

The Intertexture of Apocalyptic Discourse in the Gospel of Mark

Vernon K. Robbins

This essay addresses interaction between the oral-scribal and cultural intertexture of apocalyptic discourse in the Gospel of Mark by paying special attention to *topoi* and enthymematic argumentation.¹ Under the influence of rhetorical interpretation, distinctions recently have been drawn among “apocalypse,” “apocalyptic eschatology,” “apocalypticism,” “apocalyptic,” and “apocalyptic discourse.”² The current essay focuses on “apocalyptic discourse,” which has received the following definition in rhetorical discussion:

Apocalyptic discourse refers to the constellation of apocalyptic topics as they function in larger early Jewish and Christian literary and social contexts. Thus, apocalyptic discourse should be treated as a flexible set of resources that early Jews and Christians could employ for a variety of persuasive tasks. Whenever early Jews and Christians appealed to such topics as visions and revelations, heavenly journeys, final catastrophes, and the like, they were using apocalyptic discourse.³

In order to tap the full resources of rhetorical interpretation, it is important to modify the first sentence to read: “Apocalyptic discourse refers to the constellation of apocalyptic *topoi* as they function in early Jewish and Christian descriptive, explanatory, and argumentative discourse.” *Topoi* received considerable attention in New Testament interpretation during the last part of the twentieth century.⁴ The current essay builds on Wilhelm H.

¹ Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996), 96–115, 121–24, 129–43; idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996), 40–62.

² Gregory Carey, “Introduction: Apocalyptic Discourse, Apocalyptic Rhetoric,” in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (ed. Gregory Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist; St. Louis: Chalice, 1999), 8–10.

³ Carey, “Introduction,” 10.

⁴ Abraham J. Malherbe, “Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament,” *ANRW* 26.1:320–25 (originally completed in 1972); Wilhelm H. Wuellner, “Toposforschung

Wuellner's awareness that *topoi* have a twofold function: (1) argumentative-enthymematic and (2) amplificatory-descriptive.⁵ Abraham J. Malherbe and his associates have made extensive investigations of the amplificatory-descriptive function of *topoi* of the Hellenistic moralists in New Testament literature.⁶ Their focus on these *topoi* reveals that early Christians participated actively in first-century Mediterranean wisdom discourse. In addition, members of the Context Group have identified the presence of common social and cultural topics and values in all the writings in the New Testament.⁷ A major task for New Testament interpreters now is to produce rhetorical analysis and interpretation both of the amplificatory-descriptive function and the argumentative-enthymematic function of the *topoi* and values in all six major kinds of New Testament discourse: wisdom, miracle, prophetic, suffering-death, apocalyptic, and precreation.⁸

A beginning point for merging Wuellner's insight about the twofold nature of *topoi* with the rich investigations by Malherbe and his associates and the Context Group is the understanding that "specific (*idioi*) *topoi*" attain the status of "common (*koinoi*) *topoi*" in regional, ethnic, and even

und Torahinterpretation bei Paulus und Jesus," *NTS* 24 (1978): 463–83; Johan C. Thom, "The Mind Is Its Own Place: Defining the Topos," in *Early Christianity and Classical Culture: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald, Thomas H. Olbricht, and L. Michael White; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, forthcoming).

⁵ Wuellner, "Toposforschung," 467: "eine zweifache Funktion: eine argumentativ-enthymematische und eine amplifikatorisch-darstellerische Funktion." Cf. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 1982), 110–11.

⁶ Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists," 320–25; idem, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (LEC; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 144–61; idem, "The Christianization of a Topos (Luke 12:13–34)," *NovT* 38 (1996): 123–35.

⁷ For the basic range of these topics, see Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (rev. ed.; Atlanta: John Knox, 1993); John H. Elliott, *What Is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993); John J. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible* (Collegeville, Minn.; Liturgical, 1999); cf. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 159–66; idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 75–86. For publications of the Context Group, see <http://www.serv.net/~oakmande/index.html>.

⁸ Vernon K. Robbins, "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," in *Argumentation in the Bible* (ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas Olbricht, and Walter Überlacker; Emory Studies in Early Christianity; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2002 [forthcoming]); cf. idem, "The Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse," *Scriptura* 59 (1996): 353–62. (<http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/dialect/dialect353.html>).

imperial social and cultural rhetorical environments. The *topoi* Malherbe and his associates analyze are specific *topoi* that became common *topoi* in the writings of the Hellenistic moralists. Participants in the Context Group, in contrast, focus on *topoi* characteristic of ancient, preindustrial society and culture. For rhetorical analysis and interpretation, it is important to understand that: "Once a topical pattern has developed into common use, it will be used over and over in various manifestations and will be effective by virtue of its recognizability."⁹ This recognizability sometimes is distinctive of a particular kind of culture in a particular region of the world.

Another important point is an understanding of the expanding enthymematic-argumentative nature of *topoi*. Aristotle's insight that enthymemes are the "substance" of persuasion itself¹⁰ has been expanded in modern times to an awareness that a "cultural system can be envisioned as a set of major premises—similar to a philosophical, theological, or legal system—from which its more specific minor premises can be derived."¹¹ The rhetoric of people "lead[s] staircase fashion from opinion . . . to further opinion. . . . [I]ts syllogistic motion *generates* all the possible arguments in relation to a given case. At each point, the possibilities are not reduced or eliminated, as in dialectic, but multiplied. . . . [T]he end is an ambidextrous wealth of arguments."¹² The "background conventions" supporting the "provisional judgments" in enthymemes "are not simply private intuitions but 'social knowledge' that spills over into the common experience of many people. What is referenced by publicly articulated enthymemes is the mosaic of commonplaces, conventions, traditions, and provisional interests making up the *doxa* of [their] rhetorical culture."¹³ Early Christians interwove biblical, Jewish, and Mediterranean *topoi* and values together into argumentative-enthymematic and amplificatory-

⁹ Barbara Warnick, "Two Systems of Invention: The Topics in *Rhetoric* and *The New Rhetoric*," in *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric* (ed. Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer; Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 110; cf. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 110–11.

¹⁰ Thomas B. Farrell, "Aristotle's Enthymeme As Tacit Reference," in Gross and Walzer, *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*, 94.

¹¹ James L. Peacock, *The Anthropological Lens: Harsh Light, Soft Focus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 35; cf. Vernon K. Robbins, "The Present and Future of Rhetorical Analysis," in *The Rhetorical Analysis of Scripture: Essays from the 1995 London Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht; JSNTSSup 146; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 33–35.

¹² Margaret D. Zulick, "Generative Rhetoric and Public Argument: A Classical Approach," *Argument and Advocacy* 33 (1997): 113.

¹³ Farrell, "Aristotle's Enthymeme As Tacit Reference," 99.

descriptive discourse that functioned as persuasive discourse in late Mediterranean antiquity.

In sociorhetorical terms, the twofold function of *topoi* in early Christian discourse produced multiple “rhetorolects,” because *topoi* emerge from a variety of conceptual locations with a “richness and connectedness of knowledge available for recombination” and function as “a source of patterns and relationships” within “the habits of thought, value hierarchies, forms of knowledge, and cultural conventions of the host society.”¹⁴ Enthymematic argumentation functions as an important means of persuasion in this context, since it moves from probable premises to a probable conclusion, regularly “start[ing] with the conclusion (or ‘question’) and . . . searching for an argument to warrant thinking the subject and the predicate terms, or to warrant dissociating them if what one needs is a negative answer.”¹⁵ The issue is not one of “formal logic” or of “formal validity,” nor is it the presence or absence of all three parts of a dialectical syllogism. The issue is argumentation from “signs,” which are considered to be “sure assumptions,” or from “likelihoods,” which are considered to be probable assumptions, rather than from decontextualized philosophical thinking. *Topoi* reside at the base of enthymemes, since *topoi* function persuasively in descriptive and explanatory discourse on the basis of pattern recognition.¹⁶ The experience of “recognizing the pattern” gives credibility to the *topos*, evoking a conviction that the pattern is “sure” (based on a “sign”) or “probable” (based on a “likelihood”). This credibility undergirds enthymematic argumentation, which moves in an inductive-deductive-abductive manner.¹⁷ Thus, a *topos* is not simply a probable or sure “idea” or “theme”; it is “a nexus for enthymemes.”¹⁸ The inductive-deductive-abductive nature of enthymematic argumentation requires an interpreter to

¹⁴ Carolyn R. Miller, “The Aristotelean *Topos*: Hunting for Novelty,” in Gross and Walzer, *Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric*, 141–42.

¹⁵ Walter J. Ong, “Introduction” to “A Fuller Course in the Art of Logic (1672),” in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 8: 1666–1682 (ed. Maurice Kelley; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1982), 161; cf. David Hellholm, “Enthymematic Argumentation in Paul: The Case of Romans 6,” in *Paul and His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 119–79.

¹⁶ Warnick, “Two Systems of Invention,” 110.

¹⁷ Richard L. Lanigan, “From Enthymeme to Abduction: The Classical Law of Logic and the Postmodern Rule of Rhetoric,” in *Recovering Pragmatism’s Voice: The Classical Tradition, Rorty, and the Philosophy of Communication* (ed. Lenore Langsdorf and Andrew R. Smith; Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995), 49–70.

¹⁸ I am grateful to L. Gregory Bloomquist for helping to nurture this insight; cf. Miller, “The Aristotelean *Topos*,” 136; Carey, “Introduction,” 11, 13.

identify and display the constituents that function as Rule, Case, and Result, rather than Major Premise, Minor Premise, and Conclusion.¹⁹ For example, the *topos* of “final catastrophe” functions as a resource for the invention of enthymematic argumentation in Rev 18:7–8:

Case: (7b) Since in her heart she says, “I rule as a queen; I am no widow, and I will never see grief,”

Result: (8) therefore her plagues will come in a single day—pestilence and mourning and famine—and she will be burned with fire;

Rule: for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.

