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Procedural Register in the Olivet Discourse: A Functional Linguistic Approach to Mark 13

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Translations of Greek and other foreign-language phrases have been added for the convenience of the reader.

I will rely on insights from Halliday's register theory to explain the Markan Jesus' use of a functional variety of language I call procedural register. The identification of procedural register in the main section of the Olivet Discourse (vv. 5b-23) will be shown to reveal the rhetorical design of the discourse within a first temporal horizon, of direct relevance for the audience and addressing the disciples' question (v. 4). The absence of procedural register in vv. 24-27 indicates the opening of a second horizon in the speech, lacking immediate impact for the audience and no longer addressing the disciples' question.

I. Mark 13: Mark's Agenda and Ours

For the last few decades, the attention of Markan scholarship has been shifting consistently towards an appreciation of Mark's gospel as a finished literary product. Be they socio-rhetorical, oral performance or reader response oriented, literary approaches predominate among current works in the gospel of Mark, all having in common an internal approach to the meaning of the text, rather than an external one. In the words of Elizabeth S. Malbon, the new focus is on how the text means what it does.¹

This functional approach to texts is at the heart of my own functional-grammatical based work in Acts². In this study I will rely on the Hallidayan concept of register, a functional variety of language, to present and explain the linguistic choices made by Mark in his composition or editing of his text. That is, the Hallidayan notion of register will help us to understand and explain how Greek clauses, pericopes or major sections of Mark's Olivet Discourse mean what they do. This is an objective shared by rhetorically oriented critics who have produced analyses and interpretations of Mark 13 in recent years.

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Unfortunately the analyses of Black,³ Yarbrow Collins,⁴ and Robbins,⁵ among others, fail to engage consistently and in detail with the language of the Olivet Discourse, and focus instead on possible *Sitz im Leben* [life-setting], or possible matches between the speech and the instruction found in Graeco-Roman rhetorical manuals.

¹ E. STRUTHERS MALBON. "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?", *Mark and Method. New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (eds. J.C. ANDERSON – S.D. MOORE) (Minneapolis, MN 1992) 24.

² See G. MARTIN-ASENSIO, *Transitivity-Based Foregrounding in the Acts of the Apostles: A Functional-Grammatical Approach to the Lukan Perspective* (JSNTSup 202: SNTG 8: Sheffield 2000).

³ C.C. BLACK. "An Oration at Olivet: Some Rhetorical Dimensions of Mark 13", *Persuasive Artistry. Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George Kennedy* (ed. D.F. WATSON) (JSNTSup 50: Sheffield 1991) 66-92.

⁴ A. YARBROW COLLINS. "The Apocalyptic Rhetoric of Mark 13 in Historical Context", *BR* 41 (1996) 5-36.

⁵ V.K. ROBBINS. "Rhetorical Ritual: Apocalyptic Discourse in Mark 13", *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (eds. G. CAREY— L.G. BLOOMQUIST) (St. Louis, MO 1999) 95-121

Mark 13 has often been seen as an ideal section of Mark's gospel for gleaning insights into the situation of Mark's community that called forth the evangelist's writing. The abundance of imperatives, temporal indicators, reference to the "desolating sacrilege," and the study of the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke have led scholars to discern in Mark's composition various possible concerns, needs, or errors of his community in the years 40 to 75 C.E.⁶ Although proposals as to Mark's purpose in writing abound, BEASLEY-MURRAY's survey reveals the extent to which theological and philosophical bias has gotten in the way of pursuing the task of investigating Mark's agenda, as discernible in his composing, or shaping and editing of the Olivet Discourse.⁷

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Specifically, modern concerns for obtaining a clear chronology of events, critical scholarship's evolving assumptions as to what Jesus could or could not have said, and especially attempts to highlight or deny the Markan Jesus' "mistake" in allegedly predicting the Son of Man's coming within a generation of the speech, have severely muddied the waters of exegesis and reduced visibility of Mark's careful shaping of this episode to a minimum.

Scholars have traditionally seen the Olivet Discourse as fundamentally different from the rest of Mark's gospel. Pesch was most emphatic in this regard: "Kapitel 13 passt nicht in den kunstvollen Aufbau des Markusevangeliums! Das Kapitel fungiert als ein selbständiger Teil..." [Chapter 13 does not fit into the artful construction of Mark! The chapter acts as an independent section...].⁸ How exactly Mark 13 is different remains a debated issue

⁶ E.g. R. PESCH. *Naherwartungen. Tradition und Redaktion in Mk 13* (Dusseldorf 1968) 231: "Der Evangelist spricht ein klärendes Wort in die aufgeregte Situation der Gemeinde [The evangelist speaks a word of clarification in the excited situation of his community]...", namely, to cool off eschatological excitement. Similarly to Pesch. M.D. HOOKER. *The Gospel According to Mark* (London 1993) 300, states that Mark wrote in order "to urge inaction, rather than action". Thus also E. TROCMÉ. *L'Évangile de Marc* (Geneve 2000) 323, and many others. T.J. WEEDEN, "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel". *The Interpretation of Mark* (ed. W. TELFORD) (Philadelphia. PA 1985) 89-101, argued that Mark was written to correct a heretical "theios aner" [shaman] Christology. Most recently regarding Mark 13 and the "Markan community" see: J. MARCUS. *Mark 1-8. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Yale Bible: New Haven. CT 2000) 25, 30. YARBRO COLLINS, voicing a widely held view regarding the "rhetorical exigence" that called forth the speech, namely, the appearance of false teachers and false messiahs during the first Jewish war with Rome. See A. YARBRO COLLINS. *Mark. A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN 2007) 603—a view already expressed in YARBRO COLLINS. "Apocalyptic Rhetoric", 5. But see B. WITHERINGTON. *The Gospel of Mark, A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids. MI 2001) 28-29.

⁷ G.R. BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Jesus and the Last Days. The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Vancouver 2005).

⁸ PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 65.

until today. Analyses of language and style, the state of play of which has been recently summarized by Dyer⁹ have helped to identify and quantify lexical and syntactical items that are considered frequent, rare, or unique in Mark 13. Yet, even in a recent study like Dyer's the aim seems to be determining traditions behind Mark's composition, and these conclusions tend to get in the way of appreciating Mark's carefully crafted structure. Matters of genre have also been the subject of intense debate, and this has a direct bearing on the determination of a context of situation that Mark would have intended to address with his gospel. Is the discourse an example of paraenesis?¹⁰ Paraclesis?¹¹ Paraenetic eschatology?¹² Apologetic-paraenetic-chatechetical material?¹³ A farewell discourse?¹⁴ Prophetic oracle?¹⁵ Or perhaps a speech conforming to epideictic rhetoric?¹⁶ The number of different proposals suggests the genre does

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not exactly match any of the usual categories, and a fresh look at the language, structure and possible functions of the speech may be required.

Linguistically oriented monographs and articles have not, thus far, contributed any significant new insights into how the linguistic choices Mark has made in his composition can be seen to be addressing concrete rhetorical (i.e. addressable by means of language) needs of his community. In his two essays on Mark mentioned above,* Longacre suggests a narrative template that is applicable to Mark's gospel as a whole, as well as certain criteria for determining the peaks, or grounding scheme of the narrative. Unfortunately, Longacre excluded Mark 13 from the scope of his analysis. Paul Danove's most valuable contribution to a linguistic analysis of Mark 13 is found, I would argue, in a 2003 article and in a chapter of

⁹ K.D. DYER. *The Prophecy on the Mount* (ITSCBS2: Bern 1998)

¹⁰ V. BALABANSKI. *Eschatology in the Making: Matthew. Mark and the Didache* (SNTS 97; Cambridge 1997) 100, argues that the speech is about paraenesis, rather than about objective signs. For VORSTER ("Literary Reflections", *The Interpretation*, 281) the speech is written in paraenetic style, WITHERINGTON (*The Gospel*, 445) speaks of a "paraenetic thrust". W. L. LANE. *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT: Grand Rapids, MI 1974) 336, suggests a "paraenetic framework".

¹¹ LANE. *The Gospel*, 446.

¹² BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Last Days*, 355.

¹³ PESCH, *Naherwartungen*. 231.

¹⁴ YARBRO COLLINS. *Mark*. 594; YARBRO COLLINS, "Apocalyptic Rhetoric", 9. Against this view see WITHERINGTON, *The Gospel*, 342.

¹⁵ YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*. 594.

