Child talk exploration of the child passages of the Gospel of Mark against the background of Norman Perrin's structural outline of Mark 8:22-10:52.

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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE
CHILD TALK:
EXPLORATION OF THE CHILD PASSAGES
OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK
AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF
NORMAN PERRIN'S STRUCTURAL OUTLINE
OF
MARK 8:22-10:52

by
Mary Margaret Sweeten

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of Religious Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts at
The University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario
1981
ABSTRACT

The central section of the gospel of Mark, 8:22-10:52, is discussed in detail with regard to the structure, teaching, and christology of Mark, beginning with a brief study of his purpose and compositional techniques. This work is built largely upon the exegetical research done by Norman Perrin with regard to the structure and purpose of the Markan gospel in general, and the crucial central section of this gospel in particular.

A brief history and current overview of existing Markan exegesis is presented, followed by a much more detailed exegesis of the seven child passages found within the central section. This exegesis has been developed to ground the hypothesis that these child passages were used by the evangelist to illustrate his teachings on true discipleship, entry into the kingdom of God, and the new status and acceptance of children within the Christian community of the first century and the applicability of those teachings to the present-day Christian community.

To explain more fully the importance of these new teachings within the first-century Markan community, a description of the place of children within the worshipping Roman and Jewish communities is presented to develop a Sitz im Leben for the seven child passages under study in this work.
Lastly, a new synthesis of Mark's teaching, as it applies to the twentieth century Christian community and its children, is developed with regard to proposed new attitudes about children and their rightful place within the worshipping community. There is also attention given to developing, within adults, a child-like sense of the wonder and acceptance necessary for creative and celebrational Christian living.
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated with joyful thanksgiving to...

the memory of my mother and father, who celebrated my being and allowed my childhood to be an adventure of acceptance and testing, joy and sorrow, make-believe and reality, and celebration and growth in the true spirit of Christian family living.

my friends, who although here unnamed, have unstintingly supported me with their loving prayers, their helping hands, their child-like joy, their ever-constant belief in my potential, and above all, their ability to help me keep things in the proper perspective.

Robert G. Sweeten, who has always been My Brother. It is from his unfailing love and untiring support that I have been able to draw the strength necessary to walk to the beat of my own drum. The children we were, and the child within us now helps us to celebrate life with joyous abandon and our family and friends with ingathering love.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deep and heartfelt thanks are extended to Edward J. Crowley, Helen I. Milton, Joseph T. Culliton, and Donna Foley for their support and belief in my quest for answers, challenges, peace, and a place within the greater family of man for all of God's children.
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CHAPTER ONE - PART I  Background

The gospel of Mark is a uniquely exciting work written by a brilliantly dedicated author whose sharp imagery and iconoclastic message is built upon the foundations of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. There is little doubt any longer that Mark was the prototypical gospel in that it was not only written first among the four gospels, but that the genre of gospel writing had not hitherto been in existence. This message, given to us in such a singular fashion, bears careful scrutiny and, to aid in so doing, the work and insight of Norman Perrin will be used as the major guiding resource.

One of the most compelling features about the gospel of Mark is the blend of past, present, and future so adroitly presented throughout at both the symbolic and the historic levels. Mark combined traditional teachings and stories about Jesus with his own material and managed to creatively address situations within his own church in such a manner as to symbolically represent Jesus at work within his own ministry while at the same time making the point Mark himself wanted to convey. This was also cleverly accomplished by Mark with regard to his own apocalyptic view toward the imminent coming of the Son of Man.

The past of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee and Judea, the present of the ministry of Jesus in and through his church, the future of the ministry
Jesus will exercise when he comes as Son of Man all come together in the narrative of Mark's gospel. In this way the evangelist brings to a climax the tradition he inherits and its literary conventions.  

