

**LOVED TO DEATH: AN ANABAPTIST CRITIQUE OF CHRISTENDOM CHRISTOLOGY THROUGH  
THE NARRATIVE THEMES OF KENOSIS AND DEATH IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis expands the Anabaptist critique of Christendom Christology by examining the narrative motifs of kenosis and death in the Gospel of Mark.

Within their respective literary documents, modern Anabaptism, early Anabaptism, and Christendom Christology all present opposing Christological views related to God's ability to change, the constitution of humanity, and the definition of death. One view exemplified in the Tome of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon promotes the belief that God is necessarily immutable, humans are body/soul composites, and death is the separation of body and soul (a dualist view). An alternative view within Christendom and Anabaptist literature holds that God is kenotic, humans do not have souls, and death is the decomposition of a corpse (a physicalist view).

Historically, Anabaptism has critiqued Christendom by implementing a Christocentric narrative approach to developing theology. Working from within the Anabaptist tradition, this thesis applies a narrative critical examination of the Gospel of Mark to determine whether a dualist or physicalist view is most faithful to the story the author of Mark presents to his audience. To aid in this analysis, I adopt the strategic approach of narrative critic Peter Bolt, who suggests that knowledge of the first-century audience's cultural mind provides helpful insight into the practice of narrative criticism. Using Bolt's approach, I suggest that certain rhetorical, socio-religious, and linguistic knowledge of the first-century audience's cultural minds proves useful in constructing a robust narrative analysis of Mark's anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology.

I begin my narrative criticism by examining the narrative motif of death in Mark's Gospel. From this analysis, I conclude that the author of Mark intends for his audience to

embrace a physicalist understanding of death. Next, I investigate the theme of kenosis within Mark's Gospel. From this analysis, I conclude that the author of Mark seeks to persuade his audience that Jesus was a kenotic messiah. Finally, I examine pericopes in Mark's Gospel that combine the themes of kenosis and death. From these texts, I conclude that the author of Mark intended to convince his audience that Jesus was a kenotic mortal messiah.

In response to my conclusion that Mark desired his audience to view Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah, I argue that the Anabaptist stream of Christology that has embraced the dualist view found in Christendom Christology should be rejected. In its place, I attempt to construction an Anabaptist Christology that embraces Mark's portrayal of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah. I contend that this definition of Jesus has significant implications for how Anabaptists think about God, Jesus' death, and human death.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the disciples of Jesus who have chosen the path of kenosis and peace. For some, this path has led to following Jesus' example of laying down one's *psyche* to death. This action requires an immense amount of faith and trust.

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Note: All biblical references are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise stated.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.

### 1.1. THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT.

This thesis will seek to expand the existing Anabaptist critique of Christendom Christology by examining the narrative motifs of kenosis and death in the Gospel of Mark to argue that God in the person of Jesus Christ is capable of change, suffering, and death.<sup>1</sup> To provide context for this endeavor, this introduction will briefly define the components of this task. First, this thesis seeks to build upon the existing Anabaptist critique of Christian tradition. Second, this critique will address the theology of Christendom, the time in which Anabaptism has claimed that Christianity lost its unique emphasis on the Gospel narratives.

Third, in alignment with the Anabaptist tradition, this thesis will prioritize the narrative of Jesus' life, teaching, and death within the Gospels. More specifically, this thesis will focus on the narrative presentation of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah. Fourth, the scope of this narrative analysis will be limited to the Gospel of Mark, which is presumed to be the earliest recorded history of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Finally, since I am working within the Anabaptist faith tradition, this thesis adopts the Anabaptist confession of faith that Jesus was

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<sup>1</sup> In response to the original thesis submission and viva, this thesis has been significantly revised and rewritten. The most significant revision was a change in methodology. While the original thesis described and utilized an Anabaptist Christocentric hermeneutic as its method, the revised edition employs a narrative critical method. This responds to the concerns raised about an over-reliance on Boyd. This methodological change subsequently resulted in a new introductory chapter, the complete rewriting of the literature review, a different methodology chapter, and major alterations to the remaining chapters (this has also addressed the concern about uncritical reliance upon Lewis). These changes positioned the thesis in the domain of constructive (Anabaptist) theology rather than New Testament Biblical Studies. To satisfy the request for corrections and revisions, I have (1) articulated a clear thesis statement at the beginning of the thesis that sets out the argument for the entire thesis, (2) clarified the research questions, (3) included the introduction in the chapter numbering system, (4) significantly decreased the engagement with extrabiblical materials (what remains is the use of 2 and 4 Maccabees to illustrate the narrative difference and antithetical anthropologies) (5) engaged deeper with Anabaptist studies (see specifically chapter three), (6) revised the consistency of footnoting by following the Chicago Manual of Style 17<sup>th</sup> edition (full note).

God incarnate and is, therefore, the definitive and normative revelation of God. With these parameters in place, I will seek to discover how Mark's presentation of Jesus might conflict with the Christendom doctrine that Jesus as God did not change, suffer, or die.

### **1.1.1. An Anabaptist critique.**

As a faith movement, Anabaptism originated in the 16th century alongside the Protestant Reformation. Anabaptism has been called the Radical Reformation since it branched off from both the Catholic tradition and the Protestant Reformers. As an emerging faith community, Anabaptism originated from the critique of existing Christian traditions through a Christocentric approach to biblical interpretation. This approach elevated the Gospels as the primary source for shaping Christian theology and the establishment of a community ethic. The Christ-centered hermeneutic used by Anabaptists prompted them to critique numerous Christian practices of their religious counterparts such as infant baptism, the taking of oaths, and the use of violence. Early Anabaptists justified their various critiques of Christian tradition by appealing to Jesus' teaching in the Gospels. As a result, Anabaptists placed a heavy emphasis on Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

This thesis aims to join in the exercise of critiquing Christian tradition through a Christocentric narrative approach to scripture. In particular, I will be concerned with aspects of Christendom Christology that early Anabaptists appear to have adopted without first critically filtering these beliefs through the Gospel narratives. To justify the need for such a critique, chapter three will outline the opposing Christological views that exist within the early Anabaptist writings and confessions. These documents show a spectrum of belief.

### 1.1.2. Christendom Christology.

As a general demarcation, Anabaptism has identified the beginning of Christendom by The Edict of Milan, which was adopted in 313 A.D. This edict established religious freedom for Christians and removed the threat of persecution within the Roman Empire. In addition, Anabaptism has associated the origins of the era of Christendom with the reign of Emperor Constantine (324-337 A.D.). The overarching Anabaptist critique of Christendom has been that “the alliance between church and state from the second half of the fourth century onwards has resulted in ways of reading the Bible fundamentally alien to that of the earliest church.”<sup>2</sup> As a countermeasure, Anabaptists sought to correct this issue by filtering their beliefs and practices through the Gospel narratives. This practice placed an emphasis on story over tradition. In practice, this meant that Anabaptists confessed that “Jesus himself is the normative criterion for theology.”<sup>3</sup>

For Anabaptists, this time period within Christian history is marked by what theologian Stuart Murray has called the Christendom shift. This shift is believed to be initiated by the alliance between church and state. The result of this shift was that Christianity transitioned from being a persecuted minority to a persecuting majority backed by the power of the state church. Murray comments that Anabaptists adamantly rejected five major characteristics of this Christendom system. First, he notes that Anabaptists rejected “infant baptism as the symbol of obligatory incorporation into Christian society.”<sup>4</sup> Anabaptism in all its forms has

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<sup>2</sup> Lloyd Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom* (Harrisonburg, Va: Herald Press, 2012), 22.

<sup>3</sup> Clyde Norman Kraus, *Jesus Christ Our Lord: Christology from a Disciple’s Perspective*, Rev. Ed (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publ, 1990), 16.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Murray, *Post Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2013), 83.

always stood against infant baptism. Second, Anabaptists additionally rejected “the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of city, state or Empire.”<sup>5</sup> Early Anabaptists rejected this marriage seeking to divorce the church from the state and return to a pre-Christendom state.

Third, Murray notes that Anabaptists rejected the “requirement of oaths of allegiance” by the state church.<sup>6</sup> This position against taking oaths naturally unnerved the state church, especially, which desired allegiance during times of foreign threat. Fourth, Murray summarizes that Anabaptists rejected “the use of political and military force to impose Christianity” on non-believers.<sup>7</sup> Early Anabaptists rejected the use of violence, grounding their ethics in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Finally, Murray summarizes that Christendom appeared to rely “on the Old Testament, rather than the New” for scriptural justification for practices of oath taking, physical nonviolence and adult baptism.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Anabaptists held to a canon within a canon emphasizing the New Testament over the Old. This practice elevated Christ’s teaching as the lens through which all scripture was to be read. These five practices are at the heart of the early Anabaptist critique of Christendom.

In addition to the previously mentioned characteristics of the Christendom shift, two additional characteristics of Christendom also deserve mentioning as they relate specifically to the development of Christendom Christology. First, the Christendom shift can be described as a time when truth was being defined by those in power. Murray states that within Christendom, orthodoxy was defined and “determined by powerful church leaders with state support.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Murray, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Murray, 84.

<sup>7</sup> Murray, 84.

<sup>8</sup> Murray, 84.

<sup>9</sup> Murray, 83.

Chapter two will illustrate the validity of Murray's statement showing that orthodox Christology during Christendom was defined by Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon. As a result, Murray is justified to say that Christendom is marked by the fact that "orthodoxy is deeply implicated in the power politics of imperial decree."<sup>10</sup> This raises serious questions about how imperial power influenced the shaping of Christendom's orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup>

Second, dissenting voices of these theological power structures found themselves threatened both physically and socially. This heightened the consequences for those who chose to publicly disagree with the established orthodox beliefs of the state-church. The closing remarks of the Council of Chalcedon reflect this truth. The Council of Chalcedon's final remarks state that those who did not agree with the statements made by the council would be expelled from the college of priests and anathematized. Driving the point home further, the ecumenical synod stated, "It is not permissible for anyone to propose, write, compose, think, teach anything else."<sup>12</sup> This left zero room for further theological conversation. As a result of these constructed theological boundaries, Christendom became defined by "legal sanctions to restrain heresy, immorality and schism."<sup>13</sup>

In order to define Christendom Christology, chapter two will outline the Christology established under the era of Christendom. In response, chapter three will then present evidence that indicates that some early Anabaptists uncritically adopted this Christology.

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<sup>10</sup> Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom*, 49.

<sup>11</sup> Allen James Reimer, *Mennonites and Classical Theology: Dogmatic Foundations for Christian Ethics*, Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies 1 (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 2001), 411. On the topic of theological development by those in power, Reimer points out that the Christology of Christendom was formed in an attempt to "mediate the concerns both of the East and West."

<sup>12</sup> Richard A. Norris, ed., *The Christological Controversy, Sources of Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 121.

<sup>13</sup> Murray, *Post Christendom*, 83.

Chapters six through eight will seek to apply a Christocentric approach to scripture to compare Christendom Christology with the Markan narrative. Finally, chapter nine will conclude that this Christology must be rejected because it is antithetical to Mark's presentation of Jesus. This conclusion stands in harmony with existing Anabaptist theologians that have stated that "the orthodox statements of the early ecumenical councils like Nicea and Chalcedon use the terminology of Platonic Philosophy" rather than the language of the Gospels.<sup>14</sup> I suggest the appropriate Anabaptist solution to this problem is to return to the Gospel narratives allowing them to act as a theological filter for constructing Anabaptist Christology.

### **1.1.3. Narrative and the formation of Anabaptist Theology.**

Early Anabaptist faith and practices first emerged from the application of a Christocentric hermeneutic. This hermeneutical method was grounded in four distinct characteristics: Christocentricism, narrative-driven theology, a layered understanding of biblical authority, and obedience to the politics of Jesus.<sup>15</sup> Of these four characteristics, the central unifying factor of Anabaptist hermeneutics was its Christocentricism.<sup>16</sup> Examples of this can be found in the writings of early Anabaptist theologians who consistently appealed to the explicit words of

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<sup>14</sup> Kraus, 40.

<sup>15</sup> Stuart Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 3 (North Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000), 70–96. Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom*, 69–72. Willard M Swartley, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives* (Elkhart, Ind: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 6–7, 106–14.

<sup>16</sup> Christocentricism remains a key factor in modern Anabaptism. For example, the General Board of the Mennonite Church of Canada and the USA makes a distinction between the Word of God written and the Word of God in the flesh. Here they elevate the Word of God in the flesh, Jesus, over the word of God in print. In doing so, they aim to confess that all scripture is fulfilled in Jesus and points to Jesus. The denomination's website states that they seek to interpret "Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ, in the sense that his life, teaching, death, and resurrection are essential to understanding the Bible as a whole." General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, eds., *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1995).

Jesus in defense of their beliefs. In addition, Christocentric confessions of faith can be found in the writings of the Anabaptist founding fathers: Hans Pfistermeyer, Michael Sattler, Dirk Phillips, and Menno Simmons.

Michael Sattler was one of the first pioneers of early Anabaptist Christ-centered theology. During his trial, Sattler stated, “I appeal to the words of Christ,” in defense of his theological positions.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, second-generation Anabaptist Menno Simmons was known for quoting 1 Corinthians 3:11, “No other foundation can be laid, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ,” before everything he wrote.<sup>18</sup> Murray concludes that while the Protestant Reformers such as Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli, were “Christological,” the Anabaptist reformers were uniquely “Christocentric.”<sup>19</sup> As a result, Anabaptists used the Jesus of the Gospels as their chief hermeneutical key to read backward into the Old Testament and forward into the pastoral letters of the New Testament.

Since early Anabaptists like Dirk Phillips believed Jesus to be the “measuring rod” of God’s word, Anabaptist Christocentricism naturally led to the practical emphasis of the Gospel narratives, especially Jesus’ ethical teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>20</sup> As a result, Anabaptist theologian Greg Boyd explains that the early Anabaptists adopted a more “narrative-focused reading of Scripture than did the magisterial Reformers.”<sup>21</sup> This narrative

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<sup>17</sup> Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 71.

<sup>18</sup> Menno and J. C. Wenger, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons: C. 1496 - 1561* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1992), 312.

<sup>19</sup> Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 84–87. Boyd has commented that this “has led some critics of Anabaptism to label them ‘hyper-Christological.’” See specifically footnote 94 in Gregory A Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament’s Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 124. Additionally, Boyd states that the practical application of this Christocentric hermeneutic is what set Anabaptists at odds with “their Protestant and Catholic contemporaries.” 129.

<sup>20</sup> Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 72.

<sup>21</sup> Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, 125.



focus led to the belief there should be layers of biblical authority. As a result, Anabaptists established a hierarchal structure to scriptural interpretation, elevating the New Testament witness over the Old, and prioritized the Gospels above the letters to the churches.<sup>22</sup>

Demonstrating this hierarchy, founding Anabaptist theologian Hans Pfistermeyer wrote, “I accept the Old Testament wherever it points to Christ. However, Christ came with a more exalted and perfect teaching.”<sup>23</sup> Anabaptist theologian Walter Klaassen explains that since Anabaptists understood scripture to be a narrative moving toward a climax in Jesus, they did not “regard the Bible as being equally authoritative.”<sup>24</sup> Instead, Jesus was understood to be the epicenter to which all other scripture bore witness. As a result, Jesus’ life and teaching were exalted as the highest biblical authority.<sup>25</sup> Standing in this tradition, I have chosen Christocentric literature (Mark’s Gospel) and a narrative methodology (narrative criticism) to conduct my analysis.

For Anabaptists, all three of these previous distinctives, Christocentricism, narrative-driven theology, and the prioritization of Jesus’ teaching, resulted in a hermeneutic of obedience.<sup>26</sup> The adherence to Jesus’ practical teaching, led many Anabaptists to reject infant baptism, the taking of oaths, embracing state citizenship, and the use of violence. I will propose in chapter nine that a change in Christology, grounded in Mark’s Gospel, should similarly

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<sup>22</sup> Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 97–124. Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom*, 78–81. Swartley, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. John Howard Yoder, “The Hermeneutics of the Anabaptists,” *MQR* 41, no. 41 (1967): 306–7. C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, Ontario: Pandora Press, 2002), 162–64.

<sup>23</sup> Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 70.

<sup>24</sup> Swartley, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 110–11.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology: Biblical, Historical, Constructive* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 100–101.

<sup>26</sup> Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 186–205. Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom*, 78–81. Swartley, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 65.

influence the way Anabaptists think (orthodoxy) and live (orthopraxy) as it relates to how Jesus' disciples understand their own deaths. In summary, Anabaptism was birthed by followers of Christ who chose to challenge existing church traditions in light of the person and work of Jesus. This thesis will continue this critique by applying narrative criticism to the Gospel of Mark.

#### **1.1.4. The Importance of Mark's Gospel for Anabaptist Theology.**

Why Mark's Gospel?<sup>27</sup> I have chosen the Gospel of Mark above all because the text devotes so much attention to cruciform themes of suffering and the passion. As I have previously mentioned, Anabaptists unapologetically work with a scriptural canon within a canon, holding the Gospels as the center of God's written revelation.<sup>28</sup> The authors of the Gospels display an intent to provoke belief in the person of Jesus, whom Anabaptists confess to be the fullest revelation of God incarnate.<sup>29</sup> If the Gospels are elevated in priority by Anabaptism, the question then becomes: Why chose Mark over Matthew, Luke, or John?

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<sup>27</sup> For a primer on the Synoptic Problem, see Robert H Stein, *The Synoptic Problem*, 1994. Stein provides the following rationale for adopting Markan priority. (1) Agreement in wording, (2) agreement in order (3) agreement in parenthetical material, (4) unusual agreements, (5) Luke's indication that a literary relationship existed between his gospel and others (1:1-4), (6) Mark's shortness indicates that Matthew and Luke expanded on it, (7) Mark's poor writing style appears to be corrected by Matthew and Luke, (8) Mark's harder readings, (9) Mark's more primitive theology, (10) Mark's apparent lack of information on the destruction of the temple, (11) redaction criticism makes sense of Matthew and Luke.

<sup>28</sup> For an explanation on how Anabaptists have approached scripture, see; Palmer Becker, *Anabaptist Essentials: Ten Signs of a Unique Christian Faith* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Herald Press, 2017). Becker describes the 'flat Bible' approach as one that attributes all scripture as equally authoritative and attempts to reconcile all scripture with itself. Becker describes the dispensational approach as trying to reconcile the differences within scripture by declaring that God operates differently over the course of time. Becker understands the spiritualized Christ-centered approach as limiting the gospel to Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and attempting to create meaning in the remainder of scripture through that lens. Finally, Becker describes the Anabaptist approach to scripture as ethically Christ-centered. By this, he explains that Jesus is the fullest revelation of God, and Christians are called to follow Christ as their example. Becker says that "Anabaptists have a high regard for the Scripture and an even higher regard for Jesus." 50.

<sup>29</sup> Paul R. Eddy and Gregory A Boyd, *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 311. Boyd states, "The Gospels were designed to proclaim the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for the purpose of convincing people he was the Son of God."

Of these options, I have chosen the Gospel of Mark for multiple reasons. To begin, I agree with the scholarly consensus that Mark's Gospel was written first. This is based on the acceptance of the Two-Source Theory.<sup>30</sup> This theory proposes that Matthew and Luke used the Gospel of Mark as their primary source text, as well as a second unknown source commonly referred to as Q. This hypothesis seeks to provide a solution to what has been called the Synoptic Problem. This is the question of how to explain the similarities and differences between the three Synoptic Gospels.

In general, Anabaptism has held a healthy skepticism of human tradition as it develops over time. If Mark was written first, this Gospel should be given priority because it contains information closer in time to the historical Jesus. Given the theory of Markan priority and the idea that Matthew and Luke both used Mark as a source text, it is possible that Jesus' original teaching became obscured by any deviations made from the Markan text.<sup>31</sup> Concerning the

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<sup>30</sup> For example Collins claims this is the majority opinion of New Testament scholars. Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probing of Mark in Context* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 4. Anabaptist scholar Timothy Geddert states, "I hold (along with almost all modern scholars) that Matthew and Luke both wrote their Gospels after the Gospel of Mark and used Mark as a source." Geddert, Timothy J, *Mark*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 20. American Biblical scholar Mark Strauss, in his commentary on Mark's Gospel, states that "assumes Markan priority," along with "the majority of NT scholars." Strauss, Mark L. *Mark: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 25. As support, Strauss refers his readers to Tuckett, C. M., *New Studies in the Synoptic Problem: Oxford Conference, April 2008: Essays in Honour of Christopher M. Tuckett* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2011). Catholic priest and scholar Francis Moloney concludes that while the Synoptic Question is still debated, "the priority of Mark is the best explanation for a number of the features of Mark, Matthew, and Luke." Moloney, Francis J, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic. 2012), 2. German evangelical theologian Eckhard Schnabel states that the view that Mark was written first is "widely accepted." Schnabel, Eckhard J, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Editor Schnabel (Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 126. For an argument that Peter was the oral source for Mark and that the work should be dated around A.D. 65 see Hans F. Bayer, *A Theology of Mark: The Dynamic between Christology and Authentic Discipleship*, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Pub, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> The possibility that Jesus' original teaching in Mark could have been obscured by either Matthew or Luke will depend on at least two factors. First, this is only possible if one holds to the theory that both Matthew and Luke used Mark as their primary source. As Anabaptist Markan scholar Geddert has noted, "If this is correct [Markan Priority], then careful observation of differences between Mark and the other Gospels is of some importance in interpreting Matthew and Luke. Geddert, Timothy J, *Mark*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 20. Second, the possibility that Jesus' original teaching in Mark could have been obscured by either Matthew or Luke will depend on one's view of Scripture's ability to contradict itself. This issue becomes complex. Within the various branches of

topic of chronology, although Pauline texts have been dated earlier than Mark, these letters only give us fragments of narrative. Mark's Gospel, on the other hand, offers a stable narrative frame through which to understand Jesus. This frame is largely adopted by Matthew and Luke.

If Mark was the first Gospel, "the author of Mark was a pioneer among early Christian writers."<sup>32</sup> In this view, the author of Mark was "the first to gather various oral forms. And perhaps short written collections and discourses, of the tradition about Jesus into an extended narrative."<sup>33</sup> This element of Mark's Gospel makes it unique among the four Gospel accounts of

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the Anabaptist family tree, there are alternative views concerning Scripture's ability to error. What unites Anabaptists is the consensus that Jesus is the chief hermeneutical key to interpreting Scripture. This factor has been given the name Christocentrism. This means that Anabaptists hold to a canon within a canon, elevating the Gospels as the most authoritative source. Stuart Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 3 (North Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000), 74. Historically, one of the more prominent places this canon within a canon stance has affected Anabaptist's thought is in relation to the issue of non-violence. Perhaps the largest struggle for many Anabaptists has been how to reconcile the violent portraits of God in the Old Testament with the non-violent ministry and teachings of Jesus. As an Anabaptist theologian, Boyd has sought to wrestle with this issue in his *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*. The general approach taken by Anabaptism has been to reconcile issues within the Old Testament considering the teachings of Jesus. For example, the 1617 *Thirty-Three Articles* states "The Old Testament must be interpreted and reconciled according to the New Testament." Karl Koop and Cornelius J. Dyck, eds., *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition: 1527 - 1660, Classics of the Radical Reformation* (Kitchener, Ont: Pandora Press, 2006), 190. In this way, the problem of harmonizing God's decrees to slaughter one's enemies in the Old Testament with the non-violent teachings of Jesus to love one's enemies in the New Testament can be solved by appealing to the concept of progressive revelation. When it comes to the issue of the Scripture's ability to contradict itself some Anabaptists hold to the infallibility and inherency of Scripture. As an example, Kraus reports the statement of a Mennonite General Conference that adopted the following statement, "We accept the Bible as the one inspired, infallible, inerrant message of God." See C. Norman Kraus, "American Mennonites and the Bible," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives* (Elkhart, Ind: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 144. Others, like Denck (See Ben C. Ollenburger, "The Hermeneutics of Obedience," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives* (Elkhart, Ind: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 54.) and Boyd have emphasized the human element within the writing of Scripture. As Boyd explains, this leads to the confession that the Bible contains "a multitude of errors, contradictions, and historical inaccuracies, as well as morally offensive material." Greg, Boyd *Inspired Imperfection* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020, xiv. Yoder adds that not only was human fallibility a factor in the generation of the Bible, but it also played a role in the distortion of the message over time. John Howard Yoder, *To Hear the Word* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 98. At the heart of this inquiry is the question: What does it mean for the Bible to be inspired (1 Tim 3:16)? Does divine inspiration require perfection? If so, how are Anabaptists to deal with proposed errors the Scriptures make about history and science? If one takes the position of Markan priority, this in effect creates a canon (Mark) within a canon (The Gospels) within a canon (Scripture). If not, the Gospels will be held on equal footing. In either case, both positions must wrestle with the differences between the Synoptics. Finally, one's position on inspiration and the Scripture's ability to error will also affect how the outcome.

<sup>32</sup> Collins, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Collins, 4.

Jesus' life, teaching, death, and resurrection. If Mark's Gospel is the source upon which Matthew and Luke drew, Mark's Gospel was the original theological well by which Jesus' teaching is made available to his followers in written form. Since I am persuaded by this evidence, I have selected Mark's Gospel with the Christology of Christendom.<sup>34</sup>

This is not, however, the only reason I have chosen to focus on Mark. Even if the theory of Markan priority was found to be incorrect, I still believe there are valid reasons to choose Mark over Matthew, Luke, and John's Gospels.<sup>35</sup> First, I believe that choosing one of the Synoptic Gospels is a stronger choice because these three Gospels contain multiple attestations of Jesus' life, ministry, teaching, death, and resurrection. Together, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke bear collective witness to the theological teaching of Jesus deemed important by the early Christian writers to be passed on to the Christian community.<sup>36</sup> This also creates a

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<sup>34</sup> Typically, anthropological arguments marshal a collective of biblical texts to support one perspective over another. In the New Testament, the debate tends to center around a handful of texts. For two physicalist arguments, see Joel Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008). and Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection: A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Design* (Berrien Springs, Mich: Biblical Perspectives, 1998). For two dualist arguments, see John W Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000). and Paul R. Williamson, *Death and the Afterlife: Biblical Perspectives on Ultimate Questions* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018).

<sup>35</sup> German theologian Gottlob Christian Storr is credited by Neville as being the first to argue for Markan priority. David J. Neville, *Mark's Gospel-- Prior or Posterior? A Reappraisal of the Phenomenon of Order*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 222 (London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Gottlob Christian Storr, *Über Den Zweck Der Evangelischen Geschichte, Und Der Briefe Johannes (German Edition)* (Nabu Press, 2011), X.

<sup>36</sup> Although the New Testament was written in Greek, a general scholarly "consensus has emerged that a good deal of the sayings tradition in the Gospels rests on an Aramaic substratum." John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 1st ed, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 265. However, this consensus has not gone uncontested. Gleaves argues that Greek, not Aramaic was the most common language of Jesus' day. As a result, "the Gospels may contain the very words that Jesus spoke instead of translations into Greek of Jesus' original words in Aramaic." G. Scott Gleaves, *Did Jesus Speak Greek? The Emerging Evidence of Greek Dominance in First-Century Palestine* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2015). Within Mark's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as an authoritative teacher who taught in the synagogue. However, this fact comes as a surprise to his contemporaries because he is described as "a member of the manual-labor-class." Chris Keith, *Jesus against the Scribal Elite: The Origins of the Conflict* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014). While there are indicators that Jesus spoke one language (Aramaic) over another (Greek), any conclusion will remain at best, informed speculation. It is also quite possible that Jesus was multilingual and appropriated his linguistic choices to each specific audience. As it is the Greek that was recorded, it is the Greek with which I work in this thesis.

unique problem for Christians in that these three Gospels do not provide identical accounts of Jesus' life. Some have sought to solve this issue by suggesting that these differences can be accounted for through the consideration that Jesus was a "peripatetic teacher [who] regularly repeated his material in various forms."<sup>37</sup> Of course, there are also other options to account for this textual disagreement. For example, Candida Moss has suggested that it was common practice for an author to reshape material for their particular intended audience's reception.<sup>38</sup> If Mark was indeed the first Gospel to be written, and Matthew and Luke utilized his material, this would provide a working theory as to why their Gospels at times deviate from Mark's material.

Second, a deeper layer of agreement resides within the context of multiple attestation. That is to say that the Gospels contain an inner layer of agreement known as the triple tradition. Within this triple tradition, Mark's Gospel stands out in comparison to the others as it pertains to the use of the Greek word *psyche*. The author of Mark chose to use the Greek word *psyche* in several cases where Matthew and Luke's Gospel omit the word.<sup>39</sup> This is a relevant

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<sup>37</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Candida Moss, *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Of the 104 occurrences of the Greek word *psyche*, 55 are associated with death, destruction, or loss. A survey of the use of *psyche* within the Synoptic triple tradition reveals the following. The Synoptic Gospels contain four texts that use *psyche* in parallel, all of which are found in Mark. Only one of these, Mark 8:35-37, contains the word *psyche* in all three of the Synoptics (cf. Matt. 16:24-28; Luke. 9:23-27, and John 12:24-25). Within the Synoptic parallels, the word *psyche* is used sixteen times in the context of death or dying. First, Mark 3:4 along with Matthew 12:9-14 denote that a *psyche* can be saved or killed. The Lukan counterpart to these texts found in Luke 6:6-11 omits the word *psyche*. Second, Mark 8:35-37, Matthew 16:24-28, and Luke 9:23-27 explain that a *psyche* can be saved or lost (literally destroyed). Third, in Mark 10:45 Jesus declares that he has come to give his *psyche* as ransom to death. The Synoptic parallels found in Matthew 20:20-28 and Luke 22:24-27 omit the word *psyche*. Finally, in Mark 14:34 Jesus states that his *psyche* is grieved to death. The Synoptic parallels found in Matthew 26:36-46 and Luke 22:39-46 also omit the word *psyche*. Within the Synoptic double tradition (texts found in both Matthew and Luke) *psyche* is used twice in Matthew 10:26-33 but is omitted in the Lukan parallel found in Luke 12:2-9. Texts that are unique to Matthew and Luke show deviance from the previously stated texts. For example, Matthew 2:20 speaks of those who are seeking to kill Jesus' *psyche*. Similarly, in Luke 9:56, Jesus states that he did not come to destroy *psyche* but to save them. Finally, the Gospel of John works with the same vernacular and

feature because this thesis seeks to determine how the early church understood death. As chapter six will highlight, *psyche* and death are integrally related. I believe that even if Mark's Gospel was not written first, the author's use of the Greek word *psyche* would provide enough rationale to choose Mark over its counterparts. Related to this, I will suggest in chapter six that this linguistic choice becomes relevant when Mark's Gospel uniquely addresses the Pharisaical belief in the survival of the *psyche* after death. This is one of the several ways Mark's Gospel persuades its audience to embrace a messiah who can change, suffer and die.

In summary, while all four of the Gospel narratives are relevant to the conversation and the development of Anabaptist theology, I have chosen the Gospel of Mark as the focus of this study. A robust Anabaptist theology will need to incorporate these additional texts into the faith community's considerations when finalizing orthodoxy. I have chosen to examine Mark's Gospel because of the theory of Markan priority, the value of multiple attestations within the Synoptics, Mark's use of the Greek word *psyche*, and the use of this word in discussion with the Pharisees related to issues of life and death.

#### **1.1.5. God in Jesus Christ.**

This thesis aims to work within and out of the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith tradition.<sup>40</sup> This tradition "has recognized a number of confessions [of faith]: the Schleitheim Articles (Switzerland, 1527), the Dordrecht Confession (Holland, 1632), the Christian Fundamentals

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definition of *psyche* as the Synoptics. The Gospel of John contains no parallels with the Synoptics, but the theme of the 'loss' of Christ's *psyche* is the dominant Christological concern expressed by the author. John's favorite use of the term involves the laying down of one's *psyche*. These texts found in John 10:11, 10:15, 10:17, 13:37, 13:28, and 15:13 also serve to reinforce the kenotic Christology I construct later in this thesis.

<sup>40</sup> While I use the combined term Anabaptist/Mennonite in this section, for the remainder of the thesis I will simplify this phraseology and only use the word Anabaptist. I have chosen to do this because Anabaptism is an umbrella term under which Mennonite generally falls.

(1921), the Mennonite Confession Faith (1963).<sup>41</sup> Chapter three will highlight that some Anabaptist confessions of faith stand in conflict with one another. However, what is central to these confessions are the faith statements that “Jesus is the Word of God incarnate,” and “as [a] teacher of divine wisdom, he has made known God’s will.”<sup>42</sup> For the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, this means that when Jesus taught and spoke, he communicated divine truth.<sup>43</sup> Within this tradition, this has resulted in the prioritization of Jesus’ teaching above all else.

Anabaptist Christocentrism is expressed in the unapologetic confession that “Jesus constitutes the final, the definitive, the full and therefore the normative revelation of God.”<sup>44</sup> In this way, the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition, is Christocentric at its core.<sup>45</sup> This belief is echoed in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* in the statement: “We believe that God has spoken above all in the only Son, the Word who became flesh and revealed the divine being and character.”<sup>46</sup> This hermeneutic is unashamedly applied to the reading and interpretation of scripture. Anabaptists and Mennonites “seek to understand and interpret

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<sup>41</sup> A modern summary of these beliefs in the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith tradition can be found in the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* published by the General Conference Mennonite Church. General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, 21. The Schleithem Confession was most likely more influential on the Swiss Brethren than other expressions of Anabaptism.

<sup>42</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, 11.

<sup>43</sup> As divinity becomes human, Jesus showed signs of experiential ignorance. For instance, In Mark’s narrative he expresses that he did not know who touched him. This does not in any way undermine the truth claims of his teaching. While Jesus was voluntarily limited as a human by things such as time and space, his teaching is believed to be true and trustworthy statements of God.

<sup>44</sup> Paul F Knitter, “Theocentric Christology,” *Theology Today* 40, no. 2 (July 1983): 130–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/004057368304000204>.

<sup>45</sup> The Anabaptist tradition stands in unity with the Catholic tradition to the extent that the Catholic Catechism affirms that “Christian faith cannot accept ‘revelations’ that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfillment.” Catholic Church, ed., *Catechism of the Catholic Church: With Modifications from the Editio Typica*, 2nd ed., [new] (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 28. Where the Anabaptist faith differs is that it does not follow the Catholic confession that “both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.” 31.

<sup>46</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, 13.



Scripture in harmony with Jesus.”<sup>47</sup> As a result, Jesus is the lens through which scripture is read and understood. In addition, the Anabaptist/Mennonite faith community believes that scripture is centered around and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.<sup>48</sup> The result of this confession is that all aspects of reason, experience, tradition, and culture must be tested and corrected by Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection.

The Anabaptist/Mennonite faith tradition is ecumenically united with the majority of Christianity in that it confesses Jesus as the second person of the Trinity, God incarnate, a historical person who lived, taught, suffered, died, was resurrected, and was both fully human and fully divine.<sup>49</sup> These aspects of faith can be found in the Catholic Catechism, the early church creeds, the Lutheran book of Concord, the Heidelberg Confession, and many other expressions of Christian confessions of faith.<sup>50</sup> The Anabaptist/Mennonite faith tradition stands in ecumenical agreement on three vital aspects of Christology.

First, Anabaptists’ confess Jesus is the second person of the triune God who became flesh. Second, they confess that Jesus was a historical person who lived, taught, suffered, died, and was resurrected from the dead. Third, they confess that Jesus was fully divine and fully human.<sup>51</sup> Despite ecumenical unity over these confessions, it should be noted that different expressions or understandings arise within these faith traditions. For instance, there are

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<sup>47</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, 7.

<sup>48</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, 21.

<sup>49</sup> For a comparison of Christian denominations and traditions, see Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations: Understanding the History, Beliefs, and Differences*, (Eugene, Or: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 15. Rhodes explains that the three major divisions of Christianity can generally be categorized as “the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and the Orthodox Church.”

<sup>50</sup> See Young, who traces the development of early church creedal formations and how the narrative elements of the Gospels were utilized as the fundamental building blocks of these confessions of faith. Frances M Young, *The Making of the Creeds* (London: SCM Press, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, 15. The commentary adds that “the Bible does not use the language of ‘natures’ to describe Jesus Christ.”

different ways the church has understood ‘how’ Jesus became human, ‘what’ exactly he communicated, or ‘how’ Jesus was both God and man.<sup>52</sup> Some of these differences will be explored within this thesis.

#### **1.1.6. Can divinity change, suffer and die?**

Chapter two will outline that while Christendom Christology confessed the incarnation, crucifixion, and death of Jesus, it did so in a specific way that may be interpreted as running counter to the Gospel narratives.<sup>53</sup> Chapter three will then reflect on the early Anabaptist’s struggle to integrate this view theologically. While some early Anabaptist theologians appear to have adopted the Christendom Christology without critique, others challenged various nuances of it. Unlike the generally agreed-upon topics of baptism, oaths, and the use of violence, early Anabaptist Christology did not present a unified voice on the theological topics of thanatology, anthropology, and eschatology. This is the gap within Anabaptist scholarship that this thesis seeks to fill. How might Anabaptist Christology, shaped by the narrative of Mark, inform Anabaptist thanatology, anthropology, and eschatology? The answer to these questions will then determine which stream of the Anabaptist tradition the Markan Christology supports. To determine the answer to these questions, I will ask how the Markan narrative might shape the Anabaptist understanding of human death. In addition, I will ask what the Markan author aimed to teach his audience about the relationship between divinity and death. Finally, I will ask how

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<sup>52</sup> For example, the Dordrecht Confession of Faith mentions that the church may not fully understand ‘how’ Jesus became human, but that we must be satisfied with the content the early evangelists have given the church.

<sup>53</sup> Kraus, 47. Kraus for example states that “The Greek church Fathers...used the language of Greek dualistic metaphysics to interpret New Testament concepts.” This is however an overgeneralization considering Greek philosophy contained several streams that did not believe in body/soul dualism such as Stoicism, and the schools of Aristotle and Epicurus.

these issues are also integrally related to the belief that God became a human being, walked the earth, and died.

## **1.2. DEFINING ANABAPTISM.**

### **1.2.1. A simple term for a complex movement.**

Anabaptism is a simple term that is used to describe a complex faith community. Anabaptism, named pejoratively for its rejection of infant baptism, found its origins in the 16th-century Protestant Reformation of Europe. The choice to be re-baptized as an adult was a direct outcome of the emerging Christocentric hermeneutical decisions of the early Anabaptists.<sup>54</sup> The term ‘Anabaptist’ was first used by opponents as a derogatory label referring to ‘one who baptizes again.’ In distinction from the Protestant Reformation, the protest of the Anabaptists was labeled the ‘Radical Reformation.’<sup>55</sup> Early Anabaptists rejected infant baptism based on their theological conclusions, which they derived from following a Christocentric hermeneutic. They believed that Jesus and his disciples taught baptism should follow a conscious confession of faith. They also believed such confession was not possible for infants. The state church viewed the political and religious practice of adult baptism as a rejection of infant baptism. Adult baptism was perceived as a rebellion against both church and state since infant baptism

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<sup>54</sup> John Howard Yoder and Michael Sattler, *The Legacy of Michael Sattler, Classics of the Radical Reformation* 1 (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1973), 71. Sattler demonstrated this during his trial by stating, “Counter to the gospel and the word of God I do not know that I have done anything; in witness thereto, I appeal to the words of Christ.”

<sup>55</sup> James M. Stayer, “The Radical Reformation,” *Handbook of European History 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, January 1, 1995, 249–82, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391680\\_010](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391680_010). Summarizing Williams, Stayer says that this group can be outlined by their commitments to “believers' baptism, the sleep of the soul pending the resurrection, the separation of church and state, and a commitment to missions.”

performed the double function of inaugurating a person into the church and assumed their fidelity to the state.<sup>56</sup>

The catalyst of the Anabaptists' perceived rebellion came in the form of the Schleithem Confession. This confession contained seven articles of faith and practice, which were all derived from the unifying practice of placing the teachings of Jesus at the center of biblical interpretation. The Anabaptist Schleithem Confession was spearheaded by the former Roman Catholic monk Michael Sattler.<sup>57</sup> Sattler defiantly proclaimed baptism was to be administered by a confession of faith that excluded “all infant baptism, the highest and chief abomination of the pope.”<sup>58</sup> Sattler’s Christocentric confession, as well as his testimony at his trial, later became a model example of how Anabaptists practiced a Christocentric hermeneutic and were willing to obey Jesus’ teaching regardless of the cost.<sup>59</sup>

Although Anabaptism was unified under the belief that infants should not be baptized, it was both a fluid and diverse movement. Modern Anabaptist theologian Lloyd Pieterse has

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<sup>56</sup> Addressing this claim, Anabaptist Hubmaier Balthasar stated, “I have never taught Anabaptism. ... But the right baptism of Christ, which is preceded by teaching and oral confession of faith, I teach, and say that infant baptism is a robbery of the right baptism of Christ.” Henry Clay Vedder, *Balthasar Hubmaier: The Leader of The Anabaptists* (Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010), 204.

<sup>57</sup> Yoder and Sattler, *The Legacy of Michael Sattler*, 33. Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder records that both Zwingli and Calvin had read the confession of faith and were aware of the document. Estep explains that this document was influential in leading to Sattler’s trial and execution. He also adds that the witness of Michael Sattler in the face of his persecution and martyrdom “became a symbol of Anabaptist fidelity in the eyes of the sixteenth-century world wherever the story of his heroic martyrdom found an audience.” William Roscoe Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub, 1996), 57.

<sup>58</sup> “The Schleithem Confession of Faith,” accessed April 29, 2021, <https://pages.uoregon.edu/sshoemak/323/texts/schleithem.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> Among those that joined Sattler in this Radical Reformation were the German judge William Marpeck, a Franciscan friar Dirk Phillips, a former Roman Catholic priest Menno Simons, and the traveling bookseller Hans Hut. For Marpeck see, Pilgram Marpeck, William Klassen, and Walter Klaassen, *The Writings of Pilgram Marpeck* (Kitchener, Ont, Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1978). For Philips, see Dirk Philips et al., *The Writings of Dirk Philips, 1504-1568*, Classics of the Radical Reformation 6 (Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1992). For Menno, see Menno and Wenger, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*.

described early Anabaptism as “fluid, with fuzzy edges.”<sup>60</sup> Given its fluidity, several issues arise when trying to tightly define Anabaptism. First, unlike alternative Protestant movements such as Calvinism or Lutheranism, Anabaptism “produced no one theologian whose system won the unanimous approval of Anabaptists generally.”<sup>61</sup> In addition to this, early Anabaptist theologians had diverse educational backgrounds. For example, some, like Menno Simons, abandoned their roles within the Catholic Church to join the Anabaptist movement.<sup>62</sup> Others, however, did not have this sort of formal education. For the educated, such as Simons, it is not always clear how much these individuals retained from their previous theological education. As a result of this diverse leadership, there was also a “diversity of teaching and practice” among the early Anabaptist educators and communities.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to issues of leadership and teaching, Franklin Littell has also voiced several other concerns. First, he comments that much of the history that has been written on Anabaptism has been reliant upon “secondary sources.”<sup>64</sup> This is due in part to the fact that Anabaptist writings were suppressed or destroyed while their counterparts’ works were published freely in multiple languages.<sup>65</sup> Persecution and martyrdom were realities that many early Anabaptists had to face. In fact, Littell suggests that “the best-educated leadership was martyred during the first years” of Anabaptist development.<sup>66</sup> In the faith communities’ infancy, many Anabaptists were declared heretics by the church and convicted of treason against the

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<sup>60</sup> Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom*, 62.

<sup>61</sup> Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 177.

<sup>62</sup> Estep, 151.

<sup>63</sup> Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 43.

<sup>64</sup> Littell, xiii.

<sup>65</sup> Littell, 148.

<sup>66</sup> Littell, 61.

state. As a result, they were executed by drowning, slain by the sword, or burned at the stake. This persecution can be observed in the life and death of Felix Manz, the first Anabaptist to be executed by Protestants under Zwingli in 1527.<sup>67</sup> Later that same year, Roman Catholic authorities tortured and burned Anabaptist leader Michael Sattler for defying the emperor, and the religious beliefs of the land.

Since advocates of the state church strongly disagreed with Anabaptists and saw them as their enemies, they wrote forcefully against them. This raises another difficult hurdle to overcome, deciphering the truthfulness of the polemics written against them.<sup>68</sup> The rejection of various Anabaptist beliefs is documented in writings such as Huldrych Zwingli's *Refutation against the tricks of the catabaptists* (1527), the Lutheran *Augsburg Confession* (1530), John Calvin's *Psychopannychia* (1534), and the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1563).<sup>69</sup> At a minimum, these documents reveal that the hermeneutical distinctive of the Anabaptists set them at odds with their religious contemporaries. However, it is not always clear how true these accusations were in relation to the actual beliefs of the accused.

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<sup>67</sup> Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*.

<sup>68</sup> Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church*, 138.

<sup>69</sup> For Zwingli, see Huldrych Zwingli, "Selected Works of Huldrych Zwingli," *University of Pennsylvania*, 1522, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/zwingli-selected-works-of-huldrych-zwingli>. For Luther, see Richard Cahill, "'Damnant Anabaptistas': The Damned Anabaptists in the Textual History of the Augsburg Confession," *Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 75, no. 2 (1995): 188–97. For Calvin, see Calvin, John, *Psychopannychia: The Sleep of the Soul* (Apollo, Pennsylvania: Ichthus Publications, n.d.). For the Council of Trent, see "The Council of Trent - Session 3," accessed November 5, 2019, <http://www.thecounciloftrent.com/ch3.htm>. See also sessions four and seven.

### **1.2.2. Characteristics of Anabaptism.**

Given the diversity and fluidity of the early Anabaptist movement, precisely defining Anabaptism can be a precarious task. I have chosen to define Anabaptism by several characteristics it exhibited in response to Catholic and Protestant beliefs and practices. These characteristics are (1) a Christocentric approach to scripture, (2) a willingness to challenge tradition and authority, (3) the rejection of infant baptism, (4) a belief in the separation of church and state, and (5) the embrace of a non-violent ethic. While other beliefs and practices could certainly be added, these five seem to be at the heart of the movement.

To begin, the most fundamental characteristic of early Anabaptism was its Christocentric approach to scripture. The foundational principle of Anabaptist theology was the decision to interpret the Bible through the lens of Christ.<sup>70</sup> Early Anabaptists did not believe their methodological approach was novel but rather that it was the resurrection of a Christocentric approach to scripture exhibited by Jesus and his followers. This Christocentric method of establishing doctrine set the early Anabaptists at odds with their fellow believers in Christ. By exalting Jesus' teachings above everything else, this group of Christians separated themselves from the church-state model which arguably elevated other streams of knowledge such as reason, experience, and tradition.

Second, the implementation of a Christocentric hermeneutic meant that Anabaptists embraced a willingness to challenge tradition and authority. Anabaptism, as a Christian faith movement, challenged and critiqued existing faith structures through its Christocentric interpretive strategy. This hermeneutical approach shaped Anabaptist orthodoxy and

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<sup>70</sup> Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 126, 181, 191.

orthopraxy. Third, as its name indicates, Anabaptism is defined by its rejection of infant baptism and positive confession that baptism must be carried out by choice. This belief and practice set it at odds with its religious contemporaries. Fourth, Littell reports that “the Anabaptists would have nothing to do with the State Church; and this was the main point in their separation from the Lutherans, Zwinglians, and Calvinists.”<sup>71</sup> Many Anabaptists rejected the union of church and state because they also rejected the initiating act of taking oaths.

Finally, Anabaptists separated themselves from the state church because they were committed to an ethic of non-violence. Boyd explains that because the early Anabaptists “broke from the Constantinian ecclesial paradigm, they were free to appreciate the centrality of non-violence in Jesus’ revelation of God.”<sup>72</sup> Deriving their politics and ethics from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, non-violence became a distinctive characteristic of these Radical Reformers. Many if not all of these Anabaptist distinctives forged during the Radical Reformation continue to define and give shape to articulations of Anabaptist faith communities today.<sup>73</sup> This thesis seeks

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<sup>71</sup> Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church*, 206–7.

<sup>72</sup> Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God*, 124. Boyd’s work serves as a modern Anabaptist litmus test for how this hermeneutic can be applied to specific areas of theology.

<sup>73</sup> The Mennonite World Conference is a collection of Anabaptist churches worldwide consisting of 1.47 million baptized believers. This number is said to represent 68.91% of the total of Anabaptists worldwide. The Conference’s statement of faith claims the Bible as its authoritative text and Jesus as the lens through which scripture is to be interpreted. See also the International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB). This group consists of 21 national churches in 19 countries and has approximately 450,000 official ICOMB members. This international community of believers also confesses to implementing a “Christ-centered” interpretation of Scripture. CCMBC Communications, “International Community of Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) Confession of Faith,” *The Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches* (blog), March 12, 2012, <https://www.mennonitebrethren.ca/directory/partners/international-community-of-mennonite-brethren-icomb-confession-of-faith/>. Similarly, the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Fresno Pacific University also demonstrate this hermeneutical position in their statements of faith. Finally, the Brethren in Christ denomination (which is organized in both the USA and Canada and is quite possibly the largest organization of Anabaptist Mennonite churches in North America) claims to take a Christ-centered approach to scripture. Evidence for this is found in the organization’s promotional document labeled “Six Principles of Anabaptist Hermeneutics.” In the fifth principle of interpretation, the document states that “Jesus is the centre of the interpretive process.” What this means is that “the clearest passages of Scripture are the ones that portray his life and teaching. All other passages must be interpreted in the light of these.” In addition, this means that “the New Testament takes precedence over



to join in the tradition of applying a Christocentric narrative-oriented hermeneutic to critique Christian tradition.

### 1.3. DEFINITIONS OF DEATH AND THE MARKAN AUDIENCE.

The chief anthropological dividing line within the Greco-Roman and Hebraic literature that preceded Mark's Gospel is the definition of the finality of death.<sup>74</sup> Within this literature, death was defined in two antithetical ways. These views can be defined as (1) immortalism and (2) mortalism. The dualistic immortalist anthropological position proposed that upon death, a person enters into a disembodied "immediate postmortem" state, where conscious existence persists.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, death for the immortalist, is defined as a transition from one form or state of being alive to another. Dualist theologian John Cooper explains that there are "two main kinds of dualistic holism in traditional Christian thought": substance dualism and soul-matter dualism.<sup>76</sup> What is relevant is that "all dualists affirm that body and soul are distinct and that the soul can exist apart from the body" after death.<sup>77</sup> Some of these positions attribute immortality as an ontological attribute of the soul, while others deem it a grace granted by God. In opposition to this, the mortalist anthropological position holds that "the soul is the physical

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the Old." These church/organizations affirm that Jesus is the fullest revelation of God and that scripture is to be read and interpreted in light of Jesus. For BIC USA, see <https://bicus.org/> For BIC Canada, see <http://www.canadianbic.ca/anabaptist-basics/>.

<sup>74</sup> For a comparison of the two views, see Bruce R. Reichenbach, *Is Man the Phoenix? A Study of Immortality* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1978). For a physicalist conclusion, see Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life*. For a dualist perspective, see Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*. For various hypotheses on the mind-body problem, see Joel Green et al., *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Eugene, Or: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

<sup>75</sup> Williamson, *Death and the Afterlife*, 90.

<sup>76</sup> John W Cooper, "The Current Body-Soul Debate: A Case for Dualistic Holism," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13/2, no. Summer 2009 (n.d.): 32–50.

<sup>77</sup> Cooper, 32–50.

aspect of our existence and not an immaterial component of our nature.”<sup>78</sup> Death for the mortalist is defined as the end of life entirely.<sup>79</sup> Mortalists, therefore, see humans as unified wholes, denying the possibility of a disembodied intermediate-state.

Integrally related to these views within Greco-Roman and Hebraic literature was the author's use of either the Hebrew word *nephesh*, or the Greek word *psyche*. These words have sometimes been translated into the English word soul. The immortalist defined a *nephesh/psyche* as an immaterial aspect of a human being that was capable of surviving bodily death. The mortalist defined a *nephesh/psyche* as a mortal person.

As an example of the immortalist position, the presumed Hebrew author of 4 Ezra (which is believed to be written around 70 C.E.), describes death as the immortal soul's separation from its “vessel of mortality.”<sup>80</sup> For this author, the *psyche* is an immaterial locus of identity that survives bodily death. This concept was most likely a derivative of a much earlier Greek concept of the *psyche*. For example, Plato's *Phaedo* (469-399 B.C.E.) written centuries earlier states that the soul being both immortal and imperishable “when attacked by death cannot perish.”<sup>81</sup> For these authors, death is defined as the separation of the physical mortal body from the immaterial immortal *nephesh/psyche*.

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<sup>78</sup> Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection*, 83.

<sup>79</sup> Three Greek words are used in the New Testament to refer to life; *bios*, *zoe*, and *psyche*. Of the three, *bios* occurs the least. The Greek word *bios* appears only ten times in the New Testament, six of which are in the Gospels. *Bios* in Mark 12:44 denotes the livelihood of a woman. Similarly, *bios* is found five other times in the Gospel of Luke, all of which are in reference to financial wealth or livelihood. As a result, the Greek word *bios* brings no relevant or definitive evidence to the discussion of the immortality of the soul. Of the three, *psyche* is the only word translated into the English word ‘soul.’

<sup>80</sup> Charles, R. H. (Ed.). (1913). *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Vol. 2, p. 588). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

<sup>81</sup> Marcus Tullius et al., *Stoic Six Pack 6: The Cyrenaics* (Los Angeles, CA: Enhanced Media, 2015), 113. 113.

In contrast, the book of Joshua (which is believed to be written around 1400 B.C.) presents its readers with a mortalist understanding of death. Joshua describes a group of souls (*nephesh*) who were stabbed with swords, resulting in them being “utterly destroyed” (Josh. 10:28).<sup>82</sup> Here, the author used the Hebrew word *nephesh* to describe physical bodies that can be slain with a physical object. This mortalist position is also found in the writings of the Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 B.C.). He writes in his *Letter to Herodotus* that “the soul (*psyche*) is a corporeal thing,” so death is the privation of awareness, the cessation of existence, and the dissolution of the soul (*psyche*).<sup>83</sup> As an author, Epicurus employs the Greek term *psyche* to denote a person’s life. These two opposing descriptions of a *nephesh/psyche* provide a historical context out of which the Gospel of Mark can be investigated. Understanding this context and the disagreement over the definition of the Greek word *psyche* is vital to interpreting Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ teachings.

#### 1.4. DEFINING KENOSIS.

In Christian theology, the concept of kenosis is frequently derived from Philippians chapter two, which reads: “who, though he [Jesus] was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God

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<sup>82</sup> Concerning the Hebrew *nephesh*, Biblical linguist Barr has concluded: “the *nepes* means the whole living being and not the ‘soul’ as separate and distanced from the body.” James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 16. Likewise, linguistic evidence of the New Testament *psyche* reveals that the authors employed the term in a related manner. *Psyche* in the New Testament discloses a meaning “similar to [the Hebrew] *nepesû*.” Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library (Baker Book House, 1996), 744. Specifically, concerning death, Elwell explains that *psyche* “frequently designates life: one can risk his life (John 13:37; Acts 15:26; Rom. 16:4; Phil. 2:30), give his life (Matt. 20:28), lay down his life (John 10:15, 17–18), forfeit his life (Matt. 16:26), hate his life (Luke 14:26), and have his life demanded of him (Luke 12:20).”

<sup>83</sup> Epicurus, Cicero, and Lucretius, *Stoic Six Pack 3: The Epicureans*, vol. 3 (Los Angeles, CA.: Enhanced Media, 2015), 11.

as something to be exploited, but emptied himself (kenosis), taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:6-8). Here, the Greek word kenosis is translated as the act of self-emptying. This thesis will suggest that the theological concept of kenosis is present throughout the Gospel of Mark. As a result, this early Christian hymn should be read as a statement about Jesus that is derived from his life, teaching, and death.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will define kenosis as a freely chosen selfless act of self-limitation motivated by love for another. Inherent within this definition is the necessary ability to undergo change. Philippians 2:6-8 notes that in becoming incarnate, Jesus experienced a transformation or metamorphosis. The Gospel of Mark similarly notes that Jesus underwent a transformation on a mountain (Mark 9:2-13). Through narrative analysis, chapters six through eight will suggest that “at the center of Mark’s story, there stands a theology of Jesus’ suffering and death that recalls the kenotic theme of Philippians 2.”<sup>84</sup> Together, the themes of kenosis and death in Mark’s Gospel tell the tale of a protagonist who can change, suffer, and die. I will contend that what the Markan themes of death and kenosis reveal is that, “the gospel of Mark is an account of the unprecedented and incomprehensible incarnate and kenotic love of God.”<sup>85</sup>

This thesis will contend that Mark’s portrayal of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah provides the fodder for an undiscovered facet of the Anabaptist critique of Christendom.

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<sup>84</sup> Lucien Richard, *Christ: The Self-Emptying of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 63.

<sup>85</sup> Richard, 69.

Theologian Daniel Peterson has defined kenosis as “the act by which God withdraws God’s power for the sake of creaturely freedom.”<sup>86</sup> This concept can be seen in the act of creation, God’s covenant partnerships with humanity, the self-limitation of incarnation, Christ’s servant-leadership, the call to discipleship, and most vividly, in Jesus’ death.<sup>87</sup> While kenotic Christology has generally understood itself to be grounded in the kenotic hymn of Philippians 2 and the incarnation of Christ, I suggest that kenotic Christology should be even more Christocentric.<sup>88</sup> That is to say that the cornerstone of kenotic Christology should be understood to be Jesus’ articulation of his obedient kenotic service to death found in Mark 10:45. Here, Jesus equivocates his crucifixion with the death of his *psyche*.

### **1.5. DEFINING THE PROBLEM: CURRENT APPROACHES TO THE SOUL IN ANABAPTISM.**

A survey of recent Anabaptist scholarship on the topic of the soul reveals a spectrum of views. In this way, current Anabaptist theological writings mirror the diversity of the early Anabaptist perspectives that will be reviewed in chapter three. What is different between the two is that present Anabaptist scholarship appeals to a broader range of knowledge in support of their respective positions. Rather than appealing to the Gospels for primary support, current

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<sup>86</sup> Daniel J. Peterson, “The Kenosis of the Father: Affirming God’s Action at the Higher Levels of Nature,” *Theology and Science* 11, no. 4 (November 2013): 451–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2013.836895>.

<sup>87</sup> For a recent work exploring the theme of kenosis and cruciformity across a larger Biblical spectrum, see Nijay K. Gupta et al., eds., *Cruciform Scripture: Cross, Participation, and Mission* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021).

<sup>88</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2010). For instance, while I am sympathetic to Evan who states that, “the Incarnation itself is our primary window into God’s being,” I want to push beyond this, along with many other theologians such as Barth, Boyd, Bauckham, Gorman, Moltmann and others who claim that the cross is, in fact, the primary window into God’s being.

Anabaptist scholars appeal to philosophy, Paul's letters, tradition, psychology, and personal experience.

Within recent Anabaptist scholarship, Anabaptist philosopher Nancey Murphy has been a strong advocate for doing away with belief in body-soul dualism. Murphy has chosen to use philosophy and science to justify her view because she believes that "the biblical authors, especially the New Testament authors...did not take a clear stand on one theory."<sup>89</sup> While I agree with her conclusion that Anabaptism must reject the concept of an immaterial soul, I disagree with her assessment of scripture.<sup>90</sup> Murphy is not the only Anabaptist who thinks the scriptures do not provide a definitive anthropological answer. Anabaptist scholar and pastor Greg Boyd has also taught from the pulpit that he believes scripture does not teach a definitive anthropological view.<sup>91</sup> In a 2018 sermon Boyd explained to his congregation that he used to hold to the position that "you die and then you don't exist until you are raised."<sup>92</sup> Boyd explained that he held this view in part because the apostle Paul likened death to sleep in some of his letters. In his sermon, Boyd then went on to explain that he has recently changed his mind for three different reasons.

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<sup>89</sup> Nancey C. Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 22.

<sup>90</sup> In an alternative source, Murphy indicates that scripture is not ambiguous on the topic of the soul. Warren S Brown, Nancey C. Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 28. Murphy states, "the dominate view of the human person in the New Testament is that of ontological monism." I am in agreement with the stream of Old Testament scholarship that believes the Ancient-Israelite understanding of humanity represented in the Old Testament is that humans are physical creatures without immaterial souls. In addition I would agree with Anabaptist theologian Zerbe that Paul was not a dualist.

<sup>91</sup> Greg Boyd, "Between Death and Resurrection," filmed Sunday April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018 at Woodland Hills Church <https://whchurch.org/sermon/between-death-and-resurrection/>

<sup>92</sup> Greg Boyd, "Between Death and Resurrection," filmed Sunday April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018 at Woodland Hills Church <https://whchurch.org/sermon/between-death-and-resurrection/>

First, Boyd explains that there are some biblical texts that he found did not fit in his previous model of understanding. As an example, he cites 2 Corinthians 15:6-9. Second, he explains reports of near-death experiences validate his belief in a disembodied intermediate state. Third, Boyd adds that conversations with hospice care workers have also convinced him that people on the precipice of death are able to have conversations with their deceased loved ones. Despite these three reasons, it seems contradictory that Boyd, who has been such a strong advocate for a Christ and cross-centered Anabaptist hermeneutic, would elevate the Pauline letters and experiential data over Jesus' teaching. What Murphy and Boyd highlight is the spectrum of belief within current Anabaptist thought and the belief that scripture does not provide answers to anthropological questions.

#### **1.5.1. Anabaptist appeals to tradition, scripture, science, and experience.**

A recent publication of the Mennonite Brethren Journal *Direction* also highlights both the diversity of belief among Anabaptist scholars and the problem of which methodological approach should be given precedence. The Fall 2008 edition of the *Direction* was titled "Can the Soul Be Saved?" This edition of the journal sought to give space to different Anabaptist scholars who argued for their respective views. This edition was, in part, a response to Murphy's book *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* First, Mennonite Associate Professor Gordon Zerbe argued for a physicalist anthropology by appealing to Pauline anthropology. Second, Mennonite Academic Dean Terry G. Hiebert responded to Murphy's nonreductive physicalism, suggesting that the current Mennonite Brethren Confession of Faith only accommodates some form of dualism. Third, Mennonite psychologist Delmar B. Epp claimed that recent neuroscientific

evidence indicates that humans do not have immaterial souls. Finally, Mennonite Associate Professor Dan Epp-Tiessen offered some personal reflections about how the death of his son led him to embrace body-soul dualism. These four articles each question belief in the soul through investigating different sources of knowledge. Zerbe explores Pauline literature, Hiebert reviews Anabaptist tradition, Epp explores psychology, and Tiessen comments on his own personal experience. Interestingly, none of these Anabaptist scholars adopt the Christocentric approach recommended in Boyd's work.

In his article, Zerbe sought to inform Anabaptist theology by asking what the apostle Paul taught concerning human anthropology. He states that "Paul uses *psychē* in accordance with the Hebrew notion of *nephesh*, as the whole person."<sup>93</sup> He also adds that Paul never attributes immortality to the *psyche*. Zerbe believes that Paul's anthropology is most definitively expressed in his first letter to the Corinthian church. In this letter, Paul states that apart from the resurrection, humans perish (1 Cor. 15:18). Therefore, Zerbe concludes that "it cannot be said that Paul teaches a dualist anthropology with a distinct and separable 'soul.'" What is interesting is that Zerbe's conclusions about Pauline thought aligns with my narrative assessment of the Gospel of Mark. Unlike Boyd, Zerbe concludes that Paul's anthropological teaching runs counter to the reported beliefs of the Pharisees in regard to death and the afterlife.

Next, Hiebert's article responds to Nancy Murphy's nonreductive physicalism by appealing to the writings of several early Anabaptist theologians. He concludes that early

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<sup>93</sup> Gordon Zerbe, "Paul on the Human Being as a 'Psychic Body': Neither Dualist nor Monist" 37, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 168–84.



Anabaptist theologians “Sattler, Hubmaier, and Menno represent a spectrum of Anabaptist views on the nature of the soul and its implications for facing death.”<sup>94</sup> This spectrum included the beliefs of the immortality of the soul, soul sleep, and soul death. Following this, Hiebert reviews the Anabaptist Schleithem Confession (1527), The Waterlander Confession (1577), and The Dordrecht Confession (1632). He concludes that “these confessions provide space for both traditional dualist and contemporary monist views.”<sup>95</sup> Finally, Hiebert suggests that since the current Mennonite Brethren Confession “is loose enough to accommodate the traditional immortality view or the doctrine of soul sleep,” Murphy’s nonreductive physicalism should be rejected.<sup>96</sup> Hiebert’s article is interesting in that he first appeals to the spectrum of belief within the earliest Anabaptist traditions, which wide enough to accommodate Murphy’s position. Hiebert then makes a further appeal to current Mennonite tradition to paint Murphy outside the bounds of tradition. This raises the question, which of the three positions within the Anabaptist tradition aligns with Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels?

The third article, written by Epp, addresses the question of the soul from a psychological perspective. He suggests that the biblical witness has the potential to support either a dualist or materialist view. From his perspective, scripture does not present a definitive answer to the question of the soul. He believes this gives him the freedom to find an answer elsewhere. Epp argues that the dualist view is not supported by current neuroscientific evidence. Therefore, he

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<sup>94</sup> Hiebert, “Is the Search for the Anabaptist Soul a Dead End? Historic Anabaptism Meets Nancy Murphy’s Nonreductive Physicalism.”

<sup>95</sup> Hiebert.

<sup>96</sup> Hiebert.

concludes, it is best for Anabaptists to believe in a “holistic conception of humanity.”<sup>97</sup> While I agree with Epp’s final conclusion, I am left to wonder how he would assess scripture.

Finally, Tiessen’s article reflects on the question of human mortality from a personal perspective. Upon reflection, he notes that the Biblical language of resurrection “is far more earthy. It affirms the value of our bodies and the physical world as a whole.”<sup>98</sup> Tiessen also adds that in his classroom, he teaches his students that the “ancient Israelites viewed human beings as single holistic entities.” Despite this biblical evidence, Tiessen explains that the death of his son has led him to believe in body-soul dualism. He explains, “As I cradled his lifeless body, a profound sense washed over me that Tim’s body was here in my arms, but the ‘real’ Tim was gone. The ‘real’ Tim, Tim’s ‘soul,’ had already passed into God’s everlasting care, and Tim was now being cradled in the loving arms of God.”<sup>99</sup> Tiessen’s article seems inconsistent to me in that he presents that scripture teaches a physicalist or mortalist position, but he appears to reject this belief out of the fear of loss of continuity of identity for his son between death and resurrection.

### **1.5.2. Should the Anabaptist soul be saved?**

In January 2018, Murphy responded to Hiebert’s article during a presentation at The Grand Dialogue, an inter-institutional, interdisciplinary, and interfaith exploration of science and

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<sup>97</sup> Delmar B. Epp, “Direction: I’m a Soul, Man: One Psychologist’s Reflection on Human Nature” 37, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 201–14.

<sup>98</sup> Dan Epp Tiessen, “Direction: Resurrection of the Body or Immortality of the Soul? Some Personal Reflections” 37, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 223–27.

<sup>99</sup> Tiessen.

religion. Murphy's keynote presentation was entitled "Do humans have souls?"<sup>100</sup> In her presentation, she argued that Christians should embrace a physicalist understanding of humanity. Hiebert had claimed in his article that Murphy's biblical case was "ambiguous at best."<sup>101</sup> Murphy countered by appealing to Biblical scholar James Dunn, who has noted that biblical language often used to support body soul-dualism should be understood aspectively and not partitively.<sup>102</sup> Although Murphy appealed to a Biblical scholar, she chose a Pauline scholar speaking about Pauline texts rather than appealing to the teaching of Jesus.

Also in attendance at the conference was Philosophical Theologian John Cooper, who has argued in his book *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* that scripture supports a dualist understanding of human nature. After the presentation was over, Cooper and Murphy continued to discuss the topic. In their conversation, Cooper sought to address the question: Why is the intermediate state so important? Cooper stated that the primary reason the intermediate state was essential for Christian theology was Christological in nature. He argued that Christians must be able to answer the question: Where was Jesus on Holy Saturday? Cooper then added that this concern touches the theological categories of anthropology, Christology, and eschatology.

In defense of his view, Cooper appealed to Chalcedonian Christology and the understanding that Jesus is believed to have two natures. He added that this has been the orthodox position of not only the Roman Catholic church but also the majority of Protestants.

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<sup>100</sup> Nancy Murphy, "Do humans have souls?," recorded Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0wHkn202wk>

<sup>101</sup> Hiebert, "Is the Search for the Anabaptist Soul a Dead End? Historic Anabaptism Meets Nancy Murphy's Nonreductive Physicalism."

<sup>102</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmanns, 2008), 54.

Cooper explained to Murphy that the traditional doctrine has taught that Jesus' human soul remained united to his divinity at death. Murphy's response to Cooper was that somebody (who agrees with her anthropology) who does Christology would need to come up with an Anabaptist solution. This thesis has sought to take up this mantle and fill this void in Anabaptist scholarship by applying a narrative criticism to Mark's Gospel.

Should the Anabaptist soul be saved? It all depends on how the word soul is functioning in the sentence. If the word is used to denote an immaterial locus of identity that separates from the physical body at death, Boyd (at present), Hiebert, and Tiessen answer yes. They justify their positions by appealing to near-death experiences, tradition, and personal experience. On the other hand, Boyd (in his older work) Murphy, Zerbe, and Epp disagree. They believe that a person is a soul, a living physical being. They justify their positions by appealing to philosophy, Pauline literature, and psychology.<sup>103</sup>

Several things can be concluded from these Anabaptist scholars. First, current Anabaptist scholarship represents a spectrum of beliefs on the existence of the soul and the definition of death. Second, these respective Anabaptist scholars draw from various different disciplines to support their perspectives. Third, and most importantly, none of these current Anabaptist scholars have chosen a Christocentric narrative-driven approach to the question of the Anabaptist soul. This is highly problematic, considering a Christocentric narrative-driven

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<sup>103</sup> In chapter six I will argue that Murphy, Zerbe, and Epp's definition of the soul agrees with Jesus' words in Mark 3:34. Here, Jesus questions the Pharisees: "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life (*psyche*) or to kill?" In healing the man with the withered hand, Jesus defines the *psyche* as a physical person. Given this definition of the word *psyche*, Jesus emphatically answers yes, the Anabaptist soul (*psyche*) should be saved. At the same time, the Markan Jesus calls those who follow him to model his behavior by laying down their lives (*psyche*) in kenotic service (Mark 10:45). We can say then that the Anabaptist *psyche* is and will be saved through resurrection, but only after it has been willingly destroyed (*apollumi*) Mark 8:35.

approach to theology was the differentiating and defining characteristic of the Anabaptist Radical Reformation.

The diversity in thought and varied approach to the topic affirms the gap in scholarship that this thesis seeks to fill. In addition, it has led me to seek partnerships with theological voices outside the tribe of Anabaptism to construct an Anabaptist theology.<sup>104</sup> The key component that these theological voices have in common is their Christocentric narrative-driven approach to doing theology. In this way, while they are not Anabaptist, they are in sync with the Anabaptist method of constructing theology.<sup>105</sup> The work of these various non-Anabaptist theologians shows that applying a Christocentric approach to theology leads to the necessity critiquing Christendom theology.

## **1.6. METHODOLOGY.**

This thesis will apply the method of narrative criticism to the Gospel of Mark. I have chosen this methodology because it aligns with the Anabaptist core principle of Christocentricism, and I am an Anabaptist seeking to construct an Anabaptist Christology. In pursuit of this task, I will adopt the narrative criticism methodologies of Markan scholars Rhoads, Kingsbury, Camery-Hoggatt,

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<sup>104</sup> John Howard Yoder does address the topics of Chalcedonian theology and kenosis in his writings. See John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2002). However, this book, as he states, is “descriptive and historical” in nature, presenting opposing views on multiple topics and allowing the reader to determine which view they want to hold. Yoder notes that Anabaptists are biblicists and do not hold to historical church traditions or creeds. Yoder notes the problems with the Two-Natures doctrine and outlines some of the biblical texts that promote kenosis, but he does not explicitly condone the two-nature doctrine in favor of kenosis.

<sup>105</sup> It seems more appropriate for me to choose dialogue partners who have chosen the Anabaptist Christocentric method of doing theology and are not themselves a part of the Anabaptist tradition, rather than theologians who stand inside the Anabaptist tradition and are using not Christocentric methods to come to their conclusions. This approach is modeled by Boyd who engages with six non-Anabaptist scholars whom he claims take a Christocentric approach to doing theology.

and Bolt. Each of these scholars has their own particular interests in Mark's Gospel, and they all share the robust and adaptable method of approaching the text through narrative criticism. Although I will further detail their methodological approaches to Mark in chapter four, a few introductory comments can be made.