The *topos* of “final catastrophe” is stated in the Result. In this “enthymematic apocalyptic argumentation,” the Result is a “logical” outcome of the nature of God’s attributes and actions (the Rule, inferred from the story of God’s actions and attributes in the past) and the nature of the attitudes and actions of Babylon (the Case). Whether or not it could be judged as “formally valid” by a logician, some early Christians considered this argumentation to be probable or sure on the basis of “likelihood” or “signs.”²⁰

A major challenge for enthymematic analysis and interpretation is to perceive the underlying Rule-Case-Result nature of different kinds of discourse.²¹ This essay contains a description of the underlying enthymematic nature of different kinds of discourse as they become important for the analysis and interpretation.

1. Apocalyptic Topoi and Argumentation in Mark 1:1–20

From a sociorhetorical perspective, the Gospel of Mark is a biographical composition woven with prophetic, miracle, wisdom, apocalyptic, and

¹⁹ Vernon K. Robbins, “Enthymemic Texture in the Gospel of Thomas,” *SBL Seminar Papers, 1998* (SBLSP 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 343–66 (<http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/enthymeme/enthymeme343.html>); idem, “From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1–13,” in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson* (ed. R. P. Thompson and T. E. Phillips; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 191–214 (<http://www.emory.edu/COLLEGE/RELIGION/faculty/robbins/Theology/theology191.html>); idem, “Progymnastic Rhetorical Composition and Pre-Gospel Traditions: A New Approach,” in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism* (ed. Camille Focant; BETL 110; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), 111–47.

²⁰ See the discussion of “premonitory discourse” in Farrell, “Aristotle’s Enthymeme As Tacit Reference,” 104–5.

²¹ Robbins, “Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation.”

suffering-death “rhetorolects” that were nurtured by early Christians in the rhetorical environment of Mediterranean discourse.²² In the context of early Christian discourse, the obvious missing rhetorolect is precreation discourse, which functions dynamically in the Gospel of John, Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews.²³ The Gospel of Mark presents an account of the life of Jesus with the aid of all of the major modes of early Christian discourse except that which became its most distinctive mode: precreation discourse.

In contrast to the Gospel of John, which begins with a reconfiguration of Gen 1:1 that introduces precreation discourse,²⁴ the Gospel of Mark begins with a reconfiguration of prophetic discourse like that which appears in Hosea 1:2 LXX: “the beginning of the word of the Lord in Hosea.”²⁵ Markan narration has reconfigured phrasing characteristic of prophetic discourse by replacing “the word of the Lord” with “the gospel of Jesus Christ [Son of God]” and attributing the beginning to “the prophet Isaiah” through the conventional oral-scribal formula “as it is written.”²⁶ The result is an account of Jesus’ adult life and death as the continuation of a redemptive story that began during the time of the prophets.²⁷ Immediately after these opening words, Markan narration presents an oral-scribal recitation of biblical discourse in a manner of prophetic fulfillment (1:2–3).²⁸

²² Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); idem, “Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation”; cf. idem, “Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse.”

²³ Precreation discourse focuses on the redemptive effect for humans and the cosmos of Christ’s relation to God prior to creation. Cf. Robbins, “Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation.”

²⁴ John 1:1–5 introduces precreation Rule-Case-Result argumentation as follows (cf. *ibid.*):

Rule: (1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(2) He was in the beginning with God;

(3) all things were made through him [by God], and without him was not anything made that was made [by God].

Case: (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Result: (5) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

²⁵ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1952), 152.

²⁶ Cf. Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26* (WBC 34A; Dallas: Word, 1989), 10.

²⁷ Norman R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (GBS; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 50–53.

²⁸ For details concerning the content of the biblical discourse, see Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 11

Rule: (2) “Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way; (3) the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

Case: (4–6) John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness. . . .

Result: (7) And he preached saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I. . . . (8) I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

In prophetic discourse, primary “Rules” regularly emerge from God’s decisions to select certain people and groups to enact righteousness in the human realm.²⁹ Mark 1:2–3 present God’s sending of a messenger to prepare the way of the Messiah. These oral-scribal verses function as the Rule in prophetic reasoning that governs the Case of John the Baptizer. The Result of John’s appearance as God’s messenger is his baptism of people with water as a preparation for the coming of another who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (cf. 13:11). In characteristic fashion, this prophetic narration is filled with vivid imagery about the present (“crying in the wilderness,” “mak[ing] paths straight,” “clothed with camel’s hair,” etc.) and tantalizing assertions about the future (“after me comes he who is mightier than I,” etc.). Wolfgang Roth has accurately perceived that the kind of prophetic discourse conventionally associated with Elijah and Elisha in 1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13 is evoked by this opening recitation and continues throughout the Gospel.³⁰ The “messenger” to whom the recitation refers in Mark 1:2 has, through prophetic interpretation in Mal 3:1 and 4:5, become Elijah,³¹ and *topoi* associated with Elijah continue in the account of John the Baptist (1:4–8), Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness (1:12–13), and Jesus’ calling of his first four disciples (1:16–20), which establishes the transition that sets the stage for Jesus’ ministry.³²

²⁹ Robbins, “Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation.”

³⁰ Wolfgang Roth, *Hebrew Gospel: Cracking the Code of Mark* (Oak Park, Ill.: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988), 4.

³¹ Guelich, *Mark 1–8:26*, 11.

³² Vernon K. Robbins, “Mark 1.14–20: An Interpretation at the Intersection of Jewish and Graeco-Roman Traditions,” *NTS* 28 (1982): 220–36; idem, *Jesus the Teacher*, 27–31. Topics associated with Elijah and Elisha continue in the account of the healing of the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue in Capernaum (1:21–28; see Roth, *Hebrew Gospel*, 5, 30, 32, 46, 47, 72, 107). The middle of the Markan account explicitly evokes the name of Elijah seven times (Mark 6:15; 8:28; 9:4, 5, 11, 12, 13), and two of these occur in a context where Elijah appears as a personage in conversation with Jesus (9:4–5). The end of the Gospel evokes the name of Elijah twice (15:35, 36) when people refer to the possibility of Elijah’s appearance during the crucifixion of Jesus (15:35–36). In other words, modes and

In the initial sequence of episodes in Mark 1:1–13, there are three potentially apocalyptic *topoi* that appear in descriptive discourse: (1) the splitting open of the heavens (1:10); (2) a voice coming out of the heavens (1:11); and (3) Jesus' being tested by Satan (1:13). While the opening of the heavens is a common *topos* in biblical discourse,³³ it acquired special meanings in biblical prophetic discourse. Isaiah 64:1 looks forward to the time when God will “split open” the heavens and come down on earth. In Ezek 1:1, the heavens are opened and the prophet sees “visions of God.” Isaiah 24:18–23 moves this *topos* beyond prophetic reasoning into Case-Result-Rule protoapocalyptic reasoning when it presents a logical sequence in which the opening of the heavens calls forth an earthquake throughout the earth, punishment of powers on the earth and in the heavens, and shame on behalf of the moon and the sun:³⁴

Case: (17) Terror, and the pit, and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth!

Result: (18a) Whoever flees at the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit; and whoever climbs out of the pit shall be caught in the snare.

Rule: (18b) For the windows of heaven are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble. (19) The earth is utterly broken, the earth is torn asunder, the earth is violently shaken.

(20) The earth staggers like a drunkard, it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again.

Case: (21) On that day the LORD will punish the host of heaven in heaven, and on earth the kings of the earth.

Result: (22) They will be gathered together like prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished. 23 Then the moon will be abashed, and the sun ashamed;

Rule: (23) for the LORD of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his elders he will manifest his glory.

This reasoning moves beyond prophetic discourse in which the Rules enact the selection of specific individuals and groups with special responsibility to embody righteousness in the human realm. In this protoapocalyptic discourse, the Rules narrate God's attributes and actions that bring imminent judgment upon the earth and the heavens. The narration in Isa 24 focuses on the trembling of the earth, the response of the

topoi associated with prophetic discourse about Elijah and Elisha are present in the opening-middle-closing texture of the Gospel of Mark (see Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 50–53; idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 19–21).

³³ E.g., Gen 7:11; Ps 78:23.

³⁴ Cf. Robbins, “Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation.”

heavens, and the punishment of unrighteous people in the manner of proto-apocalyptic discourse. Unlike fully developed apocalyptic discourse, it does not detail the actions of angels or other representatives of God's authority, nor does it feature one or more voices speaking out of the heavens. The *Apocalypse of John* features the opening of the heavens accompanied by a voice out of the heavens in 4:1,³⁵ and the apocalyptic discourse in *2 Bar.* 22:1 and *T. Levi* 2:6 and 5:1 also feature such an occasion. As the voice comes forth in these passages, it engages its auditor in dialogue or invites the person to see things in the heavens that soon will take place. In addition, these passages feature a first-person singular account of the experience by the seer himself. While the splitting apart of the heavens and the coming forth of the voice in the Gospel of Mark has the potential for evoking apocalyptic reasoning, the amplicatory-descriptive narration of the *topos* is more characteristic of prophetic discourse than apocalyptic discourse.