¹⁶ BLACK, "An Oration", 66-92

* [The author seems to have forgotten to mention or to footnote them.]

his 2001 monograph.¹⁷ In his *Biblica* article, Danove contributes a fundamental insight to the ongoing discussion of the role of the Son of Man in Mark's narrative and shows how Mark deploys a rhetoric of repetition to progressively reaffirm ("sophisticating rhetorical strategy") or contradict ("deconstructive rhetorical strategy") existing beliefs. Danove concludes that, contrary to previous beliefs of his readers, Mark's narrative rhetoric foregrounds the Son of Man's progressive characterization as suffering, dying, rising and coming again.

Though, as Porter himself admits, his essay is merely programmatic and suggestive, Stanley Porter's application of register to Mark's gospel¹⁸ points the way forward with some useful examples of how Hallidayan register theory may shed light on some much debated issues in Markan studies, including Mark's rhetorical agenda. For Porter, the concept of register represents a valid, complementary ally to traditional criticism in the quest for the recovery of the context of situation that called forth the text. However, it seems to me more concrete results will be obtained from the analysis of a specific section of the gospel such as the Olivet Discourse episode, since it seems clear

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that Mark uses more than one register, and individual sections could have been shaped by the writer to address separate rhetorical needs. Mark 13 is widely recognized to be such a section.

The view that Mark is in his Olivet Discourse attempting to cool off eschatological passions has strong backing from the most influential works. Contrary to this well established view, I will show that the primary thrust of the speech is to focus his audience's attention on the road signs leading up to the "abomination of desolation" and accompanying events as described in vv. 14-23. Verses 5b-23 include the peak of the speech and the answer to the disciples' question, delivered in a crescendo fashion in an unusual register with both procedural and paraenetic features. The section beginning with verse 24 represents the opening of a new temporal horizon in the speech by means of a clear register shift, and no longer addresses the question of the disciples regard-

¹⁷ P.L. DANOVE, "The Rhetoric of the Characterization of Jesus as the Son of Man and Christ in Mark", *Bib* 84 (2003) 16-34, esp. 23-25 on the Son of Man: ID., "Contribution of the Method to Narrative Analysis", *Linguistics and Exegesis*, 120-139. An earlier version of this chapter appeared as "The Narrative Function of Mark's Characterization of God", *NT* 43 (2001) 12-31.

¹⁸ S.E. PORTER, "Register in the Greek of the New Testament: Application with Reference to Mark's Gospel", *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts. Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation* (ed. M.D. CARROLL) (JSOTSS 299: Sheffield 2000) 209-229.

ing the temple's destruction, nor any action required of them. In fact, it doesn't even address the disciples directly. I will show that the procedural register evident in Mark 13.5b-23 communicates urgency, with increasing rhetorical effect culminating in vv. 14-23. In light of the fact that this register is absent from Matthew's parallel passage, Matthew 24, Mark's composition may reveal something about the situation and contribute to the determination of the date of the gospel. I will show that changes in register are the clearest revealers of Mark's agenda in the Olivet Discourse.

II. The Olivet Discourse Episode: Cohesion, Structure and Register Variation

The narrative introduction and speech are clearly a cohesive literary unit,¹⁹ both internally, and in relation to the rest of Mark's gospel. The relationship of the introductory verses (1-5a) providing the setting, as well as the prophecy of Jesus and, especially, the question of the disciples to the speech itself (5b-37), has been a subject of intense

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debate. To what extent is the speech an answer to the disciples' question? Has the Markan Jesus addressed the two-part question directly and are there clear indicators of this in the language and structure of the speech? Conversely, is the speech a partial answer in which the Markan Jesus addresses the question, as well as adding information not requested by the disciples? A majority of scholars have sided with the latter view. Thus BEASLEY-MURRAY believes there is much in the speech that appears unrelated to the prophecy and question.²⁰ Trocmé argues that, in the speech, the Markan Jesus addresses not the temple and the timing of its destruction, but the parousia.²¹ Hooker sees much of the speech being directed not to the disciples, but to the readers of the gospel.²² The determination of the referent of ταῦτα... πάντα [all these things] in the disciples' question (v. 4)

¹⁹ From the classics, the most detailed treatment of the structure and cohesion is probably J. LAMBRECHT, *Die Redaktion der Markus Apokalypse* (AnBib 28: Rome 1967) 267-300. See also T. J. GEDDERT, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (JSNTSup 26; Sheffield 1989), and S. VILLOTA HERRERO, *Palabras sin ocaso. Función interpretativa de Mc 13.28-37 en el discurso escatológico de Marcos* (Instituto Bíblico y Oriental: Estella 2006). Villota Herrero has written lengthy chapters on the thematic connections between vv. 28-37 and the rest of the speech and gospel. Most recently see YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*, 594.

²⁰ BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Last Days*, 356.

²¹ TROCME, *L'Évangile*, 323-324.

²² HOOKER, *The Gospel*, 298-300.

and throughout the speech (vv. 23, 29, 30) is rightly considered crucial for connecting the speech to the question, as we will see below. Unfortunately widespread confusion about the referent of τέλος [end] in the speech has clouded scholarly vision and led to the blurring of compositional boundaries fixed by Mark.²³ In the below section-by-section analysis we will show that τέλος [end] is not likely to refer to anything after v. 23 in the speech, a fact not precluding the opening of a new narrative horizon at verse 24, which Mark does without recourse to the word “end”.

In their approach to the structure of the speech itself, literary and rhetorical critics have expressed a commitment to let a thorough analysis of the text itself reveal Mark’s structure, ahead of other methodological considerations. This is a positive change from the source and form critical approaches that have been bound up with the study of the structure of the speech since the publication and widespread acceptance of Colani’s Little Apocalypse thesis.²⁴ Thus Hooker,²⁵

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Trocmé,²⁶ Pesch,²⁷ and others have speculated about the degree to which the Little Apocalypse or *Flugblatt* sources remain discernible throughout the major sections of our text. Those speculations aside, a consensus is evident among some of the most influential works concerning at least the most basic structure of the speech as we have it, namely, verses 5b-23; 24-27; 28-37.²⁸ The clear and emphatic colophon at v. 23 (ὁμοίως δὲ βλέπετε· προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν πάντα [but as for you, watch out! I have told you all things beforehand]), the sharply different style of the material in vv. 24-27, and the sapiential style of the final section containing a parable and a

²³ The referent of τέλος [end] is identified by a majority of scholars as the “parousia”, or the “end of the world”, even if these terms are foreign to Mark. Thus PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 121; HOOKER, *Mark*, 299-300; BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Last Days*, 374; TROCMIÓ, *L’Évangile*, 322; VILLOTA HERRERO, *Palabras*, 185; ROBBINS, “Rhetorical Ritual”, 103; BALABANSKI, *Eschatology*, 14; GEDDERT, *Watchwords*, 226; LANE, *The Gospel*, 448.

²⁴ See the discussion in BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Last Days*, 32-79.

²⁵ HOOKER, *The Gospel*, 298. For HOOKER, the speech shows “clear signs of having been pieced together” (297).

²⁶ TROCMIÓ (*L’Évangile*, 322-223) sees the “petite apocalypse chrétienne” in vv. 7-8, 14-20, 24-27.

²⁷ For PESCH (*Naherwartungen*, 65) the structure of the speech is based on the apocalyptic *Vorlage* [model] plus paraenetic material.

²⁸ Thus V. TAYLOR, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (London 1952) 499-500, though seeing some subdivisions: PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 65; HOOKER, *Mark*, 30-301— with some subdivisions; LAMBRECHT, *Die Redaktion*, 286; BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Last Days*, 365. More recently, though with subdivisions in the first section indicating “stages” (YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*, 613). YARBRO COLLINS (*Mark*, 614-615) speaks of the first section as indicating stages of “the end time”, being the third stage. VILLOTA HERRERO, *Palabras*, 25-31

simile, have not been missed by most scholars. Other structural elements that have often been discussed are the two references to false prophets / false christs that form an inclusio at the beginning and end of the first section (5b-23), the high number of imperatives, the temporal references etc.