First, I have chosen David Rhoads because he is one of the pioneers of the practice of narrative criticism. Rhoads' work is unique in that as a New Testament scholar he joined minds with English professor Donald Michie to apply contemporary literary criticism to Mark's Gospel. Rhoads has shown that the method of narrative criticism is essentially concerned with four categories of a literary work; plot, setting, characters, and rhetoric. Of these, this thesis will be most concerned with rhetoric because I am seeking to ask what the author is persuading his audience to believe. More specifically, I will be interested in how the Markan author uses language to teach its audience how to think about Jesus and the topic of death. Second, Kingsbury's work is particularly useful in that it points out that narrative is driven and constructed through the conflict between a narrative's characters. Chapter six will illustrate that it is through the interaction between characters that the implied narrator of Mark has the protagonist, Jesus, define death.

Next, the narrative criticism of Camery-Hoggatt highlights the fact that there is often a subtext beneath the surface text that provides a flavor of irony for the reader. To appreciate this literary device, however, one must have the sociohistorical and linguistic knowledge of the implied reader. Such irony, I will suggest, has gone unnoticed in Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees. Finally, the work of Bolt has illustrated that the central theme of Mark's Gospel is Jesus' defeat of death. This necessitates the subsequent question I seek to ask, which is: In the

Gospel of Mark, how is death understood by the implied author and protagonist? This is critical because together, the author and protagonist present an accurate representation of the things of God (Mark 8:33).

All four of these Markan scholars, Rhoads, Kingsbury, Camery-Hoggatt, and Bolt, have applied the method of narrative criticism to Mark's Gospel in their own way. Unlike Rhoads, my narrative criticism of Mark will not seek to be comprehensive. Instead, I am concerned specifically with the Markan themes of messianic kenosis and death. As a result of this focus, my analysis naturally overlaps with Kingsbury, who has been concerned with the development of characterization and conflict. This thesis adds to Kingsbury's work in that I will demonstrate that it is within these two narrative elements (characterization and conflict) that the themes of messianic kenosis and death are at least partially forged. In addition, Camery-Hoggatt's work on the literary device of irony is useful to this thesis because Mark uses the conflict between characters to present ironic events to his readers. This thesis aims to point out the Markan irony that Camery-Hoggatt has overlooked, which is found in Jesus' conversations with his religious counterparts. Finally, I will also engage with the narrative criticism of Bolt since we are both concerned with the literary theme of Jesus' death. I will utilize Bolt's understanding of the first-century audience's cultural mind to aid in a robust narrative criticism of Mark.

To summarize, my intent in applying a narrative-critical approach to Mark's Gospel is to highlight the fact that the narrative presents a messiah who is capable of change, suffering, and death. It is important to note that in the narrative, the author never makes a distinction between Jesus' divinity and humanity. Similarly, nowhere in the text does the reader get the idea that the humanity of Jesus changes, suffers, and dies, while the divine aspect of Jesus

remains unchanged, unaffected, and immortal. Instead, Mark's Jesus is presented to the reader as a divine person capable of change, suffering, and death. This has significant ramifications for the construction of Anabaptist Christology and thanatology. In essence, what the method of narrative criticism applied to Mark's Gospel does for Anabaptist theology is to allow for story (Mark's Gospel) to overcome doctrine (Christendom Christology). This is to say that this thesis contends that by examining Mark's narrative afresh, "it is possible to overcome the failures and limitations of past embodiments of truth," namely Christendom Christology through returning to the material that is upheld as foundational for the formation of Anabaptist theology, the Gospels.<sup>106</sup>

### **1.7. PERSONAL MOTIVATIONS FOR PURSUING THIS THESIS.**

Growing up, I was raised in a Christian home. During my childhood and youth, I attended a Nazarene church with my family. Later in college, I was introduced to the Anabaptist faith tradition through the writings of John Howard Yoder.<sup>107</sup> As a Christian, Yoder's non-violent

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<sup>106</sup> Donald G Dawe, *Form of a Servant: A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif*. (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 24.

<sup>107</sup> John Howard Yoder (1927-1997) was one of the most influential Anabaptist theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Evidence of his influence can be found in the fact that his *Preface to Theology* was used as the primary source of teaching for a course entitled "Preface to Theology" at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) from approx. 1960-1981. Yoder is best known for his defense of Christian pacifism and his book *The Politics of Jesus*. Since his death in 1997, many have wrestled with the tension of his positive theological legacy that stands in tension against his sexual misconduct. Concerning his theological legacy, Roberts notes that Yoder is "far and away the most famous Mennonite theologian." She adds that "it would be difficult to overstate Yoder's impact on Mennonite theology, ethics, and ecclesiology, in both formal academic circles as well as the language, imagery, and practice of actual Mennonite congregations." However, Yoder's legacy has been tainted by his "long-standing sexual violence in Mennonite communities." Roberts, Laura Schmidt. 2021. "Addressing Sexual Violence in Mennonite Communities: The Case of John Howard Yoder." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 41 (1):87-94. I believe that both his theological legacy and sexual misconduct must be taken seriously. Yoder's harmful behavior must be denounced. However, I suggest "boxing up his books, storing them in attics or tossing them into recycling bins" is not the correct approach to wrestling with Yoder's legacy. Villegas, Isaac Samuel. 2021. "The Ecclesial Ethics of John Howard Yoder's Abuse." *Modern Theology* 37 (1):191-214. If we are honest, the very Bible we claim to be authoritative for the Christian community is filled with sinful characters. The Psalms which are believed to have



theology intrigued me and filled a theological void that my Christian upbringing lacked. Later, after graduating from seminary, I also encountered the theological writings of Anabaptist pastor Greg Boyd. What I appreciated most about the Anabaptist faith was the centrality of Christ in the formation of faith and practice. This appeal eventually led to my current pastoral role as a pastor within the Mennonite Brethren denomination.

As a pastor, I became personally interested in the topic of this thesis through my individual study of topics such as anthropology, thanatology, Christology, and eschatology. As a follower of Jesus, I have been on a journey to allow the Gospel narratives to shape my theology even when they may conflict with church traditions. In part, my journey into investigating this topic began with the eschatological question: What is the final fate of the unbeliever? Through my studies, I became convinced that scripture teaches the final fate of the unrepentant will be death and not eternal conscious torment. This belief prompted further study into the topics of biblical anthropology and thanatology. My study of biblical anthropology resulted in aligning with the general consensus of Old Testament scholarship that holds that the Ancient Israelite view of humanity is monistic, not dualistic.

Eventually, my Anabaptist Christocentricism led me to investigate the Gospels and ask what Jesus taught about these matters. What I found initially interesting was the general lack of

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been written by David (a perpetrator of sexual misconduct) have not been thrown out by the church. In the same way, we must wrestle with the positive aspects of Yoder's theological influence and his inappropriate behavior. For a review of the allegations against him, see "John Howard Yoder's Sexual Misconduct—Introductory Article," *Peace Theology* (blog), February 8, 2011, <https://peacetheology.net/john-h-yoder/john-howard-yoder%e2%80%99s-sexual-misconduct%e2%80%94introductory-article/>. For a more current response see, Karen V. Guth, 'Lessons from Anabaptist Women's Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Violence' in Elizabeth Soto Albrecht & Darryl W. Stephens (eds), *Liberating the Politics of Jesus: Renewing Peace Theology through the Wisdom of Women* (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 199-212.

Gospel support for ideas such as a disembodied intermediate state or the concept of Jesus' Harrowing Hell on Holy Saturday. These collective interests have prompted me to embark on this thesis. At the heart of my questioning, I am seeking to ask: What did Jesus teach about his own death, and what ramifications does that have for following him?

Finally, as a worship pastor, the songs that I choose for my congregation to sing every week are important. What I have found is that the theology of body-soul dualism permeates much of contemporary praise music. Theologian Richard Middleton has highlighted the importance of this issue for me as he points out that "those in the pew (or auditorium) typically learn their theology" from the songs that are sung on Sunday mornings.<sup>108</sup> If the belief in body-soul dualism is to be done away with in Anabaptist churches, it must be addressed not only from the pulpit but from the selection of songs that are sung.

### **1.8. THESIS OVERVIEW.**

Since the aim of this thesis is to critique Christendom Christology as an Anabaptist, chapter two will begin by reviewing the Christological content that I aim to critique. This chapter will propose that the Tome of Pope Leo can be read as representative of the Christology of Christendom. This Christology holds to the belief that God is essentially immutable, impassable, and immortal. I suggest that Christendom Christology systematically infused these beliefs into its understanding of Jesus' birth, suffering, and death. As a result, the two central beliefs of Christendom Christology, (1) the immutability of God and (2) body/soul dualism, meant that for

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<sup>108</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014), 27.

this theological system, Jesus did not empty himself in becoming incarnate, suffer in his divinity, or fully die.

With the content of Christendom Christology summarized chapter three will illustrate the existence of divergent Christological beliefs within early Anabaptism. This is the problem this thesis seeks to solve. Which stream of Anabaptist Christology best aligns with the narrative of the Gospel of Mark? Through reviewing primary sources of early Anabaptists, Confessions of faith, and adversarial statements against Anabaptist beliefs (e.g., the writings of Calvin, Zwingli, Bullinger, and the Augsburg Confession), it will be shown that early Anabaptism was not unanimous in its Christological teaching. Among this diversity of Christological beliefs exists a subset of teachings that align with Christendom Christology. Evidence of Christendom's influence on Anabaptist theology includes the descriptions of Jesus having two natures, promotion of the narrative that Jesus' Harrowed Hell, and descriptions of the soul as immortal.<sup>109</sup> Both the diversity of beliefs and the apparent adoption of Christendom Christology provide the need for an Anabaptist narrative analysis and critique.

Next, chapter four will outline the narrative critical method that will be used in subsequent chapters to carry out my analysis of the Gospel of Mark. This chapter will outline the general principles of narrative criticism as a methodology, along with the narrative

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<sup>109</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2013), 534. Erickson notes that Ronald Leigh has argued that the concept of Christ having two natures is not present in Scripture. Rather, it is only a philosophical hypothesis imposed upon the text as the result of a specific understanding of Christology. Youngs concludes that for Moltmann, the concept of Christ having two natures is faulty and "has functioned as merely a defense mechanism for a classical conception of an impassible God. Samuel J. Youngs, *The Way of the Kenotic Christ: The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 46. For a case in favor of the traditional view, see Thomas V Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001). Ultimately unable to reconcile the fact that the Two-Natures view accepts contradictory attributes in one person, similar to the idea of a married bachelor, Morris appeals to "an ineliminable element of mystery," which he claims must be the case in attempting to define God.

components of story and discourse. Following this description, I will review four examples of Markan narrative criticism. This will provide a narratological toolbox that can be applied to the themes of death and kenosis in the Gospel of Mark. First, I will look at David Rhoads' elemental approach to Mark as a story. Second, I will review Jack Dean Kingsbury's aspective approach to conflict in Mark's Gospel. Third, I will review Jerry Camery-Hoggatt's literary device approach to irony in the book of Mark. Finally, I will summarize Peter Bolt's thematic approach to Jesus' defeat of death in Mark's Gospel.

Prior to applying a narrative critical approach to Mark's Gospel, chapter five will explore Bolt's method of integrating the first-century reader's cultural mind into the practice of narrative criticism. In addition, I will use Jan Sigvartsen's work on Intertestamental literature to establish criteria for categorizing afterlife literature and the beliefs they present to their audience. I will propose that three aspects of the first-century reader's cultural mind are relevant to my narrative analysis. These aspects are related to literature, leadership, and language. Regarding literature, I will review how Intertestamental literature creates a bifurcation in the first-century cultural mind between body/soul dualism and monist anthropology. Concerning religious leadership, I will show that the available sources indicate that Jesus' religious contemporaries, the Pharisees and Sadducees, maintained opposing views concerning life and death. Finally, concerning linguistics, I will look at how the lexicon of the first-century cultural mind contained a diversity of views on the *psyche*.

With a narrative method defined and sensitivity to various aspects of the audience in mind, chapter six will move to apply a narrative criticism to Mark's story in relationship to the theme of death. This chapter will analyze the theme of death within Marks' Gospel primarily

through the narrative elements of conflict (looking at the flat characters Pharisees/Sadducees and round characters Jesus' disciples) and rhetoric (the opposing lexical definitions of the *psyche*) to demonstrate how the author encourages his audience to embrace a physicalist understanding of death. I argue that the desired outcome of the Markan thanatology is that the reader adopts the belief that a person's *psyche* is mortal. This belief runs counter to the Christendom Christological belief that Jesus' *psyche* survived the death of his *soma*.

Chapter seven will further the narrative analysis of Mark's Gospel, moving to examine the theme of kenosis. This chapter will analyze the theme of kenosis within Mark's Gospel primarily through the narrative elements of motif, theme, and plot. I conclude that the Markan author primes the audience to view Jesus as a kenotic messiah by describing Jesus' experience of kenotic events. I argue that Mark teaches its audience to envision Jesus as a kenotic messiah through stories of change and self-emptying. This is important because the belief that God can change runs counter to the Christendom Christological belief that God is immutable.

Finishing my Markan narrative analysis, chapter eight will seek to show how the themes of death and kenosis are interwoven together within the Markan narrative. This chapter will analyze the theme of kenotic death within Mark's Gospel primarily through the narrative elements of verbal threads (i.e., the language of 'broken' and 'poured out') and repetition to show how the author teaches the audience to have a kenotic and physicalist understanding of death. I argue that the desired outcome of the Markan kenotic mortalism is that the reader understands Jesus' death to be kenotic and all-encompassing. Again, this undermines the Christendom Christological that God cannot change, suffer, and die.

In response to the conclusion that Mark's Gospel presents its audience with a portrait of a kenotic mortal messiah, chapter nine will move to construct an Anabaptist Christology that is grounded in the Markan narrative. Through this approach, I will seek to allow story to reform doctrine in a Christocentric narrative manner. This chapter will highlight several ways that Markan theology differs significantly from Christendom theology. For example, Mark teaches his audience to view the divine through the lens of a kenotic mortal messiah. In addition, Mark teaches his audience that on Holy Saturday, Jesus occupied a tomb as a corpse. Finally, Mark teaches his audience how to view their own deaths as followers of Jesus. Given these theological differences, I argue Christendom Christology must be rejected on several levels. Finally, I present several areas for further research and a summary of my original contribution to scholarship.

## CHAPTER 2: CHANGE AND DEATH IN CHRISTENDOM CHRISTOLOGY.

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION.

In the previous chapter, I outlined that the chief object of this thesis is to construct a non-dualist Christology with the goal of furthering the traditional Anabaptist objections to Christendom. This will expand the Anabaptist critique of Christendom Christology into the theological arenas of anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. More specifically, this thesis will challenge the ideas that Jesus as God did not change, suffer, or die. This challenge will be accomplished by examining the narrative motifs of kenosis and death in the Gospel of Mark. To provide the necessary theological context for a critique of these ideas, this chapter will seek to outline the establishment of the theology that will be critiqued. This chapter will illustrate that the belief that Jesus as God could not change, suffer, or die became the orthodox position of Christendom. These beliefs ultimately became solidified as orthodoxy through the Tome of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon.

This chapter will aim to accomplish three tasks. First, I will establish that debate over the soul's immortality existed within the first several centuries of early Christian history.<sup>110</sup> This is important because it helps to show that early followers of Jesus wrestled with how to reconcile Jesus' teaching with various cultural and philosophical influences. To illustrate the ongoing debate over the soul within the first several centuries of the Christian church's existence, I will provide three different samples of texts written within the first four centuries after Jesus'

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<sup>110</sup> For a historical overview of Christological literature in the early church, see Alois Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition. From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965). See also Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100 - 600* (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007).

death. These texts illustrate the debate between belief in soul death and the immortality of the soul. In addition to the debate over the soul, there also appears to be a difference in methodological approaches between these early church writers. As an example of this, I review theological comments of Tertullian and Arnobius, two early Christian writers who exhibit different starting points in constructing their theology.

Second, I will suggest that Platonic metaphysical arguments strongly influenced the immortalist position. This runs contrary to the Anabaptist practice of appealing to Jesus' teaching first. In support of the immortalist position, early church writers frequently appealed to Plato's definition of the *psyche* rather than the definition that can be derived from Jesus' use of the word in the Gospel of Mark. This is important because Anabaptist theology elevates Jesus' teaching above all else. If Jesus' teaching and definition of the *psyche*, in the Gospel of Mark, can be shown to be at odds with the orthodox Christendom position, Jesus must be followed over tradition.

Third, I will propose that belief in the immutability of God and the immortality of the soul became the two foundational building blocks that were essential in the construction of what has been termed Word-flesh Christology. These two building blocks, (1) divine immutability and (2) divine immortality, are present in the Tome of Pope Leo, which is arguably the most influential Christological document produced by Christendom. By outlining the framework of this Word-flesh Christology, I will have a theological model with which to contrast the kenotic Christology that will be constructed in the forthcoming chapters. If the Gospel of Mark can be shown to present an opposing Christological model to Christendom Christology, many Christological arguments within the early church that were based on a dualist



anthropological scaffolding prove to be extraneous. In addition, this critique of Christendom Christology leads to embracing the theological position that God, in his very nature, is kenotic.<sup>111</sup>

## 2.2. DEBATE OVER THE SOUL IN THE EARLY CHURCH.

Greek philosophical literature and Jewish Second Temple literature written before the Gospel of Mark contain diverse views on the human constitution and the definition of death. Mark's Gospel reflects this diversity and religious disagreement in portraying the theological conflict between Jesus and his religious contemporaries. This disagreement continued in the writings of the early Christian authors, who also exhibited both the mortalist and immortalist positions. In the aftermath of Jesus' death and resurrection, despite his clear teaching on the matter to his disciples and public dialogue with his religious contemporaries, the debate over the soul's immortality continued well into the fourth and fifth centuries.

Although Jesus' teaching on the *psyche* appears to be straightforward, i.e., that a *psyche* is a mortal person, his instruction did not settle the debate among his followers.<sup>112</sup> This is evident in the fact that early church literature during the first several centuries after Jesus'

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<sup>111</sup> One of the significant benefits of this Christological anthropology is that it does not require a hidden sub-plot that is both absent and contradictory to the Gospel accounts themselves. For example, while the classical articulations alter the language of incarnation from transformation to addition, the kenotic view fully embraces the language of transformation. In addition, while the classical view must describe Jesus' death in contradictory terms (Jesus both died and did not die), the kenotic view fully embraces the complete death of Jesus.

<sup>112</sup> For an analysis on how the early church fathers engaged with scripture, see Thomas W. Toews, "Biblical Sources in the Development of the Concept of the Soul in the Writings of the Fathers of the Early Christian Church, 100-325 C.E." (2011), <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/156>. For an analysis of the intersection of anthropology and eschatology in the early church as it pertains to conditional immortality, see John H. Roller, "The Doctrine of Immortality in the Early Church" (2008), <https://www.truthaccordingtoscripture.com/documents/death/immortality-early-church/John%20Roller%20--%20Doctrine%20of%20Immortality%20in%20the%20Early%20Church.pdf>. Roller concludes that conditional immortality was initially the majority view of the early church.

death reflects proponents on both sides of the issue. Over time, the majority position became heavily weighted in support of the immortality of the soul. This immortalist position eventually became calcified as the orthodox position of the Christendom state church.

### **2.2.1. Second-century debate: Tatian (A.D. 110-180) vs. Tertullian (A.D. 145-220).**

Like the Sadducees and Pharisees, two second-century Christian theologians, Tatian and Tertullian, promoted two very different perspectives on the soul. Representing the mortalist position, Tatian the Assyrian taught that the soul is mortal and dissolves at death along with the body.<sup>113</sup> Tatian apologetically argued, “The soul is not in itself immortal, O Greeks, but mortal. Yet it is possible for it not to die. If indeed, it knows not the truth, it dies, and is dissolved with the body, but rises again at last at the end of the world with the body.”<sup>114</sup> Here, Tatian describes death like a Sadducee but looks forward to the hope of the resurrection like Jesus. Tatian’s statement closely parallels Jesus’ conversation with the Sadducees found in Mark 12:18-27. In contrast to numerous others that came after him, Tatian also spoke of the soul like an Aristotelian, stating: “The human soul consists of many parts, and is not simple; it is composite, so as to manifest itself through the body; for neither could it ever appear by itself

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<sup>113</sup> *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, vol. 2, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 70–71. Tatian’s contemporary Athenagoras disagreed. Athenagoras sided with “Plato that when the dissolution of bodies takes place,” the soul continues to exist. *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*. 148. He also states, “if the body were to be corrupted, and each of the dissolved particles to pass to its kindred element, yet the soul to remain by itself as immortal.” *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, 2:160.

<sup>114</sup> *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, 2:70–71.

without the body nor does the flesh rise again without the soul.”<sup>115</sup> Tatian’s statement stands in direct opposition to the position of Plato and many church Fathers who argued that the soul is both simple and immortal. For Tatian, the soul is understood to be the manifestation of the body; therefore, body and soul are inseparably conjoined.<sup>116</sup>

In contrast to Tatian, Tertullian of Carthage held the immortalist position arguing that death should be understood as the separation of the immortal soul from the mortal body.<sup>117</sup>

Unlike Tatian, Tertullian argued that the soul was both simple and immortal. Tertullian writes, “It is essential to a firm faith to declare with Plato that the soul is simple; in other words, uniform and uncompounded.”<sup>118</sup> Unlike Plato, Tertullian was not a proponent of the pre-existence of souls. Instead, he believed that the soul derived its immortality from God.

Tertullian clarified: “The soul, then, we define to be sprung from the breath of God, immortal, possessing body, having form, simple in its substance, intelligent in its own nature.”<sup>119</sup> These two second-century authors illustrate that among the followers of Jesus, the anthropological

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<sup>115</sup> *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, 2:70–71.

<sup>116</sup> See also F. Gavin, “The Sleep of the Soul in the Early Syriac Church,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 40 (1920): 103–20, <https://doi.org/10.2307/593409>. Gavin quotes the ‘Persian sage’ Aphraates who articulated a similar view. Aphraates says, “when men die the soulish spirit is buried with the body, and the power of sensation is taken from it.” Of note is Aphraates conflation between the concepts and language of soul and spirit.

<sup>117</sup> *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, vol. 3, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 189–93. While they agreed on the soul’s ontological immortality, Athenagoras and Tertullian differed on the state of the soul after death. Athenagoras was a proponent of an unconscious intermediate-state describing death as analogous to sleep. Athenagoras explains the “dead, and those who sleep are subject to similar states, as regards at least the stillness and the absence of all sense of the present or the past, or rather of existence itself and their own life.” *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, 2:158. Tertullian, on the other hand, believed in a conscious intermediate-state of the soul. Tertullian wrote that “souls are even now susceptible of torment and of blessing in Hades, though they are disembodied, and notwithstanding their banishment from the flesh, is proved by the case of Lazarus.” *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 3:557. The writings of these three men illustrate that three different views existed in the early church, (1) soul death, (2) soul sleep, and (3) soul consciousness. *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 3:202.

<sup>118</sup> *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 3:189–93, 202.

<sup>119</sup> *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 3:189–93, 202.

debate over the constitution of humanity (monism vs. dualism) and the definition of death (holistic mortality vs. the separation of body and soul) had yet to be settled.

### 2.2.2. Third-century debate: Origen (A.D. 185-254) vs. Arabians.

A generation later, the church historian Eusebius reported that the debate between the mortalist and immortalist positions was still taking place.<sup>120</sup> Eusebius' writings describe an event when the immortalist Origen of Alexandria spoke publicly in opposition to a mortalist group from Arabia who taught that when "the human soul dies," it "perishes with the body, but that at the time of the resurrection, they will be renewed together."<sup>121</sup> Painting Origen as the hero, Eusebius describes how Origen converted his opponents to the truth.

The writings of Origen corroborate his position and the ongoing debate. Affirming Eusebius' testimony, Origen mentions in his own writing that there are those who maintain that the "soul of man perishes immediately (after death)" and others who contend that the "soul continues to subsist or is immortal."<sup>122</sup> The latter group, he explains, believed that souls are

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<sup>120</sup> Eusebius also recorded that during his lifetime, "the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead" became the orthodox positions of the imperial church. Eusebius: *Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine* (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 158. For example, Athenagoras sides with "Plato, that when the dissolution of bodies takes place," the soul continues to exist. *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, 2:148. This can be attributed at least partly to the fact that "the imperial theologian had become a factor in the church's attempt to define its faith." Wells, *The Person of Christ*, 94. Eusebius also reported that emperor Constantine believed the "doctrine [of the immortal soul was] not merely to be admired, but profitable too." Eusebius: *Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, 566–67. Again, Eusebius records that in the process of admonishing his listeners, Constantine declared that the one who "keeps his soul pure from the pollutions of the body does not wholly die." Eusebius: *Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, 579.

<sup>121</sup> Eusebius: *Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine* (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 279.

<sup>122</sup> *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, vol. 4, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 472–88.

immortal because they are simple.<sup>123</sup> Origen himself stated that the doctrine of the immortal soul was of “pre-eminent importance.”<sup>124</sup> Establishing his position in the debate and placing himself in dialogue with Plato and other Greek philosophers, Origen declared that the soul’s immortality could be proven “not only by what the Greeks have so well said regarding it, but also in a manner agreeable to the teaching of Holy Scripture.”<sup>125</sup>

This statement by Origen illustrates how some theologians sought to synthesize the writings of Plato with the sayings of Christ: Greco-Roman philosophy with Holy Scripture.<sup>126</sup> This pattern had already been modeled by Tertullian a generation earlier. In fact, some scholars have noted that the dynamics of this internal debate were undoubtedly influenced by this attempted synthesis. The dualist Christian philosopher Cooper explains that as Jesus’ followers grew in numbers, several adherents of Platonism converted to Christianity, bringing with them a Platonic metaphysic. Seeing this as an appropriate union Cooper reports that Justin Martyr and Augustine believed “the Platonists had uncovered some truths about human nature” through philosophy.<sup>127</sup> Additionally, Herzman suggests that “Augustine’s acceptance of the Platonist philosophers can be seen both as an important historical event and as a model for

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<sup>123</sup> *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, 4:472–88.

<sup>124</sup> *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, 4:472–88.

<sup>125</sup> *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, 4:472–88. 472-488.

<sup>126</sup> To be clear, it is specifically a Platonic Greco-Roman philosophy. Aristotelean, Epicurean, and Stoic philosophy did not teach the immortality of the soul.

<sup>127</sup> John W Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000), 25. Cooper explains that Hellenistic scholars who converted to Christianity, such as “Justin Martyr and even Augustine were Platonists before they became Christians. While they were willing to give up whatever their new faith required of them, they believed that Greek thinkers, especially the Platonists, had uncovered some truths about human nature.” This speaks to the popularity of Platonic philosophy and its influence within the early church.

subsequent encounters.”<sup>128</sup> While Cooper believes the marriage of Athens and Jerusalem was appropriate, I believe the Markan material to be examined in future chapters will prove that this synthesis of Plato with Jesus is tremendously ill-founded.

### **2.2.3. Fourth-century debate: Arnobius of Sicca (A.D. 250-327).**

Despite Origen’s supposed conversion of the mortalist Arabians, the debate over the soul’s immortality continued on into the fourth century A.D. Like Origen, Christian apologist Arnobius attempted to refute his opponents who held the opposite understanding of the soul. Arnobius framed the debate by stating that there are some who say the soul is “subject to death... while others *maintain* that it is immortal.”<sup>129</sup> He further clarified that there are some arguments within this debate that defend the idea that the soul is “capable of suffering, and perishable,” while others propose “the soul is divine and immortal.”<sup>130</sup>

Contrary to Origen, who held the immortalist position, Arnobius firmly held to the soul’s mortality. In distinction from Origen, Arnobius did not seek to synthesize Plato’s writings with Jesus’ teaching but instead argued that Jesus himself taught the mortality of the soul. Arnobius explained, “We [Christians] have been taught by the greatest teacher [Jesus] that souls are set not far from the gaping jaws of death.”<sup>131</sup> In this way, Arnobius took Tertullian’s advice in

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<sup>128</sup> Ronald Herzman, “‘Confessions’ 7.9: What Has Athens to Do with Jerusalem?,” *The Journal of Education* 179, no. No 1 (1997): 49–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42743883>.

<sup>129</sup> *Fathers of the Third Century: Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, Julius Africanus, Anatolius and Minor Writers, Methodius, Arnobius*, vol. 6, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 446.

<sup>130</sup> *Fathers of the Third Century: Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, Julius Africanus, Anatolius and Minor Writers, Methodius, Arnobius*, 6:446.

<sup>131</sup> *Fathers of the Third Century: Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, Julius Africanus, Anatolius and Minor Writers, Methodius, Arnobius*, 6:446. To my knowledge, Arnobius is the only early Christian author to appeal to Jesus in support of a mortalist position.

implementing a Christocentric approach to the question of the soul's immortality. However, in doing so, he concludes the opposite of Tertullian: that the soul is mortal.

#### **2.2.4. Summary.**

The writings of these early church authors indicate that the debate over the soul's immortality lasted well into the fourth century A.D. Tatian, a second-century Christian writer, argued against the Greek idea that the soul is both simple and immortal. In opposition, Tertullian, a second-century contemporary of Tatian, sided with Plato, arguing that the soul was, in fact, simple and immortal. Later, third-century theologian Origen, following in Tertullian's footsteps, sought to synthesize Greco-Roman philosophy with Scripture. Finally, fourth-century apologist Arnobius, like Tatian, rejected Greco-Roman philosophy and claimed Jesus himself taught the mortality of the soul. This ongoing debate left the church at a critical crossroads. Would the church utilize two sources of knowledge, synthesizing the writings of Plato with the teachings of Jesus, or would it take a single-sourced Christocentric approach to the anthropological question of the soul's immortality?

### **2.3. THE MARRIAGE OF ATHENS AND JERUSALEM.**

In the aforementioned examples, both Tertullian and Origen illustrate that some early church theologians attempted to synthesize Greco-Roman philosophy with Christianity, Plato with Jesus. In fact, as I noted previously, some modern biblical scholars endorse this marriage. As the church grew, it was not uncommon for theologians to question the degree to which Christianity and culture should interact. Understanding himself to be echoing the apostle Paul's warning of

the lure of philosophy, second-century Latin Father Tertullian questioned, “What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians?”<sup>132</sup> This inquiry became more and more relevant as Christianity spread throughout the pagan Roman Empire. Like other Christian writers, Tertullian put himself in dialogue with the philosophical writings of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Stoics. Tertullian then proceeded to warn Christ’s followers against the use of pagan philosophies in determining doctrinal positions. Tertullian proposed instead that the church should adopt a Christocentric methodology, demanding that the church’s theology be grounded in nothing other than Jesus Christ. Interestingly, it was Arnobius, Tertullian’s interlocutor that appears to be the one who actually put Tertullian’s advice into practice.

It is ironic that Tertullian did not follow his own advice by pursuing Jesus’ teaching on the *psyche*. Instead, in his *Treatise on the Soul*, Tertullian models precisely what he warned against. Siding with the philosophy of Plato over Christ, Tertullian wrote, “It is essential to a firm faith to declare with Plato that the soul is simple; in other words, uniform and uncompounded.”<sup>133</sup> Here Tertullian adopted and argued for a dualist metaphysic of body and soul, appealing to Plato’s argument from simplicity. Similarly, in his *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Tertullian likened Christian anthropology to the philosophy of Pythagoras, Empedocles, and the Platonists, proclaiming that “some things are known even by nature.” In his writings, Tertullian suggests that Christians should adopt the position along with Plato that “every soul is immortal.”<sup>134</sup> Ironically, Tertullian, the theologian who warned against the church’s flirtation

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<sup>132</sup> *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 3:246.

<sup>133</sup> Tertullian, “Treatise on the Soul,” 16, accessed March 19, 2020, <https://ccel.org/ccel/tertullian/treatise/anf03>.

<sup>134</sup> *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 3:545–47.



with Greco-Roman culture and its various philosophies, proved to be a prime example of what happens when one does not take one's own advice. I believe Tertullian's writings on the *psyche* epitomize the road frequently traveled by the majority of the early church writers who reflected on the immortality of the *psyche*.<sup>135</sup> In his assessment of the early church literature, theologian Van Inwagen agrees concluding that "the anthropology of the Fathers is the result of an unfortunate marriage of Athens and Jerusalem."<sup>136</sup>

While arguments for the immortality of the soul varied among authors, numerous church Fathers explicitly promoted the teachings of Plato to some degree or another.<sup>137</sup> In this way, Christian thought was taken captive by Platonic philosophy rather than being shaped and developed from the Gospel narratives. Evidence of this can be found in the writings of the

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<sup>135</sup> Oscar Cullmann et al., *Immortality and Resurrection, Death in the Western World: Two Conflicting Currents of Thought*, ed. Krister Stendahl (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), 79. Wolfson concludes that "the concept of the soul common to all Fathers is essentially Platonic. The main characteristic of the Platonic conception of the soul is its separability from the body."

<sup>136</sup> Peter van Inwagen, "Dualism And Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 12, no. 4 (October 1, 1995): 475–88, <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil199512444>.

<sup>137</sup> For example, Clement of Rome (35-99 A.D.) stated, "For my part, I approve of Plato." *Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire)*, 2:247. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) wrote, "I confess that I both boast and with all my strength strive to be found a Christian; not because the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ." *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 192–93. Irenaeus (130-202 A.D.) declared, "Plato is proved to be more religious than these men, for he allowed that the same God was both just and good, having power over all things." *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, 1:459. Eusebius (265-339 A.D.) reports that "Plato's sentiments were sound." *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine*, 566–67. It should be noted that in engaging with the cultural philosophy of their time, early church writers took on the arguments of the most prominent Greek thinkers attempting to either synthesize their views with Christianity or explain the ways in which Christianity differed. As a result, these authors engaged with the Greek philosopher Plato finding common ground in the soul's separability but also seeking to differentiate how Christian anthropology should remain distinct. This led to various dualist arguments over the soul, such as whether the soul pre-existed the body or was created by God. While Plato taught that the soul was immortal, many Christian writers argued that immortality was a gift from God. What all parties could agree upon was the fundamental belief that death is the separation of the body from the soul, in which the soul lives on for a period of time or indefinitely without the body. Additionally, while Plato described the concept of transmigration of souls into alternative human and animal bodies, many Christian authors demanded that a person's soul would be reunited with the same body it was separated from at death. Finally, while the Platonic telos of life after death was the soul's escape from the physical body, most Christian apologists argued for a temporary bodiless intermediate-state followed by a reunion of body and soul through resurrection.

fourth-century theologian Augustine of Hippo who contended that no philosophical group came closer to Christianity than the Platonists.<sup>138</sup> Plato's argument from simplicity, which promoted belief in an immutable God and the immortal soul, became the argumentative thread that stitched much of Patristic theology together. Drawing on Plato as a source of validation, several church Fathers utilized Plato's argument of simplicity to prove the soul's immortality.<sup>139</sup> Plato's philosophical rationalization demanded that both God and human souls be understood as indivisible and, therefore, both immutable and immortal.<sup>140</sup> Reflecting on this, Cyril of Alexandria deduced that the logical conclusion of the synthesis of God's immutability and immortality meant that Jesus did not suffer or experience "death in his own nature (for it would be madness to say or think this)" but instead, he only tasted death in his flesh or human nature.<sup>141</sup> Ultimately, it was this line of reasoning that led to the definitive Christological statements of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon. Together these documents declared that

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<sup>138</sup> *St. Augustin's City of God and Christian Doctrine*, vol. 2, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887), Book 8, Ch 5.

Augustine states, "It is evident that none come nearer to us [Christians] than the Platonists."

<sup>139</sup> For instance, Tertullian writes, "It is essential to a firm faith to declare with Plato that the soul is simple; in other words uniform and uncompounded; simply that is to say in respect of its substance." *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, 3:189. Augustine also argued that because God is understood to be immutable and simple, "the human soul is likewise simple and not compound." Augustine, *The City of God, Books VIII–XVI*, ed. Gerald G. Dressler HermigildEditor, Walsh and GraceTranslators Monahan, vol. 14 (The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), 28.

<sup>140</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2013), 541–42. Erickson attributes Greek philosophy as the influential factor in the adoption of such ideas into theology. He counters that the Biblical God instead models change through relationships. Erickson astutely points out that there is a difference between the immutable static God of the Greeks and the stable God of the Israelites. The Biblical witness is that while God is dynamic in his relationships, there is no change in his character. This is reflected in the testimony of God's covenant faithfulness with Israel.

<sup>141</sup> *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 14, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 198–203.

Jesus consisted of a “reasonable soul and [human] body” and that he could “both die... and not die.”<sup>142</sup>

German theologian Eberhard Jüngel has summarized the Christological dilemma of the early church in his observation that “the existence of the man Jesus confronts us with the hermeneutical problem, both with respect to the understanding of God as well as the respect to the understanding of the self.”<sup>143</sup> The pivotal problem that plagued Christology in its embryonic stages was the question of how Jesus could be both divine and human at the same time if divinity and humanity ontologically consisted of opposing abilities or characteristics. In order to answer this question and construct a proper Christology, two essential elements were required: a concept of the divine and a working framework of humanity.

Since Christendom Christology relied on a Platonic philosophical conception of divinity and humanity, it ultimately adopted polarizing and unreconcilable contradictions foreign to the biblical narrative.<sup>144</sup> That is to say that the divine was understood to possess attributes such as immutability, impassibility, omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.<sup>145</sup> These attributes

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<sup>142</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great* (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895), 40. Leo describes Christ’s death as the separation of body and soul and his resurrection as his soul’s return to the body. Leo writes, “The LORD’S flesh being buried, both truly rested and did not undergo corruption: because it was quickly revived by the return of the soul, and rose again.” Letters 15:18. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., “The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon,” in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 14:264. This concept coincided with the mythical dramatization that Jesus, as a disembodied soul, descended to Hades. Grillmeier records that this idea “belongs to the late third and early fourth century” and perhaps reached “its climax in the Gospel of Nicodemus.” Grillmeier and Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition. From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 74–75.

<sup>143</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God’s Being Is in Becoming*, Monograph Supplements to the Scottish Journal of Theology (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), xxi.

<sup>144</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 531. Erickson explains, “as usually understood in orthodox theology, the doctrine of the incarnation involves the idea of Jesus as both fully God and fully man, possessing all the attributes of each. This appears to be a logical contradiction of very great proportions. It seems to affirm that one person has diametrically opposed qualities at the same time.”

<sup>145</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 229. Pelikan states, “the early Christian picture of God was controlled by the self-evident axiom, accepted by all, of the absoluteness and the impassibility of the divine nature. Nowhere in all of Christian doctrine was that axiom more influential than in Christology.”

were believed to be essential to divine essence or identity. In contrast, humanity was considered to be contingent, finite, able to suffer, and altogether limited in ability. The mixture of divine and human then was akin to combining oil and water. With these categories in place, theologians were forced to articulate how Jesus became incarnate, suffered, and died in a way that betrayed the biblical narrative itself. These blatant contradictions were ultimately combined and systematized through an appeal to two forms of dualism. This position has been termed Word-Flesh Christology.

#### **2.4. NESTORIUS AND CYRIL: THEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSY PRIOR TO THE COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON.**

In addition to the ongoing debate over the human constitution, church leadership also debated the logistics of the incarnation. This debate came to a head in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and propelled the church toward establishing a unified solution. In time, the debate was resolved at the Council of Chalcedon, “whose ‘Definition of Faith’ became the standard of orthodox belief.”<sup>146</sup> The debate over the incarnation came to a head when the Antiochene bishop Nestorius became the Archbishop of Constantinople in 428. Nestorius quickly found himself in a disagreement over the incarnation with Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria. Letters written by these church leaders indicate that both men embraced body-soul dualism. In addition, both men professed the immutability of God. These beliefs drastically shaped the outcome of their incarnational Christology.

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<sup>146</sup> Richard A. Norris, ed., *The Christological Controversy, Sources of Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 20.

When the letters of Nestorius and Cyril are compared, it is evident that both men followed a similar pattern of thought. First, both Nestorius and Cyril argue that God is immutable. Second, since God cannot change, the incarnation was described in terms of addition rather than transformation. Third, since God cannot change, it was believed by both men that Jesus must have two natures, a divine immutable nature, and a human mutable nature. Fourth, since God was believed to be immutable, he was also believed to be impassible. Fifth, since God was believed to be changeless, he must also be immortal. The belief in body-soul dualism complimented this line of reasoning and also made it possible because the soul provided a mechanism for the divine nature to escape death unscathed. It is because Nestorius and Cyril began with the same premise that they were forced to follow this theological line of reasoning.

#### **2.4.1. Immutable incarnation.**

When it came to explaining the incarnation, Nestorius started with the belief that “Christ as God is unaffected by change.”<sup>147</sup> Similarly, Cyril stated, “God’s Logos is by nature immortal and incorruptible” and therefore incapable of change.<sup>148</sup> This initial belief established the parameters for the theology that was to follow. The perplexing problem for both men was the challenge of articulating how a God who cannot change can also “become flesh” (John 1:14). This same issue applied to the idea of Christ emptying himself by becoming incarnate (Phil 2:7). The biblical language of becoming and emptying did not cohere with belief in divine

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<sup>147</sup> Norris, 97.

<sup>148</sup> Norris, 103.

immutability. As a result, Nestorius and Cyril were forced to rearticulate how they believed the Logos became flesh. Nestorius's view was that in becoming incarnate, Christ "assumed a person," putting humanity on like a "garment" to use as an "instrument."<sup>149</sup> This sort of language is absent from biblical descriptions of the incarnation. Instead, this type of language is much more reminiscent of Plato's anthropology. In the same way, Cyril wrote, "We do not say that the Logos became flesh by having his nature changed, nor for that matter that he was transformed."<sup>150</sup> Since both men were committed to the initial idea of God's immutability, they were forced to follow this line of reasoning where it would lead them.

#### **2.4.2. Christ's two natures and divine impassibility.**

The theological commitment to the immutability of God also led to the idea that Christ had two natures. The divine nature was believed to be immutable, impassible, and immortal, while human nature was believed to be capable of change, suffering, and death. In Nestorius's *First Sermon Against The Theotokos*, he confessed that Christ had "two natures," which allowed for the immutability of the divine to be "maintained after their union."<sup>151</sup> In his *Second Letter To Nestorius*, Cyril likewise wrote that "the natures which were brought together into a true unity were different."<sup>152</sup> This division of divinity and humanity was then applied to Jesus' life, suffering, and death. Concerning the crucifixion, Nestorius wrote, "God has been joined to the crucified flesh, even though he has not shared its suffering."<sup>153</sup> For Nestorius, it was not the

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<sup>149</sup> Norris, 96–99.

<sup>150</sup> Norris, 102.

<sup>151</sup> Norris, 97.

<sup>152</sup> Norris, 102.

<sup>153</sup> Norris, 100.

divine who suffers but the human body that the divine is wearing as a garment. Cyril agreed writing, “It is not that the Logos of God suffered in his own nature,” for he is “impassible.”<sup>154</sup>

### **2.4.3. Divine immortality.**

Finally, belief in the immutability of God also affected the way Nestorius and Cyril talked about Christ’s death. Nestorius claimed that “the incarnate God did not die”; instead, it was the human body that the Logos assumed that died.<sup>155</sup> Again, this is where body-soul dualism served a vital role within the theological system. Echoing Nestorius, Cyril emphatically wrote, “It is not that he [Jesus] actually experienced death as far as anything which touches his [divine] nature is concerned; to think that would be insanity.”<sup>156</sup> Although Nestorius and Cyril disagreed about whether or not Mary should be called the *theotokos*, the mother of God, their theological systems of belief followed very similar trajectories precisely because they began with the premise that God is immutable. Nestorius and Cyril proposed that Christ had two distinct natures and that the divine nature did not suffer or die. These beliefs were later solidified through the Tome of Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon.

## **2.5. WORD-FLESH CHRISTOLOGY AND THE INFLUENCE OF LEO’S TOME**

The establishment of Word-flesh Christology, founded on Platonic assumptions, “stressed two cardinal points.” First, it underscored the belief that “God is absolute” and, therefore, “never

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<sup>154</sup> Norris, 103.

<sup>155</sup> Norris, 96.

<sup>156</sup> Norris, 103.

changes.”<sup>157</sup> This belief was preached by early church theologians such as Celsius, Origen, and Justin Martyr. In addition, belief in God’s immutability was further established as the orthodox position at the church’s first ecumenical council, the Council of Nicaea.<sup>158</sup> Second, Word-flesh Christology espoused anthropological dualism, the understanding that each person is “a body inhabited by a soul.”<sup>159</sup> Body-soul dualism later became the orthodox doctrinal position of Christendom through the influence of the Tome of Pope Leo and the fourth ecumenical council of the church, the Council of Chalcedon. For classical Christology, the importance of these two pillars, the immutability of God and body-soul dualism, cannot be overexaggerated.<sup>160</sup>

The pillars of immutability and body-soul dualism of Word-flesh Christology critically affected three vital aspects of the Christology that emerged out of the era of Christendom. These aspects are the incarnation, God’s ability to suffer, and God’s ability to die. First, because God is understood to be immutable, “divine transfiguration into flesh is impossible.”<sup>161</sup> As a result, Christ’s incarnation had to be described in terms of the *Logos* adding flesh to himself. Second, because “God cannot change, God is impassible.”<sup>162</sup> Given the apparent dilemma that this presented to a surface-level reading of the Gospels, the church sought a solution in another form of dualism. This dualism proposed that Jesus consisted of two natures, a human nature

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<sup>157</sup> David F. Wells, *The Person of Christ: A Biblical and Historical Analysis of the Incarnation*, Foundations for Faith (Westchester, Ill: Crossway Books, 1984), 100.

<sup>158</sup> Joseph M. Hallman, *The Descent of God: Divine Suffering in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 13–31.

<sup>159</sup> Wells, *The Person of Christ*, 100.

<sup>160</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 51. Pelikan suggests that “two Christian doctrines are perhaps the most reliable indications of the continuing hold of Greek philosophy on Christian theology: the doctrine of the immortal soul and the doctrine of the absoluteness of God.”

<sup>161</sup> Hallman, *The Descent of God*, 65.

<sup>162</sup> Hallman, 111.



and divine nature. The glaring contradiction of Jesus' death was solved using Cyril's proposal that Jesus suffered in the flesh only.

Combining the two essential pillars of divine immutability and body-soul dualism, Jesus' death was explained as the separation of his mortal body from his immortal soul. In this way, the survival of Jesus' soul conveniently provided an escape hatch for the immutable, impassible, and immortal divine nature. In summary, Word-flesh Christology relied upon two forms of dualism to explain Christ's incarnation, suffering, and death.<sup>163</sup> This double dualism of divine-human natures and body-soul then became solidified as the orthodox position through Pope Leo's Tome and the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>164</sup>

### **2.5.1. The construction of Word-flesh Christology.**

Historically, the Council of Chalcedon and its Christological formulation have been understood as one of the most fundamental Christological statements the church has ever written.<sup>165</sup> The pivotal role of the Chalcedonian definition within church history was the establishment of the Christological concept of the Hypostatic Union. This idea became the "*locus classicus*" for understanding the incarnation of God and therefore had a "pervasive influence" on how the

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<sup>163</sup> Later another form of dualism, a dualism of minds, would be proposed to explain how Jesus could at the same time be both divinely omniscient and humanly limited in knowledge. For an example of this view see, Thomas V Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 102–3. Morris explains, "In the case of God Incarnate, we must recognize something like two distinct ranges of consciousness. ... The divine mind of God the Son contained, but was not contained by, his earthly mind, or range of consciousness. That is to say, there was what can be called an asymmetric accessing relation between the two minds."

<sup>164</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2010), 116. Evans represents a standard kenotic critique of the Christological views present in Leo's Tome and Chalcedon, claiming that "the orthodox doctrine of the Incarnation spelled out at Nicaea and Chalcedon" are incoherent because they demand a logical impossibility.

<sup>165</sup> For a historical overview of the Council of Chalcedon, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 3:740-47.

event of Jesus' death is understood.<sup>166</sup> While the Chalcedonian definition did not directly address the theology of Holy Saturday, its theological conclusions significantly impacted how Jesus' death was interpreted. Similarly, this directly affected what was believed to have occurred between Jesus' burial and resurrection.<sup>167</sup> The core of this significance can be found in a document that preceded the Council of Chalcedon, Pope Leo's Tome. This document aptly summarized the Christological struggles that preceded the council's final Christological confession of faith. It is in Leo's Tome that the significant Christological conclusions relevant to a theology of Holy Saturday were established.

Although Pope Leo's Tome is less familiar than the Chalcedonian Creed, Grillmeier concludes that it is "the most important Christological document of its kind" produced by the Latin church.<sup>168</sup> While the more well-known Chalcedonian formula established a Christological bedrock that has stood the test of time, the document that preceded the Creed and provided the necessary philosophical theology for its logical conclusions was Pope Leo's Tome. This document sought to "protect the divine nature" from being contaminated by human nature, which was understood to be susceptible to change, suffering, and death.<sup>169</sup> Despite its popularity, some Anabaptist theologians such as John Howard Yoder and Greg Boyd have argued that the language of Chalcedon and Leo's Tome presents an inadequate metaphysical explanation of Jesus' incarnation and death. While Word-flesh theology seeks to insulate the

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<sup>166</sup> Edward T. Oakes, "The Internal Logic of Holy Saturday in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 2 (2007): 184–99, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2400.2007.00248.x>.

<sup>167</sup> This can be seen, for example, in Oakes' analysis of von Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday, in which the Hypostatic Union provides an explanation as to how Jesus survives his bodily death as a soul and descends into the underworld. See Oakes, 193.

<sup>168</sup> Grillmeier and Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition. From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 526.

<sup>169</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 260. Word-flesh Christology appears to promote a subversive counter-narrative that subtly undermines the Gospel narratives themselves.

divine from change, suffering, and death, the Gospel stories speak of Jesus' limitations, suffering, and death without qualification. Contrary to the Gospel narratives, Word-flesh Christology qualifies how it speaks of Jesus' limitations, suffering, and death, claiming that hidden under the surface of the narrative is a divine nature that remained changeless and unimpacted by the events of his human life.

#### **2.5.1.1. The influence of the Nicene Creed and belief in Divine Immutability.**

Prior to the writing of Pope Leo's Tome, the Nicene Creed, written in 325 A.D., laid the essential theological groundwork by establishing the immutability of the *Logos* in relation to the incarnation. The Creed declared that the Son of God was not "subject to change or conversion," and anyone not adhering to this view was anathematized by the "Catholic and Apostolic church."<sup>170</sup> This Creed developed in a historical context where bishops of different camps were excommunicating each other for various theological reasons. Nicaea certainly helped to narrow some of the theological diversity, but the Council didn't create a stable theological status quo. Through this decree, ostracization became a powerful tool in maintaining a certain set of theological beliefs within the Catholic church.

In his historical summary, Pelikan concludes that the belief that God could not change or suffer "was a basic presupposition of all Christological doctrine" being done during this time in history.<sup>171</sup> This commonly held belief became the cornerstone upon which Leo built his Christology. God's immutable nature was the most crucial and fundamental aspect of Leo's

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<sup>170</sup> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., "The Nicene Creed," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 14:3.

<sup>171</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 270.

theology, upon which all other elements relied. As the letters of Nestorius and Cyril show, Leo's Tome was not an original theological contribution but rather a mapping out of the Christological definition established at Nicaea. Leo's Tome clearly indicates that he had adopted the Nicene Creed's guiding principle that the divine is immutable.<sup>172</sup> This became the theological linchpin for the Word-flesh Christology of Leo and Chalcedon.

Both the Nicæan definition of the immutability of God and the Chalcedonian definition that Christ was a composite of two natures became safeguarded from any would-be challenger through the threat of anathematization. Extracts from the Council report that after Leo's Tome was read at the Council of Chalcedon, the bishops proclaimed, "Anathema to him who does not thus believe. Peter has spoken thus through Leo."<sup>173</sup> The Word-flesh Christology established at Nicaea, affirmed by Leo and defined by Chalcedon through the influence of Christendom, had a significant long-lasting impact on the theology of the church. Pelikan concludes that "the Chalcedonian Christology set the terms for the theology and devotion of the Latin church at least until the Reformation."<sup>174</sup> The belief that God could not change became the initial domino that set off a theological chain reaction resulting in the understanding that Jesus was unable to die. This description of Jesus' death, however, stands as a blatant contradiction to the Gospel narratives themselves and Jesus' own definition of death.

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<sup>172</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, 40.

<sup>173</sup> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., "The Council of Chalcedon: Extracts from the Acts, Session II (Continued)," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 14:259.

<sup>174</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 266.

### 2.5.1.2. Immutable incarnation.

Leo's commitment to the doctrine of divine immutability had three consequences for the shape of Christian theology. First, God's inability to change necessitated viewing the incarnation as an addition rather than a transformation. For Leo, God's immutability required an incarnation of addition.<sup>175</sup> Rather than using the biblical language of becoming (John 1:14) or transformation (Philippians 2:6-8), Leo described the incarnation as a "veil of flesh which covered His [Jesus] Divinity."<sup>176</sup> For Leo, any language of becoming or transformation had to be rejected because of his belief that God could not change. In addition, Leo postulated that Jesus had two natures: one divine (immutable) and one human (mutable). These natures were believed to have contradictory characteristics (i.e., divine immortality and human mortality), which remained separate from one another. These beliefs were affirmed in the Chalcedonian formulation.<sup>177</sup>

For Leo, it was essential that "Christ should have lost nothing of his divinity" in becoming incarnate.<sup>178</sup> This view runs counter to any concept of kenosis or self-emptying by which God is understood to experience change. Rather than the *Logos* becoming flesh, Leo explained the incarnation in terms of the *Logos* adding humanity to himself while at the same time remaining utterly distinct from it. The ultimate result of framing the incarnation in the

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<sup>175</sup> For a kenoticist critique of the adoption of the language of 'addition' over 'becoming,' see Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology*, 191–217.

<sup>176</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, 41.

<sup>177</sup> The Creed reads, "Acknowledged in Two Natures unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the difference of the Natures being in no way removed because of the Union, but rather the properties of each Nature being preserved, and (both) concurring into One Person and One Hypostasis; not as though He was parted or divided into Two Persons, but One and the Self-same Son and Only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ."

<sup>178</sup> G. A. Keith, "Leo the Great," ed. Martin Davie et al., *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic* (London; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 510.

language of addition rather than transformation meant there was no room in the theological system for divine fragility.

### **2.5.1.3. Divine impassibility.**

Since Leo professed God is immutable, it also necessarily followed that he should believe God is also impassable. Just as belief in God's immutability shaped the definition of the incarnation, so also God's changelessness shaped Leo's articulation of Jesus' crucifixion, death, and resurrection. For Leo, affirming God's immutability naturally led to the belief that God is also impassible. Leo concluded that God "cannot suffer" because he cannot change.<sup>179</sup> However, this created a conflict in Leo's ability to synthesize his Christology with the story of Jesus' crucifixion. Within Leo's Christological framework, Jesus can only suffer in his human nature. This concept, however, fails to consider the reality that natures do not suffer; people suffer.

The term nature is used as a descriptive word of a person's fundamental dispositions, characteristics, attributes, or abilities, and is not the person themselves. The theologian John Meyendorff has pointed out this distinction in relationship to Leo's theological line of reasoning. He keenly observes, "Only *someone* can die, not something, or a nature or the flesh."<sup>180</sup> It is precisely at this point that Leo failed to recognize that what he proposed, in essence, betrayed the Hypostatic Union. This, in turn, reveals the contradictory nature of what the Hypostatic Union proposes: a single person possessing contradictory and opposite natures

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<sup>179</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, 40.

<sup>180</sup> John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011), 72.

or characteristics. The problem for Leo's theology is that people live, suffer, and die; natures do not.

#### **2.5.1.4. Divine immortality.**

Finally, since God was believed to be immutable, God's unchanging nature did not allow for His union with the perishable. While anthropological dualism may have been the water in which Leo was already swimming, it uniquely served his theological system since God's immutable divine nature needed a way to escape death unharmed. Anthropological dualism provided a way for Leo to hold to both the immutability of God and still confess with the Gospels that Jesus died. For Leo, the soul provided a way for God's immutable divine nature to escape death. This is exhibited in Leo's description of Jesus' resurrection. Leo suggests, "The LORD'S flesh being buried, both truly rested and did not undergo corruption: because it was quickly revived by the return of the soul, and rose again."<sup>181</sup> Death and resurrection for Leo are defined as the separation and reunion of body and soul.

Attempting to salvage the Gospel writer's confession that Christ died, was buried, and was resurrected, Leo concluded that "the same Mediator between GOD and men, the Man Christ Jesus, could both die with the one [human nature] and not die with the other [divine nature]."<sup>182</sup> This, however, is not only an oxymoron but (as I will show in later chapters) a betrayal of Jesus' own definition of death. Leo explains that this is possible because Christ's "natures retain their own proper character without loss: and as the form of GOD did not do

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<sup>181</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, Letters* 15:18.

<sup>182</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, 40.*

away with the form of a slave, so the form of a slave did not impair the form of God.”<sup>183</sup> It is the belief in the soul’s survival of physical death that allowed for the dual-nature views tenability. Christ’s divine nature could now be coupled with a human soul, providing an escape hatch for the divine nature to survive bodily death. Leo expressed this by concluding, “The Son of God is said to have been crucified and buried, although it was not actually in His Divinity whereby the Only-begotten is co-eternal and con-substantial with the Father, but in His weak human nature that He suffered these things.”<sup>184</sup> As it was previously stated in relation to Christ’s suffering, what is problematic about this hypothesis is the oversight that ‘natures’ do not die; people die. However, for Leo, there had to be a logical way by which the person Jesus Christ could both die and not die. This is where anthropological dualism provided a necessary theological service, even if it resulted in an irreconcilable antinomy.

In the end, Leo’s definition of death arose out of the necessity to serve the doctrine of God’s immutability, which in turn mandated a particular understanding of the incarnation. Leo’s initial belief in God’s immutability ultimately led to the contradictory summative statement that Jesus both died and did not die. This conception of death later perpetuated the idea that Jesus descended into Hades as a disembodied soul.<sup>185</sup> This perspective of Jesus’ death was the logical

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<sup>183</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, 40. See also Letters 35:2. Leo writes, “For the Word was not in any part of It turned either into flesh or into soul, seeing that the absolute and unchangeable nature of the Godhead is ever entire in its Essence, receiving no loss nor increase.”

<sup>184</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, 41.

<sup>185</sup> Martin F. Connell, “Decensus Christi Ad Inferos: Christ’s Descent to the Dead,” *Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (June 2001): 262–82, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/212696337/abstract/375C768829384E9CPQ/1>. Connell admits that there is no sign of Jesus’ descent in the Gospels. He claims its only explicit Scriptural support is found in the First Letter of Peter. Connell also adds that in the period “between the councils of Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381) and the councils of Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), the Christological contentions about the person and natures of Christ resulted in some awkward configurations of the person of Christ in the span between death and resurrection. There was a problem about how the salvation borne by the descent could have happened if the body or ‘flesh’ was in the silence of the tomb.” Connell explains that it was the bishop of Aquileia



result of holding to the immutability of the divine. As we shall see later, the Christology produced by such speculation established insurmountable tensions between the early Christological co-ordinates of Mark and the doctrinal framework offered at Nicaea.

### **2.5.2. Christ's two natures and body-soul dualism.**

The belief established at Nicaea, adopted by Leo, and further expounded upon at Chalcedon that God cannot change necessitated a symbiotic double dualism of divine-human natures and an anthropological dualism of body-soul. These dualistic beliefs exhibited in Pope Leo's Tome are similarly expressed in the declarative statements of the Council of Chalcedon. Word-flesh Christology is best understood through two forms of dualism. First, dualist anthropology was affirmed, declaring that Jesus consisted of a "reasonable soul and [human] body."<sup>186</sup> Second, a dualism of divine and human natures was instituted, which explicitly stated that Jesus' divinity and humanity should be understood as "two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, distinctly."<sup>187</sup> Once established, this Christology influenced other Christological beliefs pertaining to the topics of Holy Saturday, atonement, incarnation, anthropology, eschatology, and more. Under this Christological framework, Christ modeled the perfect human life and death. Therefore, death for all humanity must be defined as the separation of body and soul.

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who "worked out the spatial and temporal complexity of the person of Christ in the descent by having the humanity and divinity of Christ act separately."

<sup>186</sup> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., "The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 14:264.

<sup>187</sup> Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., "The Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon," in *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 14:264.

## 2.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to highlight three important things related to the concepts of change and death within the formation of Christendom Christology. First, this chapter demonstrated through the writings of Tatian, Tertullian, Eusebius, Origen, and Arnobius that the debate over the soul's immortality did not end with Jesus' teaching. These early church writings display how the church was at a crossroads. During this period in church history, the church sought to determine how influential Athens would be on Jerusalem.

Second, these early church writings show that many theologians adopted a Platonic framework of divinity and humanity influenced by Plato's argument of simplicity. During the formation of the Word-flesh theology, Christological debate took place concerning the details of Jesus' incarnation. What the letters of Nestorius and Cyril divulge is that a theological system that begins with the belief in the immutability of God forces itself to also adopt the concepts of divine impassibility and immortality.

Given this complex history, perhaps the most critical question for Anabaptist Christology is: How did those engaged in the debate seek to validate their theological position? For example, a philosophically initiated theology begins with abstract truths about God. This philosophical approach typically begins by highlighting "all the 'omni-properties' and 'total' characteristics as being essential to divinity."<sup>188</sup> Alternatively, a Christocentric approach begins with Jesus, taking him to be the "normative revealer of God."<sup>189</sup> As this chapter has sought to show when God is defined philosophically and determined to have essential properties such as

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<sup>188</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 2nd ed (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 232.

<sup>189</sup> O'Collins, 233.

immutability, impassability, and immortality, the incarnation must be explained in terms of a “real contradiction,” and “no explanation can remove the incoherence.”<sup>190</sup>

Third, in agreement with Nestorius and Cyril, Pope Leo's Tome is the document that appears to be both summative and axiomatic for the Christology that developed out of the Christendom time period. This pivotal document set the stage for the fourth ecumenical Council of Chalcedon and laid the foundation for what has been labeled Word-flesh Christology. At the center of this theological system is the belief that God is immutable. As a result of God's changelessness, it is also understood that divinity was only veiled in flesh. This meant that Jesus suffered only in his human nature and the divine nature of the *Logos* escaped death through the survival of his soul.

Through the influence of Pope Leo, the orthodox position concerning Christology came to be the belief that Jesus (and therefore all of humanity) consisted of an immaterial soul and a physical body, with the soul having the capacity to maintain life apart from the body upon death. To support the pillars of divine immutability and anthropological dualism, classic Christology created a subversive narrative that ultimately undermined Jesus' revelation of divinity and humanity. Finally, to protect these beliefs from being challenged in the future, the authors of the Chalcedonian Creed threatened anathematization to anyone who did not agree.

The existing Anabaptist critique of various Christendom beliefs and practices has developed from the understanding that the “alliance between church and state from the second half of the fourth century onwards has resulted in ways of reading the Bible

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<sup>190</sup> O'Collins, 238.

fundamentally alien to that of the earliest church.”<sup>191</sup> To correct this error, the Anabaptist approach has been to apply a Christocentric hermeneutic to the Bible and more specifically the Gospels. This thesis will build on the historical Anabaptist critique of Christendom by comparing and contrasting the Word-flesh Christology of this chapter with the Gospel of Mark.

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<sup>191</sup> Lloyd Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom* (Harrisonburg, Va: Herald Press, 2012), 22.

## CHAPTER 3: EARLY ANABAPTISM AND THE SOUL.

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION.

To expand the Anabaptist critique of Christendom Christology, this chapter will aim to illustrate that early Anabaptist beliefs were diverse, and that some of these beliefs appear to have been adopted from Christendom Christology. First, I will outline the shifting religious context of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which gave birth to the Anabaptist Radical Reformation. This theological context is important because it helps set the stage for why early Anabaptist theology possessed antithetical views. Prior to the emergence of the Anabaptist faith movement, debate was taking place over the immortality of the soul and what was believed to happen to a person at death within the Catholic church. Although the Fifth Lateran Council of the Roman Catholic church affirmed the doctrine of the soul's immortality, this theology was called into question by the Italian philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi. In addition to the internal debate within the Catholic church, Protestant reformers also mounted an external attack against the Roman Catholic church's doctrine. While this attack was theologically diverse, the central issue between Protestant and Catholic theologians appeared to be the disagreement over the Catholic belief in purgatory. It was out of this context of questioning tradition that the Anabaptist movement emerged.

When examining early Anabaptist beliefs on the soul, two immediate concerns arise. First, unlike other issues that Anabaptists were united on, such as the rejection of infant baptism, early Anabaptist theologies of the soul present divergent views related to the fields of anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. To illustrate the antithetical views of early Anabaptists, I will review early writings that show signs of disagreement concerning topics

related to the soul. In addition, I will review early Anabaptist confessions written by different faith communities, which also exhibit a spectrum of beliefs concerning human anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. These opposing anthropological views that existed within early Anabaptism illustrate the necessity for further investigation and a Christocentric approach to determining which view should be adopted.

Second, early Anabaptist theology shows several signs of adopting the Christendom Christology outlined in the previous chapter. This includes descriptions of God's unchangeability, Christ having two natures and Jesus' postmortem survival of death via his soul. In addition to this, some documents show signs of internal contradiction. This can be seen in the tension between holding to the belief in the immutability of God and the desire to use biblical language that indicates change. Later in this thesis, I will seek to determine which of these opposing views is most faithful to the Gospel of Mark.

Lastly, I will review several Protestant documents that condemn the Anabaptists for their beliefs about the soul. These Protestant polemics include Ulrich Zwingli's *Refutation Against the Tricks of the Anabaptists* and John Calvin's *Psychopannychia*. In addition to the primary Anabaptist sources, these documents also indicate early Anabaptists held to a variety of views such as soul sleep (psychopannychism) and soul death (thnetopsychism).

### 3.2. THE STATE OF THE SOUL PRIOR TO THE RADICAL REFORMATION.

During the Protestant and Radical Reformation, two views on the soul challenged the traditional view of Christendom.<sup>192</sup> The first position, psychopannychism (literally: soul sleep), holds to a form of body-soul dualism. Under this view, death is the separation of the soul from the body. Between death and resurrection, the soul is said to sleep. In this state, the soul is believed to be unconsciousness. Norman Burns observes that “psychopannychism seems to have been the opinion of Luther (at least in his early career) and his English disciples William Tyndale and John Frith.”<sup>193</sup>

The second position, labeled *thnetopsychism* (literally: soul death), holds a monist anthropological position. This position denies the existence of an immaterial soul that is separable from the body. Under this view, death affects the entire person who is their body. Between death and resurrection, the corpse of a person decays. These two views can be compared with the Christendom view (immortalist) in the following chart.

	<b><u>Immortalist</u></b>	<b><u>Psychopannychist</u></b>	<b><u>Thnetopsychist</u></b>
Human constitution	Dualist (body-soul)	Dualist (body-soul)	Monist (body)

<sup>192</sup> See George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3. ed., rev. expanded, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies 15 (Kirksville, Mo: Truman State Univ. Press, 2000), 64. Williams outlines that several “divergent views” concerning a person’s “survival after death” were being debated during the Reformation. The first view, natural immortality, was the view of Plato. The second view, conditional immortality, he explains, was the standard Christian view. This position holds that upon creation, the soul is immortal. The third view, psychopannychism, holds that at death, the soul separates from the body but sleeps until the resurrection. The final view, thnetopsychism, held that the soul is the life force or form of the body and does not survive death. At times distinguishing between soul sleep and soul death becomes difficult because some of those who held to soul death used the terminology of soul sleep as a metaphor. See also Gergely Juhász, *Translating Resurrection: The Debate between William Tyndale and George Joye in Its Historical and Theological Context*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, VOLUME 165 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2014), 68. Juhász states “The question of soul sleep vs. immortality of the soul a much debated issue at the time”

<sup>193</sup> Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 23.

Death	Soul consciousness	Soul Sleep	Decomposing body
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### 3.2.1. Catholic disagreement.

Leading up to the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648), Christian thanatology became a hotly debated topic.<sup>194</sup> During this time, conflicting views on the human constitution and the meaning of death emerged within Roman Catholicism. To settle the dispute over the question of body-soul dualism and the soul's immortality, the Catholic church held its Fifth Lateran Council in 1513. The result of this meeting was the condemnation of anyone holding to the soul's mortality.<sup>195</sup> Affirming body-soul dualism and the soul's immortality, the council sought to squelch dissension before momentum could build. In affirming the soul's immortality, the Fifth Lateran Council reinforced tradition attempting to safeguard the Christological claims of Christendom.

Despite the threat of condemnation, some theologians spoke out against the church's established position. One of these dissenting voices was Catholic philosopher and theologian Pietro Pomponazzi. In 1516, three years after the Fifth Lateran Council, Pomponazzi published a work entitled *On the Immortality of the Soul*. In his writings, Pomponazzi openly critiqued Thomas Aquinas's beliefs on the soul. Challenging the Catholic tradition, Pomponazzi astutely pointed out that the Aristotelian soul was both "material and perishable."<sup>196</sup> This critique argued that the Catholic church's doctrine on the soul was grounded more in Platonic than

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<sup>194</sup> Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton*.

<sup>195</sup> For a history of the development of thought on the soul in the Catholic tradition, see Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100 - 600* (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007); Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *The Shape of Death: Life, Death, and Immortality in the Early Fathers* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1978).

<sup>196</sup> Francesco Petrarca and Ernst Cassirer, eds., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Nachdr. (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007), 302.



Aristotelian philosophy. Since Pomponazzi's teaching on the soul directly contradicted the Fifth Lateran Council, the Roman Catholic church officially denounced him as a heretic. However, Pomponazzi escaped facing trial by sheltering himself under the wings of the powerful Venetian Cardinal Pietro Bembo.<sup>197</sup>

### 3.2.2. Protestant disagreement.

Also engaging in the debate over the soul's immortality was the Protestant Reformer Martin Luther.<sup>198</sup> On November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1521, Luther responded to the pope's threat of ex-communication in writing. Luther stated that the church's belief that "the soul is immortal" was a monstrous opinion and belonged among the "Roman dunghill of decretals."<sup>199</sup> Later, in his commentary on Psalm 118, Luther also commented, "God cannot be the God of those who are dead or who are nothing, but must be the God of the living...hence death is not death to the saints, but a sleep."<sup>200</sup> To defend his position, Luther employed the narrative account of Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees found in Mark 12:18-27. Luther claimed that Jesus had argued that the dead must be genuinely dead for Jesus' argument for the resurrection to work.

Several years later, in 1529, lawyer and philosopher Thomas More published a document entitled *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* in defense of the Roman Catholic position. Using language more reminiscent of Platonic philosophy than Biblical anthropology, More

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<sup>197</sup> Martin Pine, *Pietro Pomponazzi Radical Philosopher of the Renaissance* (Padova: Antenore, 1986), 124–28.

<sup>198</sup> Scholars debate whether or not Luther held to a literal soul-sleep position or a metaphorical sleep of the soul. For an overview of Luther and the soul see Joseph Saligoe, *Death until Resurrection: An Unconscious Sleep According to Luther*, 2020.

<sup>199</sup> Francis Blackburne, *A Short Historical View Of The Controversy Concerning An Intermediate State And The Separate Existence Of The Soul* (1765) (London: Field, 1765), 12–13.

<sup>200</sup> Henry Cole, *Select Works Of Martin Luther: An Offering To The Church Of God In "the Last Days"* (Arkose Press, 2015), 1:349. For Luther's views on death and the soul see, Saligoe, *Death until Resurrection*.

claimed that the body is but a “garment of the soul.”<sup>201</sup> More’s theological defense did not go unanswered. A year later, in response to More, the biblical translator William Tyndale wrote a document entitled *Answer to Thomas More’s Dialogue*. In contrast to More and swimming against the stream of Catholic tradition, Tyndale rejected the immortal soul doctrine. While More claimed Jesus’ conversation with the mortalist Sadducees provided evidence for body-soul dualism and a disembodied intermediate state, Tyndale argued the opposite, siding with Luther. Responding to More, Tyndale wrote,

And when he [More] proveth that the saints be in heaven in glory with Christ already, saying, ‘If God be their God, they be in heaven, for he is not the God of the dead;’ there he stealeth away Christ’s argument, wherewith he proveth the resurrection: that Abraham and all saints should rise again, and not that their souls were in heaven; which doctrine was not yet in the world. And with that doctrine, he taketh away the resurrection quite and maketh Christ’s argument of none effect.<sup>202</sup>

In his critique of More, Tyndale highlighted that if More was correct, Jesus’ statement that God was not the God of the dead but the living is rendered mute. Worse than this, Tyndale also pointed out that belief in an intermediate state negates Jesus’ argument for the necessity

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<sup>201</sup> Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, vol. 12 (Yale University Press, 2014), 108.