One of the most striking examples of this flow of history in Mark is what Perrin refers to as the apocalyptic drama in three acts, all pointing toward an imminent parousia. The drama begins with John the Baptist who preaches and is delivered up, it moves on to Jesus who preaches and is delivered up, and proceeds finally to the Christians who preach and are themselves delivered up. "When the third act is complete the drama will reach its climax in the coming of Jesus as Son of Man (13:26)." This sense of movement is seen throughout the Markan narrative and gives the gospel an intensity of purpose and active anticipation unlike any of the other synoptics. One senses that Mark truly saw himself and his community in the very vortex of Christian history which was soon to end in the coming apocalyptic climax.  

Mark, in writing his prototypical gospel about the life and ministry of Jesus, used much of the existing traditional material which had been produced by the emerging church for various reasons. Chief among this traditional material Perrin identifies the passion narrative, which, along with the account of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus, also contains many references to scripture by way of attempting to help the community believe that a crucified Messiah was indeed necessary to fulfill the prophetic traditions. Along with the passion narrative, Mark also
inherited the account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, "which interprets the death of Jesus in its significance for the believer and which teaches about discipleship in light of the death of Jesus."\textsuperscript{11}

Mark 2, 5, and 7 all contain elements of traditional material and show evidence of entire units being used by Mark. Mark 2 is a cycle of controversy stories dealing with various aspects of traditional Jewish law and social customs like eating with sinners and tax collectors, the forgiving of sin, keeping a proper Sabbath, and fasting. Mark 5 and 7 are felt to contain an inherited-cycle of stories about Jesus set within the Hellenistic "divine man" genre.

Perrin further postulates that in Chapter 4 Mark added the secrecy motif in verses 10-12 to an existing collection of parables. The apocalyptic element which was so prominent a feature of the earliest Christian community is seen in much of Mark 13, although Mark himself added to this material and certainly placed it within its present setting.

The final pre-Markan unit of traditional material is the double cycle of stories which contain accounts of two feeding episodes, two incidents of crossing the lake, two disputes with the Pharisees, and two teachings about bread. Apparently here Mark is using two versions of the same tradition as this section lacks the usual Markan sense of flow and continuity.

Several scholars add other items to the list of pre-Markan units of tradition we have given, and others argue against some of them. But it is generally agreed that some such list is the extent of the connected units of tradition Mark had been
able to collect. Apart from these, there are only small or isolated units of tradition, and therefore the organization of the traditional material into an integrated structure is something Mark himself has done. The structure of the gospel of Mark is the work of the evangelist, and it is very important for an understanding of what he was trying to do and to say.  

Perrin writes with strong conviction that the structure of the gospel of Mark bears a great deal of careful study, as the key to understanding the message the evangelist wished to convey was mainly revealed by the way in which he put the work together. The sense of movement alluded to earlier was accomplished by the very clever use of geographical references placed within a journey motif, and by the frequent use of summary passages to recapitulate preceding occurrences and prepare the reader to move ahead to the next section. The journey motif takes the reader from Galilee 1:14-6:12; into an area beyond Galilee, 6:14-8:26; then, moving from Caesarea Philippi toward Jerusalem, 8:27-10:52, and finally into Jerusalem, 11:1-16:8, for the final action. The summary passages occur in 1:14-15, 21-22, 39; 2:13; 3:7-12; 5:21; 6:6b, 12-13, 30-33, 53-56; and 10:1. The center section, 8:27-10:45, which is of major importance to this work, is bracketed by two giving-of-sight stories, the blind man at Bethsaida, 8:22-26, and blind Bartimaeus, 10:46-52, and is used by Mark as a teaching section on discipleship and the nature and necessity of the suffering Messiahship of Jesus.