Several proposals regarding “structural keys” to the entire speech have been made. Of these, the following are worth noting here. Balabanski has seen the unusually high number of imperatives in the speech, βλέπετε [watch!] in particular, as the structural key.²⁹ Thus also Lane.³⁰ Pesch has noticed that the ὅταν [when] clauses in vv. 7 and 14 “...markieren deutliche Einsätze innerhalb des Aufbaus der Rede [mark significant insertions within the structure of the speech]”.³¹ Mateos sees that these clauses appear in both the question as well as distributed throughout the speech, and are therefore “marcas estructurantes primarias [primary structuring marks]”.³² My own proposal for the structure will explain how both these elements, together with choices from the transitivity network of Greek, are combined by Mark in an unusual register, a functional variety of language, not used by him anywhere

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else in his gospel. This unusual register, a combination of paraenesis and procedural styles, is used by the Markan Jesus to discuss road signs in the near future of his audience, together with the required interpretation and reaction to these road signs. I will show how this register is evident in the language of vv. 5b-23, which includes the discourse peak and specific answer to the disciples’ question, and in the parable of vv. 28-29, but completely absent from vv 24-27. The final section of the speech and the episode as a whole, vv. 28-37 will be shown to be an interpretive key summarizing and distinguishing two distinct temporal horizons and associated required behaviors. We shall then be in a position to appreciate how this speech is “the most coherent of all those attributed to Jesus in Mark”.³³ Once the structure and rhetorical arrangement of Mark’s Olivet Discourse are set forth, I will briefly compare them with the parallel passage in Matthew 24 and suggest some conclusions regarding context of situation and dating.

²⁹ BALABANSKY, *Eschatology*, 72-74.

³⁰ The discourse is actually structured and sustained by the nineteen imperatives...”, LANE, *The Gospel*, 446.

³¹ PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 78.

³² J. MATEOS, *Marcos 13. El grupo cristiano en la historia* (Lectura del Nuevo Testamento 5:Madrid 1987) 146.

³³ YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*, 594.

1. Narrative Setting: vv. 1-5a

The presence of verbs of movement and the change of localization of v. 1 is characteristic of Markan structuring and indicates the beginning of a new section. The new section starting in 14.1 is signaled by a temporal shift and the re-introduction of characters not mentioned in chapter 13. As I will show below, the speech includes two emphatic colophons, one of which is placed at the very end (v. 37) and clearly marks the end of the discourse.

The portrayal of the disciples in Mark is another of the perceived keys to Mark's overall rhetorical structure in his gospel. This portrayal of the twelve becomes progressively more negative as the narrative advances.³⁴ But, what about Mark 13? Mateos has noted that in the narrative setting section (vv. 1-5a), Jesus is alone described as exiting the temple (v. 1: Καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ λέγει αὐτῷ εἷς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ [and as he was going out of the temple, one of his disciples says to him]) which is, in his view, an intentional Markan construction showing that while Jesus has left the Jewish institution,

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his disciples remain committed to it.³⁵ Similarly, only Jesus is portrayed as sitting "opposite" the temple (v. 3) as he begins his speech to answer the question of the disciples, a detail to which much importance is attached by Mateos and many others.³⁶ Those two clauses are all that can potentially be interpreted as contributing to Mark's negative portrayal of the disciples in this episode formed by the narrative setting and the speech. Geddert has argued that signs (σημεῖα) are consistently disapproved of in Mark's gospel, and, therefore the speech of Jesus does not include any signs, the question asked of him notwithstanding. As we will show below, Jesus does provide the disciples a set of road signs, in a crescendo of relevance and importance leading up to v. 14, and no negative judgment is passed, therefore, on the disciples'

³⁴ T.J. WEEDEN, "The Heresy that Necessitated Mark's Gospel", *The Interpretation of Mark* (ed. W.R. TELFORD) (Philadelphia, PA 1985) 90-91, argues for a progression of the negative portrayal of the disciples. See also in the same volume R.C. TANNEHILL, "The Disciples in Mark", 169-195; D. RHOADS – J. DEWEY – D. MICHIE (eds.), *Mark as Story* (Minneapolis, MN 1999) 90-94; 122-129. See also J. MATEOS, *Los "Doce" y Otras Seguidores de Jesús en el Evangelio de Marcos* (Madrid 1982).

³⁵ MATEOS, *Marcos 13*, 86-87.

³⁶ MATEOS, *Marcos 13*, 87. Scholars with an interest in Graeco-Roman rhetoric have attached special significance to Jesus' positioning against the temple. Thus ROBBINS, "Rhetorical Ritual", 5; YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*, 602. But compare the καθήμενου... κατέναντι τοῦ ἱεροῦ [as he sat... opposite the temple] clause of v. 3 with 12.41: καθίσας κατέναντι τοῦ γαζοφυλάκιον [having sat down opposite the treasury], where Jesus sits opposite the offering box in order to evaluate positively the type of giving into the offering box that is praiseworthy.

request. It is not signs from heaven or supernatural portents that both question and answer refer to, but concrete road signs that may help the disciples interpret and properly react to the events that are to befall them in the near future. Thus, two senses of the word σημεῖα [signs] are evident in this episode, only one being inappropriate and characteristic of false prophets and false Christs (v. 22, cf. 8.12, no σημεῖον [sign] shall be given to this generation). France is, therefore, correct; the disciples are asking when the temple will be destroyed, and what σημεῖον will help them to prepare for that formidable event.³⁷ To this question Jesus provides a rather detailed answer (5b-23), but also gives additional predictions which extend beyond the scope of the question, delivered in a completely different style (24-27), and wraps up the speech with an interpretive key to the entire discourse (28-27).

Following Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple, the disciples ask the master a two-fold question: When will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished? Does the question point to one or two separate events as

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its referent(s)? Scholars who argue for the latter view usually take the second clause (τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα [what is the sign when these things will all be ended up*]) to be eschatologically loaded, specifically by the verb and/or by the plural "all (these) things".³⁸ But no such inference is justifiable from the immediate context, or from the meaning of the verb συντελεῖσθαι, of which this is the only instance in Mark. Much more likely is the explanation that the ταῦτα... πάντα [all these things], merely indicates that the disciples perceive the destruction of the temple to be a com-

³⁷ R.T. FRANCE, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC: Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 506. He argues that the question and the speech deal only with the destruction of the temple until v. 32 which refers to the second coming of Jesus.

* [Translating συντελεῖσθαι as "to end up" in order to echo the related word τέλος, "end".]

³⁸ TAYLOR (*The Gospel*, 502) suggested the natural sense, but then strays from it: "ταῦτα [these things] points back to the prophecy of the destruction of the temple, and, taken by itself, ταῦτα πάντα [all these things] has the same meaning. But as the chapter now stands, ταῦτα πάντα [all these things] appears to point forward, and it is in this sense that it is commonly interpreted". See also HOOKER, *The Gospel*, 305; VILLOTA HERRERO, *Palabras*, 159; YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*, 602. But see J.R. DONAHUE – D.J. HARRINGTON, *The Gospel of Mark* (Sacra Pagina 2; Collegeville, MN 2002) 368, who argue that "these things" and "all these things" most likely refer to the same event, namely, the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.

plex event or a process leading up to a climax.³⁹ This interpretation is certainly confirmed by the answer of Jesus in vv. 5b-23, which, as I will show, contains the peak of the speech and a direct answer to the question of the disciples.

As we will see below, clear connections exist between the speech and the question asked by the disciples. Vv. 23 and 29-30 include respectively πάντα [all], ταῦτα [these things], and ταῦτα πάντα [all these things], all pointing back anaphorically to the question, and contributing to the cohesiveness of the entire episode. More significantly, cohesiveness is achieved by the temporal ὅταν [when] clauses of vv. 7, 11, 14, and 28-29, which also point back to the question (4b) and give the first and main section a sense of urgency and of moving forward progressively towards the climactic point of v. 14: "Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ... τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη [but when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not... then let those in Judea flee to the mountains]— the only combination of "when... then" in the speech, and the second of only two in the entire gospel (the other instance being 2.20). These ὅταν [when]

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clauses, characteristic of the first section, are absent from the second (vv. 24-27) and are picked up again in the final one, the interpretive key to the speech, which contrasts by means of parable and simile, that which is known and understood by means of road signs (first horizon, vv. 5b-23) from that which is unpredictable and indeterminate, and requires a state of constant vigilance (second horizon, vv. 24-27).

2. Road Signs and Tribulation: vv. 5b-23

The speech itself begins with a typical Markan construction: "And Jesus began to say to them".⁴⁰ It seems self-evident that, throughout the section, Jesus is addressing his disciples, at least the four explicitly mentioned in the narrative setting section: Peter and James and John and Andrew (v. 4). However, Jesus is addressing his audience

³⁹ BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Last Days*, 386; MATEOS, *Marcos*, 126; YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*, 602. The latter two scholars argue that Mark has carefully edited the question so as to make it connect the prediction of Jesus with the speech. Lambrecht sees in the ταῦτα [these things] (4a) ταῦτα πάντα [all these things] (4b) a formal parallelism, the "all these things" expanding the thought of the earlier "these things", but having the same referent. However, LAMBRECHT (*Die Redaktion*, 85-87) argues with the majority of scholars that συντελεσθαι [to be ended up] is a "terminus technicus" referring to the "Endzeit" ["End Time"]. FRANCE (*The Gospel*, 505) makes the strongest statement in regard to the referent of ταῦτα πάντα [all these things], calling the positing of a second subject "an exegetical tour de force".

