recently in "The Flight of the Christians to Pella," *ETL* 66 (1990) 368-84.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Pfeleiderer, "Composition," 141; Pesch, *Markusevangelium*, 2. 295-96. Pella stands in the lower foothills of the eastern edge of the Jordan Valley; see "Pella," *HBD*, 768.

<sup>97</sup> For this assertion includes Mark's apparent knowledge of Aramaic (Hengel, *Studies*, 46), his use of the OT, which in many ways parallels contemporary interpretative methods in Palestinian Judaism (see the monograph mentioned in n. 38), and the possibility that

presence of Gentiles within the church is a momentous sign of eschatological fulfillment<sup>98</sup> and who reads the handwriting on the wall when the Zealots occupy the Temple to purify it of Gentile influence in the winter of 67–68. He and other like-minded Jewish Christians flee therefore to one of the Transjordanian Hellenistic cities (Pella<sup>9</sup>), where they join a predominantly Gentile Christian community that has recently experienced its own difficulties at the hands of the Jewish revolutionaries. When, two-and-a-half years later, the Romans destroy the Temple, Mark teaches his church to see this destruction as the inevitable fate of a house of prayer that was emptied of its divinely intended international significance when the Zealots shut its doors on Gentiles and turned it into a center for revolutionary violence.

The ramifications of our reconstruction of Mark's *Sitz im Leben* for exegesis of the Gospel are manifold. Instead of speaking vaguely of the Gospel's context as one of "persecution," we may specify the context of intra- and intercommunal tension produced by the upheaval of the Jewish War. In such a context, terms such as "Son of David" and scenes such as the acclamation of Jesus' divine sonship by a Roman centurion (15:39) take on a deeper and more topical significance. Mark's community situation, moreover, may be related to that which has been postulated for other New Testament writings. If critical studies are correct, for example, in concluding that Matthew and John are Christian reactions to the consolidation of Judaism that followed the war,<sup>99</sup> then Mark represents an earlier stage of Christian response to events within the Jewish community.

Mark may thus be situated along a time line of developing opposition between Christian communities and the Jewish world from which they sprang. Many of the inhabitants of the latter world took a disastrous plunge into revolutionary activism, then responded to the wreckage of their dreams by closing ranks around a new leadership and a new definition of who was and was not a Jew. At each of these stages the events in the Jewish world had major effects on Christians, whether they were of Jewish birth or not, and the echoes of some of the ensuing conflicts are audible to the attuned ear in the pages of the New Testament.

---

the exhortation in 13:14 to flee from Judea echoes Mark's own experience. Explanatory comments such as 7:3–4 reflect the Gentile background of most of Mark's *audience*, not his own descent.

<sup>98</sup> On the different attitudes toward Gentiles among Jewish Christians, see R. E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," *CBQ* 45 (1983) 74–79.

<sup>99</sup> See, e.g., W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966) 256–315; D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (SNTSMS 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (2d ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1979).