Perrin's structural outline of the entire Markan gospel is as follows:
1:1-13  Introduction
1:14-15  Transitional Markan summary
1:16-3:6  First major section: the authority of Jesus exhibited in word and deed
3:7-12  Transitional Markan summary
3:13-6:6a  Second major section: Jesus as Son of God and as rejected by his own people.
6:6b  Transitional Markan summary
6:7-8:21  Third major section: Jesus as Son of God and as misunderstood by his own disciples
8:22-26  Transitional giving-of-sight story
8:27-10:45  Fourth major section: Christology and Christian discipleship in light of the passion
10:46-52  Transitional giving-of-sight story
11:1-12:44  Fifth major section: the days in Jerusalem prior to the passion
13:1-5a  Introduction to the apocalyptic discourse
13:5b-37  Apocalyptic discourse
14:1-12  Introduction to the passion narrative with intercalation, verses 3-9
14:13-16:8  Passion narrative

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the structure of the Markan gospel is a product of the scholarship and intent of the evangelist himself. Mark's very determined purpose may only be fully ascertained as one continues to delve into the subtleties of his interconnected use of history and symbol for the setting of his iconoclastic message of discipleship and Messiahship which must have been so upsetting to the traditional beliefs and practices of his day. With this in mind, it is now time to move into the specific area of concern of this study. This very important and totally unique center section of Mark, 8:22-10:52, contains the thrust of Jesus' ministry and teaching on discipleship and his Messianic mission and motivation. It is within this section that Mark develops the Son of Man motif even more fully, and also adds the interesting dimension of the many child passages within the context of teaching Mark's readers about the true
nature of the qualities necessary to attain the Kingdom of God.
CHAPTER ONE - PART II  Mark's Central Section

If the true essence of the gospels lay in their iconoclastic nature, and if many of the symbols were used in the exact opposite sense of their traditional meaning, and if so many obvious values and social positions were thus turned upside down, it seems justifiable to postulate that the Son of Man passages and the child passages in the book of Mark may bear closer scrutiny with regard to their interconnectedness of purpose and symbol in upsetting traditional viewpoints. Just as the world-weary and confused contemporary Christian struggles with Mark's Son of Man and child passages, so must have the self-centered and status-conscious disciples to whom Mark portrayed Jesus as first addressing these words, and, indeed, the persecuted and parousia-minded first-century church for which Mark wrote.

Several places in the gospel of Mark where references to Jesus as the Son of Man and where incidents with children are ascribed to Jesus are jarring to the twentieth-century Christian mind, but were even more so to the minds of the members of the church for whom Mark composed his gospel. In the second chapter of this study, this sense of the iconoclastic will be seen as evident in the Son of Man and child passages in the center of the gospel which is bracketed by the two giving-of-sight stories; 8:22-10:52.

It must be borne in mind that the central concern of
Mark was to construct a work which would serve, "...to exhort and to instruct readers who await an imminent parousia in the period immediately following the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple."¹⁸ There is general agreement between Perrin and other scholars that, although much of the Markan gospel is based upon existing sayings and narratives, the framework into which he chose to place these passages, as well as his own work, was largely the work of the evangelist himself.¹⁹ For the purpose of this work, the structure of Mark 8:22-10:52 as outlined by Norman Perrin²⁰ will be used to ground my discussion of the child passages and their proximity to the Son of Man passages which has been hitherto overlooked in the literature on the gospel in general and particularly in this most crucial center section concerning Christology and Christian discipleship.

In passing, it is interesting to note that as Willi Marxsen said that Mark must have written his gospel "backward" from the passion narrative,²¹ and Martin Kahler has claimed that Mark is, "...a passion narrative with an extended introduction,"²² the section under consideration contains three passion predictions to help prepare the reader for that all-important passion narrative ending. That this section which contains the three passion predictions also contains seven passages of the proposed child motif and seven passages of the Son of Man motif should lend credibility to the hypothesis of this work.

Perrin labels the passage of Mark under consideration as
the fourth major section in the structure and indicates that the two giving-of-sight stories are important transitional brackets around it. 23

Note that there are two stories about people being given their sight, the blind man at Bethsaida (8:22-26), and blind Bartimaeus (10:46-52). They occur where the geography shifts, and they also symbolically enclose the section of the gospel where Jesus tries to make his disciples see the necessity for his suffering and its significance for an understanding of discipleship — signally failing to do so (8:27-10:45). 24

The following is Perrin's structural outline of Mark 8:22-10:52 to which I have added the Son of Man passages and the child passages integrated into it as separate entries as they occur.