⁴⁰ See TAYLOR, *The Gospel*, 63; PRYKE, *Redactional Style*, 79.

simply by means of verb forms and pronouns in the second person plural, beginning and ending the section with the imperative βλέπετε, watch out! Three major subsections are discernible (vv. 5b-8; 9-13; 14-23) each having as its thematic core a command to watch, a ὅταν clause (when...) and a number of imperatives by which Jesus prescribes concrete behavior expected of the disciples at specific times.

Thus, the three subsections represent a triad, with each of its members incorporating a command to watch out, a ὅταν [when] clause indicating a future event(s) in need of interpretation, and one or more imperatives by which Jesus prescribes the behavior he expects from the disciples in response to the event(s) described. As mentioned above, the abundance of imperatives has led many scholars to define the genre of the section, or even the entire speech as paraenetic. However, the summary above suggests this material is more than mere paraenesis. As mentioned, we have here a combination of the ὅταν [when] clauses, depicting concrete situations or events the disciples will be faced with, and the associated imperatives, which builds up in relevance, immediacy and intensity from the "look out" of v. 5, to the "watch out for yourselves" of v. 9 to the "when... then" statement of verse 14, in a subsection ending with the emphatic: "I have told you all things." The crescendo of this section was not missed by Lambrecht, who argues correctly that the presence of τότε [then] in v. 14 "increases the voltage".⁴¹ In fact, the emphatic "when... then" of v. 14 answers directly and unmistakably the disciples' question, providing the final and clearest

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σημείον [sign], the final road sign indicating that "all these things" are to be fulfilled. Thus the first ὅταν [when] clause makes reference to "wars and rumors of wars," which will be heard by the disciples. In reaction to these, they should not be alarmed, for though these things "must happen," the end is not yet (ὄπω τὸ τέλος). The second subsection increases the immediacy and the urgency by means of the explicit subject plus reflexive pronoun in βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτοῦς [but as for you, watch out for yourselves]. The second ὅταν [when] clause makes clear that the disciples themselves will become victims in the dreadful times ahead: When they bring you handing you over... don't worry about what you will say. Finally, in v. 14 the ὅταν [when] clause becomes fully specific and detailed: When you see the desolating sacrilege... then, let those in Judea flee to the mountains, etc. The following verses describe the tribulation that will befall the disciples in the near future, with

⁴¹ LAMBRECHT, *Die Redaktion*, 148.

specific instructions to flee and save their lives. The tribulation notwithstanding, God has shortened those days on behalf of his elect. In the second member of an inclusio, the Markan Jesus refers again to the deceivers, false prophets and false christs who will rise in order to deceive, if possible, even God's elect. The final clause of this subsection delivers a clear sense of finality and completeness, and refers anaphorically to the question of v. 4: ὑμεῖς δὲ βλέπετε· προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν πάντα [but as for you, watch out! I have told you all things beforehand].

The language of this section is a rare mix of procedural and paraenetic registers, which associates behavior with specific time frames by means of "when X do Y" patterns, and has the highest concentration of ὅταν [when] clauses in the entire gospel. In Mark, ὅταν [when] clauses can carry a gnomic sense, as in the parables in chapter 4, which contain the second highest concentration of ὅταν [when] clauses in all of Mark, and refer to situations or processes that are assumed to be always or generally occurring. As Pesch points out, another set of ὅταν [when] clauses seems to have an eschatological sense (8.38; 9.9; 12.23 etc),⁴² as they refer to the time of Jesus' coming, resurrection, or the resurrection of the dead. In chapter 13, however, the usage is clearly different, as here the "when" clauses are an integral part of a speech about future events, of which its main section, 5b-23, is a set of instructions associated to time frames progressing towards a climax. The closest examples of this usage of ὅταν [when] in conjunction with imperatives is found in some of Paul's letters, as he delivers final and highly practical instructions to be carried out when he next visits churches, when his letter is read, when

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he sends Artemas, etc (Col 4.16; Titus 3.12 etc). The question of the disciples is concrete, specific, and related exclusively to Jesus' prediction of the doom of the Jerusalem temple. The first part of the speech (5b-23) addresses the question directly and specifically and does provide a set of potential or actual road signs culminating with the sign par excellence, set up where he ought not to be.⁴³ When the disciples see the desolating sacrilege, those who are in Judea should flee without delay as

⁴² PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 119.

⁴³ The determination of a historical referent is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the strong connections that tie the question and speech together, the emphatic colophon of v 23 which refers back to v. 4b, and the mention of Judea lend strong support to those that see vv. 14-23 as describing the events of 70 AD in Jerusalem including the razing of the temple. This view is further supported by a comparison of the parallel material in Matthew 24, for whom these events appear to be in the past. Matthew has left out the crescendo-creating ὅταν [when] clauses with imperatives, except for that of v. 14. In Matthew's version of the Olivet Discourse the focus has become the parousia.

the tribulation that will ensue is without parallel in history. The warning against false prophets and christs closes the inclusio that was opened at v. 6, and the section ends with the powerful colophon, in which πάντα [all things] points back anaphorically to the second part of the disciples' question (v. 4b): But you watch out! I have told you all things.

Contrary to Pesch, I wish to argue that Mark is not in this section writing anti-apocalyptic material, and inserting "when" clauses to correct eschatological expectations. Pesch is also incorrect in arguing that no real signs are given but merely the suggestion of "the end" being "nearly" [near].⁴⁴ Neither apocalyptic nor anti-apocalyptic, this material is practical, of direct and immediate relevance to the audience, yet conveying urgency in a crescendo which cannot be missed by readers and hearers, and which culminates in v. 14. As I mentioned above, the identification of the referent of τέλος [end] (vv. 7, 13) is a crucial issue, without which this section, as well as the speech as a whole, cannot be properly understood. The two instances of the word are part of the first and second subsections I have outlined above which exhibit the "when X do Y" pattern and build up in intensity climaxing in the third subsection. In the first instance, Jesus tells the disciples that wars and rumors of wars must come, but this is not the end. In the second instance, after describing in some detail the suffering that will befall the disciples, Jesus concludes: But he who endures to the end will be saved (v.23). This is followed immediately after by the final subsection

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which starts powerfully in v. 14 with the most emphatic ὅταν [when] plus imperatives set, expressed in the "when X then Y" construction, appearing only twice in the entire gospel. There are no more references to τέλος [end] in Mark 13, or in the remainder of the gospel.⁴⁵ In light of this, and the complete change in register and subject matter that begins in v. 24, it seems clear that "the end" cannot refer to anything after v. 23. Indeed, the two instances of τέλος [end] are pointing forward to the answer to the disciples' question (τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι [what is the sign when these things will all be ended up]), an answer that is finally complete with v. 14-16. Pesch and Geddert have both failed to see that, as is to be expected from the question asked, this section is the discussion of a set of road signs (when X

⁴⁴ PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 119.

⁴⁵ Besides the two instances in Mark 13, there is only one additional instance in 3.26: καὶ εἰ ὁ σατανᾶς ἀνέστη ἐφ' ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐμερίσθη οὐ δύναται στήναι ἀλλὰ τέλος ἔχει [and if satan should rise up against himself and be divided he cannot stand but has an end].

do Y) leading up to and climaxing in a concrete event in the near future of his audience. In fact, the only end in view in this section of the speech is that of the temple, as predicted by Jesus in v. 2.