Ernst Lohmeyer considered the opening of the heavens to establish definitively the apocalyptic texture of the Markan story.³⁶ The narration in the Gospel of Mark, however, exhibits a restraint of narration about heavenly things that is uncharacteristic of apocalyptic discourse. Jesus does not engage in dialogue with the voice. The voice does not invite Jesus to come up to heaven. Jesus does not see a throne or lightning, nor does he hear peals of thunder (cf. *Rev* 4:2–6). When Jesus sees the heavens split apart, he sees the spirit descend on him like a dove.³⁷ The descent of the spirit of the Lord is a special phenomenon in prophetic discourse (see *Isa* 11:2; 61:1), and *Mark* 1:11 features a recontextualization of *Isa* 42:1 interwoven with *Ps* 2:7. The Gospel of Mark, as most literature during the Hellenistic period, merges phenomena characteristic of multiple kinds of discourse. As *Mark* features God's selection of a personage on earth who will have a special role at the end of time, it merges prophetic and apocalyptic discourse in a manner similar to *T. Levi* 18:6, which presents the Case of a new priest who will function in a special way during the final days of time:

- (6) The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac.
(7) And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him.³⁸

³⁵ Cf. *Rev* 11:19; 19:11.

³⁶ Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (16th ed.; KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963), 22.

³⁷ Leander E. Keck, "The Spirit and the Dove," *NTS* 17 (1970–1971): 41–67.

³⁸ See also *T. Jud.* 24:2.

When the narration continues with the spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness, it introduces another *topos* characteristic of Elijah-Elisha prophetic narration.³⁹ Apocalyptic discourse would feature Jesus being transported into another level of heaven⁴⁰ or engaging in dialogue with the voice to receive answers about things that appeared in heaven. However, when Jesus is in the wilderness, Satan tests him. The presence of Satan in the world is an apocalyptic *topos*, receiving the form it has in Mark from the influence of discourse like that in *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees*, and the writings at Qumran.⁴¹ While Mark 1:13 takes the form of descriptive discourse, discussion of Satan becomes argumentative in Mark 3:23–30. There will be further discussion of *T. Levi* 18 in the section below on exorcisms in Mark.

After the appearance of potentially apocalyptic *topoi* in the descriptive discourse of Mark 1:9–13, two potentially apocalyptic *topoi* appear in argumentative discourse attributed to Jesus: (1) announcement that time is fulfilled (1:15); and (2) announcement that the kingdom of God is drawing near (or “has drawn” near) (1:15). The enthymematic nature of the discourse becomes evident in a Rule–Exhortative Result display:

Rule: (15) The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;
Exhortative Result: repent, and believe in the gospel.

There are two *topoi* here that exhibit a close relation to biblical prophetic discourse: (1) fulfillment of time and (2) kingdom of God. When first approaching Mark 1:15, it would appear that the first two clauses present a Case rather than a Rule. But in apocalyptic discourse, assertions about time and the coming of a new age regularly are Rules emerging from the attributes and actions of God. This becomes evident when one sees the application of the Rule to a Case in Ezek 7:12–13:

Rule: (12) The time has come, the day drawn near [when those who are righteous will be preserved by God, but those who are not righteous will have wrath upon them].
Case: (13) For the vision concerns all their multitude; it shall not be revoked. Because of their iniquity,
Result: they cannot maintain their lives.

In prophetic literature, the Rules are God’s performative decisions and pronouncements in time. When God pronounces them, they occur. The

³⁹ See 1 Kgs 18:12; 2 Kgs 2:16; Acts 8:39.

⁴⁰ See *Apoc. Pet.* 9, 17; *Apoc. Paul* 3, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 41, 45.

⁴¹ See Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995), 3–62.

Cases are people whom God selects to perform specific tasks to enact righteousness and people whom God judges by the Rules to be performing righteousness and unrighteousness. The Results emerge from the application of the Rules to the Cases. In Ezekiel, as in portions of Isaiah, God's words are becoming apocalyptic Rules. The prophet presents God's Rule in Ezek 7:12. This leads to an exhortative Result as well as a deductive Result. Ezekiel 7:13 explains that the vision concerns the iniquitous multitude. Here one sees the Case over which the Rule governs. The Result of their iniquity is that "they cannot maintain their lives."

The second *topos* is the kingdom. This appears to be more specifically an apocalyptic *topos*, as is evident from Dan 7:21–22:

Case: (21) As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them,

Rule: (22a) until the Ancient One came;

Case: then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High,

Result: (22b) and the time arrived when the holy ones gained possession of the kingdom.

In apocalyptic discourse, the attributes and actions of God and those whom God sends to perform his tasks during time function as the Rules. People on earth who are either righteous or unrighteous function as the Cases upon which the Rules produce the Results. The unrighteous actions of the horn against the holy ones in Dan 7:21 present the Case upon which God's actions of coming and judging in 7:22a function as the Rule that produces the unstated Result of ending the power of the horn and the stated Result of giving the kingdom to the holy ones in 7:22b. The result of the cultural intertexture of Mark 1:15 with prophetic texts such as Ezek 7:12–13 and Dan 7:21–22 suggests that Jesus' announcement of the fulfillment of time and the arrival of the kingdom functions as a prophetic-apocalyptic Rule. The Rule is at one and the same time a prophetic "word of God" (in Mark 1:14, called the "gospel" of God) that performs what it declares and an apocalyptic action of God that enacts the attributes and actions of God throughout all time in the past, present, and future.

Thus, Mark 1:1–20 has significant oral-scribal intertexture with prophetic biblical literature. Into this prophetic narration, the Gospel of Mark introduces apocalyptic *topoi* that evoke the recognition of a pattern of God's activity at the end of time. The narration does not fulfill the expectations of apocalyptic discourse, but it embeds potentially apocalyptic *topoi*, including an apocalyptic Rule in 1:15 that creates an enthymematic environment inviting apocalyptic patterns of expectation and fulfillment.

2. *Apocalyptic Topoi and Argumentation in Miracle Discourse: Mark 1:21–8:26*

In the context of the overall prophetic discourse of the Gospel of Mark, miracle discourse functions centripetally in 1:21–8:26.⁴² Since miracle discourse is conventional in Elijah-Elisha prophetic discourse (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 5), Jesus' inauguration of his Galilean ministry in the Capernaum synagogue by healing a man (1:21–28) and his regular performance of miracles of various kinds throughout the first eight chapters of Mark would be considered highly acceptable, if not expected, by a first-century reader. The presence of unclean spirits or demons in the people to be healed, however, was not a conventional phenomenon in Elijah-Elisha discourse.⁴³ Mediterranean writers as early as Hesiod referred to good and evil δαίμονες,⁴⁴ and during the second century B.C.E. *1 En.* 15:6–12 presented an "apocalyptic" account of the origin of "evil spirits" through interpretation of Gen 6:1–4.⁴⁵ In both *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*, these evil spirits "corrupt" the world, causing it to be "impure" and "unclean."⁴⁶ By the first century C.E. a writer like Josephus could use the term δαιμόνιον to refer either to a good or divine power (fate).⁴⁷ Out of fifteen occurrences of a singular or plural form of δαιμόνιον in the writings of Josephus, nine refer to evil demons.⁴⁸ In contrast to a phrase like "good δαίμων,"⁴⁹ Markan discourse uses the phrase "holy spirit," "spirit," or "angel."⁵⁰ In Mark, the term δαιμόνιον always refers to an evil spirit, which can be called an "unclean" spirit.⁵¹

⁴² The language of "centripetal" function comes from the writings of M. M. Bakhtin. The most comprehensive guide to miracle discourse during the time of earliest Christianity, with its bibliographical references, currently is Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook for the Study of New Testament Miracle Stories* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁴³ While Qumran *Genesis Apocryphon* attributes Abram with an exorcism and Josephus attributes exorcistic powers to David and Solomon, the tradition did not associate Elijah and Elisha with exorcism; see *ibid.*, 48–53, 96–105.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 75–89.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 106–12.

⁴⁶ *1 En.* 8:2; 15:11; *Jub.* 5:2–3, 10; 7:20–21; 10:5, 8; 11:4; 50:5.

⁴⁷ Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Symposium Series 12; Lewiston and Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1984), 84–86

⁴⁸ Josephus, *J.W.* 7.185; *Ant.* 6.166 (2), 168, 211; 8.45, 46, 47, 48. These may be equated to an evil spirit: πονηρὸν πνεῦμα (*Ant.* 6.211; cf. *J.W.* 7.185) and are opposite of divine spirit (θεῖον πνεῦμα: *Ant.* 6.166).

⁴⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 16.210; cf. *J.W.* 6.47–48.

⁵⁰ See Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, 84.

⁵¹ See Mark 7:25–26, 29–30. Mark 9:25 refers to a "dumb and deaf" spirit.