8:22-26 Bethsaida transitional giving-of-sight story.

8:27 Caesarea Philippi.

8:27-30 Fundamental narrative of Peter's confession.

8:31-9:1 First prediction unit.

Prediction, 8:31

SON OF MAN, 8:31

Misunderstanding, 8:32-33

Teaching about discipleship, 8:34-9:1

SON OF MAN, 8:38

9:2 "After six days...." Transfiguration.

9:9-13 Elijah as forerunner.

SON OF MAN, 9:9

SON OF MAN, 9:12

9:14-29 Appended incident and teaching on discipleship.

CHILD PASSAGE, 9:14-27

Teaching to disciples, 9:28-29
9:30  Galilee (9:33 Capernaum).

9:30-37  Second prediction unit.
         Prediction, 9:31
         SON OF MAN, 9:31
         Misunderstanding, 9:32
         Teaching about discipleship, 9:33-37
         CHILD PASSAGE, 9:36-37

9:38-50  Appended incident and teaching on discipleship.
         Nondisciple practicing exorcism, 9:38-40
         Teaching to disciples, 9:41-50
         CHILD PASSAGE, 9:42

10:1  Judea and beyond Jordan.  Interlaced units of
      incident and teaching to the disciples.

10:2-12  Divorce.
         The Pharisees and divorce, 10:1-9
         Teaching to disciples, 10:10-12

10:13-16  CHILD PASSAGE
         The presentation of the children, 10:13
         Teaching to disciples, 10:14-16

10:17-31  Entering the Kingdom of God.
         The man with the question, 10:17-22
         CHILD PASSAGE, 10:19-20
         Teaching to disciples, 10:23-31
         CHILD PASSAGE, 10:24
         CHILD PASSAGE, 10:29-31

10:32  The road to Jerusalem.

10:33-45  Third prediction unit.
         Prediction, 10:33-34
         SON OF MAN, 10:33
         Misunderstanding, 10:35-41
         Teaching about discipleship, 10:42-45
         SON OF MAN, 10:45

CHAPTER ONE - PART III Teaching and Christology

Mark, it has been noted earlier, used many of the existing units of material about the life and teaching of Jesus which he found within the oral tradition of the early church. Many of these traditional passages or units found their impetus within the Old Testament material and were designed to show how these predictions and prophecies had indeed come to pass with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. Many of them were apologetic in scope and were used to justify the ignominious events of the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of the man who had been touted as the Messianic deliverer of the Jews. 25 Much of this traditional material assumed a totally different thrust 26 when it became part of the Markan theology and Christology which so radically changed the understanding of the man Jesus, his earthly ministry, his Messianic obligation to the emerging Christian community, and the true nature of the relationship of this new community to his Father.

Mark used many ways in which to get his teaching across to his own community, but two images strike me as the most revolutionary in scope and iconoclastic in nature. These are the re-defined nature of the Son of Man image and the subtle insertion of the many child passages in and around the teachings to the disciples about the true nature of discipleship and entry into the kingdom of God. In regard to this
Perrin notes:

It is my contention that the evangelist Mark is the major figure in the creative use of Son of Man traditions in the New Testament period. To him we owe the general picture we have from the Gospels that Son of Man is Jesus' own favorite self-designation and that Jesus used it to teach his disciples to understand both the true nature of his messiahship, as including suffering and glory, and the true nature of Christian discipleship, as the way to glory through suffering. Because of the Gospel of Mark we get the impression that this is what Jesus does, but this is actually what Mark does, for recent research has shown that a major purpose in the writing of the Markan Gospel is a christological purpose; it was the purpose of the evangelist to teach the Christians of his day a true Christology in place of the false Christology which he felt they were in danger of accepting. 27