<sup>202</sup> William Tyndale, *An Answer to Sir Thomas More’s Dialogue: The Supper of the Lord After the True Meaning of John VI. and 1 Cor. XI. And Wm. Tracy’s Testament Expounded* (Printed at the University Press, 1850), bk. 4, chaps. 4, 118.

of bodily resurrection.<sup>203</sup> Tyndale, like Luther, opposed the doctrine of the immortal soul appealing to Jesus' conversation with the mortalist Sadducees as support for their position. Williams summarizes that "although Tyndale did not agree with the radicals on the matter of baptism, he did share with them adherence to the doctrine of the sleep of the soul."<sup>204</sup>

### **3.2.3. Summary.**

In summary, disagreement over Christian beliefs regarding human composition and the meaning of death occurred in both Catholic and Protestant circles before and during the formation of the Anabaptist faith. While the Catholic church maintained and affirmed the beliefs established by Christendom, some Protestant Reformers rejected them. Knowledge of this historical context is important because it was out of this context, in which there was disagreement over the soul that the Anabaptist Radical Reformation was birthed. Since Anabaptism emerged out of a context of theological controversy, Anabaptist theologians were naturally forced to take sides. Early Anabaptist theologians had to choose to side with the Catholic Christendom Christology or with the dissenting Reformers who had begun to pave an alternative way. In general, Anabaptism did not seem to shy away from rejecting tradition even when it was controversial. Rejection of beliefs such as infant baptism, taking oaths, and the use of violence set them at significant odds with their religious counterparts. However, this unified

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<sup>203</sup> The writings of the apostle Paul reinforce Tyndale's rebuttal. Paul explains to the church in Corinth that if there is no resurrection from the dead, those that have already died, have perished (1 Cor. 15:17-18). This indicates that Paul, like Jesus, affirmed both the finality of death and the necessity of resurrection.

<sup>204</sup> Williams, *The Radical Reformation*. 605. See Tyndale, *Works*, ed. John Foxe (London, 1573), 324.

front on such controversial theological issues seems to have broken down when it came to the topic of the human soul.

It remains unclear why a movement that appears to have been so counter-cultural despite the cost of martyrdom would show ambiguity on seemingly such an important and culturally contentious issue. Why would a faith movement that was willing to die for their beliefs not be unified on the definition of death? We might also ask, why are there plenty of sources condemning Anabaptists for their thanatological beliefs and so few original Anabaptist sources that promote these beliefs?<sup>205</sup>

### **3.3. EARLY ANABAPTIST BELIEFS.**

Several preliminary observations can be made when observing the beliefs of the early Anabaptists. First, polemics against Anabaptist beliefs were widely distributed and frequently translated into multiple languages. In contrast, original Anabaptist documents were often suppressed or destroyed. Second, for the first generation of Anabaptists, persecution and the threat of death were a serious concern. Many accounts of persecuted Anabaptists who died for their beliefs are found in the book, *The Martyr's Mirror*. Third, Anabaptism was a fluid movement that developed over time and in several cultural contexts. Finally, it appears from the documents that have survived that theology related to the soul was not a primary concern for many of the early Anabaptist writers.

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<sup>205</sup> While they are speculative, a least three reasons can be proposed as to why there are so few Anabaptist sources on thanatology. First, it could be that Anabaptist theologians did not feel the need to replicate existing discussions and instead simply chose a side. Second, it could be that Anabaptist theologians did produce content on the topic of thanatology and their opponents were successful at systematically destroying these documents. Finally, it is possible that there were simply other more pressing issues that drew the attention of Anabaptist theologians who were writing for the community.

Brewer and Whitford have observed that, “If one were to review the writings of the more noted Anabaptist theologians at the time, particularly Conrad Grebel, Pilgram Marpeck, and Menno Simons, none, in his extant works, makes any mention of the state of the soul.”<sup>206</sup> Instead, as expected, Anabaptists were busy “polemically addressing their detractors regarding baptism, ecclesiology, and the role of the state in religious practices—in order to defend themselves against intense persecution.”<sup>207</sup> Still, this invites the question, wouldn’t a group willing to die for their beliefs also want to clearly define what death meant and what believers should expect to experience or look forward to after death?

### **3.3.1 A spectrum of belief within early Anabaptism.**

One challenge in analyzing early Anabaptist thanatology is a lack of concentrated material on the topic. Early Anabaptist writings appear to have been more concerned with orthopraxy than orthodoxy. As a result, a systematic Christology, which also defines human anthropology, thanatology, and the subsequent ramifications for eschatology, were not topics that early Anabaptists spent a significant amount of time writing about. Since this thesis is topical, I am not aiming to examine the entirety of early Anabaptist writings and beliefs. Instead, I have limited my review to material that will allow me to demonstrate the spectrum of ideas early Anabaptists had about the soul and death. In addition, I have also sought to highlight theology that mimics the Christendom Christology outlined in the previous chapter. The following review

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<sup>206</sup> Brian C. Brewer and David M. Whitford, eds., *Calvin and the Early Reformation*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, volume 219 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2020), 128.

<sup>207</sup> Brian C. Brewer and David M. Whitford, eds., *Calvin and the Early Reformation*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, volume 219 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2020), 128.

of early Anabaptist material seeks to show (1) that early Anabaptist teachings on the soul are diverse and often contradictory and (2) some of the early Anabaptist teachings on the soul mimic the Christendom Christology established by Pope Leo and the Council of Chalcedon. This diversity of belief and adherence to Christendom Christology gives justification for an Anabaptist Gospel centered critique of early Anabaptist views as well as Christendom perspectives.

Three central figures of early Anabaptist theology help to highlight the theological diversity. These men are Michael Sattler, Balthasar Hubmaier, and Menno Simons. Before his conversion to Anabaptism, Sattler served as a monk in the Roman Catholic Church. As one of the early Anabaptist leaders, Sattler was influential in the writing of the Schleitheim Confession, which is one of the earliest Anabaptist confessions of faith. Hubmaier, a German Anabaptist, was also an educated man with a doctorate from the University of Ingolstadt. Like Sattler, Hubmaier was charged with heresy and died for his beliefs in Austria on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1528. A third early Anabaptist leader, Menno Simons, worked as a Roman Catholic priest prior to his conversion to Anabaptism. Simons was excommunicated from the Catholic Church for his theological beliefs. Simon's followers rejected infant baptism and later became known as the Mennonites.

In his review of these Anabaptist theologians, Terry Hiebert states, "Sattler, Hubmaier, and Menno represent a spectrum of Anabaptist views on the nature of the soul and its implications for facing death."<sup>208</sup> Hiebert explains that "Sattler expected to die and wait for the

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<sup>208</sup> Terry G. Hiebert, "Is the Search for the Anabaptist Soul a Dead End? Historic Anabaptism Meets Nancy Murphy's Nonreductive Physicalism," *Direction: A Mennonite Brethren Forum* 37, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 185–200.

resurrection [soul death]. Hubmaier expected his soul to meet God at death [soul consciousness]. And Menno expected to rest in Paradise until the seed of the new body was born at the resurrection [soul sleep].”<sup>209</sup> Hiebert’s summary illustrates that while early Anabaptism was firmly united on some theological tenets, it was diverse regarding the theology of the soul. Perhaps it was the case that among early Anabaptists, there was little concern regarding how one passed from death into the afterlife as long as the end result was resurrection and eternity in the presence of God.

Another early Anabaptist theologian of note was Bernhard Rothman. As one of the early Anabaptist leaders, Rothman openly denounced the teachings of the Catholic church. Rothman converted to Anabaptism in 1533 and began to preach against Catholic teachings on infant baptism and purgatory. Rothman rejected Christendom Christology and taught that God can change, suffer and die. In his writing, Rothman expressed adamantly that the Chalcedonian formula of Christ’s two natures should be rejected. In his *The Hiddenness of Scripture*, Rothman wrote, “the Papists and the Lutherans and whoever else they may be do not know Christ truly” because they claim that “the Son of God himself did not suffer...but stood by and watched it...they claim that there were two distinct natures in Christ at the same time, the one divine, and the other human.”<sup>210</sup> In Rothman’s opinion, the Catholic two-nature theology made “Christ out to be baked bread.”<sup>211</sup> Rothman appears to be one of the first early Anabaptists to begin to explore the theological implications of how one’s anthropology and thanatology directly affect

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<sup>209</sup> In a footnote, Hiebert adds that “more research is needed on Anabaptists like Hans Denck, Pilgram Marpeck, Hans Hut, and Peter Riedemann.”

<sup>210</sup> Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources, Classics of the Radical Reformation 3* (Kitchener, Ont. : Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1981), 92.

<sup>211</sup> Klaassen, 92.

their Christology. This theological relationship does not appear to have been explored by Sattler, Hubmaier, and Simmons.

Sattler, Hubmaier, Simmons, and Rothman's views demonstrate a spectrum of beliefs within early Anabaptism concerning anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. What united them was their common appeal to Christ as the lens through which theology should be done. I propose that this Christocentric approach also has the potential to provide a foundation upon which Anabaptism can build its Christology going forward. While Rothman clearly rejected the Christology of Christendom, his position was not unanimously embraced by Anabaptism. Rothman's writings exhibit that some early Anabaptists critiqued the Christological beliefs outlined within Christendom. Was this critique valid, and should it have been embraced as part of the Radical Reformation? Perhaps Rothman's critique was ignored because it was not grounded in a practical application such as baptism, nonviolence, or oath-taking. Indeed, early Anabaptist critiques of tradition seem to focus on practical daily discipleship practices. While they certainly have practical implications, Christological beliefs related to anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology are more in the rational arena.

However, this is not to say that early Anabaptist theologians completely ignored philosophical theology. Early Anabaptist theologians and Anabaptist Confessions of Faith show disagreement over important questions such as (1) Does God have the ability to change? (2) Does Christ have two natures? and (3) What is the definition of death? This disagreement supports the rationale for further Christocentric study on these topics. By illustrating conflicting views on these topics, I will also point out areas where these statements of faith show signs of adopting the Christendom Christology outlined in the previous chapter. Should these beliefs be



assimilated into Anabaptist theology (Hubmaier) or directly challenged (Rothman)? What are the theological outcomes of these choices?

### 3.3.2. The immutable God.

As the previous chapter outlined, the belief that God could not change or suffer “was a basic presupposition of all Christological doctrine” being done during the era of Christendom.<sup>212</sup>

Leo’s Tome demonstrates this concept by arguing that “Christ should have lost nothing of his divinity” in becoming incarnate.<sup>213</sup> For Christendom Christology, this meant that all biblical language of transformation in reference to the incarnation had to be altered. Instead, the incarnation was described as the divine adding humanity to himself.

The writing of Anabaptist theologian Menno Simmons exhibits his struggle to maintain his belief in the immutability of God in conjunction with his belief in the incarnation. Simmons argued that Jesus’ “becoming [an incarnate human] is not a change – the Word remains immutable whilst becoming flesh.”<sup>214</sup> Simmon's Christocentric approach to scripture reveals how he was forced him to wrestle with the biblical language of becoming and transformation. However, to accommodate his preconceived ideas about God, he was ultimately forced to abandon the biblical language of transformation.

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<sup>212</sup> Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, 270.

<sup>213</sup> G. A. Keith, “Leo the Great,” ed. Martin Davie et al., *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic* (London; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 510.

<sup>214</sup> Stephen R. Holmes, “Evaluating a Neglected Tradition of (Ana)Baptist Christology,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 2023, 3, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930623000029>.

In contrast to Simmons, Anabaptist theologian Bernhard Rothmann appealed to the Johannine language stating that Jesus “became flesh and dwelt among us.”<sup>215</sup> Unlike Simmons, Rothmann had no issue with the idea of divine mutability. Later Anabaptist Confessions of Faith similarly demonstrate the struggle to blend the concept of divine immutability with belief in the incarnation. For example, the Anabaptist 1610 *Short Confession of Faith* appears to present contradictory ideas. First, it states that Jesus’ incarnation did not occur “in a manner by which a part of the eternal essence of the eternal Word was changed [divine immutability].”<sup>216</sup> However, immediately after this statement, the confession states that in the incarnation, Jesus “became that which he had formerly not been [divine mutability].”<sup>217</sup> This confession of faith does not clarify for its readers how it is possible to maintain theological concepts of divine immutability and divine mutability at the same time. In contrast to the 1610 *Short Confession of Faith*, the later 1626 *Thirteen Articles* simply states that in the incarnation, Jesus “became what he was not, truly human.”<sup>218</sup> This statement insinuates belief in divine mutability by implying that there was a real change involved. Collectively, this evidence illustrates a disagreement over God's immutability within the Anabaptist tradition.

Can God change? According to Pope Leo and Christendom Christology, the answer is no. Early Anabaptist documents indicate that some sided with the Catholic tradition on the question of divine immutability, while others embraced the idea that God could change and become something he had previously never been: human. Two things can be said in summary.

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<sup>215</sup> Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline*. 35.

<sup>216</sup> Karl Koop and Cornelius J. Dyck, eds., *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition: 1527 - 1660*, Classics of the Radical Reformation 11 (Kitchener, Ont: Pandora Press, 2006), 142.

<sup>217</sup> Koop and Dyck, 142.

<sup>218</sup> Koop and Dyck, 161.

First, early Anabaptist teachings exhibit a spectrum of beliefs concerning God's ability to change. Second, within this spectrum, one of the views represented is the Christendom theological position that God cannot change. This is important because the understanding that God cannot change has significant implications for beliefs concerning the incarnation, life, and death of Christ. As the previous chapter illustrated, an immutable God cannot change, suffer, or die. This spectrum of belief prompts the question, which of these two concepts of divinity is most faithful to the revelation of God through Jesus in the Gospel of Mark?

### **3.3.3. The incarnation and two natures of Christ.**

Belief in divine immutability has a direct effect on incarnational theology. The Christendom Christology of Pope Leo proposed that Jesus had two natures: one divine (immutable) and one human (mutable). This belief that God is immutable was additionally affirmed by the Chalcedonian Creed. As the writings of Simmons and Rothman exhibited, the belief that God is immutable was rejected by some Anabaptists and accepted by others. Interestingly, although he embraced the immutability of God, Simmons rejected the Chalcedonian formula of two natures because he believed it led to the belief that "there are two sons in Christ, the one eternal and not subject to suffering; the other temporal and subject to suffering."<sup>219</sup> This displays the internal conflict and contradiction within Simon's theology between tradition and the biblical text. Simons wanted to hold to the belief that God could not change while also holding to the belief that God in Christ could suffer and die.

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<sup>219</sup> Menno and J. C. Wenger, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons: C. 1496 - 1561* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1992), 555, 848.

Simmons was not the only Anabaptist to be critical of Christendom Christology. German Anabaptist Rothman explicitly rejected the “claim that there were two distinct natures in Christ at the same time, the one divine, and the other human.”<sup>220</sup> Simmons and Rothman were not alone. Williams summarizes that the Italian Anabaptists were also “critical of both the Nicene and Chalcedonian formulations.”<sup>221</sup> In contrast to Simons and Rothman, some Anabaptists embraced the Christendom teaching that Christ had two natures, one divine and one human. One of these Anabaptists was Peter Riedemann, who was a founding father of the Anabaptist branch called the Hutterites. The Hutterites are an Anabaptist offshoot that established communities based on the Schleithem Confession. Evidence for belief in Christ’s two natures within this group can be found in Peter Riedemann’s *Account*, written in 1542. This document states, “We say that it was not the divine but the human nature of Christ that died.”<sup>222</sup> This statement echoes the teaching of Pope Leo. In agreement with Riedemann’s *Account*, some years later, the Anabaptist 1577 *Waterland Confession* similarly states that Jesus had “both a divine and human nature.”<sup>223</sup> Still, within Anabaptism as a whole, this belief did not go unchallenged. In contrast to Riedemann’s *Account* and the *Waterland Confession*, a later Anabaptist document, the *Thirty-Three Articles*, written in 1617, states that Jesus was “not divided or mixed of two very different natures or substances.”<sup>224</sup>

Does the incarnate Christ have two natures, one divine and immutable and another human and mutable? According to the teaching of Pope Leo, the answer is yes. Early Anabaptist

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<sup>220</sup> Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline*, 92.

<sup>221</sup> Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 849.

<sup>222</sup> Klaassen, 94.

<sup>223</sup> Koop and Dyck, *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 127.

<sup>224</sup> Koop and Dyck, *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*.

theologians such as Simons and Rothman rejected this doctrine of Christendom Christology. For them, all of Christ suffered and died on the cross. This meant that Christ's divinity did not escape suffering and death. In contrast to Simons and Rothman's beliefs, later Anabaptist documents profess the opposite. The writings of Riedemann and the *Waterland Confession* show a return to Christendom language and theology. Two things can be said in summary of this material. First, early Anabaptist teachings display a spectrum of beliefs concerning Christ's two natures. Second, within this spectrum, one of the views represented is the Christendom theological position that Christ had two natures and that the divine nature did not experience change, suffering, or death.

#### **3.3.4. Death as separation of body and soul.**

The Christendom thanatology of Pope Leo taught that when a person dies, their fleshly body is buried, and their immaterial soul survives, existing in a state of consciousness. In light of this, Leo described resurrection as the "return of the soul" to the body.<sup>225</sup> Since death was described as the separation of body and soul, resurrection was defined as the reunion of body and soul. As previously mentioned, Anabaptist theologian Hiebert has pointed out that the three views of soul death, soul sleep, and soul consciousness appear in the writings of early Anabaptist writers Sattler, Simmons, and Hubmaier. Like Sattler, Pilgram Marpeck, who was a leader of the Southern German Anabaptists, appears to have embraced belief in natural or soul death. Speaking of the crucifixion, Marpeck wrote that Jesus "died a natural death and rose again from

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<sup>225</sup> *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great* (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895), Letters 15:18.

among the dead through the nature of God.”<sup>226</sup> Although he does not expand on this thought in detail, this appears to be a rejection of the ideas that death is separation and resurrection is a reunion of body and soul. Early Anabaptism shows signs of disagreement on this issue. The views of *thnetopsychism* (soul death), *psychopannychism* (soul sleep), and the Catholic view of the immortality of the soul can all be found in early Anabaptist writings. A brief examination of Early Anabaptist documents illustrates this diversity of thought.

First, some documents embrace a thanatology that is in agreement with Christendom anthropology and thanatology. For example, *The First Waterland Confession of Faith*, written in 1577, declares, “We believe that God created humans as two-fold beings, consisting of body and soul.”<sup>227</sup> Using Platonic like language, the Confession states, “The body is the house, temple or tabernacle in which the soul lives in.”<sup>228</sup> In describing its thanatological position, the confession says that “death is the departure of the soul from the body.”<sup>229</sup> In the Confession, death is defined as the separation of body and soul because the soul is believed to be “imperishable and immortal.”<sup>230</sup>

Second, some Anabaptist documents show signs of internal discontinuity. The Anabaptist *Thirty-Three Articles*, written in 1617, provide an interesting example in that it seems to present two contradictory views. First, the articles describe death as a return to the dust referencing Genesis 3:19 and Hebrews 9:28 as supportive of this position. This seems to promote a monistic understanding of the human constitution and holistic view of death. Next,

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<sup>226</sup> Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline*, 33.

<sup>227</sup> Koop and Dyck, *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 129.

<sup>228</sup> Koop and Dyck, 129.

<sup>229</sup> Koop and Dyck, 129.

<sup>230</sup> Koop and Dyck, 129.

the articles describe resurrection as the reunion of the “soul or spirit” with the body. A bracketed clarification is made that the soul or spirit, “which through death was separated from the body,” remains immortal.<sup>231</sup> First, the articles describe death as a return to dust, but later they describe it as the separation of body and soul/spirit. These two contradictory statements reveal that the Articles are internally inconsistent.<sup>232</sup> The articles further elaborate that “the spirit or soul of human beings does not die (Acts 7:59; Ps. 31:6) or pass away with the body (Wis. 3:1) but is and remains immortal spirit (Matt. 10:28).”<sup>233</sup> In addition to this apparent conflict of the definition of death, what is also interesting about the *Thirty-Three Articles* is that it intermingles the language of soul and spirit. This document wants to use the words spirit and soul synonymously.

Third, some Anabaptist documents indicate belief in soul sleep. For example, in agreement with Simons, the 1632 *Dordrecht Confession* appears to embrace the concept of soul sleep. In its expression of beliefs concerning the resurrection and return of Christ, the confession states that “all who have died and fallen asleep shall be awakened, made alive, and raised up on the last day.”<sup>234</sup> This statement shows no signs of belief in a conscious intermediate state. It also leaves room for sleep to be understood as a metaphor for death or to be taken literally, where the immaterial soul is still understood to separate from the physical body.

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<sup>231</sup> Koop and Dyck, 253.

<sup>232</sup> A dualist response might be that the phrase ‘return to dust’ refers only to the body, while the soul subsists without the body. However, this idea must be read into the Genesis narrative. There is no indication within the text itself that a person is more than the dust they return to.

<sup>233</sup> Koop and Dyck, 255.

<sup>234</sup> Koop and Dyck, 306.

Collectively, these Anabaptist documents demonstrate evidence of belief in soul death, soul sleep, and soul consciousness. This gives validation to the Protestant condemnations that some early Anabaptists taught soul death and soul sleep. Is death a return to the dust from which humankind was made (Gen 3:19), or is it the separation of the physical body from the immortal soul? According to Christendom Christology, death is the separation of body and soul. This is how Christ's divine nature maintained its immutability and immortality through death. Early Anabaptist writings show signs of denying and embracing this teaching.

As in the previous cases, two things can be said in summary. First, early Anabaptist teachings display a spectrum of beliefs concerning the definition of death. Second, within this spectrum, one of the views represented is the Christendom theological position that death is the separation of body and soul. It was this belief that prompted Pope Leo to say that Christ both died and did not die. It is also this definition of death that allowed for the belief that Jesus' soul, after his physical death, descended into an underworld of disembodied souls.

### **3.3.5. The descent of Christ's soul to Hades.**

One last aspect of Christendom Christology should be mentioned in relation to the death of Christ. The belief that God is immutable led to the proposal that Christ had both a divine and human nature. This allowed Leo to state that the human nature of Christ suffered and died while the divine nature remained impassible and immortal. In addition to this, body-soul dualism provided a means by which the divine nature could escape death via the soul. The logical question that followed this line of reasoning was: Where did Jesus' soul go for the three



days that his body lay lifeless in the tomb? The answer that Christendom Christology gave to this question was that Jesus' soul descended into the underworld/Hades.

For those that held to the belief that death is a return to the dust, the question of where the soul goes after death was not an issue of concern. Similarly, those that believed that the soul sleeps after death also had no interest in this question. However, for those that believed that death is the separation of body and soul, this question was one of great interest. Several Anabaptist documents illustrate that the narrative of Christ's descent into a disembodied underworld was assimilated into Anabaptist theology. For example, as early as 1527, German theologian and Anabaptist leader Hans Denck wrote that Jesus "descended into hell in the spirit to preach to those unbelieving spirits (1 Pet. 3)."<sup>235</sup> Denck's writing also shows a desire to use the words spirit and soul synonymously. Later, in 1542, Riedemann wrote in his *Account* that Jesus "went down to the lowest parts of the earth," where he "proclaimed to the spirits in prison."<sup>236</sup> Like Denck and Riedemann, southern German Anabaptist Jörg Maler also promoted this narrative in his teaching. In his 1554 Confession of Faith, Maler states that after his death, Jesus "descended into hell."<sup>237</sup>

Eventually, these personal confessions also found expression in corporate Anabaptist confessions of faith. Following in the footsteps of Denck, Riedemann, and Maler, the 1578 Swiss Brethren *Confession of Hesse* states that "through divine power [Jesus] descended into hell and redeemed the souls of the believing Old Testament patriarch."<sup>238</sup> Together, this subset of

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<sup>235</sup> Klaassen, *Anabaptism in Outline*, 26.

<sup>236</sup> Klaassen, 95.

<sup>237</sup> Koop and Dyck, *Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 39.

<sup>238</sup> Koop and Dyck, 63.

Anabaptist theology promoted the beliefs that humans are body-soul composites and that death is the separation of body and soul. These two beliefs appear to be adopted from Christendom Christology. The adoption of the belief of Jesus' descended into Hades is interesting, considering the Anabaptist focus on the Gospel narratives and the absence of this narrative within the Gospels themselves. Contrary to the descent narrative, all four Gospels narratives spatially place Jesus in the tomb as a corpse on Holy Saturday. This means that biblical support for Jesus' descent must be made through a piecemeal of individual texts. In addition, these texts are primarily outside the Gospels themselves.

### **3.3.6. Seeds of kenotic Christology within early Anabaptism.**

This chapter has demonstrated that not all early Anabaptist writings agreed with the Christology of Christendom. Within some early Anabaptist writings, there are seeds of kenotic Christology that stand in direct opposition to Christendom Christology. These seeds can be found in the writings of Dirk Philips and Andreas Carlstadt. For example, in describing the incarnation, Philips states that Jesus took "off his divine form" and took the form of a servant.<sup>239</sup> Here, Philips references the apostle Paul's words in Philippians chapter two. Philips additionally explains that the transformation from divine form to human form was done because of God's overflowing love for humanity. In defining Jesus as incarnate, Philips writes that in "Jesus Christ, there are two natures, a divine nature, and a human nature."<sup>240</sup> However, concerning Jesus' death, Philips writes that "Jesus was also dead for three days according to the

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<sup>239</sup> Dirk Philips et al., *The Writings of Dirk Philips, 1504-1568*, Classics of the Radical Reformation 6 (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1992), 147.

<sup>240</sup> Philips et al., 63.

flesh, contrary to the divine nature.”<sup>241</sup> The key, perhaps, to understanding Philip's anthropology may be in his anthropological explanation of humanity. Writing about humanity in general, Philips taught that Christians have two natures within them, “a carnal and sinful nature” and a “spiritual and divine nature.”<sup>242</sup>

Similar to Philips, Andreas Carlstadt’s writings reflect a kenotic Christology. In a sermon on the incarnation, Carlstadt quoted John 1:14 explaining that John spoke of Christ’s two natures. Embracing John’s language of transformation, Carlstadt explains that “the eternal son of God, became flesh.”<sup>243</sup> For Carlstadt, this meant that Christ became a “mortal body.”<sup>244</sup> This appears to indicate that Carlstadt embraced the concept of divine mutability. He also adds that Christ “had to be a human being, so that he might initiate this salvation and be able to suffer and die.”<sup>245</sup> Carlstadt makes no mention of Jesus’ survival of his death as a disembodied soul. Instead, he clarifies that “where death is, there is no life.”<sup>246</sup> Although he affirms that Christ had two natures, he also asserts that God in Christ can change, suffer, and die.

In contrast to the Anabaptist Philips and Lutheran Carlstadt, other Anabaptist writings echo the Christology of Christendom. Attempting to synthesize the ideas of God’s immutability and the incarnation, Peter Riedemann wrote that “although he [Jesus] took upon himself

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<sup>241</sup> Konrad Grebel and Leland Harder, eds., *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism: The Grebel Letters and Related Documents*, Classics of the Radical Reformation 4 (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1985), 148.

<sup>242</sup> Philips et al., *The Writings of Dirk Philips, 1504-1568*, 284.

<sup>243</sup> Andreas Rudolff-Bodenstein von Karlstadt and Edward J. Furcha, *The Essential Carlstadt: Fifteen Tracts*, Classics of the Radical Reformation 8 (Waterloo, Ont.; Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1995), 388. Although Carlstadt was not an Anabaptist, he was influential in the movement. I have chosen to include him here because of his potential influence on the development of early Anabaptist theology. Wayne Pipkin, editor of the Institute of Mennonite Studies writes, “Many themes that came to be distinctive among the Anabaptists were found first in the varied writings of Carlstadt.” 13.

<sup>244</sup> Carlstadt and Furcha, 390.

<sup>245</sup> Carlstadt and Furcha, 391.

<sup>246</sup> Carlstadt and Furcha, 392.

human nature, he did not relinquish the power through which all things were created.”<sup>247</sup> In contrast to Philips and Carlstadt, Riedemann did not see the incarnation as a kenotic act of self-emptying. In light of his views on the incarnation and the immutability of God, Riedemann agreed with the theology of Pope Leo, stating, “We believe that it was not the divine but the human nature of Christ that died.”<sup>248</sup> Since Riedemann believed that Jesus survived his death, he also taught the narrative that Jesus descended to a disembodied underworld postmortem.

What we see in the writings of Philips, Carlstadt, and Riedemann are contrasting views concerning the question of divine mutability and kenosis. Belief regarding God’s ability or inability to change significantly affects theological conclusions regarding the incarnation, Christ’s suffering, and death. This, in turn, also shapes beliefs about what happens after death prior to the resurrection. With a portrait of the spectrum of early Anabaptist beliefs painted, I will now turn to several of the more prominent Protestant polemics written against the early Anabaptist beliefs on the soul. These polemics support the position that there was a diversity of beliefs among Anabaptists. They also affirm the conclusion that among this diversity was the belief in either soul death or soul sleep.

#### **3.4. PROTESTANT OPPOSITION TO ANABAPTIST BELIEFS.**

Although the first Anabaptists did not seem to write extensively on the soul, there is evidence that some were promoting the beliefs of either soul sleep or soul death. One problem in

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<sup>247</sup> Peter Riedemann and John J. Friesen, *Peter Riedemann’s Hutterite Confession of Faith: Translation of the 1565 German Edition of Confession of Our Religion, Teaching, and Faith, by the Brothers Who Are Known as the Hutterites*, Classics of the Radical Reformation (Waterloo, Ont. ; Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1999), 65.

<sup>248</sup> Riedemann and Friesen, 69.

determining early Anabaptist beliefs is that their detractors appear to have suppressed their literature. Church historian Franklin Littell reports that “the writings and records of the [Anabaptist] movement were successfully suppressed, whereas the polemics of their enemies circulated widely.”<sup>249</sup>

One piece of evidence of early Anabaptist beliefs is found in a letter written on October 14, 1524, to reformer Vadian Zurich, by one of the first Anabaptist leaders Conrad Grebel. In his letter, Grebel gives both implicit and explicit awareness of the doctrine of soul sleep. First, Grebel mentions that Carlstadt had been in contact with Martin Luther. It is certainly possible that this encounter could have included Luther discussing his beliefs concerning soul sleep, but this is unknown. More importantly, Grebel mentions a messenger by the name of Gerhard Westerborg and asks if perhaps Zurich has “read his booklet on the *Sleep of Souls*.”<sup>250</sup> Grebel additionally wrote, “When these booklets and their disputations are printed and reach us, soon I hope, I will see to it that you have a supply of them.”<sup>251</sup> This shows that not only was Grebel waiting in anticipation for copies of Westerborg’s *Sleep of Souls* but also that he intended to distribute this material to others, presumably because he agreed with it. This evidence gives credence to the Protestant Reformers’ claims that early Anabaptists taught either soul sleep or soul death. In addition to this Anabaptist source material, several Protestant documents condemn the Anabaptists for their beliefs.

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<sup>249</sup> Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 148.

<sup>250</sup> Grebel and Harder, *The Sources of Swiss Anabaptism*, 295.

<sup>251</sup> Grebel and Harder, 295.

Two of these polemics against the Anabaptist beliefs come from Protestant Reformers who sided with the Roman Catholic church's position on the immortality of the soul. Both Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin condemned the Anabaptists for holding heretical views concerning the soul. Williams summarizes that concerning belief in the immortality of the soul, "Zwingli stood with the Fifth Lateran Council (as later Calvin) over against Luther and Carlstadt and also such Anabaptists as Westerborg."<sup>252</sup> Zwingli, who was close to several founders of Anabaptism, denounced the Anabaptists for teaching soul sleep. John Calvin, who also appears to have had interaction with various Anabaptists, condemned them for teaching soul death.

In 1527 Ulrich Zwingli, a pastor of the Grossmünster in Zürich, wrote a document entitled *Refutation Against the Tricks of the Anabaptists*.<sup>253</sup> In his refutation, Zwingli condemned the Anabaptists who affirmed the soul's mortality. Zwingli had been a former mentor and friend to three founding fathers of the growing Anabaptist community: George Blaurock, Felix Manz, and Conrad Grebel. Williams notes that Westerborg, a proponent of soul sleep, stayed with Conrad Grebel for six days. Grebel's letter and anticipation of distributing Westerborg's *Sleep of Souls* validates Zwingli's claim that the Anabaptists were teaching psychopannychism.<sup>254</sup>

In his writing, Zwingli states that the Anabaptists "teach that the dead sleep, both body and soul, until the day of judgment."<sup>255</sup> Disagreeing with this position, Zwingli affirmed the historical majority position, which espoused body-soul dualism and the soul's immortality.

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<sup>252</sup> Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 196.

<sup>253</sup> Just prior to the adoption of the Schleitheim Confession (24 February 1527), Felix Manz, was executed for baptizing adults in Zurich (5 January 1527).

<sup>254</sup> Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 198.

<sup>255</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, *Refutation Against the Tricks of the Anabaptists*, Appendix 252  
<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/zwingli-selected-works-of-huldreich-zwingli>

Interestingly, Zwingli mentioned that his belief in the soul's immortality was rooted in Greek philosophy. In his writing, Zwingli appealed to Plato's philosophical arguments, which suggest that the soul is incapable of sleep because it must remain in perpetual motion. As a result of this belief, Zwingli claimed that the soul persists in life without the body after death. Echoing Plato's *Phaedo*, Zwingli stated that the soul at death is "freed from the body" and "persists and exists in life, oppressed neither by sleep nor death."<sup>256</sup>

Since Anabaptists focused so heavily on Jesus' direct teaching, Zwingli sought to disprove the Anabaptist position with the teachings of Jesus. Like More and Tyndale, Zwingli addressed Jesus' discussion with the mortalist Sadducees. Zwingli claimed that Jesus "taught nothing else but that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are living, though dead."<sup>257</sup> In an attempt to infuse his *a priori* anthropological position into the text, Zwingli asked his readers to accept a logical contradiction.<sup>258</sup> However, as Tyndale had already pointed out, this proposal undermines Jesus' argument for the necessity of bodily resurrection. In an attempt to poison the well, Zwingli additionally equated the Anabaptists with the mortalist Sadducees. However, this accusation was blatantly false, considering the Anabaptists affirmed bodily resurrection.

Zwingli argued that "nothing equally corrupts manners with teaching that the soul dies, or, as the Catabaptist now blaspheme, sleeps till the last day."<sup>259</sup> It seems from Zwingli's

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<sup>256</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, Refutation Against the Tricks of the Anabaptists, Appendix 252

<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/zwingli-selected-works-of-huldreich-zwingli>

<sup>257</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, Refutation Against the Tricks of the Anabaptists, Appendix 252

<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/zwingli-selected-works-of-huldreich-zwingli>

<sup>258</sup> A dualist reading of the text might suggest that Zwingli is not logically inconsistent because a person can simultaneously be dead (as a body) and alive (as an immaterial soul). However, this concept must be read into the text. In his discussion with the Sadducees, Jesus does not indicate that a human is a body/soul composite.

<sup>259</sup> Ulrich Zwingli, Refutation Against the Tricks of the Anabaptists, Appendix 252

<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/zwingli-selected-works-of-huldreich-zwingli>

critique that some Anabaptists believed in *thnetophychism* (soul death), while others believed in *psychopannychism* (soul sleep). Many Anabaptists tended to quote Jesus' words directly on theological issues and often resisted the desire to expand on the topic. So, for the Anabaptist, when Jesus speaks of Lazarus' literal death as sleep in John 11:13, some may have taken this to be a metaphor while others may have taken it literally.

A second Protestant Reformer that condemned the Anabaptists for teaching the mortality of the soul was John Calvin. Against the Anabaptists, Calvin wrote a document entitled *Psychopannychia*. In this text, Calvin vehemently defended the Catholic doctrine of body-soul dualism and the soul's immortality. Historian George Williams suggests that when Calvin penned his *Psychopannychia* condemning the Anabaptists for their beliefs on the soul, he specifically had in mind Michael Servetus. Servetus was condemned for his anti-Trinitarian beliefs and rejection of infant baptism on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1553, and was executed for his beliefs.<sup>260</sup> In his writing, Calvin begins by mentioning that the church historian Eusebius reported that a group of Arabs once held to the concept of soul death.<sup>261</sup> Calvin then writes that this belief "lay smoldering for some ages, but has lately begun to send forth sparks, being stirred up by some dregs of Anabaptists."<sup>262</sup> In his *Psychopannychia*, Calvin also addressed Jesus' encounter with the Sadducees. Calvin claimed that Jesus corrected the Sadducees of their "two errors," which were their denial of "the Resurrection of the dead" and "the immortality of the soul."<sup>263</sup> However, Calvin's claim is flagrantly false. Jesus mentions nothing of

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<sup>260</sup> Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 903–33.

<sup>261</sup> Eusebius: *Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine* (Oxford, New York: Christian Literature Company, 1890), 279. In this account, Eusebius paints Origen as a hero who successfully converted this group of Arabs to the truth.

<sup>262</sup> Calvin, John, *Psychopannychia: The Sleep of the Soul* (Apollo, Pennsylvania: Ichthus Publications, n.d.), 6.

<sup>263</sup> Calvin, John, 35.



the soul's immortality in his conversation with the Sadducees. In fact, as a later analysis of the Markan narrative will show, when Jesus used the Greek word *psyche* in conversations with the Pharisees and his disciples, he explicitly stated that the *psyche* is mortal.

So far, what has been demonstrated is that the orthodox position of the immortal soul underwent scrutiny during the Reformation. While some reformers like Calvin and Zwingli maintained the historical majority position, others such as Tyndale, Luther, and the Anabaptists questioned this doctrine in light of Jesus' teaching. Why did the reform of this doctrine not succeed on a broader scale? In tracing the history of thought on the soul during the Reformation, Burns suggests that while Tyndale and Luther embraced Christian mortalism, "once it was identified solely with the Anabaptists, there was no hope for a hearing before respectable protestants."<sup>264</sup> Further condemnation of the Anabaptists in the years that followed indicated that Burns was right.

Three additional documents attest that various Anabaptists continued to teach the concepts of soul death, soul sleep, and the annihilation of the wicked. The Lutheran *Augsburg Confession*, written in 1530, condemned the Anabaptists for teaching annihilationism, the rejection of the idea that Hell is eternal conscious torment. The confession states, "We condemn the Anabaptists who think that the punishment of demons and those people whom God condemns will not last forever."<sup>265</sup> What can be deduced from this statement is that some

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<sup>264</sup> Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton*, 32.

<sup>265</sup> Glen L Thompson, *The Unaltered Augsburg Confession, A.D. 1530* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Northwestern Pub. House, 2005), 9.

Anabaptists taught that both the first and second deaths result in the cessation of life altogether.<sup>266</sup> This eschatological position ruled out belief in eternal conscious torment.

In a later document written in 1540, Italian mendicant friar Francis of Calabria condemned Camillo Renato, an Italian Anabaptist, along with his followers. Calabria wrote, “We damn [the Renatians] who say that the rational soul is mortal, and dies with the body.”<sup>267</sup> This condemnation did not seem to deter the Anabaptists in Italy entirely. Williams reports that ten years later, an Anabaptist synod met in Venice in 1550. Among those that gathered was a group that “agreed that the souls of the wicked die with their bodies.”<sup>268</sup> Six years later, in 1566, Swiss Reformer Henry Bullinger was instrumental in writing *The Second Helvetica Confession*. His confession explicitly states that humans consist of two substances, a physical body, and an immortal soul. The confession then condemns anyone who doubts the belief that the soul is immortal or that embraces the idea of soul sleep. Burns suggests that “Fifteen of the Forty-two Articles were aimed, at least in part, against the Anabaptists.”<sup>269</sup>

### **3.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY.**

This chapter has sought to explain the need for further Anabaptist investigation concerning God’s ability in Jesus to change, suffer, and die. I began by demonstrating that prior to the Radical Reformation, disagreement over the human constitution and definitions of death existed both within both Roman Catholic and Protestant theological circles. During this time,

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<sup>266</sup> Strengthening this position are the brute facts that the New Testament speaks of immortality as something to be sought after (Romans 2:7), that God alone possesses (1 Timothy 6:16), and that is only said to be given to the righteous (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

<sup>267</sup> Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 846.

<sup>268</sup> Williams, 872. 872. See also Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton*, 125.

<sup>269</sup> Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton*, 26.

three general views presented themselves, *thnetopsychism* (soul death), *psychopannychism* (soul sleep), and the Catholic position that the soul is immortal. While the official Catholic doctrine was that the soul is immortal (the Fifth Lateran Council), not everyone within the Catholic church agreed with this teaching (Pomponazzi). Similarly, disagreement existed within Protestant camps concerning the human constitution and the definition of death. For example, while some Reformers, such as Calvin and Zwingli, embraced the Catholic position, others, such as Tyndale and Luther, argued that the traditional belief in the immortality of the soul additionally needed to be reformed. This was the theological context that gave birth to Anabaptism.

Next, Anabaptist sources revealed that early Anabaptists also struggled to provide a unified position on the soul and the definition of death. Like the Catholic church and their Protestant objectors, the Anabaptist sources also revealed a spectrum of beliefs concerning the questions of God's immutability, Christ's two natures, death as the separation of body-soul, and Christ's postmortem descent into Hades. What this material discloses is that early Anabaptism (1) was not unified in its profession of faith concerning issues of the soul, and (2) some early Anabaptist literature shows clear signs of the adoption of Christendom Christology.

Interestingly, it appears that Anabaptist alignment with Christendom Christology did not first undergo the same Christocentric critique that other beliefs did within the development of Anabaptist theology. This diversity of belief and uncritical endorsement of Christendom Christology gives credence to the need for an Anabaptist Christocentric approach to the theology in question.

In contrast to the traditional view, some Anabaptist writings show signs of a kenotic theology that embraces the ideas that God can change, and in Christ, God suffered and died. This prompts the question, which view does a Christocentric approach to this topic endorse? Was God in Christ immutable or kenotic? Did he die and not die as Pope Leo proposed, or did he die and rest as a corpse in a tomb between death and resurrection? These questions long to be answered within Anabaptist theology with the same Christocentric scrutiny that topics such as infant baptism and nonviolence have undergone. With a theological description of the Christendom Christology that is in need of critique in the previous chapter and an overview of the evidence that early Anabaptism adopted this Christology in this chapter, I will now move to outline the methodological approach I will use for my critique of Christendom.

## CHAPTER 4: NARRATIVE CRITICISM AND THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

### 4.1. INTRODUCTION.

Since this thesis is concerned with constructing Anabaptist theology, I have chosen a method of textual analysis that aligns with how Anabaptists construct doctrine. The method I have chosen is a narrative-critical method of analysis. This method is congruent with the foundational Anabaptist practice of Christocentrism. The purpose of applying a narrative-critical method to the Gospel of Mark is to aid in constructing a Gospel-centered Anabaptist Christology.<sup>270</sup> This approach will seek to derive meaning from the Gospel narrative and, more specifically, the narrator's presentation of Jesus' teaching within the story.

As a methodology, narrative criticism is concerned with how a text utilizes elements of a story, such as plot, setting, and characterization, to construct rhetoric in a manner that influences its audience. The purpose of applying this methodology is to gain insight into how the author used various narrative tools to shape the theological influence the narrative had on its first-century audience.<sup>271</sup> My application of this approach aims to determine how the implied author used the thematic motifs of kenosis and death to communicate a particular understanding of kenotic messiahship and human mortality to its audience.<sup>272</sup> In the following

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<sup>270</sup> On Mark as a narrative Christology, see Robert C Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," *Semeia* 16 (1979): 57–95. See also David S Du Toit, "Treasuring Memory: Narrative Christology in and beyond Mark's Gospel," *Early Christianity* 6, no. 3 (September 2015): 334–53, <https://doi.org/10.1628/186870315X14404160895054>. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Christology and the Son of Man: What the Markan Jesus Says Instead," *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 3–4 (2003): 373–85. M Eugene Boring, "The Christology of Mark: Hermeneutical Issues for Systematic Theology," *Semeia* 30 (1984): 125–51; M. Eugene Boring, "MARKAN CHRISTOLOGY: GOD-LANGUAGE FOR JESUS?," *New Testament Studies* 45, no. 4 (October 1999): 451–71, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688598000459>.

<sup>271</sup> For the idea that the apostle Peter is the original author and used Mark to write the Gospel, see Martin Hengel, *Studies in the Gospel of Mark* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003). Hengel believes that the Gospel of Mark was written in Rome in AD 69.

<sup>272</sup> Sharyn Dowd and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "The Significance of Jesus' Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 125, no. 2 (2006): 271–97, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27638361>.

chapters, I will argue that the literary themes of kenosis and death intentionally intersect to portray the Markan Jesus as a kenotic, suffering, mortal messiah. These themes teach the “hypothetical ‘implied reader’” that the nature of God is kenotic love and instructs potential disciples how to “deal with [their own] death.”<sup>273</sup>

A narrative critical investigation of Mark’s Gospel is a Christocentric approach. As an overview, Mark’s Gospel reveals the ideological point of view the author intends the audience to adopt through the teaching and actions of Jesus.<sup>274</sup> This ideological point of view is the theological perspective the author desires the audience to embrace as their own. Like the Anabaptist appeal to Christocentrism for the construction of doctrine, Mark’s Gospel presents Jesus as the standard of judgment for its audience. In this way, a narrative critical approach to the Gospels and the Christocentric construction of Anabaptist theology are grounded in the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

To establish a methodological approach for analyzing the Gospel of Mark, this chapter will proceed as follows. First, I will outline the principles of narrative criticism to establish guidelines for how I will later approach Mark’s Gospel. In general, narrative criticism as a methodology draws heavily on literary criticism and communication models of speech theory.<sup>275</sup> Second, I will selectively survey four practitioners who have applied narrative

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<sup>273</sup> David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Third edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 137, 139.

<sup>274</sup> In Mark’s Gospel, the ideological point of view is represented primarily by the narrator, the protagonist, and the voice from heaven.

<sup>275</sup> For introductions to the method, see Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). For literature and the Bible, see Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, eds., *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, 7. print (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1994). And Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman, eds., *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1993). See also Leland Ryken, *Jesus the Hero: A Guided Literary Study of the Gospels*, Reading the Bible as Literature (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2016). Leland Ryken, *How Bible Stories Work: A Guided Study of Biblical Narrative*, Reading the Bible as Literature (Ashland: Lexham Press, 2015). James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of*

criticism to the Gospel of Mark. Through this methodological survey, this discussion seeks to identify the centrality of the Markan narrative for understanding the theory of life and identity embedded in the teaching of Jesus. This survey is not meant to be comprehensive of Markan scholarship. Instead, I have selected four resources that (1) have utilized some form of narrative criticism as a methodological approach and (2) have highlighted an aspect of narrative criticism I seek to build upon. This selective survey of Markan scholarship establishes that narrative criticism is an “adaptable methodology.”<sup>276</sup>

A review of the four applications of narrative criticism will demonstrate that this methodology is a versatile tool that can be applied to an entire piece of literature (Rhoads), an aspect of a narrative's plot (Kingsbury), the author's employment of a specific literary device (Camery-Hoggatt), or a theme within a narrative (Bolt). In the following chapter, I will additionally use Bolt's methodology to outline how three influential factors, rhetoric, culture, and language, all play prominent roles in a robust application of a narrative-critical methodology.<sup>277</sup> Although narrative criticism is primarily concerned with the story world of the text, practitioners of the narrative critical method have drawn attention to the importance of

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*the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2005). Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, Rev. and expanded (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1999). Stephen H. Smith, *A Lion with Wings: A Narrative-Critical Approach to Mark's Gospel*, *The Biblical Seminar* 38 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). For critiques of the narrative criticism method, see Petri Merenlahti, *Poetics for the Gospels? Rethinking Narrative Criticism*, *Studies of the New Testament and Its World* (London ; New York: T&T Clark, 2002). Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). David M. Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, eds., *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 184 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

<sup>276</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 19.

<sup>277</sup> Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 39. Resseguie states that “the narrative critic joins this reader and has the cultural, linguistic, social, and historical competencies expected of the implied reader.”

correctly understanding the literary, cultural, and linguistic context that the text originated from in order to fully grasp its rhetorical effect.

Joining with these scholars, I will preface my narrative criticism of Mark by illustrating how rhetorical, social, and linguistic concerns might provide further insight into understanding the motif of kenotic thanatology in the Gospel of Mark. These culturally embedded concerns will be aimed at understanding the author's portrayal of mortality and the human person. By taking this approach, I am siding with those who have argued that “basic information about the cultural context is essential to any interpretation” of the Gospel narratives since they are indeed products of their culture.<sup>278</sup> This is a recognition that the concept of an implied reader entails a historically situated, culturally influenced, and linguistically conditioned audience.<sup>279</sup>

#### **4.2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF NARRATIVE CRITICISM.**

What is narrative criticism? “Narrative criticism focuses on how biblical literature works as *literature*. This methodology is concerned with the ‘what’ of the text (its content) and the ‘how’ of a text (its rhetorical structure).”<sup>280</sup> Narrative critics approach the “text as a whole,” investigating the “complexities and nuances” of the story to determine the “effects of a narrative on the reader.”<sup>281</sup> Narrative critics delineate between the real author and the implied author as well as the real reader and implied reader. The real author/reader is understood to

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<sup>278</sup> Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, eds., *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 32. See also, Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1997), 19. Green states that the Gospels are “cultural products” and should be read and interpreted as such.

<sup>279</sup> Therefore, to ask the question: What effect does the text have on the implied reader also entails asking the question: What effect did the text have on a first-century Graeco-Roman audience?

<sup>280</sup> Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 18.

<sup>281</sup> Resseguie, 39–40.



stand outside the text, while the implied author/reader is believed to be contained within the text. This means that narrative critics are not primarily concerned with the biographical information of the original author.

However, narrative critics tend to soften this distinction regarding the delineation between the real and implied reader. For example, although narrative critics seek to use the idea of an implied reader to avoid the necessity of understanding the cultural context of the original reader, they also admit that “basic information about the cultural context is essential for any interpretation.”<sup>282</sup> In agreement with this, I will argue that certain knowledge about the implied reader's cultural anthropology becomes vital to avoid “imposing alien meanings on the text,” as well as deciphering how certain words might function as a polemic against a dualist thanatological framework.<sup>283</sup> To accomplish this, the next chapter will examine several issues related to the first century audience's knowledge.

#### **4.2.1. Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*.**

Like several other Markan scholars who have applied a narrative critical method, I will use the structural categories of narrative outlined by Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*.<sup>284</sup> Chatman divides narrative into two separate categories, story, and discourse. The story is understood to be the content of the narrative, while the discourse is the style in which the author communicates a message. Furthermore, a narrative's story can be dissected into three

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<sup>282</sup> Anderson and Moore, *Mark & Method*, 33.

<sup>283</sup> Michael L. Cook, *Christology as Narrative Quest* (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1997), 71.

<sup>284</sup> Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, 9. print, Cornell Paperbacks (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007). Chatman's outline for discussing narrative is followed by Rhoads, Kingsbury, and others.

essential elements: plot, setting (which Chatman calls space and existents), or characters.

Critics have described the plot, characters, and setting as the *what* of the narrative.

In addition to the story's content, such critics are concerned with the form of a narrative. While Chatman uses the term discourse to describe the form of the narrative, I have chosen to use the word rhetoric because it speaks to the persuasive intent of the text.<sup>285</sup> A narrative's form, or rhetoric, refers to *how* the story is told in order to convey meaning. In applying the method of narrative criticism, scholars are concerned with understanding "how the story means."<sup>286</sup> To accomplish this goal, narrative critics seek to identify "how we as readers are expected to be affected by the text if we read it from the point of view that the text assumes we possess."<sup>287</sup> Therefore, as a methodology, narrative criticism investigates how the author of a text uses the essential components of a narrative, such as plot, characters, setting, and rhetoric, to persuade its audience toward a particular point of view. To illustrate the contours and fruits of this method, I will briefly discuss these literary components as they relate to the Gospel of Mark.

#### **4.2.2 Story: The content of narrative.**

##### **4.2.2.1 Mark's plot.**

The plot of any narrative can be defined as the movement of events from beginning to end.

Typically, the engine that drives the narrative's plot is the element of conflict between

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<sup>285</sup> In my opinion rhetoric is a more accurate term because narrative is shaped by its author to persuade its reader to adopt a particular point of view. This is to say that the discourse takes aim at an intended goal.

<sup>286</sup> Anderson and Moore, *Mark & Method*, 54. 54.

<sup>287</sup> Joel B. Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2010), 255. 255.

characters. This is undoubtedly the case for Mark's Gospel. Smith states that conflict is the "linchpin of Mark's narrative."<sup>288</sup> Narrative criticism analyzes the plot of a narrative investigating the conflict between characters to determine the story's meaning. In Mark's Gospel, conflict is portrayed at the cosmic level, between God and spiritual characters (Satan and demons), as well as the earthly level between humans (Jesus, the authorities, and the disciples). However, all spiritual conflict in Mark's Gospel occurs within the earthly domain. For instance, the cosmic conflict between God and Satan occurs primarily between Jesus and the unclean spirits.

The central human conflict that progresses the Markan plot occurs between Jesus and the religious authorities. The following chapter will illustrate that sources indicate that these religious groups disagreed about the human constitution and the definition of death. I will suggest that the author assumes his audience possesses this basic socio-religious knowledge. Concerning the beliefs of Jesus' narrative interlocutors, Josephus, a Roman-Jewish historian, reports that the Pharisees believed in the immortality of the soul (*psyche*), while their religious counterparts, the Sadducees, did not.<sup>289</sup>

On a secondary level, Jesus' ongoing conflict with the disciple's misunderstanding of his role as the Messiah also moves the plot forward. In Mark's Gospel, the conflict between characters shapes the narrative and intrigues the reader to continue reading in pursuit of resolution. As a rhetorical device, Mark's Gospel utilizes conflict between characters to influence the reader to make judgments and side with the protagonist over and against the

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<sup>288</sup> Smith, *A Lion with Wings*, 93.

<sup>289</sup> Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Complete Works* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004).

antagonists and his own disciples. For example, as the narrative progresses, the gap between Jesus and his disciples increases, nudging the audience to side with Jesus over his disciples. This gap is created by various characterization developments such as disagreements, disbelief, and betrayal.

#### **4.2.2.2 Markan characterization.**

A second arena of study within narrative criticism is characterization. Characterization is “the techniques an author uses to construct and develop the persons in a story.”<sup>290</sup> Authors use characterization to portray both major and minor characters in a way that encourages the reader to make value judgments about them. For instance, in Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is presented as the protagonist whose teaching and actions align with God. In contrast, the authorities represent the primary antagonist position and oppose Jesus through their dialogue and actions. The juxtaposition of these characters forces the reader to choose whose side they will be on.

Within a narrative, characters can be categorized in several different ways. For instance, characters are typically categorized as playing either a major or minor role in the story. In addition, a character can be described as being either flat or round. A flat character is one whose character traits remain the same throughout the narrative. A round character, in contrast, shows fluctuation over time, either positively or negatively. Characters that play a major role in the narrative are most often depicted positively or negatively. For example, in Mark, the religious authorities play a major role and can be categorized as flat negative

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<sup>290</sup> Jeannine K. Brown, *The Gospels as Stories: A Narrative Approach to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2020), 191.

characters. The disciples as a collective also play a major role, but unlike the religious authorities, the disciples are round and both positive and negative. How characters are portrayed in a narrative tells the reader how to feel, what to think, who should be judged, and for what reasons. For example, in Mark, the heavenly affirmation of Jesus both at his baptism and on the mount of transfiguration encourage the reader to align Jesus' character with the things of God.

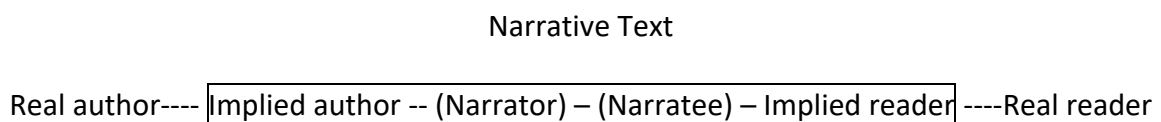
#### **4.2.2.3 Mark's setting.**

While setting can play a significant role in a narrative, this study is less concerned with the narrative element of setting. This is not to say that the setting is insignificant but that other narrative elements, such as characterization and rhetoric will, play a much more significant role. In Mark's narrative, the setting moves from Galilee to Jerusalem and back to Galilee. Like characterization, a narrative setting can communicate certain things to its readers. In Mark, the overall setting shifts three times. Each shift communicates a more generalized theme to the reader. First, Jesus' initial journey through Galilee tells the reader how people respond positively to his mission. Second, Jesus' visitation to various locations, such as the synagogues, the fields, and multiple houses, tells of the mounting opposition to his ministry. Third, Jesus' journey to Jerusalem helps fulfill the religious leaders' plot to execute Jesus. In addition to this, a setting can often be related to a theme or motif and gives the readers context clues. For instance, in Mark, a mountain draws on the literary motif of the place where one encounters God. Similarly, a synagogue is representative of a place where teaching and authority are dispersed and questioned.

#### 4.2.3 Discourse: The form of narrative expression.

##### 4.2.3.1 Implied author/reader.

Within narrative criticism, a differentiation is made between the actual author/reader and the implied author/reader.<sup>291</sup> While the actual author/reader stands outside the text, the implied author/reader is understood to stand within the text. “The implied author is the one who would be necessary for this narrative to be told or written. The implied reader is the one who would be necessary for this narrative to be heard or read.”<sup>292</sup> These distinctions are outlined by Chatman in his *Story and Discourse* and diagramed as follows.



Here the real author and real reader stand outside the text. In distinction, the implied author and implied reader exist within the story world of the text. While narrative criticism tends to draw a hard line between the real and implied author, this line is softened between the real and implied reader of the text. This will be further explored as I engage with the work of Peter Bolt.

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<sup>291</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 147–51.

<sup>292</sup> Anderson and Moore, *Mark & Method*, 33.

#### 4.2.3.2 Point of view.

Another vital aspect of narrative criticism is determining the story's point of view. The point of view of a narrative "signifies the way a story gets told."<sup>293</sup> In deciphering a narrative's point of view, the reader discovers the worldview, beliefs, and values the author wants the reader to "adopt or reject."<sup>294</sup> Concerning the implied author's point of view, "narratives typically present diverse perspectives concerning what is transpiring in the story, and readers are expected to regard some of these as more reliable than others."<sup>295</sup> Building on the idea of an implied author, narrative criticism is concerned with the implied author's perspective. Malbon notes that the gospels' narrators are understood to be both omniscient and omnipresent.<sup>296</sup> The author is received by the audience as a reliable communicator of truth and, in Mark's case, is always represented as being on the side of God. Wegener describes the implied author of Mark as "a reliable purveyor of divinely approved ideology."<sup>297</sup> This is to say that the author is understood to represent the same point of view as God.

Peterson has pointed out that in Mark's Gospel, there are two distinct perspectives that are understood to be in contrast.<sup>298</sup> Weimann adds that "since the act of narration involves selective communication ... it already contains an unashamed element of perspective and evaluation."<sup>299</sup> From this perspective, the author invites its readers to judge each character and

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<sup>293</sup> M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 7th ed (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999). s.v. "Point of View." For point of view in Mark, see Norman R Petersen, "Point of View in Mark's Narrative," *Semeia* 12 (1978): 97–121.

<sup>294</sup> Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament*, 167.

<sup>295</sup> Green, *Hearing the New Testament*, 247.

<sup>296</sup> Anderson and Moore, *Mark & Method*, 34.

<sup>297</sup> Mark I. Wegener, *Cruciformed: The Literary Impact of Mark's Story of Jesus and His Disciples'* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), 14.

<sup>298</sup> Petersen, "Point of View in Mark's Narrative."

<sup>299</sup> Robert Weimann, *Structure and Society in Literary History: Studies in the History and Theory of Historical Criticism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1976), 246.

take a side. In Mark's Gospel, the author and the protagonist, Jesus, are in complete alignment with "the things of God." In contrast, the narrative's antagonists, the religious authorities, are found to be "thinking the things of men." This invites the audience to decipher interactions between characters, determining who is on God's side and who is not. As an example of the author's use of this narrative tool, the disciples (who are presented as round characters) show and tell the audience how one might align with God or stand in opposition to him.

#### **4.2.3.3 Standards of judgment.**

As a document that seeks to shape its audience's theologically, Mark uses story to shape the reader's point of view.<sup>300</sup> This is achieved through standards of judgment. Rhoads explains that "the narrator presents the points of view of the characters and at the same time guides the reader's evaluation of them."<sup>301</sup> In Mark, the narrator presents the ideological point of view through Jesus' words and actions. This is the position that the author desires for the audience to adopt. For the audience, this means that Jesus is not only the protagonist, he is also the messenger of God. Jesus, therefore, becomes the definitive standard Mark's audience is expected to use against all other characters' words and actions.<sup>302</sup> While Jesus' disciples are initially portrayed as taking his side by following him in his mission, Mark's Gospel narrates a downward spiral of events in which the disciples fail to understand the identity of the kenotic

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<sup>300</sup> Paul Danove, "The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterization of God," *Novum Testamentum* 43, no. 1 (2001): 12–30; Paul Danove, "The Narrative Rhetoric of Mark's Ambiguous Characterization of the Disciples," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 20, no. 70 (October 1998): 21–38.

<sup>301</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 43.

<sup>302</sup> Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," 69. Tannehill states, "the author intends us to evaluate the disciples' behavior in light of what Jesus says and does."



mortal Messiah they have chosen to follow. This leads the disciples to seek power and avoid death while Jesus models kenotic acts of service and marches steadfastly toward his crucifixion.

#### 4.2.3.4. Mark as rhetoric.

Finally, the way a text develops its plot, utilizes the tool of characterization, and describes various settings to create a persuasive narrative is called its rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art of linguistic persuasion by which the author uses styles and patterns of speech to lure the reader into a particular point of view. Booth explains that “the author cannot choose to avoid rhetoric; he can choose only the kind of rhetoric he will employ.”<sup>303</sup> Since Mark’s Gospel narrates a sequence of chronological events, “Markan rhetoric is narrative rhetoric.”<sup>304</sup> To say Mark’s Gospel is narrative rhetoric is to say that it is “not simply a presentation of bare facts, but theology through story.”<sup>305</sup> This is indicated in the opening line of Mark’s Gospel, which tells the reader who Jesus is, “the Messiah, the Son of God,” and the author’s opinion that this fact should be received as “good news” by the audience.

As a rhetorical document, the Gospel of Mark employs the use of insider/outsider language to invite the audience to take sides. This is exhibited in Jesus’ rebuke that some people have the mind of God while others are thinking from a human perspective (8:33). The narrator repeatedly invites the audience to have the mind of God, which is also the mind of the author and protagonist. In Mark’s Gospel, the narrator, Jesus, and God represent a unified

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<sup>303</sup> Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 149.

<sup>304</sup> Anderson and Moore, *Mark & Method*. 39. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, Rev. ed (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), 347. Bultmann suggests that Mark’s Gospel united the “Hellenistic kerygma about Christ, whose essential content consists of the Christ-myth [cf. Phil. 2:6-11]..., with the tradition of the story of Jesus.” Here Bultmann connects the kenotic hymn of Philippians 2 with Mark’s Gospel.

<sup>305</sup> Smith, *A Lion with Wings*, 41.

perspective on reality. Those who oppose this view are the religious authorities and the unclean spirits. As a persuasive narrative tool, the author utilizes the disciples as round characters to show fluctuation between these two poles throughout the narrative. As a rhetorical document, the author guides the reader through the story, shaping the reader's perspective. Mark's Gospel invites its readers to become an insider who views life from the vantage point of God rather than an outsider who views life from the perspective of humanity.

In summary, the method of narrative criticism utilizes the categories of literary criticism, applying them to Biblical narratives such as the Gospels, to determine what effect the story has on its readers.<sup>306</sup> This is achieved by investigating a text's fundamental components, such as plot, setting, and characterization. Narrative criticism understands narratives to be fundamentally rhetorical in nature. This leads to questions regarding how an author has selectively utilized language to convey meaning and persuade an audience toward adopting a particular idea or mindset. With this established, I will now review four different applications of narrative criticism to the Gospel of Mark. This will allow me to highlight the tools of narrative criticism, the breadth and depth of the methodology, and how I aim to utilize these methodological tools to achieve the goals of this thesis.

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<sup>306</sup> William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, Third edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 71. It should be noted that "it does not follow that narrative and fiction must be synonymous."

### 4.3. NARRATIVE CRITICISM AND THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

#### 4.3.1 Approaching Mark as a Narrative.

To begin, it will be helpful to review how narrative critics have generally approached Mark's Gospel as a piece of historical literature. Since the Gospel of Mark is a narrative originally written in the first century, narrative critics have wrestled with several issues related to its historicity. Markan scholar Elizabeth Struthers Malbon has raised six general concerns for narrative critics as they approach Mark's Gospel as a piece of literature. First, Malbon raises the concern of chronology. Since the Gospel of Mark was written around 70 A.D., it is chronologically removed from a modern audience. This raises sociological concerns for interpreters.<sup>307</sup> Cultures are products of a specific environment shaped by elements of geography, technology, language, and other factors. These cultural building blocks are no longer the same for a modern reader of the text, which has the potential to create barriers to proper interpretation.

The second concern Malbon raises pertains to the arena of linguistics.<sup>308</sup> Since the Gospel of Mark was originally written in Greek, it is linguistically distanced from its current audience. This raises concerns about semantics, the transfer of definitions, and the transference of word meaning through translational choices. The third issue is the question of authorship. While the Gospel is attributed to Mark, the actual author is unknown.<sup>309</sup> This issue

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<sup>307</sup> Brown, *The Gospels as Stories*, 16. Brown states that while narrative criticism "brackets out questions of history, it does recognize the importance of sociohistorical contexts of the storied features of a Gospel."

<sup>308</sup> Stanley E. Porter, Beth M. Stovell, and Craig L. Blomberg, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, Spectrum Multiview Book (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2012), 51. Spencer suggests that literary critics "inescapably participate in historical-linguistic investigation *behind* as well as *within* the narrative."

<sup>309</sup> This issue is not one narrative criticism is concerned with. Werner H. Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 13. For example, Kelber notes in his work, "When throughout this book we refer to the

is not one that narrative critics are particularly concerned with since narrative criticism focuses primarily on the implied author. In addition to this, Anabaptists accept the Gospel of Mark as canonical and, therefore, authoritative for the community of faith despite the fact that the author is unknown.

The fourth issue addresses the acknowledgment of bias. Malbon comments that the Gospel of Mark “was written by someone who believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”<sup>310</sup> This is to say the author of Mark has a particular point of view and wishes for the audience to adopt this perspective. This relates to the fifth concern, which is that narrative critics understand narratives to be rhetoric or persuasive documents. Narrative critics approach the Gospel of Mark as a story containing a plot that progresses through conflict. This means the Gospel is meant to persuade its audience of a particular Christological perspective. The question for the narrative critic is: What Christological perspective is the implied reader being persuaded to adopt as their own? Here there is a clear alignment between the narrative critic and the Anabaptist theologian. Just as the narrative critic wants to know what the implied author desires for implied readers to believe, so also the Anabaptist theologian, an actual reader who has been persuaded of the truth of the Gospel seeks to be faithful to it.

Finally, Malbon raises the issue of audience. Mark’s Gospel was written to be both read and heard by a first-century Graeco-Roman audience.<sup>311</sup> This issue raises the concern of understanding what uncommunicated information the author might have assumed the

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author as Mark, we do so as a matter of convenience, without thereby intending to make a historical identification.” This is a standard practice for narrative critics and one I will also adopt.

<sup>310</sup> Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Hearing Mark: A Listener’s Guide* (Harrisburg, Pa: Trinity Press International, 2002).

<sup>311</sup> I will adopt Malbon’s practice of using the term audience since it includes the concept of both readers and hearers.

audience would have already known. In an attempt to help fill in the gap between assumed and provided information, the next chapter will examine three elements of the first-century audience's cultural mind.

To summarize Malbon's concerns, Mark's Gospel (concern #3/unknown authorship) is a culturally embedded (concern #1/socio-historical document) story that uses language (concern #2/written in Greek) to persuade (concern #4/rhetorical document) its readers/hearers (concern #6/written for a first-century audience) through the use of narrative elements such as plot, conflict, characterization, and irony (concern #5/written in a narrative format). This leads narrative critics to approach Mark as a persuasive piece of literature, seeking to understand how it uses literary elements and various linguistic devices to persuade its readers of a particular Christological perspective.

#### **4.3.2 The narratological toolbox: Four examples of Markan narrative criticism.**

How has the method of narrative criticism been applied to the Gospel of Mark? A selective survey of Markan narrative criticism reveals that this method has been applied in several different ways.

First, the work of David Rhoads provides an example of how narrative criticism can take a more comprehensive approach to analyzing a text. Rhoads examines the literary framework of Mark's Gospel, concerning himself with the four major literary categories: rhetoric, setting, plot, and character. Second, Jack Dean Kingsbury's work on conflict in Mark illustrates how narrative criticism can inquire about a key component within one of these four categories. What Kingsbury's work exhibits is how the Gospel of Mark is a story that progresses primarily

through the conflict between Jesus, the religious authorities, and Jesus' disciples. As a result of the conflict over issues regarding tradition, laws, and religious actions, the additional conflict of death is introduced. These conflicts exhibit the protagonist and antagonist's character and invite the audience to choose sides.

Third, the work of Jerry Camery-Hoggatt stands as an example of how narrative criticism can focus on a literary device or technique used by the author. Specifically, Camery-Hoggatt looks at the rhetorical use of irony in Mark's Gospel as it functions to highlight contrast. Finally, Peter Bolt's work in Mark illustrates how narrative criticism can investigate a theme or motif within a literary work. To do this, Bolt looks at the theme of Jesus' defeat of death within Mark's Gospel and how it persuades its readers toward certain Christological conclusions. I will now look at the conceptual elements these four narrative critics have utilized in applying narrative criticism to Mark's Gospel. Following this review, I will outline how I will apply these tools to the narrative motifs of messianic kenoticism and human mortality in Mark's Gospel.

#### **4.3.2.1 Rhoads' elemental approach.**

Rhoads application of narrative criticism to Mark's Gospel can be described as elemental in that he focuses on the four main elements of narrative; plot, characters, setting, and rhetoric. The term narrative criticism appears to have been initially coined by Rhoads in his article *Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark*.<sup>312</sup> From its outset, Rhoads notes that this method has "drawn extensively on the work of contemporary literary criticism."<sup>313</sup> Rhoads explains that because

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<sup>312</sup> David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 3 (1982): 411–34.

<sup>313</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 2.

this approach is derived from literary criticism, it encompasses multiple approaches in investigating the literary features of a narrative. Rhoads' analysis of Mark draws heavily on the work of Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*.<sup>314</sup> From Chatman, Rhoads adopts the method of delineating between the story and the rhetoric of a narrative. Under this framework, the story is understood as the "what" of the narrative. The elements of the story consist of the narrative's settings, plot, and characters. Rhetoric, on the other hand, refers to the "how" of the narrative. That is, how the author utilizes persuasive speech to guide the reader in adopting a particular point of view. Rhoads' seminal work, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, co-written with Donald Michie, is a practical demonstration of how this method has been applied. This book examines "narrative patterns and literary techniques" and various narrative elements such as "plot line, character development, verbal motifs, and suspense."<sup>315</sup> In his application of narrative criticism, Rhoads examines four different elements of the Markan narrative.

First, Rhoads looks at the rhetoric of Mark's Gospel. This involves tasks such as exploring the role of the narrator. In investigating the rhetoric of Mark, Rhoads examines literary elements such as point of view, standards of judgment, literary style, narrative patterns, and rhetorical devices used by the author. Then, Rhoads uses the tools of literary criticism to examine the story itself. Rhoads looks at Mark's narrative patterns, literary techniques, plot, character development, and verbal motifs. In analyzing Mark's rhetoric, Rhoads is concerned with how the author used persuasive speech to communicate a message. What Rhoads

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<sup>314</sup> Chatman, *Story and Discourse*.

<sup>315</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 5.

concludes are two key ideas that this thesis will focus upon. First is the conclusion that the rhetoric of Mark establishes standards of judgment in such a way that invites the reader to embrace a Messiah who is defined by his acceptance of suffering and acts of service. Second is the conclusion that Mark's rhetoric is intentionally shaped so that the reader is forced to wrestle with their own mortality.