As we will see below, Mark 13.27 contains the only ergative clause with the Son of Man as agent in the entire gospel: ἐπισυνάξει τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ [he will gather his elect], a clause edited by Matthew to make the angels the agent.⁴⁶ In stark contrast with the grammatical role assigned to the Son of Man in 13.27 is the role assigned to the audience of Jesus in vv. 5b-23. The audience is addressed by means of second person plural verbs and pronouns, most often appearing in the direct or indirect object slot, or as subjects of passive verbs or of imperatives pronounced by Jesus or by the false prophets (v. 21 ἴδε ὧδε ὁ Χριστός [look here is the messiah]).⁴⁷ The “you” subject

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does not appear as agent in any ergative clauses, and only in 4 out of a total of 23 clauses as subject of verbs of seeing, hearing, speaking or being.⁴⁸ Finally, in 8 clauses (vv 14-17) the third person singular and plural subjects are clearly to be understood as subsets of “you”: “When you see the desolating sacrilege, then, let those who are in Judea...”. In this final category, the subjects are commanded to flee, not to turn back to collect anything, not to go down or re-enter their houses, and a

⁴⁶ Cf. Matt 24.31: καὶ ἐπισυνάξουσιν τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ [they shall gather his elect] with the angels as subject. The clause in Mark 13.26, with the Son of Man as agent of a material process, is in contrast especially with the Son of Man clauses of Mark 8–11. The depiction of the Son of Man as a patient sufferer which begins in 8.31, reaches a climax in the third passion prediction (10.33-34) as Mark piles on 7 verbs with the Son of Man on the receiving end of the actions of his enemies: παραδοθήσεται... κατακρινούσιν αὐτὸν θανάτῳ καὶ παραδώσουσιν αὐτὸν... ἐμπαίζουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐμπτύσουσιν αὐτῷ καὶ μαστιγώσουσιν αὐτὸν καὶ ἀποκτενοῦσιν [he shall be handed over... they shall judge him to death and hand him over... they shall mock him and spit on him and whip him and kill him].

⁴⁷ “You” as subject of imperatives in vv. 5b-23, note especially those with explicit subject, and one imperative issued by the false prophets. βλέπετε μὴ θροεῖσθε, βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς, μὴ προμεριμνάτε, λαλεῖτε, προσεύχεσθε, ἴδε ὧδε ὁ χριστός, μὴ πιστεύετε, ὑμεῖς δὲ βλέπετε [watch out, do not be troubled, but as for you, watch out for yourselves, do not worry ahead of time, speak, pray, see here is the messiah, do not believe, but as for you, watch out] (9). “You” as object (direct or indirect) or as passive subject in vv. 5b-23: μὴ τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ, παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς, δαρήσεσθε, ἐπὶ ἡγεμόνων καὶ βασιλέων σταθήσεσθε, ὅταν ἄγωσιν ὑμᾶς παραδιδόντες, ὃ ἐάν δοθῇ ὑμῖν, ἔσεσθε μισούμενοι, ἂν τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ, προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν πάντα [let not anyone deceive you, they will hand you over, you will be beaten, you will stand before rulers and kings, when they lead you handing you over, whatever would be given to you, you will be hated, if anyone should say, I have told you all things] (10).

⁴⁸ ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε, τί λαλήσητε, οὐ γὰρ ἔστε ὑμεῖς λί λαλοῦντες, ὅταν δὲ ἴδητε [but when you hear, what you should say, for you are not the ones speaking, but when you see].

woe is pronounced on those that are pregnant or breast-feeding. Of particular note are those clauses with “you” as explicit subject, especially v. 9: βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς [but as for you, watch out for yourselves], and v. 23: ὑμεῖς δὲ βλέπετε [but as for you, watch out]. Both are particularly emphatic, the former serving to increase the immediacy and relevance of the road signs for the “you” audience, and the latter to contrast “you”, with those who might be deceived (v. 22), and to underline further the colophon closing this section.⁴⁹ In my analysis of Acts 27, I showed that ergativity is central to the author’s rhetorical strategy, as he depicts God as the ultimate Agent who drives events forward, the apparently efficacious actions of men notwithstanding.⁵⁰ In Mark 13, procedural register is constructed on the basis of “when” clauses, the associated behavior expressed in imperatives, and patterns of ergativity which reveal the agency of the enemies of the disciples as the followers of Christ are to be victimized in various ways. The role assumed by Jesus in the speech is that of the (nearly) all knowing and authoritative master who knows and controls future events, and is thus able to supply concrete instructions to guide his disciples as they navigate the dangerous road ahead.

The identification of Jesus’ followers with the sufferings of the master is for Mark a fundamental element of discipleship, a fact noted by most commentators. The clause breakdown I provide helps us to understand how that message is conveyed in Mark 13. In vv. 5b-23, the disciples are, similarly to the Son of man in the three passion predictions, consistently described as being in the receiving end of the actions of their enemies, as they are handed over, beaten, hated, and

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killed. Their suffering notwithstanding, the disciples should draw significant encouragement from the fact that it is God, not their temporally bound oppressors who ultimately drives events forward. The two positive references to the necessity of things (vv. 7, 10) suggest divine providence and ordering of events. Further, in vv. 19-20, at the height of the suffering, Mark goes out of his way, grammatically, to highlight God’s agency in creation and election: “Since the beginning of God’s creation, which He created” (v. 19) “on behalf on the elect, whom He chose” (v. 20).

⁴⁹ See LAMBRECHT, *Die Redaktion*, 171; BEASLEY-MURRAY, *Last Days*, 420-421; MATEOS, *Markos 13*, 325. YARBRO COLLINS (*Mark*, 614) calls this clause in v. 23 a “summary statement”. FRANCE (*The Gospel*, 530) however, ignores this and concludes his discussion of v. 23 with the words: “The end has begun”. He believes v. 23 “sums up the discourse so far”, but that with vv. 24-27 “the answer to the question is now coming to its climax”.

⁵⁰ MARTIN-ASENSIO, *Transitivity*, 71-79.

Rather than cooling off eschatological expectations, the ὅταν [when] clauses in this section point forward irrevocably and by means of road signs to the events described in vv. 14-16. After those final instructions, Jesus refers back to the question and is able to say with unmistakable finality: "But you watch out, I have told you all things", that is, I have answered your question, I have given you the road signs that will precede the temple's destruction. The procedural-paraenetic language of this section, the language of road signs with its increasing urgency and relevance, makes sense while human action is a possibility. That appears not to be the case in the following section of the speech.

3. *The Coming of the Son of Man: vv. 24-27*

The strong adversative ἄλλ' [but], separates the material starting in v. 24 from the previous section and introduces a new scene.⁵¹ While Mark does repeat the ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις [in those days] of the previous section, the adversative together with the preposition μετὰ [with] qualifying the phrase τὴν θλίψιν ἐκείνην [that tribulation] indicates a new, later time frame. The distinction of vv. 24-27 as a separate section, however, does not rest upon the presence of the two particles. Missing from this section is everything that drove the message home to Jesus' audience in vv. 5b-23: Imperatives, second person verbs and pronouns, anaphoric references to the disciples' question, the language of road signs as described above including the ὅταν [when] clauses, and any reference to deceivers, opponents, or any human action whatsoever. The overall urgency and immediacy of the previous section are absent from vv. 24-27.

Vv. 24-25, described fairly by Dyer as "a Markan pastische of

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Septuagintal allusions",⁵² appears to be a poetic transition passage, written in language taken directly from a large, familiar stock of eschatological material, which includes Isaiah 13.10 (LXX): καὶ σκοτισθήσεται τοῦ ἡλίου ἀνατέλλοντος, καὶ ἡ σελήνη οὐ δώσει τὸ φῶς αὐτῆς [and it will be dark as the sun rises, and the moon will not give its light]. In Isaiah 13 the context is the day of the Lord coming with judgment against Babylon and the nations, as well as sinful humanity as a whole (13.11). I concur with Wright in seeing this language as symbolic,

⁵¹ Thus TROCME, *L'Évangile*, 327; LAMBRECHT, *Die Redaktion*, 114. MATEOS (*Marcos 13*, 331) though believes it remains connected with the previous one by the repetition of tribulation, "in those days", and "then". FRANCE (*The Gospel*, 531-532) however, warns against deriving too much from the adversative.

⁵² DYER, *The Prophecy*, 267.

and conveying the message that what follows is of "earthshattering" significance,⁵³ I differ from Wright, France,⁵⁴ and Hatina⁵⁵ in that I see in this section (vv. 24-27) a new temporal horizon in the speech, its only connection with the previous material being that it is God who ultimately drives the events depicted in both. The previous section, vv. 5b-23 is the rhetorical core of the speech. It contains the answer to the disciples' question regarding the temple's demise, delivered in a crescendo fashion of increasing immediacy and relevance until the final road sign is given by means of the attention-catching formula "when X then Y" (vv. 14-23). In the colophon of v. 23, the Markan Jesus wraps up the procedural-paraenetic section, and, in contrast to those who might be deceived, concludes: "But as for you, watch out, for I have told you all things" With this colophon, the Markan Jesus concludes his answer to the disciples' question, and the subject of the temple's destruction is now closed.