The Gospel of Mark contains only four exorcisms.⁵² It is likely that, outside of their context in Mark, the exorcism of the legion of demons from the Gerasene man (5:1–20), the unclean spirit/demon from the Syrophenician woman’s daughter (7:24–30), and the dumb spirit from the boy with the believing father (9:14–29) evoked only general Mediterranean understanding of evil spirits, rather than anything specifically apocalyptic in nature. However, the placement and argumentative texture of the exorcism of the man with the unclean spirit in the Capernaum synagogue (1:21–28), which inaugurates Jesus’ Galilean activity after he calls four disciples, moves what is otherwise an account of prophetic teaching toward apocalyptic discourse. The holy spirit that came down into Jesus after his baptism (1:10) and immediately drove him into the wilderness (1:12) is quite clearly the agent that equips Jesus to cast out “unclean spirits.” This becomes evident when the unclean spirits fall down before Jesus and cry out to him that he is “the Son of God” (3:11), the natural designation to infer from the voice from heaven that called Jesus “my beloved Son” (1:11) in the context where the spirit came down into him. But all of this could be understood in the mode of prophetic discourse, since Elijah is a “man of God” (1 Kgs 17:18, 24) who heals by means of “the word of the Lord in [his] mouth” which “is truth” (1 Kgs 17:24; cf. Mark 1:24–27) and Elisha is a “holy man of God” (2 Kgs 4:9) upon whom the spirit of Elijah rested in double portion (2 Kgs 2:9–15). Mark 1:24 has the nature of oral-scribal recontextualization of 1 Kgs 17:18 and 2 Kgs 4:9, and Mark 1:27 may be oral-scribal reconfiguration of 1 Kgs 17:24.⁵³

The narration, however, appears to call forth apocalyptic understanding when people refer to Jesus’ action as “a new teaching” that “commands even the unclean spirits” and they obey him (Mark 1:27). If the new teaching includes 1:15 (“The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is drawing near”) and if a result of the descent of the holy spirit is the empowerment of Jesus to encounter a large number of unclean spirits, then the discourse has moved beyond the reasoning of prophetic discourse, where evil in the world is a result of human disobedience, into a worldview where evil spirits have “corrupted” God’s “good creation.” In other words, here the narration appears to have apocalyptic “cultural

⁵² The Gospel of Mark refers eleven times to unclean spirits (1:23, 26, 27; 3:11, 30; 5:2, 8, 13; 6:7; 7:25; 9:25), nine times to demons (1:34, 39; 3:15, 22; 6:13; 7:26, 29, 30; 9:38), and four times to people who are “demonized” (1:32; 5:15, 16, 18; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 8.47). The longer ending in Mark contains two additional references to demons (16:9, 17).

⁵³ Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97–108, 129–42; idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 48–50.

intertexture.” The invasion of the human realm of God’s created world by unclean spirits and demons becomes clear in Markan summaries and other references (1:32–34, 39; 3:11–12, 15, 22; 6:7, 13) outside the four specific exorcisms. From all of these references, it seems obvious that the presence of unclean spirits and demons in people is the result of spirits “ris[ing] up against the children of the people and against the women” (1 *En.* 15:12). The general Markan discourse about unclean spirits and demons, then, appears to be apocalyptic in its worldview. There are no exorcisms in apocalyptic writings.⁵⁴ Part of the Markan achievement is to intertwine exorcisms with apocalyptic *topoi* in a manner that moves the casting out of unclean spirits/demons beyond the worldviews of basic Mediterranean miracle discourse or biblical prophetic discourse into apocalyptic discourse.

Markan discourse never explains how unclean spirits and demons came into being on earth or why they dwell in humans. The discourse takes on a decisive argumentative texture,⁵⁵ however, in Mark 3:19b–30, where scribes from Jerusalem accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the prince of demons (3:22). Into the topic of household (3:19, 21, 25, 27, 31–35), the argumentation embeds the topics of the public domain (3:20–21); scribes from Jerusalem (3:22); being “out of one’s mind”/possessed by Beelzebul, Satan, a demon, or an unclean spirit (3:21–23, 26, 30); casting out demons (3:22–23); kingdom (3:24); sin (3:28–29); and holy spirit (3:29).⁵⁶ The opening of the account in 3:19b–22 introduces the concept of household and family, and it correlates being “out of one’s mind” (3:21) with being possessed by Beelzebul⁵⁷ or casting out demons by the prince of demons (3:22). The scribes from Jerusalem function as those to whom God has given the responsibility for righteousness both in the public domain and in the private domain of the household. Jesus’ response, therefore, functions in the mode of prophetic discourse that criticizes and corrects the reasoning of those who have been selected by

⁵⁴ Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 119.

⁵⁵ Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 58–64, 77–88; idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 21–29.

⁵⁶ Cf. Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetorical Composition and the Beelzebul Controversy,” in Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge, 1989), 171–77.

⁵⁷ For discussion of Beelzebul, see Edward Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth, 1949), 165–67; Werner Foerster, “Βεεζεβοουλ,” *TDNT* 1:605–6; Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World*, 18–22; Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (2d ed.; SNTSMS 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11.

God to oversee righteousness but have not carried out their duties responsibly. As Jesus elaborates his response to the scribes, he uses the argumentative procedures of wisdom discourse that features parables, enthymemes, and contraries:

Proposition/Result: (23) “How can Satan cast out Satan? [= Satan cannot cast out Satan.]

Rationale:

Case: (24) If a kingdom is divided against itself,

Result: that kingdom cannot stand.

Case: (25) And if a house is divided against itself,

Result: that house will not be able to stand.

Case: (26) And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided,

Result: he cannot stand, but is coming to an end.”

[**Unstated Rule:** If a powerful domain rises up against itself, it will destroy itself.]

Argument from the Contrary:

Case: (27) “But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man;

Result: then indeed he may plunder his house.”

[**Unstated Contrary Rule:** If one powerful domain overpowers another, it may plunder the domain it subdues.]

Conclusion As Authoritative Apocalyptic Judgment:

Rule: (28) “Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; (29) but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”—

Case: (30) for they [the scribes] had said, “He has an unclean spirit.” [= they had said that he cast out unclean spirits by an unclean spirit (Beelzebul), thus blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.]

[**Unstated Result:** The scribes never have forgiveness for their assertion about Jesus.]

Markan narration asserts that Jesus responded to the scribes “in parables” (ἐν παραβλαῖς), which means in arguments from analogy characteristic of wisdom discourse.⁵⁸ The analogies come from the commonly understood social domains of kingdom and household, and the mode of elaboration is characteristic of wisdom discourse. The term “Satan,” however, introduces an apocalyptic *topos*. Thus, the question that introduces the proposition that Satan cannot cast out Satan (an *interrogatio*) begins the

⁵⁸ Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O’Neil, *The Progymnasmata* (vol. 1 of *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 177; Mack and Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*, 54–57, 143–60, etc.

argumentation in a mode of apocalyptic reasoning. The argumentation presents three reasons for believing the apocalyptic assertion. The first two reasons, based on the nature of a kingdom and a house, argue in a mode characteristic of wisdom discourse. The third reason, standing in a natural position of “conclusion” in a series of three,⁵⁹ brings the “wisdom” reasoning to fruition in an “apocalyptic” conclusion about Satan “rising up” and “coming to an end.”⁶⁰ The argument from the contrary, then, continues with a counterargument from analogy (παραβολή). By analogy, the strong man is Satan, and the one who enters the strong man’s house is Jesus. Ernest Best has devoted two editions of a book to the issues embedded in this argumentation with special focus on 3:27. Following the interpretations of Roland Meynet and Jan Lambrecht, Best understands 3:27 to be “the rhetorical centre of iii.20–35.”⁶¹ For him, the key soteriological issue in Mark is Jesus’ binding of Satan in the temptation account and Jesus’ assertion about binding the strong man in Mark 3:27. Best asserts:

The conception of the binding of evil spirits is common in the apocalyptic writings. It presumably takes its Jewish origin [the idea also existed in Persian circles] in Isa. xxiv.21 f. and becomes more explicit in Tob. viii.3; I Enoch x.4 f., 11 f.; xviii.12–xix.2; xxi.1–6; liv.4 f.; Test. Levi xviii.12; Jub. xlviii.15. It reappears in the New Testament in Rev. xx.2, where it is explicitly said that it is Satan who is bound. . . . Christ has already bound Satan according to Mark iii.27; δῆσῃ, aorist subjunctive, would suggest one definite act, and this must be the trial of strength which he had with Satan in the desert—the Temptation.⁶²

For Best, Jesus’ confrontation of Satan in the temptation supplemented by the argument in Mark 3:27 establishes the environment for understanding the salvific effect of Jesus’ activity in the entire Gospel of Mark. One of these effects is to empower his disciples to cast out demons. In the end, Best proposes that “The argument in Test. Levi xviii and in

⁵⁹ Vernon K. Robbins, “Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three-Step Progression,” *NovT* 23 (1981): 97–114; repr. in *The Composition of Mark’s Gospel: Selected Studies from Novum Testamentum* (ed. David E. Orton; Brill’s Readers in Biblical Studies 3; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 103–20.

⁶⁰ *1 En.* 10:1–7; 15:6–12; 54:1–6; Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 106–12.

⁶¹ Best, *Temptation and the Passion*, xxii; Roland Meynet, “Qui donc est ‘le plus fort’? Analyse rhétorique de Mc 3,22–30; Mt 12,22–37; Luc 11,14–26,” *RB* 90 (1983): 334–50; cf. Jan Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished: The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 117.

⁶² Best, *The Temptation and the Passion*, 12–13.

Mark is precisely the same.”⁶³ In the terms of the present essay, Best has used the enthymematic “apocalyptic cultural reasoning” of *T. Levi* 18 as a guide for reading the amplificatory-descriptive narration of the Gospel of Mark:

Rule: (6) The heavens will be opened [by God],

Case: and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice [from God], as from Abraham to Isaac.

Result: (7) And the glory of the Most High shall burst forth upon him. And the spirit of understanding and sanctification shall rest upon him. . . .

Case: (8) For he shall give the majesty of the Lord to those who are his sons in truth forever . . . (11) and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life.

Result: The spirit of holiness shall be upon them.

Case: (12) And Beliar shall be bound by him. And he shall grant to his children the authority to trample on wicked spirits.

Result: (14) . . . and all the saints shall be clothed in righteousness.

This is apocalyptic reasoning that moves enthymematically from the actions of God as Rule through a special envoy of God’s attributes and actions as Case to the Result of special blessing on a group of righteous ones, which includes the ability to overpower demons.