Next, Rhoads examines the setting found within the text, asking: What do the geographical locations depicted within the text communicate to its reader? This is achieved by examining the geographical journey within the narrative alongside additional private and public locals. Third, Rhoads reviews the plot of Mark, asking: How does the narrative movement, fueled by the conflict between characters, progress the story to its desired resolution? Here he reviews the layered conflicts within the narrative between Jesus and the authorities, the demonic, and the disciples. Finally, Rhoads reviews the major and minor characters within the narrative, asking: How has the author characterized individuals and groups through action (showing who they are) and dialogue (self-revealing character)? This is accomplished by examining the characters of Jesus, the authorities, the disciples, and minor characters as they develop throughout the narrative progression. Rhoads concludes that the Markan setting is oriented toward Jerusalem, where the plot conflict will be resolved. He further explains that the Markan plot is defined by the conflicts that have arisen between Jesus and various other characters, such as the demonic, the religious authorities, and Jesus' disciples. Finally, Rhoads concludes that Mark has shaped his narrative in such a way that the implied reader is invited to evaluate the characters according to how they "deal with death."<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, 136.



Rhoads' initial application of narrative criticism to the Gospel of Mark has paved the way for several other studies. Three aspects of Rhoads' work have been beneficial for subsequent studies. First, Rhoads recognizes the need for socio-historical study outside the text in order to fully understand the mind of the implied reader. As a narrative critic, Rhoads seeks to engage with the Markan text as a unified whole and stresses that it is to be taken as a "self-sufficient story."<sup>317</sup> However, as he focuses on the narrative of Mark as a whole, Rhoads also recognizes that historical and cultural information is often valuable for understanding the story world of an implied author/audience. This is the recognition that all texts are derived from a specific context and speak to a reader who is likewise culturally and linguistically conditioned.

Second, Rhoads points out the linguistic concern of reading a text that has been translated. Rhoads astutely points out that "every translation is an interpretation."<sup>318</sup> This means that understanding the linguistic matrix of the implied reader becomes vital for anyone removed from the reader's original social and linguistic context. Acknowledgment of this truth is vital for this thesis and will be applied in the next chapter to the first-century audience's understanding of the *psyche*. Since the modern reader is removed in time and space from the text's original culture, there is always a potential degree to which some aspect of communication may be lost in translation. Third, Rhoads points out the importance of understanding Mark's Gospel as rhetoric. Reading Mark as a persuasive document leads to questions about what the author intended to communicate. Narrative criticism is a valuable

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<sup>317</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, 3.

<sup>318</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, 6.

tool that can help determine how the author used narrative to shape the theology of a faith community.

Within Rhoads' introduction to *Mark as Story*, one can find the seeds for Kingsbury, Camery-Hoggatt, and Bolt's future Markan studies. For example, Rhoads acknowledges that the primary conflict that drives the Markan plot is the issue of authority between Jesus and the religious authorities (later used by Kingsbury). Not only does he mention that the Markan narrative is full of "conflict and suspense," but he also notes that it is full of "reversals and strange ironies (later used by Camery-Hoggatt).<sup>319</sup> Finally, Rhoads comments that "the Gospel of Mark deals with the great issues—life and death, good and evil, human triumph and human failure" (later used by Bolt).<sup>320</sup> All three of the following narrative critics have built on Rhoads' foundational work to further explore how narrative criticism as a methodology can be applied to Mark's Gospel. I will now turn to these three narrative critics, Kingsbury, Camery-Hoggatt, and Bolt, to discuss how they have furthered the work of Rhoads.

#### **4.3.2.2 Jack Dean Kingsbury's aspective approach.**

Building on the work of Rhoads, Jack Dean Kingsbury applies a narrative-critical methodology to the Gospel of Mark.<sup>321</sup> Kingsbury's application of narrative criticism takes one of the four elements of narrative (characterization) and looks at how the element of conflict shapes the reader's point of view. Instead of focusing on the more prominent four elements of plot,

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<sup>319</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, 1.

<sup>320</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, 1.

<sup>321</sup> Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 143. Kingsbury comments that "history will show that more than any other single work, this book [Rhoads and Michie] has pointed the way to a literary (narrative-critical) study of Mark's Gospel."

characterization, setting, and rhetoric, Kingsbury focuses on the literary element of conflict. The result, *Conflict in Mark*, examines the narrative aspect of conflict in Mark primarily through the element of characterization. To establish a context, Kingsbury first gives a cursory overview of the story world of Mark by reviewing the settings, characters, and plot trajectory. Next, he devotes an entire chapter to Jesus, the authorities, and the disciples, discussing how these three characters engage in conflict within the Markan narrative. Kingsbury explains that an underlying spiritual or cosmic conflict runs as a sub-current underneath the narrative's plot. However, his thesis is that the narrative's primary conflict is between Jesus and the religious authorities. He adds to this that the central issue between these two Markan characters is the question of authority. Kingsbury explains that throughout the narrative, characters can be seen as either "thinking the things of God" or "thinking the things of men."<sup>322</sup> This dichotomy permeates the narrative and becomes a rhetorical device that the author uses to convince the reader to side with the protagonist.

Kingsbury's work demonstrates how narrative critics can take an element of narrative (characterization) and investigate an aspect of this element (conflict), using it as a filter that can be applied to the story in search of meaning. This process highlights how Mark narratively developed Jesus as a protagonist, the religious authorities as antagonists, and the disciples as characters that oscillate between faith and fidelity, ignorance and abandonment. Kingsbury uses a progressive narrative approach working chronologically through the narrative with each character/group to reveal how the conflict between these three characters/groups progresses the plot and shapes the implied reader's opinion of each person/group. While Rhoads' work

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<sup>322</sup> Kingsbury, 5.

illustrates a more general or elemental methodological approach, Kingsbury's work shows how the methodological focus can be sharpened and more limited in scope. Like Kingsbury, this thesis will limit the scope of investigation by looking at the two themes of kenosis and death that intersect and overlap within the narrative.

#### **4.3.2.3 Jerry Camery-Hoggatt's literary device approach.**

Camery-Hoggatt's approach to Mark's Gospel is driven and shaped by the literary use of irony. Similar to Kingsbury, Camery-Hoggatt uses a thematic narrative-critical approach by analyzing the literary use of irony in the Gospel of Mark. In describing his methodological approach, Camery-Hoggatt describes his method as a combination of "sociological analysis and literary criticism."<sup>323</sup> Just as Kingsbury traces the literary aspect of conflict, Camery-Hoggatt investigated the literary uses of irony, concluding that "irony lies close to the narrative's core."<sup>324</sup> Camery-Hoggatt adds to the narrative-critical approach by adding a sociological analysis. Like Rhoads, Camery-Hoggatt recognized that a text "can only be understood within the social and linguistic matrix the author or redactor assumes."<sup>325</sup> As narrative criticism has grown as a methodology, this style of approach has become more common. Narrative critic Malbon explains, "It is almost a definition of narrative criticism that it will reach beyond itself in interpreting texts."<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.

<sup>324</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, lx.

<sup>325</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, X.

<sup>326</sup> Paula Gooder, ed., *Searching for Meaning: An Introduction to Interpreting the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: SPCK/Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 87.

In his investigation of Markan irony, Camery-Hoggatt explains that to create an ironic moment, the author utilizes the reader's "repertoire of knowledge" to create dissonance.<sup>327</sup> However, the author is under no obligation to describe his social world in "official terms."<sup>328</sup> This literary effect can be achieved through the art of showing or telling. Camery-Hoggatt explains that the use of irony within a given text draws on the audience's repertoire of knowledge to decipher incongruity in the text. To demonstrate this, Camery-Hoggatt first reviews the social functions of ironic language. Next, he looks at the literary functions of narrative and how irony is rhetoric that is found at the subtext level. This is the text below or underneath the surface text. With this framework established, Camery-Hoggatt examines the Markan text for evidence of ironic rhetoric. Camery-Hoggatt's work successfully demonstrates the importance of understanding the implied reader's socio-historical setting and linguistic matrix.

Like Rhoads and Kingsbury, Camery-Hoggatt agrees that narrative literature is a form of rhetoric. He states that "the very act of telling a story involves taking a point of view."<sup>329</sup> He further explains that narratives, by nature, are selective compositions and can never "exhaust the infinite range of plot details or descriptions by which the story-world could be made 'complete.'"<sup>330</sup> Within a narrative, irony is a rhetorical device that forces the reader to make a decision or value judgment. Even more so than Rhoads, Camery-Hoggatt stressed the importance of understanding the social and linguistic matrix of the reader. What Camery-

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<sup>327</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 2.

<sup>328</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, 16.

<sup>329</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, 29.

<sup>330</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, 38.

Hoggatt draws attention to is the fact that language is socially and historically conditioned. In addition to this fact, Camery-Hoggatt notes that language shifts over time. Therefore, communication between an author and their readers requires a “shared semantic field, in order for communication to take place effectively.”<sup>331</sup> Using this shared semantic field, the author can use irony to present the reader with competing points of view. This creates conflict and dissonance, forcing the reader to choose one side over another.<sup>332</sup> What this realization necessitates is an understanding of the shared semantic field of language within the socio-linguistic context that the literary document was written. To help identify the first-century repertoire of knowledge concerning death, the next chapter will similarly investigate three areas of the implied reader's socio-historical setting and linguistic matrix.

#### **4.3.2.4. Peter G. Bolt’s thematic approach.**

The work of Peter Bolt has been shaped by the narrative theme of Jesus’ defeat of death. Bolt’s work, *Jesus’ Defeat of Death*, takes a similar narrative-critical approach to Camery-Hoggatt’s. In applying a narrative critical method to Mark’s Gospel, Bolt seeks to “recover aspects of the pre-understanding” of the early Graeco-Roman reader. This leads him to focus on cultural perceptions of sickness, death, and magic as they relate to the rhetoric of Mark’s Gospel. Bolt’s approach is to synthesize the reading of Mark’s narrative world with a socio-historical or cultural understanding of the first-century Graeco-Roman society. Bolt argues that since “Mark

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<sup>331</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, 21.

<sup>332</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, 31.

is a Hellenistic document arising from a Jewish context,” a proper understanding of the “Jewish thought world” of the time period is vital for anyone seeking to interpret the text correctly.<sup>333</sup>

Like Camery-Hoggatt, Bolt’s work seeks to “move beyond the literary study of Mark’s narrative world, to understanding Mark’s reception in the real world of first-century Graeco-Roman society.”<sup>334</sup> Bolt begins by establishing his topic as the concern for how Mark’s Gospel portrays Jesus’ defeat of death. Prior to his narrative analysis of the text, Bolt looks at three sociological features of Mark’s audience. These features are; rhetorical strategy, the role of magic, and the role of Caesar in first-century Greco-Roman society. Bolt contends that knowledge of these features will help the reader better understand the socio-historical context of the implied reader.<sup>335</sup> He then progressively works his way through the narrative, commenting on these elements and the topic of Jesus’ death within the Markan story. Like Camery-Hoggatt, Bolt seeks to “move beyond the literary study of Mark’s *narrative world*, to understand Mark’s reception in the *real world of first-century Graeco-Roman society*.”<sup>336</sup>

In his work, Bolt seeks to further Kingsbury’s study on Markan conflict and argues that “the three major arenas of conflict in Mark all involve death.”<sup>337</sup> This leads him to consider three related aspects of death within the first-century Graeco-Roman society; illness and death, magic in first-century Graeco-Roman society, and Caesar in first-century Graeco-Roman society. First, so that the reader can appreciate and understand the exorcism stories in Mark’s narrative, Bolt seeks to understand how the implied readers would have understood illness and

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<sup>333</sup> Peter Bolt, *Jesus’ Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark’s Early Readers*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 125 (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 10.

<sup>334</sup> Bolt, 2.

<sup>335</sup> Bolt, 11.

<sup>336</sup> Bolt, 2.

<sup>337</sup> Bolt, 11.

death. Bolt suggests that the audience's life expectancy was most likely under the age of 30, and infant mortality was high. He then suggests that these factors influenced how the Markan audience thought about death.<sup>338</sup>

Second, Bolt examines the concept of magic in Graeco-Roman society and concludes that it was a widespread phenomenon. He believes this would have had implications for how Markan exorcisms were understood. Third, Bolt looks at the role of Caesar in first-century Graeco-Roman society. In contrast to Caesars, who were believed to bring rescue from death, Bolt argues that Jesus proves to be a different kind of Caesar that saves people from death.

In applying a form of narrative criticism to Mark's Gospel, Rhoads, Kingsbury, Camery-Hoggatt, and Bolt have all sought to "identify textually embedded devices which are oriented towards producing an effect in the reader."<sup>339</sup> For Rhoads, the rhetorical effect of Mark's Gospel on the reader is the contemplation of life's "great issues—life and death, good and evil, triumph and human failure."<sup>340</sup> For Kingsbury, the rhetorical effect of Mark's Gospel on the reader is the realization that the conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities points toward "a cosmic struggle between God and Satan."<sup>341</sup> For Camery-Hoggatt, the rhetorical effect of Mark's Gospel on the reader is the ability "to view the silhouette of Jesus' full messianic identity," which in turn asks the reader to "take a position."<sup>342</sup> Finally, for Bolt, the rhetorical effect of Mark's Gospel on the reader is an encounter with a God "who brings life where there once was death."<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Bolt, 29.

<sup>339</sup> Bolt, 3.

<sup>340</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 1.

<sup>341</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*, 1.

<sup>342</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 179.

<sup>343</sup> Bolt, *Jesus' Defeat of Death*, 1.



In conjunction with these four narrative critics, I will argue that Mark's Gospel speaks rhetorically about the issues of kenoticism and mortality. Through narrative, Mark's Gospel persuades its audience to embrace a Messiah who can change, suffer and die. The antithesis of these beliefs is found in the Christendom Christology of Pope Leo's Tome (previously discussed in chapter two). In drawing attention to the incongruity between Mark's Gospel and Pope Leo's Tome, I aim to present a "crisis of loyalty" between the Gospel narrative and Christendom Christology.<sup>344</sup> If there is an incongruity between these documents, I contend that Anabaptist theology should abandon any traditions influenced by Christendom Christology that are not in agreement with Mark's Christology. Instead, grounded in the method of Christocentrism, Anabaptist theology should adopt doctrine that is congruent with Mark's portrayal of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah.

#### **4.4. APPLYING NARRATIVE CRITICISM TO THE MARKAN THEMES OF KENOSIS AND DEATH.**

In applying a narrative critical method to the Gospel of Mark, the following chapters will build on the work of Rhoads, who has explored Mark's narrative patterns and literary techniques. Following in the footsteps of Rhoads, I seek to apply a narrative criticism of the Gospel of Mark that looks at how the author uses rhetoric through various literary constructions to adopt a particular view. This will involve analyzing the plot, characterization, and rhetoric of the Gospel. Given my topic of concern, I will be less interested in the setting of the narrative and more concerned with the elements of plot and characterization. Concerning the Markan plot, I will adopt Kingsbury's proposal that Mark's plot revolves primarily around the conflict between

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<sup>344</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel*, 34.

Jesus and the religious authorities and secondarily around the conflict between Jesus and his disciples. The interest of my thesis is found within these two arenas of conflict. The theme of death traverses both of these conflicts, while the theme of kenosis is mainly found in the interaction between Jesus and his disciples.

In alignment with Camery-Hoggatt, I contend that the elements of conflict within the Markan narrative offer the reader repeated ironic experiences. Specifically, I suggest that one ironic interaction in particular between Jesus and the Pharisees has gone unnoticed due to a lack of socio-religious sensitivity concerning the Pharisee's beliefs. Like Camery-Hoggatt and Bolt, I am concerned with the implied reader/original audience's context. As a result, prior to looking at the Markan text, I will suggest several areas where narrative criticism might be informed by rhetorical, sociological, and linguistic concerns. Through this informed reading of Mark's Gospel, I will then be able to construct a robust Anabaptist Christology. Adopting Bolt's concern for the first-century reader's interpretation, I will argue that Mark combines the motifs of death and kenosis to teach his readers that Jesus was a mortal Messiah capable of change, suffering, and death. I suggest that the Markan rhetoric has been shaped to teach its first-century reader that Jesus was a kenotic mortal Messiah. I believe this is supported by the linguistic argument that the first-century reader's ears would have been sensitive to the description of the death of the *psyche*.

Finally, regarding the process, since I am investigating two intersecting themes within Mark's narrative, I will first look at each theme individually (chapters 6 and 7), and then I will explore how these two themes intersect (chapter 8). This process is similar to Bolt's narrative walk-through method. In summary, my analysis will examine narrative patterns and techniques

(Rhoads), conflict in characterization (Kingsbury), irony (Camery-Hoggatt), and the theme of Jesus' death (Bolt). Mark uses these literary techniques and others to create the narrative themes of a kenotic mortal messiah.

#### **4.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY.**

In conclusion, narrative criticism is a flexible methodology that can be applied to the Gospel narratives in various ways. This chapter began by outlining the fundamental elements of narrative criticism and its areas of concern related to narrative structure and content. Next, through a four-fold review, I sought to illustrate how narrative criticism as a methodology has been applied to Mark's Gospel in ways that coincide with this thesis' topic of concern. Adopting the concerns of the implied reader's concept of narrative as rhetoric, socio-religious context, and the reader's linguistic matrix, I will preface my narrative analysis by addressing issues related to these categories.

First, I will look at how Mark's Gospel uses persuasive speech or rhetoric to accomplish a task. This relates to Kingsbury's question: How does Mark use conflict to force the reader to take sides? Second, regarding the implied reader's socio-religious context, I will ask what might have been known about the thanatological beliefs of Jesus' interlocutors, the Pharisees, and Sadducees. This relates to Bolt's question: How does a first-century mindset of death inform Mark's portrayal of Jesus' death? Finally, regarding the implied reader's linguistic matrix, I will ask how the reader may have understood Mark's use of the Greek word *psyche*. Here I seek to highlight that language is a social construct that is formed and used as a utility within a social context. This relates to Camery-Hoggatt's concern about how Mark uses language to create

irony in the text. Narrative criticism is a textual analysis that seeks to understand the exchange between the author and the reader, which involves “the social and linguistic matrix which the author or redactor assumes.”<sup>345</sup> I agree with Rhoads, Camery-Hoggatt, and Bolt, all of whom suggest that for a contemporary reader to read the text like the intended reader, the semantic range of the text’s language world must be understood.

After discussing these related issues, the following three chapters will analyze the themes of kenosis and death in the Gospel of Mark. First, chapter six will ask the question: How do the narrative elements of conflict, irony, and death intersect to teach the implied reader that death affects the entire person? Second, chapter seven will ask the question: How does the Markan characterization of Jesus as a kenotic Messiah teach the implied reader that the nature of the Messiah is self-emptying, self-sacrificial, other-oriented love? Third, chapter eight will ask the question: How do the motifs of kenosis and death intersect within Mark’s Gospel to teach the implied reader how it is possible for the Messiah to die? These chapters conclude that Mark’s Gospel shapes “‘cruciformed’ readers, for it lures them to follow Jesus’ pattern of self-giving service to others, even in the face of death.”<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, X.

<sup>346</sup> Wegener, *Cruciformed*, 7.

## **CHAPTER 5. THANATOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE FIRST-CENTURY READER'S CULTURAL MIND.**

### **5.1. INTRODUCTION.**

This chapter will serve as a bridge between the previously discussed narrative critical method and the following three chapters that will apply this methodology to the Gospel of Mark. The purpose of this chapter will be twofold. First, I will use Jan Sigvartsen's criteria for categorizing afterlife literature to determine where the Gospel of Mark fits in comparison to similar literature. Second, I will examine three aspects of the implied/first-century reader's cultural mind.

Jan Sigvartsen's criteria for classifying Second Temple's afterlife and resurrection literature aids in the narrative analysis of Mark by providing a framework to discuss issues of life and death in the mind of the first-century audience. Applying Sigvartsen's criteria to the Gospel of Mark reinforces this thesis' argument that Mark's Gospel was purposefully written in a rhetorical manner, providing its audience with competing socio-religious views to elicit a specific understanding of kenotic mortal messiahship. The effect Mark's Gospel has on its audience is the encouragement to adopt a particular anthropology (physicalism), thanatology (death as decomposition), and eschatology (physical resurrection hope). As a related consequence, this requires rejecting the antithetical views of body/soul dualism, death as the separation of body and soul, and hope for a disembodied afterlife.

Bolt's narrative criticism of Mark's Gospel is also valuable in that it aids in the narrative analysis of Mark by integrating an understanding of the first-century reader's cultural mind into the application of narrative criticism. Using Bolt's methodology, I will discuss three factors of pre-knowledge that may have influenced the first century reading of Mark's Gospel. First, I will

draw attention to the literary category of afterlife propaganda within the cultural milieu of Mark's audience.<sup>347</sup> Second, I will review what can be known about the opposing afterlife beliefs of Jesus' socio-religious interlocutors, the Pharisees and Sadducees. Finally, I will draw attention to the diversity of views on the *psyche* within the first-century audience's cultural mindset.

Together, these three aspects of the first-century audience's cultural mind enhance a narrative criticism of Mark's Gospel as it relates to Jesus' ability to change, suffer, and die. All three of these aspects of the first-century cultural mind demonstrate opposing thought categories related to life, death, and afterlife beliefs. This reinforces the idea that as a rhetorical document, Mark's Gospel sought to lead its reader to adopt a particular view on these topics.

## **5.2. MORTALIST AND IMMORTALIST AFTERLIFE AND RESURRECTION BELIEFS.**

When it comes to understanding the cultural mind of the first-century reader in relation to beliefs about death and the afterlife, Jan Sigvartsen's work is particularly helpful.

Sigvartsen's work on the topic can be found in his *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha* and his *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Apocrypha and Apocalyptic Literature*. While other significant works, such as N.T Wright's *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Alan Segal's *Life after Death*, and Nickelsburg's *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, all examine similar Intertestamental

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<sup>347</sup> I use the phrase afterlife propaganda to describe a piece of literature that presents its audience with a narrative about life, death, and the afterlife. These narratives present their audience with the choice to accept or deny a specific anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. In the case of 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, and Mark's Gospel, this is also tied to the proposal to embrace martyrdom rather than fighting back against the ruling authorities.

literature, none of these works establish criteria by which to categorize the literature that can subsequently be applied to the Gospels. Sigvartsen's afterlife criteria are helpful in examining the differences between Intertestamental literature beliefs and can additionally be applied to later literary compositions such as Mark's Gospel.

Theologians Sigvartsen, Wright, Segal, and Nickelsburg all agree that Intertestamental literature contains a broad spectrum of afterlife beliefs. In addition, they agree that various dynamics influenced these writings, including culture, the adoption of the Greek language, and the threat of martyrdom. However, these theologians do not always agree on how to categorize the beliefs of the Ancient Israelites. For instance, while he rejects the Platonic view of the soul, Wright's work still embraces body-soul dualism and the perspective that death is the separation of body and soul. On the other hand, Segal argues that the Ancient Israelites were physicalists, and the dualist concept of a separable soul is foreign to the Christian faith.

In comparison to these three scholars, Sigvartsen's work is unique in that he does not address the Gospels. Sigvartsen's work reviews a collection of literary documents that fall within the category of afterlife propaganda. These texts attempt to persuade their audience to adopt a particular perspective on life, death, and the afterlife. Sigvartsen's work systematically reviews documents from the Pseudepigrapha, Apocrypha, and Apocalyptic Literature and categorizes them related to their anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. Like Bolt, Sigvartsen believes that "an awareness of Second Temple period literature is helpful for gaining a better understanding of the death and afterlife views presented in the New Testament and Early Rabbinic literature, as it shows they are a part of the larger discussion taking place during

this critical period.”<sup>348</sup> Nicklesburg’s work is helpful in that it categorizes the Gospel of Mark in the genre of afterlife propaganda, however, he presents no conclusions besides the fact that Mark repeatedly uses the word *psyche* to describe the physical body in the context of death.

### **5.2.1. Sigvartsen’s criteria for categorizing afterlife literature.**

Summarizing his study of the various texts, Sigvartsen identifies “eighteen distinct and complete views (from death to eternity) regarding life-after-death with varying degrees of complexity ranging from the basic view of *2 Maccabees*.”<sup>349</sup> Each of these texts presents its audience with a suggested perspective on the concepts of life, death, and the afterlife.

Naturally, the authors of this subset of literature used similar vocabulary in their descriptions of life, death, and the afterlife. Concerning the overlap of vocabulary and opposing definitions of the same terms, Sigvartsen says that “terms and concepts were adapted to fit into the theological framework of the composition.”<sup>350</sup> In light of this assessment, he adds that each individual composition must be allowed to define its use of terms.

Sigvartsen’s work is significant because it summarizes the diversity of views within this type of literature. This chapter will seek to demonstrate that not only is this diversity present within Second Temple literature, but it can also be observed in the recorded beliefs of religious leaders who may have written these documents and the language used by authors of this literature. The polarization of afterlife views is perhaps most evident in the comparison of 2

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<sup>348</sup> Jan A. Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 30, *Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies* (London, England: T&T Clark, 2019), 225.

<sup>349</sup> Sigvartsen, 30:209.

<sup>350</sup> Sigvartsen, 30:210. 210.



Maccabees and 4 Maccabees, which tell the same story but present their respective audiences with opposite afterlife theologies. Sigvartsen comments that the afterlife portrait of 4 Maccabees stands in “stark contrast to the parallel narrative of 2 Maccabees 7.”<sup>351</sup> In surveying the Apocryphal, Pseudepigraphal, and Apocalyptic writings of Second-Temple Jewish literature, Sigvartsen concludes that “the predominant view” within this body of literature “is the bipartite view (Body + Soul).”<sup>352</sup> As a result, he further states that “if the anthropological view of a certain text [written within the general time frame] is not specifically stated, the reader could assume the writer held a bipartite view unless there is evidence in the text to the contrary.”<sup>353</sup>

In determining whether a text should be classified as dualist (Body + Soul) or physicalist (Body) in its thanatology, Sigvartsen establishes several questions that can be asked of the literature. First, he asserts that the primary question to be asked of an afterlife propaganda text is, “What is the nature of this soul [*psyche*]: is it mortal or immortal?”<sup>354</sup> In some cases, answering this question is straightforward because the author explicitly states that the *psyche* is immortal. Alternatively, other authors describe the *psyche* as the mortal physical person.

**Primary Criteria:** Does the author describe the *psyche* as mortal or immortal?

If the text is ambiguous on this initial question, Sigvartsen explains that texts supporting a dualist anthropology also tend to possess four descriptive clues that can be used to determine

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<sup>351</sup> Sigvartsen, 30:225. 225.

<sup>352</sup> Sigvartsen, 30:210. 210.

<sup>353</sup> Sigvartsen, 30:210. 210.

<sup>354</sup> Sigvartsen, 30:210. 210.

an author's position. Sigvartsen explains that a mortalist and immortalist text will most likely show the following secondary evidence which confirms the primary criteria.

**Secondary evidence of an immortalist text:**

- (A) The author reports where the soul (*psyche*) goes when it departs from the body.
- (B) There is a description of post-mortem judgment followed by reward or punishment.
- (C) There is a narrative of a disembodied conscious intermediate-state.
- (D) Resurrection is described as the reunification of the body and soul (*psyche*).<sup>355</sup>

**Secondary evidence of a mortalist text:**

- (A) Death is described as the end of life or as decomposition.
- (B) There is no description of a disembodied intermediate state.
- (D) Resurrection is described as the revivification of a corpse.

These criteria are useful in determining a given text's anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. These opposing categories illustrate that divergent views concerning anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology existed within the first-century audience's mental

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<sup>355</sup> According to Josephus, the views of (A) death as separating, (B) post-mortem judgment, (C) a conscious intermediate-state, and (D) resurrection as a reunification of the soul with the body summarize the death and afterlife beliefs of the Pharisees. For example, Josephus states the Pharisees say that "all souls are incorruptible, but that the souls of good men only are removed into other bodies [A and D], - but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment." Flavius Josephus and William Whiston, *The Complete Works* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 729. Additionally, he adds, "They [the Pharisees] also believe that souls have an immortal vigor in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards and punishments [B], according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison [C], but that the former shall have power to revive again." Josephus and Whiston, 572.

register. In the following sections, it will be illustrated that these opposing views existed within the literature (Second Temple afterlife literature), religious teaching (beliefs and teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees), and language (competing anthropological definitions of the *psyche*) of the first-century Markan audience. Together, these categories of literature, religious leadership, and language help construct the cultural mind of the first-century reader. I propose that knowledge of these aspects of the first-century audience's cultural mind is essential to the modern reader seeking to understand what the author of Mark intended for his audience to adopt.

### **5.2.2. Applying Sigvartsen's criteria to the Gospel of Mark.**

How would the hearing of Mark's Gospel have been influenced by afterlife propaganda literature? As a literary document, Mark was written in the form of a narrative, which is inherently selective in nature. Using Sigvartsen's criteria, Mark's Gospel should be classified as a physicalist text. This conclusion will be supported by subsequent chapters that will provide a more in-depth analysis. Support for this conclusion is found in Mark's parallel use of the words *soma* and *psyche*. In addition, Jesus repeatedly uses the word *psyche* in reference to bodily death.

**Primary Criteria:** Mark describes the *psyche* as mortal.

**Secondary evidence of a mortalist text:**

(A) Death is not described as the separation of the *psyche* from the body.

- (B) There is no depiction of post-mortem judgment, reward, or punishment.
- (C) There is no description of a disembodied conscious intermediate-state.
- (D) Resurrection is not described as a reunification of the body and soul (*psyche*).

This evidence summarizes facts about the content of the narrative itself. It is also useful for narrative criticism to seek insight into the mind of the first century audience.

### **5.3. NARRATIVE CRITICISM AND THE FIRST-CENTURY READER'S CULTURAL MIND.**

As narrative criticism has developed as a methodology, some practitioners have drawn attention to the fact that literary works are conditioned by certain factors that the narrative critic must consider. For instance, Resseguie notes that the implied author always assumes that the implied reader has a particular set of “cultural, linguistic, social, and historical competencies.”<sup>356</sup> Echoing this sentiment, Bolt has claimed that narrative criticism should seek to recover “the ‘cultural mind’ of Mark’s early readers through social description.”<sup>357</sup> This is an attempt to understand the implied reader's socio-historical context in order to inform and fill in gaps of assumed knowledge by the author. This supplementary element of narrative criticism is necessary since cultural, linguistic, and social gaps exist between the first-century reader and the modern reader. In agreement with Bolt’s aims, this chapter will use his work as a model to be replicated. This means that prior to analyzing Mark’s Gospel, like Bolt, I will propose three

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<sup>356</sup> James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2005), 39.

<sup>357</sup> Peter Bolt, *Jesus’ Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark’s Early Readers*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 125 (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.

areas in which information about the first-century readers' cultural mind may be helpful for a modern analysis.

Bolt's work provides an excellent working model because it practically demonstrates how narrative criticism can draw upon sociological, religious, and linguistic knowledge to further inform a narrative analysis of a text. While other Markan narrative critics such as Rhoads, Kingsbury, and Camery-Hoggatt recognize the usefulness of this approach, none of them have implemented this prior to their narrative analysis of the Gospel. Like Bolt, I will seek to "recover relevant aspects of the pre-understanding which Graeco-Roman readers could be expected to bring to their reading of Mark."<sup>358</sup> Bolt labels this pre-understanding the cultural mind of the first-century audience. This is understood to be the repertoire of information that makes up the mental register of the first-century Graeco-Roman reader.

Bolt explains that his goal is to work within the interface between the story world and the real world. In the same way, this thesis seeks to move from the story world of Mark to constructing real world theology for a community of Christ followers. This thesis aims to place oneself in the position of the implied/first-century reader to construct a modern Anabaptist Christology. Bolt explains that he aims to "move beyond the literary study of Mark's *narrative world*, to understand Mark's reception in the real world of *first-century Graeco-Roman society*."<sup>359</sup> Here, Bolt draws attention to the fact that the implied reader is culturally, socially, and linguistically conditioned by their first-century historical context. This chapter will follow in Bolt's footsteps, asking how three elements of the implied/first-century reader's cultural mind

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<sup>358</sup> Bolt, xi.

<sup>359</sup> Bolt, 2.

might have influenced the reading of Mark's Gospel in a first-century context. The three elements this chapter will examine are (1) afterlife propaganda literature, (2) the competing beliefs of religious leadership, and (3) cultural awareness of polarizing linguistic definitions.

As a narrative critic, Bolt's "analysis seeks to identify and explain textually embedded devices which are oriented towards producing an effect in the reader."<sup>360</sup> Since there is a gap between the modern reader and the first-century reader, these textually embedded devices have the potential to go unnoticed, become lost in translation, or be misunderstood. Bolt explains that "when a text is heard by an audience, its vocabulary and concepts have to engage with the 'mental register' that the audience already possesses."<sup>361</sup> This transmission of information from the author to the reader can be impeded when the reader no longer possesses the same vocabulary or mental register as the original author. To summarize this idea, culturally conditioned concepts can be lost in translation in the transference of language and culture.

The goal for the modern reader to properly construct a Christology from Mark's Gospel is to attempt to understand the cultural mind of the first-century audience. Bolt's work seeks to inform this gap by exploring how three aspects of the first-century readers' life might inform a reading of Mark's Gospel as it relates to the topic of death. Modeled after Bolt's work, this chapter will seek to raise awareness of three potential competencies of the implied reader relevant to this thesis's aims. This is an attempt to define or describe elements of the first-

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<sup>360</sup> Bolt, 3.

<sup>361</sup> Bolt, 9.

century audience's mental register and how these elements might have influenced a reading of Mark's Gospel.

#### **5.4. LITERATURE: THE FIRST-CENTURY CULTURAL MIND AND AFTERLIFE PROPAGANDA.**

Prior to the writing of Mark's Gospel, numerous literary documents existed that can be categorized as Jewish afterlife propaganda. These documents provide their audience with an eschatological hope for life after death. Like Mark's Gospel, some of these persuasive literary documents encourage their audience to embrace an ideology of martyrdom with the promise of some form of life after death. The works of 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees provide a unique test case within this arena of literature in that they tell the same story with entirely different views on life (anthropology), death (thanatology), and the afterlife (eschatology). In this way, they are entirely unique amidst this category of literature.<sup>362</sup> Comparing these two stories also reinforces Sigvartsen's summary that there was no "single Jewish orthodoxy of the time" concerning the topics of immortality, resurrection, and the afterlife.<sup>363</sup>

One perspective of these afterlife propaganda authors was that death is final. This can be observed in the writers of 1 Maccabees, Tobit, Sirach, and 1 Baruch. Alternatively, some texts invite their audience to hope in life after death. For example, the book of 2 Maccabees promises a future hope of immortality through belief in bodily resurrection. This hope,

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<sup>362</sup> To my knowledge there is no other literature within this category that tells the same story with opposing afterlife beliefs.

<sup>363</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, Expanded ed, Harvard Theological Studies 56 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 222. Trafton echoes this, stating that, "the Pseudepigrapha attest to the rich theological diversity within Judaism during the intertestamental period." Trafton, J. L. (1996). *Apocrypha*. In *Evangelical Dictionary of biblical theology* (electronic ed., p. 31). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

however, is not attached to the soul's ontological innateness or preexistence "as it is in Platonic immortality."<sup>364</sup> In addition, the pseudepigraphal texts, 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, Psalms of Solomon, and 4 Maccabees, exhibit a spectrum of beliefs concerning death and the afterlife.

To illustrate how literature in this genre can present its audience with polarizing views, I will briefly overview 2 and 4 Maccabees, which tell the same tale from different anthropological, thanatological, and eschatological perspectives. What is unique about the contrast between the stories of 2 and 4 Maccabees is that these pieces of literature tell the same story with a similar rhetorical goal but present their audiences with contrasting beliefs about life, death, and the afterlife.

This comparison of second temple Hebraic literature illustrates the variety of views on the *psyche* and death. This contrast demonstrates that "there was a wide spectrum of belief in second-temple Judaism regarding the fate of the dead, both in the short and long term."<sup>365</sup> Knowledge of these contrasting views within this style of literature prompts the question: What anthropological, thanatological, and eschatological perspectives does the Gospel of Mark promote?

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<sup>364</sup> Sigvartsen, J. A. (2019). *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Apocrypha and Apocalyptic Literature*. (J. H. Charlesworth, Ed.) (Vol. 29, p. 62). London; Oxford; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. See also Trafton, J. L. (1996). Apocrypha. In *Evangelical dictionary of biblical theology* (electronic ed., p. 31). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. Trafton suggests that "affirmations, among other things, of the preexistence and immortality of the soul indicate a considerable degree of Greek influence upon the author."

<sup>365</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God.*, 201.



#### 5.4.1. 2 Maccabees: A mortalist view of death with the hope of bodily resurrection.

2 Maccabees narrates the martyrdom of seven brothers who give up their bodies (*soma*) and lives (*psyche*) to death. This act is motivated by the hope of bodily resurrection, which is described as the reconstitution of their bodies (2 Macc 7:37). In the process of facing death, the familial hope is placed in bodily resurrection (7:9-11). The eschatological hope described within the mother's testimony is that the breath of God will one day return life back to her son's corpse (7:23). The persecutors of this family, however, will not be raised (7:14). In summary of this story Moss concludes that the Maccabean martyr's confidence that "their God will be able to restore their bodies to wholeness" subverts the Greek mythological accounts of disembodied afterlife. In addition, she adds that what this narrative seeks to communicate to its audience is that "Greek might is thwarted by Jewish eschatology."<sup>366</sup>

The anthropological portrait of humanity presented in 2 Maccabees is the understanding that life requires the breath of God.<sup>367</sup> In this view, God both gives this initial life-sustaining breath to humanity and, in His mercy, will restore the "breath of life" to those that are resurrected.<sup>368</sup> In short, 2 Maccabees knows nothing of the idea of an immaterial soul. For the author of 2 Maccabees, death is holistic. It affects both the *soma* and *psyche*. In the story, there is no mention of a disembodied afterlife.<sup>369</sup> What is communicated is that death is

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<sup>366</sup> Candida Moss, "Dying to Live Forever: Identity and Virtue in the Resurrection of the Martyrs," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (May 1, 2019): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140019829977>.

<sup>367</sup> It should be noted that the three most likely texts that speak to bodily resurrection in the Hebrew Scriptures describe resurrection as a reconstitution of the person in a re-creative fashion. Isaiah 26 speaks of corpses that rise, Daniel 12 speaks of sleepers awakening from the dust, and Ezekiel 37 describes bones being enfolded and given back the breath of God. This stands in contrast to alternative descriptions of resurrection in which a departed shade, soul, or spirit is reunited with a body.

<sup>368</sup> *Apocrypha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon: Clarendon Press, 1913). (2 Macc. 7:23).

<sup>369</sup> *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. (2 Macc. 7:37). Shmuel Shepkaru, "From After Death to Afterlife: Martyrdom and Its Recompense," *AJS Review* 24, no. 1 (April 1999): 1-44, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0364009400010977>.

not a continuation of existence; it is non-existence. Therefore, “immortality is not an inherent quality of the soul but the reward of righteousness (14:3).”<sup>370</sup> This reward is a gracious gift of God bestowed upon the righteous through the process of resurrection. For the righteous of 2 Maccabees, hope is placed in a future bodily resurrection to eternal life (2 Macc. 7:11, 22; 14:46) to participate in God’s kingdom on earth (2 Macc. 7:29-37; 14:15).<sup>371</sup> The eschatological hope for the audience of 2 Maccabees is the resurrection (2 Macc. 12:43-45; 7:9-29, 14:46) of the body (2 Macc. 7:11-14; 46).<sup>372</sup> The hope in martyrdom is to be raised to everlasting life.<sup>373</sup>

In summary, the book of 2 Maccabees tells the story of a mother and her three sons who were persecuted and executed for their beliefs. Within this narrative, the audience is encouraged to embrace a physicalist anthropology, a thanatology of death as decomposition, and an eschatology that looks forward to bodily resurrection.

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Shepkaru contends that “First-century Judaism rarely speaks in psychological terms of a dualism of body and soul, and does not provide a clear picture of the beyond.”

<sup>370</sup> Edmund B. Keller, “Hebrew Thoughts on Immortality and Resurrection,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5, no. 1 (1974): 16–44, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40021203>. Porter states that “the writer’s conception of immortality rests, as that of the rabbis did, primarily on Genesis, chaps. 1-3. The story of creation and the fall is taken to mean that God made man for dominion and eternal life and that sin is man’s free choice of death (Wisdom, 1:12-16, 2:23-24). 84. Frank Chamberlin Porter, “The Pre-Existence of the Soul in the Book of Wisdom and in the Rabbinical Writings,” *The American Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (1908): 53–115, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3154642>.

<sup>371</sup> 2 Maccabees 7:28 builds a theology of creation based on the idea of creation *ex nihilo*. This concept for the mother informs the perceived process of resurrection. See; Jonathan A. Goldstein, “The Origins of the Doctrine of Creation Ex Nihilo,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35, no. 2 (October 1, 1984): 127–35, <https://doi.org/10.18647/1149/JJS-1984>. Jonathan A. Goldstein, “Creation Ex Nihilo: Recantations and Restatements,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38, no. 2 (October 1, 1987): 187–94, <https://doi.org/10.18647/1339/JJS-1987>. For a rebuttal see David Winston, “Creation Ex Nihilo Revisited: A Reply to Jonathan Goldstein,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37, no. 1 (April 1, 1986): 88–91, <https://doi.org/10.18647/1251/JJS-1986>.

<sup>372</sup> R. H. Charles, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life: In Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899), 230. 230.

<sup>373</sup> *Apocrypha of the Old Testament*. (2 Macc. 7:9).

#### 5.4.2. 4 Maccabees: An immortalist view of death and a disembodied afterlife.

In juxtaposition to the eschatological hope of 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees describes the same event with a different anthropological, thanatological, and eschatological framework. Retelling the same story, 4 Maccabees encourages its audience to embrace a dualist anthropology, a thanatology of death as the separation of body/soul, and an eschatological hope of a disembodied afterlife. In contrast to 2 Maccabees, the author of 4 Maccabees describes humanity as a composite being consisting of a body (*soma*) and soul (*psyche*). In relation to this, as composite beings, death is understood to be the separation of body and soul. For 4 Maccabees, death only affects the body (*soma*), while the person receives an immortal *psyche* in heaven (4 Macc 9:22, 17:11; 17; 18:23) immediately after death.

Post-mortem, these martyrs are escorted to the presence of God, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are waiting for them (4 Macc 13:16; 16:25). The righteous dead, those who are sons of Abraham, are said to join their ancestors “having received pure and immortal souls from God” immediately upon death.<sup>374</sup> The wicked, however, are judged and sentenced to eternal torment as a disembodied *psyche*. Unlike 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees does not mention bodily resurrection. Instead, judgment, punishment, and reward happen immediately upon death (4 Macc. 17:5, 9:22; 14:5; 16) because the spirit is immortal (4 Macc. 14:5, 16:3).

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<sup>374</sup> R. H. Charles, *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament (Apparatuses)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913). (Vol. 2, 685).

While 2 Maccabees promotes a belief in bodily resurrection only for the righteous, 4 Maccabees, retelling the same narrative, describes the immortality of the *psyche* and eternal torment for the wicked.<sup>375</sup>

### **5.4.3. Similarities and differences between 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees and the Gospel of Mark**

How does the Gospel of Mark compare to the works of 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees?

As literature, these three books have several things in common. First, none of the authors are known. Second, all three literary documents were originally written in Greek. Third, all three pieces of literature were written within a similar timeframe. 2 Maccabees has been dated by Bullard and Hatton to 124 B.C.<sup>376</sup> While the dating of 4 Maccabees is less precise, Davies states that 4 Maccabees “was certainly written before the temple's destruction in 70 AD and after the composition of 2 Macc.”<sup>377</sup> The Gospel of Mark can be dated to the mid to late first century.<sup>378</sup> This brings the text within an approximate time frame of around 200 years.

Like 2 and 4 Maccabees, the Gospel of Mark is presented in a narrative format. All three stories tell the tale of Jewish martyrdom coupled with a form of afterlife hope. Since 2 and 4 Maccabees tell the same story with conflicting afterlife views, they provide an excellent test

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<sup>375</sup> For instance, 2 Maccabees 7:14 states that “one cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you, there will be no resurrection to life!” On the other hand, 4 Maccabees speaks of “immortal souls” given by God in 13:14-15. In addition, 9:8-9 speaks of those that will experience “eternal torment by fire,” and 12:11-12 also speaks of “eternal fire and tortures” that the wicked will undergo “throughout all time.”

<sup>376</sup> Roger A. Bullard and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on 1-2 Maccabees*, ed. Paul Clarke et al., United Bible Societies' Handbooks (Reading: United Bible Societies, 2011), 623.

<sup>377</sup> T. Witton Davies, “Maccabees, Books Of,” ed. James Orr et al., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 1955.

<sup>378</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (La Vergne: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 7.

case for comparing the Gospel of Mark. Wright, Segal, and Nickelsburg all agree that these texts illustrate opposing views. Wright states that while 2 Maccabees teaches bodily resurrection, “4 Maccabees went in the other direction, insisting that though the body could be harmed and killed, the soul could not.”<sup>379</sup> Wright adds that 4 Maccabees, which was written later, used 2 Maccabees as its source and “consistently changes the clear resurrection teachings of 2 Maccabees.”<sup>380</sup> Nickelsburg agrees with Wright that 2 Maccabees persuades its audience to place their hope in the resurrection, while 4 Maccabees encourages its audience to put their hope in the soul's immortality. Also agreeing with Wright and Nickelsburg, Segal points out that this demonstrates that anthropological, thanatological, and eschatological beliefs vary from writer to writer.<sup>381</sup> This point emphasizes the need for a careful reading of each text as well as the necessity of letting each author define their own terms. When compared, Mark's Gospel is more like 2 Maccabees, emphasizing bodily resurrection.

In addition to their similar narrative format, all three documents present as afterlife propaganda written in narrative form with the intent to persuade its audience toward certain beliefs and actions. Concerning the Gospels in general, Wegener suggests that “the Gospels are rhetorical propaganda, intended to supply Christians with evangelistic equipment in order to enable the church's mission to elicit [a] favorable response” from its audience.<sup>382</sup> He further suggests that Mark's Gospel seeks to shape its readers “in a ‘cruciform’ pattern with twin

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<sup>379</sup> N.T. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*. (London: SPCK, 2017), 142.

<sup>380</sup> Wright, 425. 425.

<sup>381</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 387.

<sup>382</sup> Mark I. Wegener, *Cruciformed: The Literary Impact of Mark's Story of Jesus and His Disciples* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1995), 23.

effects.”<sup>383</sup> These effects are to overcome the fear of death through the hope of resurrection and encourage the audience to mimic Jesus’ kenotic self-giving, self-sacrificial servanthood. Narrative critics are in general agreement that Mark’s Gospel was written to “lead the reader to align with Jesus and to distrust the authorities.”<sup>384</sup> In doing so, it “encourages the reader to follow Jesus’ pattern of self-giving service to others, even in the face of death.”<sup>385</sup> In the next three chapters, I will argue that as a rhetorical document, Mark’s Gospel guides the audience to share the author’s perspective of a kenotic mortal messiah. This is achieved by teaching the audience not to side with the disciples who are critiqued by Jesus for thinking the things of man. In this way, the protagonist is allowed to define what it means to be a messiah. This corrects any preconceived notions the audience may have brought with them about messiahship.

In summary, the primary similarities, and differences between 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, and the Gospel of Mark are as follows:

**Similarities:**

- (1) Narrative stories of life and death: All three pieces of literature use narrative as their primary vehicle of communication.

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<sup>383</sup> Wegener, 222.

<sup>384</sup> David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, Third edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

<sup>385</sup> Wegener, *Cruciformed*, 7.

(2) Afterlife propaganda: All three pieces of literature encourage their audience to overcome the fear of persecution and death by placing their hope in life after death. As rhetorical documents, these books seek to convince their audience of a particular anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology.

**Differences:**

- (1) Definitions of the psyche: For the authors of 2 Maccabees and Mark, the *psyche* is mortal. For the author of 4 Maccabees, the *psyche* is immortal.
- (2) Life after death: For the authors of 2 Maccabees and Mark, life after death is only made possible through resurrection. For the author of 4 Maccabees, the immortal *psyche* survives the death of the mortal body, and there is no mention of resurrection.
- (3) Motivations: For the authors of 2 Maccabees and Mark, belief in life after death is motivated by an appeal to God's covenant faithfulness (2 Macc 1:2-6, Mark 12:18-27). In addition, Mark's Gospel appeals to discipleship as the rationale for enduring persecution and embracing death (Mark 8:31-38). In contrast, the author of 4 Maccabees appeals to philosophy as the rationale for belief in life after death (4 Macc 1:1).

In summary, the books of 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees illustrate how beliefs surrounding life, death, and the afterlife differed significantly within the literature that permeated the first-century audience of Mark's Gospel. These works use the same narrative to

present their audiences with opposing anthropological, thanatological, and eschatological beliefs. As a rhetorical document, Mark's Gospel similarly seeks to convince its audience of a particular anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology through the vehicle of a narrative. Compared with 2 and 4 Maccabees, Mark's Gospel aligns best with the physicalist text 2 Maccabees.

### **5.5. LEADERSHIP: THE FIRST-CENTURY CULTURAL MIND AND THE BELIEFS OF THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES.**

As a literary document, Mark's Gospel was written within a socio-historical context. As a result, the author makes reference to two religious groups within the audience's socio-historical context (the Pharisees and Sadducees). If the author assumed a socio-religious competency of the audience, that is, knowledge of these two religious groups and their beliefs, two questions become important. First, are there sources of information that describe these two groups' beliefs that can shed light on Mark's narrative for a modern audience? Second, how would the hearing of Mark's Gospel have been influenced by the understanding of the Pharisees' and Sadducees' beliefs, which were a part of the mental register of Mark's readers?

In the previous chapter, attention was given to the fact that "narrative criticism in its more mature forms has included attention to the socio-historical contexts of a Gospel for interpretation."<sup>386</sup> In the context of Mark's Gospel, this concern can be directed at Jesus' public dialogue with two different religious groups, the Pharisees, and Sadducees. Within these

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<sup>386</sup> Jeannine K. Brown, *The Gospels as Stories: A Narrative Approach to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2020), 156.



conversations, Mark's narrative reports that Jesus discussed issues pertaining to life and death. Specifically, in Mark 3:1-6, Jesus questions the Pharisees, asking, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life (*psyche*) or to kill?" Later, in Mark 12:18-27, the Sadducees present Jesus with a hypothetical life-and-death scenario about a woman who marries seven brothers. The Sadducean attempt to make Jesus' theology look ridiculous ends with the question, "In the resurrection, whose wife will she be?" Within the Markan narrative, these stories serve to highlight the theme of life and death. In addition, these interactions also reiterate the ongoing conflict between Jesus and his religious contemporaries.

#### **5.5.1. Explicit and implicit narrative communication.**

While Mark develops the characterization of the Pharisees and Sadducees as antagonists who oppose Jesus, he does not take the time to give a detailed report of their theological systems. The absence of this socio-cultural information is vital for narrative critics who believe that "the narrative world of the gospels is only 'completed' when its details have been articulated against the assumed body of information which comprises the 'world' of its hearers." Three approaches to the absence of this information could be proposed.

First, it could be assumed that Mark provided his audience with all the necessary information they would need about these two groups to accomplish his desired outcome. This would align with the narrative critical ideology that nothing should be examined outside of the story world itself. Second, it could be proposed that Mark assumed a common socio-religious matrix that his audience shared. This is to say that Mark could have simply assumed the religious beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees were common knowledge, so an explanation of

their beliefs is superfluous or unnecessary for the audience. A third option might be that the author intentionally left gaps in the text as a rhetorical device. This gap would leave space for a perceptive audience to experience irony. In the next chapter, I will suggest that while Mark was explicit about the Sadducees' disbelief in the resurrection, he intentionally did not outline the Pharisees' belief in the immortal *psyche* to leave space for the audience to experience an ironic encounter.

As I have mentioned, In Mark's Gospel, some information is explicit (the Markan statement that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection), while other information remains implicit (knowledge concerning what the Pharisees believed about life and death). This implicit theology may be further spelled out in other aspects of the narrative. As an example, Sternberg explains that storytellers often withhold information about the story world to breed discontinuity and ambiguity.<sup>387</sup> If the author assumed common knowledge or intentionally left gaps in the text, a socio-religious understanding of the Pharisee's and Sadducees' thanatology has the potential to shed light on Mark's narrated discussions between Jesus and his interlocutors. This would also reinforce the work of Camery-Hoggatt, who has shown that gaps are required for irony to be present, and Mark's Gospel appears to be highly ironic in nature.

When gaps of knowledge are left in a narrative, it can be challenging to decipher what assumed knowledge resides in the empty space between the communicator and the receiver. Speaking about the relationship between Mark and his audience, Moss suggests that "if Hellenistic influence upon first-century Judaism was widespread and the author of Mark was

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<sup>387</sup> Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, 5. Dr., *Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature* 453 (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana Univ. Pr, 1996), 235–36.

aware of members of his audience familiar with these traditions, it is likely that he utilized elements of Greek religious thought to appeal to them.”<sup>388</sup> Demonstrating this knowledge, Mark depicts Jesus as a Jewish Rabbi who contended in religious debates in the context of the synagogue, showing awareness of his adversaries’ anthropological positions. These interactions exemplify the author’s understanding of the religious milieu. In Mark’s Gospel, the character of Jesus is presented as having both authority and knowledge concerning the current debate over the *psyche* in relation to the topics of life, death, and resurrection. This indicates that the author made specific linguistic choices regarding the use of the Greek word *psyche* in relation to the topics of life and death. The question then becomes, does the author of Mark utilize the Greek word *psyche* as a physicalist or a dualist?

#### **5.5.2. Available sources that comment on the Pharisee's and Sadducees' afterlife beliefs.**

Returning to Jesus’ interlocuters, what historical information is available about the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ thanatology that might inform Markan thanatology? Unfortunately, no literature from the Pharisees or Sadducees has survived. Source material pertaining to the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ beliefs is contained in three collections of writings, “the writings of Josephus, the New Testament, and the rabbinic Literature.”<sup>389</sup>

The Jewish historian Josephus records information about these groups’ beliefs in his *The War of the Jews* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*. In these documents, Josephus describes these

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<sup>388</sup> Candida Moss, “The Transfiguration: An Exercise in Markan Accommodation,” *Biblical Interpretation* 12, no. 1 (January 1, 2004): 70, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156851504322887681>.

<sup>389</sup> Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and Bruce Chilton, eds., *Judaism in Late Antiquity* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001), 36.

groups' thanatological disagreements. In Josephus's *War*, his commentary on the Pharisees and Sadducees illustrates a contrast in beliefs between the two groups related to issues of death and resurrection. Concerning their thanatology, Josephus states that the Pharisees believed that every soul (*psyche*) is imperishable, while the Sadducees believed that the soul (*psyche*) perishes with the body. In his *Antiquities*, Josephus makes a similar comparison, repeating the same contrast. In these texts, Josephus does not add any evaluative commentary, nor does he side with either group on this topic.

In comparison, the New Testament records very little about the Pharisees' and Sadducees' beliefs concerning life, death, and the afterlife.<sup>390</sup> The book of Acts suggests that the Pharisees and Sadducees were rivals because they differed on “a number of religious beliefs.”<sup>391</sup> The primary disagreement that the New Testament reports is that these groups held different beliefs about the possibility of resurrection.<sup>392</sup> Concerning the rabbinic literature, Saldarini reports that “the rabbinic sources can be of limited help” above and beyond what Josephus and the New Testament provide.<sup>393</sup> Although there is little source material to go on, the reports of Josephus and the New Testament agree with one another.

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<sup>390</sup> For a detailed overview of these groups, see E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016). Cf. Neusner, Avery-Peck, and Chilton, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*.

<sup>391</sup> Neusner, Avery-Peck, and Chilton, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 60.

<sup>392</sup> See Matthew 22:23 and parallel texts in Mark 12:18 and Luke 20:27 in which the Gospels report the Sadducees' disbelief in the resurrection. See also Acts 23, which records the apostle Paul's encounter with the Sanhedrin that affirms the Pharisees' belief in the resurrection as well as other texts such as 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul, a Pharisee, affirms the belief.

<sup>393</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach*, New ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Livonia, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans ; Dove Booksellers, 2001), 237.

### 5.5.3. Shifting afterlife beliefs and the influence of Greek culture.

Concerning the opposing views of these groups, multiple scholars have concluded that a shift in thought regarding the afterlife took place between the first and second temple periods.<sup>394</sup> This may help explain the disagreement within religious leadership. Segal sees evidence for such a shift in that “Alexandrian Philo Judaeus, Josephus, several other Jewish philosophical writers, and the Pharisees, or more exactly the rabbis...eventually synthesized the notion of an immortal soul with the notion of bodily resurrection.”<sup>395</sup> However, this shift in thought did not take place overnight and was not universally accepted.

Segal suggests that “the Greek influence is [was] a hermeneutical process, not just a translation of terms from one language to another but an attempt to translate notions of the afterlife from one culture to another, where ‘resurrection’ is better understood as ‘immortality.’”<sup>396</sup> Segal further suggests that “Christianity also provided a meeting point for the two ideas, but they did not blend so easily in Christianity, leaving us with centuries of

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<sup>394</sup> For example, Nickelsburg suggests that the book of 4 Maccabees shows signs of Hellenistic influence. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, 223. Similarly, Wright notes that “there is no evidence that the ancient Hebrews conceived of an ‘immortal’ soul in our philosophical sense of the term. The notion of the immortal soul comes largely from Greek philosophers, especially Plato.” Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God.*, 143.

<sup>395</sup> Segal, *Life after Death*, 368.

<sup>396</sup> Segal, 386. Scholar Bart Eerdman, in *Heaven and Hell: A history of the Afterlife*, suggests two factors that may have been influential in the shift of belief from bodily resurrection to immediate rewards and punishments upon bodily death. First is the issue of justice. The notion of bodily resurrection without an intermediate state requires a delay in the gratification of the implementation of justice, while the immortality of the soul provides for the opportunity for immediate vindication. Second, the Platonic emphasis of the importance of the soul over and against the body leads to a devaluing of the physical body and the exaltation of a disembodied future existence. Eerdman suggests that this shift did not take place linearly but was the result of an intermingling of cultural and religious ideas. Luke Janssen also suggests several reasons for this shift in *Soul-Searching: The Evolution of Judea-Christian Thinking on the Soul and the Afterlife*. Janssen suggests; (1) a shift occurred in regards to the human constitution from a Hebrew concept of embodied life to a Greek notion of an incarnated soul, (2) a communal concept of human relationships to a more individualized one, (3) a shift from a Hebrew concept of death as nonexistence to a more Greek understanding of disembodied life in an underworld, (4) a Hebrew concept of creation as something good that God created to a Greek idea that matter was evil, and (5) A Hebrew hope in the afterlife as a restoration of Gods physical creation to an escape from the material. 185-187.

interesting attempts to synthesize them.”<sup>397</sup> This synthesis begs the question, does Mark’s Gospel affirm or reject this shift? As a rhetorical document, what does Mark’s Gospel teach its readers to believe about the *psyche* and the possibility of resurrection?

#### **5.5.4. Josephus as a source of knowledge.**

In addition to the issue of limited source material, a second issue that arises in summarizing the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees is the question of bias. Concerning Josephus, Saldarini has observed that several scholars, namely R. Laqueur, Jacob Neusner, Hans Rasp, and Morton Smith, “have all claimed that Josephus is much more positive toward the Pharisees.”<sup>398</sup> These scholars suggest that Josephus painted the Pharisees in a favorable light “because they have become the leaders of the Palestinian Jewry.”<sup>399</sup> In addition, some have suggested that “Josephus was biased in favor of the Pharisees” because he claims to have been one.<sup>400</sup> However, even if this can be substantiated, it does not necessarily mean that Josephus’ report concerning the Pharisee’s anthropological beliefs is false or embellished. In fact, Laqueur argues that this line of reasoning is undermined by the fact that in several places within his writing, Josephus appears to be anti-Pharisaic. Unlike Neusner, Rasp, and Smith, Saldarini’s assessment is that Josephus is neither “pro- or anti-Pharisaic.”<sup>401</sup> Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of Josephus’ report’s accuracy is that combined with Mark and Acts, these “three independent

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<sup>397</sup> Segal, 368.

<sup>398</sup> Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, 128.

<sup>399</sup> Saldarini, 128.

<sup>400</sup> Sanders, *Judaism*, 652.

<sup>401</sup> Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society*, 131.

literary sources” corroborate the same information.<sup>402</sup>

Whether one takes Josephus to be a genuine defector or a prisoner of war, it appears that Josephus’ explanation of these Jewish religious groups to his Roman audience parallels the Greek philosophical schools. While the New Testament documents do not speak to the Pharisees’ belief in the immortal soul, they do attest to the Sadducees’ mortalist position, which coincides with Josephus’ testimony. In addition, these sources all agree that the two groups disagreed about the resurrection. This agreement among sources brings validity to the accuracy of Josephus’ claims. The fact that Josephus and the New Testament documents independently report similar accounts of the Pharisee’s and Sadducees’ beliefs on death and resurrection reinforces the likelihood that Josephus and the New Testament accounts are accurate summaries of the group’s beliefs.<sup>403</sup>

#### **5.5.5. The beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees, according to Josephus.**

How might Josephus’ reports about these two groups inform scholarship about the Markan readers’ implied socio-religious competencies? To answer this question, we can look at Josephus’ report on these groups’ thanatological beliefs. First, what does Josephus report about the Pharisee’s thanatology? Josephus records that the Pharisees’ believed that “all souls are

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<sup>402</sup> Joel Marcus, ed., *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, v. 27A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1122. Marcus adds that it would be unwise to give more weight to speculative inferences than the evidence of three independent sources that all agree with one another.

<sup>403</sup> Saldarini agrees, summarizing that “the testimony of all the sources that the Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, afterlife, and judgment fits the other things we know about them and is historically reliable and convincing. The Sadducees’ belief is the traditional Biblical view; ideas of resurrection, immortality and afterlife entered Judaism in the second century B.C.E. and only gradually dominated Judaism over the next four five centuries. 304

incorruptible.”<sup>404</sup> Summarizing the Pharisees’ beliefs, Josephus states, “The Pharisees .... say that all souls [*psyche*] are incorruptible, but that the souls [*psyche*] of good men only are removed into other bodies, but that the souls [*psyche*] of bad men are subject to eternal punishment.”<sup>405</sup> While no explicit Scriptural confirmation corroborates this statement, there is implicit evidence that Jesus parroted the Pharisees’ afterlife theology back to them with a similar subversive twist in what is known as ‘The Parable of Dives and Lazarus’ found in Luke 16:19-31. Analyzing this text, Bauckham has uncovered that the parable existed in several Egyptian and Jewish versions, which all predate Jesus telling. Bauckham concludes that Jesus did not use the narrative motif in a traditional manner but rather “employs the motif in order to subvert it.”<sup>406</sup>

Concerning the mortalist Sadducees, Josephus states in *The Jewish War* that they are “those [who]...take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul [*psyche*], and the punishments and rewards in Hades.”<sup>407</sup> Jesus’ interaction with the Sadducees in Mark’s Gospel validates Josephus’ statements. Mark explicitly highlights that the Sadducees disagree with Jesus concerning the resurrection.<sup>408</sup> Scholars have repeatedly commented that Jesus’ dialogue with the Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27 subverts and undermines the Sadducean disbelief in angels and the resurrection.<sup>409</sup> For example, Cole suggests a subtlety in Jesus’ “statement that

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<sup>404</sup> Josephus, *The Jewish War: Books 1–7: Greek Text*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson et al., vol. 203, 487, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press; William Heinemann Ltd; G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1927), 2:8:14.

<sup>405</sup> Josephus, 203, 487: Book 2 Section 162. *Book 2 Section 162*

<sup>406</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 5.

<sup>407</sup> Josephus, *The Jewish War: Books 1–7: Greek Text*, 203, 487: Book 2 Section 162.

<sup>408</sup> For instance, the book of Acts states, “The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all” (Acts 23:8 cf. Luke 20:27).

<sup>409</sup> Mary Healy and Peter S. Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 244. Lamar Williamson, *Mark*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 224. Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of*



those resurrected are *like angels in heaven*, which does not appear on the surface.”<sup>410</sup> Cole further indicates that this subtle nuance in Jesus' critique would scarcely have been lost to either group. In addition to Mark's narrative, the book of Acts also corroborates the writings of Josephus, stating, “The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things” (Acts 23:8). New Testament scholar Wright also adds that the Mishnah and Talmud equate the Sadducees' beliefs with the Epicureans, who also believed in the mortality of the soul.<sup>411</sup>

### 5.5.6. The Pharisees and Sadducees in the Gospel of Mark.

Biblical scholarship has generally accepted the subversion of resurrection belief in Mark's Gospel between Jesus and the Sadducees.<sup>412</sup> However, what appears to have gone unnoticed, is that Mark may have also portrayed Jesus as undermining the thanatology of Pharisees.<sup>413</sup> What has been overlooked is that Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees in Mark 3:4 indicates a

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*Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2001), 327. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Editor Schnabel (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 298. Schnabel disagrees, arguing that the Sadducees did believe in angels but did not believe in the resurrection. Wright takes the same position. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God.*, 133. Both Schnabel and Wright seem to go against Luke's description in Acts 23:8; however, they both agree that the Sadducees did not believe in an intermediate state.

<sup>410</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, Eng: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 265.

<sup>411</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God.*, 135.

<sup>412</sup> Neusner, Avery-Peck, and Chilton, *Judaism in Late Antiquity*, 60. See also; Sanders, *Judaism*, 521. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God.*, 131. Segal, *Life after Death*, 618. Richard Bauckham, *The Jewish World around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 245.

<sup>413</sup> For example, Collins draws out (1) the “prohibition of work on the Sabbath” (2) “the contrast between the honorable motivation of Jesus and the shameful motivation of his opponents,” and (3) the understanding that *psyche* is most likely intended to be understood “metaphorically,” as the main purpose of the Markan passage. Here as in other commentaries, there is no engagement with the Pharisaical position on the soul in comparison to the frequent engagement with the Sadducees' beliefs in Mark 12. Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 208–9.

subversion of the belief in the immortality of the *psyche*. This “multi-layered meaning” within the text has not been perceived by scholars, perhaps because the working scholarly assumption has been that Jesus sided entirely with the Pharisees’ anthropology.<sup>414</sup> This assumption, however, does not align with the subsequent Markan material that depicts Jesus as describing his crucifixion and the martyrdom of his disciples as the death of their *psyche*. Admittedly, this would be reading Josephus’ reported thanatology of the Pharisees into the Gospel narrative of Mark. However, if Mark’s audience was generally aware of the debate over the *psyche*, and it was common knowledge that the Pharisees held to the immortality of the *psyche*, this does not appear to be a stretch. From this position, Mark’s Gospel can be understood as a polemic against the teaching of the immortality of the *psyche*.

In summary, within Mark’s Gospel, Jesus encounters the religious leaders identified as the Pharisees and Sadducees. Although he clarifies that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, Mark does not go into further detail about the afterlife beliefs of these two groups. Unfortunately, an attempt to discover more about these groups is limited in that no writing from these groups has survived. What little is known about the afterlife beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees is primarily found in the writings of Josephus and the New Testament documents. Adding to the likelihood that these texts are giving honest reports is the fact that they all agree with one another. However, some scholars have debated the bias of Josephus’ statements. Josephus records that the Pharisees held to the immortality of the soul, a disembodied intermediate state, and resurrection as a reunion of body and soul. He also reports that the Sadducees held to the mortality of the soul and the belief that death is final.

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<sup>414</sup> Moss, “The Transfiguration,” 69–89.

Mark's Gospel corroborates the Sadducean beliefs but does not speak to the Pharisee's beliefs. Knowledge of these two religious groups and their afterlife beliefs provides further insight for a narrative criticism of Mark's Gospel.

## **5.6. LANGUAGE: THE FIRST-CENTURY CULTURAL MIND AND THE DIVERSITY OF VIEWS ON THE PSYCHE.**

In addition to understanding the Markan implied readers' socio-religious matrix, it is also fruitful to understand the Markan implied readers' linguistic matrix. Mark as a literary document was originally written in Greek. As a result, this text contains an internal thought and symbol matrix specific to the Greek language. Camery-Hoggatt explains that narrative criticism as a textual analysis seeks to understand the exchange between the author and the reader. This, he says, involves "the social and linguistic matrix which the author or redactor assumes."<sup>415</sup> If the author of Mark's Gospel assumed a linguistic competency of the audience, is there relevant information within the author/audience's linguistic matrix that may be lost on a modern reader? How would the hearing of Mark's Gospel have been influenced by the diversity of views on the *psyche*, which were a part of the mental register of Mark's first-century audience? Considering Mark's protagonist Jesus repeatedly uses the Greek word *psyche* in dialogue related to death and dying, it is relevant to inquire how similar literature to Mark utilized the word *psyche*.

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<sup>415</sup> Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark's Gospel: Text and Subtext* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), X.

### 5.6.1. Mark's linguistic matrix: vocabulary, definitions, and translation.

Since the Gospel of Mark was originally written in Greek, narrative criticism is forced to “participate in historical-linguistic investigation *behind* as well as *within* the narrative.”<sup>416</sup>

Anderson and Moore summarize, “The implied author and implied reader of Mark’s Gospel, for example, were literate in *koine* (common) Greek and knew the Hebrew Bible (later to become the Old Testament for Christians) in the form of its Greek translation in the Septuagint.”<sup>417</sup> This raises issues of language and intertextuality. Three things can be stated as initial concerns regarding Mark’s linguistic matrix.

First is the fact that authors use a vocabulary of words to communicate their message. Regarding vocabulary Camery-Hoggatt comments, “There may be several levels at which the language-world can inform, alter or shape the listener’s perceptions of the narrative’s structures, movements or significances. At its lowest level, reading itself requires not only sensitivities attuned to various lexical dimensions of the text’s vocabulary but also a kind of pre-formal intuitive reaction to the textures and biases latent in that vocabulary.”<sup>418</sup> As a result, it is important to understand what definitional layers or nuances existed related to the first-century literary use of the Greek word *psyche*.

Second, it is authors and audiences who give words definitions. The problem with definitions, however, is that words can be used in a variety of ways. The problem with the

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<sup>416</sup> Stanley E. Porter, Beth M. Stovell, and Craig L. Blomberg, eds., *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, Spectrum Multiview Book (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2012), 50.

<sup>417</sup> Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, eds., *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 33.

<sup>418</sup> Camery-Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel*, 55.

medium of a narrative is that authors typically do not take the time or effort to define words for their readers. Danove explains that within a narrative, “the introduction of words without definitions, concepts without explanations, and named characters without detailed descriptions signal appeals to beliefs assumed for the implied reader.”<sup>419</sup> As a result, the reader is often left only with the narrative context within which words are used to derive the author's intended meaning of a given word.

A third initial observation is that the original Greek text has been translated for audiences that do not speak Greek. This translational process has the potential to be problematic since “every translation is limited in adequately representing the original language, and every translation is an interpretation.”<sup>420</sup> When it comes to understanding the implied reader’s linguistic matrix, there is room to mine “the rich *contextual* resources of Hellenistic-Jewish and Greco-Roman literature to illuminate the cultural world” of the implied author and reader.<sup>421</sup> Spencer notes that “all texts—indeed, all language and communication—are influenced by other texts and voices they answer, both directly and tacitly.”<sup>422</sup> This is a recognition that all authors and readers of literature have a socio-linguistic context from which they write and read.<sup>423</sup> Concerning the thanatology of extracanonical Jewish literature, Nickelsburg summarizes that during the “intertestamental period, there was no single Jewish

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<sup>419</sup> Paul L. Danove, *Theology of the Gospel of Mark: A Semantic, Narrative, and Rhetorical Study of the Characterization of God* (London: T & T Clark, 2021), 4.

<sup>420</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 6.

<sup>421</sup> Porter, Stovell, and Blomberg, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 53.

<sup>422</sup> Porter, Stovell, and Blomberg, 51.

<sup>423</sup> Joel B. Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2010), 71. Bauckham adds that because extracanonical literature may have been widely circulated, “virtually all the literature of the period” is “potentially relevant to NT interpretation.”

orthodoxy on the time, mode, and place of resurrection, immortality, and eternal life.”<sup>424</sup>

Evidence for this can be found in the fact that some texts attribute immortality to the *psyche*, understanding it to be an immaterial essence that is separable from the physical body.

Alternatively, other texts use the word in a physicalist sense as a synonym for the physical body.