Starting with v. 24, hearers of the speech cannot miss the change in setting. The immediacy, the urgency and direct relevance for "you" of the earlier section are gone. In fact, in contrast to the concreteness of "you", as the object of most clauses in the previous section, the object of the Son of Man's gathering are the elect "out of the four winds, from the end of the earth to the end of heaven" (v. 27). A new act in the unfolding drama has begun, in which there is no longer a need to watch out. Further, there are no imperatives and no temporal references other than the double τότε [then] "and then they will see..." (v. 26) and "and then he will send his angels" (v. 27), which communicate indeterminacy in the future, in contrast to the specificity of the ὅταν [when] + second person plural imperatives or ὅταν [when] plus τότε [then] of the previous section. Without

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engaging with these fundamental differences, Wright argues, following Caird, that vv. 24-27 are still part of Jesus' answer to the question raised by his disciples, and that the entire speech makes reference to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.⁵⁶

Clouds of controversy continue to swirl around vv. 26-27. To what extent and how is this passage dependent on Daniel 7Θ; directly related to the previous question, what

⁵³ N.T. WRIGHT, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis, MN 1996) 362.

⁵⁴ FRANCE, *The Gospel*, 530.

⁵⁵ T.R. HATINA, "The Focus of Mark 13.24-27: The Parousia, or the Destruction of the Temple?", *BBR* 6 (1996) 43-66.

⁵⁶ WRIGHT, *Jesus and the Victory*, 341.

is the direction of the Son of Man's⁵⁷ "coming," or "going" (ἐρχόμενον)? How are we to explain the changes in clause structure, including the insertion of the articles, from the Aramaic of Daniel 7.13 to the Greek of Mark 13.26, and other New Testament passages? What is the referent of "they will see" (ὄψονταί) in v. 26? How is this section, radically different as it is, tied thematically to the material before and after it in the speech of Jesus? I will address these points in order.

The degree of dependency of Mark on Daniel 7 is one of the *cruces interpretum* [interpreters' crosses] of this passage. Is it only a clear allusion to Daniel, or are we to use the Danielic text to interpret Mark 13 in its details, assuming a similarly detailed association on the part of the audience/readership of the speech?⁵⁸ The focus of the present article is linguistic and literary, and matters of intertextuality are outside our scope. However, I wish to address this point in terms of what Wright, France and Hatina claim, based on their reading of Daniel, ought to be the interpretation of Mark 13.26-27. Thus, as appears to be the case in Daniel 7, Wright and France argue that the movement of the Son of Man in Mark 13.26 ought to be understood as upward to God's abode, in order to be enthroned and receive eternal dominion.⁵⁹ From a literary point of

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view, however, the Markan Jesus, identified with the Son of Man at various points in the gospel, has no need to ascend to heaven to receive dominion. In Mark, Jesus has already been connected with the clouds, the realm of God, in two key moments in the gospel, namely, the baptism (1.9-11) and the transfiguration (9.2-13). In the

former, the heavens are rent, and a voice is heard from heaven saying "you are my beloved son." As Witherington has argued, the words used in Mark 1.11 are reminiscent of enthronement language (Ps 2.7; Isa 42.1), and suggest Jesus is being enthroned by God as king at the outset of his ministry.⁶⁰ In 9.2-13, as Jesus is transfigured on the mountain before Peter, James and John, a cloud overshadows them, and the familiar voice is heard again "this is my beloved son, listen to him." Unlike Daniel 7.13ff, Mark 13.24-27 includes no references to God or the Ancient of Days before whom כּבֶר אֱנֹשׁ (MT) / ὁ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου (LXX) [one like a son of man] appears. Secondly the context in Daniel is judgment (e.g. v. 7.26), but in Mark 13.24-27 there is no mention of judgment, but only of coming with glory and power, and gathering of the elect from the end of the earth to the end of heaven. In our passage, the Son of Man is seen by "they", presumably human beings, as he advances in the clouds in order to gather his elect from the whole earth. Thus, not only those who see his coming, but the beneficiaries of that coming, his elect, are people located on earth.

In addition to what we gather from the immediate context, Scott shed some light on the issue with an insightful and influential discussion of clause structure in the Aramaic and LXX / Theod. Greek *vis-à-vis* the Greek of Mark 13.26.⁶¹ Scott pointed out that in the MT of Daniel 7.13b, as well as in the OG and Theod. Greek versions, the clause "in (or upon or with) the clouds of heaven" was most likely not qualifying adverbially the manner of coming of "one like a son of man," but was merely setting the scene, continuing from vv. 9-10. That is, the supposed adverbial phrase "with the clouds of heaven," would merely indicate the locale of God's throne and abode, as similar phrases do in

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Ezekiel and elsewhere. Lastly, the clouds are a theophanic symbol in the Hebrew scriptures, and it seems far more natural for the clause in Dan 7.13 to be describing God's abode, rather than the fashion of the one like a son of man's coming. In light of this, it is curious, argues Scott, that in the New Testament quotations of this passage, the order of the clause is altered, to make ἐν νεφέλαις [in the clouds] qualify the manner of the Son of Man's coming, affirming as well that his coming is seen by humans on earth. In the Christian context, therefore, we no longer have the visionary setting in which God's heavenly abode is opened up to the seer's view. Instead,

⁵⁷ The exponential growth in the literature on the Son of Man in recent decades is illustrated in C.C. CARAGOUNIS, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* (WUNT 38: Tübingen 1986) 9-10, n. 1-2. For a recent summary and evaluation see D. BURKETT, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (SNTS MS 107: Cambridge 1999). From a literary-critical standpoint see H.L. CHRONIS, "To Reveal and to Conceal: A Literary-Critical Perspective on the Son of Man in Mark", *NTS* 51 (2005) 459-481.

⁵⁸ See on this HATINA ("The Focus". 60, n.66) admitting the problematic nature of the assumption, and qualifying it in terms of "a certain degree of familiarity". But this qualification is absent from his statement in the note 74.

⁵⁹ On the basis of Daniel 7, argues WRIGHT (*The Victory*, 361), including footnote 156, we should interpret the coming as towards God, not downward to earth: "Nothing in Daniel, in the rereadings of Daniel in the first century, or in the teaching of Jesus as we have studied it, pushes the reading of Mark 13.26 in that direction". See also FRANCE, *The Gospel*, 534. HATINA ("The Focus". 63), however, seems to interpret the direction as downward, but only metaphorically, as the Son of Man is seen to be directly associated with the judgment and destruction of the temple. The natural reading of the Markan text itself, however, leads us to conclude that the moving is in fact downward. Thus HOOKER, *Mark*, 319.

⁶⁰ WITHERINGTON, *The Gospel*, 50.

⁶¹ R.B.Y. SCOTT, "Behold He Cometh with Clouds". *NTS* 5 (1955-1956) 121-132. See also N. PERRIN, "Mark XIV.62: The End Proddict of a Christian Peshet Tradition?", *NTS* 12(1966) 150-155.

the Son of Man is now seen coming with the clouds to earth. The change in clause structure effectively emphasizes this new perspective in the New Testament context.

Thus, Mark is indeed using the Daniel passage, but he rewrites it in order to apply it to the Son of Man's future coming to earth, to vindicate and gather the elect. As we saw in the analysis of the previous section, in v. 20, Mark is emphasizing that the elect are God's: "But on behalf of the elect, which He chose [the Lord] shortened the days." In v. 27, however, the elect are the Son of Man's elect,⁶² and the manner of his coming to gather them is depicted in the language of theophany,⁶³ the coming or appearing of God Himself upon the cloud on behalf of His people, as in Ex 34.5.⁶⁴ Downward coming is in fact the natural reading of our text in the context of the section and the entire chapter.

For the determination of the referent of "they will see" in v. 26, Pesch suggested we should turn to the trial scene of 14.62 and allow that passage to shed light on 13.26. The subject thus ought to be understood, argues Pesch, as the opponents of Jesus and his word.⁶⁵ This is also Hatina's view.⁶⁶ But the aspect of judgment or condem-

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tion which could be inferred for "you will see", in the trial scene is completely absent in vv. 24-27, a fact noted by

⁶² The possessive pronoun αὐτοῦ [his] is omitted by D, L, W, and others, but the reading which includes the possessive is generally acknowledged to be the original one.