The overall argumentative texture of the Markan account reveals vigorous claims by Christians over both the public domain and the domain of the household. After the argument in 3:23–27, the Markan Jesus presents an authoritative judgment in 3:28–29—a type of assertion that often supplements argument from analogy and example in Greco-Roman discourse.⁶⁴ The authoritative judgment interweaves the topic of forgiveness of sins with blasphemy against the holy spirit, explaining that the blasphemy occurred when people asserted in public that Jesus possessed an unclean spirit (rather than the holy spirit). This judgment uses apocalyptic reasoning that presupposes that primary attributes and actions of God are embodied in an agent of God’s authority and judgment during the end time. From this reasoning, blasphemy in public against the holy spirit in Jesus has the effect of blaspheming against God, which has devastating results.

The closing of the Markan account (3:31–35) inverts the public and private domain in the opening (3:19b–22). At the end of the account, “a crowd” is sitting around Jesus in the house (3:32), and Jesus describes his “true kinfolk” as those who “do the will of God” (3:35). The insight by Robert G. Hall that “arguing like an apocalypse” includes “a call to join the

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶⁴ Hock and O’Neil, *Progymnasmata*, 177, 181; Mack and Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*, 28–29, 54–57, *passim*.

righteous realm God rules and to repudiate the wicked realm ruled by other forces”⁶⁵ would appear to apply here. The “household of Jesus” contains “people who do the will of God” by gathering around Jesus, who possesses the holy spirit, versus those who “blaspheme against the holy spirit” by asserting that Jesus possesses an unclean spirit. The rhetorical effect of the unit is a call to repudiate the unrighteous public realm nurtured by the scribes and others (3:21–22) and to join the righteous household realm nurtured by Jesus, who teaches them how to “do the will of God.”

For the present essay on the intertexture of apocalyptic discourse in Mark, it is important to notice that this unit uses “common social topics”⁶⁶ characteristic of wisdom discourse to present a public challenge characteristic of prophetic discourse that contains topics internal to apocalyptic discourse intertwined with miracle discourse. This merger of prophetic, wisdom, apocalyptic, and miracle discourse is highly characteristic of the manner in which early Christians participated in the creative intertwining of conventional discourses during the Hellenistic period. If one follows the lead of Best’s analysis, Markan discourse in this account reveals “cultural intertexture” with contemporary apocalyptic discourse. There is no significant oral-scribal intertexture here with apocalyptic literature or with prophetic literature. Rather, the intertexture lies within enthymematic presentation of apocalyptic *topoi*.

3. Apocalyptic Topoi in Wisdom Discourse and Seeking of Signs in Mark 1:21–8:26

In the previous two sections we have seen apocalyptic *topoi* in descriptive prophetic narration (1:1–15, 21–28) and in argumentative discourse about exorcisms (3:20–35). Given the presence of apocalyptic *topoi* in the introduction and the dispute over exorcisms, it is surprising that no apocalyptic *topoi* appear in the healings and disputes in 1:29–3:6; the miracle stories and rejection of Jesus at Nazareth in 4:35–6:6; the death of John the Baptist, the feedings, the miracles, and the dispute with the Pharisees in 6:14–8:10; and Jesus’ discussion with the disciples and the healing of a blind man in 8:14–26. *Topoi* that may be interpreted as apocalyptic in nature appear in the initial exorcism (1:21–28), Jesus’ choosing of twelve disciples (3:7–19), the dispute over exorcisms (3:20–35), Jesus’ teaching in parables (4:1–34), Jesus’ sending out of the Twelve (6:7–13),

⁶⁵ Robert G. Hall, “Arguing Like an Apocalypse: Galatians and an Ancient *Topos* Outside the Greco-Roman Rhetorical Tradition,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 434–53.

⁶⁶ Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 159–66, 179–82; idem, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 75–86.

and the Pharisees' challenge to Jesus to give a sign (8:11–13). This means that all the potential apocalyptic *topoi* in 1:21–28 concern the casting out of demons, except for the parables of Jesus in 4:1–34 and the Pharisees' challenge of Jesus in 8:11–13.

Once an interpreter has read the five parables with well-developed apocalyptic features in Matthew (13:24–30, 35–43, 47–50; 25:1–13, 14–30), one might suppose that Mark 4:1–34 also contains well-developed apocalyptic parables. In fact, only explanatory discourse about the parable of the Sower (4:11–12), the reference to Satan in Jesus' retelling of the parable of the Sower (4:15), Jesus' saying about hidden things coming to light (4:22), and the parable of the Mustard Seed (4:30–32) contain potentially apocalyptic *topoi*. Mark 4:1–34 is not argumentative discourse, but a combination of descriptive and elaborative discourse. The overall elaboration introduces a cultural system of understanding that focuses on mystery rather than a well-articulated *paideia*.⁶⁷ The chapter begins with references to teaching in 4:1–2 that evoke a context of wisdom discourse, and parables are a natural part of this kind of discourse. After the initial parable (4:3–9), Jesus explains to the disciples that “the mystery of the kingdom of God” has been given to them, while everything is “in parables” to those outside (4:11). This statement introduces an apocalyptic *topos* into Jesus' wisdom discourse. Mystery had become a special *topos* in apocalyptic discourse by the first century. Daniel 2:28–30 exhibits primary enthymematic reasoning associated with this *topos*:

Rule: (28) there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries,

Case: and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of days. **Result:** . . . (29) . . . the revealer of mysteries disclosed to you what is to be.

Contrary Case: (30) But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me because of any wisdom that I have more than any other living being, but in order that the interpretation may be known to the king and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

Contrary Result: . . . (36) This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. . . .

In Daniel 2, wisdom discourse is mysterious apocalyptic discourse. Mark 4:1–20 has cultural intertexture with this Rule-Case-Result reasoning in apocalyptic discourse. With Jesus' explanation in 4:11, the parable of the Sower in 4:3–9 receives the status of an “apocalyptic” message from God in heaven to the hearers. With this parable, Jesus has revealed to them

⁶⁷ Burton L. Mack, “Teaching in Parables: Elaboration in Mark 4:1–34,” in Mack and Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*, 143–60.

some special insight into the end of days. Jesus has been given the wisdom to interpret the parable, which he does in 4:13–20. Thus, the sequence of the parable, the explanation, and the retelling of the parable has cultural intertexture with apocalyptic reasoning about God as a revealer of mysteries like that exhibited in Dan 2:28–45.

While Mark 4:11 has “cultural” intertexture with Dan 2:28–45, it does not have “oral-scribal” intertexture with it. Rather, in accordance with the underlying “prophetic” dynamic of Markan discourse, Jesus’ explanation reconfigures the Rule/Case/Result reasoning of Isa 6:9–10 into apocalyptic reasoning. Isa 6:9–10 asserts:

Rule: (9) [The voice of the Lord said:] “Go and say to this people: ‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.’

Case: (10a) Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes,

Result: (10b) so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed.”

Mark 4:11–12 has changed the Rule-Case-Result reasoning of Isa 6:9–10 into:

Case: (11) To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables;

Result: (12) so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven.

[Unstated Rule: God is a revealer of the mystery of the kingdom to special people.]

In other words, the unstated Rule for Mark 4:11–12 is well stated in Dan 2:28, and with this change Markan discourse reconfigures prophetic discourse into apocalyptic discourse.

According to *1 Enoch*, the earthly Watchers—the “evil spirits” on earth—know only the “rejected mysteries,” not the true, deep mysteries of the entire cosmos. They, “out of the hardness of their hearts,” have broadcast the “false mysteries” to women, and “by those mysteries the women and men multiply evil deeds upon the earth” (*1 En.* 16:3). In *1 Enoch*, to counter this false understanding—the rejected mysteries—various angels reveal “the hidden, secret things” either to Noah or Enoch (*1 En.* 60:10–13; 68:1; 71:3–4; 104:10–13; 107:3; 108:15). The Gospel of Mark presents a variant version of this apocalyptic view. To everyone outside the Twelve, everything is in parables (which means something like “stories that keep the ‘hidden wisdom’ secret”). Yet, Jesus says in Mark 4:22, “there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light.” In an apocalyptic worldview, all secrets of the cosmos will become known when the end-time events play themselves out in full.

After these statements, Jesus says in Mark 4:24–25:

Case: (24) . . . the measure you give

Result: will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you.

Rule: (25) For to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.

The saying about the measure appears in the context of wisdom argumentation in Matt 7:1–2:

Exhortative Result: (1) Judge not that you be not judged.

Rule: (2) For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.

Hans Dieter Betz appropriately identifies this as a basic rule of exchange within society: “it is a rule of business stipulating that the same instruments for measuring (*to metron*) must be used for all business transactions.”⁶⁸ From the social arena of business, wisdom discourse applies this by analogy to ethical standards and to God at the last judgment. Mark 4:24–25 moves beyond the analogical reasoning of wisdom discourse into apocalyptic reasoning when “for to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away” becomes the Rule; “the measure you give” becomes the Case; and “will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you” becomes the Result. Mark 4:25 expresses a Rule based on attributes and actions of God rather than basic social rules of exchange. In turn, the Result contains a statement of “more will be given” on the basis of God’s attributes both of “blessing more” and of “utterly destroying that which is unjust.” Thus, the Markan discourse has reconfigured the reasoning of a wisdom *topos* into apocalyptic reasoning that evokes the *topos* of God’s final judgment, which brings superabundant blessings in the context of terrible destruction.

The elaboration in Mark 4 ends with the parable of the Mustard Seed. The Markan version of the parable has dramatically reconfigured and recontextualized language about “the birds of the air,” conventionally associated with the great apocalyptic tree in Dan 4:12, 21, and “nesting in the shade of its branches,” conventionally associated with the great cedar of Lebanon in Ezek 17:23.⁶⁹ In Mark, the kingdom of God is not like a tree that will be destroyed (Daniel) or a cedar of Lebanon that will be plucked

⁶⁸ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 491.