### **5.6.2. Sigvartsen’s primary criterion and Mark’s use of the Greek word *psyche*.**

Concerning Sigvartsen’s initial criterion, the Markan text consistently indicates that the *psyche* is mortal.<sup>425</sup> This is explicitly stated by the Markan Jesus on multiple occasions (Mark 3:4, 8:35, 10:45). As previously stated, given Sigvartsen’s primary and secondary criteria for determining a piece of literature’s thanatology, Mark’s Gospel demonstrates sufficient enough textual evidence to categorize it as a physicalist text. Not only does Mark’s Gospel repeatedly use the term *psyche* in the context of bodily death, but it also lacks all four of these dualist anthropological motifs Sigvartsen outlines. Given Sigvartsen’s criteria, Mark’s portrayal of death fits firmly within the physicalist thanatological camp.<sup>426</sup> It is also significant to note that Mark’s use of the Greek term is in agreement the New Testament as a whole.

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<sup>424</sup> Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, 222.

<sup>425</sup> While the mortalist view of death may not have been the majority position, Segal notes that “many Biblical and intertestamental books actually reflect their [the Sadducees] perspective,” and as a result, a book such as Ecclesiastes and Job may have been favored by them. Segal, *Life after Death*, 377. Wright states that “the closest we come to the statements of the Sadducees themselves, or to one whom they might regard as a spiritual ancestor, is the Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach (‘Ecclesiasticus’).” Wright cites Sir 14.16f; 17.27f; 38.21-3; 14.18 as several examples in which the absence of hope for life after death is articulated. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 136.

<sup>426</sup> Segal, *Life after Death*, 368. Segal sees the synthesis of belief in resurrection and the immortality of the soul as a move away from Biblical Judaism and Christianity. He contends that “the intellectuals who adopted the Platonic afterlife from Greek culture were those who made a living in Greek society and needed Greek intellectual credibility for their support...This would include Alexandrian Philo Judaeus, Josephus, several other Jewish philosophical writers, and the Pharisees, or more exactly, the rabbis, as they gave up their sectarian status and

Concerning the Synoptic Gospels, four parallel texts use the word *psyche*, all of which are found in Mark. Only one of these, Mark 8:35-37, contains the word *psyche* in all three of the Synoptics (cf. Matt. 16:24-28; Luke. 9:23-27, and John 12:24-25). Within these Synoptic parallels, the word *psyche* is used sixteen times in the context of death or dying. First, Mark 3:4 (along with Matthew 12:9-14) denotes that a *psyche* can be saved or killed (the Lukan counterpart, Luke 6:6-11 omits the word *psyche*). Second, Mark 8:35-37 (with parallels in Matthew 16:24-28 and Luke 9:23-27) explains that a *psyche* can be saved or lost (literally destroyed). Third, in Mark 10:45, Jesus declares that he has come to give his *psyche* as a ransom to death (the Synoptic parallels found in Matthew 20:20-28 and Luke 22:24-27 omit the word *psyche*). Finally, in Mark 14:34, Jesus states that his *psyche* is grieved to death (the Synoptic parallels Matthew 26:36-46 and Luke 22:39-46 omit the word *psyche*).

Within the Synoptic double tradition (texts found in both Matthew and Luke), *psyche* is used twice in Matthew 10:26-33 but is omitted in the Lukan parallel found in Luke 12:2-9. Texts that are unique to Matthew repeat the established pattern. For example, Matthew 2:20 speaks of those that are seeking to kill Jesus' *psyche*. Similarly, in Luke 9:56, Jesus states that he did not come to destroy *psyche* but to save them. The Synoptics use of *psyche* can be diagrammed as follows:

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became the ruling body in Jewish life, In doing so, they eventually synthesized the notion of an immortal soul with the notion of bodily resurrection." Wright, on the other hand, sees this synthesis as acceptable because he believes the resurrection of the body necessitates some form of a disembodied intermediate state. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God.*, 133.

## Synoptic Gospels

<i>Psyche</i>	Mark	Matthew	Luke
Saved or killed	3:4	12:9-14	6:6-11 omitted
Saved or lost/destroyed	8:35-37	16:24-28	9:23-27
Ransomed to death	10:45	20:20-28 omitted	22:24-27 omitted
Grieved to death	14:34	26:36-46 omitted	22:39-46 omitted

The Gospel of John appears to work with the same vernacular and definition of *psyche* as the Synoptics. For example, while the Gospel of John contains no parallels with the Synoptics, the theme of the 'loss' of Christ's *psyche* is the dominant Christological concern expressed by the author. John's favorite use of the term involves the laying down of one's *psyche*. These texts found in John 10:11, 10:15, 10:17, 13:37, 13:28, and 15:13 also serve to reinforce the kenotic Christology I construct later in this thesis

Of the 104 occurrences of the Greek word *psyche*, 55 are associated with death, destruction, or loss. Concerning the use of the Greek word *psyche* in relationship to the topic of death, four Greek words are repeatedly used throughout the New Testament to describe the death of the *psyche*. All four of these words, *apokteinó*, *apollumi*, *lytron*, and *thanatos*, are used in Mark's Gospel.

First, the Greek word *apokteinó* is used to describe the murder or death of a *psyche*. The first occurrence of *psyche* in Mark's Gospel records Jesus stating that a *psyche* can be saved or



killed (3:4). In the New Testament, in general, *apokteinó* is used to describe the fact that a *psyche* can be: sought after to be killed (Matt. 2:20; Rom. 11:3), saved from being killed (Luke. 6:6-11), slain or beheaded (Rev. 6:9, 20:4). It is also used to describe animals that die (Rev. 8:9, 16:3).

Second, the Greek word *apollumi* is used to describe the salvation or destruction of a *psyche*. Mark's Jesus explains to his disciples that a *psyche* can be destroyed (8:35-37).

Concerning the physical death of a *psyche* in the New Testament, a *psyche* can be; destroyed (Matt. 10:39, 16:24-28; Luke. 9:23-27, 9:56, 17:33; Acts 3:23) or saved from being destroyed (Heb. 10:39).

Third, the Greek word *lytron* is used to describe the physical loss of life. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus explains to his disciples that his *psyche* will be a death ransomed (10:45). In the New Testament, in general, a *psyche* can be a death ransom (Matt. 20:20-28), taken (Luke. 12:19, 20, 22, 23), laid down (John. 10:11, 10:15, 10:17, 13:37, 13:28, 15:13; 1 John. 3:16, Rev. 12:11), or risked (Acts. 27:10, 27:22; Rom. 16:4; Phil. 2:30).

Fourth, the Greek word *thanatos* is used in reference to the death of the *psyche*. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is cognizant of the mortality of his *psyche* (14:34). Parallels of this Markan idea are also found in two other Gospels (Matt. 26:36-46; John. 12:27). Similarly, in different places in the New Testament, a *psyche* can be saved from death (James. 5:20; 1 Peter. 3:20), and when a person dies, it is the *psyche* that is buried in the grave (Acts. 2:27). The New Testaments association of *apokteinó*, *apollumi*, *lytron*, and *thanatos* with the *psyche* can be diagrammed as follows:

The death of the *psyche*

<i>apokteinó</i>	<i>apollumi</i>	<i>lytron</i>	<i>thanatos</i>
sought after to be killed Mtt. 2:20, Rom. 11:3	can be destroyed Mtt. 10:39, 16:24-28; Mark 8:35-37; Luke. 9:23-27, 9:56, 17:33; Acts 3:23	death ransomed Mtt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:45	mortality Mtt. 26:36-46; Mark 14:34; John. 12:27
saved from being killed Luke. 6:6-11	saved from being destroyed Heb. 10:39	taken Luke. 12:19, 20, 22, 23	saved from death, James. 5:20; 1 Peter. 3:20
slain or beheaded Rev. 6:9, 20:4		laid down, John. 10:11, 10:15, 10:17, 13:37, 13:28, 15:13; 1 John. 3:16, Rev. 12:11	buried in the grave Acts. 2:27
animals that die Rev. 8:9, 16:3		risked Acts. 27:10, 27:22; Rom. 16:4; Phil. 2:30	

In summary, the Gospel of Mark was originally written in the Greek language and used the word *psyche*, which possessed opposing definitions within the first-century cultural mind. Of the two ways authors used the word *psyche*, Mark's Gospel employs the term in a physicalist

sense. This appears to be the overwhelming sense in which the word is used in the New Testament as a whole. As a rhetorical document aimed to persuade its readers of a particular anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology, the Gospel of Mark uses the Greek word *psyche* in a physicalist fashion. Any proposal otherwise would need to explain why the author repeatedly used the term in a manner that would undermine the suggestion of a dualist anthropological framework.

### **5.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY.**

In conclusion, a robust narrative criticism of Mark's Gospel will consider how issues such as rhetoric, socio-religious context, and language determine how the text communicates. Robbins summarizes that "a major challenge for an interpreter of a NT document is to discern the particular manner in which patterns of thought and action characteristic both of Jewish and of Greco-Roman social, religious, or literary traditions and conventions are exhibited in the document."<sup>427</sup> This chapter has suggested that the first-century cultural mind of Mark's audience possessed knowledge of (1) afterlife propaganda literature which sought to promote differing views on life, death, and the afterlife, (2) the opposing beliefs of religious leadership, and (3) the opposing mortalist/immortalist definitions and uses of the Greek word *psyche*. Reconstructing the cultural mind of the first-century reader aids in a more robust narrative criticism of Mark's Gospel.

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<sup>427</sup> Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 2.

Using the methodology of Bolt and the literary criteria of Sigvartsen, this chapter sought to address this challenge. First, I sought to determine how the hearing of Mark's Gospel might have been influenced by afterlife propaganda literature, which was a part of the mental register of Mark's readers. I concluded that the first-century audience would have classify Mark as a physicalist text like the book of 2 Maccabees. Second, I sought to determine how Mark's audience might have been influenced by the understanding of the Pharisees' and Sadducees' beliefs. I suggested that if Josephus's account of the Pharisees' and Sadducees' beliefs can be trusted, this would provide further rationale for classifying Mark as a physicalist or mortalist text. Third, I inquired as to how hearing Mark's Gospel might have been influenced by the diversity of views on the *psyche*. I concluded Mark's use of the term *psyche* provides further reason to believe the Markan narrative intends to promote a physicalist anthropology.

With the knowledge of the diversity of views in the first century (1) within afterlife propaganda literature, (2) among Jewish religious leadership, and (3) the cultural, religious, and philosophical uses of the Greek word *psyche*, I will now move to examine the themes of death and kenosis in the Gospel of Mark. The broader outline of these three chapters builds on the narrative criticism of Rhoads in several ways.

Rhoads has observed that on three different occasions in Mark's Gospel, Jesus prophecies about his imminent crucifixion. He suggests that these three separate prophecies are the "core standards of Mark's Gospel."<sup>428</sup> In agreement with Rhoads' assessment, I will explore these three core standards found within the narrative. These core standards will be the topics of the following three chapters.

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<sup>428</sup> Rhoads. 45.

First, chapter six will explore the core standard found in 8:35, which speaks to Jesus' thanatology. Here, death is defined as the loss or utter destruction (*apolesei*) of one's life (*psyche*). This chapter will explore how Mark uses the narrative tool of conflict to develop his thanatological perspective. As "Mark engages in a rhetoric of contrast" he provides standards of judgment to the audience to develop a mortalist thanatology.<sup>429</sup>

Next, chapter seven will explore the second core standard found in 9:35, which speaks to Jesus' understanding of his kenotic role as the Messiah. In this pericope, leadership is presented as self-giving or self-emptying servanthood (*diakonos*). Finally, chapter eight will explore the third core standard found in 10:43-45, which combines the previous two elements of death and kenosis. In this third text, Jesus defines the fulfillment of kenotic service as the giving of his life (*psyche*) to death. The aim of these three chapters is not to present a complete narrative analysis of Mark's Gospel. Instead, what I seek to accomplish is a presentation of several narrative aspects within the Gospel that highlight the themes of death and kenosis.

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<sup>429</sup> David M. Rhoads, *Reading Mark, Engaging the Gospel* (Minneapolis, Minn: Fortress Press, 2004). 45. For example, Mark's Gospel presents the audience with two opposing categories in a dialogue between Jesus and his disciple Peter (Mark 8:33). In this verse, the narrative contrasts (1) thinking the things of God, with (2) thinking the things of humans.

## CHAPTER 6: MARKAN THANATOLOGY.

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION.

To achieve the goal of extending the Anabaptist critique of Christendom Christology, this chapter will examine the theme of death within the Markan narrative. From this narrative analysis, I conclude that the Markan author wanted his audience to embrace the Christological perspective that God as Christ can change, suffer, and die. This expands the Anabaptist critique of Christendom by showing that the Markan narrative contradicts the Christendom Christology outlined in the Tome of Pope Leo that God in Christ did not change, suffer, or truly die. I contend that Mark's narrative thanatology presents a counter-narrative to the one presented by Christendom Christology. This is to say that Mark presents its readers with a protagonist who truly changes, suffers, and dies.

First, I will review how Mark's Gospel utilizes rhetoric and character conflict to persuade the reader to adopt a mortalist thanatology. Mark's thanatology is additionally understood through the presentation of cosmic conflict and the contrast between murderers and victims. Next, I will review two texts that present the reader with the narrative conflict between Jesus and his religious contemporaries. Together, these pericopes suggest to the audience that Jesus held a middle position between the mortalism of the Sadducees and the immortality of the Pharisees.

Third, I will examine how Mark combines the language of the *psyche* and death to teach his disciples about his crucifixion and the ramifications of following him. Here, Jesus' teaching reinforces the book's mortalist perspective on death. Finally, I will look at Mark's narrative description of Jesus's death and burial. In this pericope, the author defines death as becoming a

corpse. Together, these elements of Mark's Gospel indicate that the implied author desired his audience to adopt the perspective that Jesus was a mortal messiah. This aim is achieved through the repeated narrative elements of conflict between characters and the use of specific mortalist rhetoric.<sup>430</sup>

## 6.2. MARK AS A MORTALIST DOCUMENT.

The previous chapter asked how Mark's Gospel is positioned in relation to the mortalist and immortalist literature that predates it. Several different factors validate classifying the Gospel of Mark as a mortalist document. First, contrary to the immortalist literature, Mark's Gospel never attributes immortality to the *psyche*. Instead, Mark's Jesus speaks specifically of the death of the *psyche*. Second, in some instances, Mark explains the same event in terms of the death of Jesus' *soma*. Unlike the immortalist texts, neither Mark nor Jesus ever juxtaposes the *psyche* against the *soma*.<sup>431</sup> Third, rather than welcoming death like Plato's Socrates in his *Phaedo*, Mark's Jesus fears death as an unwelcomed enemy.<sup>432</sup> Fourth, concerning life after death, Jesus never refers to a disembodied intermediate state or promises a postmortem ascent to heaven.<sup>433</sup> For Mark's Jesus, there is no hope for life after death. Instead, there is only

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<sup>430</sup> The aim of this chapter is not to present a complete narrative analysis of Mark's Gospel. Instead, what I seek to accomplish is a presentation of several narrative aspects within the Gospel that highlight the theme of death. This repeated theme teaches the implied reader/hearer how to view death.

<sup>431</sup> *Psyche* and *soma* appear together six times in the New Testament; Matthew 6:25, 10:28; Luke 12:22, 23; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Revelation 18:13. Mark's use of *psyche* repeatedly associates the *psyche* with the person that can die. *Soma* only occurs four times in Mark's Gospel when; Jesus heals a woman's body Mark 5:29, Jesus' body is anointed 14:8, Jesus' institutes the practice of communion 14:22, and when Jesus' corpse is requested after his death 15:43.

<sup>432</sup> See Cullmann for a more extended contrast between Socrates and Jesus' deaths. Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul: Or, Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 2010).

<sup>433</sup> To the contrary, in John's Gospel, Jesus explicitly states that nobody has ever ascended to heaven (John 3:13).

hope for life through the reversal of death via resurrection. In summary, Mark directs his audience to embrace the concept that death affects the entire person.<sup>434</sup>

This chapter will add three additional arguments to the previously stated rationale by exploring Jesus' position on death and resurrection in Mark's Gospel. What I will show is that the author uses conflict between characters and specific rhetoric to develop the theology of mortalism. This will be highlighted in three ways. (1) First, Mark's mortalism is accentuated by the conflict between Jesus and his religious contemporaries, the Pharisees, and Sadducees in two separate encounters. (2) Second, Mark defines Jesus' personal teaching on the topic of death through the rhetoric he uses while teaching his disciples about death. (3) Finally, at the moment of death, Mark does not provide his audience with any hope for a disembodied postmortem state. Instead, Mark tells his audience that Jesus has become a corpse that is to be laid to rest in a tomb.

Prior to looking at these specific texts I will highlight three ways in which the author of Mark develops his mortalist thanatology. First, Mark's thanatology develops through the narrative elements of discourse and character conflict. Second, the overarching theme of cosmic conflict progressively advances Mark's thanatology. Third, Mark invites the audience to categorize characters into the domains of murderers and victims.

### **6.2.1. Death, discourse, and character conflict**

In the Gospel of Mark, the development of a specific thanatology develops primarily on the level of discourse. More specifically, the primary way death is understood is through the words

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<sup>434</sup> van Inwagen, "Dualism And Materialism."



of the protagonist, which are set in contrast to the antagonists. This narrative motif can be illustrated by examining three different occurrences of conflict. First, Jesus is found to be in conflict with the flat characters, the Pharisees, over the issue of life (healing) and death (the plot to kill) on the Sabbath. I suggest that this pericope is meant to be read with a degree of irony when the audience possesses knowledge of the Pharisees afterlife beliefs. If the Pharisees believed in the immortality of the *psyche*, it is ironic that Jesus seeks to save something that is indestructible, and the Pharisees seek to destroy it.

Second, Jesus is found to be in conflict with the flat characters, the Sadducees, over the issue of overcoming death through resurrection. Here the irony is that the teachers of the law are being schooled in the law. Third, Jesus is found to be in conflict with the round characters, the disciples, over their understanding of Jesus' mission, which will end in his death. In this text, irony occurs in the interplay between Jesus' identity that is revealed and the disciple's lack of understanding. This chapter will outline how Jesus' interactions with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and his disciples, serve to construct Mark's thanatology. Through these encounters, death is defined by Jesus as the loss or destruction of one's life (*psyche*).

Finally, I will review Mark 15:37-47, which describes the events of Jesus' death and burial. From a narrative perspective, this event is the pivotal place where the author had the potential to describe death as either decomposition or the separation of the immortal soul from its mortal body. In this pivotal moment of the narrative what the author chooses to emphasize to the audience is that Jesus was a corpse that was laid in a tomb.

### 6.2.2. Cosmic warfare to the death.

Markan thanatology is also advanced within the Gospel through the topic of cosmic warfare. Again, this is expressed narratively through the conflict between various characters.<sup>435</sup> Within the narrative, the conflict that arises between good and evil defines the battle over life and death. In Mark, the “cosmic struggle between God and Satan” invades the human realm, where characters naturally take sides.<sup>436</sup> At times, Mark utilizes the motif of irony, demonstrating that some characters, such as the religious authorities, believe they are on God’s side when in fact, they are operating as instruments for Satan. While the religious leaders represent flat characters, the disciples are depicted as round characters who are easily swayed from one side of the cosmic battle to the other. For instance, although Peter correctly proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah (8:29), Jesus immediately reprimands him for taking Satan’s side by setting his mind on “human things” rather than “divine things” (8:33).

From the outset, Mark aligns Jesus, the protagonist, with God the Father. This is achieved by explaining to the audience that what they are reading/hearing is “the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). In the opening verses of the Gospel, Mark makes this connection by providing God’s affirmation of Jesus ministry. Mark narrates that a voice from heaven declared Jesus to be God’s beloved son (1:11). Later, the disciples hear the same voice say, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him” (9:7). In addition to God, Mark speaks of a second divine character, the Holy Spirit. Early in his ministry, Jesus is baptized with the Holy Spirit (1:8). This Spirit descends upon Jesus at his baptism (1:10) and drives him out

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<sup>435</sup> Rhoads, Dewey, and Michie, *Mark as Story*. 1. For example, Rhoads comments that Mark’s Gospel “deals with the great issues—life and death, good and evil, human triumph and failure.”

<sup>436</sup> Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark*. 1.

into the wilderness to confront Satan (1:12). Here, the audience learns that the divine entourage also includes angels (1:13). Aligning himself with them, Mark defines the protagonist characters as Jesus, God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and angels.

In contrast to these characters, Mark also describes the characters of evil. The mention of the spiritual antagonist, Satan, occurs early in Jesus' ministry (1:13). While Mark explains that Jesus is in the wilderness being tempted by Satan for forty days, the audience is not told any of the details of this encounter. Later, Jesus is accused of being on Satan's side of the cosmic conflict, but by the time this takes place, the audience already knows better. Jesus explains that he will bind the strong man and plunder his kingdom (3:20-27). However, this conquering will ironically be achieved through service, suffering, and death. In a strange turn of events, the hero, instead of fighting his enemy, will lay down his life to claim his victory. This cosmic warfare is thanatologically significant because, as the audience will learn, this battle is to the death. However, Mark narrates this cosmic battle to death in an ironic manner. Victory is achieved not by taking an enemy's life but by allowing the enemy to take life. This was indeed a practice early Anabaptists embraced as they chose to suffer and die for their beliefs rather than pick up a sword and fight for them.

In partnership with Satan, Mark depicts unclean spirits who repeatedly challenge Jesus' ministry throughout the narrative by seeking to afflict human beings. The first appearance of unclean spirits occurs in the synagogue (1:26), where a man is reportedly being thrown into convulsions. Just like the narrator, audience, and God, the unclean spirits are aware of Jesus' true identity as the Son of God (3:11). Ironically, Jesus is accused of being possessed by an unclean spirit, but Mark's audience has already been made aware that this is a false accusation

(3:30). Within Mark's narrative, Jesus encounters unclean spirits in tombs (5:2), in houses (7:25), and among crowds (9:17). In each case these unclean spirits are depicted as afflicting a victim, and Jesus is able to liberate them from their torture.

For Mark, Jesus' ministry reveals a cosmic spiritual warfare that is taking place amidst humanity. The leaders in conflict, God and Satan, each have their own army. Mark reports that it is the Holy Spirit who empowers Jesus and his disciples to heal and give life. In contrast, Satan's army, the unclean spirits, seek to torture and kill. Through multiple encounters, Jesus demonstrates that he has authority over these unclean spirits who are forced to obey him (1:27). Ironically, the religious leaders who are supposed to speak authoritatively for God mistake Jesus for being on Satan's side (3:30). This irony is a repeated theme within Mark's Gospel as the religious leaders are shown to lack authority and engage in the murderous tactics of Satan.

### **6.2.3. Murderers and victims.**

Another way the Gospel of Mark develops its mortalism thanatology is through the conflict between murderers and victims. Throughout Mark's Gospel, the reader is presented with two implicit questions: Who is killing, and who is being killed? This becomes a prominent subtheme within Mark's thanatological framework. Mark's Gospel answers these questions by employing two Greek words, *apollumi*, and *apokteinó*, to progressively differentiate the antagonists and protagonists. The narrative succinctly distinguishes between Jesus and the characters who are seeking to kill (*apokteinó*) and destroy (*apollumi*). The characters seeking to kill are the Pharisees (3:6), Herod (6:19), the unclean spirits (9:22), and the chief priests and scribes (11:18;

14:1). In contrast, those that are being killed are the disciples (4:38), John (6:19), a boy (9:22), and Jesus (8:31, 9:31, 10:34).

The first occurrence of *apollumi* in the Gospel narrative is found in 1:24. Here, a demon-possessed man asks Jesus, "Have you come to destroy us?" This prompts the reader to ask if Jesus is the type of person who will seek to destroy (*apollumi*) others. The second use of *apollumi*, which is also coupled with *apokteinó*, answers this question for Mark's audience. In 3:4, Jesus asks the Pharisees if it is acceptable to save or kill (*apokteinó*). What is revealed in Mark 3:6 is that it is not Jesus who seeks to kill (*apollumi*) but his adversaries, the Pharisees. Not only is Jesus portrayed as someone who does not seek to take life, but Jesus is affirmed as someone who is seeking to save life. Further on in the narrative, the author describes a scene in which Jesus saves his disciples from a storm (4:35-41). Here, the disciples ask Jesus, "Do you care that we are perishing (*apollumi*)?" The narrative's implicit answer to this question is, yes, Jesus emphatically cares. Jesus' salvific act demonstrates to the audience that Jesus has empathy for those who are perishing (*apollumi*).

In addition to the Pharisees, Mark adds Herod to the list of murderers. Mark notes in 6:19 that Herod wants to kill (*apokteinó*) John the Baptist. This desire is accomplished in 6:27-29 where John's death serves to foreshadow Jesus' fate. In a later scene that describes the demon's possession of a young boy, the audience learns that, like the Pharisees, demons also seek to destroy (*apollumi*) people. Mark then reiterates in 11:18 that the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to kill (*apollumi*) Jesus. This idea is repeated again in 14:1, where Mark tells his audience that the chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to kill (*apokteinó*) Jesus. Finally, in Jesus' parable of the tenants (12:1-2), Jesus implies that although

the religious leaders have a track record of murdering (*apokteinó*) people, those that have killed God's messengers will ultimately be destroyed (*apollumi*) by God. This subtheme within Mark serves to define the conflict that Jesus encounters. Jesus is described as one who seeks to save and restore life, while the religious leaders and demonic forces are those who seek to destroy (*apollumi*). Finally, in 8:35, Jesus clarifies that following him will entail losing (*apollumi*) one's life (*psyche*).

Concerning Jesus' use of the Greek word *psyche* in Mark's Gospel, seven out of the eight occurrences refer to human mortality.<sup>437</sup> For Mark, like other New Testament authors, the *psyche* can be saved (*sózó*) from death, killed (*apokteinó*), destroyed (*apollumi*), lost (*zémioó*), given as ransom (*lytron*), and grieved to the point of death (*thanatos*). Collectively, as it appears in Mark, the primary use of *psyche* is in reference to the death of physical bodies (3:4; 8:35-37; 10:45; 14:34). In Mark's Gospel, those seeking to kill the *psyche* provide a parallel and antithetical thematic motif to Jesus, the life-giving physician who seeks to save the mortal *psyche*.

Speaking to this directly, Jesus declares that a *psyche* (a physical person) can be both killed (3:4 *apokteinó*) and destroyed (8:35 *apollumi*). In both cases, *psyche* is used in context to reference the physical body. Jesus' description of the death of a *psyche* in 3:4 can also be found in several other places in Mark's Gospel. For example, Mark uses the same Greek word

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<sup>437</sup> The one outlier is found in Mark 12:30 which reads "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul (*psyche*), and with all your mind, and with all your strength." I agree with Marcus who explains that these words heart, soul, mind, and strength, "are roughly equivalent; they do not designate four different kinds of human capacity but the human mind and will, viewed from slightly different angles." Joel Marcus and Markus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First Yale University Press impression, The Anchor Bible, volume 27 (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 2010). 837.

<sup>437</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1 - 8*. 134.

“*apokteinó* (6:19, 8:31, 10:34, 12:5-8, 14:1) ‘kill’” in reference to the physical death of Jesus’ body.<sup>438</sup> The lexical definition of *apokteinó* is to deprive of life, kill, do away with, put to death, or eliminate.<sup>439</sup> Only two verses later, in 3:6, the Pharisees, in response to Jesus’ comments, begin the plot to kill (*apokteinó*) him. Here Mark reveals the irony in the Pharisees’ critique of Jesus’ remedy of the man’s ailment.<sup>440</sup> Lane suggests that the interplay between verse 4 and verse 6 is the author’s foreshadowing, pointing “forward to the Passion.”<sup>441</sup> The connection between these two verses (3:4 and 8:35) clearly demonstrates for Mark that the death of the *psyche* and the body (*soma*) are identical.

#### 6.2.4. Death and resurrection.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Intertestamental literature shows signs of belief in both monistic and dualistic anthropology. Indications about which position the author promoted can be found in descriptions of death and resurrection. Within the dualist texts, death is defined as the separation of a soul (sometimes qualified as immortal) from a mortal body.<sup>442</sup> On the other hand, the physicalist texts described death as the expiration of breath and the cessation of life in its entirety.<sup>443</sup> Mark’s Gospel reports contrasting views on the topic of death and the afterlife

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<sup>438</sup> Robert G Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993). 105.

<sup>439</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 114.

<sup>440</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002). 150. For “irony,” see Morna Dorothy Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (London; New York: Continuum, 2001). 107-108.

<sup>441</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2008). 125

<sup>442</sup> For example, see Plato’s *Phaedo*.

<sup>443</sup> For example, Mark describes Jesus taking his last breath (5:37) and becoming a corpse (15:46).

among his characters. Concerning resurrection, Mark explains that some did not believe in the resurrection (Mark 12:18-27).

In opposition to the Sadducees' understanding that death is irreversible, Jesus affirmed and taught resurrection (Mark 12:18-27, 8:31, 9:31, 10:34). In addition to the question of the general resurrection, a secondary issue also arose concerning who would be resurrected. Within the Jewish tradition, some believed only the righteous would rise from the dead (Isa. 25:7-8, 26:18-19, Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1).<sup>444</sup> Within Mark's Gospel, Jesus does not explicitly settle this dispute.<sup>445</sup> What is clear, however, is that just as death is never described as the separation of body and soul in Mark, so also resurrection is never described as the reunion of body and soul

Just as there was an ongoing disagreement over the soul's immortality, so also arguments arose as to the "mechanics of resurrection."<sup>446</sup> Like death, resurrection was described within physicalist and dualist frameworks. For example, as Davis notes, the dualist believed resurrection entailed the reunion of a living soul with a dead body.<sup>447</sup> In contrast, as Clarke-Soles observes, physicalist literature depicted resurrection in terms of a reconstitution of

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<sup>444</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*. 194. Wright correctly observes that this was "one of the greatest areas of disagreement among both rabbis and Christians," and rightfully so considering it involved one's attitude toward the fate of their enemies.

<sup>445</sup> If it could be proven that Mark 9:42-49 is in reference to a post-resurrection judgment and punishment, then it would appear that Jesus did teach a universal resurrection in Mark's Gospel. However, this is unclear.

<sup>446</sup> Neil Gillman, *The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2006). 131. Gillman suggests that "the idea that human beings will live again after death cannot be found in Jewish writings much before the second century BCE, and the idea that we possess a soul which never dies is not found until roughly a century later." 22. He adds that "the death of each human being is final, that God has no power over our destiny after death, is the overwhelming testimony of the [Jewish] Bible." 83.

<sup>447</sup> For example, Josephus says the Pharisees believe dead souls will reinhabit new bodies.



the physical body.<sup>448</sup> As Mark's narrative unfolds for its readers, Jesus discloses the diagnosis, prognosis, and remedy to the human condition of mortality. Mark's Gospel demonstrates that Jesus the physician understood the ramifications of death to be serious. In response, Jesus appealed to the power of God to overcome this enemy through resurrection. Jesus' interactions show that while the Sadducees did not understand the life-giving power of God, the Pharisees underestimated death as an enemy. These two encounters between Jesus and his religious contemporaries show that Jesus did not side entirely with either camp. Instead, he paved a middle way between these two positions. This is evident by the fact that he critiqued the Sadducees and Pharisees from the foundation of common ground.

### **6.3 JESUS AND THE PHARISEES: SAVING AND KILLING *PSYCHE* (MARK 3:1-5).**

The Markan pericope 3:1-5 describes the pinnacle of a building conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisees, who are first introduced in 2:16, question why Jesus is eating with tax collectors and sinners. Next, the Pharisees criticize Jesus and his disciples for not fasting (2:18-20). Third, Jesus' sabbath practices are called into question (2:23-28), and Jesus claims to be lord over the Sabbath. What follows next in the narrative a description of Jesus giving a practical demonstration of his lordship over the sabbath in 3:1-5. Within this encounter, Mark utilizes the narrative tools of conflict, irony, echo, and parallelism to construct the story. Mark 3:1-5 reads,

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<sup>448</sup> For Rabbinic discussion on the physicality of the resurrection, see Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*. 195-206. Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Daniel all describe the rebuilding of physical components (flesh, bone, corpse, dust) infused with the breath of God, similar to Genesis 2:7.

He entered a synagogue again; and a man was there whose hand was withered. And they were watching Him closely to see if He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. He said to the man with the withered hand, "Get up and come forward!" And He said to them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do harm, to save a life or to kill?" But they kept silent. After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

While talking in the synagogue in the presence of the Pharisees, Jesus asks the question, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save (*sózó*) life (*psyche*) or to kill (*apokteinó*)?" Here, "Jesus' placing the man in 'the center' of attention (3:3) graphically draw[s] lines of conflict."<sup>449</sup> With this statement, Jesus, the physician, diagnoses the anthropological problem: human mortality.<sup>450</sup> Unfortunately, the impact of Jesus' statement to the Pharisees has gone unnoticed and without commentary.<sup>451</sup> Instead, the preponderance of the attention concerning this text has invested conversation in Jesus' critique of the Sabbath Law. However, armed with the knowledge of the Pharisees' anthropological position concerning the *psyche*, this appears to be a drastic oversight. This is where knowledge of the cultural mind of Mark's audience becomes important. Mark could have articulated Jesus' disagreement with the Pharisees over the Sabbath law in numerous ways. What Jesus does not

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<sup>449</sup> Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1 - 8: 26*, Word Biblical Commentary 34A (Dallas, Tex: Word Books, 1989). 134.

<sup>450</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*. 73. Commenting on Mark 2:17, Schnabel says that Jesus' comment that the sick needing a physician is an "explicit statement about his mission." This is affirmed as the Gospel is read in its entirety.

<sup>451</sup> Of the multiple Biblical commentaries I examined, none entertained Jesus' mortalist use of the Greek word *psyche* in comparison to the alleged immortalist views of the Pharisees.

do is use language directed at the man's body (*soma*) that he was preparing to heal. Instead, he uses subversive and evocative language directed at the Pharisees' belief in the immortal *psyche*.<sup>452</sup>

In posing this question to the Pharisees, Jesus indicates that a *psyche* (person) can be either saved or killed, thereby declaring the *psyche* mortal.<sup>453</sup> Jesus' indication that it is indeed possible to save or kill a *psyche* runs contradictory to the concept that the human *psyche* is immortal. The fact that Jesus' opposition to the Pharisees' anthropology has been overlooked by scholarship may be partly due to the linguistic choices of those transcribing the original Greek into English. For example, the KJV, ESV, NET, and NASB all translate *psyche* as 'life' in Mark 3:4, thereby hiding Jesus' subversive comment.<sup>454</sup> In the same manner, none of these translations chose to interpret *psyche* as soul in Mark 10:45, where death and the *psyche* are also paired. To translate the text in this manner obscures its ironic intention.

While narrative critics have suggested several layers of irony within this specific text, none have drawn attention to Jesus' use of the word *psyche* in relation to the Pharisees' afterlife beliefs. Guelich has suggested that this pericope is rich with irony. He states that "by bringing the new life of God's rule to bear, Jesus risks losing his own life. This is the irony not

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<sup>452</sup> This may not be the only place in the Gospels that Jesus undermines the Pharisees' belief in the immortal soul. Bauckham has argued that Jesus' parable of 'Dives and Lazarus' found in Luke 16:19-31 may do the same. Bauckham suggests that by telling a commonly circulated parable that affirmed the Pharisees' beliefs, Jesus undermined the expected narrative plot of the dead returning to the living. Instead, Jesus placed emphasis on the resurrection. See Richard Bauckham, "The Rich Man and Lazarus: The Parable and the Parallels," *New Testament Studies* 37, no. 2 (April 1991): 225-46, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500015678>.

<sup>453</sup> Collins summarizes that "in the context of the Gospel as a whole, it [Jesus statement] builds suspense and prepares for the narration of the arrest, suffering, and death of Jesus." Collins and Attridge, *Mark*.

<sup>454</sup> To be clear, I do not think that *psyche* should ever be translated into the English word 'soul' in the New Testament. My point is that to intentionally choose to translate *psyche* as 'life' in clear cases where its death is indicated, and 'soul' in more ambiguous texts not concerning death is intentionally disingenuous.

only of these controversial narratives but also of Mark's Gospel."<sup>455</sup> Marcus also views the pericope as ironic and contends that Mark is making a narrative allusion between the Pharisee's hardness of heart and that of Pharaoh. Marcus states that "Mark intends his readers to link the Pharisees with the Egyptian king."<sup>456</sup> The irony is that the Pharisees have sided with Pharaoh, by seeking to take life rather than save lives. By describing the Pharisees as a group that aims to kill, Mark foreshadows the ironic accusation that Jesus is using Satan's power. Mark, therefore, implicates the Pharisees in having sided with Satan in seeking to kill Jesus.

In addition to these ironies, these verses highlight the Markan conflict between good and evil. The concept of doing good or evil in verse four "is the first of two antithetical parallelisms."<sup>457</sup> The second parallelism, regarding saving or killing a *psyche*, "stands in synonymous parallelism with the first."<sup>458</sup> Therefore, to kill a *psyche* is the definition of doing evil. This also creates a callback to a previous text. The phrase "in order that they may destroy him" echoes 1:24, "where the demons have asked Jesus whether he has come to destroy them."<sup>459</sup> This interaction sets the stage for Jesus' future crucifixion. Keenan notes that within the Markan narrative, "Jesus is caught in the planning of others and dies because of their planning."<sup>460</sup> For Mark, Jesus is not "sentenced to death by the Father in order to satisfy the needs of divine justice."<sup>461</sup> Instead, Jesus models the kenotic nature of the Father.

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<sup>455</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1 - 8*. 139.

<sup>456</sup> Joel Marcus and Markus, *Mark 1 - 8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, First Yale University Press impression, The Anchor Bible, volume 27 (New Haven, Conn. London: Yale University Press, 2010). 253.

<sup>457</sup> Guelich, *Mark 1 - 8*. 134.

<sup>458</sup> Guelich. 134.

<sup>459</sup> Marcus and Markus, *Mark 1 - 8*. 254.

<sup>460</sup> John P. Keenan, *The Gospel of Mark: A Mahāyāna Reading*, Faith Meets Faith (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1995). 373.

<sup>461</sup> Keenan. 373.

Jesus' question in Mark 3:4 provides two avenues of continued consideration. First, what must a *psyche* be saved from? As we will see, Jesus' answer is that salvation is intricately tied to the death of the body (*soma*). Second, and related to this, is the question: What does it mean to kill a *psyche*? For Jesus, killing a *psyche* is synonymous with killing a person, who *is* their body (*soma*). This is significant because later in the narrative Jesus states that he has come to give his life (*psyche*) as a ransom. Mark's thanatological position that he presents to his audience is that Jesus will die completely. The loss of *psyche* is also the loss of the *soma*.

I propose that Mark's audience learns three things about Mark's thanatology in 3:1-5. First, that Jesus is as a healing physician. Second, a person's life (*psyche*) is necessarily tied to their body (*soma*). Third, combining the two previous points, salvation is understood as saving the entire *psychosomatic* person from death.

### **6.3.1. Jesus the healing physician.**

Mark's narrative develops a thematic contrast between life and death for his readers by depicting Jesus as a healing physician. This theme seeks to intentionally force the reader to answer Jesus' central identifying question, "Who do you say I am?" (Mark 8:29). Yoder explains that the question of Jesus' identity is inductively distilled through the observance of both variety and similarity within the Gospels.<sup>462</sup> The question of Jesus' identity acts as a marker, allowing the reader to distinguish Jesus, the healer and giver of life, from the antagonists who

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<sup>462</sup> John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Brazos Press, 2002). 39.

are seeking to kill and destroy life (*psyche*). As we have seen, to establish dissimilarity for his readers, Mark underscores the distinction between killer and victim.

To help his reader answer the question of Jesus' identity, Mark intricately crafts three layers of literary discovery. At times, Mark presents his readers with a direct factual statement, making a theological claim for the reader to either accept or reject.<sup>463</sup> At other times, characters within the narrative make a confession of faith about whom they believe Jesus to be.<sup>464</sup> Finally, Jesus himself makes claims of identity through both direct and indirect communication.<sup>465</sup> These three levels of communication present the reader with multiple ironic twists, the culmination of which is found in the identity of Jesus being proclaimed at his death. Kok aptly connects the elements of identity and death, stating, "Jesus' crucifixion is the apex of Christological revelation, as the first non-divine character publicly to affirm Jesus' divine sonship does so after witnessing how Jesus transpired (Mk 15.29)."<sup>466</sup> Not only does Kok connect the elements of identity and death, but he also affirms a Christocentric hermeneutical approach. Jesus' identity is most fully identified in his cruciformity.<sup>467</sup> This is articulated in Jesus' own words as the death of his *psyche*.

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<sup>463</sup> For example, see Mark 1:1, "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Here the author makes a definitive statement about Jesus.

<sup>464</sup> For example, see the centurion's confession in Mark 15:39: "Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'"

<sup>465</sup> For example, see Jesus' response to the high priest in Mark 14:61-62 "Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" Jesus said, "I am; 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power, 'and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'"

<sup>466</sup> Michael Kok, "Does Mark Narrate the Pauline Kerygma of 'Christ Crucified'? Challenging an Emerging Consensus on Mark as a Pauline Gospel," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37, no. 2 (December 1, 2014): 139–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X14558021>. Kok also explains, "it is the height of irony that a Roman centurion is moved to confess that the one who has been executed as a royal pretender, rather than the emperor in Rome, is the true son of God."

<sup>467</sup> Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2009). This is the thesis of Boyd's work. n Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God*.

As a physician, Jesus' identity is repeatedly confirmed by the miracles he performs.<sup>468</sup> Jesus' healing of the man's ailment emphatically proves his identity as a healer of *psyche*. In addition to his healing miracles, Mark's audience eventually learns that Jesus does what no other physician can do: he brings the dead back to life. While Jesus saves *psyche* from sickness and disease, the larger enemy to be overcome is death.

### **6.3.2. The inseparability of life (*psyche*) from the body (*soma*).**

Mark 3:4 communicates to the audience that human life (*psyche*) requires a (*soma*). As the first occurrence of the word *psyche* in Mark's Gospel, Jesus' statement in Mark 3:4 establishes a prototype for the author's use of the term for the remainder of the narrative. Wahlen concurs that in Mark, "*psyche* and *soma* seem to be complementary."<sup>469</sup> It is important to note that nowhere in Mark's Gospel is *psyche* ever set in contrast to the *soma*. On the contrary, in the context of Mark 3:4 specifically, saving a *psyche* and healing a withered hand (a part of the man's body) are understood to be interchangeable. Bratcher and Nida agree and add that "the first part of the question about doing good or evil obviously refers to healing the handicapped man. For Jesus, the man's "human need poses a moral imperative."<sup>470</sup> What Jesus demonstrates in word and action is that to heal a body is to save life.

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<sup>468</sup> In Mark, Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law from a fever 1:30; a leper 1:40; a paralytic 2:13; a man with a withered hand 3:1, a woman suffering from discharge 5:25; a deaf man; two blind men 8:22, 10:52; and many others 1:33, 6:15. In the three cases of the woman suffering from discharge 5:25; those he touched 6:56; and the blind man 10:52; Jesus associates the healing with salvation (*sózó*).

<sup>469</sup> Clinton Wahlen, *What Are Human Beings That You Remember Them: Proceedings of the Third International Bible Conference Nof Ginossar and Jerusalem June 11-21, 2012* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015). 150.

<sup>470</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*. 99. See also William Barclay, ed., *The Gospel of Mark*, *The New Daily Study Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017). 68-69. Barclay sees an interaction

In this encounter, the actions of saving and healing both pertain to the *psyche*, the life of the physical body.<sup>471</sup> With this question, Jesus contrasts killing a *psyche* with healing a *psyche* (specifically in context, the man's shriveled hand).<sup>472</sup> What is interesting is that the man's shriveled hand was not an issue of life or death. This suggests that Mark has intentionally described an exaggerated contrast to highlight the underlying theological disagreement between Jesus and the Pharisees.

France has suggested that Jesus' "broad statement of principle, in the form of a rhetorical question (perhaps intended to echo the essential Deuteronomic choice, 'life and good, death and evil,' Dt. 30:15)" juxtaposes the death and life of the *psyche*.<sup>473</sup> In his Gospel, Mark repeatedly uses the word *psyche* to talk about the physical and biological death of Jesus and his disciples. In contrast to Platonic and various dualist intertestamental uses of the word *psyche*, "The NT writers [which includes Mark] do not disparage the body, and do not regard the soul as intrinsically immortal since the soul can be destroyed."<sup>474</sup> This point is blatantly

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between Jesus' desire to heal the physical body of the man and the Pharisees' plot to kill Jesus. Life here pertains to the corporeality of both the crippled man and Jesus.

<sup>471</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary by C.E.B. Cranfield*, Reprinted 1974, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (London; New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 1959). Cranfield notes that the theme of healing is prominent within the Gospel of Mark. If *psyche* is used in reference to the mortal body, healing seems appropriate. The concept of 'healing' along with 'losing,' however, is not compatible with belief in an immortal soul. See also Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*. 123. Lane understands Jesus to be making a "concrete" statement applicable to the man that could be further applied tangibly to others.

<sup>472</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991). 68.

<sup>473</sup> This leaves the reader to question if this is an intentional move by the author to juxtapose Jesus' motivation to save with the Pharisees' desire to kill. France does not seem to think this is the case. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. 150. Brooks, on the other hand, sees a connection and a motif developing between the two verses. Brooks, *Mark*.

<sup>474</sup> Meier.



apparent in texts such as Mark 3:4, which speaks of the mortality, destruction, loss, and death of the *psyche*.

### **6.3.3. The salvation of the entire *psychosomatic* person.**

In this text, Jesus' communication indicates that salvation pertains to the entire *psychosomatic* person. Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees demonstrates practically that as a healing physician (2:7), Jesus seeks to combat evil, ailments, sickness, and ultimately death.<sup>475</sup> By healing the man with the withered hand, Jesus emphatically declares his missiological purpose is to save *psyche*, not kill them (3:4).<sup>476</sup> While the majority of Jesus' healings in Mark are not a matter of life and death, they demonstrate that as a physician, Jesus is not only concerned with life's victory over death but the quality of life that is lived free from oppressive limitations. This thanatological teaching is expanded upon as the narrative unfolds.

Building on this teaching, Mark further describes how Jesus saves (*sózó*) those whom he touches (6:56), heals a deaf man (7:32), and restores sight to two blind men (8:22, 10:52).<sup>477</sup> This collection of healings allows Mark to expand on the soteriological meaning of *sózó*.

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<sup>475</sup> Williamson, *Mark*. 74-75. Williamson understands this specific healing to be a pivotal text that foreshadows the climax of Mark's Gospel. Yet Williamson goes on in his commentary to juxtapose the "human body and *psyche*," ignoring the contextual evidence in 3:4 that the *psyche* is the body that is either saved through healing or killed.

<sup>476</sup> Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*. 60. Healy comments that understanding Jesus as a physician in Mark's Gospel is crucial and brings "insight into his messianic mission: he is a physician and his mission is to heal."

<sup>477</sup> The Greek word *sózó* occurs 108 times in the Greek New Testament. Its primary use in the Gospels is concerned with physical healing or salvation from death. For *sózó* as healing in Mark, see 5:23, 5:28, 5:34, 6:56, and 10:52. For *sózó* as salvation from death, see 15:30-31. Lucan scholar Joel Green also points out that "Luke's soteriology" focuses on the salvation of the physical person. Warren S Brown, Nancey C. Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, eds., *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). 163.

Later in the narrative, the audience is presented with the resurrection of Jairus' daughter, which becomes Mark's definitive statement that Jesus has power over life and death. Finally, once again employing irony, at Jesus' crucifixion, the protagonists declare that although Jesus, the healing physician, saved others (15:30), he is ultimately unable to save (*sózó*) himself (15:30). Just as the *psyche* and the physical body are understood to be inseparable in relation to healing (3:4), Jesus also describes his own execution as the death of his *psyche* (10:45).<sup>478</sup>

#### **6.4. THE RESURRECTION OF JAIRUS' DAUGHTER (MARK 5:22-43).**

So far, I have argued that Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees in Mark 3:1-5 teaches the Markan audience to embrace a physicalist anthropology. This is accomplished through Jesus' language of the mortal *psyche*, while in dialogue with the Pharisees. In a moment, I will also argue that Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27 leaves no room for doubt that Jesus believed in the resurrection. Between these two texts stands another story which serves as a precursor and foreshadowing of Jesus' resurrection in the Markan narrative. This story of the resurrection of Jairus' daughter is found in Mark 5:22-43.

The Markan narrative begins with the author describing that Jairus, a synagogue official, pleaded with Jesus to come and heal his dying daughter. Unfortunately for the girl, Jesus' healing of the hemorrhaging woman delayed him from traveling to see the dying child. As a result, a messenger reports to Jairus that his daughter has died. In response to the news, Jesus

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<sup>478</sup> The term martyr is used here to denote a person who dies for their religious beliefs. Mark indicates in Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin that Jesus' death is directly related to his religious confession that he is the Messiah (Mark 14:61-62). Writing subversively, Mark also uses the Greek word for lord (*kurios*) to indicate Jesus' identity as a king of a kingdom (Mark 1:15). While Jesus makes it clear during his arrest that he has engaged authority non-violently (Mark 14:46-48), the empirical powers still ironically inaugurate him as the 'king of the Jews' (Mark 15:2; 9; 2; 18; 26), thereby justifying his potential threat to the Roman Empire, and validating his crucifixion.

encourages Jairus to believe (the mechanism for healing in the previous story). Next, (for a second time in this 'Markan sandwich') the audience is confronted with the hopelessness of death through encountering characters who weep and wail over the child's death. In response, Jesus provides hope to the situation by explaining that the girl is not dead but sleeping. Bringing closure to the pericope, Mark narrates that Jesus restored the young girl to life by calling her to rise.

Where does this text fit within Mark's thanatological portrait of death and resurrection? I suggest that this text provides the audience with a tangible example of Jesus' position (death is final but afterlife hope can be realized through resurrection). This story serves to affirm a physicalist portrait of death and demonstrate God's resurrection power. Still, there are questions to be asked of the text. Should this Markan pericope be understood as a resuscitation or a resurrection? This is a difficult question and will depend in part on how one decides to define these terms. Unfortunately for the modern reader, Mark gives no clues as to whether or not the girl had a heartbeat or was breathing at the time Jesus encountered her. Some commentators like Anabaptist Geddert have argued that the text should be read as a resurrection.<sup>479</sup> He believes that since Jesus did not correct the messengers' and mourners' assessment of the girl's death his comment about sleep should be understood as a metaphor, guiding the audience toward the hope of resurrection. Others, like Schnabel, have chosen to use the words resuscitation and resurrection synonymously to describe the event.<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Geddert, *Mark*, 123.

<sup>480</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 127.

One potential clue as to how the text was intended to be understood may be that “the verb for arise, *egeiro*, is the same word used for Jesus’ resurrection (16:6).”<sup>481</sup> Marcus suggests that “Mark apparently wants his readers to link this rescue from death with Jesus’ own resurrection.”<sup>482</sup> In this text, Jesus is exercising the power of God through raising the child. This same divine power will be exercised over death when Jesus is raised. Marcus proposed that “There are, to be sure, differences between the two events [the girl's resurrection and Jesus’ resurrected]: the resurrected girl, like Lazarus (cf. John 12:10), will die again, whereas the resurrected Jesus will not (cf. Rom 6:9). But the analogy seems to be more important to Mark.”<sup>483</sup>

Cole agrees that “resuscitation of a corpse is not the same as resurrection to a new kind of life.”<sup>484</sup> As a result, some may choose to define this event as a resuscitation out of the motivation that they believe the word resurrection only describes being raised to eternal life. However, Mark’s Gospel does not demand this restraint on the language. For Mark, the language of resurrection appears to be broad enough to describe a temporary resurrection that eventually leads to death, while also being able to refer to a future resurrection that results in eternal life.

The task of narrative criticism is to ask: What does this text aim to communicate to its audience? By contrasting the messengers and mourners with Jesus, this text juxtaposes the hopelessness in death of various characters with Jesus’ encouragement for hope in God’s ability

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<sup>481</sup> Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 109.

<sup>482</sup> Marcus and Markus, *Mark*, 372.

<sup>483</sup> Marcus and Markus, *Mark*, 372.

<sup>484</sup> Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 165.

to resurrect the dead. Strauss comments that 5:35 is meant to reinforce the hopelessness of the situation because the girl has truly died.<sup>485</sup> Concerning the idea of hopelessness, Marcus also suggests that Mark's audience was "inclined to doubt life after death, and those who accepted it generally looked forward to the immortality of the soul rather than the resurrection of the body."<sup>486</sup> Concerning this sort of eschatological hope, Mark's Gospel never encourages the audience to believe in the concept of an immortal psyche. Instead, the audience is encouraged to adopt belief in the resurrection from the dead. This is what Jesus affirms in his dialogue with the Sadducees, that death is to be taken seriously as a mortal enemy, but the power of God can overcome death.

Within the narrative, Mark confirms the death of the child through two separate groups, the messengers and the mourners. Concerning the messengers, Schnabel comments that their report that the daughter is dead "suggest[s] that Jesus is no longer needed and should not be bothered any further."<sup>487</sup> This report communicates the finality of death. In addition, it insinuates that while Jesus may be able to heal the living (such as the woman suffering from hemorrhaging), the messengers did not believe he could overcome death. Concerning the mourners, Jesus' "declaration *the child is not dead but asleep* is met with derisive laughter."<sup>488</sup> This suggests to the audience that, like the messengers, the mourners firmly believe that the girl is dead. Together, these characters' views reinforce the Markan thanatological perspective that death is final.

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<sup>485</sup> Strauss, *Mark: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 232.

<sup>486</sup> Marcus and Markus, *Mark*, 371.

<sup>487</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 127.

<sup>488</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 128.

Strauss argues that while “some commentators have taken Jesus’ words literally and [have] tried to explain the healing as a resuscitation from a coma”, interpreting the text this way “is certainly not how the gospel writers understood it.”<sup>489</sup> He argues that “the entire flow of the story, including the report of the death and the derision of the mourners, confirms that the girl has died.”<sup>490</sup> I agree with Strauss that this text affirms the death of the young girl through the testimony and actions of the characters. This, however, presents a potential problem. If Strauss is correct, how is the audience intended to interpret the contrast between the messengers’ and mourners’ affirmation of the girl’s death and Jesus’ comment that she is merely asleep?

In verse 39, Jesus responds to the mourners by stating, “The child is not dead but sleeping.”<sup>491</sup> One way to read this text is to conclude that Jesus’ response is to be understood as contradicting the messengers and mourners. This position may suggest that Jesus is proposing a sort of soul sleep. However, this would contradict what Jesus has already said and will continue to say about the psyche in the Gospel of Mark. An alternative interpretation is to interpret Jesus’ response as a metaphorical statement that points toward the hope of a future resurrection. Catholic theologian Healey has posed the question this way, “Was he [Jesus]

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<sup>489</sup> Strauss, *Mark: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 234.

<sup>490</sup> Strauss, *Mark: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, 234. Strauss adds that “Matthew explicitly states this (Matt 9:24).” He adds that “ ‘Sleep’ is a common euphemism for death in the NT, pointing to its temporary nature for believers (John 11:11-14; 1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 4:13-14).”

<sup>491</sup> Gombis notes that this story is similar to the death of Lazarus found in John chapter 11. Gombis, Timothy G, *Mark*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 186. In John’s narrative, Jesus also describes death as sleep. John’s narrator confirms to the audience what Jesus means by sleep by narrating “The disciples then said to Him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will come out of it.’ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about actual sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus died’” (John 11:12-14). In addition, verse 39 also confirms that Lazarus is a corpse through Martha’s comment that the body will have a stench after four days in the tomb.

denying that she [Jairus' daughter] had really passed away?"<sup>492</sup> He concludes, "No, sleep is his [Jesus'] characteristic way of referring to death (John 11:11-14; see Dan 12:2), which continued into early Christian usage (1 Cor 15:51; 1 Thess 5:10)." I concur with Healey. This position is strengthened when joined with Jesus' discussion on death and resurrection with the Sadducees.

Many commentators have observed that the word sleep was commonly used in the Old Testament (Gen 47:30; Deut. 31:16; Job 14:12; Isa. 14:8), the New Testament (1 Cor 15:20), in classical Greek writing (Homer, *Il.* 11.241), and funeral inscriptions, as a metaphor for death.<sup>493</sup> For instance, Healey notes that the metaphor of death as sleep is present in the Old Testament (Daniel 12:2) and is reinforced in the New Testament (1 Thess. 5:10).<sup>494</sup> If Mark is drawing on this commonly understood imagery, which I believe he is, Jesus' comments do not contradict the messengers and mourners' assessment of the girl's state of being. Instead, as Witherington notes, "'sleep' is the term a person uses for death when one believes in resurrection (cf. John 11:4-14, Dan. 12:7 LXX; Ps. 87:6 LXX; *Gen. Rab.* 96.60-61)."<sup>495</sup> This makes sense considering the next thing that Jesus does in the narrative is resurrect the girl by calling out to her to rise.

In summary, I contend that this text is best understood as a resurrection rather than a resuscitation for three significant reasons. First, the evidence within the pericope suggests that

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<sup>492</sup> Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 109.

<sup>493</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 128.

<sup>494</sup> Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 109.

<sup>495</sup> Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 188. As an example, in his letter to the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul affirms that those who have died have no hope without resurrection. 1 Cor 15:17-18 says "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Here Paul indicates those who die perish without resurrection. This seems to affirm the idea that death is final and resurrection is the only viable hope for Christians to attain life after death.

the girl was dead. Two separate character groups within the text assert this conclusion. While Jesus' response to the mourners is that the girl is not dead but sleeping, this response does not appear to be a denial of her death but a metaphorical affirmation of her future resurrection. Death is 'like' sleep in that you can be awoken from it. Interpreting the text this way is in alignment with other metaphorical biblical language that describes death as sleep. In addition, the girl's death is not described as the separation of her body and soul, and her resurrection is not described as a reunion of body and soul. Had Mark intended to promote these dualist ideas this would have been a prime opportunity to do so within the narrative. Similarly, while it is an argument from silence, the girl gives no report of existing in a disembodied state. Finally, Mark uses the same resurrection language to connect the girl's resurrection with Jesus' resurrection.

A second reason to favor resurrection over resuscitation is that both parallel and related texts in the Gospels reinforce this idea. For example, in the Lukan parallel (Luke 8:40-56), Luke explains that the girl's breath (Grk: *pneuma*) returned, and she immediately got up (Luke 8:55). This portrayal of resurrection is in line with the Jewish understanding that a living person requires breath (Heb: *ruach*, Grk: *pneuma*) to live. The Lukan account appears to affirm Jesus' middle ground between the Sadducees' and Pharisees' beliefs concerning the afterlife. Death is understood as the end of life (Sadducees), but there is hope for life after death through resurrection (Pharisees).

Further support can also be found in the Gospel of John which clarifies how Jesus employed the word sleep in relation to death. In the account of Lazarus' death, John narrates "The disciples then said to Him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will come out of it.' Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about actual sleep. So Jesus



then said to them plainly, 'Lazarus died'" (John 11:12-14). Here John's Gospel clarifies what Mark assumes his audience already knows, that Jesus calls death sleep in accordance with other Old Testament scriptures (Daniel 12:2) that point toward the future hope of resurrection. This is not a denial of death but a hope that looks beyond it.

Third, interpreting this event as a resurrection aligns with Mark's thanatology as a whole. In Mark, Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees indicates he rejects their body/soul dualism. This concept is also absent in the story of Jairus' daughter. Similarly, Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees indicates that resurrection is necessary for any form of life after death. This text demonstrates Jesus' power over death (knowledge of which he says the Sadducees lack) and points toward his future resurrection. Finally, Mark's overall linguistic use of the Greek word *psyche* invites the audience to adopt a physicalist anthropology. While the text in question does not specifically describe the girl as a corpse, the messengers' comments and mourners' response to Jesus suggest that they believed the girl to be lifeless. This is also in alignment with Mark's postmortem description of Jesus as a corpse (Mark 15:37-47).

In conclusion, given (1) the immediate evidence within the narrative, (2) the parallel and comparative accounts in Luke and John, and (3) Mark's physicalist thanatology in general, it is reasonable to assume that Mark intends his audience to hear Jesus' report that the girl is sleeping as a metaphor for the temporality of death for those who believe in resurrection from the dead.<sup>496</sup> As a result, I suggest that it is best to use language of resurrection rather than resuscitation to describe the event. It seems safe to assume that enough time had passed

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<sup>496</sup> In alignment with this conclusion, Witherington comments that "Luke seems clearly to view the Markan story as a raising from the dead (cf. Luke 8:53, 55)." Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, 189.

between the girl's death and resurrection that she was most likely, not breathing and did not have a heartbeat. In this case, she was a corpse similar to Lazarus who had been dead for three days. It also seems reasonable to assume that Mark would expect his audience to believe that the girl eventually died again. While Mark does not expand on the idea, his statement about a future resurrection in 10:30 indicates that the girl's future resurrection will be different from her first in that the second resurrection will result in eternal life. This also strengthens the eschatological position of annihilationism, which teaches that resurrection does not necessarily lead to eternal life. For some it will result in eternal life, for others, it will result in a second death (Revelation 2:11; 20:6; 20:14; 21:8).

#### **6.5. JESUS AND THE SADDUCEES: A DISCUSSION ABOUT DEATH AND RESURRECTION (MARK 12:18-27).**

What we have seen thus far is that conflict and irony are presented to the reader through Jesus' interactions with the Pharisees. In Mark 12:18-27, the author presents his readers with a dialogue between Jesus and the Sadducees. In the conversation, Jesus explains that resurrection is the remedy for the mortal *psyche*.<sup>497</sup> This text is "one of the few passages in the New Testament that teach[es] about the nature of resurrection life [and] is found in the triple tradition of the Synoptic Gospels."<sup>498</sup> What is of particular interest in this text as it pertains to

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<sup>497</sup> For discussion on the historical accuracy of this text, see John P. Meier, "The Debate on the Resurrection of the Dead: An Incident from the Ministry of the Historical Jesus?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 22, no. 77 (July 1, 2000): 3–23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X0002207701>. Meier argues that this text should be understood as historically accurate. For a summary of various historical approaches to this text, see A D Macdonald, "Resurrection in Mark 12: Refining the Covenant Hypothesis," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41, no. 4 (June 2019): 433–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064x19832193>.

<sup>498</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1998). 106. See Matt 22:23-33

the *psyche* is not so much Jesus' interpretation of the Law but his belief in the resurrection and the contrast he presents between the dead and the living. Here Jesus' statements to the Sadducees concerning death firmly establish his teaching on the mortality of the *psyche*.

Since no Sadducean material survived the group's dissolution, everything that is known about their beliefs comes from secondary sources. According to the testimony of Josephus, the Sadducees rejected "belief in the resurrection because they could not find it in the Torah."<sup>499</sup> In Mark's introduction to the discussion, he affirms the Sadducean belief that the Pentateuch did not demonstrate a possibility for life after death but instead taught "the absolute finality of death."<sup>500</sup> This coincides with the consensus of Old Testament scholarship that has concluded that the Hebrew Scriptures present a physicalist constitution of man and a mortalist view of death. Mark introduces the pericope by telling his readers, "The Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him [Jesus] with a question" (Mark 12:18). Mark 12:19-27 reads,

"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves behind a wife and does not leave a child, his brother is to marry the wife and raise up children for his brother. There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died leaving no children. The second one married her, and died leaving behind no children; and the third likewise; and so the seven together left no children. Last of all the woman also died. In the resurrection, which one's wife will she be? For each of the seven had her as his wife." Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not

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and Luke 20:27-40 for parallels. Segal also notes that the Biblical material parallels Josephus' description of the Sadducees' beliefs. Segal, *Life after Death*.

<sup>499</sup> Bauckham, *The Jewish World around the New Testament*, 2010. 246.

<sup>500</sup> Jon Douglas Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, Conn; London: Yale University Press, 2008). 109.





Here the emphasis is often placed on the present tense of the relationship. Macdonald, however, has pointed out the error in this interpretation. Macdonald explains that Trick builds his case on the false assumption that the marriage covenant and God's covenant with Israel "are identical."<sup>504</sup> He then astutely points out that Trick's own rationale backfires. Macdonald reveals that "Trick's argument requires that the woman and her husbands are dead so that covenants end, but that the patriarchs are alive enough for covenants to remain."<sup>505</sup> Additionally, this interpretation attempts to simultaneously refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as 'the dead' and 'the living.' The result is to turn the limited negative phrase, He is not the God of the dead, into a universal positive: All are alive.<sup>506</sup>

Concerning this text, Wright has warned that it is vital to properly understand "the way the language and concepts function[ed] at the time."<sup>507</sup> I propose that many who have sought to understand this text have not properly heeded Wright's advice. A lack of a general understanding of Jesus' teachings on the *psyche* in Mark has led to unmerited assumptions, which in turn undermine Jesus' argument for the resurrection. Wright himself explains that the central debate of Jesus' day was between the immortalist Pharisees' "two-stage view" (understood as an intermediate-state and resurrection) and the mortalist Sadducees' "no-stage view" of the afterlife.<sup>508</sup> However, Wright fails to consider the possibility that Jesus could have held a middle ground: What Wright might term a one-stage view (death and resurrection).

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<sup>504</sup> Macdonald, "Resurrection in Mark 12." 433-457.

<sup>505</sup> Macdonald. 433-457.

<sup>506</sup> Genesis describes the death of all three patriarchs as follows; "Abraham breathed his last and died" (25:8). "Isaac breathed his last and died" (Gen. 35:29). Jacob "breathed his last" and died (Gen. 49:33-50). "Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel" (Gen. 50:2).

<sup>507</sup> Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*. 429.

<sup>508</sup> Wright. 424.

Wright holds the position Jesus agreed with the Pharisaical beliefs of a disembodied intermediate-state and the future bodily resurrection.<sup>509</sup> However, by incorrectly assuming Jesus set out to prove the truthfulness of the intermediate state and, by default, the resurrection, Wright has neglected the motivation for the Sadducees' question.

Against Wright, Macdonald has correctly pointed out that “there is no hint here, or anywhere else (from available evidence), that this [text] requires the patriarchs to be still alive.”<sup>510</sup> Wright’s and Trick’s conclusions are a derivative of a particular interpretation of Jesus’ response that seems to be driven by dualist presuppositions and not the text itself.<sup>511</sup> In addition to this, proof of an intermediate state does not necessarily mandate a need for resurrection, as Wright suggests. This additional logical step must be assumed and read into the text. Literature such as 4 Maccabees refutes this claim, revealing that belief in a disembodied afterlife does not necessitate bodily resurrection.

What dualist interpretations of this text have failed to understand is that a dualist reading of the text actually serves to undermine Jesus’ statement of contrast that God is the God of the living and not the dead. If all are alive and nobody is dead, Jesus' differentiation between the dead and the living dissolves. Also problematic for the consensus position is the fact that scripture never speaks “directly or at length” about a disembodied intermediate state.<sup>512</sup> Instead, in his interaction with the Sadducees, Jesus explains that God’s covenant

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<sup>509</sup> Wright. 428.

<sup>510</sup> Macdonald, “Resurrection in Mark 12.”

<sup>511</sup> Interestingly, the majority view seems to be a derivative of what is depicted in 4 Maccabees, which holds to the immortality of the soul rather than the bodily resurrection as in 2 Maccabees. For example, 4 Maccabees 13:16 says that those that die are welcomed by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in heaven. The New Testament contains no similar statements. On the contrary, Jesus states nobody has ever been to heaven (John 3:13).

<sup>512</sup> Murray J Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1985). 134. The parable of Dives and Lazarus found in Luke 16:19-31 is the closest the

faithfulness will result in the resurrection of the dead. In summary, it is precisely because the patriarchs are dead that God's covenant faithfulness demands Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be raised to life.

### **6.5.2. God is not a God of the dead but the living.**

In contrast to the scholarly consensus, I propose that when Jesus appeals to God's identity, his point is not that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are currently still alive in some disembodied afterlife. Instead, Jesus' emphasis is that Israel's forefathers are dead and therefore need resurrecting.<sup>513</sup> Jesus' argument necessitates this underlining problem. Janzen explains that "the interpretive focus falls, not on the relation of the ancestors to God, but on the relation of God to the ancestors."<sup>514</sup> Jesus' appeal is to God's identity as faithful to his covenant promises.<sup>515</sup> The irony in the Sadducees' hypothetical question is that it narrates a story of sterility. This allows Jesus to provide a multi-layered response that I suggest has gone unnoticed.

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New Testament comes to discussing a disembodied intermediate state. Bauckham has successfully shown that this parable is most likely an adaptation of a commonly circulated story. Jesus' version of the story actually serves to subvert the dualist anthropological view. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*. See also Bauckham, "The Rich Man and Lazarus." Additionally, see Joel Green, "Eschatology and the Nature of Humans: A Reconsideration of Pertinent Biblical Evidence," *Science and Christian Belief* Vol 14, No 1 (n.d.): 33–50. For a treatment of the Gospel of Luke and the Intermediate State, see Lucan Scholar Joel Green's book *Green, Body, Soul, and Human Life*. See specifically 157-166.

<sup>513</sup> In fact, this is precisely the argument that Paul makes in Romans 14:9. Paul writes, "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." Paul's argument is that in order for Christ to become Lord over the dead, they must be resurrected back to life.

<sup>514</sup> J Gerald Janzen, "Resurrection and Hermeneutics: On Exodus 3:6 in Mark 12:26," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 7, no. 23 (January 1985): 43–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X8500702304>.

<sup>515</sup> David B Sloan, "God of Abraham, God of the Living: Jesus' Use of Exodus 3:6 in Mark 12:26-27," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 74, no. 1 (2012): 85–98. While Sloan ultimately sides with Trick and the majority interpretation, he does recognize that Jesus chose a "central biblical text that involves God's self-revelation, displays God's covenantal loyalty, and anticipates one of the greatest displays of 'the power of God' in the history of the world."



Sterility is precisely the covenantal problem that has been repeatedly overcome by God throughout Israel's history. God has persistently proven faithful to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives through miracles of fertility.<sup>516</sup> As a result, I propose the following alternative interpretation of the text. This reading has the added benefit of being harmonious with Jesus' teaching of the mortality of the *psyche* in other Markan texts. This alternative interpretation can be viewed in the following syllogism:

- (1) If                                      God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (who are dead)
- (2) And                                     God is the God of the living and not the dead
- (3) Then                                    God will resurrect Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (in covenant faithfulness)

Here both sterility and death are overcome through God's covenant faithfulness and his miraculous power to give life.<sup>517</sup> The problems of sterility and death are resolved through the following formula:

- (1) God is faithful to his covenant,
- (2) a problem is identified that stands in the way of God's covenant faithfulness, and
- (3) the solution to the problem demands an exercise of God's divine life-giving power.

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<sup>516</sup> Janzen, "Resurrection and Hermeneutics."

<sup>517</sup> The apostle Paul's words to the church in Rome are similar. Paul states that God is "the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not" (Rom. 4:17).

Jesus' rebuke of the Sadducees is that they have failed to recognize God's covenant faithfulness in Scripture and the life-giving power of God. Here the resolution to the problems of sterility and death can be understood as analogous syllogisms:

### **The Problem of Sterility.**

- (1) If God has promised fertility as part of his covenant (Gen. 17:6)
- (2) And Sterility prohibits the promise of future descendants
- (3) Then God will overcome sterility through the miracle of fertility.<sup>518</sup>

### **The Problem of Death.**

- (1) If God has promised his covenant will endure (Gen. 17:13)
- (2) And Death prohibits God's ongoing covenantal relationship with humanity
- (3) Then God will overcome death through resurrection.

Giving credence to this interpretation, Mark 16:6 utilizes this same formula in one succinct statement.

- (1) "Jesus the Nazarene" (The representative of God's covenant faithfulness)
- (2) "Who has been crucified" (the current problem)
- (3) "He has risen." (God's divine life-restoring remedy to the problem of the mortal *psyche*)

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<sup>518</sup> For the stories of God's covenant faithfulness, see Sarah's pregnancy in Genesis 21, Rebekah's pregnancy in Genesis 25, and Rachel's pregnancy in Genesis 30.

In summary, what Jesus tells the Sadducees is that just as God has solved the human problem of sterility through the miracle of fertility, so also God will also solve the human problem of death through resurrection. It is precisely because Jesus agrees with the Sadducees about the reality of death that he can make the argument that he does. Jesus' response to the Sadducees is meant to point to the fact that God's covenant faithfulness as the 'God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' will result in a demonstration of the 'power of God.' This demonstration will be the resurrection of the dead, by which God will prove himself to be 'the God of the living.' Furthermore, Mark mimics this pattern by telling his audience that Jesus himself is the proof of God's life-giving power.<sup>519</sup>

Bauckham summarizes that the mortalist position taught by the Markan Jesus was that "there is hope for life after death not because death is a mere appearance or does not affect the real core of the person, but because God can and will raise the dead."<sup>520</sup> This concept is reflected in Jesus' critique that the Sadducees do not understand the power of God. Healy also adds that Jesus' repeated statement to the Sadducees that they are greatly misled "forcefully emphasizes how foolish and mistaken is the view that the human body is a mere appendage to

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<sup>519</sup> Jesus testifies to this himself in his revelation to John when he states, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18). In support of this interpretation, this same formula is echoed in Paul's letter to the church in Rome. At the end of the letter to the Romans, Paul explains 'how' Jesus has become Lord of both the dead and the living. The text explains, "For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. 14:9).