⁶³ BEASLEY-MURRAY (*Last Days*, 430) affirms: "A theophany is always from heaven to the world of human kind... the representative of heaven comes from heaven to accomplish God's purpose in the world". See also E. ADAMS, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven* (LNTS 347; New York 2007) 151. See also SCOTT, "Behold", 132; CARAGOUNIS, *Vision and Interpretation*, 74; J. LUZARRAGA, *Las tradiciones de la Nube en la Biblia y en el Judáismo primitivo* (AnBib 54; Rome 1973) 220.

⁶⁴ In this reference, the theophany is a coming down of Yhwh upon the cloud (κατέβη [he came down]).

⁶⁵ PESCH, *Naherwartungen*, 168.

⁶⁶ HATINA, "Who", 24-27. The sharp distinction between insiders and "bystanders" Hatina sees in Mark 8.38-9.1 does not take into account that Jesus' words of warning are motivated by Peter's refusal to accept the way of the cross. Thus Peter is in fact part of "this sinful and adulterous generation". Rather than conflating the three Markan references to the coming of the Son of Man to argue a uniform meaning for all of them (judgment), taking each in its own context seems more productive and less likely to result in strained interpretations. TAYLOR (*The Gospel*, 569) suggests that in 14.62, the combination of Psalm 110.1 and Daniel 7.13 shows that "the emphasis lies on enthronement". I would argue that in chapter 8 Mark suggests a separate "snapshot of the same event taken from the angle of judgment, while in 13.26 what is highlighted is salvation and vindication of those same disciples who were told to experience suffering in the near future.

many.⁶⁷ The third person plural ὄψονται [they will see] is more likely an instance of the impersonal plural in place of a passive form, a feature long recognized as characteristic of Markan redactional style.⁶⁸ Interestingly, France shares this interpretation, and is thus forced to suggest that what is seen by humans on earth are the "consequences" of the Son of Man's heavenly enthronement.⁶⁹ As expected with other examples of the impersonal plural subject in Mark, Matthew supplies the explicit subject in his parallel passage by inserting πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς [all the tribes of the earth] in 24.30.

In order to understand Mark's usage of ὄψονται [they will see] we must take into account the thematic importance of verbs of seeing in the gospel as a whole, and in the Olivet Discourse in particular. Geddert's work brought to scholarly attention the consistent, "technical" use of βλέπω [look] in Mark, every usage of which "appears intended by the author to contribute to a carefully devised call for discernment...".⁷⁰ Unfortunately, Geddert fails to include ὁράω [see] in his analysis, and only makes a passing reference to it in his brief discussion of 13.26. In fact, of the 15 instances of βλέπω [look] in Mark, none are future forms, and future

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forms of "to see" are realized with ὁράω instead, as in 13.26; 14.62, and 16.7. The same holds true for Matthew and Luke, with one exception, the quotation of Isaiah in Matt 13.14, which has the future form of βλέπω [look]: βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε [looking they will look and not see]. Thus, Mateos is correct when he argues in regard to ὄψονται [they will see], "como en otros pasajes 'ver' equivale a conocer" ["as in other passages, 'see' is equivalent to 'know'"].⁷¹ Seeing is for Mark tantamount to perceiving and understanding, independently of the seeing verb used. In the Olivet Discourse, the disciples must watch out in response to the events that will unfold in their near future, which include attempts by "many" to deceive them. As we pointed out above, in the

⁶⁷ BEASLEY-MURRAY (*Last Days*, 430) notes that theophany can involve judgment or salvation, but "By accident or design, however, the discourse is silent on the latter aspect". Thus also YARBRO COLLINS, *Mark*, 614. Characteristically, GEDDERT (*Watchwords*, 227) believes judgment is neither unambiguously excluded nor unambiguously included, and—for him—Mark has made the speech intentionally ambiguous.

⁶⁸ See C.H. TURNER, "Markan Usage: Notes. Critical and Exegetical on the Synoptic Gospel". *The Language and Style of the Gospel of Mark. An Edition of C.H. Turner's 'Notes on Marcan Usage' together with Other Comparable Studies* (ed. J.K. ELLIOTT) (NTS 71; Leiden 1993) 4; TAYLOR, *The Gospel*, 47. FRANCE (*The Gospel*, 535) also believes this to be an instance of Mark's impersonal plural usage.

⁶⁹ FRANCE, *The Gospel*, 535.

⁷⁰ GEDDERT, *Watchwords*, 60.

⁷¹ MATEOS, *Marcos 13*, 360.

section made up of vv. 24-27, human action is no longer required or possible, and the coming of the Son of Man will be seen, that is, known and understood. The verb in its Markan context suggest the revealing of that which was before only partially grasped by disciples, as well as the object of counterfeiting by false christs.

As we mentioned above, the clause ἐπισυνάξει τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ [will gather his elect] (v. 27), is the only clause with the Son of Man as agent in an ergative clause among the 14 Markan Son of Man sayings. That Mark 13 is the context of the Son of Man's most efficacious activity, grammatically speaking, in the entire gospel is not surprising. In the main section of the discourse (5b-23), the disciples are given a consistent patient role, as Jesus predicts they will be, similarly to their master in earlier and later material, handed over, beaten, and, in some cases killed, in a crescendo of suffering which culminates in vv. 14ff. In vv. 26-27, however, the disciples are given a glimpse of final vindication and salvation, but only in an indeterminate, unknown future, as the Son of Man comes powerfully and gloriously to take them to himself, in a manner reminiscent of the coming of God on behalf of His people.

4. *The Interpretive Key to the Speech:* vv. 28-37

In v. 28 Jesus turns again the focus of his speech to his disciples. The imperative "learn" is the only instance of the verb in Mark, and underlines the importance of understanding this parable. It also marks the beginning of a section, as Villota Herrero has shown, where verbs of knowing predominate.⁷² The particle δὲ [but] together with the abrupt change in scene, characters and topic marks the beginning of the new section. The colophon ὃ δὲ ὑμῖν λέγω πᾶσιν λέγω γρηγορεῖτε [but what I say to you, I say to all: stay vigilant] of v. 37 brings the section and the entire speech to its conclusion.

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A detailed analysis reveals that this material is highly cohesive with the rest of Mark 13, shares many of the fundamental structuring elements we have discussed above, and provides an interpretation of the oration by means of two complementary parables and their explanatory material. I side with Hooker, Mateos, Yarbro Collins, and the UBS Greek text⁷³ against the NA27, BEASLEY-

MURRAY, Lambrecht, Villota Herrero⁷⁴ and others, in seeing two distinct sections and not three in vv. 28-37, as follows:

Parable about knowing: Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς συχῆς μάθετε τὴν παραβολὴν [but from the fig tree learn the parable] (vv. 28-31)

Parable about not knowing: Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης ἢ τῆς ὥρας οὐδεὶς οἶδεν [but about that day or hour no one knows] (vv. 32-37)

As Mateos points out, Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς συχῆς [from the fig tree] (v. 28a) and Περὶ δὲ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης [about that day] (v. 32) are parallel constructions, each starting a new subsection.⁷⁵ In v. 28, Jesus picks up again the procedural style of ὅταν [when] clauses plus imperatives to remind his audience of the final road sign detailed in vv. 14-23, given in answer to the request of the disciples for a sign that will signal when "all these things will be fulfilled". The parable of the fig tree contains a ὅταν [when] (when you see...) clause followed by the knowledge which results from the seeing: "You know that summer is near". In v. 29 Jesus gives the application of the parable to the lives of the disciples: "In this way also, when you see all these things happening, know that it (or he) is near, even at the gate".⁷⁶ The two ὅταν [when] clauses connect audience and readers to similar clauses in vv. 7, 11, and 14, and to the question of v. 4, and convey specific guidance in procedural register, the language of road signs, their correct interpretation and associated behavior. V. 31, prefaced by v. 30, the formulaic Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν [amen I say to you] (12x in Mark), is Jesus' emphatic promise that this generation will not pass until ταῦτα πάντα [all these things] are fulfilled. As I detailed in my discussion of vv. 5b-23, πάντα [all things] and ταῦτα πάντα [all these things] are anaphoric, point back to the "all these things" (ταῦτα

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συντελεῖσθαι πάντα [these things will be all ended up]) of the disciples' question in v. 4, and refer, as the question did, to the destruction of the temple. V. 31b merely reinforces and elaborates on the Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν [amen I say to you] of v. 30, and is in stark contrast to the words of the deceivers, the false prophets and false christs of vv. 6, 21-22: οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται [but

⁷⁴ BEASLEY-MURRAY (*Last Days*, 449) suggests that vv. 30-32 belong together. LAMBRECHT (*Die Redaktion*, 286, 291-292) also separates vv. 30-31 from 28-29. VILLOTA HERRERO (*Palabras*, 31-33) places vv. 30-32 together.