⁶⁹ Cf. John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 45–48.

up and replanted (Ezekiel), but it is a mustard seed that “becomes the greatest of all shrubs.” In contrast to other *topoi* that function apocalyptically in Mark, the *topoi* in Mark 4:30–32 present a critique of traditional Jewish imagery of Israel’s destiny, which is being reconfigured by the Markan story.⁷⁰ When Markan wisdom discourse shows oral-scribal or cultural intertexture with apocalyptic discourse, therefore, it often reconfigures it toward prophetic discourse.

Just as Mark 4:30–32 refuses, rather than embellishes, the image of the great tree in Ezek 17 or the apocalyptic tree in Dan 4, so Jesus refuses to play the role of an apocalyptic seer in Mark 8:11–13. When Pharisees ask Jesus to show them a sign from heaven, he will not do it. Again, Markan discourse exhibits a restraint that is more characteristic of prophetic than apocalyptic discourse. When apocalyptic *topoi* appear, they regularly are redirected back to earth in a manner more characteristic of prophetic than apocalyptic discourse.

4. *Apocalyptic Topoi in Suffering-Death Discourse in Mark 8:27–12:44*

In the last half of the Gospel, 8:27–16:8, suffering-death discourse becomes the centripetal mode in the context of the overall prophetic discourse. Glimpses of suffering-death discourse appear in 1:14; 3:6, 19; 4:17; 6:4, 11, 14–29, but prophetic-miracle discourse, with apocalyptic and wisdom *topoi* embedded in it, dominates the first half of the Gospel. In Mark 8:34–9:1, Jesus introduces suffering-death discourse argumentatively in public—in other words, not only with his disciples, but also with the crowd (8:34). This sets the stage for narration that leads to Jesus’ crucifixion, death, and resurrection from the tomb. The argumentative introduction of suffering-death discourse occurs in the following manner:

(34) He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them,

Proposition/Result: “If anyone wishes to follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Rationale Based on Opposite Consequences/Case: (35) For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

Confirmation of Rationale Based on Wishing to Save Life/Rule: (36) For what does it benefit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? [= It does not benefit a person to gain the whole world and forfeit his life.]

Confirmation of Rationale Based on Losing Life/Rule: (37) Indeed, what can a person give in exchange for his life? [= A person can give nothing in exchange for his life.]

⁷⁰ Cf. Mack, “Teaching in Parables,” 158.

Enthymematic Argument by Contrary Example:

Case: (38) For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation,

Result: of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

[**Unstated Rule:** A person who honors the Son of Man will be honored and a person who is ashamed of the Son of Man will be shamed.]

Conclusion/Exhortation by Apocalyptic Rule: (9:1) And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

[**Unstated Case:** Those who honor the Son of Man/

Result: will be saved by the power of the kingdom;

Case: those who are ashamed of the Son of Man/

Result: will experience negative consequences from the power of the kingdom.]⁷¹

The primary challenge for rhetorical understanding of the sequence in Mark 8:34–9:1 is the shift from suffering-death argumentation in a mode of wisdom discourse to apocalyptic discourse when it moves from the opening enthymematic sequence to the argument and the conclusion. The sequence begins with an inductive-deductive syllogism characteristic of early Christian wisdom discourse. In enthymematic terms, the opening sequence consists of Result-Case-Rule-Rule. An unusual thing here is the presentation of two Rules: one that addresses the desire to save life (first part of the Case) and one that addresses the loss of life (second part of the Case). In other words, the Confirmation in Mark 8:36–37 proceeds according to an argument “from the parts.”⁷² Mark 8:36 presents a Rule that attempting to secure one’s life by accumulating possessions results in throwing one’s life away. Mark 8:37 presents a Rule that implies that a person has to give life over to a great cause, because it is impossible to buy it with anything. Luke 9:25 omits the second confirmation, evidently considering the Rule about attempting to secure one’s life to be sufficient for the syllogistic reasoning.

After this syllogistic beginning, characteristic of an elaboration that begins with an enthymeme rather than a paradigm,⁷³ the elaboration presents an

⁷¹ I am grateful for discussions over Rhetoric-L during January, 2001, with Fredrick J. Long and others, which helped to clarify a number of things about this and other sequences of argumentation in the Gospels.

⁷² This appears to be what Theon means by “argument from the parts” (Hock and O’Neil, *Progymnasmata*, 72–73).

⁷³ The two ways an elaboration (or speech) can begin, as Aristotle observed in *Rhet.* 1.2.8 (1356b).

argument and a conclusion. In Mediterranean discourse outside of Jewish and Christian circles the content of the argument and conclusion is unusual, because at this point the elaboration shifts from argumentation characteristic of wisdom discourse to argumentation characteristic of apocalyptic discourse. It is characteristic of apocalyptic discourse for the Rules to articulate attributes and actions of God, his angels, and representatives (like the Son of Man).⁷⁴ One can see how a basic Rule about the Son of Man emerges from Dan 7:13–14:

Case: (13) I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.

Result: (14a) To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

Rule: (14b) His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.

The descriptive discourse in Dan 7:13–14 introduces an apocalyptic *topos* about the power of the Son of Man in the form of an apocalyptic syllogism. All three parts of the syllogism function as resources for early Christian discourse. Mark 8:38 is a Case-Result enthymeme (see above) that presupposes a Rule about the consequences of being ashamed of the Son of Man. This enthymeme presupposes that the only hope for a person's not being destroyed is to honor the universal and everlasting power of the Son of Man. In other words, this argumentation presupposes dynamics of honor and shame that are central values in the Mediterranean world.⁷⁵ The shame concerns social identification with a person who has been publicly dishonored by Jerusalem temple authorities (Mark 8:31) and the "gospel" that recounts this humiliation (cf. Rom 1:16; Heb 2:11). It also evokes the dynamics of accepting alternative kinship relations (cf. 2 Tim 1:15–16) where people do the will of God rather than are ashamed of Jesus' words (cf. Mark 3:31–35). In Mark 8:34–9:1, then, apocalyptic *topoi* are present in suffering-death discourse that begins in a mode characteristic of wisdom discourse and progresses into an apocalyptic argument and conclusion.

Immediately after Jesus' elaborated argument with the crowd and his disciples about suffering and death (8:34–9:1), he takes three of his disciples to a high mountain, where he is transformed into a shining personage before them. When the writer of the *Apocalypse of Peter* wanted to compose an apocalypse out of episodes in the Synoptic Gospels, he started with Jesus' discourse on the Mount of Olives (Matt 24 par. Mark 13: *Apoc.*

⁷⁴ Robbins, "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation."

⁷⁵ Malina, *New Testament World*, 26–62; Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 76–77.

Pet. 1–14 [Ethiopic]) and continued with the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt 17:1–8 par. Mark 9:2–8: *Apoc. Pet.* 15–17 [Ethiopic]).⁷⁶ To make the transfiguration account function as fully apocalyptic discourse, the author describes with detailed imagery the shining faces and bodies of Jesus, Elijah, and Moses (*Apoc. Pet.* 15). In other words, in *Apocalypse of Peter* the disciples have followed Jesus into a region of heaven, where holy people “shine” with a brilliance that makes it impossible to “look upon their faces.” When the disciples ask where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the rest of the righteous fathers are, they are shown a great garden (*Apoc. Pet.* 16). Again, the presupposition is that Jesus has taken the disciples into a region beyond the earth, where places like Paradise exist. When Peter asks if he should make three tabernacles, Jesus says that his eyes must be opened and ears unstopped so that he may see a tabernacle not made with hands for Jesus and his elect (*Apoc. Pet.* 16). At this point, a voice comes from heaven, the heaven opens, and the disciples behold men traveling with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah “into another heaven” (*Apoc. Pet.* 17). After this, the heaven shuts, the disciples pray, and the disciples go down the mountain glorifying God.

In comparison with the apocalyptic version of the transfiguration in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, one can see that the Markan account has a restraint related to the Exodus account of Moses on Mount Sinai. In Mark, Jesus’ body and garments, without description of his face, become glistening, intensely white, and the disciples hear a voice from a cloud that speaks about “my Son” (9:7). But the heavens do not open, the disciples do not see anything else in this “region of heaven,” and the disciples do not see Jesus or anyone travel from one region of heaven to another. The Markan account proceeds in a manner much more characteristic of prophetic discourse than apocalyptic discourse. Yet, as one can see from the development of the transfiguration account both in Matthew and in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the Markan account contains “potentially apocalyptic” *topoi*.

5 Apocalyptic Discourse in a Prophetic Context: Mark 13

After the transfiguration (Mark 9:2–8), the next major scene for apocalyptic *topoi* emerges in Mark 13. Things changed dramatically for the study of Mark 13 when the analysis of the SBL “Genre of Apocalypse” group brought forth the following definition of apocalypse in 1979:

⁷⁶ J. K. Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M. R. James* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 600–612; Edgar Hennecke, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. and ed. R. McL. Wilson; 2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 2:668–83.

“apocalypse” is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.⁷⁷

This description called into question the definition of Mark 13 and its parallels as an apocalypse, since “the revelation” is not “mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient.”⁷⁸ Shortly after this, David E. Aune described Mark 13 as a Greco-Roman “*Tempeldialog*,”⁷⁹ and the author of the current essay combined Aune’s insights with earlier work to describe the chapter as a temple dialogue “with features of the conventional farewell speech and the apocalypse.”⁸⁰ Subsequently, Adela Yarbro Collins, a member of the SBL Genre of Apocalypse Group, criticized the “Little Apocalypse Theory” about Mark 13 and described the chapter as “a scholastic dialogue with prophetic or apocalyptic content.”⁸¹ These alternative points of view broaden the discussion of the cultural intertexture of Mark to include aspects of Greco-Roman culture as well as Jewish culture.