<sup>520</sup> Richard Bauckham, *The Jewish World around the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). 250. Bauckham goes on to say that "for the most part the Jewish tradition of belief in life after death maintains the holistic view of the human person which is found in the Hebrew Scriptures." He further explains that during the Second Temple period, a dualistic anthropology of body and soul overtook the older and original holistic anthropology.

the soul, destined to be discarded at death.”<sup>521</sup> In support of Healy’s conclusion is the fact that resurrection in Mark (as well as the rest of the New Testament) is never described as a soul re-entering a body, but rather the reanimation of “physical corpses.”<sup>522</sup> This understanding, that Jesus’ taught that death affects the entire *psychosomatic* person, is affirmed in Jesus’ interactions with both the immortalist Pharisees and the mortalist Sadducees.

## 6.6. A MIDDLE WAY.

In summary of these two encounters between Jesus and his religious contemporaries, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the evidence found in the Gospel of Mark indicates that the protagonist (Jesus) maintained a middle way. Mark’s description of Jesus’ interactions with these groups tells the audience that he “was not only conscious of the demographics of his audience but tailored his narrative accordingly.”<sup>523</sup> Jesus’ engagement in religious debates demonstrates that he both understood his opponent’s theological beliefs and was able to challenge his contemporary’s positions forcefully. In doing so, Mark presents Jesus as one who took death seriously but also believed that God could resurrect the dead.

This was demonstrated first in Jesus’ discussion with the Pharisees in Mark 3:4. Here, Jesus specifically denied the immortality of the *psyche* and subversively undermined the

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<sup>521</sup> Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*. 245. Healy and Williamson also explain that “in biblical thought, the body is not just a component of the person, it *is* the person.”

<sup>522</sup> Moss, “Dying to Live Forever.” 159. In support of this are three Old Testament texts commonly appealed to in support of the resurrection of the dead. These descriptions all portray the reconstitution of the body. Daniel 12:1-2 foresees people awakening from the dust, Ezekiel 37 describes bodies being reconstituted, and Isaiah 26:19 anticipates corpses rising.

<sup>523</sup> Moss, “The Transfiguration.” See also Dennis R Macdonald, *Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*. (Yale University Press, 2010). Macdonald argues that Mark’s Gospel appropriated material from Homer’s *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*.

Pharisees' anthropological beliefs in public dialogue. Jesus' view on the death of the *psyche* was then affirmed in his debate with the Sadducees in Mark 12:18-27. In this debate, Jesus argued that death is final and that it can only be overcome through resurrection. Viewed side-by-side, these discussions reveal Jesus' position on the mortality of the *psyche* and the resurrection of the dead.

Two summary conclusions can be made in response to these interactions. First, against the Pharisees, Jesus taught the *psyche* is mortal. Josephus provides the necessary historical data that the Pharisaical position was that "all souls (*psyche*) are incorruptible."<sup>524</sup> Contrary to this position, Jesus denied the immortality of the *psyche* when he asked the Pharisees, "Is it lawful...to save a life (*psyche*) or to kill?" (Mark 3:4). Second, against the Sadducees, Jesus taught the resurrection of the dead. In presenting Jesus' opposition, Mark narrates that the Sadducees believe "there is no resurrection" (Mark 12:18). Mark then shows how Jesus affirms resurrection when he says to the Sadducees, "For when they rise from the dead, they...are like angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25).

Each group's position can be summarized visually in the following table. Three questions reveal the distinctions between the beliefs of the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and Jesus. These questions are: Is the *psyche* immortal, is there a disembodied intermediate-state between death and resurrection, and will there be a resurrection? The darker shaded areas show the overlap between Jesus and his contemporaries.

	<b>Is the <i>psyche</i> immortal?</b>	<b>Intermediate-state?</b>	<b>Resurrection?</b>
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<sup>524</sup> Josephus, *The Jewish War: Books 1–7: Greek Text. Book 2 Section 162.*

<b>1. Pharisees</b> (Mark 3:4)	Yes  (Josephus, <i>The Judean War</i> , Book 2 Section 162)	Yes  (Josephus, <i>The Judean War</i> , Book 2 Section 162)	Yes  (Acts 23:8)
<b>2. Jesus</b> (Mark 10:45)	No  (Mark 3:4 Pharisees)	No  (Mark 12:18-27 Sadducees)	Yes  (Mark 12:25 Sadducees)
<b>3. Sadducees</b> (Mark 12:17)	No  (Josephus, Antiquities, Book 18 section 16)	No  (Josephus, Antiquities, Book 18 section 16)	No  (Acts 23:8)

### 6.7. THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS' *PSYCHE* AND THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP.

As the Markan narrative develops, the author repeatedly uses the narrative elements of conflict and irony in relation to the topic of death. Tannehill comments that “the paradoxical sayings which speak of life through death (8:35) and greatness through lowliness (9:35, 10:42-45) become drama in the passion narrative.”<sup>525</sup> Conflict arises between Jesus and his disciples as he describes the cost of following him. For the Markan Jesus, discipleship means losing one's life (*psyche*). “Yet, since the narrative exists for the sake of the audience and not for the sake of its characters, the disciples' tutorial is actually the audience's tutorial.”<sup>526</sup> Mark teaches his audience through Jesus' interactions with his disciples what it means to truly follow Jesus. What

<sup>525</sup> Tannehill, “The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology.” 80.

<sup>526</sup> Dowd and Malbon, “The Significance of Jesus' Death in Mark.” 278.

the Markan audience is encouraged to embrace is the thanatological position that death is the loss of the *psyche*. It is not the escape of the *psyche* from the *soma*.

Jesus' teaching concerning death is intricately related to his soteriological mission as a 'Suffering Servant.' Mark attempts to hyperlink his Gospel's narrative to the messianic figure described in Isaiah 53 in several ways. Within this motif are elements of ransom, atonement, and substitution. Mark narrates that Jesus understood his death to be purposeful but was still fearful and reticent. Reflecting on his death, Jesus' words demonstrate that he understood his death to be something that affects the whole *psychosomatic* person. This is why death is to be feared rather than welcomed. Reflecting on the weight of death and its consequences, Jesus likewise warns his disciples that following him will potentially result in laying down their *psyche* to death.

#### **6.7.1. The cost of discipleship (Mark 8:35-37).**

As Jesus' discussion with the Pharisees in Mark 3:4 indicates, Jesus understands a *psyche* to be a physical body that can be saved through healing or destroyed by murder. Expanding on this, Jesus, the physician, described the prognosis of discipleship to his followers.<sup>527</sup> Mark 8:35-37 reads,

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<sup>527</sup> Moss argues that the theme of mimesis and imitation as suffering discipleship permeated the early church writings. Her conclusion is that "the person and teachings of Jesus became the guiding principle for Christian behavior." Moss, *The Other Christs*. 20.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it benefit a person to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? For what could a person give in exchange for his soul?

In this dialogue, Jesus teaches his disciples that martyrdom is understood as the loss/destruction (*apolesei*) of one's life (*psyche*).<sup>528</sup> Jesus calls his disciples to sacrifice their *psyche* to death, just as he will eventually do himself.<sup>529</sup> Here Jesus both defines discipleship as imitation and explains the ramifications of the commitment. Just as Jesus' question to the Pharisees in Mark 3:4 contrasts saving and killing a *psyche*, Jesus' words to his disciples in Mark 8:35-37 contrast salvation with loss.<sup>530</sup> The term 'loss' in context is in reference to the disciples' martyrdom.<sup>531</sup> The concept of loss is incompatible with the doctrine of the immortal soul.<sup>532</sup> An

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<sup>528</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley ed. and tr, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2006). 642. In relation to saving and losing, "the original form of the saying might well have been: 'He who would save his ψυχή will lose it, He who loses his ψυχή will save it.' Both the reference to preserving the ψυχή and also the positively assessed losing of the ψυχή show that primarily the reference is to what is commonly called life, i.e., physical life on earth."

<sup>529</sup> Ezra Palmer Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996). 157. This seems to be commonly understood by the disciples and is rearticulated as a principle of discipleship in 1 John 3:36 "We know love by this, that he laid down his life (*psyche*) for us—and we ought to lay down our lives (*psyche*) for one another."

<sup>530</sup> Bratcher notes, "psuchē (8:35, 36, 37, 10:45, 12:30, 14:34) 'life,' 'soul,' 'self': the various meanings of the word can be traced back to its use in the LXX." Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*. 105.

<sup>531</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. 340. France comments that "the talk of losing and gaining the ψυχή in these verses depends on the range of meaning of ψυχή, and poses problems for the translator. The same noun denotes both the 'being alive' (as opposed to dead; cf. 3:4; 10:45) which one might seek to preserve by escaping persecution and martyrdom." Bock agrees that this text points toward martyrdom and further states that the language of loss and gain points to the concept of commerce. However, he quickly moves from the tangible death of the body to the intangible language of the soul, saying that in context, *psyche* means "the inner life, that which represents real life, the self in the full sense of that term." Darrell L. Bock, *Mark*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York, NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015). 245. In contrast, Cranfield understands the text literally, associating it with martyrdom and loss of physical life. As a result, he believes *psyche* is used in reference to the physical life lost at death. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*. 283. Lane understands Jesus to address the disciples' "self-denial and cross-bearing" that would ultimately lead to their own martyrdom. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*. 308.

<sup>532</sup> Commenting on the translation of *psyche*, Brooks says, "The word translated "life" (psychē) in v. 35 is sometimes translated "soul," as in vv. 36–37 of the NIV. Generally, when people read or hear the word "soul," they



immortal core or essence of a person can hardly be said to be lost. In fact, the English translation 'lose' of the Greek word *apolesei* softens the contrast between life and death if 'lose' is not correctly understood to denote bodily death. For example, Mark's use of the word "apolesei (cf. 1:24) 'he will lose'" is frequently translated as destroy in 1:24. This connotation of the word should not be lost in the translation in Mark 8:35-37.<sup>533</sup>

While some scholars like Collins have chosen to translate *apolesei* as destroy in their commentaries, almost all English translations of the Bible have chosen to use the word 'lose.' This translational choice is only properly understood in context if the reader understands 'loss' is in reference to losing physical life. This is affirmed in "the call to take up the cross in v. 34 [which] obviously implies the possible loss of physical life."<sup>534</sup> Thus to lose a *psyche* is to die a martyr's death for the sake of the Gospel. While the meaning of the word *psyche* in Mark is disputed, Bratcher reveals the necessary context for the linguistic concerns.<sup>535</sup> As the previous literature on the soul has proven, the vital question is: How does the present author define the *psyche* in the context of their writing?<sup>536</sup>

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think in Greek terms of an independent element in human nature that is separate from the physical body. This is not a biblical concept. The biblical emphasis in the word is on the wholeness and oneness of the person or self. Therefore 'life' is the best translation, and it ought also to be used in vv. 36–37, as in the RSV, NRSV, GNB, and REB." Brooks, *Mark*. 137-138.

<sup>533</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*. 267.

<sup>534</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*. 257.

<sup>535</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*. 266-67. Bratcher summarizes, "The Old Testament concept of *nephesh*, which furnishes the basis for the meaning of the New Testament word *psuchē*, bears no resemblance to the Greek idea of *psuchē* 'soul' as the spiritual part of man, distinct and separate from his material make-up, his fleshly body. Rather the basic O.T. concept of *nephesh* (for which LXX *psuchē* generally stands—cf. Hatch Essays, 94–108) is that of 'breath,' 'life,' and is used of the individual (animal or man) in his quality as a breathing, living being. From this the word comes to mean the individual himself, 'person,' 'oneself' (cf. Koehler). Passages which speak of killing or destroying *nephesh* mean, of course, to kill a person or persons (cf. Nu. 31:19, 35:11, 15, 30; Ezek. 13:19, 22:27; Lev. 7:20, 21, 25, 27, 23:30, etc.); while, conversely, to save *nephesh* means to save one's life, oneself (cf. Gen. 19:17, 32:31, Job 33:28, Psa. 72:13, etc.)."

<sup>536</sup> Bratcher and Nida. 266-67. Commenting on the translation of *psyche* in Mark, Bratcher further explains, "most English translations (ASV, RSV, BFBS, Weymouth, Manson, Montgomery, Goodspeed, Berkeley) have 'life' in all three verses; some have 'life' in 35 and 'soul' in 36–37 (Moffatt; also Synodale, Lagrange, Brazilian); Zürich has 'life'

Read within their literary contexts, both Mark 3:4 and 8:35-37 teach the audience that a *psyche* is mortal. In both texts, salvation and death involve the body, which is synonymous with the *psyche*. Unlike Platonic imagery, death is never described in Mark as the separation of a body (*soma*) from an immortal soul (*psyche*). Unique to this text is the fact that this is the only place in which *psyche* is paralleled in all three of the Synoptics. The Markan parallels are found in Matthew 16:24-28 and Luke 9:23-27. Commenting on Matthew's text, Nolland says, "The wish to save one's life (ψύχη) is antithetical to taking up one's cross; losing one's life would be a natural outcome of having taken up one's cross; 'for my sake' corresponds to following Jesus in v. 24. The language of saving and losing requires a context in which life is under threat."<sup>537</sup>

If the author thought that the *psyche* was an immortal soul, the concept of 'losing' would hardly be applicable. Perhaps recognizing this, Stein comments on the Lukan version, stating that "this verse is also an example of paradox."<sup>538</sup> Edwards agrees with seemingly no textual support, commenting that verse 24 uses *psyche* in relation to the death of the physical body "at least in one sense of the word, but it cannot connote the loss of one's soul."<sup>539</sup> Both

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in all three verses, but in v. 36 introduces 'future' in parentheses before 'life.' The word 'soul' should not be used if it reflects the Greek concept rather than the Hebraic; 'life' adequately represents the word: in vv. 36-37, however, it must mean more than simple physical existence, ordinarily denoted by the word ('true life' or 'real life' is the sense required); perhaps 'oneself,' 'himself' or 'true self' would adequately convey the meaning in those two verses (cf. Black Aramaic, 76)."

<sup>537</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005). 692.

<sup>538</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992). 279. Stein writes, "this saying is an example of both antithetical and chiasmic parallelism: A = save; B = lose; b = lose; a = save. There is also a pun, in that the first use of "save" means a failure to deny oneself, but the second means to receive eternal life (cf. John 12:25). Conversely, to "lose" in the first instance means to suffer the judgment of hell, but in the second it means to deny oneself." Marshall agrees and says that "the word ψυχή (1:46; 2:35; 6:9; et al.) can mean 'soul' or 'life', and often the two meanings run into each other. Here the meaning appears to be a person's 'real' life, or what he considers to be 'real'; it is the existence of a particular, individual being." I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978). 374. Hooker also agrees that this text presents a paradox. Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*. 209.

<sup>539</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson (La Vergne: William B. Eerdmans, 2015). 276.

Stein and Edwards see the dilemma their paradoxical exegesis presents. As a result, those who hold to anthropological dualism are forced to resort to the claim of mystery to combat the problem. With their hands tied, Edwards and Stein seem to disregard the contextual evidence and Mark's use of the word *psyche* in general. Moss, however, argues that there is ample contextual evidence for Mark 8:35-37 to be taken literally. As a result, she explains that the text should be read to mean "following Christ involves following a death like his."<sup>540</sup> Agreeing with Moss, Geldenhuys explains that the loss of one's *psyche* results in the complete eternal destruction of the person.<sup>541</sup> This concept of the *psyche* runs counter to the beliefs of Christendom Christology.

### 6.7.2. Saved from death.

The Gospel of Mark addresses the soteriological theme: What is a person saved from? The story's answer is death (*thanatos*).<sup>542</sup> This is demonstrated in Mark's Suffering Servant motif, which makes a direct connection between the Hebrew *nephesh* and the Greek *psyche*. In both Isaiah and Mark, a living person (Hebrew *nephesh*, Greek *psyche*) is the corporeal body that dies. Congruent with this, Jesus describes his death as a ransom or substitute in Mark 10:34.

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<sup>540</sup> Moss, *The Other Christs*. 31.

<sup>541</sup> Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1993). 277.

<sup>542</sup> It should be considered that a significant number of Biblical texts, such as John 3:16 and Romans 6:13, indicate that the final punishment of the wicked will be annihilation or death, the opposite of eternal life. For a broader study on conditional immortality and annihilation as final punishment see Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*, 3rd ed (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, 2011). See also Gregory G Stump, *Rethinking Hell. Readings in Evangelical Conditionalism* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co Ltd, 2014). For four contrasting views, see Preston M. Sprinkle, ed., *Four Views on Hell*, Second Edition, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2016).

According to Jesus, what is substituted is Jesus' *psyche*, not his *soma*. This demonstrates how the soteriological question is inseparable from the anthropological inquiry: What is a *psyche*?

Jesus' answer is that a *psyche* is a mortal physical person. Mark 14:34 affirms this in revealing Jesus' fearful emotional response to contemplating his own death. Finally, intricately related to the previous two questions, Jesus answers the thanatological question: What does it mean to die?<sup>543</sup> For Jesus, death is the cessation of life and, as a result, the severance of all relationships. Jesus warns his disciples of this in Mark 8:35-37, stating that the cost of discipleship will be the death or loss of their *psyche*.

#### **6.8. FROM THE CROSS TO A CORPSE (MARK 15:37-47).**

Recalling Sigvartsen's criteria of categorizing mortalist and immortalist literature, it is important to investigate how a text describes death and what events occur after death. If there were anywhere in Mark's Gospel that would be most appropriate to explain Jesus' death through a dualistic framework, it would be Mark 15:37-47. It is here that Mark tells his readers of Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent burial. If the author of Mark understood Jesus' death to be the separation of his body (*soma*) from his soul (*psyche*), this section of the narrative would have been the key place to communicate that belief. However, Mark does not describe Jesus'

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<sup>543</sup> Concerning death, the three Greek words *apollumi*, *apokteinó*, and *thanatos*, are all used in association with *psyche*. For *apollumi*, see Matthew 2:13, 20, 16:25-26; Mark 8:35-37; Luke 6:9, 9:24, 9:56, 17:33; John 12:25; Hebrews 10:39; and Revelation 18:13. For *apokteinó*, see Matthew 10:28, Mark 3:4, and Romans 11:3. For *thanatos* see Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34; John 12:27; Philippians 2:30; James 5:20; 1 Peter 3:20; Revelation 12:11.

death as an immaterial *psyche* escaping the bondage of a physical body. Rather he affirms in physicalist terminology that Jesus died and became a corpse.<sup>544</sup> Mark 15:37-47 reads,

But Jesus let out a loud cry, and died. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw that He died in this way, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" Now there were also some women watching from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. When He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and serve Him; and there were many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.

When evening had already come, since it was the preparation day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea came, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself also waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Now Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoning the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And after learning this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Joseph bought a linen cloth, took Him down, wrapped Him in the linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb which had been cut out in the rock; and he rolled a stone against

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<sup>544</sup> Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*. Cole comments that in Mark's Gospel, "The resurrection of Jesus was no mere re-uniting of a hovering soul with a waiting body, but an act of mighty power (Rom. 1:4)." This is also in line with Jesus' words to the Sadducees that they did not understand the power of God to raise the dead.

the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching to see where He was laid.

Mark's narrative is emphatic that Jesus was identical with his dead body, a corpse that was taken down from a cross and laid in a tomb. Reflecting on Mark 15:37-47, theologian Eberhard Jüngel stated that it is here that we find God's "unity with perishable man."<sup>545</sup> In examining this pericope, four aspects of Mark's Gospel highlight a physicalist reading of the text. All four of these aspects of Mark's narrative affirm Jesus' thanatological teaching. The aspects of Mark 15:37-47 that reinforce a physicalist reading are that Jesus' death is described as a loss of breath, the eye-witness' confirmation of Jesus' death, the description of Jesus as a corpse, and his identity as an inert body that is buried.

### **6.8.1. Death defined.**

When examining Mark's description of Jesus's death, the first notable observation is that Jesus' death is described as the loss of his breath. Mark narrates the centurion's observance that Jesus expired (*ekpneó*) or breathed his final breath. This then triggers the centurion's confession of Jesus' identity, that Jesus indeed was the Son of God. The NASB translation of Mark 15:37 reads, "Jesus let out a loud cry, and died." The word translated as 'died' is the Greek *ekpneó*, which means to breathe out or expire. Verse 39 then reads, "And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw that He died [*ekpneó*] in this way, he said, 'Truly this man

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<sup>545</sup> Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). 299.

was the Son of God!” This concept of a body needing breath for a person (or animal) to live has a rich history within the Old Testament Scriptures.

The two Hebrew words used synonymously to reference breath in the Old Testament are *neshemah* and *ruach*. For instance, it is the *neshemah* of God that gives humans life in Genesis 2:7.<sup>546</sup> Similarly, the loss of *neshemah* (or *ruach*) is said to result in death. This description of death is applied to both humans and animals and can be observed in texts such as Genesis 7:22, where “all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath (*neshemah*) of the spirit of life (*ruach*), died.”<sup>547</sup> Mark 15:37-39 stands in this tradition, echoing the anthropological understanding that a body without breath expires. Mark’s Gospel affirms the Old Testament’s descriptions of life and death, which state that a body with the breath of God is alive, and a body without breath dies.<sup>548</sup>

### 6.8.2. Death confirmed.

Second, Jesus’ death is confirmed by three characters within the story. Mark highlights the question of Jesus’ death in 15:44 as Pilate wonders if Jesus has died (*thnéskó*). In affirming Jesus’ expiration, Mark brings an added level of irony to the narrative. In a reversal of previous roles, Mark has the representatives of power (the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman Empire) confess that he is the Messiah (the centurion) and administer his sympathetic burial (Joseph of

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<sup>546</sup> Similar texts can be found in Job 27:3 “For as long as life (*neshemah*) is in me, and the breath (*ruach*) of God is in my nostrils” (Cf. 32:8; 33:4). See also; Psalm 150:6; Proverbs 20:27; Isaiah 2:22.

<sup>547</sup> For various other examples see; Deuteronomy 20:16; Joshua 10:40; 11:11-14; 1 Kings 15:29; 17:17; Job 34:14; Daniel 10:17; Isaiah 57:16.

<sup>548</sup> See also Luke 23:46. What is vital to note against a dualist rebuttal is that the breath is a life sustaining gift from God. A person or animal is not said to escape their body as their breath when the body dies.

Arimathea).<sup>549</sup> To confirm Jesus' death, Mark has "three witnesses—Joseph (v. 43), Pilate (v. 44), and the centurion (v. 45)—testify that Jesus was dead, two of whom (Joseph and the centurion) had actual contact with the corpse."<sup>550</sup> Mark states clearly that Jesus "ēdē tethnēken he had already died,' he was by now dead."<sup>551</sup> Painter appropriately draws attention to Mark's intentional shift in language, which he uses to confirm to his reader that Jesus was indeed dead. In this Markan pericope, there is no indication that Jesus survived his bodily death as a disembodied *psyche*.

### 6.8.3. From life to death.

To solidify the confirmation of the three witnesses, Mark tells his readers that Joseph first requested "the *body* of Jesus."<sup>552</sup> In response, upon confirming his death, "Pilate gave the *corpse* to Joseph."<sup>553</sup> Here Mark employs a linguistic shift from the body (*soma*) to a corpse (*ptóma*). Pilate summons the centurion, who confirms that Jesus has died (*apothnēskó*). Then Mark explains that Pilate granted Jesus' corpse (*ptóma*) to Joseph of Arimathea. Commenting on this linguistic shift, France notes that "πτῶμα is rarely used in the NT, and only in connection with corpses requiring burial (cf. 6:29); its use here rather than σῶμα (v. 43) emphasizes the

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<sup>549</sup> On the concept that the Gospel of Mark narrates the story in such a way that Jesus is believed to intentionally keep his identity a secret, see William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, Library of Theological Translations (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1971).

<sup>550</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*. 489. See also Williamson, *Mark*. 281. Williamson comments that "the interchange between Pilate and the centurion (vv.44-45) serves to verify that Jesus is really dead, as does the account of the burial itself (v.46)." He additionally states, "Jesus is thoroughly dead and, in terms of human experience, irrevocably buried."

<sup>551</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. 668.

<sup>552</sup> John Painter, *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict*, New Testament Readings (London; New York: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>553</sup> Painter.



fact of death.”<sup>554</sup> Bratcher and Nida agree, noting that the word “*body* is often translated by two quite different words, depending upon whether the person is alive or dead. In this case, one would use the equivalent of corpse.”<sup>555</sup> In this way Mark emphasizes that the crucified Jesus is a corpse.

In addition to this linguistic emphasis, Mark draws attention to the fact that those close to Jesus have all abandoned hope. Neither Jesus’ disciples nor his immediate family present themselves to request Jesus’ body for proper burial. This is out of the ordinary because “it was Roman custom to allow crucified criminals to hang on crosses until they decayed, as a warning to would-be miscreants or rebellious slaves. If requested, however, their corpses might be handed over to relatives or friends for proper burial.”<sup>556</sup> What Mark does indicate is that “Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were watching to see where He was laid” (Mark 15:47). Narratively, this statement provides justification for Mark’s later explanation that these women knew where to find the tomb of Jesus. Within the narrative description of Jesus’ death Mark’s does not provide his audience with any hope for a belief in a disembodied intermediate state.

#### **6.8.4. The passivity of death.**

Up to this point, Mark has confirmed Jesus’ death through the testimony of three witnesses (Pilate, the centurion, and Joseph) and described the process of death as the loss of breath resulting in a living body becoming a corpse. Finally, Mark utilizes masculine personal pronouns

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<sup>554</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. 668.

<sup>555</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*. 498.

<sup>556</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*. 487.

to denote what was done to Jesus after his death. The use of these personal pronouns communicates to the reader that Jesus *is* his body, a corpse. This is underscored in Jesus' burial, as the author describes how 'he' (*autos*) was taken down from the cross and 'he' (*autos*) was laid in a tomb. By using these masculine personal pronouns, Mark leaves no doubt for his readers that Jesus himself is a passive corpse.

Schnabel notes that it is "significant that Mark uses here (and with the next two verbs) the masculine personal pronoun *him*."<sup>557</sup> This is a clear indication that Mark understands Jesus to be the corpse that is being handled. Mark states it is 'he' who was taken down from the cross and 'he' who was laid in a tomb. If one were to anticipate hearing a dualist interpretation of death from Mark's Gospel, it might be expected instead to read that Jesus' body was taken down and buried but that he himself lived on as a disembodied *psyche*. However, this is not the case. The narrative function of this pericope in Mark's Gospel denotes a "long dramatic pause between Jesus' death and resurrection."<sup>558</sup> This "breathless silence of the tomb sets apart Jesus' resurrection as the climax of the Gospel."<sup>559</sup> In conjunction with Jesus' own teaching on death, Mark 15:37-39 affirms that death is the cessation of life and can only be overcome through the victory of resurrection.

In summary, Mark 15:37-47 reinforces the definition of death that is found in Jesus' dialogue with his religious contemporaries and disciples. This is also in harmony with descriptions of death found in the Old Testament. Mark describes Jesus' death as the loss of God's life-giving breath. As should be expected, there is no hint of an immaterial *psyche* that

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<sup>557</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*. 429.

<sup>558</sup> Williamson, *Mark*. 281.

<sup>559</sup> Williamson. 281. See also Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*. 325.

survives the death of Jesus' *soma*. In addition to this, Jesus' death is confirmed by three eye-witness accounts, driving home the point that he was indeed truly dead. Third, Mark describes Jesus' death as the transition from a living, breathing body (*soma*) to a corpse (*ptoma*). This reinforces the physicalist description of Jesus' death. Finally, while perhaps less significant than the previous three facts, Mark makes use of male personal pronouns to emphasize the fact that Jesus is a passive body that is buried. Taken as a whole, the Markan narrative of Jesus' death reinforces the physicalist anthropological thanatology found in Jesus' encounters with his religious contemporaries and his disciples.

## 6.9. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined how Mark's narrative uses tools such as conflict, rhetoric, and irony to promote a mortalist thanatological framework through the protagonist's interactions with the antagonists. I have done this by focusing on the Gospel of Mark, allowing the teaching of Jesus to be normative.<sup>560</sup> This chapter illustrates that Mark's Jesus understood himself to be a physician who saves the mortal *psyche*. In contrast, Mark narratively unveils the protagonist of his Gospel as those who seek to kill and destroy the *psyche*. In comparison to his religious contemporaries, Jesus paved a 'middle way' as a mortalist who taught and demonstrated physical resurrection.

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<sup>560</sup> Mark T. Finney, *Resurrection, Hell, and the Afterlife: Body and Soul in Antiquity, Judaism and Early Christianity*, BibleWorld (New York, London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016). 139. Finney suggests a spectrum of belief is present within the New Testament writings. He indicates that while the Gospels lean toward a physicalist anthropology, the Pauline corpus is more on the dualist side of the spectrum. He then understands Luke's writing in Luke-Acts as an "attempt to reconcile two disparate traditions. See also Dag Øistein Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs and the Success of Christianity*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). 176.

Mark's Gospel proves to be exemplary of the New Testament teaching on the *psyche* as a whole and is, therefore, paradigmatic. While this is demonstrated in texts such as Mark 3:4, scholarship has generally missed Jesus' critique of the Pharisees' anthropology. I have proposed that this may be due in part to poor translational choices of *psyche*. In addition, I suggest that Jesus' critique of the Pharisees' theology in this text has been overlooked by scholars because they have not considered the Pharisees' beliefs when reading the text. This chapter's narrative analysis has shown that Mark's Gospel substantively demonstrates how Jesus understood humans to be an inseparable *psychosomatic* unity.

Salvation in Mark's Gospel contains both a quantitative element in contrast to death, as well as a qualitative element concerned with the healing and restoration of ailments and sickness. Revealing his theological position, Jesus uses the language of killing (*apokteinó*) in relation to the *psyche* and frames his own crucifixion as the death of his *psyche*. Developing a 'Suffering Servant' motif, Mark connects Jesus' death with the prophecy of Isaiah 53:12. This parallels the *nephesh* death of Isaiah 53:12 with Jesus' *psyche* death in Mark 10:45. Mark also reports that Jesus used the language of loss and destruction (*apolesei*) in relationship to *psyche* death.

Mark's Gospel further emphasizes the finality of death demonstrated by Jesus' fear in the Garden of Gethsemane. This is set in contrast to the previously articulated remedy of resurrection performed on Jairus' daughter and found in Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees. Further strengthening this conclusion is the fact that this anthropology and definition of death are later affirmed in the book of Acts by both Peter and Paul, who use arguments for the

resurrection that mimic Jesus' discussion with Sadducees.<sup>561</sup> In their evangelistic sermons, both men define death as decay and contrast Jesus, who was resurrected, with King David, who is currently understood to be decomposing in his grave.

In light of the material covered in Mark's Gospel, several things can now be concluded about the Markan perspective on life, death, and the afterlife. First, life and eternal life are understood to be contingent upon God, not an ontological attribute of the *psyche*. In support of this, Mark 10:17 presents the belief that eternal life is inherited. It is not currently possessed.<sup>562</sup> Second, death is understood to be the cessation of life entirely, affecting the whole person. This thoroughly rules out the concept of an intermediate state between death and resurrection. In Mark, death is not the separation of an immaterial *psyche* from a material *soma*. Third, in his teaching, Jesus affirmed a 'middle way,' a road untaken by the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and ultimately the Christology of Christendom. Jesus' mortalist teaching can be further affirmed by the fact that nowhere in the New Testament is immortality attributed to the *psyche*. Instead,

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<sup>561</sup> Kevin Corcoran, ed., *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2001). In support of the dualist view, Cooper says that the biographical factor that Paul was a Pharisee must be considered. Cooper suggests that because Paul was a Pharisee, and the Pharisees embraced dualism, this must mean that dualism is the correct Biblical anthropological position for the Christian to adopt. However, Cooper fails to reconcile this with other Pauline texts such as 1 Corinthians 15, in which resurrection is essential for any hope of life after death. Similarly, Cooper draws on Paul's words in Acts 23:6-9 but conveniently overlooks Paul's sermon in Acts 13, in which he spatially locates king David as a decomposing corpse in a grave.

<sup>562</sup> The Greek word *zoe* is found 135 times in the New Testament, of which it is paired with the word *aionios* 44 times. The phrase *aionios zoe* is most frequently translated as "eternal life." Two things can be said about the New Testament's use of this phrase. First, eternal life (*aionios zoe*) is set in contrast to punishment (Matt. 25:46) by eternal fire (Matt. 18:8), that results in death (John 5:24; Rom. 5:21; 6:23), destruction (Gal. 6:8), perishing (John 3:16, 6:27, 10:28), and the absence of life (John 3:36; 1 John 3:15). Second, *aionios zoe* is never said to be an ontological reality of the *psyche* but is contingent upon being received. *Aionios zoe* is described as a gift (Mark. 10:30; Luke. 18:30; John 3:15, 4:14, 4:36, 6:40, 6:47, 6:54, 12:25, 12:50, 17:3; Acts 13:48; Rom. 2:7, 6:22; 1 Tim. 1:16, 6:12; Titus. 1:2; 1 John. 2:25, 5:13) that is received through Jesus (John. 5:39, 6:68, 17:2; 1 John 1:2, 5:11, 5:20; Jude. 1:21) for those that believe. It is an inheritance that is received (Matt. 19:29; Titus. 3:7), which is contingent upon loving God and neighbor (Matt. 19:16; Mark 10:17; Luke. 10:25, 18:18). Ultimately, those that receive the gift are said to be given the right to eat of the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7 22:2, 14, 19), and their names will be written in the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5, 20:15). In summary, the Biblical use of the phrase *aionios zoe* supports the idea that immortality is conditional and not an ontological attribute of the *psyche*.

the opposite is frequently the case. Rather than attributing immortality to the *psyche*, Jesus' language, as shown in Mark's Gospel, reveals the mortality of the *psyche*.

## CHAPTER 7: MARKAN KENOTICISM.

### 7.1. INTRODUCTION.

As the previous chapter noted, the finality of Jesus' death is highlighted by the author in Jesus' description of his death as the destruction of his *psyche*. As a result, Mark's kenotic messiah undermines Christendom's two fundamental Christological claims: (1) that God cannot change, and (2) that God cannot die. Through the teaching of the protagonist, Mark's Gospel impresses on its audience the idea that human beings are *psychosomatic* unities and that upon death, the entire person ceases to exist. Having challenged the idea that God cannot die in the previous chapter, this chapter will additionally argue that God in Jesus is capable of change because he is kenotic.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus' missiological service is kenotic. The fundamental element of the Markan motif of kenoticism is that "divinity is supremely manifested in human self-giving, specifically in the human self-giving of Christ."<sup>563</sup> As Mark 9:35 reports, service is the fundamental mission of Jesus' ministry. Jesus further clarifies in Mark 10:45 that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life [*psyche*] as a ransom for many." Here, Mark's Jesus describes himself as a kenotic mortal messiah, a self-emptying servant who will be crucified. Together, these texts help establish the kenotic tone of Mark's Gospel.

While Markan scholarship has not completely ignored the theme of divine self-emptying, it has neglected it relative to other areas of inquiry. In this chapter, I am attempting to reverse that neglect by giving the Markan theme of kenosis the attention it deserves. Lucien Richard has rightly picked up on Mark's kenotic theme, summarizing that "At the center of

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<sup>563</sup> Lucien Richard, *Christ: The Self-Emptying of God* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 41.

Mark's story, there stands a theology of Jesus' suffering and death that recalls the kenotic theme of Philippians 2."<sup>564</sup> This chapter will suggest that the telling of Jesus' unintentional healing of a bleeding woman and mountaintop metamorphosis are used by the author to highlight Jesus' kenotic nature. These events highlight Jesus' freely chosen selfless acts of self-limitation motivated by love for another.

Mark's Gospel possesses a kenotic tone.<sup>565</sup> To highlight this kenotic tone, I will look at two Markan texts that indicate Jesus was capable of change. First, I will argue that Mark 5:25-34 illustrates a fragile messiah who can lose both power and knowledge through his acts of ministry. Second, I will contend that Mark 9:2-10 invites the audience to view Jesus as one who can transform. Together, these narrative depictions of a kenotic messiah prime the reader to accept the additional kenotic texts that will be reviewed in the following chapter.

## 7.2. THE KENOTIC TONE OF MARK'S GOSPEL.

The kenotic tone of Mark's Gospel is established from the outset through the declarative words of John the Baptist. John prepares the way for a kenotic mortal messiah by modeling servanthood. John offers the service of hearing people's confessions and baptizes them. Mark

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<sup>564</sup> Richard, 63.

<sup>565</sup> While it is outside the scope of this thesis, it is relevant to note that Mark's Gospel is not alone in this declaration that Jesus was a kenotic mortal messiah. For example, similar kenotic statements related to Jesus' death are also found elsewhere within New Testament letters. For example, the letter of 1 John, reminds the Christian community, "We know love by this, that he [Jesus] laid down his life [*psyche*] for us—and we ought to lay down our lives [*psyche*] for one another" (1 John 3:16). Similar to Mark 10:45, this text combines the themes of kenotic service with the death of the *psyche*. Likewise, the letter to the Philippian church beckons disciples of Jesus to mimic his humility and obedient service to death (Phil. 2:5-8). These texts, and others like them, indicate that the author of Mark was not alone in portraying Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah. The Markan presentation of Jesus sets a precedent for kenotic mimetic discipleship, as Jesus' followers are counseled to lose their *psyche* for the cause of God's kingdom (Mark 8:35).



narrates that John told his audience, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals” (Mark 1:7). Here, the character of John declares that he is not worthy of even the lowliest of servant duties.<sup>566</sup> John’s comment serves to deflect attention away from himself and onto Jesus. Similarly, Jesus comes with more power than John, but he comes to freely give it away. John’s mention of service foreshadows the service of Jesus. As Mark’s narrative begins, John’s words set the stage for the audience to be introduced to Jesus, who will come as a self-giving servant of others.

Who is this one that is coming after John? The author implicitly prompts the audience to inquire about this on their own in response to John’s declaration. Later, this central concern of Mark’s Gospel is asked outright by Jesus in Mark 8:27. Again, the audience is invited to supply their own answer. Jesus’ question, “Who do people say that I am?” is answered by the Markan narrative itself through a series of statements foreshadowing his kenotic death (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34, 10:45). Jesus has come to be a kenotic servant, and this emptying will culminate in his death. The Markan narrative utilizes the repeated conversations between Jesus and his disciples to explain to the audience that Jesus is a kenotic mortal messiah.

Reflecting on the Markan theme of kenosis, Richard rightly connects Jesus’ kenotic life with his crucifixion, stating: “His [Jesus’] life was one of complete self-giving; his death was the definitive act of this self-giving.”<sup>567</sup> Richard’s observation helps to illuminate a key feature of Markan theology. Jesus’ life is not merely characterized by a dynamic, radical giving but is, in

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<sup>566</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (La Vergne: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 33. Edwards explains, “the loosing of sandals and washing of feet were duties of slaves, indeed of only *Gentile* slaves, in first-century Judaism. The metaphor bespeaks John’s humility and subordination in relation to the Messiah (see John 3:30).”

<sup>567</sup> Richard, *Christ*, 35.

essence, cruciform. His ministry finds its ultimate meaning in the loss and trial expressed in the crucifixion. Mark depicts a messiah who undergoes change through suffering and death to model a God who is self-giving love. This chapter will help highlight that Mark has a particular understanding of what kind of God is revealed in Jesus, not a Platonic immutable God, but a transformative relational God. Chapter nine will further explore the theological ramifications of embracing Jesus as both kenotic and mortal.

This chapter will serve to exhibit that Jesus' ministry was kenotic in nature. In fact, I will argue with Richard that "The Gospel of Mark is an account of the unprecedented and incomprehensible incarnate and kenotic love of God."<sup>568</sup> This kenotic love of God will be used to reframe multiple theological conversations in chapter nine. This will draw out the implications of taking Richard's statement seriously. Framed in this manner, Jesus' kenotic life is interpreted as a series of humble, self-sacrificial, other-oriented, loving acts of kindness, culminating in his physical death. As the Markan narrative unfolds, one of the ways the audience learns of Jesus' kenotic nature is through his miraculous healing of the demonically oppressed, sick, leprous, bleeding, blind, deaf, mute, and dead.<sup>569</sup> These exorcisms and acts of miraculous healing serve either to remove what is detrimental to the inflicted or remedy what has been damaged. Jesus' acts of healing illustrate that he is indeed to be understood as a

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<sup>568</sup> Richard, 68.

<sup>569</sup> Jesus' first exorcism occurs as early as 1:25-26. In chapter two, Jesus heals a paralytic and Simon's sick mother-in-law. Shortly after in, 1:40-41, Jesus heals a man suffering from leprosy. For a double attempted healing of a blind man, see 8:22-26. For the deaf and mute, see 7:37. After unintentionally healing a woman, Jesus intentionally raises Jairus' daughter, who is 'sleeping' from the dead (Mark 5:41-42).

physician, one who has come to heal the sick (Mark 2:17).<sup>570</sup> As a physician, Jesus serves others.<sup>571</sup>

### **7.3. JESUS' UNINTENTIONAL HEALING: LOSING POWER AND GAINING KNOWLEDGE (MARK 5:25-34).**

To be human is to be limited in both power and knowledge. Humans are, by nature, creatures of finitude. Rationally, it would follow that if the divine became human, these characteristics must be taken on. However, Christendom Christology could not fully embrace the concept of divine limitation. Instead, to protect the proposed divine attribute of changelessness, Christ had to be imagined as a composite of divine and human with two opposing natures that cannot be intermingled. Contrary to this idea, Mark's Gospel describes Jesus as possessing human limitations. Mark achieves this by narrating aspects of Jesus' life that highlight his power (through healing) and his powerlessness through giving power away.<sup>572</sup> In addition, while Jesus exemplifies a deep knowledge of both the scriptures and the power of God that surpasses even the Sadducees (Mark 12:24), he also confesses that he did not know everything (Mark 13:32). According to Jesus, some things only the Father in heaven knows. These stories that indicate change provide a challenging dilemma for the systematic of Christendom Christology.

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<sup>570</sup> It is of note that the Greek word *sózó* is used in Mark's Gospel to denote both physical healing as in 5:34 as well as salvific terms such as 8:35. This strengthens the physicalists' argument that salvation is tied to both resurrection and the physical body.

<sup>571</sup> For a first-century perspective on illness and death in relation to the Markan audience, see Peter Bolt, *Jesus' Defeat of Death: Persuading Mark's Early Readers*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 125 (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>572</sup> Richard, *Christ*, 63. For example, Mark 6:2-5 both marvels at the works of power that Jesus did and states that he was unable to perform some works of power, with a few exceptions.

The story of Jesus' healing of a woman in Mark 5:25-34 illustrates that the act of healing removed power from Jesus. This concept of losing power runs counter to the idea of divine immutability. Mark explains that in response to being touched, Jesus confessed that he did not know who unwillingly took his power. Buttressing Jesus' ignorance is Mark's narrative description of Jesus' searching intently within the crowd to find the culprit. This text tells the audience that Jesus experienced change by losing power and gaining knowledge. These Markan accounts of Jesus' ministry are illustrative examples of kenosis (emptying of power) and plerosis (filling with knowledge).

Mark 5:25-34 provides unique insight into the domains of power and knowledge as they relate to the concept of changelessness by depicting Jesus as losing healing power unwillingly and lacking the knowledge of who drained him of this power. Despite this, there is absolutely no hint in the Markan narrative that this limitation of power and knowledge diminished Jesus' divinity.<sup>573</sup> This is because for Mark's kenotic Messiah, "self-limitation is not only possible for God but is a manifestation of a characteristic [kenosis] that is central to his nature."<sup>574</sup> In his life, ministry, and death, the Markan Jesus exhibits that the very nature of God is kenotic. Mark discloses this to his audience by narrating that as the Messiah, Jesus is most fully revealed as the Son of God while hanging dead on the cross (Mark 15:39). For Mark, Jesus' death discloses a God that is relational, other-oriented, kenotic love (Mark 10:45). Jesus' life and ministry then are to be interpreted as a series of kenotic events oriented toward the trajectory of the cross.

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<sup>573</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2010), 82. Evans states, "while in the Incarnation the Son divests himself of the divine mode of being, this is by no means a divesting of what is *essential* to divinity." The concept of divine and human natures is foreign to Mark's Gospel. This idea was read back into the text to solve preconceived ideas about divinity and humanity. Mark's Gospel is not worried about natures or essences but about embodied persons.

<sup>574</sup> Evans, 17.

This chapter will suggest that Jesus' kenotic loss of power and lack of knowledge, narrated in Mark 5:25-34 is one step in preparing Mark's audience for the ultimate self-limitation of the God-man, his death.

### **7.3.1. Jesus' unconscious loss of power.**

Sandwiched between the beginning and end of a story in which Jesus raises a young girl from the dead is a Markan pericope that describes Jesus' healing of a woman suffering from years of hemorrhaging (Mark 5:25-34). This scene takes place in the midst of a crowd where a woman, motivated by faith, touches Jesus' garment and is instantaneously healed.<sup>575</sup> Mark writes,

“Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, ‘If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.’ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ And his disciples said to him, ‘You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, “Who touched me?”’ He looked all round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had

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<sup>575</sup> Interestingly, not every healing event in Mark seems to occur instantaneously. Mark tells of the healing of a blind man in 8:22-26, which initially results in failure. Cole notes that “nowhere else is such twofold healing action recorded of Jesus. R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, Eng: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 200. For Cole, this unusual detail speaks to the high probability that this text is a genuinely recorded historical event in Jesus' ministry.

happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.’” (Mark 5:25-34)

This event is particularly relevant because it directly challenges the concepts of omnipotence and divine omniscience as necessary attributes of the divine. Here, Jesus is described as one who both lacks knowledge and unwillingly loses divine healing power. After being touched, Mark explains to his audience that Jesus was “immediately aware that power had gone forth from him.”<sup>576</sup> While Jesus is keenly aware of the power he possesses, the narrative describes that it can be drained from him without his consent.<sup>577</sup> The narrative explains that in response, “Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’” Mark narrates that Jesus’ disciples responded to him, saying, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” Nevertheless, the audience is told that Jesus still “looked all around to see who had done it” (Mark 5:30-32).

Prior to this healing event, Mark indicates that the woman had heard about Jesus’ life-healing power (Mark 5:27).<sup>578</sup> Luke’s Gospel describes a similar situation when everyone “in the

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<sup>576</sup> The theme of power (*dunamis*) in Mark begins in 5:30, where Jesus perceives power has left him. It is then mentioned in 6:2 as a crowd is astonished by his power. Mark follows this up in 6:5, stating that Jesus was limited in power at this specific location, perhaps because of the lack of faith. Next, in 6:14, Herod suggests that Jesus somehow possessed the supernatural powers of a resurrected John the Baptist. Later in 9:1, Jesus declares that “the kingdom of God has come in power.” In 9:39, Jesus tells his disciples not to stop anyone doing a work of power, and in 12:24, he accuses the Sadducees of not knowing “the scriptures nor the power of God.” Finally, 13:25-26 and 14:62 both have Jesus speaking of the Son of Man’s future power and glory in the heavens.

<sup>577</sup> Mark does not give the reader any insight into the quantity of Jesus’ power. It could be proposed that Jesus had limited power, and this transfer drained him. It could also be proposed that Jesus had unlimited power. What Mark is clear about is that there was a power transfer that occurred that resulted in the woman’s healing, and Jesus did not consciously consent to or initiate this transfer.

<sup>578</sup> Mark mentions as early as 1:28 that Jesus’ fame began to spread like wildfire to the surrounding regions.

crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them” (Luke 6:19). Contrary to Mark’s Gospel, Luke does not describe whether or not this divine healing power was willingly given by Jesus. While Luke’s account implies a healing frenzy, Collins suggests that Mark’s “text implies that ordinary, accidental touch does not affect the transfer of Jesus’ power in this automatic way. Rather, only touch with the intention of being healed and with trust that Jesus is the bearer of power to heal creates this phenomenon.”<sup>579</sup> This seems to be validated in that Mark 6:56 describe that healing is initiated by faith.

Later, Mark 6:56 indicates that the sick did not even need to touch Jesus himself, but only “the fringe of his cloak,” and they were healed. Somehow, Jesus’ healing power is present in his clothing as well.<sup>580</sup> The emphasis of the Markan story is on the sick seeking healing by faith rather than Jesus’ intentional touch. France agrees with this summary, pointing out that while “Jesus is the focus of attention,” he is not “the subject of the verbs: Jesus does not go out looking for patients; it is the people who take the initiative.”<sup>581</sup> It appears that what the audience is intended to take from this encounter is that the faith of the wounded combined with the physical touch is the key that unlocks healing.

France adds that “this healing perceptibly ‘took something out of’ Jesus, in a way not paralleled in other gospel healing narratives.”<sup>582</sup> That is to say that the power that left Jesus was not given by him willingly but instead taken from him involuntarily. Brooks comments that in this Markan text, we see a remarkable sign of Jesus’ deity partnered with “the limitations of

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<sup>579</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 283.

<sup>580</sup> Here God’s healing power appears to be channeled through things associated with Jesus, not just his body.

<sup>581</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 275.

<sup>582</sup> France, 237.

Jesu's humanity."<sup>583</sup> Mark, however, does not train his audience to think of Jesus' divinity and humanity as opposite sides of a coin. By commenting on the text in this way, Brooks suggests that the miraculous should be attributed to the divinity of Jesus, while the limitation is relegated to his humanity. However, there is no indication in the narrative itself that Jesus' divinity and humanity should be understood separately. Instead, Jesus is to be understood as the divine kenotically become human. Brooks' commentary shows how orthodox Christological concerns can be read back into the text in an attempt to solve a systematic theology question that is foreign to the story.

The Markan text indicates that the extraordinary miracle "was performed without conscious effort on Jesus' part."<sup>584</sup> Collins believes that Mark specifically chose to use this story to draw his reader's attention to Jesus' divinity. By focusing on "Jesus' 'power' (*dunamis*)," this Markan story parallels other cultural-religious texts that describe the unique powers of "ancient legendary figures, heroes, and deities."<sup>585</sup> If Mark is drawing his audience's attention to Jesus' divinity in this text, it is interesting, as Cole observes, that verse 30 indicates that "Jesus was at

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<sup>583</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 96.

<sup>584</sup> Brooks, 23:96. Brooks additionally explains that "although some think Jesus knew all the while who had touched him and asked only to induce the woman to confess publicly her deed, more likely he needed to learn the person's identity. Self-limitation of the earthly Jesus is not incompatible with omniscience of the risen Christ." Perhaps the fatal flaw of some definitions of the divine is the understanding that identity is equal to ability. That is, the idea that God must have some type of ability (unlimited knowledge or power) in order to remain God.

<sup>585</sup> Collins and Attridge, *Mark*, 282. In comparison to the Markan version, Matthew 9:18-26 does not contain a description of Jesus' loss of power or his question concerning who touched him. However, Luke's version found in Luke 8:43-48 contains both Jesus' acknowledgment of a loss of power and his lack of knowledge concerning who touched him. Luke's Gospel states elsewhere that Jesus' power (*dunamis*) was not his own but was something he was filled with from the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14). Luke specifically states that "the power (*dunamis*) of the Lord was with him [Jesus] to heal" (Luke 5:17). Luke adds that this power (*dunamis*) Jesus received, he also gave away to his disciples to heal and cast out demons (Luke 9:1). For Luke, Jesus' power is not attributed to his divinity. Jesus' power is given to him to use and give away. In this way, Luke reinforces the kenotic messiah motif of the Gospels.



least sometimes conscious of the flow of healing power from Himself to the sick individual.”<sup>586</sup>

This Markan text suggests to the audience that Jesus was cognizant of his kenotic loss of power and perhaps even aware of the plerotic filling of power by the Holy Spirit. In summary, Mark 5:25-34 stands as a direct challenge to the Christendom concept of divine immutability. An unchangeable, all-powerful being could hardly be understood to lose power, let alone unwillingly. This narrative portrayal of gaining and losing power is incompatible with the concept of immutability.

### **7.3.2. Jesus’ lack of knowledge.**

In addition to his loss of power, Mark tells his audience that Jesus lacked knowledge of who had unwillingly taken power from him. France rightfully observes that Jesus’ supernatural knowledge does not extend to the “instant recognition of the culprit.”<sup>587</sup> Schnabel likewise concludes that Jesus’ “supernatural insight does not extend to the ability to identify the woman in the crowd.”<sup>588</sup> This fact appears to be reinforced by the grammatical structure of the text itself. Witherington observes that in verse 30, there is a “stress on Jesus’ supernatural though limited knowledge.”<sup>589</sup> He additionally points out that the grammatical construction of the pericope “makes Jesus’ supernatural power and what has happened with it the object of this knowledge.”<sup>590</sup> Adding to the emphasis that Jesus indeed lacked knowledge of who touched

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<sup>586</sup> Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2:161.

<sup>587</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 238.

<sup>588</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Editor Schnabel (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 126.

<sup>589</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2001), 187.

<sup>590</sup> Witherington, 187.

him, Edwards explains that the Greek verb used in verse 32 implies that Jesus “kept looking to see who had done this.”<sup>591</sup> This serves to reinforce the story's point that Jesus genuinely lacked knowledge of who touched him. Jesus' lack of knowledge serves the kenotic Markan literary motif by setting Jesus in parallel with the woman that he heals. The “persistence of Jesus in discovering who touched him rivals the woman's persistence in reaching Jesus.”<sup>592</sup>

This healing miracle stands out among others because, as Gould observes, the text implies that Jesus “had no conscious part in the miracle.”<sup>593</sup> Gould further explains that “the writer conceives of the cure as effected not by the conscious exercise of power by Jesus, but by the power that went out from him involuntarily, and of which he became conscious only afterwards.”<sup>594</sup> Again, this point is reinforced by the grammatical structure of the text. Bratcher notes the Greek “*idein* ‘to see’: the infinitive indicates purpose; here the verb is practically equivalent to ‘to discover,’ ‘to find.’”<sup>595</sup> The language chosen by the author appears to emphasize the narrative point that Jesus did not know who had touched him. What Jesus communicates to the woman post-healing is that her faith is the conduit for her healing. This statement coincides with other Markan healing pericopes where Jesus tells the recipient of the healing that their faith has been the medium of their healing.

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<sup>591</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 165.

<sup>592</sup> Edwards, 165.

<sup>593</sup> Ezra Palmer Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996), 98. Gould states that the language indicates “Jesus was ignorant [of] who had done it [touched him], and so of course [was ignorant of], whether it was man or woman.”

<sup>594</sup> Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*. 98. Gould additionally adds that “Lk. relates the story from the same point of view. Mt. tells us that the woman expected to be cured in that way, but that Jesus felt the touch, and sought the woman out, after which the miracle proceeded in the ordinary way.”

<sup>595</sup> Robert G Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 175.

### 7.3.3. Challenging Christendom's view of divinity.

In summary, Mark 5:25-34 provides a formidable challenge to belief in divine omniscience given Jesus' self-disclosed lack of knowledge. If Jesus is divine, and Jesus lacked knowledge, how can one hold to the belief that divinity is necessarily omniscient? Understanding this problem, theologians holding to the Two-Natures view have been forced to marshal creative dogmatic explanations to resolve this issue. For example, in an attempt to maintain the coherence of the Two-Natures view, the Sixth ecumenical council devised a statement of faith that appears to fall within the bounds of Nestorianism. In order to logically maintain that Jesus' 'divine nature' maintained omniscience, and the 'human nature' was limited in knowledge, the church declared that in Christ there were "two natural wills and two natural operations indivisibly, inconvertibly, inseparably, inconfusedly, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers."<sup>596</sup> Given these parameters, a Christendom reading of Mark 5:25-34 would state that Jesus' human mind/nature lacked the knowledge of who touched him, while his divine mind/nature possessed this knowledge at all times.

It is hard to distinguish how Jesus' having two wills, one omniscient and one limited in knowledge, is not two separate persons, one human and one divine, in the incarnate Christ. Given this Christological framework, one might imagine a scenario in which 'human Jesus' is understood to unconsciously heal and lack knowledge in Mark 5:25-34. In the very next scene, 'divine Jesus' is understood to consciously raise Jairus' daughter from the dead in Mark 5:38-43. Given this explanation, it is hard to determine how Jesus remains only one person while

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<sup>596</sup> *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 14, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 345.

maintaining two wills, one divine and omniscient and the other human and limited in knowledge. What is most important for the Anabaptist approach to scripture taken in this thesis is that the text itself makes no such distinction. Jesus is presented to the audience as one person with one will or mind.

Additionally problematic for the Two-Natures position is the fact that “the New Testament [as a whole] does not credit Jesus’ miraculous powers to himself but [rather] to the Holy Spirit or the Father working through him (Luke 4:14, 17-21; John 5:19, 30).”<sup>597</sup> Jesus himself never answers the question posed to him in Mark 11:28: “Who gave you this authority?” This question is left to be answered by the audience. However, regardless of the source of Jesus’ miracle-working power, Mark 6:7 indicates that Jesus kenotically gave his power away to his disciples so they might have authority over unclean spirits.<sup>598</sup>

In its totality, Mark 5:25-34 challenges the notion that God cannot change, along with the belief that God requires all knowledge/power all of the time. Instead, this Markan text teaches its audience that Jesus, the God-man, kenotically gave power away for the purpose of restorative healing of those in need. For Mark’s Jesus, power is something to be kenotically given away. Additionally, those with power who wish to become great must serve others and give their power away. Contrary to the world's model, greatness is not achieved through the hoarding of power but rather by becoming a “slave of all” (Mark 10:44).

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<sup>597</sup> Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2009), 116.

<sup>598</sup> Jesus’ authority is synonymous with his healing power in Mark 2:1-12. In this pericope, Jesus’ authority to forgive sins is placed in parallel with his power to heal the paralytic.

#### 7.4. JESUS' MOUNTAINTOP METAMORPHOSIS: CHANGING FORM (MARK 9:2-10).

A second Markan text that demonstrates divine change and serves as evidence contrary to the Chalcedonian category of immutability is Mark 9:2-10. Here, Mark describes a mountaintop experience in which Jesus undergoes a metamorphosis, a change in form. This text serves as an example not only that God can and does change but that in order to be glorified and exalted, one must first be emptied through a process of humility. This concept of emptying oneself to be filled is established in Jesus' teaching and is present in various other New Testament texts, such as the hymn found in the letter to the Philippian church. In harmony with various Markan texts, this early church hymn contrasts a humble descent to servitude with a glorifying ascent to a place of honor.

It is the confession of the Christian faith that Jesus, the divine, became human. Of course, how this is possible is highly contested. However, it would be an insurmountable challenge to argue against the fact that to be human is to experience a lifetime of change. As humans, "we are all at every moment of our lives in a state of bodily flux."<sup>599</sup> This fluctuation involves the process of kenosis (emptying) and plerosis (filling). We are reminded of this through every breath we inhale and exhale. Mark's narrative indicates that since Jesus was a human being, he was likewise subject to multiple forms of change, most notably physical injury.

The previous text examined, Mark 5:25-34, presented an example of kenosis or emptying, which inherently involved the process of change. In addition to kenosis, the Gospels sometimes speak of a *plerosis*, or filling, related to Jesus' life and ministry. While Mark's Gospel

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<sup>599</sup> Candida Moss, "Dying to Live Forever: Identity and Virtue in the Resurrection of the Martyrs," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (May 1, 2019): 155–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140019829977>.

does not use the Greek word *plerosis*, the mountaintop metamorphosis described in Mark 9:2-10 depicts a vision of Jesus' post-resurrection *plerosis*. Here, Jesus is portrayed as changing in visual appearance, in what I will argue is his future glorified state. This vision of future glorification additionally coincides with Mark's use of the Greek word *doxa*, a word used exclusively in Mark to depict Jesus' future post-resurrection glorified state (Mark 8:38, 10:37, 13:26). These texts indicate a change from one state to another.

#### **7.4.1. Metamorphosis on the mountain, a preview of Jesus' *plerosis*.**

Prior to Jesus' transformative death, the concept of metamorphosis can be found in Mark's account of Jesus' transfiguration on the mountaintop. This narrative found in Mark 9 finds its synoptic counterparts in Matthew 17 and Luke 9. Mark writes,

“Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud, there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the

dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.” (Mark 9:2-10).

The key element in understanding this text is determining its intended literary function.<sup>600</sup> This is not an easy task. In fact, Tàrrech concludes that, to some extent, this text “eludes classification.”<sup>601</sup> Is this Markan pericope intended to communicate a literal historical event, a visionary experience, or something else? Commentators are divided over the answer to this question. Burkett summarizes that the scholarly opinions surrounding the Transfiguration pericopes fall into three categories.<sup>602</sup> The event is believed to be (1) an epiphany, (2) a

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<sup>600</sup> The state of being of Moses and Elijah in the account of the Transfiguration is a debated topic between physicalists and dualists. Several factors come into play in these discussions. Perhaps the primary question is: What is the intended literary function of the author? A dualist reading trends toward a literal historical reading while a physicalist reading favors a visionary, theological, or metaphorical account. I side with the visionary/theological/metaphorical positions for the following reasons. (1) In Mark’s account Moses and Elijah both appear and disappear. In addition, Peter’s comment about building a physical tabernacle indicates the characters are meant to be understood as being in physical form. (2) Matthew’s account seems to clarify the narrative by using similar visionary language as the book of Acts, which describes various visions. (3) This position fits with Jesus’ teaching on life and death with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and disciples in Mark’s Gospel. (4) This reading of the text fits with the thanatology of Mark’s Gospel as a whole. (5) It seems reasonable to conclude that Moses and Elijah could be used by the author as literary stand-ins for the Law and Prophets. Understood this way the text is meant to be read more for its theological point of Jesus’ superiority and affirmation by the Father than a narrative event in history. Two representatives of my position are Witherington and Strauss. Witherington believes the transfiguration is a visionary “preview of the coming Parousia of the Son of Man.” Witherington, Ben, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2001), 261. Strauss suggests the transfiguration is “best understood as a proleptic vision, with Elijah and Moses appearing in resurrected glory.” Strauss, Mark L. *Mark: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 384.

<sup>601</sup> Armand Puig i Tàrrech, “The Glory on the Mountain: The Episode of the Transfiguration of Jesus\*,” *New Testament Studies* 58, no. 2 (April 2012): 151–72, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688511000373>.

<sup>602</sup> Burkett has argued that “Jesus’ transformation was not an epiphany but a preview of his apotheosis or deification. That is, this transformation reveals not a divine nature that Jesus already possessed but the divine nature that he would obtain in the future when he ascended to heaven.” Delbert Burkett, “The Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-8): Epiphany or Apotheosis?,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138, no. 2 (2019): 413–32, <https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1382.2019.542353>.

revelation of Jesus' future glorified state, or (3) an actual change in status in the moment.<sup>603</sup>

Given the textual evidence available, I suggest that this pericope should be read as a vision meant to portray Jesus' future glorified state.

First, concerning the relation of the text to contemporary stories like it, Williamson suggests that the language of transformation in similar literature was "commonly associated with the Hellenistic mysteries" and visions, and such language of appearance is "used often in biblical theophanies and vision accounts."<sup>604</sup> Supporting examples can be found in Biblical texts. For example, if Matthew used Mark as a literary source, he may have sought to clarify any literary ambiguity by using the Greek word *horama* to describe what took place (Matthew 17:9). In context the use of this word seems to make it clear that the author intends to communicate that the event was a visionary experience. Concerning its New Testament usage, *horama* is found in Matthew 17:9 and all other occurrences are found in the book of Acts. Of the eight times *horama* is found in Acts, it is used exclusively in reference to visionary events.<sup>605</sup>

In support of the understanding that this text is to be interpreted by the audience as a vision, it can be noted that Mark 9:4 states that Elijah and Moses "appeared." Here, Mark uses

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<sup>603</sup> Burkett, 414. Concerning Mark's version of the text, Burkett believes that this text falls into the category of an apocalyptic vision. Nolland concurs with Burkett and concludes that "this is a vision by which to be informed rather than an event in which to participate."

<sup>604</sup> Lamar Williamson, *Mark, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 159. Summarizing the pericope, Williamson states that "the language of Mark 9:2-8 is primarily that of theophany." Collins agrees, stating that "The account of the transfiguration evokes the Old Testament genre of the theophany and especially the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis." Collins and Attridge, *Mark*, 416-17.

<sup>605</sup> The eight uses of the word in Acts are as follows. (1) In Acts 7:31, Stephen uses the word in his speech to describe Moses seeing the burning bush. (2) In Acts 9:10-12, the word is used to describe Ananias and Paul's coordinated visions by the Lord. (3) In Acts 10:3, *horama* describes Cornelius' vision of an angel. (4) In Acts 10:17-19, Peter has a *horama* of clean and unclean animals. (5) In Acts 11:5, Peter's commentates on his *horama*. (6) In Acts 12:9, Peter thinks he is having a vision (*horama*) as he escapes jail. (7) In Acts 16:9-10, Paul has a vision (*horama*) of the Man of Macedonia. (8) In Acts 18:9, Paul has a vision (*horama*) from the Lord, who tells him to stay in Corinth.



the Greek word *horaó*. This same word is also used in Mark 9:9, where Jesus tells his disciples not to tell anyone about what they have seen (*horaó*) until after the resurrection. This Greek word (*horaó*) has a semantic range that can refer to general sight, perceiving, or looking upon an object. However, it is most frequently used with a metaphorical meaning related to a vision within the mind. This further supports the hypothesis that Matthew, using Mark, sought to clarify this point by making Mark's language more explicit.<sup>606</sup>

Another piece of literary evidence that supports the idea that this text should be read as a vision is the function of the phrase Law and Prophets within other Biblical texts. For example, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus declares that he has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Mtt 5:17). Similarly, in Acts, the Law and the Prophets are used apologetically to persuade people to believe in Jesus (Acts 28:23). As a result of this evidence, Cole concludes that Mark 9:2-10 should clearly be understood as a "vision," in which the witnesses of Moses and Elijah serve to function as literary stand-ins for the "Law and Prophets."<sup>607</sup> I agree with Cole's interpretation because this places the literary emphasis of the text not on an eyewitness report of a historical event but on the communication to the community of faith that Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and Prophets. In addition, this coincides with the heavenly communication at Jesus' baptism, where divine affirmation is given from the cloud, which states, "This is my Son, whom I

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<sup>606</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 703. Nolland additionally notes that "Twenty-one of the thirty-eight uses of ὄραμα in the LXX are in Daniel, generally in relation to apocalyptic visions." In the New Testament, *horama* occurs twelve times, once in Matthew and the remaining eleven in the Book of Acts, all in relation to a non-literal visionary event.

<sup>607</sup> Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2:211. Schnabel disagrees with this assessment. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 209. Healy adds that "together they [Moses and Elijah] signify the totality of the Old Testament—the Law and the Prophets (Luke 16:16;24:27)—bearing witness to Jesus." Mary Healy and Peter S. Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 174.

love. Listen to him!” (Mark 9:7). This same affirmation is repeated in this text. The literary emphasis of both Jesus’ baptism and the transfiguration is that Jesus is affirmed from heaven and should be followed.

Regardless if this text is taken as a literal historical event or a visionary experience, what is described in the text is Jesus’ transformation into a glorified state. Mark’s words indicate this in 9:3 by stating Jesus’ “clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.” Clearly, Mark implies that something supernatural has happened to Jesus; he has been glorified. While Mark does not explicitly use the word *doxa* to describe this metamorphosis, internal evidence within the Gospel suggests that Mark intends to describe Jesus in a future glorified form.<sup>608</sup>

Although the theme of glory (*doxa*) does not play a prominent role in the Gospel of Mark as it does in the Gospel of John, the word still appears three times in Mark’s Gospel. Two of these occurrences are used to explain that when Jesus comes again in glory, he will be accompanied by his Father and angels (Mark 8:38), and he will possess extraordinary power (Mark 13:26). In its third usage, two disciples ask to sit at Jesus’ left and right side, in his future glory (*doxa*) (Mark 10:37).<sup>609</sup> Given this evidence Badcock concludes that the glorification

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<sup>608</sup> This same Markan language of transformation is similarly employed by the apostle Paul to denote the process of discipleship. For example, Healy has pointed out that Paul uses the same vocabulary to communicate to the church that the process of discipleship is that of being transformed (*metamorphosis*) into the image (*eikon*) of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 173. Romans 8:9 likewise states that the church is to be conformed (*summorphos*) into the image (*eikon*) of the Son.

<sup>609</sup> John’s Gospel which utilizes the Greek *doxa* more frequently, depicts Jesus being both filled with *doxa* and kenotically giving *doxa* to his disciples (John 17:22). Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1–11*, vol. 25A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 207. Borchert explains that commentators have struggled to make sense of this specific text, and as a result, it has been subject to debate. He states that the text indicates “the disciples would in their humility find the reality of Jesus’ gift of glory.” He additionally sees a connection between this text and Philippians 2:6–11 in which Jesus is glorified in response to his humble and obedient service to death.

illustrated by Jesus' other-earthly splendor points to the fact that "we are dealing with a prophetic vision."<sup>610</sup> This supports the idea that Moses and Elijah should not be understood as a "corporeal reality or presence" but rather as literary representatives of the Law and prophets.<sup>611</sup>

Despite arguments over future or present changes, Mark is emphatic that a change occurs. In this pericope, Mark states that Jesus was transfigured (*metamorphosis*) on the mountain before his disciples Peter, James, and John. Regardless of how one interprets this story, it is difficult to ignore the language used to denote change, i.e., *metamorphosis*. Witherington comments that the verb *metamorphoó* "means here a change of outward appearance or form," as indicated by the text.<sup>612</sup> Collins observes that "the statement that Jesus was 'transfigured' or 'trans-formed' (*metamorphosis*) evokes the Greek idea that gods sometimes walked the earth in human form."<sup>613</sup> It is possible then that Mark is appealing to his audience's cultural-religious context to affirm Jesus' divinity through a relatable literary form.

Contrary to the view that this text is meant to convey a vision, some hold that Mark is describing a historical event.<sup>614</sup> This view believes that Moses and Elijah actually appeared on

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<sup>610</sup> F. J. Badcock, "The Transfiguration," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 22, no. 88 (1921): 321–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/os-XXII.4.321>.

<sup>611</sup> Badcock, 325.

<sup>612</sup> Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 263. Painter adds that the term *metamorphosis*, in Hellenistic religious traditions, carried the sense of divinization of a human being becoming God." Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 129. The parallels are found in Matthew 17:2 and Luke 9:29. Using the same Greek word *metamorphosis*, Matthew indicates a change both in Jesus' face and clothing. Luke, however, says that the appearance of Jesus' face was altered (*heteros*). All three Gospels indicate a change in form and appearance.

<sup>613</sup> Collins and Attridge, *Mark*, 418.

<sup>614</sup> Anabaptist Geddert suggests four potential readings of this text. (1) Moses and Elijah are literary representatives of the Law and Prophets. (2) Moses and Elijah are leaders who never died. (3) Moses and Elijah represent leaders who have experienced transfigurations instead of dying. (4) Moses and Elijah represent preparatory leadership roles that foreshadow Jesus' leadership. Geddert favors the fourth view. Geddert, Timothy J., *Mark*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 219. Marcus notes that view one is "the most frequent interpretation" and was held by the early church Father Origin. Joel Marcus, ed., *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction*

the mountain. If this is true, it would run counter to what Jesus appears to communicate about the realities of life and death within Mark's Gospel. However, this view is not without problems. Adopting this position immediately raises the question: How or in what form did Moses and Elijah appear? Some theologians such as Painter believe that Moses and Elijah are currently alive in some form in heaven. This a priori belief leads him to argue that this text should be read as a literal event in which these two men, Moses and Elijah, appear with Jesus.<sup>615</sup> Those holding Painter's dualist position must then answer: Were Moses and Elijah temporarily resurrected in their physical bodies, or were they immaterial souls? Representative of the dualist exegetical position, Cooper suggests that Moses and Elijah appear to be *rephaim*. Cooper explains that *rephaim* are "nonfleshly beings who nonetheless have bodily form."<sup>616</sup> According to Cooper, this text provides sufficient evidence to support the claim that Moses and Elijah currently reside in a disembodied intermediate state. However, Mark makes no indication that Moses and Elijah are nonfleshly. In fact, Peter's desire to build physical shelters indicates otherwise. Cooper's interpretation does not appear to be supported by the internal evidence of the text itself.