⁷⁵ MATEOS, *Marcos 13*, 158.

⁷⁶ YARBRO COLLINS (*Mark*, 616) has failed to see the two options are possible ἔστιν. In any case "he" may still refer back to v. 14, as the participle ἐσθηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ is masculine!

⁷² VILLOTA HERRERO, *Palabras*, 27.

⁷³ HOOKER, *The Gospel*, 320-325; MATEOS, *Marcos 13*, 157-158; YARBRO COLLINS (*Mark*, 615) correctly sees in vv. 28-31 "an argument supporting imminent expectation".

my words shall by no means pass away]). There can be little doubt that v. 29 refers back to v. 14:

“Όταν δὲ ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως... τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη [but when you see the abomination of desolation... then let those in Judea flee to the mountains] (v. 14).

“Όταν ἴδητε ταῦτα γινόμενα, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἐπὶ θύραις [when you see these things happening, know that it is near, at the doors] (v. 29).

In contrast to the complex event referred to in v. 29 as ταῦτα πάντα [all these things], which will certainly be fulfilled within the lifespan of Jesus’ audience⁷⁷ is another event, for which no signs are available and the timing of which is unknown. “But regarding that day or that hour, no one knows...” (v. 32). These words begin a new subsection which includes its own “parable” and associated paraenesis, but is devoid of ὅταν [when] clauses. The only references to time in these 6 verses are expressed in negative terms: οὐδεὶς οἶδεν [no one knows] (v. 32) ...οὐκ οἶδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ καιρὸς ἐστίν [for you do not know when the time is] (v. 33) ...οὖν: οὐκ οἶδατε γὰρ πότε ὁ κύριος τῆς οἰκίας ἔρχεται [...therefore: for you do not know when the lord of the house is coming] (v. 35). In this second subsection, the simile illustrates not knowing when “the time” is, and having, therefore, to remain alert at all times (v. 33). The noun καιρὸς [time] appears 5 times in Mark, and its usage seems to denote specific, right, or even climactic time.⁷⁸ “This is like”— continues the Markan Jesus— “a man who, having left his house, went away on a journey. He gave each of his servants charge of his work, and he commanded the gate keeper to remain watching”. In the final verse, and colophon of the entire speech, the Markan Jesus widens his potential audience to include all disciples (“I say to all”). For readers and listening audience alike, the coming lord of the household is identified with the coming Son of Man of v. 26, whose coming is likewise predicted in an indeterminate future.

The 4 imperatives in this subsection: βλέπετε [watch], ἀγρυπνεῖτε [stay awake] (v. 33, ἀγρυπνεῖτε [stay awake] here qualifies βλέπετε [watch]); γρηγορεῖτε [stay vigilant] (v. 35) and γρηγορεῖτε [stay vigilant]

⁷⁷ This is the natural sense of ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη [this generation], though alternative views abound, many motivated by a desire to save the Markan Jesus from an obvious mistake, that is, the alleged prediction of the parousia within a generation of his audience. I have shown that these words, together with the rest of the subsection made up of vv. 28-31, refer to the destruction of the temple, and not the Son of Man’s coming as described in vv. 26-27.

⁷⁸ Thus in Mark 1.15; 11.13; 12.2. Perhaps less so in 10.30.

(v. 37) are used synonymously and all suggest the adoption of an attitude of constant vigilance and alertness. By means of these verbs, Mark effectively connects the Olivet Discourse with the Gethsemane episode, where Jesus commands his disciples to remain alert (γρηγορεῖτε [stay vigilant], 14.34: γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε [stay vigilant and pray] (14.38). The disciples, however, are twice caught sleeping (καθεύδοντας 14, 37, 40). Gedder and Villota Herrero have argued convincingly that the βλέπετε [watch] commands of 5b-23 and the γρηγορεῖτε/ἀγρυπνεῖτε [stay vigilant / stay awake] commands of the final section are fundamentally different, not only lexically, but also from a literary point of view. All of the instances of βλέπω [watch] outside Mark 13 occur before Mark 13, while all the instances of γρηγορέω [stay vigilant] outside of Mark 13 occur after this chapter.

III. The Language of Mark 13: From Text to Context

In Mark 13.5b-23, I have argued Mark is deploying a rare procedural register by which behavior is prescribed for the audience within specific time frames as indicated by the characteristic ὅταν [when] clauses plus imperatives. I have also discussed how choices from the transitivity network of Greek contribute to this procedural register by depicting certain participants as agents, while others, in most cases the “you” subject, are placed on the receiving end of the violent actions of others. Unlike more typical instances of procedural register, the audience in Mark 13 is not in a position to carry out any actions, other than understand, watch out, not fear, and escape. The course of “action” prescribed for them amounts to adopting the correct response and attitude in the face of the violent acts of their enemies. The features of procedural register are completely absent from the following section of the speech, vv. 24-27, in which the Markan Jesus opens a new temporal horizon in his oration, delivering material unrelated to the disciples’ question, that is, to the temple’s destruction and associated tribulation. In contrast to the events described in vv. 5b-23, no roadmap is available to forewarn of the Son of Man’s coming.

Porter has wondered whether we can “extrapolate from the text back to re-creation of the context of situation, as Halliday seems to want us to be able to do...”⁷⁹ My anal-

⁷⁹ S.E. PORTER, “Dialect and Register in the Greek of the New Testament”. *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts*. Contributions from the Social

ysis has shown how expressions of the ideational function of language (transitivity patterns

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including ergative clauses), interpersonal (role of authoritative prophet, teacher, master expressed through imperatives, etc.), and textual (cohesion by means of ὅταν [when] clauses and other elements), together constitute a functional variety of language we have called “procedural”. A brief comparison of our text with the parallel passage in Matthew 24 will help us to draw some conclusions regarding the situation that required Mark to edit the Olivet Discourse episode as he has, *vis-à-vis* Matthew’s account of it.

In Matthew 24.3, the disciples are asking Jesus: When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your parousia and of the end of the age? (τὶ τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος; [what is the sign of your parousia and of the ending-up of the age?]) thus “sign” is in the Matthean account associated with the parousia, not the destruction of the temple. Further, Matthew associates the word τέλος [end] with the preaching of the gospel to all nations, while Mark’s two references appear in the build up to the desolating sacrilege and refer only to the hardships that will precede it. Additionally, Matthew has done away with the first three ὅταν [when] clauses in the Markan account, including the one in the disciples’ question, leaving only the fourth that introduces the abomination of desolation itself. Gone from Matthew are also two of the commands to watch out, strategically placed by the Markan Jesus in Mark 13. The first is the emphatic βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς [but as for you— watch out for yourselves] of Mark 13.9, and the second the concluding and colophonous ὑμεῖς δὲ βλέπετε προεῖρηκα ὑμῖν πάντα [but as for you, watch out! I have told you all things beforehand] of 13.23, which concludes the main section of the Markan speech and refers back, as we saw, to the question of the disciples. Thus, the build-up to the desolation, as well as linguistic elements that made the process leading up to it immediate and relevant to the audience are removed from Matthew’s version of the speech. Instead, Matthew emphasizes the second horizon in the discourse, the coming of the Son of Man, which he calls the παρουσία [parousia], describing it in substantially greater detail than Mark. This includes the supplying of a subject to Mark’s “they will see” (all the tribes of the earth), and other details. Matthew seems also to be wishing to emphasize the imminent expectation of the parousia, as

he has the evil servant say in his heart, “my lord is taking his time...” (24.48).

What we suggested in our analysis of Mark 13 becomes somewhat clearer when we compare Mark’s account of the Olivet Discourse with Matthew’s. For Mark, the core, the highlight of the speech is, as we have shown above, the section clearly answering the disciples’ question in regard to the destruction of the temple. The Markan Jesus

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delivers this message in a crescendo of relevance and impact for his audience that cannot be missed. Indeed, the core of this message is delivered in a procedural register to emphasize time frames, and associated actions and behaviors. The victimization of the disciples in the buildup to the desolating sacrilege, matches the victimization of the Son of Man in the passion predictions, especially the third and most detailed one. The suffering of the disciples within the time frame of their own lives, however, is to be compensated only when the Son of Man comes in power in an indeterminate but certain future to gather his elect. While Mark would have his readers focus on the first and immediate horizon, Matthew has seen fit to remove the urgency, the relevance and impact of the first, and focus instead on the second. The significance of these linguistic choices for the discussion of the date of Mark, and Matthew, cannot be missed.

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