Brief comparison with *Apoc. Pet.* 1–14 can help the reader to see why the SBL Group on Apocalypse decided that Mark 13 did not qualify as an apocalypse. First, *Apoc. Pet.* 1 declares the work to be a revelation from Christ “through Peter to those who died for their sins, because they did not keep the commandment of God, their creator.”⁸² The *Apocalypse of Peter* immediately introduces the *topos* of “revelation” through one person to others, which is absent from Mark, where the information comes forth in a speech that Jesus taught (13:1) to four of his disciples.

⁷⁷ John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia* 14 (1979), 9; cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature,” *ANRW* 25.6:4670.

⁷⁸ John J. Collins, “Introduction,” 9; cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, “Early Christian Apocalyptic Literature,” 25.6:4691; idem, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (JSJSup 50; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 7.

⁷⁹ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 184–87.

⁸⁰ Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 173–79, esp. 178; cf. Hans-Joachim Michel, *Die Abschiedsrede des Paulus an die Kirche Apg 20, 17–38* (SANT 35; Munich: Kösel, 1973).

⁸¹ Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Beginnings of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 77; cf. Egon Brandenburger, *Markus 13 und die Apokalyphtik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 15.

⁸² All quotations of *Apocalypse of Peter* are from Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 600–609.

Second, in the *Apocalypse of Peter* Jesus speaks throughout in first-person singular about himself, the revealer, and Peter tells his experience in first-person singular to the reader in *Apoc. Pet.* 2–3, 15–17. This kind of first-person narration, which is a characteristic feature of apocalypses, also is absent from Mark 13.

Third, Jesus' revelation to Peter merges Mark 13:5–6 with 13:21 (*Apoc. Pet.* 1) to create an enthymeme at the beginning based on the Rule that "the coming of the Son of God will not be plain [unnoticeable]." This creates the context for an "amplified description" of the *topos* of Jesus' coming in great majesty. Jesus comes with his cross going before him as he shines seven times greater than the sun, with all his angels accompanying him in his majesty, and with the Father setting a crown on his head so he is empowered to judge the quick and the dead (*Apoc. Pet.* 1). Again, the restraint of Markan narration keeps the description and the argumentation closer to prophetic discourse, which describes the Day of the Lord without amplifying the details of the process in the manner of apocalyptic discourse. The narration in Mark 13:26–27 presents Case-Result argumentation that presupposes the results of God's transfer of power to one like a son of man in Dan 7:

Case: (26) And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory.⁸³

Result: (27) And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.⁸⁴

[Unexpressed Rule: The dominion of the one like a son of man is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed (Dan 7:14b).]

In contrast to the *Apocalypse of Peter* (and also Matt 24, which provided the base for the amplification in *Apoc. Pet.*), the Son of Man in Mark does not judge the quick and the dead. Rather, the Son of Man enacts only one role in Mark 13, the sending out of his angels to gather all of the elect together (13:27).⁸⁵

⁸³ Cf. *4 Ezra* 13:30–32: "And bewilderment of mind shall come over those who dwell on the earth. And they shall plan to make war against one another, city against city, place against place, people against people, and kingdom against kingdom. And when these things come to pass and the signs occur which I showed you before, then my son will be revealed, whom you saw as a man coming up from the sea."

⁸⁴ Cf. Deut 30:4: "Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back."

⁸⁵ Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 173–79; idem, "Rhetorical Ritual: Apocalyptic Discourse in Mark 13," in Carey and Bloomquist, *Vision and Persuasion*, 114–16.

Fourth, Jesus moves directly from his description to Peter of his coming (*Apoc. Pet.* 1) to “learning” from “the parable of the fig tree” (*Apoc. Pet.* 2), which comes near the end of the Markan speech (13:28). This earlier position in the discourse provides the setting for: (a) recitation of the parable; (b) first-person inquiry by Peter how “we” can understand it, because “We do not know”; and (c) elaborated explanation of the meaning of the parable. Jesus’ explanation amplifies the nature of the fig tree as “the house of Israel,” leading to a concluding enthymeme that argues that those who die by the hand of the false Christs who come will be “reckoned among the good and righteous martyrs who have pleased God in their life” (*Apoc. Pet.* 2). In other words, *Apocalypse of Peter* omits the description of the “tribulations” that are like “birth pangs” in Mark 13:7–20, which are conventional biblical and prophetic *topoi* about disturbances that will lead to judgment by the Lord.⁸⁶ *Apocalypse of Peter* 2 builds the apocalyptic *topoi* of “false Christs” and “dying as a martyr” into amplified descriptions and enthymematic arguments about the end time.

Fifth, after these opening revelations, Jesus begins to show Peter things in heaven. Jesus shows him “the souls of all men” in his right hand (*Apoc. Pet.* 3), God commanding hell to open its bars when all people from the east to the west gather together for the judgment of God (*Apoc. Pet.* 4), and fire overtaking those “who have fallen away from faith in God and have committed sin” (*Apoc. Pet.* 5). In other words, Jesus shows Peter what happens to “those who endure” (Mark 13:9–13) and those who are deceived during the times of distress (Mark 13:14–23) rather than recounting, in conventional prophetic manner, the nature of the times of tribulation for them.

Sixth, when Jesus recounts his “coming upon an eternal cloud of brightness” with the angels (cf. Mark 13:24–27), he amplifies the scene by describing:

- (1) the angel Uriel’s burning of the souls of sinners (*Apoc. Pet.* 6),
- (2) the pit of fire where sexually errant people are placed (*Apoc. Pet.* 7),
- (3) another pit with excrement in addition to fire for parents who aborted their unborn or delivered them to death after they were born (*Apoc. Pet.* 8),
- (4) the angel Ezrael’s leading of people to various places either to be tormented or to see people in torment (*Apoc. Pet.* 9–12).

An overall enthymeme governs this activity, which is articulated by Jesus in *Apoc. Pet.* 6:

Rule: Rewards shall be given to every man according to his deeds.

Case: As for the elect who have done good,

⁸⁶ E.g., 2 Chr 15:6; Isa 13:13; 14:30; 19:2; Jer 22:23.

Result: they shall come to me and not see death by the devouring fire.

Contrary Case: But the unrighteous, the sinners, and the hypocrites

Result: shall stand in the depths of darkness that shall not pass away, and their chastisement is the fire, and angels bring forward their sins and prepare for them a place wherein they shall be punished for ever, every one according to his transgression.

Mark 13:27 presents the conventional biblical and prophetic *topos* of gathering the elect as the one role enacted by the Son of Man. In contrast, *Apoc. Pet.* 6–12 develops the role of the Son of Man as “judge” in a manner characteristic of “apocalyptic” discourse. *Apocalypse of Peter* 13 returns to the *topos* of the elect (cf. Mark 13:27), amplifying it with a scene in which the angels “clothe them with the raiment of life” in the sight of all the unrighteous. Then the unrighteous develop the meaning of the action with enthymematic argumentation (*Apoc. Pet.* 13). First they articulate an enthymematic plea:

Petitionary Result: Have mercy upon us.

Case: We know the judgment of God, which he declared to us beforetime and we did not believe.

[Unexpressed Rule: Coming to the knowledge of God’s judgment (repentance) brings mercy.]

When the angel Tatirokos tells them that the time for repentance has passed, the unrighteous articulate an enthymeme that reflects the inner ideology of the narration:

Rule: Righteous is the judgment of God.

Case: We have heard and perceived that his judgment is good.

Result: We are recompensed according to our deeds.

This enthymeme shows the inner “apocalyptic” reasoning that guides the amplification of the biblical and prophetic *topos* of gathering the elect into “apocalyptic” discourse about the unrighteous versus the elect in the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Matthew 24–25 also amplifies Mark 13 in an apocalyptic manner, but the *Apocalypse of Peter* shows even more clearly how wisdom and prophetic *topoi* were nurtured into “apocalyptic” discourse with amplificatory-descriptive and argumentative-enthymematic elaboration of certain *topoi*.

The conclusion to Jesus’ revelation to Peter in *Apoc. Pet.* 14 contains a charge to Peter to “Spread my gospel throughout all the world in peace” (cf. Mark 13:10). In *Apocalypse of Peter* “the gospel” has attained a fully apocalyptic form: “Jesus’ words shall be the source of hope and of life, and suddenly shall the world be ravished” (*Apoc. Pet.* 14). Mark, in contrast, ends with a parable about “living in a household” in a posture of

“watching,” because only the Father knows the day or the hour. In a context of turmoil and anticipation of salvation when the Son of Man comes, wisdom, miracle, suffering-death, and prophetic *topoi* deeply inform and guide Markan discourse. Apocalyptic *topoi* appear in manifold places throughout Mark. Nevertheless, the discourse exhibits a continual return to wisdom, miracle, prophetic, and suffering-death *topoi* that is uncharacteristic of fully apocalyptic discourse.

6. *Apocalyptic Topoi in the Trial before the Sanhedrin: Mark 14–16*

In the context of the suffering-death discourse that dominates Mark 14–16, apocalyptic *topoi* appear in argumentative narration when Jesus stands before the high priest and the Sanhedrin after he has been arrested. In response to the high priest’s question if he is “the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed,” Jesus answers:

Case: (14:62) “I am [the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed];

Result: and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.