I suggest that understanding this text as a vision coincides with Jesus' later teaching to the Sadducees that the dead genuinely are dead (Mark 12:18-27). I agree with scholars such as

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and Commentary, *The Anchor Yale Bible*, v. 27A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 632. Concerning views two and three, Schnabel explains that "later Jewish traditions said that Moses was translated directly to heaven," and did not die. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Editor Schnabel (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 210. To support this position, an appeal is made to Deuteronomy 34:5-6. However, this text reports that Moses died and was buried by God, not that he did not die. The view that Elijah never died requires a particular reading of 2 Kings 2:11. This view believes that when Elijah was taken into heaven he never came back. However, 2 Chronicles 21:12 reports that a letter from Elijah was received by Jehoram during his reign as king. Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat did not begin his reign until his father died (2 Chronicles 21:1), and Elijah's reported ascent to heaven occurred during Jehoshaphat's reign (2 Kings 3:11).

<sup>615</sup> John Painter, *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict*, New Testament Readings (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 129.

<sup>616</sup> John W Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2000), 123.

Witherington, who concludes that Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain served as a "preview of the coming Parousia of the Son of Man" for the disciples.<sup>617</sup> Understood in this manner, Jesus is revealing his future glorified state. Interpreted as a visionary experience, this text does not pull back the curtain on what is currently hiding under Jesus' flesh but rather is an unveiling to Jesus' disciples of what is to come after Jesus is resurrected. This fits with Jesus' words to his disciples in Mark 9:9 not to "tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead." Within this transformation pericope, Mark narrates the purpose of Moses and Elijah's appearance in the text is "not to rank Jesus with such company [Moses and Elijah] but to distinguish him [Jesus] from them."<sup>618</sup> This text then provides a future hope for the disciples. Just as Jesus has called them to model his kenotic lifestyle, so also they will have the opportunity to be glorified through resurrection.

The symbiotic themes of kenosis and plerosis are vital to understanding what Mark seeks to communicate to his audience about discipleship. Jesus' disciples must empty themselves in the present by serving, so that they can be glorified and transformed in the future through resurrection. For the Markan Jesus, this is framed in the kenotic perishing (*apollumi*) of the *psyche* in the present so that it can be saved (*sózó*) in the future (Mark 8:35).

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<sup>617</sup> Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 261. See also Morna Dorothy Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (London; New York: Continuum, 2001). Collins concludes that "the author of Mark, or his predecessor(s), appears to have drawn upon the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis, but in a way that adapts them to the biblical tradition, especially to that of the theophany on Sinai." Collins and Attridge, *Mark*, 419.

<sup>618</sup> Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 260. Painter agrees, stating that "the real point of the appearance of Elijah and Moses was to make clear the significance of Jesus. Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 130. Some commentators have argued that the appearance of Moses and Elijah supports evidence for the belief in body-soul dualism and a disembodied intermediate state. However, this is only required by a particular reading of the text. If this could be substantiated, it would potentially undermine Jesus' teaching on the mortal *psyche*. However, this exegetical conclusion grounded in a dualist anthropological framework is by no means an exegetical requirement. A dualist reading of this text does not coincide with the previous exegetical analysis of Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees in which he communicated that the dead are indeed dead and in need of resurrection (Mark 12:18-27).

Not only does Jesus' metamorphosis on the mountain indicate that divinity can change, but it also sets a precedent for the concept that divinity can be transformed while maintaining identity. If this is possible, it can be said that the same Logos, the second person of the trinity, remained numerically the same person through the metamorphosis of (1) incarnation, (2) death, (3) and resurrection/glorification.<sup>619</sup> This would mean it is possible to maintain identity through bodily transformation. The latter of these three transformational processes is what is previewed in a visionary experience to the disciples on the mountaintop.

#### **7.4.2. Challenging Christendom's view of divinity.**

In summary, it appears, at least for Mark, that kenosis, plerosis, and metamorphosis are all acceptable processes for the divine to undergo and that this experience of change does not threaten the continuity of identity or personhood. At its core, transformation requires change. Change can be described in terms of kenosis (Mark 5:25-34) or plerosis (Mark 9:2-10). Mark's account of Jesus' healing and metamorphosis on the mountain provides reason to believe that God chooses to experience change in both of these ways. Cole concludes that while the mount of transfiguration speaks of Jesus' metamorphosis, "the true great transfiguration, the *metamorphosis*, had already taken place at Bethlehem when God took human form, as Philipians shows (Phil. 2:6-7)."<sup>620</sup> In conclusion, Mark's story of "the transfiguration episode

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<sup>619</sup> Transformation of form through death while maintaining identity also appears to be a significant Pauline theme within his letter to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 15).

<sup>620</sup> Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2:210. Cole adds that "on the mount of transfiguration Jesus was but re-assuming His own true form, even if only temporarily." I will later argue that the category of metamorphosis, seen both on the mountain and the cross, is the key to answering the question, *how* was Jesus both divine and human at the same time in one person?

points towards the way of suffering and death [ultimate kenosis], but also towards the way of resurrection” and glorification (ultimate plerosis).<sup>621</sup>

## **7.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY.**

This chapter has sought to highlight the motif of kenotic messiahship within the Gospel of Mark through two texts. First, Mark 5:25-34 provided a tangible illustration of Jesus' unconscious loss of power and lack of knowledge, which challenges the idea that the divine must always be omnipotent and omniscient as understood by the Christological categories of Christendom. Second, Mark 9:2-10 revealed that the concept of divine immutability runs contrary to the recorded revelation of Jesus' metamorphosis on the mountaintop.

In addition to these texts, Mark's narrative as a whole portrays Jesus as a human being who is capable of change. For example, Mark narrates that Jesus became fatigued (7:34; 8:2), suffered (14:33), needed sleep (4:38), and was surprised (6:6). Similarly, Jesus is also portrayed as experiencing human emotions such as anger (3:5; 8:33) and compassion (1:41; 6:34; 8:2). These human characteristics exhibit that Mark's Jesus was affected by those he encountered. Mark's description of Jesus illustrates to the audience that, like all other human beings, Jesus constantly experienced change. God's ability to change has significant implications for Anabaptist theology. For example, only a mutable God can transform through incarnation, share in human suffering, and die a human death. This chapter has suggested that Mark prepared his audience to embrace the idea that God can die by first portraying Jesus as a kenotic messiah who is capable of change.

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<sup>621</sup> Tàrrech, "The Glory on the Mountain," 172.

The next chapter will expand on the Markan theme of kenosis while also showing how it is connected to the theme of death. This chapter will outline that Mark chapter fourteen contains three kenotic texts that collectively point toward Jesus' kenotic death. These texts outline (1) the significant cost of Jesus' self-emptying, (2) the kenotic imagery used to depict Jesus' death, and (3) the author's foreshadowing of the quintessential act of kenosis, Jesus' death. With the interrelated Markan themes of kenosis and death explored separately, I will now turn toward the kenotic culmination of Jesus' life, the material kenosis of his death. For it is only by being fully emptied in death that Jesus can be resurrected and glorified.



## CHAPTER 8: MARKAN KENOTIC MORTALISM.

### 8.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters have explored the Markan themes of death and kenosis. In the previous chapter, two Markan texts demonstrated the kenotic motif that permeates Mark's Gospel. First, Mark 5:25-34 gave the audience insight into Jesus' humanity, showing that Jesus sometimes lacked knowledge and was drained of power. Second, Mark 9:2-10 presented an example of divine metamorphosis. This chapter will expand on the theme of kenosis by concentrating on the interconnectivity of the themes of kenosis and death within the Markan narrative. This will be achieved by tracing how the author utilizes repeated verbal threads to portray Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah.

Through a series of events leading toward Jesus' death, Mark's narrative repeatedly drives home the point that his death will be the pinnacle of his kenotic messiahship. These verbal threads teach the audience to view Jesus as a kenotic messiah and encourage them to embrace a physicalist understanding of death. Adding to Mark's kenotic motif, this chapter will examine three additional texts that illustrate that Jesus' primary kenotic service was his self-sacrificial death. This is articulated in Jesus' own words as the death of his *psyche*. These three texts act as signposts pointing forward toward Jesus' obedient kenotic service to death as he relinquished his power over life (Mark 10:45). All three of the following texts present something of cost (ointment, body/blood, and *psyche*) that is broken and poured out for the sake of another.

First, Mark 14:3-9 serves as a kenotic foreshadowing of Jesus' death. Here, the future breaking and pouring out of Jesus' *psyche* is foreshadowed by the actions of an unnamed

woman who breaks an expensive vessel of ointment and pours it on Jesus in preparation for his burial. Second, Mark 14:25-19 depicts for the audience a Passover meal in which the future breaking and pouring out of Jesus' *psyche* is foreshadowed with the breaking of bread and pouring out of wine. Third, Mark 14:32-39 records Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane just before his arrest. In this scene, Jesus kenotically pours himself out in prayer to the Father, pleading to escape what will be a kenotic crucifixion.

Collectively, these Markan texts challenge the categories of divine immutability and immortality, forcing the reader to categorize the divine within a kenotic framework.<sup>622</sup> Finally, the lynchpin, Jesus' death, is the quintessential act within the Markan drama that demands the reframing of both divine and human categories. Not only is Jesus portrayed as a kenotic messiah who serves, but his service comes to a climax with the ultimate and holistic kenotic sacrifice of his *psyche* (Mark 10:45). Together, these three texts foreshadow Jesus' (1) costly, (2) kenotic sacrifice, of (3) laying down his *psyche* to death.

## **8.2. KENOTIC MORTALITY: A BROKEN, Poured OUT, AND BURIED *PSYCHE* (MARK 14:3-9)**

Mark 14:3-9 tells the story of an unnamed woman who performs a 1) costly and extravagant (2) kenotic act of service, which (3) foreshadows Jesus' death and burial. Mark writes,

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon, the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open

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<sup>622</sup> See specifically Richard, 73–83.

the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'

In a costly act of self-sacrificial service, the woman breaks the vessel containing ointment and pours it over Jesus' head. While the disciples question the woman's financial decision, Jesus commends the woman for her boldness. Just as Jesus stated that he came to give his entire life (*psyche*) in service to death, so also this woman offers a costly gift in a kenotic or self-sacrificial fashion, preparing Jesus for his burial. Three things can be highlighted in this text that place it in alignment with Mark 10:45. These are (1) the cost of the sacrifice, (2) the kenotic imagery, and (3) the association with Jesus' death.

### **8.2.1. A costly kenotic sacrifice.**

The first aspect of this text to be highlighted is that the extravagant cost of the ointment parallels the sacrifice of Jesus' *psyche*. The Greek term *polyteles* used by Mark to describe the ointment means "very expensive" or costly and is estimated to be, at that time, an entire year's

worth of wages.<sup>623</sup> Mark's Gospel indicates the cost or value of self-sacrificial service such as this women's in several other places. For instance, in Mark 8:34-37, Jesus explains to his disciples that they must be willing to lose (literally destroy, *apollumi*) their entire *psyche* in order to follow Jesus. Later, in Mark 10:28, Peter exclaims, "We have left everything to follow you!" Peter's words show that the disciples had taken Jesus at his word. Discipleship is costly. Later in Mark 12:41-44, a poor widow serves as another tangible example of extravagant, costly sacrifice. After observing the woman's offering, Jesus explains that this woman has given out of her poverty rather than abundance. Jesus explains she has offered "everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:44). The cost of the woman's kenotic sacrifice in Mark 14:3-9 underlines her value of Jesus.<sup>624</sup>

Using the motif of costly sacrifice, Mark harkens back to Jesus' words in 8:36-37: "For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life [*psyche*]? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life [*psyche*]?" In Mark's Gospel, the most valuable thing imaginable is a person's *psyche*, their life. Here, the NRSV translates the Greek word *psyche* as 'life.' Jesus explains that a person's *psyche* (life) is of ultimate value. Mark's audience is to understand that nothing is valuable enough to give in exchange for one's *psyche* (life).

Some English translations have chosen to interpret *psyche* in this text as two different English words, life and soul. For instance, while the NIV translates *psyche* as 'life' in verse 35, it

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<sup>623</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Eckhard J. Editor Schnabel (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 345.

<sup>624</sup> As I noted in the introduction, for the purpose of this thesis I have defined kenosis as a freely chosen selfless act of self-limitation motivated by love for another. Within the text, it appears that the woman has freely chosen to humble herself in an act of servitude. This act comes at a significant financial loss to the woman. This is noted in the disciple's response. The woman sacrifices her finances by pouring the oil on Jesus' head.

changes the English translation to 'soul' in verses 35 and 36.<sup>625</sup> This translation is misleading because when most English readers read the word 'soul,' they tend to think of "an independent element in human nature that is separate from the physical body."<sup>626</sup> However, "this is not a biblical concept."<sup>627</sup> Support for Brooks' claim is found in the manner in which the word *psyche* is used by the New Testament authors. Instead, I argue that 'life' is the best translation of *psyche* for all three verses (Mark 35-37).<sup>628</sup> Ultimately, while extremely costly, the woman's sacrificial offering pales compared to the sacrifice Jesus will make by offering up his life (*psyche*).

### 8.2.2. The kenotic imagery of breaking and pouring.

Second, the woman's actions are explained linguistically through the kenotic terminology of breaking and pouring. Witherington comments that "the cracking of the vessel indicates that the woman intended to perform an extravagant act, not saving any of the perfume for later."<sup>629</sup> Narratively, this functions to parallel the broken vessel of Jesus' body and the pouring out of his

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<sup>625</sup> James A. Brooks, *Mark*, vol. 23, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 137–38.

<sup>626</sup> Brooks, 23:137–38.

<sup>627</sup> Brooks, 23:137–38.

<sup>628</sup> It is strange that many commentators such as Gould persist with the notion that "two meanings of the word life" exist within verses 35-37. Gould believes that "in the first clause, it [*psyche*] means the bodily life, and in the second, the true life of the spirit, which is independent of that bodily condition." This is untenable and reveals an a priori anthropological bias toward the language. First, Jesus does not change subjects between verses 35 and 36. Second, Jesus' use of the Greek word *psyche* in Mark consistently aligns with a physicalist anthropology. Finally, if Gould were to be believed, Jesus would be using *psyche* in verse 35 to refer to a mortal physical person and an immortal non-material person in the following verse. Ezra Palmer Gould, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: C. Scribner's Sons, 1922), 157.

<sup>629</sup> Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2001), 367. Witherington adds that Mark's placement of this story seems to be theologically intentional. It serves to "help exegete the significance of the plot, The Last Supper, and Jesus' demise."

contents, blood. The second half of this parallel will be completed through Jesus' words at the Passover meal in Mark 14:22-25.

Mark reports that the woman did not slowly pour the ointment onto Jesus' head. Instead, she "smashed the jar itself, which means the vessel could never be used again, thus symbolizing the totality of the gift."<sup>630</sup> This same totality of kenotic gift-giving can be seen in Jesus' giving of his *psyche* (Mark 10:45), the disciples giving of their *psyche* (Mark 8:34-37), and the widows giving of her entire livelihood (Mark 12:44). All of these actions are framed kenotically as the giving of something in its entirety. These three examples reinforce the Markan theme that death is holistic and not the shedding of one part (the body) while retaining another (a disembodied soul). This additionally affirms Jesus' conversation with the Sadducees. Hope in life after death must find solace not in the immortality of the *psyche* but rather in the power of God to resurrect the dead (Mark 12:24).

### **8.2.3. Burial preparation.**

Third, Jesus interprets the woman's costly kenotic act of service prophetically as pointing to his "imminent death and burial."<sup>631</sup> For Mark, this pre-burial anointing operates simultaneously on multiple levels. As already mentioned, this text reinforces the concepts of costly sacrifice and kenotic service. In addition, it functions to foreshadow Jesus' death and parallel his words at

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<sup>630</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (La Vergne: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 414.

<sup>631</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, Eng: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 182.

the Passover meal. Moreover, Mark may be suggesting to his audience that this woman's act should be interpreted as Jesus' official anointing as a messianic king and high priest.<sup>632</sup>

As one who would die like a common criminal, charged with both sedition and blasphemy, Jesus would not have been adequately anointed for his burial. What the reader learns later is that Jesus' anointing by this woman prepares him not only for his burial but also for his resurrection. This becomes evident in Mark's resurrection explanation, where Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome go to the tomb to anoint Jesus after his death and encounter an empty tomb (Mark 16:1).

#### **8.2.4. A signpost to Jesus' costly kenotic death.**

The woman's anointing of Jesus serves to reinforce and echo Jesus' words in Mark 10:45: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life [*psyche*] as a ransom for many." The self-sacrificial act of the woman's anointing and the giving of Jesus' *psyche*, which are set in parallel, are both extravagant and costly. The kenotic breaking of the vessel and the pouring out of the ointment serve to foreshadow the breaking of Jesus' body and the pouring out of his blood. The all-in nature of the woman's offering reflects Jesus' costly sacrificial death that was likewise not partial but wholistic in nature. This text is the first of three signposts in the fourteenth chapter of Mark, which point to Jesus' costly kenotic death. Within its Markan

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<sup>632</sup> Mary Healy and Peter S. Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 277. Healy claims that "for Jews steeped in the Old Testament, to anoint the head with oil also has another unmistakable significance: it is the way to crown a king (1 Sam. 10:1; 16:13) and to ordain a priest (Exod. 29:7). This woman's gesture is a symbolic recognition of Jesus the messianic king and high priest!"

context, Jesus' death is the quintessential unveiling of a God who is relational, other-oriented, kenotic love.

### **8.3. JESUS' KENOTIC COVENANT OF DEATH (MARK 14:22-25).**

What was previously foreshadowed and alluded to in Mark 14:3-9 is brought to light in Mark 14:22-25. In describing the series of final events that led Jesus to the cross, the author of Mark describes an evening Passover meal shared by Jesus and his twelve disciples. Mark writes,

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it, he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

Like Mark 14:3-9, this text repeats the narrative progression of a (1) costly (Jesus' life), (2) kenotic sacrifice (represented in the bread and wine), of (3) Jesus laying down his *psyche* to death. Two aspects of Jesus' words can be accentuated concerning the foreshadowing of his kenotic death. First, his breaking the bread and pouring out of the wine (understood to be symbolic of his body and blood) gives the disciples and the reader a tangible kenotic metaphor for Jesus' impending death. In articulating his death in this manner, Jesus expresses that his death is an act of kenotic service-oriented toward those whom he loves. Second, this "pouring out to death" serves as a potential hyperlink to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. This linkage



indicates that the author understood Jesus' body and blood to be synonymous with the *nephesh* of Isaiah's suffering servant.

### 8.3.1. The kenotic imagery of breaking and pouring.

The kenotic symbolism of breaking and pouring that initiates the meal provides a vivid metaphor of Jesus' death.<sup>633</sup> The act of both breaking and pouring are explicitly kenotic. Schnabel points out that the symbolism of breaking in reference to Jesus' *soma* connects this pericope to Jesus' death predictions in 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34.<sup>634</sup> Interestingly, in his commentary on the text, Schnabel omits Mark 10:45, where it is Jesus' *psyche* that is given to death. Adding to the complexity, it appears that there are potential semantic issues with the text itself. For example, scholars debate over what language Jesus spoke, which influences their interpretation of the text.

Edwards holds the opinion that Jesus' native tongue would have been Aramaic. As a result, he argues that the word used by the author, *soma*, was most likely a translation of the Hebrew word *nephesh*. In the Ancient Israelite dialect, this word was used to describe the whole person or whole being.<sup>635</sup> Witherington disagrees with Schnabel, stating that the actual

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<sup>633</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2002), 572. France adds an additional kenotic layer explaining that "Verses 22–24 and 25 thus present two contrasting and yet suggestively linked aspects of what is now to happen. The 'cup of death' (v. 24) and the 'cup of future glory' (v. 25)." This language reflects a kenotic emptying and a subsequent filling back up. See also, A.D. Smith, "God's Death - A. D. Smith," 1977, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0040571X7708000405>. Smith argues that all Christology must be kenotic to some extent if they are to embrace the idea that Jesus was glorified after being resurrected.

<sup>634</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 356.

<sup>635</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 425.

phrases concerning Jesus' body and blood written in Greek cannot be said in Aramaic.<sup>636</sup> Either way, Edwards concludes that “all the activity signified by the verbs thus results in the gift of Jesus *himself*, wholly and without reserve, in his self-offering for the disciples.”<sup>637</sup> The emphasis of the text is the significance of the sacrifice Jesus is preparing to make and the holistic impact it will have on his person.

Reflecting on this Markan text, Witherington comments that, ironically, “Death (the ultimate pollutant in the Jewish purity system) is the means of ultimate cleaning.”<sup>638</sup> He adds that for Jews, the idea of partaking of human blood would have been an abhorrence. In the Old Testament, texts such as Genesis 9:4, Deuteronomy 12:23-24, and Leviticus 17:14 indicate that a person or animal's life (*nephesh*) is in their blood. This speaks to the practical observation that human beings require the circulation of blood to live. Edwards believes that the phrase ‘poured out’ was intentionally used to describe Jesus’ “violent death.”<sup>639</sup> This kenotic and prophetic symbolism is found elsewhere in Hebrew literature. Painter also adds that the language of kenotic pouring out “echoes the language concerning the suffering servant (Isa. 53.11, 12) whose work makes *many* righteous, who *pours out* his life (*nephesh*) to death.”<sup>640</sup> These scholars’ observations are correct. Mark uses metaphorical language to emphasize both the

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<sup>636</sup> Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 374. Witherington states that the Greek word translates “is” in the Greek text would not be found in Aramaic. He also adds that “the phrase ‘my body for you’ probably cannot be said in Aramaic any more than the phrase ‘my blood of the covenant’ can. See also, Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, trans. Donald Harold Madvig (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), 301–3.

<sup>637</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 425.

<sup>638</sup> Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 375.

<sup>639</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 230.

<sup>640</sup> John Painter, *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict*, New Testament Readings (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 187.

violence of Jesus' impending crucifixion and its holistic ramifications. Mark promises his audience no escape from death outside the hope of future resurrection.

### 8.3.2. Isaiah 53:12: A poured out *nephesh* to death.

Painter and other biblical commentators understand Jesus' language in Mark 14:22-25 to be a direct reference to Isaiah chapter 53. Specifically, Schnabel states that "the phrase *which is poured out for many*" is a quotation from Isaiah 53:11-12.<sup>641</sup> This association is significant since Isaiah writes that it is the suffering servant's *nephesh* (misleadingly translated as soul) that is offered (Isa. 53:10) and poured out (Isa. 53:12) to death.<sup>642</sup> This places Isaiah's anthropological understanding of the suffering servant's death in agreement with Jesus' own words in Mark 10:45, where Jesus articulates his own death in terms of the mortality of his *psyche*.

What has been vitally lost in translation is that while the breaking of the bread symbolizes specifically "the death of his *body (soma)*," both Jesus and Isaiah indicate that bodily (*somatic*) death is identical to soul (*nephesh* Isaiah 53:10-12, *psyche* Mark 10:45) death.<sup>643</sup> Those who have made this connection between Isaiah 53:10-12 and Mark 10:45, therefore, affirm Jesus' holistic understanding of human nature. For example, Healey explains, "In Hebrew thought, 'body' is not merely the flesh [*basar*] but the whole person as a physical being

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<sup>641</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 357. Schnabel adds, "The explanation in 10:45 of Jesus' death in terms of a vicarious death is reinforced in the pronouncement over the cup with another allusion to Isaiah 53." Healey also understands Mark 14:22-25 as an intentional allusion to Isaiah's suffering servant. Healey and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 286.

<sup>642</sup> Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 187. Painter comments, "The notion of the one for the many echoes the language of the suffering servant (Isa. 53.11,12) whose work makes *many* righteous, who *pours out* his life (*nephesh*) to death."

<sup>643</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 356.

[*nephesh*].<sup>644</sup> As a result, the kenotic offering of Jesus' death must be understood as holistic. It is neither a partial death nor a partial offering.

The Gospel of Mark employs what has been coined the 'Suffering Servant' motif. Perhaps the best example of this is found in Jesus' own words in Mark 10:45. Reflecting on this, Koester has famously described Mark's Gospel as "a passion narrative with an extended introduction."<sup>645</sup> This motif has been connected to Isaiah 53, which some scholars interpret as a prophecy about the death of Jesus. This connection has been made because of Mark's apparent dependence on Isaiah. For example, Mark 10:34 parallels Isaiah 53 in the mentioning of mockery, spitting, flogging, and death.<sup>646</sup> Additionally, Mark, like Isaiah, describes the Suffering Servant's death in terms of his soul's death (Isa. 53:12 *nephesh*, Mark 14:34 *psyche*).<sup>647</sup> In this way, Mark 14:34 directly parallels Isaiah 53:12. Both texts describe how the Suffering Servant "poured out His life (*nephesh*) unto death."

In addition to this, some scholars have interpreted Jesus' statement in Mark 14:34, "My soul (*psyche*) is deeply grieved, to the point of death," to be derived from Isaiah 53:12. For instance, Schnabel argues that this text, along with others found in Mark, develops the

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<sup>644</sup> Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 284. Healey adds that "Jesus is revealing that his death will be a gift of *himself* to them (see 10:45." Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*. 230. Edwards concurs and says, "When Jesus said, " 'This is my body,' " the Aramaic (Jesus' native tongue) behind "body" likely meant "my person," "my whole being," "my self." Likewise, the Greek word behind "body" is not *sarx* (flesh), but *sōma*, "body" or perhaps "being."

<sup>645</sup> Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press, 2013), 26.

<sup>646</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 248. Schnabel explains that "each of these four elements (although not the verbs) is mentioned in the suffering of Isaiah's Suffering Servant of the Lord (mockery and spitting, Isa. 53:3; flogging, 53:5; death, 53:8-9, 12), a figure who is important for Jesus' explanation of the purpose and the consequences of his death in verse 45."

<sup>647</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins and Harold W. Attridge, *Mark: A Commentary, Hermeneia--a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 500. Collins comments that "the saying of v. 45 has some important similarities to Isaiah 53:10b-12 LXX."

“Suffering Servant” motif, which finds its origin in Isaiah 53.<sup>648</sup> Supporting this are the three texts in Mark where Jesus forecasts his death. Jesus explicitly tells his disciples that he will be killed (*apokteinó*), and three days later, he will rise from the dead (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34). Mark 10:45 clarifies that Jesus understands his crucifixion to be the death of his *psyche*. If Mark is indeed drawing on Isaiah 53, Mark chose to translate the Hebrew *nephesh* into the Greek *psyche*. This is most likely the case since Mark’s Gospel uses the Greek word *psyche* in a way that gives it a physicalist definition. This is in line with the way Old Testament authors utilized the Hebrew word *nephesh*.

### 8.3.3. Material kenosis.

In summary, Mark 14:22-24 reinforces the understanding of Jesus’ death as a material kenosis of his entire person (*psychosomatic*). Jesus himself describes his death to his disciples through kenotic imagery during their Passover meal. This prophetic symbolism is most likely grounded in Isaiah 53 and is recapitulated by Jesus, who provides a hyperlink back to the prophecy of Isaiah’s suffering servant. Like Mark 14:3-9, this text echoes 10:45, portraying Jesus as (1) relational, (2) other-oriented, (3) kenotic love. The text narrates Jesus expressing himself through relationships by having a meal with his disciples and illustrates his other-oriented nature through the sacrificial offering of himself for others. Finally, this text serves as a prophetic forecast of the kenotic death that Jesus will undergo as his body will be broken and his blood will be poured out.

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<sup>648</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 198.

#### 8.4. JESUS' KENOTIC SUBMISSION TO DEATH (MARK 14:32-39).

The third Markan signpost that points the audience toward Jesus' kenotic death is found in Mark 14:32-39. Just prior to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, Mark narrates that Jesus took his disciples to a place called Gethsemane to spend time in prayer. Mark tells his audience:

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, 'I am [*psyche ego*] deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'

While both Mark 14:3-9 and Mark 14:22-24 foreshadow and allude to Jesus' costly sacrifice to death, Mark 14:32-39 speaks directly to the point. In Gethsemane, Jesus' (1) costly (Jesus' *psyche*), (2) kenotic sacrifice (represented in the relinquishing of his will), of (3) laying down his *psyche* to death becomes explicit in his prayer. Two aspects of this event are pertinent in understanding Mark's communication of Jesus' kenotic death. First, Jesus is said to experience a genuine fear of death. So much so that he humbly pleads with his heavenly Father for a way to escape death. If death were understood by the audience as a transition in which the soul left the body rather than a holistic termination of life, Jesus' fear would appear to be unfounded. Second, Jesus demonstrates kenotic humility in both requesting a way out and ultimately

submitting to the Father's will. These aspects reinforce the idea that Jesus believed death to be an enemy deserving of fear and not a doorway to a disembodied intermediate state of existence. In addition, Jesus' death is demonstrated to be a voluntary kenotic submission. Mark indicates that Jesus genuinely had the ability to reject his missiological vocation, which would culminate in crucifixion.

#### **8.4.1. Jesus' fear of death.**

Why did Jesus express such distress and anguish in Gethsemane? Up to this point in the Markan narrative, Jesus has prophesied his impending death and walked confidently toward Jerusalem to meet it.<sup>649</sup> Within the narrative, Jesus' words concerning his death appear to be spoken with prophetic confidence coupled with a poised assurance of resurrection. Jesus himself, who likened death to sleep, has already demonstrated God's resurrection power in raising Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:35-43) along with a demon-possessed boy (Mark 9:19-29). He even publicly chastised the Sadducees for not understanding the scriptures and the power of God to perform such an action (Mark 12:18-27). During his ministry, Jesus both foretold of his own impending death (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:34) and taught his disciples that following him would require giving up their lives (*psyche*) to death (Mark 8:34-38). So why does Jesus express such anxiety on the precipice of death's door?

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<sup>649</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 432–33. Edwards pointedly comments, "Surely we all know individuals who face the prospect of their deaths with greater composure and courage than does Jesus. Did not Socrates greet death as a friend and liberator to a better life (Plato, *Ap.* 29; *Phd.* 67–68)?" Perhaps Jesus genuinely portrayed fear in that, unlike Socrates, Jesus did not see death as the liberation of the *psyche* from the *soma* but rather holistic in nature.

Some have speculated that Jesus was seeking to avoid the “cup of God’s wrath”; however, under scrutiny, this conclusion is unfounded.<sup>650</sup> Schnabel, for instance, points to similar texts in the Old Testament that use cup imagery as a metaphor for God’s wrath, which is poured out on the unrighteous (Isa. 51:17, Ezeki.23:32-34, Lam. 4:21, Psa. 11:6).<sup>651</sup> However, Mark never associates Jesus’ death with God’s wrath. The Greek word for wrath, *orgé*, appears only once in Mark 3:5 and is followed immediately by sympathy (*sullupeó*) and restorative healing (*apokathistémi*). Instead, Jesus refers to himself as the cup. He is the vessel that is broken and poured out, which symbolizes a newly established covenant (Mark 14:24). There is a sense in both Mark 10:38-39 and 14:36 that Jesus also uses the metaphor of the cup as something he must drink from. However, this metaphor, if stretched too far, would mean that the disciple’s death should also be interpreted as the consequence of God’s wrath. For Jesus tells John and James, “You will drink the cup I drink” (Mark 10:39). Given this evidence, the association of the cup with God’s wrath proves to be untenable.

In Mark, Jesus is not an object of wrath that must die in order to appease an angry God.<sup>652</sup> He is the humble, subservient messenger of God who has a unique filial relationship with the Father. Jesus’ death is that of a divine ambassador who has come to reveal the Father’s kenotic love through ultimate sacrifice, the laying down of his life (*psyche*). Indeed, each time Jesus forecasts his death, he follows his prophecy with a kenotic antidote. For example, when Jesus is revealed by Peter as the Messiah (Mark 8:29), Jesus immediately

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<sup>650</sup> Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 379. See also, Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2:297. Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 360. Schnabel associates this text with Isaiah 51:17, 22, Ezekiel 23:32-34, Lamentations 4:21, and Psalms 11:16.

<sup>651</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 364.

<sup>652</sup> In Mark’s Gospel, forgiveness occurs through repentance. See Mark 1:4.



clarifies that he is a kenotic messiah who will die and rise again (Mark 8:31). He then adds that discipleship also looks like a kenotic relinquishing of one's life (*psyche*) to death (Mark 8:34-36).

Paradoxically, in the kingdom Jesus is seeking to establish, to gain, one must lose. Again, when Jesus tells his disciples of his kenotic death in 9:31, Mark quickly thereafter records Jesus saying that "anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Compared to the kingdoms of the world, Jesus' kingdom is upside-down. As a result, kenosis is the *modus operandi* of the kingdom of God. The centerpiece of this Markan concept is found in Jesus' restatement that he will be killed. Jesus declares, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). For Jesus, the cross must be interpreted through a kenotic paradigm.

So why does Jesus fear death? I suggest that the answer resides in the fact that for Jesus, the *psyche* is mortal. Death, therefore, requires an unparalleled element of trust in the one who has the power to raise the dead. Mark 14:34 records Jesus' expression of fear in terms of his *psyche* being grieved to death. Bratcher and Nida confess that Jesus' words "even to death" concerning his *psyche* in Mark 14:34 "poses real problems for the translator."<sup>653</sup> Seeking to defy its meaning in context, Bratcher and Nida propose an alternative theological interpretation. They suggest that Jesus' use of *psyche* in this passage should be understood "in a strictly figurative way."<sup>654</sup> This interpretation is internally incongruent. Bratcher and Nida

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<sup>653</sup> Witherington makes a bizarre interpretation of this text, perhaps to fit his anthropological framework. Witherington interprets Jesus' words as "my spirit is very sad unto death" and then comments, "Jesus is so sad he could simply die of a broken heart." Here he incorrectly intermingles anthropological categories, that of *psyche* and *pneuma*. Jesus is not talking about his breath; he is speaking of himself as a physical person who is about to hang on a cross.

Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 378.

<sup>654</sup> Robert G Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 447.

argue for a figurative interpretation even though they believe the best translation for *psyche*, in this case, is the personal pronoun 'I' or 'myself.' This poses obvious problems for what Jesus is communicating. Jesus is not experiencing deep levels of anguish because he is preparing to 'figuratively die.' His death will be physical, tangible, painful, and gruesome. To make matters worse, there is a fly in the ointment for exegetes such as Bratcher and Nida, who attempt to read anthropological dualism into Mark 14:34. This disjunction is that those who reject the apparent physicalist reading of the text and demand instead a dualist infused interpretation must square with the fact that Jesus repeatedly and consistently speaks of the mortality of the *psyche* as synonymous with bodily (*somatic*) death.

As his death approaches, Jesus says to his disciples in Mark 14:34, "I (*psyche*) am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." This text gives the reader insight into how Jesus responded to the knowledge of his crucifixion. The Gospel writer indicates that "Jesus did not die with stoic apathy as though death were of no consequence. He really hurt as he approached the cross."<sup>655</sup> France comments that "in this context, [Mark] refers explicitly to the cause of that emotion (distress 'at the approach of death'), as the death which Jesus has long been predicting now fills the horizon."<sup>656</sup> Appealing to this text, theologian Oscar Cullman distinguished between the way Jesus and Socrates approached their impending deaths.<sup>657</sup> For Socrates, death is a friend, a liberator from the prison that is the body. For Jesus, death is an

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<sup>655</sup> Brooks, *Mark*, 23:234. Brooks understands this text to be alluding to Psalms 42:5–6, 11, and 116:3.

<sup>656</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 583. For an Anabaptist reader, this should inform readings of similar texts such as Acts 2:27–31, which states Jesus' *psyche* was not abandoned to Hades. Hades should not be understood in terms of the mythological Greek underworld, but the Hebrew *Sheol*, the common grave. This allows the reader to see the parallel within the text between Jesus' *psyche* in Hades and his flesh that did not decay. The text is understood as a pair of synonymous terms, not dichotomous ones.

<sup>657</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul: Or, Resurrection of the Dead? The Witness of the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 2010), 21.

enemy. It separates one from both God and loved ones. For Socrates, the *psyche* longs to escape the *soma*. For Jesus, the *psyche* is deeply grieved in recognition of its mortality. While Socrates describes his death as liberation, Mark describes Jesus as approaching death with reluctant submission (Mark 14:35-36). These conflicting views of death are why Socrates approaches his death with confidence, and Jesus is reluctant and fearful.

Mark 14:34 indicates to the audience that Jesus had a genuine emotional fear of death. Barclay notes that *psyche* in this text refers to Jesus' impending physical crucifixion. He says that, understandably, Jesus "did not want to die."<sup>658</sup> Jesus' statement that his *psyche* "is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death' echoes the haunting lament of the downcast and dejected soul of Pss 42:6, 11 and 43:5."<sup>659</sup> Bratcher concludes that "hē psuchē mou (cf. 3:4) 'my soul': here either the equivalent of 'myself,' 'my whole being,' or, in a more specialized sense, the 'soul' as the center of the 'inner life,' the seat of the emotions. Inasmuch as the phrase is biblical, it would appear that the first meaning prevails here."<sup>660</sup> Once again, this text reveals a distinction between how Plato and the writer of the Gospel of Mark use the Greek word *psyche*. For Plato, the *psyche* is immortal and cannot be grieved to death. For the author of Mark, a *psyche* is a physical mortal person who is susceptible to death, destruction, and decomposition.

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<sup>658</sup> William Barclay, ed., *The Gospel of Mark*, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 343.

<sup>659</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 432.

<sup>660</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, 447. Rather than translating *psyche* as a personal pronoun, Hooker makes a strange translational choice, translating *psyche* as "heart." Morna Dorothy Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark* (London; New York: Continuum, 2001), 345.

#### 8.4.2. Jesus' kenotic submission to the Father.

At this point in the narrative, it should come as no surprise to the audience that Jesus understood his death as a holistic kenotic self-emptying, rightly fearing what was in store. As a result, Mark describes how He reached out to his Father in prayer. Only the Gospel of Mark records Jesus' use of the Aramaic *Abba*, which translates into English as 'father' or 'daddy.' Edwards explains that the word *Abba* denotes "intimacy, trust, and affection."<sup>661</sup> This word only appears in two other places in the Greek New Testament, once in Romans 8:15 and again in Galatians 4:6, "where Paul declares that through the Spirit Jesus has now brought *us* into his filial relationship with the Father."<sup>662</sup> It seems that what Mark wants his audience to take from this encounter is that Jesus practiced "filial obedience" to his heavenly Father.<sup>663</sup> This obedience entailed an element of trust. For Jesus, this trust is grounded in the character of God, specifically in his covenant faithfulness. Jesus exhibited this in his conversation with the Sadducees concerning the testimony of the scriptures by pointing to the power of God to raise the dead (Mark 12:18-27). In fact, for Jesus, God's identity as being faithful to his covenant hinges on the resurrection, since as Jesus reminds the Sadducees, "He is God not of the dead, but of the living" (Mark 12:27).

What Jesus' Gethsemane prayer teaches the disciples is the desire to be aligned with the Father's will is more important than the desire for self-preservation. Williamson observes that this text "plainly sets his [Jesus'] human will over against the will of the Father."<sup>664</sup> If Jesus

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<sup>661</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 433.

<sup>662</sup> Healy and Williamson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 292.

<sup>663</sup> Schnabel, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 360.

<sup>664</sup> Lamar Williamson, *Mark, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 259. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 434–35. Edwards adds, "The plea of Jesus suggests that he is genuinely tempted to forsake the role of the suffering servant. Nevertheless, his

is genuinely understood to be obedient to death, he must also have the legitimate ability to rebel against the Father's will. Jesus, therefore serves as an archetype for the disciple's choice of submission and obedience, even unto death. Cole summarizes that "the last clause, *not what I will, but what thou wilt*, is a summary of the earthly life of obedience of the Christ; such obedience was only perfected when it was 'unto death' (Phil 2:8)."<sup>665</sup> Jesus' obedience highlights yet another aspect of kenosis in Mark, for "a positive choice implies a self-chosen limitation with the negation of other options."<sup>666</sup> This axiom cuts right to the heart of human freedom and divine love. This Father-Son interaction demonstrates that love, by its very nature, requires the freedom to choose one option (life) over another (death).<sup>667</sup> In order for love to exist, the beloved must be genuinely free to reciprocate or reject love. It can be concluded then that inherent in the reality of relationships, there is always a degree of risk because love cannot be coerced.<sup>668</sup>

In summary, Mark 14:32-36 supports the understanding that Jesus' death was a material kenosis of his entire person. This is emphasized by Jesus' genuine fear of dying. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane echoes Mark 10:45, portraying Jesus as (1) relational, (2) other-oriented, (3) kenotic love. In Gethsemane, Jesus' relationship with his heavenly Father is accentuated as he

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will to obey the Father is stronger than his desire to serve himself. Throughout his ministry he has disavowed every exit ramp from the pathway of suffering servanthood."

<sup>665</sup> Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2:297.

<sup>666</sup> John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Divine Providence* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2007), 41.

<sup>667</sup> This echoes the dynamic covenant relationship between God and Israel. For example, Deuteronomy 30:19 reads, "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!"

<sup>668</sup> Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 71. Sanders adds that "the type of relationship God offers his people is not one of control and domination but rather one of powerful love and vulnerability. God establishes the relationship in such a way that he risks the possibility of rejection."

intimately addresses God as *Abba*. Next, Jesus expresses his humble kenotic, other-oriented nature by submitting to the Father's will, all the while possessing the authentic ability to choose otherwise. Like the Passover meal, this text forecasts the ultimate demonstration of Jesus' kenotic love: submission to crucifixion. Finally, the overarching kenotic nature of relationships is underscored and exemplified in that just as the Father risks being obeyed, so to Jesus risks being resurrected.

### 8.5. JESUS' KENOTIC SERVICE TO DEATH (MARK 10:45).

In Mark 10:45, Jesus clearly articulates his understanding of his crucifixion to be the death of his *psyche*.<sup>669</sup> Speaking of the crucifixion of his body, Jesus states explicitly in Mark 10:45 that "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life (*psyche*) as a ransom for many."<sup>670</sup> In this verse, Jesus uses the language of ransom to speak about the death of his *psyche*.<sup>671</sup> What has been glossed over by commentators of this text is the fact that the

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<sup>669</sup> Here, Jesus follows the description of martyrdom found in 2 Maccabees. 2 Maccabees describes the martyrdom of seven brothers who give up their body (*soma*) and (*psyche*) to death to await the resurrection, which is described as the reconstitution of their bodies (7:37). Facing death, the familial hope is placed in the bodily resurrection (7:9-11). The eschatological hope envisioned by the mother's testimony is the breath of God giving life back to corpses (7:23). The persecutors, however, will not be raised (7:14). Moss notes that the Maccabean martyr's confidence that "their God will be able to restore their bodies to wholeness" subverts the Greek mythological accounts of disembodied afterlife. She concludes, "in this way, Greek might is thwarted by Jewish eschatology." Candida Moss, "Dying to Live Forever: Identity and Virtue in the Resurrection of the Martyrs," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (May 1, 2019): 158, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140019829977>. In opposition to this, 4 Maccabees describes the same historical event with different anthropological presuppositions. 4 Maccabees describes death as affecting only the body, while the person receives an immortal *psyche* in heaven (9:22, 17:11; 17; 18:23). In death, these martyrs are escorted to the presence of God, where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, who have gone before them, are also present (13:16; 16:25).

<sup>670</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary by C.E.B. Cranfield*, Reprinted 1974, Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary (London; New York, N.Y: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 343–44. Cranfield confesses that the authenticity of this text has been questioned by scholarship. After surveying the evidence, he concludes that "the balance of probability is surely on the side of the authenticity of the saying."

<sup>671</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 824. Nolland comments "'To give his life as a ransom for

language used to describe Jesus' death refers specifically to the death of Jesus' *psyche*, not his *soma*. Mark 10:45 "(with its Matthew parallel) is the only use of λύτρον in the NT."<sup>672</sup> Some, like France believe that Mark is presenting Jesus as making a distinctive "statement about his own mission."<sup>673</sup> This would additionally coincide with Jesus' statement in Mark 3:4 concerning saving a *psyche*. Edwards explains that "both the Heb. kipper and Gk. lytron behind 'ransom' means 'to cover over,' 'atone for,' or 'expiate.'"<sup>674</sup> Kittle comments that the "death of Jesus means that what happens to Him would have had to happen to the many. Hence, He takes their place. The saying plainly looks back to Mk. 8:37."<sup>675</sup> This language of ransom, in turn, leads to the conceptual framework of substitution. A ransom takes the place of something or someone else for the purpose of liberation.

Many theories of atonement hinge on the concept of substitution. Collins comments that the implication of the text is that "the death of Jesus is a substitute for the deaths of many others."<sup>676</sup> What has been overlooked, either innocently or intentionally, is that to claim this text speaks of substitutionary atonement also requires that one understands the 'substitute' to be Jesus' *psyche*. What is ransomed and what is given 'in place of' is Jesus' *psyche*, not his *soma*. Jesus' words in Mark 10:45 makes this clear. He states he came to give his *psyche*. Therefore, the claim that Mark 10:45 teaches Jesus' substitutionary atonement must be

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many' has often been linked with Isa. 52:13–53:12 and notably with 53:10. δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ (lit. 'give his soul') has its counterpart in tšym ... npšw (lit. 'you make ... his soul'). λύτρον ('ransom') is not 'šm ('[offering for] sin'), but both involve a vicarious death. rbbym ('many') is found in Is. 52:14, 15; 53:11, 12 and has its counterpart in the Gospel πολλῶν ('many'), where the contexts mean that both in Isaiah and the Gospel text the idea is of one dying in the place of 'many'."

<sup>672</sup> France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 420.

<sup>673</sup> France, 421.

<sup>674</sup> Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 327.

<sup>675</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley ed. and tr, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2006), 343.

<sup>676</sup> Collins and Attridge, *Mark*, 502.

coupled with the confession of the mortality of his *psyche*.<sup>677</sup> However, not all agree on how the concept of ransom is to be understood. Bratcher suggests that the language of ransom should not be understood rigidly.<sup>678</sup> He claims that what must be stressed in the metaphor is that Jesus “surrenders himself to death, rather than being forced by others.”<sup>679</sup> What should not be glossed over is that Jesus defines ‘himself,’ the person who dies, as a *psyche*. This brings us back to Mark’s interaction with the Suffering Servant motif found in Isaiah. Brooks suggests that the imagery of ransom highlights the servitude and kenosis of Jesus. Brooks believes that the concept of ransom is an echo of “Isa. 53:11–12, which may have been on Jesus’ mind.”<sup>680</sup> Connecting the trifold theme of missiology, soteriology, and thanatology, Bock succinctly notes that “Jesus’ service will be his death,” specifically the death of his *psyche*.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> Paul’s repeated testimony in his letters to the churches is that Christ died. For example, see Romans 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:13; and Galatians 2:21. Michael Kok, “Does Mark Narrate the Pauline Kerygma of ‘Christ Crucified’? Challenging an Emerging Consensus on Mark as a Pauline Gospel,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37, no. 2 (December 1, 2014): 139–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X14558021>. Commenting on the similarities between the Markan and Pauline material, Kok states, “the strongest parallel between Paul and Mark may be in their shared focus on ‘Christ crucified’ (1 Cor. 1.23).”

<sup>678</sup> Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark*, 259. Barclay believes that this text has been “mishandled and maltreated” and should not be stretched beyond its poetic and pastoral intent. Barclay argues that the term ransom in this context is not meant to lay a foundation for atonement theology but to reveal the extent to which God was willing to go to reveal his love for humanity.

<sup>679</sup> Bratcher and Nida, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, 337.

<sup>680</sup> Brooks, *Mark*, 23:170. Hooker disagrees, stating that the connection between this text and Isaiah 53 has been “grossly overexaggerated.” Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, 249.

<sup>681</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Mark*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York, NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), 283. The apostle Paul appears to echo these sentiments when he tells the church in Rome, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). For a theology of Paul, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2008), 76, 78. Dunn’s analysis of Paul’s writing reveals that Paul uses *psyche* only 13 times in his writing. After explaining categories of Greek dualist thought and Hebrew physicalist thought, Dunn concludes, “Paul’s usage clearly echoes the typical Hebraic mind-set.” Again, Dunn states that for Paul, the *psyche* “clearly denote[s] the living person, but one limited to the present bodily existence.” Bultmann, who concurs with Dunn, famously concluded that for Paul, “man does not have a *soma*, he is a *soma*.” Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: C. Scribner, 1951), 194. Again, Paul states, “For I handed down to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3). Mitchell believes that Paul’s “same theology of the death of Jesus is at work in Mark.” Margaret M. Mitchell, “Epiphanic Evolutions in Earliest Christianity,” *Illinois Classical Studies* 29 (2004): 183–204, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23065347>. Mitchell also states that “Paul’s thoroughgoing emphasis on the death of Jesus is resoundingly echoed in Mark’s euangelion.”



This description of Jesus' death in Mark is unlike Socrates's suicide, where Plato describes the death of the body as the escape of the *psyche* from its prison, the *soma*. Instead, the Gospel writer describes Jesus' approaching death as the death of his *psyche*.<sup>682</sup> Here, Jesus' commentary on his death appears to be more harmonious with other depictions of martyrdom, such as 2 Maccabees 7:37, where death is defined as the giving up of body and life (*psyche*). In this way, life and death are allowed to stand in contrast to one another. Death is not a liberator to be welcomed but an enemy to be feared. "To be excluded from eternal life is death."<sup>683</sup> What the audience can conclude is that Mark's use of *psyche* in 10:45 is consistent with the previous texts that have been examined. Therefore, *psyche* in 10:45 is best translated as 'life' and is understood to be the mortal corporeal person.<sup>684</sup>

## 8.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY.

This chapter examined the combined themes of kenosis and death in Mark's Gospel. What was concluded was that Jesus' kenotic self-emptying life culminated in the giving of his *psyche* as a ransom to death. In the narrative, three scenes leading up to the event of Jesus' crucifixion teach the audience that Jesus' death would be kenotic. Within these texts, Mark

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<sup>682</sup> See Cullmann for a comparison of the deaths of Socrates and Jesus. Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul*. Reichenbach has correctly pointed out that Cullman actually betrays "the very cause for which he has argued" and in effect adopts a "Greek dualist position" in the end. Bruce R. Reichenbach, *Is Man the Phoenix? A Study of Immortality* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1978), 182–83.

<sup>683</sup> Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 1896), 249.

<sup>684</sup> Concerning the parallel text in Matthew, Blomberg agrees that "'life' is the correct translation here for *psychē*, which in other contexts sometimes means soul." Perhaps this is because he also says that "verse 28b alludes to Jesus' impending substitutionary and atoning death." His comment that, at times, *psyche* means 'soul' as in an immaterial essence, however, seems to be founded on his anthropological presuppositions and not the text itself. Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Ten: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 308.

paints a picture of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah by using the language of breaking and pouring.

The first text examined, Mark 14:3-9, portrayed a woman's costly sacrifice through kenotic verbs of breaking and pouring, which Jesus interpreted as a preparation for his burial. Jesus then expressed in Mark 14:22-25 that his body and blood would likewise be poured out to death, harkening back to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:12. Finally, Mark 14:32-39 depicted Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane expressing genuine fear for his death while kenotically submitting to the Father's will. This obedient submission to death thereby expressed the love of God in its fullest capacity. This idea is succinctly stated in Mark 10:45, where Jesus combines the themes of costly kenotic sacrifice and death, defining his own death as the loss of his *psyche*.

In light of the material covered, several things can be concluded about the Markan perspective on kenosis and death. In addition to Jesus' ability to change and transform, Mark's Gospel is explicit that Jesus experienced human suffering. This is substantiated by Jesus' own testimony. Prior to the narrative events explored in this chapter, Jesus tells his disciples that "the Son of Man must undergo great suffering" (8:31; 9:12). Later, Jesus' suffering is described in detail as Mark recalls Jesus' brutal crucifixion. During his ministry, Jesus explains that his mission is to suffer and save. Mark outlines for his audience that salvation is the process of human beings being saved from bodily death. This is reinforced by Jesus' description of death as the loss of one's life (3:4, 8:35).

As a suffering messiah, Jesus calls his disciples to embrace their own suffering. Bayer suggests that the goal of Mark's Gospel "is to present the significant death of its key figure with

its ensuing call to discipleship.”<sup>685</sup> As a part of the call to discipleship, Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ teaching and death encourages the audience to embrace a physicalist (non-dualist) anthropology. Mark does this in part by placing an emphasis on embodied life. Throughout his ministry, Jesus shows concern for healing bodies (5:29). Mark indicates that Jesus’ crucifixion will be a giving of his body (14:22) and the loss of his life (10:45). This view of personhood is also reinforced by the women’s concern for Jesus’ body even after he has been buried (16:1). Together these texts place a strong emphasis on embodied life.

Finally, this chapter has drawn attention to the relational aspect of Jesus’ humanity. As a human being who affects and is affected by others, Mark’s story indicates that Jesus and those whom he interacted with had the freedom to make their own decisions. This illustrates the fundamental reality that all relationships contain the risk of acceptance or rejection. For example, Jesus’ prayer to his heavenly Father in Gethsemane demonstrates his divine/human freedom. Jesus’ prayer suggests to Mark’s audience that it was indeed possible for him to avoid being crucified (14:36). However, rather than seeking to avoid his Father’s will, Jesus freely chose obedience, which resulted in his death on a cross.

Using various characters, Mark shows how Jesus had relationships with various people. For example, Mark describes how Jesus was betrayed by Judas (14:10) and rejected by Peter (14:70) but was also followed by those he healed (10:52) and anointed out of devotion by those close to him (14:3). Together, these Markan texts tell a story centered around Jesus, who exhibits human characteristics, honors others’ freedom of choice, and risks rejection by inviting

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<sup>685</sup> Hans F. Bayer, *A Theology of Mark: The Dynamic between Christology and Authentic Discipleship*, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P&R Pub, 2012). 23.

others to voluntary discipleship. As the exemplar of divinity in Mark's Gospel, Jesus models that God can become a human and is affected by relationships.

Building on the Markan narrative portrayal of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah, chapter nine will seek to allow the Markan story to critique Christendom doctrine. To accomplish this task, I will look at how Mark's narrative informs its audience how to think about the divine, Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah, and the deaths of Jesus' disciples.

## CHAPTER 9: KENOTIC MESSIAHSHIP AND ANABAPTIST CHRISTOLOGY.

### 9.1. INTRODUCTION.

This thesis began by claiming that the existing Anabaptist critique of Christendom theology could be expanded upon by examining the narrative motifs of kenosis and death in the Gospel of Mark. My primary aim has been to address the existing gap in Anabaptist scholarship, which is the absence of a Christocentric narrative approach to Christological questions surrounding the arenas of anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology.

First, chapter one highlighted the problem that current Anabaptist scholarship has not taken a Christocentric narrative approach to the question of the soul. Next, chapter two illustrated that within the early church, both the mortalist and immortalist positions were held by followers of Jesus. Chapter three also outlined similar concerns, that early Anabaptist literature (1) lacked a Christocentric approach, and (2) contains a spectrum of beliefs on the soul ranging from a soulless biological death to death as the separation of the physical body from the immaterial soul. Together, modern scholarship and early Anabaptist writings exhibit the problem this thesis has sought to address, namely that Anabaptist theology presents its faith community with opposing views on life (anthropology), death (thanatology), and resurrection (eschatology).

To address these concerns, the last three chapters have presented a narrative analysis of the Gospel of Mark. What I concluded from this narrative analysis was that Mark uses the interrelated themes of kenosis and death to present Jesus to his audience as a kenotic mortal messiah. As I noted along the way, Mark's narrative portrayal of Jesus runs counter to

numerous aspects of Christendom Christology. As a result, Anabaptist Christology should be critiqued and reconstructed from a Markan perspective.

To complete the deconstructive and reconstructive theological task, this chapter will briefly review several key findings related to what Mark teaches his audience to think about God, Jesus, and discipleship. Next, I will outline multiple negative implications that result for Christendom Christology from applying an Anabaptist Christocentric and cross-centric form of Christendom theology.<sup>686</sup> This critique will outline Christendom theological beliefs concerning God, Jesus, and discipleship that should be rejected in response to my narrative analysis of Mark's Gospel. Following this, I will provide positive implications by working to construct an Anabaptist theology rooted in the Markan portrayal of a kenotic mortal messiah. I will then provide potential reasons why Anabaptists adopted a Christendom theology. I propose that an Anabaptist critique will seek to overcome the obstacles of cultural capture and previous traditions (both Christendom and Anabaptist) by being Christocentric in practice.

Next, I will suggest several pastoral implications for Anabaptist pastors. These implications affect how local churches conduct funerals, preach sermons, and worship. I will then highlight three ways I have made a significant contribution to Anabaptist scholarship. Concerning existing scholarship, I suggest that one implication of this thesis is that it provides an ecumenical rallying point for those who choose to elevate Jesus as the definitive revelation

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<sup>686</sup> Ben Ollenburger, "The Hermeneutics of Obedience: A Study of Anabaptist Hermeneutics," *Direction: A Mennonite Brethren Forum* 6, no. 2 (April 1977): 19–31. For instance, Ollenburger explains that Menno Simmons practiced a Christocentric hermeneutical approach to scripture. In addition, he states that early Anabaptist Hans Hut practiced a hermeneutic of suffering.

of God. Finally, I will close by suggesting several areas of further research related to the topic of this thesis.

## **9.2. KEY FINDINGS: SUMMARIZING MARK'S KENOTIC MORTAL MESSIAH.**

My narrative analysis of the theme of death in the Gospel of Mark has revealed that the author desired for his audience to adopt a thanatology of mortalism. This includes a monistic anthropology, defining death as holistic, and the understanding that embodied resurrection is the only hope for life after death. This thanatology is affirmed in Jesus' conflict with his religious contemporaries, his teaching to his disciples, and the author's descriptions of death.

My narrative analysis of the theme of kenosis in the Gospel of Mark has shown that the author desires for his audience is to believe that Jesus as God is capable of change and was limited in knowledge, power, and life. This portrait of God stands in marked contrast to the Christendom definition of divinity, which appears to have been rooted in Platonic philosophy.<sup>687</sup> In addition, these kenotic attributes further provided a framework to understand Jesus' life as a servant and illustrated how the divine could become a mortal and die in the giving of his *psyche* as a ransom to death.

My narrative analysis of the combined themes of death and kenosis in the Gospel of Mark has highlighted that the author expressed the culmination of Jesus' kenotic self-emptying as his death. Mark uses three scenes leading up to the event of Jesus' death to teach the audience that his death would be kenotic. Together these texts highlight how Mark paints a

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<sup>687</sup> At the heart of this philosophy is the idea that perfection equates to changelessness and God, in order to be God, must be perfect.

picture of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah by using the language of breaking and pouring.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate how radically different Mark's Gospel is from

Christendom Christology, which promotes the idea that God cannot change, suffer, or die.

In summary, eight key findings from my analysis of Mark's Gospel are vital to critiquing the

Christology of Christendom and the construction of an alternative Anabaptist Christology:

1. Mark is a Christocentric narrative: Mark emphasizes to his audience that Jesus is the central figure of the story by stating it outright at the beginning of the narrative (1:1) and rearticulating this point at the end (16:5-6). This is important because Anabaptists confess that Jesus is the central and fullest revelation of God. If Jesus is the central figure of the narrative, this means that God is the central figure in the narrative.
2. Jesus is a human being: As a human, Mark narrates that Jesus became fatigued (7:34; 8:2), suffered (14:33), needed sleep (4:38), and was surprised (6:6). Reinforcing this point, Jesus is also portrayed as experiencing human emotions such as anger (3:5; 8:33) and compassion (1:41; 6:34; 8:2).
3. Jesus is relational: As a human being, Mark narrates how Jesus affected and was affected by others. Using various characters, Mark shows how Jesus was betrayed by Judas (14:10) and rejected by Peter (14:70). In addition, he is followed by those he heals (10:52) and anointed out of devotion by those close to him (14:3).
4. Jesus is a kenotic messiah: As a human being, Mark describes Jesus as subject to change, limited in knowledge, and limited in power (5:25-34).



5. Jesus is a kenotic mortal messiah: As a human being, Mark describes how Jesus testified to his own suffering (8:31; 9:12). Mark highlights that the pinnacle of this servitude results in Jesus' death, which is described as the transformation from a living body to a corpse (15:43-46).
6. Jesus calls his followers to embodied discipleship: Mark places a strong emphasis on embodied life through Jesus' concern for healing bodies (5:29), Jesus' giving of his body (14:22), and the women's concern for Jesus' body after his death (16:1). Several times, Jesus calls his disciples to follow him potentially to their own deaths.
7. Death is the loss or destruction of human *psyche*: Mark uses Jesus' dialogue with his religious adversaries and disciples to describe death as the loss of one's life (3:4, 8:35, 10:45). The *psyche* is never contrasted with the *soma*, and is never described as surviving the death of the body.
8. Resurrection is the reconstitution of a human body: In Mark, Jesus practiced resurrection (5:39; 9:26), taught resurrection (12:18-27), and experienced resurrection firsthand (16:6). In these events, resurrection is described as the reconstitution of a human body and not the reunion of body and soul.

I will now work out both the negative and positive implications using these key findings to expand the Anabaptist critique Christendom Christology and construct an Anabaptist Christology grounded in the Gospel of Mark.

### **9.3. NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS: A CRITIQUE OF CHRISTENDOM CHRISTOLOGY.**

If Anabaptist theology is to accept Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah, various doctrines that disagree with the Gospel narrative must be critiqued and reimagined. This practice will allow the Biblical story to reform doctrine. Such a radical reformation falls in line with the Anabaptist hermeneutical practice of establishing doctrine from a Christocentric narrative-driven approach.<sup>688</sup> The Anabaptist course correction is the implementation of a Christ and cross-centric theological compass. In light of my findings in Mark's Gospel, I contend that Christendom theology should be further critiqued by Anabaptists in relation to the divine, Christology, and discipleship.

#### **9.3.1. Divinity.**

I propose that Anabaptist theology should critique Christendom theology of the divine in three ways. First and foremost, the unifying claim of Anabaptism must be maintained that Jesus defines God. This means that Anabaptist theology will be constructed in a Christocentric manner rather than a systematic or philosophical manner. I suggest that at the heart of the conflict between Markan kenotic theology and Christendom Christology is disagreement over a methodological approach. I have argued that Christendom Christology began with a working idea about God instead of allowing the Markan Jesus to define God. The result of this philosophical approach to Christology altered the Christian story. This alteration was the allowance of Greek philosophical categories of God to distort the Christological doctrine of the

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<sup>688</sup> For an Anabaptist primer on the critique of Christendom theology, see Stuart Murray, *Post Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. (Milton Keynes: Authentic Media, 2013).

early church. Essentially, the cart (metaphysical speculation) was placed before the horse (the biblical narrative). As a result, I agree with theologian John Meyendorff who concludes that the Chalcedonian Christology “dangerously lacked coherence.”<sup>689</sup>

Second, given the Christocentric and narrative-focused starting point, I suggest that Anabaptism should reject the theological claim of Christendom that God cannot change. It appears that many early church theologians believed the concepts of divinity and mortality to be like oil and water. As a result, an alternative theological construct had to be conceived of in order to override the idea of a genuinely mortal Messiah. Theologian Jaroslav Pelikan concludes that the Chalcedonian formulation that God as Christ was without change shows that it was simply taken for granted by all parties involved that “the divine nature was unchangeable.”<sup>690</sup> I think he is correct then to suggest that the Chalcedonian formula was an attempt to protect “the unchangeable divine nature from contamination by the vicissitudes that befell the human nature.”<sup>691</sup> This approach to theology elevated philosophical metaphysics of the divine over against the Biblical narrative. Anabaptist theology should not start with a list of divine attributes that begin with ‘God can’t’ but instead with a narrative review of what Jesus did.

Third, given Mark’s narrative description of Jesus’ interaction with humans and their varied responses to either follow or kill him, I suggest that Anabaptism should embrace the concepts of human freedom and divine risk. Belief in human freedom and divine risk are integrally related to other beliefs such as creation and covenant. Throughout the Bible,

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<sup>689</sup> John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>690</sup> Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition: 100 - 600* (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2007), 259, 265.

<sup>691</sup> Pelikan, 259, 265.

individuals are presented as having genuine freedom to choose one path over another. In the Old Testament, this is sometimes presented as choosing between blessing and curse or life and death. God desires that his creation chooses blessing and life. Still, God is not depicted as meticulously controlling people. By creating humans, God has endowed his creation with the gift of freedom and the responsibility of dominion. He also repeatedly invites people into the reciprocal relationship of a covenant. These concepts, human freedom, and divine risk model the kenotic nature of God. God relinquishes control and risks the relational response of acceptance or rejection. These theological truths are modeled in Mark through Jesus' relationships.

### **9.3.2. Christology.**

In response to my narrative analysis of Mark's Gospel, I propose that Anabaptist theology should additionally critique Christendom Christology in three ways. First, the Christendom language of Jesus adding humanity to himself should be abandoned. Since Jesus models that God can transform, the divine nature should not be understood as static or antithetical to human nature but as kenotic and malleable. Second, given the belief that God can change, Anabaptism should reject the theological claim of Christendom that God cannot suffer. Instead, God's ability to suffer should be used to bolster the Anabaptist identity as a peaceful church, a people willing to suffer with God. Third, given Jesus' ability to change and suffer, Anabaptism should reject the theological claim of Christendom that God cannot die. This is also to reject the narrative that after he died, Jesus descended into Hell as a disembodied soul. In place of this

narrative, Anabaptism should return to the Gospel story, which tells of God's union with perishable humanity.

### **9.3.3. Discipleship.**

Given the narrative analysis of Mark's Gospel, I propose that Anabaptist theology should critique Christendom anthropology in three ways. First, given Mark's presentation of Jesus' teaching on the mortality of the *psyche*, Anabaptists should reject the Christendom belief that human beings survive their deaths as disembodied souls. Anabaptism should, therefore, embrace a physicalist anthropology. Second, Anabaptists should also reject the Christendom definition of death as the separation of a mortal body from an immortal soul. The benefit of this thanatological position is that it takes seriously the notion that death is an enemy to be defeated and resurrection will require the miraculous power of God. Third, Anabaptists should not define resurrection as the reunion of body and soul as Christendom did, but rather, it should be understood as the reconstitution of a human person. By making this shift, the Anabaptist eschatological hope of life after death will be congruent with the Gospel accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

### **9.4. POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS: CONSTRUCTING AN ANABAPTIST KENOTIC THEOLOGY.**

Expanding the critique of Christendom means rejecting a collection of theological beliefs. The previous section outlined multiple Christendom beliefs that must be critiqued in response to a Markan narrative analysis. These were the negative implications. The positive implications of this study will be the construction of an Anabaptist kenotic theology that will take the place of

these rejected beliefs. I will now propose how Anabaptism should radically reform Christendom beliefs to appropriately align itself with the theology presented in the Gospel of Mark.

#### **9.4.1. God is mutable.**

To do theology is to ask the question: What is God like?<sup>692</sup> The Anabaptist answer to this question has always been, God is like Jesus. The Gospel of Mark presents its audience with a narrative about Jesus whom the author portrays as a kenotic mortal messiah. Perhaps the most fundamental implication for Anabaptist theology is embracing the belief that God can change. If God's essential nature is to be defined as kenotic love, God must continually undergo change through the process of engaging in reciprocal relationships.<sup>693</sup> This stands in direct opposition to the classical orthodox position, which denies that divinity can experience change (in the incarnation) and is likewise believed to be incapable of death (immutability).

Rather than allowing Jesus to define God, Christendom theology began with the premise that perfection cannot change. The fatal flaw of "classical Christology" was the belief that

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<sup>692</sup> Theologians Moltmann, Pannenberg, Jüngel, and Lewis have all concluded that a Christology grounded in the biblical narrative of the Gospels reveals that Jesus did not survive his death. Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 248. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 170. Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, 48. Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 204. German Lutheran theologian Eberhard Jüngel has posed the question, "How can the divine essence be thought of together with the event of death without destroying the concept of God?" Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*.<sup>100</sup> Proposing the question this way is problematic because it begins with assumptions about God. An Anabaptist approach must reframe the question to be Christocentric and narrative-driven.

<sup>693</sup> Some kenotic theologians have even argued that various classical attributes are not compatible with one another to begin with. For instance, Evans argues that the attributes of omnipotence and immutability are incompatible. For that which cannot change is therefore limited in what it can and cannot do. Evans makes this argument claiming "any strict view of divine immutability can actually constitute a 'divine imperfection', since it would severely restrict God in determining what God wills." C. Stephen Evans, *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2010), 84.

change within the divine coincided with the loss of identity.<sup>694</sup> This belief forced Christendom theology to double down on the belief that God is immutable. Unfortunately, this had significant ramifications for Christendom Christology. Counter to this, Mark's Gospel presents the reader with the idea that "the divine character is such that it can allow for change while retaining its identity."<sup>695</sup> This, I believe, is perfectly in line with how humans understand themselves. If God is understood as kenotic love, concepts such as change, suffering, and death, are no longer challenges to God's ability to maintain his identity but outward expressing of his kenotic loving identity.

Upon reflection, I can observe that, as a human being, I have undergone a massive amount of change during my lifetime. These changes have occurred physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. On some level, I am the same person, and yet, on another level, I have transformed over time. This concept, I believe is applicable in understanding God. If God is defined as kenotic love, God must be able to change. At the same time, the center of God's character, which is kenotic love, does not change. This is to say that God is love all the time. Jesus expresses this truth in Mark's Gospel in that his nature or outward expressions are always manifested as kenotic self-sacrificial acts of love. This, in fact, is what necessitates that Jesus must be able to be changed by his relationships. In Mark, Jesus' ability to be affected by relationships is exemplified in his acceptance and rejection by those who follow him and by those who crucify him. The cross then models God's kenotic loving nature to its fullest extent

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<sup>694</sup> David Brown, *Divine Humanity: Kenosis and the Construction of a Christian Theology* (Waco, Tex: Baylor University Press, 2011), 18. Brown explains that "in the patristic period change was universally assumed to be incompatible with divinity. The assumption shared by Christian and pagan alike was that change threatened the basic identity of the divine."

<sup>695</sup> Joseph M. Hallman, *The Descent of God: Divine Suffering in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 65.

by allowing himself to be acted on in a way that has the greatest possible consequence. Jesus' selfless act on the cross models the loving covenant faithfulness described in the Old Testament.

Anabaptists have practiced reading scripture from the Gospels outward. Looking back into the Old Testament from this perspective what can be emphasized is the repeated appeal to God's faithful character. For example, we are told that God reveals himself to Moses as "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). The Hebrew word *checed* translated as lovingkindness in this text speaks to God's covenant faithfulness. It is used to describe his affection toward his creation and his condescension to the needs of his creatures. This is also a repeated theme within the Psalms (Psalm 86:15, 103:8, 111:4, 112:4, 116:5, 145:8).

Traditional accounts of God's immutability and power are often related to issues of trust and devotion. Some may believe that God's trustworthiness is dependent upon his immutability. This line of reasoning, however, fails to consider the nature of grace and forgiveness. The Markan Jesus prompts an Anabaptist theology of the Old Testament to hold in tensions texts such as 1 Samuel 15:29, which say that God is not a man and does not change his mind, with related texts such as 1 Samuel 15:11 that state that God regrets something he has done. In summary, Anabaptist theology of God should embrace the belief that God is capable of change precisely because he is love. Belief in a kenotic mortal messiah affirms the core nature of God (love), and his covenant faithfulness with his creation. This means that God can still be trusted despite his ability to change.



#### 9.4.2. God is kenotic.

The Markan presentation of Jesus teaches that God is self-sacrificial love. Through Jesus' life and death, kenotic love is tangibly exhibited. Mark's Gospel proposes to its audience that "kenosis is not the loss of full divinity by the Son. It is, rather, the clearest revealing of that divinity."<sup>696</sup> It is hard to imagine God being love or loving his creation while also being immutable and impassible. Hallman suggests that "love involves acting and being acted upon, and both imply change."<sup>697</sup> Mark's Gospel indicates that love is a relational term. For example, Mark 10:21 states that Jesus felt love for another person. Similarly, Jesus tells a man in Mark 12:28-34 that the greatest commandment of God is to love God and neighbor. Most importantly, Jesus expresses in Mark 10:45 that love is servitude, which has the potential to end in death. For Anabaptists, this means we are called to be kenotic as Christ is kenotic. This is what the Markan Jesus called his disciples to: a life of servitude with the possibility of losing one's life in the process.

In Mark, the pinnacle of Jesus' kenotic self-disclosure is his willingness to die on the cross. In becoming incarnate, God "accepted the limitations of a human life," and yet, in doing so, he did not cease being God.<sup>698</sup> Therefore, as the German kenoticist theologian Gottfried Thomasius argued: "The absoluteness of God is not found, then, in changelessness but in his ability to change."<sup>699</sup> Boyd is also right to conclude that Christ crucified is the "real definition of what is meant with the word 'God.'" Christian theology is, therefore, fundamentally the theology

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<sup>696</sup> Dawe, 172.

<sup>697</sup> Hallman, *The Descent of God*, 125.

<sup>698</sup> Donald G Dawe, *Form of a Servant: A Historical Analysis of the Kenotic Motif*. (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2011), 47.

<sup>699</sup> Dawe, 94.

of the Crucified One.”<sup>700</sup> This crucified one, as the pinnacle of God’s self-revelation, kenotically humbled himself and accepted death. The murder (*apokteinó*) and destruction (*apollumi*) of Jesus’ *psyche* is the climactic expression of the extent to which God was willing to go to disclose his kenotic, self-sacrificial, enemy-embracing, loving character to his creation. These characteristics are the defining markers of Jesus’ death. As a result, these characteristics should also be the distinctive markers of Anabaptist seeking to imitate Jesus. Indeed, this facet of discipleship, the willingness to die, was a hallmark of many early Anabaptists.

The Gospel of Mark is not alone in presenting God as kenotic. For instance, some texts in the New Testament echo Mark’s presentation of a kenotic mortal messiah. For example, through an encouraging word, the letter of First John affirms the idea that love is defined by kenotic action, and the ultimate expression of this is to lay down one’s life. 1 John 3:16 reads, “We know love by this, that He [Jesus] laid down His life [*psyche*] for us; and we ought to lay down our lives [*psyche*] for the brethren.” What can be gleaned from this for Anabaptist theology is that God is love. Kenosis is love in action, and Jesus’ crucifixion demonstrates that God loves us to death. By allowing Jesus to define God, Anabaptism can embrace kenotic theology and reject a systematic theology that begins with abstract attributes of the divine. In summary, Anabaptist theology should embrace the belief that God is self-sacrificial, other-oriented, kenotic love.

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<sup>700</sup> Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 13.

### **9.4.3. Love requires freedom and risk.**

What Mark's Jesus models is that by its nature, love requires the presence of freedom. Jesus invites people to follow him because love operates through persuasion, not coercion. In this freedom, the beloved has the ability to reject or reciprocate the invitation. Human freedom, in turn, entails a degree of risk. In Mark's Gospel, the concept of divine risk is illustrated in the garden prior to Jesus' death. While Jesus expresses his own desire to escape death, he ultimately chooses to submit to it humbly. This implies that Jesus had the ability to do otherwise. This Markan scene teaches the audience that Jesus' mission included both freedom and risk: the freedom of Jesus to choose submission and the risk that he may succumb to the fear of death and avoid fulfilling his mission. For Anabaptist theology this means the affirmation of genuine free will and the willingness to risk rejection in the dance of relationships.

Mark's presentation of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah portrays Jesus as a loving God who honors human freedom and, by doing so, risks rejection. Jesus' crucifixion is representative of the lengths to which God will go to express his love for humanity. At the same time, the cross exhibits the fullest extent to which human freedom can be exercised against God. The cross shows us the degree to which God risked being either accepted or rejected by his creation.

In addition to Jesus' relationship with the Father, Mark's Gospel indicates that Jesus' relationships with other people involved mutual freedom. Jesus honored this freedom by inviting people to follow him. Jesus also outlined the gravity of what it would mean to follow him. For example, Mark 8:34-35 expresses that choosing to follow Jesus could result in losing one's life. This illustrates that human "freedom and autonomy implies an intrinsic measure of

risk, pain, suffering, and even death.”<sup>701</sup> Mark’s portrayal of Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah demonstrates that God honored the freedom of his creation. This means love must be offered; it cannot be demanded. For Anabaptist relationships this means that we must resist the urge to coerce others. Power should be used to serve others not to master them.

The crucifixion of Jesus is representative of what happens when love is rejected. This is the ultimate risk of the kenotic proposal of love. In creation, God gives away power by offering humanity the ability to choose. In this way, God makes himself vulnerable to rejection and suffering. As round characters in Mark’s Gospels, Jesus’ disciples exhibit this truth. Some disciples accept and reciprocate the divine offer of love, while others reject it. Jesus’ kenotic offer of service is akin to the giving of a gift. The lowest degree of rejection is when the gift is simply rejected. The highest degree of rejection is not only the rejection of the gift but the destruction of the gift giver himself. Jesus’ crucifixion forces the audience to come to grips with the grave reality that “on the cross, Jesus faced the real possibility of his own total extinction: the possibility that death might really be absolutely final.”<sup>702</sup> An Anabaptist theology, therefore, must side with theologians such as Jüngel, who have concluded that “God’s being as God can be thought of as a being which submits itself to perishability.”<sup>703</sup> This is the depth of kenotic love in action. In light of Marks presentation of Jesus, Anabaptist theology should hold that the nature of love demands both freedom and risk. This requires vulnerability in relationships and even the possibility of martyrdom.

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<sup>701</sup> Gloria L Schaab, *Creative Suffering of the Triune God: An Evolutionary Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8. 8.

<sup>702</sup> Robin Le Poidevin, “Kenosis, Necessity and Incarnation,” *The Heythrop Journal* 54, no. 2 (2013): 214–27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2012.00796.x>.

<sup>703</sup> Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 221. See esp. sect 13: “God’s Unity with Perishability as the Basis for Thinking God.” Lewis admirably describes Jüngel as the “theologian of the grave of Jesus Christ.”

The concept that love requires both risk and human freedom also calls into questions surrounding divine foreknowledge. What the cross invites us to contemplate is that divine power is not defined by control. This suggests that God's knowledge of the future may consist of knowing the possibilities of what may occur rather than the certainties of all future events. In fact, God's kenotic nature relinquishes control to creation. If God had complete detailed knowledge of the future, it would be hard to imagine how risk would continue to be a relational factor. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus overcomes his human and spiritual adversaries not by mounting a violent attack but by suffering violence. This act demonstrates that God created humanity with the capacity to reject him. It can be concluded then that creation itself is a kenotic act of self-limitation. It appears that in creating humanity God limits his knowledge of the future by creating free will agents that can alter history.

#### **9.4.4. Jesus' incarnation was a transformation.**

Mark's Gospel proposes to its audience the radical idea that God's being is in becoming.<sup>704</sup> The Markan narrative is a story about a God who became human, who suffered, and who died as the ultimate expression of the divine kenotic nature. Given the need to maintain God's immutability, Christendom Christology chose to describe Jesus' incarnation as adding humanity to himself rather than Jesus becoming a human. Since Anabaptism is not bound to this theological premise, it can reject this notion of the incarnation and instead embrace the

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<sup>704</sup> In his exploration of the death of God, German Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann has asked, "How can the immortal God suffer and die on the cross?" Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 88. To ask the question this way begins with assumptions about divinity. Mark's Gospel, however, does not start with the preconceived belief that God is immutable and immortal. An Anabaptist Christocentric and narrative-driven theology will form the question differently.

language of transformation. Kenotic theologian Thomasius Gottfried has argued that biblical texts such as the hymn found in Philippians chapter two supports the idea that in the incarnation, the Logos underwent a change through self-emptying and an alteration of form. Mark's Gospel presents its audience with the same idea, that "there is no mode of being that God cannot enter."<sup>705</sup> If God in Christ has willingly chosen to be both mutable and passible, Anabaptist theological language must shift from the 'being' of God to the 'becoming' of God.<sup>706</sup> This change in language invites us to hope. Jesus' ability to transform should bring hope to Anabaptist theology that our current bodies will someday be transformed into something better. As followers of Jesus, our aim is to become like him, to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ.

Although Barth must be critiqued for his inconsistency in retaining the Chalcedonian model, an Anabaptist theology can agree with his statement that God "allowed the human weakness and humiliation of Calvary" to give shape to the comprehension of God's nature.<sup>707</sup> As a result, an Anabaptist position can fully embrace the biblical narratives that depict Jesus as a person with fundamental human limitations. This does not, however, mean that the Logos stopped being God at the moment of incarnation, but rather, it invites us to rethink what God is

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<sup>705</sup> Dawe, *Form of a Servant*, 52.

<sup>706</sup> See Eberhard Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being Is in Becoming*, Monograph Supplements to the Scottish Journal of Theology (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), 83. Especially chapter 3. Jüngel declares, "The God whose being is in becoming can *die* as a human being!" Cf. Colin E. Gunton, *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>707</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 214. While Barth's Christocentrism led to these conclusions, he was unwilling to relinquish his belief in the Chalcedonian model. As a result, Lewis began with Barth's Christocentrism, but he championed Moltmann as the theologian who was willing to follow Barth's Christocentrism to its logical conclusions. See Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 207.

and is not capable of. This may require shifting the discussion away from the language of nature and toward the language of persons.

In speaking of Jesus' incarnate life, theologian John Frame points out a distinctive difference between the language of nature and persons. Frame writes

Certainly, there are some actions of Jesus that reflect more his divine nature (like doing miracles) and others that reflect more his human nature (like hungering and thirsting). But remember that his actions are not actions of a nature but of a person. Natures don't do anything; persons do. When Jesus works a miracle, it is his person who works the miracle. When he suffers, it is his person who suffers. That person is the second person of the Trinity, who has taken on a human nature. So, in a real sense, it is God, a divine and human person, who hungers and thirsts, who suffers and dies for us.<sup>708</sup>

Along with the view that Jesus' death was transformative, I propose Anabaptist theology should also see Jesus' incarnation as a process of voluntary transformational self-limitation. In seeking to develop an Anabaptist incarnational theology, I suggest Leigh's work should be explored further. Leigh has argued that Jesus' ability to exist as the God-man, holding both classifications, deity, and humanity, was possible because the two have a "degree of similarity."<sup>709</sup> Leigh's work is interesting because it would provide a theological groundwork for

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<sup>708</sup> John M. Frame, *Salvation Belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Pub, 2006), 143–44.

<sup>709</sup> R.W. Leigh, "Jesus: The One-Natured God Man," *Christian Scholar's Review* 11 (1982): 124–37. Leigh appeals to an interesting example in the animal kingdom, the platypus. The platypus, while technically classified as a mammal, also has degrees of similarity with both birds and reptiles. For example, unlike mammals, the platypus lays eggs to give birth to its offspring. Similarly, the platypus has both a duck-nose bill and webbed feet like a bird.

the Anabaptist Thirty-Three Articles (1617), which claims Jesus only had one nature and not two very different natures as Chalcedon proposed. Yoder has also noted that part of the problem in defining the relationship between a hypothetical divine and human nature within the Christendom paradigm is that “you can only go one way.”<sup>710</sup> He suggests Chalcedonian theologians can give Jesus the man divine attributes but can’t talk about the blood or suffering of God. The concept of Jesus having one nature also leaves open the possibility for humanity to become fully like Christ in the future. The concept of Christ having two natures seems to disallow this possibility. For a human to become fully like Christ under the Christendom model, it seems they would also need to take on the divine characteristics of immutability, impassability, and immortality.

If Jesus’ life culminated in a kenotic death, how might this kenosis be understood in the transformational birth of Jesus into a human being? The Christendom model of incarnation was forced to create a theory of incarnation that did not contradict the concept of divine immutability. This forced theologians to abandon the biblical language of becoming and transformation. Instead, they chose to articulate the incarnation in terms of addition. A kenotic model of the incarnation, however, will welcome language of transformation and becoming, understanding that love, by its very nature, is willing to be affected by relationships. In summary, embracing the Markan language of transformation means that Anabaptist Christology can bolster this belief through the Biblical language that describes incarnation as transformation.<sup>711</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> Yoder, 221.

<sup>711</sup> See for example John 1 and Ephesians 2.



#### 9.4.5. Jesus suffered.

Given Mark's narrative, Anabaptism should affirm the claim that God is capable of suffering. Historically, some Anabaptist writings have rejected this idea. For example, early Anabaptist Riedeman stated, "It was not the divine but the human nature of Christ that died."<sup>712</sup> In contrast, Mark's Gospel proposes that Jesus "kenotically transform[ed] (incarnation)" and became "perishable (crucifixion)."<sup>713</sup> This story of Jesus' brutal death on the cross discloses a God who can suffer and die. Anabaptist tradition can also be used to critique itself. For example, Riedeman's theology can be corrected by the early Anabaptist theology of Rothmann. He warned that those who say that "the Son of God himself did not suffer" make a "plaything out of the passion."<sup>714</sup>

Once one rejects the immutability of God, the door is open to exploring the potentiality of divine suffering. What Jesus' death in Mark's Gospel reveals is that God can suffer. It is right then for theologians such as Lewis to connect the kenosis of Jesus with his suffering. Lewis states that in Jesus' crucifixion and death, we see "the consequence of this self-surrender of God is God's *suffering*."<sup>715</sup> What the Markan Jesus unveils is a God who is both mutable and passible. This theological scaffolding allows for the confession that Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried without any need for clarification or reservation.

It is promising that a theology of a suffering God is already engrained within aspects of Anabaptist theology. For instance, Klaassen summarizes that "Anabaptist churches were

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<sup>712</sup> Klaassen, 95.

<sup>713</sup> Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 85.

<sup>714</sup> Klaassen, 92.

<sup>715</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 191.

suffering churches” because they “affirmed that suffering is the true sign of being a Christian.”<sup>716</sup> In addition, Anabaptism has a long history of choosing suffering over violence.<sup>717</sup> One might ask, why have Anabaptists chosen to suffer for their faith in Jesus? Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder suggests that it is because Anabaptists hold Jesus’ moral and ethical behavior to be the normative standard for Christian disciples.<sup>718</sup> Jesus’ call to suffer as he suffered can be seen in his words: “Whoever wants to save his life (*psyche*) will lose it, but whoever loses his life (*psyche*) for my sake and the gospels will save it” (Mark 8:35). This means that Jesus’ call to death is not partial but holistic in nature.

An Anabaptist theology of suffering can also call on supporting texts within the New Testament. For example, Hebrews 2:18 states, “For since He Himself [Jesus] was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” Here, we are told that God can relate to us in our suffering. This should bring comfort to Anabaptists in their suffering. As a community seeking to mimic Christ, Anabaptism can also draw on the words of 2 Timothy 2:23, which states, “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” This is discipleship as Jesus has outlined it in the Gospel of Mark. Discipleship is mimetic in nature. These convictions strengthen the conviction of the Anabaptist church to reject war and violence and embrace the call to be a church of peace and suffering. In summary, embracing Mark’s kenotic mortal messiah that suffers strengthens already-held convictions that Anabaptists are called to be peaceable people who are willing to suffer even to death.

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<sup>716</sup> Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*, Classics of the Radical Reformation 3 (Kitchener, Ont. : Scottdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1981), 85.

<sup>717</sup> David Weaver-Zercher, *Martyrs Mirror: A Social History*, Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

<sup>718</sup> John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Carlisle, UK: Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 1994). See also, Yoder, *To Hear the Word*, 55.

#### 9.4.6. Jesus died.

Jesus' teaching on death in Mark's Gospel prompts an Anabaptist theology of Holy Saturday to be constructed upon the foundational understanding that his death was kenotic or self-emptying.<sup>719</sup> This concept also appears in what has been thought to have been one of the earliest hymns of the church found in Philippians 2:6-11. Here, Paul describes Jesus' obedience service to death, employing the Greek word *kenosis* to describe Jesus' incarnation. The advantage to constructing an Anabaptist theology of Holy Saturday grounded in Jesus' teaching is that it is backed in full force by the Gospel narratives themselves. If the Markan narrative is allowed to shape Anabaptist Christology, a theology of Holy Saturday must come to terms with Mark's portrayal of a kenotic mortal messiah. I submit that the profound conclusion for the Markan audience is that Jesus' self-disclosure of the nature of God, through his submission to crucifixion on a cross, discloses a portrait of a God who loves us to his own death.

I believe that the best ally for constructing an Anabaptist theology of Holy Saturday will be the theologian, Alan Lewis. Lewis's work has been labeled "the most comprehensive constructive treatment of the doctrine of Holy Saturday and the descent into hell."<sup>720</sup> For Lewis, the Christocentric investigation into Holy Saturday can be summarized in his statement that "on Easter Saturday, in the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth between his crucifying and his raising, God lay

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<sup>719</sup> This is represented not only in Mark 10:45 with Jesus' language of ransom but is also the primary linguistic tool implemented by John's Gospel. Referring to the death of his body (*soma*), John repeatedly has Jesus saying that he has come to lay down (*tithémi*) his *psyche*. For example, the shepherd lays down (*tithémi*) his life (*psyche*) for his sheep (John 10:11; 15; 17; 18). See also John 13:37-18.

<sup>720</sup> Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell*, 145.. Lauber makes this statement in the context of reviewing the Holy Saturday theology of Barth, Balthasar, and Moltmann. For a review and critique of Lewis' work, see Thomas G. Weinandy, "Easter Saturday and the Suffering of God: The Theology of Alan E. Lewis," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5, no. 1 (2003): 62–76, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1463-1652.00095>. As a Roman Catholic, Weinandy understandably disagrees with Lewis' theological conclusions calling his writing "theologically erroneous, philosophically ill-advised and spiritually misconceived." However, Weinandy offers no substantive rebuttal, especially none grounded in the biblical narrative itself.

dead.”<sup>721</sup> Therefore, the cross, being the central definitive act in history, reveals God’s union with the perishable.

This act of perishing demonstrates kenoticism to its furthest extreme. This means that when we allow the story to dictate the terms of engagement, what we find is that “what appears impossible for God—to embrace mortality and death while remaining God—is declared by the gospel story to be an actuality and so a possibility.”<sup>722</sup> It would be incorrect to assert from this that Jesus ceased to exist at any point. Between his burial and resurrection, Jesus existed as a corpse in a tomb. This is in agreement with the testimony of Peter in Acts 2, and Paul in Acts 13 that Jesus was not abandoned to the grave and his body did not undergo decay. These testimonies state that unlike King David, who remained in the grave and underwent decay, Jesus was resurrected.

Jesus’ thanatological teaching that death affects the entire *psychosomatic* person (as outlined in chapter six) stands in direct opposition to the traditional Christological doctrine, which posits that between the events of the cross and resurrection, Jesus descended into Hell.<sup>723</sup> Therefore, an Anabaptist theology of Holy Saturday must reject the longstanding

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<sup>721</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 255.

<sup>722</sup> Lewis, 194. 194.

<sup>723</sup> The most fanciful description of Jesus’ descent can be found in The Gospel of Nicodemus. For a history of the emergence of the Catholic tradition, see Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*. Cf. Alois Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition. From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965). For an alternative Eastern Christology, see Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*. For a detailed discussion on the Catholic debate, see Stephen Yates, *Between Death and Resurrection: A Critical Response to Recent Catholic Debate Concerning the Intermediate State* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2018). For an analysis of the creedal statement found in the Apostles Creed, see Martin F. Connell, “Decensus Christi Ad Inferos: Christ’s Descent to the Dead,” *Theological Studies* 62, no. 2 (June 2001): 262–82, <http://www.proquest.com/docview/212696337/abstract/375C768829384E9CPQ/1>. For a cross-examination of John Paul, Ratzinger, and Balthasar, see Pitstick, *Christ’s Descent into Hell*. For an alternative Catholic approach, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000). For an Orthodox position, see Ilarion, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell*. For an evangelical discussion, see Emerson, *He Descended to the Dead*. For an evangelical argument against the orthodox position but still, in support of dualism,

traditional view represented within Pope Leo's Tome (outlined in chapter two) that Jesus died bodily but survived his death in his divinity as a disembodied soul. Instead, Anabaptist Christology must side with Lewis, who concludes, "Christ himself did not—despite centuries of popular theological and homiletical deceit—survive the grave! He succumbed to death and was swallowed by the grave."<sup>724</sup>

It is important to note from a narrative perspective that the story of the occupied tomb is what makes Mark's Gospel such a poignant story of contrast and reversal. Mark's Gospel suggests to the audience that in becoming a human himself, Jesus entered into the fullness of the human experience, including the experience of death. On Holy Saturday, "God's own Son, and therefore God's own self, lay dead and cold within a sepulcher."<sup>725</sup> An Anabaptist view of Jesus' death should hold that kenotic cruciformity, exemplified most vividly in Christ's death, is the very nature and essence of God.<sup>726</sup> The culmination of Jesus' kenotic life, his transformation from a living person to a lifeless corpse powerfully demonstrates God's mutability. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus teaches that the opposite of salvation is the death of the *psyche* (Mark 3:4). This establishes a monist understanding of anthropology and soteriology. In summary, an

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see Grudem Wayne, "He Did Not Descend into Hell: A Plea for Following Scripture Instead of the Apostle's Creed," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (March 1991): 103–13.

<sup>724</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 428.

<sup>725</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 5.

<sup>726</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2013). 534. Erickson notes that Ronald Leigh has argued that the concept of Christ having two natures is not present in Scripture. Rather, it is only a philosophical hypothesis imposed upon the text as the result of a specific understanding of Christology. Youngs concludes that for Moltmann, the concept of Christ having two natures is faulty and "has functioned as merely a defense mechanism for a classical conception of an impassible God. Samuel J. Youngs, *The Way of the Kenotic Christ: The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 46. For a case in favor of the traditional view, see Thomas V Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate* (Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001). Ultimately unable to reconcile the fact that the Two-Natures view accepts contradictory attributes in one person, similar to the idea of a married bachelor, Morris appeals to "an ineliminable element of mystery," which he claims must be the case in attempting to define God.

Anabaptist theology of Holy Saturday should hold to the belief that between death and resurrection, Jesus was a corpse in a tomb.

#### **9.4.7 A physicalist anthropology**

The Gospel of Mark teaches its audience that human beings are finite creatures. Given Jesus' anthropological teaching in the Gospel of Mark, Anabaptists should conclude with theologians such as Pannenberg that "in man, there is no independent reality of a 'soul' in contrast to the body."<sup>727</sup> This will shape the way Anabaptists view humanity. In Mark, Jesus' ministry indicates that he came to save people who are their bodies. He did not come to save souls inhabiting bodies. Jesus' ministry demonstrates this truth in that he is concerned with healing broken bodies and feeding hungry people. Jesus' definition of his own death and subsequent passivity as a corpse in a tomb reveals that physicalism is the proper Christian anthropological position. In addition, the author highlights that after Jesus' death, there was great concern for the care of Jesus' corpse. Mark's narrative is emphatic that Jesus was his dead body, a corpse that was taken down from a cross and laid in a tomb.

The implication for Anabaptist anthropology is that God cares for humans, who are their bodies. This means that how we treat our bodies is important. Understanding humans as their bodies will have numerous implications for body-related issues such as abuse, addiction, gender-related issues, sexual matters, exercise, nutrition, and so much more. From a practical standpoint, this should prompt Anabaptist to strike an appropriate balance between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Within Anabaptism, there is already a strong emphasis on practically applying

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<sup>727</sup> Pannenberg, 48.

discipleship. Traditionally Anabaptists have placed an emphasis on Jesus' practical teaching in his Sermon on the Mount. A physicalist anthropology will strengthen this approach as it affirms the importance of our bodies as we relate to one another as human beings.

A theology that places an emphasis on the abstract soul can have the tendency to neglect the body as a result. An Anabaptist physicalist anthropology will avoid such neglect by placing an emphasis on the goodness of creation. An Anabaptist emphasis on embodied life will place an overall emphasis on healthcare from the womb to the tomb. This should influence how Anabaptists think about their own personal health and taking care of their bodies. From a positive perspective, body care should include healthy practices in the areas of nutrition and exercise. Additionally, because humans are their bodies, care should be taken to avoid practices that devalue or pollute the body. In summary, an Anabaptist anthropology informed by Mark's Gospel will emphasize that humans are their bodies, which matter greatly to God our creator.

#### **9.4.8. A mortalist thanatology**

The Gospel of Mark teaches its audience that death is comprehensive. For Anabaptist theology, Jesus' death should be definitive of all human death. Mark's Gospel communicates that in death, we discover our frailty, perishability, and finitude. Mark highlights that the kenotic nature of God is seen in the acceptance of perishability and death. So, for the Anabaptist, just as the cross teaches the church how to be nonviolent, so also the finished work of the cross teaches Jesus' followers how to accept their own deaths. Understanding that "God's own Son, and therefore God's own self, lay dead and cold within a sepulcher" gives the church "the key

to learning how to live and even know how to die.”<sup>728</sup> It is, therefore, the confession of an Anabaptist theology that Jesus’ surrender to the cross and grave was not a dualist “charade played by his immaterial reality” but rather Jesus’ alignment with finitude, mortality, and temporality.<sup>729</sup>

What Mark’s Gospel invites its audience to embrace is the idea that Jesus did not die as a hero. Jesus was proclaimed a blasphemer by the religious and killed as a rebel by the Roman Empire. When he died, Jesus’s disciples abandoned him. He was left with no following but the women who went to his tomb to visit his corpse. Mark’s Gospel presents Jesus’ death as a tragic defeat. Within Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ followers are not provided with any glimmer of hope of a disembodied intermediate. Instead, the Gospel tells a story in which Good Friday is understood to be a day of despair and hopelessness. In Jesus’ death, we find God’s “unity with perishable man.”<sup>730</sup> This is a humbling reminder of our dependence upon our Creator as the created. The cross stands as a stark and sobering reminder that we are beings that are created from the dust and return to the dust. Even our breath is borrowed and not our own.

Viewing Jesus’ death as paradigmatic of all human death has at least three implications for Anabaptist thanatology. First, we should learn to accept and embrace our finitude as humans. We should not be so prideful to think of ourselves as immortal beings housed by mortal bodies. Humans are only potentially immortal and this requires the aid of our creator. Second, embracing our finitude should elevate our trust in God as our creator. Without a disembodied soul to rely on, we are at the complete mercy of God to recreate us after death.

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<sup>728</sup> Lewis, 5.

<sup>729</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 127.

<sup>730</sup> Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 299.



Finally, a mortalist understanding of death should shape the way we approach our impending death. Our hope should not be placed in a disembodied intermediate state. Death should be mourned appropriately because it is the end of our relationships with God and loved ones. It is not an immediate passage to a disembodied afterlife where God and our loved ones are waiting. In summary, an Anabaptist thanatology informed by Mark's Gospel will accept human finitude and elevate God as the creator and sustainer of life.

#### **9.4.9. The eschatological hope in an afterlife.**

The Gospel of Mark teaches its audience that resurrection is the hope of Jesus' disciples. As a result, the Anabaptist hope for life after death lies in God resurrecting our mortal bodies. In Mark's Gospel, "The resurrection of Jesus was no mere re-uniting of a hovering soul with a waiting body, but an act of mighty power (Rom. 1:4)."<sup>731</sup> This was Jesus' point in his discussion about the resurrection with the Sadducees. What the Sadducees failed to understand was God's miraculous power to raise the dead. For Anabaptist eschatology this should place a strong emphasis on the creative and resurrecting power of the God we worship.

On Holy Saturday, the death of Jesus teaches us how to wait patiently for the creative work of resurrection. Similarly, in death, the church learns to wait for the redemption of our bodies. Jesus' death teaches the church that victory over the fear of death means yielding to our mortality and trusting in the creator and sustainer of life. As we learn to live the story, our

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<sup>731</sup> R. Alan Cole, *Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester, Eng: InterVarsity Press, 1989).

frailty reminds us that death is the last and final enemy to be overcome. Death is the ultimate enemy and can only be overcome through bodily resurrection.

The concepts of taking death seriously and placing hope in the resurrection are not themes isolated to the Gospel of Mark. Anabaptist theology will be able to draw on the repeated theme within the book of Acts that Jesus was crucified by humans and raised to life by God. Similarly, in Acts, death is defined as decomposition as opposed to the separation of body and soul.<sup>732</sup> Unlike Word-flesh theology, which has neutered the sting of death, an Anabaptist theology of death will declare that the enemy of death should be taken seriously and is only overcome through resurrection. This is the declaration that although the Author of life was killed (*apoktennó*), God raised him from the dead (Acts 3:15).

#### **9.5. THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS.**

I will propose that one area of further research that my thesis prompts is a comparative study between Mark and the writings of Paul. While this cannot be accomplished in this thesis, I contend that the theological implications of Mark's Gospel are in harmony with Paul's scandal of the cross.<sup>733</sup> Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

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<sup>732</sup> Here I am referring specifically to the sermons given by Peter and Paul in Acts 2 and 13, in which Jesus' death is contrasted with King David. Both sermons hinge on the contrast that while David died, was buried, and is currently decaying, Jesus, on the other hand, died, was buried, and did not undergo decay or decomposition. Instead, Jesus overcame death through being resurrected by God the Father.

<sup>733</sup> Similarly, Paul appears to take a Christocentric method in approaching scripture that is in harmony with Mark's emphasis that Jesus is the definitive revelation of God (2 Corinthians 3:12-18).

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the understanding of those who have understanding, I will confound."

Where is the wise person? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than mankind, and the weakness of God is stronger than mankind.

My narrative criticism of Mark reaffirms the Pauline paradox of a kenotic mortal messiah. Paul, like Mark, writes of a crucified Christ. For Christendom Christology, a God who is susceptible to change and capable of suffering and death is foolishness. This is most clearly seen in Cyril's statement that "It is not that he [Jesus] actually experienced death as far as anything which touches his [divine] nature is concerned; to think that would be insanity."<sup>734</sup> For Cyril, the Pauline concept of Christ crucified and the Markan portrayal of a kenotic mortal messiah is insanity. However, Mark, like Paul, presents Jesus as a crucified saviour, one who saves through loss and rejection. As Paul notes, for some (Christendom Christology), Christ crucified will be a stumbling block.

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<sup>734</sup> Norris, 103.

I have argued that Christ became a stumbling block to Christendom Christology because it relied on definitions of God that were found outside the Gospel narratives. This definition appears to be significantly influenced by the Platonic view of God, which understands the divine to be simple and immutable. It is then extrapolated that man who is believed to be made in God's image must also have an element of simplicity and immutability. This was the utility of body-soul dualism. The problem with this philosophical speculation is that it runs counter to the narrative of the Gospel of Mark.

I contend that embracing the Markan narrative leads to a radical Anabaptist theology of the cross. This coincides with Paul's upside-down presentation of the Gospel, where wisdom seems foolish and true power appears to be weakness. For Mark and Paul, power is not found in immutability but in weakness. This is a scandal for those who want to affirm absolute divine sovereignty as complete control. Similarly, power is not defined by one's ultimate ability to make another suffer but by the willingness to suffer at the hands of another. This is a scandal for those who want to affirm an impassable God.

Finally, victory in Mark's Gospel is not found in one's ability to avoid death but overcome it through resurrection. This is a scandal for those who want to escape the sting of death via the doctrine of the immortal soul. Fortunately, Christendom's hope to overcome death is not ill-founded; it has just been misguided. Mark leaves his readers with hope for life after death. This hope is found in the resurrection of the body, a task which seemed like insanity to the Sadducees.

## 9.6. CULTURAL CAPTURE AND PSUEDO NARRATIVES

It is interesting to ponder why, within Anabaptism, there has been more agreement on seemingly less critical but practical issues, such as the taking of oaths, than weightier theological issues, such as how Christ's divinity relates to his humanity. This is a complex and challenging question to answer. I believe that two factors have influenced the Anabaptist disregard for critiquing Christendom Christology. These two factors are cultural capture and pseudo narratives.

First, chapter five suggested that a reading of Mark's Gospel is aided by knowledge of the first-century audience's cultural mind. Here, I pointed out that ancient literature, religious leadership, and the language of the *psyche* all indicate that during Jesus' ministry, thoughts about the *psyche* were polarized. One possibility why Anabaptists were divided over the question of the soul is that some early Anabaptists had acquired historical-cultural knowledge that informed their reading of the biblical text while others had not. This, of course, is speculative but possible. During the Reformation, mortalism saw a resurgence and was a divisive theological topic. On the other hand, those Anabaptists who retained belief in body-soul dualism may have never questioned their beliefs simply because it was the assumed cultural perspective of their time. Speaking to this concern, Murray reports that one criticism of early Anabaptist theology is that it failed to "appreciate there are real difficulties in the text that cannot be resolved without research into linguistics, history, ancient culture, and other areas where scholarship is necessary."<sup>735</sup>

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<sup>735</sup> Stuart Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 3 (North Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000), 54.

Chapter five sought to remedy these concerns related to literary, religious, and linguistic knowledge by allowing historical and cultural knowledge of literature, religious leadership, and linguistics to aid in a narrative critical approach to Mark's Gospel. Armed with this knowledge, Mark was contrasted to other texts that provide alternative narratives of death and the afterlife. Knowledge of characters within the text (the Pharisees and Sadducees) also aids the modern reader who is historically and culturally removed from a text that may assume a base knowledge about characters in the text. I suggested that historical and cultural information can be useful since "sometimes narratives assume that readers are already familiar with other texts and so borrow freely from motifs that these texts employ."<sup>736</sup> Finally, I argued that in a literary context where authors regularly use the same language (specifically the Greek word *psyche*) with polarizing definitions, one must use context clues to aid in deciphering the lexicon of the author.

In addition to these issues, it is also possible that early Anabaptism may have been influenced by non-biblical narratives such as The Gospel of Nicodemus. This narrative tells the story of the postmortem descent of Jesus into a disembodied underworld between death and resurrection. In this story, death and Hades are personified, and Jesus rescues the Old Testament souls from prison. This narrative account of Jesus death and resurrection is antithetical to Mark's Gospel. Anabaptist scholar Klaassen reports that several editions of the Gospel of Nicodemus were being printed in Germany in 1525. He suggests that the adoption of the idea that Jesus harrowed Hell is most likely due to Marpeck and other Anabaptists who read

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<sup>736</sup> Joel B. Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2010). 249.

this fanciful tale and incorporating it into their theology.<sup>737</sup> If this is the case, early Anabaptists were not only influenced by the religious subculture of their day but also by extracanonical literature that contradicts the Gospel of Mark.

Over time, the influence of culture and pseudo narratives shaped the development of Anabaptist beliefs and traditions. This is something that Mark's Gospel warns about. In Mark, the character of Jesus warns against holding to the traditions of men over the words of God (Mark 7:8). This is in fact one of the greatest strengths of the Anabaptist faith, the willingness to question tradition in light of the narrative accounts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Speaking to this reality, Yoder has reminded the Anabaptist community that the human tendency to create traditions means we must be perpetually reforming. At the heart of this constant reformation must be the testimony of Jesus' life, teaching, death, and resurrection.

While some reform will be the result of intentional disobedience, more often than not, it will result from critiquing a "historically rooted community" that has been influenced by its context.<sup>738</sup> As a community receptive to reform, Anabaptism must remain open to the prophetic voices that call the community away from the traditions of man and toward the commandments of God. What I have sought to accomplish in this thesis is to be faithful to the narrative testimony found in Mark. Since Anabaptism is clearly divided on important Christological issues, the result of this faithfulness requires that Anabaptism choose one stream of tradition over another.

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<sup>737</sup> Willard M Swartley and William Klassen, "Pilgram Marpecks Theology," in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives* (Elkhart, Ind: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 102.

<sup>738</sup> John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 70.

In comparing the early Anabaptist documents with Mark's Gospel, it becomes clear that several early Anabaptist Confessions of Faith align with Mark's Gospel by affirming the suffering and death of Jesus. However, some confessions, such as the Swiss Brethren Confession of Hesse, the Waterlander Confession, and the Thirty-Three Articles (1617), appear to disagree with the Gospel of Mark. These three confessions promote a narrative that is counter to Mark's Gospel. This counter-narrative affirms body-soul dualism, the immortality of the soul, Jesus' postmortem Harrowing of Hell, and the understanding that resurrection is the reunion of body and soul.<sup>739</sup> As a result of these findings, and in alignment with the Anabaptist commitment to a Christocentric narrative-driven approach to developing theology, I contend that Anabaptist tradition and theology that does not align with Mark's kenotic mortal messiah should be rejected. This means that one stream of Anabaptist tradition must be chosen over another.

My proposal is that since the Anabaptist tradition (theological writings and confessions of faith) disagrees about God's ability to change, suffer, and die, it is the responsibility of the current Anabaptist generation to adopt Yoder's approach to reading scripture. He states that the appropriate approach to theological issues is a "readiness to doubt whether past majority positions have been adequate."<sup>740</sup> Indeed, this appears to be the approach early Anabaptism took in general at its inception, questioning Catholic traditions through the lens of Jesus' teaching in the Gospels.

This thesis has argued that Mark's portrayal of a kenotic mortal messiah favors one side of Anabaptist tradition over the other. Mark's Gospel presents a Jesus that is more in line with

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<sup>739</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

<sup>740</sup> John Howard Yoder, *To Hear the Word* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 54.



the Anabaptist Thirteen Articles (1626). This Anabaptist confession of faith confesses that Jesus “became what he was not, truly human.”<sup>741</sup> This tradition stands in opposition to the Short Confession (1610), which states that Jesus did not change into “mortal flesh of humanness.”<sup>742</sup>

### **9.7. PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS OF A MARKAN MORTAL MESSIAH.**

The faith community of Anabaptism was born out of theological dissent and controversy. Anabaptist orthopraxy created a unique sense of otherness both in relation to Christians (Catholics and Protestants) as well as non-Christians. This positioned Anabaptists as resident aliens.<sup>743</sup> Anabaptist practices, such as the rejection of infant baptism and the refusal to take oaths, set them at odds with both the church and the state. If Anabaptist pastors embrace Mark’s presentation of a kenotic mortal messiah, several ecclesial practices will be directly affected, which will additionally set Anabaptism apart. I suggest that following Mark’s mortal messiah will influence Anabaptist ecclesial orthopraxy in three ways.

#### **9.7.1. Anabaptist death practices.**

First, following a kenotic mortal messiah shapes how a faith community practices its death rituals. Rethinking human death will influence how Anabaptist churches conduct funeral services. Death is a time of mourning when pastors, friends, and family members seek to

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<sup>741</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, eds., *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1995), 160.

<sup>742</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, 142.

<sup>743</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know That Something Is Wrong*, Expanded 25th anniversary edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014). Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

comfort those who have a relationship with the deceased. It is highly likely that the theological system that many people have inherited routinely promised that the deceased are now alive in a disembodied intermediate state. In many contexts, this is expressed as the deceased having gone to heaven to be with God. However, given Mark's thanatological presentation of an occupied tomb, the pastoral role in comforting those in mourning should be to emphasize the disciple's promise of the resurrection of the dead over against the idea of a disembodied intermediate state. This approach to comforting the mourning will allow for the Markan Jesus' thanatology to shape the rituals and practices of Anabaptist burial. It is only by accepting the significance and finality of death that the Christian community will learn to embrace Jesus' emphasis on the resurrection power of God.

As a young pastor in seminary, I can remember a chapel service when Stanley Hauerwas spoke on the topic of God, suffering, and death. He said something to the effect of "Christians need to learn how to reclaim their deaths from modern medicine." At the time, I was unsure how to process this passing comment. Now, I can see how Hauerwas' comment echoes Jesus' call to his disciples in the Gospel of Mark to embrace kenotic suffering. Fortunately, the Anabaptist pastor can offer this comfort in death, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). In contrast, I have argued that a Christendom theodicy cannot offer this comfort. This deepens the Anabaptist sense of otherness in that we can proclaim a God who truly suffered and died to destroy the works of the devil through resurrection.

### **9.7.2. The Anabaptist proclamation of hope for life after death.**

A second pastoral implication of embracing Mark's kenotic mortal messiah will be that the content of pastoral sermons may need to change. Pastoral sermons given on the topic of eschatology should focus on the resurrection of the body. If belief in resurrection was the crown jewel of the early church, and it is the only hope for life after death, it should also be elevated to this status within Anabaptist preaching and teaching. Pastoral sermons should frequently emphasize the necessity of the resurrection, and the frequency of this teaching should significantly exceed the annual Easter celebration. Hopefully, this increase in teaching about the resurrection will also lead to deeper theological conversations about human bodies and ethics.<sup>744</sup> For example, if God cares intimately about humans as his creation, and humans are their bodies, we should think deeply about how we use our bodies for the kingdom of God. This will also involve considering how we might reclaim our deaths from modern medicine.

In response to the pastoral emphasis on resurrection, pastors will need to help their congregations navigate a potential shift in afterlife beliefs. For many Anabaptists, doing away with the belief in a disembodied intermediate state will be a paradigm shift. Within Christian circles, many have been told that their hope for life after death resides in going to heaven after they die. This portrait, however, depends on the belief in body-soul dualism. Framing the Christian eschatological hope in this way has greatly diminished the Christian proclamation of the resurrection of the dead. In reclaiming the hope of the resurrection, pastors must assure

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<sup>744</sup> Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder has written prolifically on the topic of Christian ethics and non-violence. In addition, Stanley Hauerwas, who was friends with Yoder and sympathetic to the Anabaptist faith tradition, has integrated the theological topics of ethics and death.

their community that they are not taking away hope for life after death. Instead, they are replacing a misguided hope with the promises grounded in the Gospel narrative.

### **9.7.3. Anabaptist anthropology and the practice of corporate singing.**

A third pastoral implication of this thesis will be re-examining corporate worship lyrics regarding their anthropological accuracy. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to do away with using the English word soul in corporate worship altogether, given the modern tendency to interpret this word as the mind or consciousness of a person that survives death. Here, it will be up to the discretion of pastoral leadership to either educate the church on the various biblical and lexical nuances of the word *psyche* and specifically how Jesus used it or exclude the language of the soul entirely from corporate worship. Given Jesus' teaching in Mark, a soul should be understood as a living, breathing, embodied person.

As an Anabaptist pastor and worship leader, I have personally wrestled with this issue myself. I have chosen to tackle this issue from several different angles. First, whenever it is appropriate, I try to remind my congregation that human beings are holistic. To do this, I place an emphasis on God as the creator. I also remind the congregation that humans are dependent beings; we are dust and breath. I also address this pastoral issue in two other ways. When possible, I try to avoid songs that use language of the soul. Finally, in contexts outside of corporate worship when I have the chance to teach in smaller group setting, I explain some of the nuances of the language and how an Anabaptist should understand the English word soul. This has involved showing congregants that the Hebrew word *nephesh* is frequently used within the psalms and is often best understood as a personal pronoun. For example, Psalm 16:10

reads “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.” Here the Hebrew word *nephesh* has been translated as ‘my soul’ when it is better translated as ‘me.’

#### **9.7.4. Summary.**

In summary, the Markan Jesus’ teaching should shape the ecclesial practices of burial, preaching, and communal singing. These thanatological, eschatological, and ecclesial implications serve to demonstrate how significant the Markan Jesus’ teaching on the *psyche* is for the Anabaptist church’s orthodoxy and orthopraxis moving forward. These will not be easy changes. I suspect that the additional preaching on the resurrection will be the easiest of these three changes. Changes regarding death beliefs and corporate worship will be much harder. These are deeply emotional beliefs and practices that will require sensitivity in conversations. This will necessitate paradigm shifts for both pastors and church members alike.

#### **9.8. ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP.**

This thesis has offered at least three unique contributions to scholarship. These contributions have been achieved through pursuing questions that lie at the intersection of Christology and thanatology. First, this thesis has expanded on the existing Anabaptist critique of Christendom theology. This critique places an emphasis on the story of Jesus in the Gospels in forming and reforming Anabaptist doctrine. Second, this thesis has concluded that Mark presents Jesus as a religious teacher who promoted anthropological physicalism. For Anabaptists, this will place an emphasis on embodied life and the necessity of resurrection for life after death. Third, this

thesis has established a Christological cornerstone upon which kenotic Christology can claim validity. Mark's depiction of Jesus' kenotic death affirms those who have sought to apply the concept of kenosis to theological topics such as creation, the incarnation, and the suffering of God.

### **9.8.1. An expansion of the Anabaptist critique of Christendom Christology.**

This thesis has expanded the Anabaptist critique of Christendom Christology by examining the narrative motifs of kenosis and death in the Gospel of Mark. The narrative analysis of Mark's Gospel has concluded that God in the person of Jesus Christ is capable of change, suffering, and death. This runs counter to the Christology of Christendom that asserts that only Jesus' human nature was capable of change, suffering, and death. By applying a Christ and cross-centric hermeneutic to scripture, early Anabaptists critiqued Christendom theology and rejected certain beliefs and practices. This thesis adds to the existing Anabaptist critique of topics such as infant baptism, pledging allegiance to the state, taking oaths, and the use of state-sanctioned violence. The implications of my critique will influence both faith (orthodoxy) and practice (orthopraxy) for the Anabaptist faith community.

As I previous outlined, understanding Jesus as a kenotic mortal messiah affects the way Anabaptists understand divinity, Christ's death, and discipleship. In addition, embracing a Markan mortal messiah will lead to pastoral implications such as altering the practice and theology of Anabaptist funeral services, emphasizing the hope of the resurrection in Anabaptist sermons, and avoiding worship lyrics that promote body-soul dualism. In addition to the call to

reject Christendom Christology, this thesis has also argued that one stream of Anabaptist tradition should be chosen over another.

### **9.8.2. A reclassification of Jesus among his religious contemporaries.**

Although the historical sources are limited, scholarship agrees with the general classification that the Sadducees held to a mortalist thanatology. This is the understanding that humans do not have an immortal soul that is separable from a mortal body. In contrast, sources indicate that their contemporaries, the Pharisees, believed in a version of body-soul dualism, a disembodied intermediate state, and a future resurrection. This thesis has called for a reclassification of Jesus' teaching among his Jewish contemporaries. Scholars have generally understood Jesus to have corrected the Sadducees only concerning common beliefs about life after death. This is because the Sadducees ask Jesus directly about the topic. However, I have suggested that Jesus equally critiqued the anthropological beliefs of the Pharisees employing irony through pointed language. Since scholars have not picked up on this irony, they have often worked with the assumption that Jesus aligned entirely with the Pharisees. This is most likely because Jesus affirmed a belief in bodily resurrection. However, this thesis has shown that Jesus also corrected the Pharisees' views of death and the *psyche* (Mark 3:4), taking a middle position between his religious contemporaries.

This thesis has suggested that to comprehend the anthropology, thanatology and eschatology that Mark's Gospel presents to its audience fully, it is necessary to understand three facets of the first-century audience's cultural mind. First, I suggested that it is helpful to understand that Jewish literature that predated Mark's Gospel presents antithetical views

concerning life after death. This was illustrated by observing how 2 and 4 Maccabees present their audiences with the same narrative but different afterlife beliefs. Second, I reviewed that the sources available record that Jesus' religious contemporaries held opposing afterlife views. Third, I pointed out that the language used in defense of these views included similar vocabulary with contrasting definitions. Knowledge of these aspects of the first-century audience's cultural-religious context allows the modern reader to see Jesus' critique of the Pharisees and his mortalist teaching to his disciples correctly.

I propose that the Markan Jesus' anthropological critique of the Pharisaical position should not be surprising, considering Jesus regularly encountered and challenged Pharisaical beliefs and traditions in the Gospel narratives. Jesus should, therefore, be understood as paving an anthropological middle way between the Sadducees and Pharisees. This invites the rethinking of numerous aspects of theology, which I have introduced in this chapter.

### **9.8.3. The establishment of a Christological cornerstone for kenotic Christology.**

Finally, for many, kenotic theology has been deemed heretical. Constrained by the Christological framework of Christendom, it is understandable why one might come to this conclusion. However, once one is liberated from Christendom's constraints on anthropology and Christology, kenosis can be embraced as the very nature of God. Interestingly, much of Christianity already embraces several critical elements of kenotic theology.

As an example, most Christians would agree that Jesus came to live a life of servitude. This is a vital aspect of kenotic theology. In addition, many would also agree with the concept of substitutionary atonement or the idea that Jesus gave his life for others. Finally, many



Christians would concur that after Jesus was resurrected, he was glorified. This concept of glorification inherently involves a change from one state of being to another. Fortunately, all of these elements mentioned are facets of kenotic theology, which proposes both a kenotic self-emptying and a plerosis or filling up. Therefore, by focusing on the mortality of Jesus' *psyche*, this thesis has provided a cornerstone upon which kenotic theology can be built.

Given Jesus' self-emptying life and death described in Mark's Gospel, kenosis should not just be understood as a concept that appears only once in the letter to the Philippian church. The concept of kenosis proves to be much bigger than this. Instead, kenosis is the primary lens through which God is rightly discerned. This truth comes vividly into focus when one perceives Jesus' crucifixion as the voluntary laying down of his *psyche* in demonstration of the kenotic, other-oriented, self-giving nature of God. In this supreme act of self-abnegation, one learns that the creator of the universe humbly entered into the created order to tangibly display the kenotic character of the divine by loving his creation to death. Even more, God's self-revelation did not end on the cross. The resurrection of Jesus provides a bedrock for the Christian eschatological hope for life after death. As Mark's Gospel emphasizes, death does not have the last word. As it turns out, not even death can separate us from God, who is love.

#### **9.9. IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP.**

This thesis has argued that Christendom Christology betrayed a fundamental aspect of Jesus' teaching in the Gospel narrative of Mark. I have agreed with Presbyterian theologian Alan Lewis who has argued that the "church's struggles with Christology...reached a climax with the dogma

of Christ's two natures at the Council of Chalcedon."<sup>745</sup> Chapter two pointed out that this struggle was initiated by elevating philosophical ideas about God above the revelation of God found in Jesus. The Christocentric Anabaptist approach I have taken also places me in agreement with the Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann who has argued that the primary problem of Christendom theology was that it adopted a "philosophical theism of indirect knowledge of God" over and against the direct knowledge of Jesus, the crucified God.<sup>746</sup> What is interesting about these two theologians' critiques of Christian tradition is that by using an Anabaptist Christocentric and narrative-driven approach to theology, they have come to the same conclusions that this thesis has by looking at the Gospel of Mark. This agreement through a common methodological approach provides hope for further ecumenical conversations.

In addition to Presbyterian and Reformed theologians, this Christocentric approach has also been employed by the Lutheran theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg. He has concluded that in order for Christendom Christology to maintain coherence, the church necessarily adopted a Platonic view of the immortality of the soul, which he believes is contrary to the Jewish understanding of resurrection.<sup>747</sup> Together these theologians provide hope for a common ecumenical method, an Anabaptist Christocentric and a narrative centered approach to theology. It is also not surprising that by using the same method these theologians have come to similar anthropological and Christological conclusions.

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<sup>745</sup> Alan Edmond Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2003). 138.

<sup>746</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, 1st Fortress Press ed (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).216.

<sup>747</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What Is Man?: Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). 41-53.

I suggest that Anabaptists should welcome interdenominational dialogue about these issues with theologians who are seeking to mimic the Anabaptist Christocentric and narrative-driven approach to theology. Anabaptist theologian Greg Boyd stands as an example of someone who is already engaging in this practice. For example, in developing his Anabaptist cruciform hermeneutic, Boyd cites six modern scholars who capture a foundational aspect of his hermeneutic. Boyd states that he considers Moltmann to be the contemporary thinker who most thoroughly and consistently captures the centrality of the cross for the Christian interpretation of the Bible and for Christian theology in general. Boyd himself joins in the critique of classical ideas about God by addressing the work of Augustine, who he claims utilized Platonic philosophy to defend belief in God's immutability and impassibility.<sup>748</sup>

The ecumenical rally point for these various theologians from different faith traditions is that they all agree that Jesus should be the lens through which Christians understand God. Lewis, Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Boyd all begin with the belief that Christian theology must start with the story of Jesus. They similarly agree that the repetitive drumbeat of the Biblical narrative is the story of Jesus, the "crucified, buried, and risen one."<sup>749</sup> This trifold narrative statement was also the unifying and definitive confession of the early church. These theologians believe this thematic narrative claim can be seen in the repeated confession of the early evangelists who preached, "This Jesus you crucified and killed, but God raised him up" (Acts 2:23-24). What is notably absent from all of the Gospel accounts is any testimony of Jesus descending into a disembodied underworld between death and resurrection.

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<sup>748</sup> Gregory A Boyd, *The Crucifixion of the Warrior God: Interpreting the Old Testament's Violent Portraits of God in Light of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).148.

<sup>749</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*. 26.

Like Lewis, I have suggested that Mark's Gospel should be the "paradigm and norm for all Christian narrative theology."<sup>750</sup> What I have added to Lewis's work is a textual foundation within Mark's Gospel to support the claim that Jesus truly died. One of the things that makes Mark's Gospel unique is the way it tells the story of Jesus with a focus on the passion of Christ. As I have argued, Mark's Gospel teaches its audience how to think about death. The author achieves this by setting Jesus in contrast with the beliefs of his religious contemporaries. In harmony with Moltmann, I have also suggested that Mark's presentation of Jesus' death raises concerns about accepting "the Christology of the early church."<sup>751</sup> The practice of questioning church tradition was the generative factor in the birth of Anabaptism. I have argued that questioning tradition through the lens of Mark's Gospel leads to the rejection of the alternative narrative that between death and resurrection, Jesus descended into a postmortem underworld as a disembodied soul. This means that Mark's Gospel teaches its audience that "the concept of life beyond death is possible only in the sense of some kind of revival of bodily life."<sup>752</sup>

In summary, a Christ (and in the case of this thesis, a Markan) centered hermeneutic invites the church universal to struggle with the central understanding that God unified himself with a human corpse. Death was not avoided; it was succumbed to. This is the Markan testimony of Holy Saturday. The Christian celebration is that the story did not end there. This is the joy of our collective Easter Sunday celebration.

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<sup>750</sup> Lewis. 44.

<sup>751</sup> Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 88.op

<sup>752</sup> Pannenberg, *What Is Man?*, 50.

## **9.10. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.**

If the vast majority of historical Christology has been grounded in anthropological dualism since the Chalcedonian definition, reframing Christology in anthropological physicalism will open up an array of areas for further research. For example, one such area is how Anabaptist understand Jesus' death as a work of salvific atonement. In addition, an Anabaptist approach that works with a canon within the canon will need to begin to do comparative studies, first between the Gospels, and next between the Gospels and Pauline literature. The primary concern of these two studies might be the question of coherence between the sources. In this case, the scholar would be seeking to answer the question: Does the New Testament present a monolithic anthropology?

### **9.10.1. A physicalist anthropology and the doctrine of the atonement.**

It is one thing to describe death as the cessation of life instead of the separation of an immortal soul from a mortal body. It is another to ask the theological question of atonement: What does Jesus' death mean for his followers and humanity? An Anabaptist theology of atonement informed by Mark's kenotic mortal messiah might begin by asking: What did Jesus mean when he stated that his life (*psyche*) was a ransom? A ransom to whom and for whom? How far can this analogy be stretched? This questioning may lead to the conclusion that atonement is better understood as God's salvific act of resurrection rather than God's divine sanction of retributive violence.<sup>753</sup>

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<sup>753</sup> J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 2nd ed., greatly rev. and expanded (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub, 2011), 321.

There are numerous atonement theories in part because scripture contains several metaphors to describe Jesus' death. For example, Mark 10:45 may be alluding to redemption from Satan and the concept of a slave market. In contrast, 1 John 2:2 uses the imagery of temple and sacrifice to describe Jesus' death. Other texts, such as Isaiah 53:5, use the imagery of healing, which aligns with Jesus' language of being a physician. Still others, such as Hebrews 2:14, draw on battlefield imagery and the concept of victory over death. Finally, Galatians 3:13 uses the imagery of the law court and the concept of substitution. These metaphors are not always easily combined to create a coherent theory of atonement.

The Anabaptist approach to scripture, which elevates the Gospels as a canon-within-a-canon would prioritize the concepts from Mark, except where other sources align closely with the teachings of Jesus. If another source can be shown to be earlier and/or closer to Jesus (which might be the case for some of Paul's letters) it would also be given priority. Continuing with this method would therefore offer a productive starting point for untangling the complex collection of metaphors into a clear and Christocentric theory.

Atonement theories and definitions of the first death are also related to eschatology and what John in the Book of Revelation calls the second death. Concerning the issue of substitution, physicalist scholar Chris Date has concluded that "conditional immortality passes muster" while "the doctrine of eternal torment is in fact found wanting."<sup>754</sup> This is to say that the concept of substitution works with a physicalist understanding of death but not with the idea that humans have immortal souls that are tortured for eternity. Therefore, further

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<sup>754</sup> Christopher M Date, "The Righteous for the Unrighteous: Conditional Immortality and the Substitutionary Death of Jesus," *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 18 (2017 2016): 69–92.

investigation into Anabaptist theology of the atonement will also need to expand into how death is defined in the eschaton.

### 9.10.2. A comparative study of the Gospels.

In addition to the question of atonement, one question that scholar Sigvartsen has proposed in his study becomes both intriguing and relevant to the topic of this thesis. Sigvartsen asks, “Is it reasonable to assume that the New Testament presents a harmonized view of the resurrection and afterlife? Or should the reader instead be open to New Testament writers holding various [anthropological] views?”<sup>755</sup> Certainly Sigvartsen’s work has demonstrated that a multiplicity of views existed within the literature that predates Jesus’ ministry. While it has been concluded that Mark’s gospel is internally consistent and is closer to the mortalism of 2 Maccabees, can the same be said about the Synoptics? If Mark’s Gospel is agreed upon as the primary source for Matthew and Luke, what Markan material might have been altered in the later Matthean and Lukan versions of the story? Or perhaps, what did Matthew and Luke add to their version of the story that may conflict with Mark’s original version? What is interesting is that these texts are only found in their respective Gospels and not in the Triple Tradition. An Anabaptist comparative study of the Gospels will seek to investigate these sorts of concerns.<sup>756</sup>

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<sup>755</sup> Jan A. Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, vol. 30, *Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies* (T&T Clark, 2019), 222.

<sup>756</sup> Concerning the New Testament language of the *psyche* in general, a few general statements can be made. Just like *nephesh* in the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament *psyche* can refer to a person or an animal. Next, *psyche* in the New Testament is often described as being threatened by death. Third, a person’s *psyche* is described as something that can be laid down, lost, or destroyed. Finally, immortality in the New Testament is never attributed to the *psyche*. Instead, the New Testament described immortality as a gift or inheritance that is to be received after resurrection takes place.

This thesis has limited the scope of its inquiry to the Gospel of Mark. The rationale for this decision was that Anabaptists have chosen to develop doctrine using a Christocentric hermeneutic. This emphasizes a narrative-driven approach to scripture and elevates the Gospel narratives to a higher place of importance concerning Biblical authority.<sup>757</sup> In addition, I have chosen the Gospel of Mark among the Synoptics because of the likelihood that it was written first and used as a source by both Matthew and Luke. By nature, this limits the full exploration of the anthropological landscape of the Biblical canon.<sup>758</sup> Using this methodology, an expanding investigation would seek to move into and beyond the Synoptic Gospels.

Within the Synoptics, a small subset of biblical texts has been drawn upon in support of a belief in a disembodied intermediate state.<sup>759</sup> An expansion of the scope of this thesis would compare these texts with Mark's Gospel to determine similarities and differences. To give an example of how this dialogue within the larger scope of the Synoptics might begin, I will briefly introduce one text within the Synoptics that has historically been used to promote body-soul

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<sup>757</sup> Stuart Murray, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*, 3 (North Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000), 70–96. Lloyd Pietersen, *Reading the Bible after Christendom* (Harrisonburg, Va: Herald Press, 2012), 69–72. Willard M Swartley, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives* (Elkhart, Ind: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 6–7, 106–14.

<sup>758</sup> Perhaps the last biblical material to be discussed, using an Anabaptist hermeneutic, would be the Old Testament material. Discussion located within the Old Testament has centered around the mysterious deaths or disappearances of Enoch and Elijah. However, in both cases, these men are understood to remain physically embodied. As a result, these texts give more support to the physicalist position than the dualist position. Perhaps the single most appealed to text in the Old Testament is the story of Saul and the Witch of Endor. Discussions surrounding this text question its historicity and the reliability of the testimony of a supposed necromancer. For a detailed analysis of the Witch of Endor text, see; Clinton Wahlen, *What Are Human Beings That You Remember Them: Proceedings of the Third International Bible Conference Nof Ginossar and Jerusalem June 11-21, 2012* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015).

<sup>759</sup> These specific texts, more often than not, turn out to be an exegetical Rorschach test. That is to say that similar to the rabbit–duck illusion made popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these texts seem to have the ability to be read from both the physicalist and dualist perspectives. This handful of texts is predominantly appealed to by dualists as positive evidence for belief in the soul's survival of bodily death. Physicalist advocates counter that these texts have had a long history of misinterpretation, which is rooted in a set of a priori dualist assumptions. Two critical factors that play a vital role in this discussion are the lack of biblical material in support of the immortality of the soul and the question of which sources are elevated as authoritative in the development of doctrine.



dualism. I will not attempt to address all the textual issues regarding this text. Instead, I will briefly illustrate that scholarship is divided over how to interpret this text, and in part, interpretations are colored by anthropological concepts one brings with them to the text. Outside of Mark's Gospel, three Synoptic texts present the potential for a dualist reading. These texts are often appealed to as Biblical proof that humans survive the death of their body. Two of these texts are found in Luke's Gospel (16:19-31 and 23:42-43), and a third in Matthew's Gospel (10:28). While they are outside of Mark's Gospel and, therefore outside of the scope of this thesis, I will briefly review a snapshot of the scholarship surrounding one of these texts to demonstrate there is a valid physicalist interpretation.

It should be noted from the outset that how one approaches these texts can significantly influence the exegetical outcome. Biblical scholar Green has warned that if the "default hermeneutical position" of scholarship and popular Christian opinion is dualist, it should come as no surprise when one coincidentally finds texts such as these that support a dualist position.<sup>760</sup> N.T. Wright has echoed Green's sentiment by suggesting that the church has for too long been buying its mental furniture from "Plato's factory."<sup>761</sup> It is good exegetical practice then to remember that literature, leadership, and the authorial use of language were polarized on the definition of death during the first century. A *psyche* was not the same thing for a Sadducee as it was for a Pharisee. This is a reminder that humans understand and interpret their world through the prescription glasses they are wearing. This prescription has

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<sup>760</sup> Joel Green, "What about...? Three Exegetical Forays into the Body-Soul Discussion," *Criswell Theological Review* 7 (2010): 3–18.

<sup>761</sup> N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church: Six Sessions* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 153–54.

been influenced by numerous socio-religious factors. If Green and Wright are correct, the exegetical interpretation of this biblical data will be similar to a Rorschach test.<sup>762</sup>

A Lukan text that has prompted disagreement between the physicalist's and dualist's positions is Luke 23:42-43. This text contains Jesus' words to the penitent thief on the cross. Here, dualist scholarship has attempted to place a substantial stake in the ground, proclaiming Jesus' words definitively prove the existence of a disembodied afterlife. For instance, dualist scholar Cooper understands this text to be an unambiguous statement affirming an immediate afterlife following bodily death.<sup>763</sup> Stein agrees with Cooper that this text validates Christian belief in a temporary disembodied intermediate state. In response to Jesus' words, Stein suggests that believers can expect to be in a "conscious experience with Jesus in paradise" postmortem.<sup>764</sup> Does this text demand belief in body-soul dualism, or are there other ways of interpreting the dialogue between Jesus and the thief?

One problem that arises within the dualist camp is the question: How could Jesus have been in Paradise with the thief immediately after death? This idea seems to contradict Acts 2:27, which reports that Jesus was in Hades after he died. Do these texts create a spatial contradiction for dualists when combined? Or are we to believe that Jesus was in two places at once? Dualist advocate, Williamson solves this potential spatial dilemma by suggesting that "between his death and resurrection Jesus was simultaneously in paradise and Hades" because

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<sup>762</sup> For an excellent example of this see Green, "What about...? Three Exegetical Forays into the Body-Soul Discussion." Green exegetes 2 Corinthians 12:1-4, Matthew 10:28, and Revelation 6:9-10 demonstrating that "at the very least, these texts do not demand a dualist interpretation and, to the contrary, are very much at home with a monist understanding of the human person."

<sup>763</sup> Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting*, 127-29.

<sup>764</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 593.

Paradise, he believes, is best understood as a subsection of Hades.<sup>765</sup> This is one way dualists have sought to harmonize a theology of Holy Saturday. However, this speculative interpretation is not the only exegetical possibility. For example, Middleton, who defends a physicalist interpretation, counters that “paradise is not (in either Jewish literature or the New Testament) an immaterial realm or place.”<sup>766</sup> For Middleton, this means that Jesus is not talking about going to an immaterial paradise postmortem.

Aside from the spatial issues, there is also a linguistic disagreement concerning the use of the Greek adverb *sémeron* (translated ‘today’) in the sentence. More specifically, the disagreement is over the punctuation that has been applied to the sentence structure. A comma (which is absent in the original Greek) must be added to the sentence before or after the word today. For the physicalist, the word ‘today’ in the sentence is understood to be used to refer to the timing of Jesus’ statement. Given this choice, the text reads, ‘Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise.’ On the other hand, the dualist position argues that the referent ‘today’ is meant to denote the day of the two men’s reunion postmortem as disembodied souls. Under this view, the text is intended to be read as, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’ This disagreement reveals that comma placement drastically affects how the sentence is understood. Unfortunately, this issue cannot be resolved because the original Greek manuscripts do not contain punctuation.

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<sup>765</sup> Williamson, *Death and the Afterlife*, 55.

<sup>766</sup> J. Richard Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2014), 235. See also Green, who concludes that “attempts to locate in the Gospel of Luke an eschatological pattern that requires or includes an intermediate-state cannot be sustained.” Joel Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008), 165.

In conclusion, this text elicits several exegetical questions to be discussed and debated between physicalist and dualist scholars. Given the ambiguity of the Greek and the absence of punctuation, the text does not provide irrefutable evidence for either position. Perhaps the most substantial factor within the text itself, then, is the fact that the word paradise was never used to describe an immaterial realm for disembodied souls.

### **9.10.3. A comparative study of Jesus and Paul.**

Finally, moving outward from the Synoptic core of Anabaptist Christocentrism, it will be helpful for Anabaptist theology to do a comparative study of Jesus' anthropological teaching in Mark with the anthropology presented within the Pauline corpus. This will additionally require defining the Pauline corpus. While a synthesis methodological approach may seek to harmonize the biblical texts into one solitary view despite the exegetical cost, an Anabaptist approach will begin with the established physicalist position and ask, Does Paul present the same physicalist anthropological view? The posture of this sort of approach is demonstrated in the work of Clark-Soles.<sup>767</sup> As indicated by the multiplicity of opinions in the literature review, belief in a solitary New Testament view or a diversity of ideas must not be brought to the table a priori. However, as a result of this thesis, Jesus' physicalist anthropology, as established in Mark, should inform further comparative studies.

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<sup>767</sup> Jaime Clark-Soles, *Death and the Afterlife in the New Testament* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 3. Clark-Soles states, "I do not assume a unified vision among NT authors concerning death and afterlife. Neither do I reject unity a priori."

#### 9.10.4. Anabaptism and Process Theology.

A fourth area of potential further research would be to examine the relationship between Anabaptism and Process Theology. While this thesis has sought to be Christocentric and narrative focused, “Process theology is a form of philosophical theology.”<sup>768</sup> This thesis began with the Anabaptist distinctive that Christian theology is grounded in no other foundation than Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11).<sup>769</sup> While their starting points are different, Anabaptist theology and Process Theology have several things in common. For instance, both can affirm that love is persuasive and not forcefully coercive. Since divine love is understood as creative and risk-taking, both of these theologies oppose forms of divine determinism. Similarly, while an Anabaptist kenotic theology does not have to go down the road of open theism in the ways that Process Theology does, it certainly has that option available.<sup>770</sup> Further study of Anabaptism and Process theology would examine how the concept of a kenotic mortal messiah might overlap with process thought.

Anabaptist kenotic theology and Process Theology are united against tradition in that they both believe that humanity is “radically contingent.”<sup>771</sup> That is to say, as mortal embodied beings, eternal life is contingent upon the creator (Rom 6:23), belief (John 3:16), and resurrection (John 6:40). While there is no doubt that Anabaptist kenotic theology and Process

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<sup>768</sup> John B. Cobb and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 10. See also Bruce Gordon Epperly, *Process Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, T & T Clark Guides for the Perplexed (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 64, 141. Epperly comes very close to being fundamentally Christocentric, stating, for instance, that “process theology sees God’s activity in Christ as the fullest exemplification of God’s aim at creative transformation, revealed in all things and not just the Christian world.” However, he later summarizes that “there is no absolute form or norm of revelation.”

<sup>769</sup> General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, eds., *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>770</sup> For an Anabaptist example of Open Theism, see Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2000).

<sup>771</sup> Cobb and Griffin, *Process Theology*, 81.

Theology overlap with similarities, there are also marked differences. These differences could also be explored. For instance, Pinnock has pointed out that Process Theology struggles with explaining the very familiar Gospel narrative accounts of miracles, the incarnation, resurrection, and petitionary prayer. Pinnock explains that the fundamental difference between alternative models and Process Theology is that “in process thought, God cannot override the freedom of creatures.”<sup>772</sup>

In summary, Anabaptist kenotic theology and Process Theology can come to the table of theological discussion with much in common. Not the least of these is the critique of classical Christology and the desire to elevate Jesus as the fullest revelation of God. However, they are not without distinctions, the most important of which is their alternative starting points of the revelation of God in Christ versus philosophical theology. Where does this leave the relationship between an Anabaptist kenotic theology and Process Theology? It seems that they must remain distinctly differentiated by their alternative starting points but will often find common ground. These theological constructs can unite under the agreement that God is represented in Christ as dynamic, mutable, relational love. However, while Process Theology begins with an external criterion of metaphysics or ontology, an Anabaptist kenotic theology will always start from divine revelation, which finds its fullest expression in Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection. The Anabaptist prophetic critique of Process Theology may, therefore, be summarized in the words of Evans, who writes, “When reason encounters the God-in-time,

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<sup>772</sup> Clark H. Pinnock, ed., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 101.

it must understand something, even to know that it has encountered what it cannot understand.”<sup>773</sup>

### **9.11. CONCLUSION.**

Using Mark’s theology as my guide, I provided a critique of Christendom’s views of God, Jesus, and discipleship. With Christ and the cross as foundations, I then constructed an Anabaptist theology of the divine, Christ, and discipleship rooted in Mark’s account of a kenotic mortal messiah. Next, I suggested that since “doctrine was constructed in defense of story,” an Anabaptist critique must overcome both cultural influences and traditions outside and inside its tradition.<sup>774</sup>

With an Anabaptist theology in place, I outlined three pastoral implications Mark’s theology will have on Anabaptist ecclesiology. I then reviewed three ways that this thesis has provided a unique contribution to Anabaptist scholarship. Next, I suggested one implication for existing scholarship is that the story of Jesus has the potential to be an ecumenical rallying point. Finally, I suggested implications for further research might include investigations into Anabaptist atonement theology, a comparative study of the gospels, a comparative study of the Mark and Pauline literature, and a comparative study of Anabaptism and Process theology.

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<sup>773</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Faith beyond Reason: A Kierkegaardian Account*, Reason and Religion Series (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1998), 81.

<sup>774</sup> Lewis, *Between Cross and Resurrection*, 138. Lewis explains that foundational to the controversy was the seemingly unanimous axiom that God was both immutable and impassible. As such, it is impossible for the divine nature to die. 158. Lewis argues that “the interpretation of Christ’s death in terms of separation of natures” can be found in the writings of Antiochenes, Athanasius, and Gregory of Nyssa, who speak of Christ’s death as a separation of body and soul. 160.

In conclusion, I propose that the death of Christ should significantly affect the way Anabaptists understand anthropology, thanatology, and eschatology. Using Jesus as the anthropological model, Anabaptism should view humanity as embodied mortal persons. This also means that death is defined not as the separation of body and soul but as the dissolution of the person who is their body. Directly correlated to this understanding of humanity and death is the hope for life after death through resurrection. Anabaptists should hang their hope on the resurrection of the body. This is understood as the reconstitution of the person's body, not the reunion of a disembodied soul with a physical body.

As this thesis has sought to do Anabaptist theology, it is appropriate to end with a reminder that within this faith community, Jesus is upheld as the central revelation of God. All Anabaptist's confessions of faith should emanate from this starting point. This chapter has sought to take this claim and practice seriously by working out the ramifications of Mark's narrative about a kenotic mortal messiah. Anabaptism stands in agreement with Evangelicals like Ramm who claim that "Christology is so central to Christian theology that to alter Christology is to alter all else."<sup>775</sup> In contrasting Mark's Gospel with Christendom Christology, this thesis has highlighted the many ways Christendom Christology deviated from the Gospel narrative. For Anabaptists, Christology is indeed the linchpin of all theology. This will mean that "a change in Christological doctrine" will mandate a change "in all other doctrines."<sup>776</sup> In this thesis, I have suggested multiple ways in which this process of change to conform to the truth of God's love, as shown through the Gospel of Mark, can begin within Anabaptist theology.

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<sup>775</sup> Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology*, 16.

<sup>776</sup> Ramm, *An Evangelical Christology*; Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, 16.





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