[Unexpressed Rules:

- (1) The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool” (Psalm 110:1);
- (2) The dominion of the one like a son of man is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed (Dan 7:14b).]

Daniel 7:14 first appears in Mark as a resource for a basic Rule in argumentative suffering-death discourse underlying Mark 8:38 (see above). Then Dan 7:14 reappears as a basic Rule in argumentative prophetic discourse about events when the end finally arrives (Mark 13:24–27). The appearance of Dan 7:14 yet again in Jesus’ trial before the high priest and the Sanhedrin reveals its presence not only as cultural intertexture but also as oral-scribal intertexture for Markan discourse. Thus, it is clear that Dan 7 is a substantive oral-scribal resource for the Markan embedding of apocalyptic *topoi* into prophetic, miracle, wisdom, and suffering-death discourse.

7. *Conclusion*

There are many *topoi* in Markan prophetic, miracle, wisdom, and suffering-death discourse that can potentially evoke, but need not definitively evoke, apocalyptic reasoning and argumentation. *Topoi* such as the splitting open of the heavens (1:10), the descent of the spirit (1:10), a voice coming out of heaven (1:11), and tribulations (4:17; 13:7–8, 19) are present in biblical and prophetic discourse in a manner

that does not call forth fully apocalyptic reasoning and argumentation. Also, unclean spirits and demons are present in Mediterranean miracle discourse with no apocalyptic overtones. In spite of this, the opening exorcism (1:21–28); the argumentation about exorcisms, Satan, and unclean spirits (3:20–30); and the repetitive reference to unclean spirits and demons in Markan miracle summaries naturally evoke the apocalyptic reasoning in *1 En.* 15:6–12. Much Markan wisdom discourse that features Jesus disputing with scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees reveals little or no apocalyptic *topoi*. However, Jesus' presentation of parables in Mark 4 reveals an emphasis on "mystery" (4:11) characteristic of the book of Daniel, a view of everything hidden being revealed (4:22) that evokes apocalyptic revelation, and reasoning about receiving "more" than one's measure (4:24–25) that appears to be apocalyptic amplification of wisdom reasoning. In addition, the presence of Satan on earth (1:13; 4:15), the fulfillment of time (1:15), the drawing near of the kingdom of God (1:15), the binding of Satan (3:26–27), the beginning of "the end" (13:7–8), and the coming of the Son of Man (8:38; 13:26; 14:62) exhibit cultural and oral-scribal intertexture explicitly with apocalyptic discourse.

On the one hand, it could seem that there should be no debate that the Gospel of Mark is apocalyptic discourse. Our description throughout, however, has tried to indicate why interpreters have substantively different views of its function in Markan narration. Norman Perrin championed the view that the Gospel of Mark is apocalyptic discourse. Building on the work of interpreters such as Albert Schweitzer, Johannes Weiss, Ernst Lohmeyer, and Willi Marxsen, Perrin asserted in 1974:

Fundamentally, Mark is an apocalypse in its purpose. For all that he writes realistic narrative, the intent of the evangelist is precisely that of the apocalyptic seers in the discourses in Mark 13 and its parallels or that of John of Patmos in the book of Revelation. . . . Like an apocalyptic seer, he views himself and his readers as caught up in a divine human drama.⁸⁷

Viewing the Gospel of Mark as an apocalypse, Perrin understood the apocalyptic drama of its "realistic narrative" to unfold in three acts:

- (a) John the Baptist "preaches" and is "delivered up" [1:7, 14].
- (b) Jesus "preaches" and is "delivered up" [1:14; 9:31; 10:33].
- (c) The Christians "preach" and are to be "delivered up" [13:9–13].⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction—Proclamation and Parenthesis, Myth and History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 162.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 144.

“When the third act is complete,” Perrin asserted, “the drama will reach its climax in the coming of Jesus as Son of man (13:26).”⁸⁹ In enthymematic terms, this is a Case-Result argument:

Case: John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Christians preach and are delivered up.

Result: Jesus will come as the Son of Man.

Like many enthymematic arguments, it is not entirely clear what Perrin presupposed to be the unstated Rule. If the argumentation is apocalyptic, the Rule would concern attributes and action of God that are bringing imminent judgment upon both the earth and the heavens. Perhaps Perrin’s proposal for the conceptual location of Mark presupposed a Rule something like: Within God’s plan for the end of time, it will be necessary for God’s righteous ones to preach God’s good news and be delivered up before the Son of Man will come to gather the elect from the four corners of the earth. While few would argue, I think, that this enthymematic argumentation is not present in Mark, it is also clear that this emphasis can give us only a partial view of Markan discourse.

In contrast to Norman Perrin and others who follow his lead, Richard Horsley has argued that wisdom discourse in the Gospel of Mark guides “the author’s main message,” which is “to refuse to be distracted by ostensibly earth-shaking events from the concerns of the movement. But the concerns of the movement were renewal of Israel centered in Galilee, with a rejection of temple and high priests as exploitative and unfaithful stewards.”⁹⁰ Horsley’s assertion implies that the dominant enthymematic mode of Mark features *topoi* that present the attributes and actions of God as hidden in God’s creation. In other words, implicit in Horsley’s assertion is an argument that Markan discourse exhorts people to turn away from “apocalyptic signs” toward the establishment of justice on the basis of knowledge about walking the “path of life” and rejecting the lure of power and wealth. One could, perhaps, present an entire commentary on Mark in this mode by correlating Burton Mack’s interpretation of Mark 4 as a “rhetorical elaboration”⁹¹ with Mary Ann Tolbert’s presentation of the “maps” for the Markan plot in Mark 4 and Mark 12:1–12⁹² to argue for

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Richard Horsley, “Wisdom and Apocalypticism in Mark,” in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie* (ed. L. G. Perdue, B. B. Scott, and W. J. Wiseman; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 242.

⁹¹ Mack and Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels*, 143–60.

⁹² Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989).

enthymematic wisdom at the center of the Gospel of Mark. But this also would give us a partial view of Markan discourse.

In contrast to these two interpretations, Robert H. Gundry has written a commentary based on the following presupposition: "Marks' meaning lies on the surface. He writes a straightforward apology of the Cross, for the shameful way in which the object of Christian faith and subject of Christian proclamation died, and hence for Jesus as the Crucified One."⁹³ From a sociorhetorical perspective, this is an assertion that suffering-death enthymematic argumentation dominates Markan narration. It is informative when Gundry writes twenty-one "No-sentences" introduced by "The Gospel of Mark contains no ciphers, no hidden meanings, no sleight of hand" to lead up to the statement quoted above. Following the lead sentence are sentences such as:

No messianic secret designed to mask a theologically embarrassing absence of messianism from the ministry of the historical Jesus. . . . No covert attack on divine man Christology. . . . No discipular enlightenment in the miracles. . . . No apocalyptic code announcing the end. No de-apocalyptic code cooling down an expectation of the end. No open end celebrating faith over verifiability. No overarching concentric structure providing a key to meaning at midpoint. No riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.⁹⁴

This sequence of assertions exhibits Gundry's attempt to reduce Markan narration to "one basic enthymeme" rather than to display the multiple kinds of enthymematic argumentation that interweave with one another in this early Christian discourse. When a sociorhetorical interpreter asks what mode of suffering-death discourse the Gospel of Mark presents, it becomes clear that Gundry is thinking beyond a wisdom or prophetic mode to an atonement mode like one finds in 1 Pet 2:22–24:

Case: (22) He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips.
(23): When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he trusted to him who judges justly.
Rule: (24) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.
Result: By his wounds you have been healed.

This mode of reasoning would appear to be implied by the following interpretation by Gundry of Mark 10:41–45:

⁹³ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 1.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

In saying that his serving goes to the extent of giving his life as a ransom in substitution for many, Jesus interprets his approaching death as supremely self-sacrificial for the saving of many others' lives. Thus the Marcan apologetics of miraculous ability, of didactic authority, and of predictive power metamorphose into an apologetic of beneficial service. The Cross will not bring shame to its victim, but salvation to its followers.⁹⁵

It is clear to most that suffering-death discourse is a very important feature in Markan discourse. But is it appropriate to argue for this discourse alone as dominant for understanding descriptive, explanatory, and argumentative discourse in the Gospel of Mark? The thesis of this essay is that the answer is not to be found in only one major kind of discourse in the Gospel of Mark. As an interpreter looks at the kinds of Christian discourse that had developed by the end of the first century C.E., it is obvious that both apocalyptic and precreation discourse had moved into a potentially "totalizing" position. On the one hand, the Revelation to John presented an overall view that could have absorbed all narratives and discourses into apocalyptic reasoning and argumentation. On the other hand, the Gospel of John presented a narrative about Jesus that could have absorbed all narratives and discourses into precreation reasoning and argumentation. By the fourth century, precreation discourse had won out over apocalyptic discourse in the centers of power in the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, apocalyptic discourse remained alive and well in many regions, and it has emerged in a vibrant fashion during virtually every century since.

The thesis of this essay is that the potential for apocalyptic or precreation discourse to be considered "the dominant" discourse in Christianity is dependent on the lack of attention to the manner in which most New Testament literature continually interweaves wisdom, miracle, prophetic, and suffering-death discourse into its narration. The Gospel of Mark is a foremost instance. Since precreation discourse is absent from it, one might imagine that apocalyptic discourse would totally dominate its presentation of Jesus. The thesis of this essay is that, with prophetic discourse at its base, Markan discourse interweaves apocalyptic, miracle, wisdom, and suffering-death discourse. Interpreters who focus on one of these discourses in a manner that excludes the others give a skewed view of the internal nature of Christian discourse during the first century, and after it to the present.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 581.