The Son of Man images used by Mark came to him in three traditional ways which must be discussed before moving on to the uniquely Markan Son of Man passages. The first of these inherited images is the apocalyptic sense in which the Son of Man is understood. These originated in an Old Testament exegesis and worked their way through, "various ecclesiastical traditions such as the eschatological judgment pronouncement tradition, the eschatological correlative, and the apocalyptic promises." 28 The second inherited tradition reflects upon, "the ministry of Jesus as the ministry of the Son of Man designate and eventually of the Son of Man himself." 29 Mark finally unites two of the inherited traditions which use paradidonai (to deliver up or to betray), in conjunction with the passages about the passion of Jesus: what Perrin has come to call, "the apologetic paradidonai tradition which uses Son of Man and the soteriological paradidonai tradition
which does not. 30

If this contention is correct, then the specifically Markan uses of Son of Man are concentrated in the sequence of references which begins with 2:10 and ends with 10:45. The first Son of Man reference in the Gospel is 2:10 and the ones after 10:45 are simply embedded in traditional material and allowed to stand by Mark; 13:26 is an apocalyptic promise; 14:21, 41 are from the apologetic paradidonai tradition; 14:62 from the Christian exegetical tradition which began it all; and all are in material where Markan redactional and compositional activity is at a minimum. 31

It is not the intention of this paper to present an exhaustive study of the various aspects of the Son of Man passages as Perrin perceives them; suffice it to say that they were carefully placed by Mark at developmental levels of the unfolding understanding of Jesus as the Son of Man within the context of his messianic mission as the Son of God on earth. However, it cannot be overly emphasized that Mark creatively used the Son of Man images he inherited, as well as those he himself placed upon Jesus' lips, as one of the major vehicles by which he pictured Jesus' christological teaching to his disciples, and in so doing, corrected the tendency toward false christology Mark saw evolving within his own community. 32

It is, however, the intention of this study to suggest that just as Mark used many of the Son of Man passages to correct a growing false christology within his community, he used many of the child passages to correct false ideas abroad about the true nature of discipleship. It will be noted that even a cursory glance at Perrin's structural outline (see above), yields the fact that every child passage either immediately
precedes, follows, or is incorporated into a section which is intended to teach the disciples about some facet of the nature of Jesus' ministry and mission, what true discipleship is, or the way into the kingdom of God.

Further, just as Perrin states that the Son of Man passages fall into three categories: the suffering Son of Man as seen in 8:31; 9:31; and 10:33-34, the authoritative Son of Man pictured in 2:10 and 2:28, and the apocalyptic Son of Man referred to in 8:38 and 13:26, so do we have child passages closely approximating these three categories. The "authority" Mark accords children may be seen in 9:36-37; 9:42; and 10:13-16. The "suffering" of childhood may be seen in 9:14-29, but also in 5:21-24; 35-42; and 7:24-30. Finally, the "apocalyptic" nature of the child passages may be seen in 10:29-31, but also in 13:12 and 17. The next chapter will cover these in detail.

Lastly, Perrin points out that the Son of Man passages are within the passion prediction unit structure of prediction, misunderstanding, and teaching as may be clearly seen in the outline, and so also do we find child passages figuring very prominently in two of the three passion prediction units. In the third unit we do not have a distinct child passage, but Mark has Jesus respond to James' and John's request to sit at his right and left hand with a reiteration of the teaching in 9:35 in which he used a child to demonstrate a teaching about greatness.

In this unit Mark also has Jesus referring to himself
as "a ransom for many" (10:45) and, although the term "ransom" has many connotations within the Old Testament, one of them is certainly the concept of the redemption of the first-born son by sacrificing the appropriate animal in place of the child himself. Whether children were actually ever sacrificed within the Hebrew tradition has never been fully substantiated. That lack of proof notwithstanding, Mark had Jesus proclaim himself ransom for all and that statement, along with the other child passages, assures us that Markan theology took children out of a sacrificial context and made of them instead beings to be served and imitated.

An attempt will be made to prove that the nature of the purpose and symbol of the Son of Man passages and the child passages is indeed that of upsetting traditional viewpoints. The traditional viewpoints about Jesus and his messianic message and mission, about the true nature of discipleship, and about the rightful place and importance of children and child-like faith within the kingdom of God were all irrefutably thrust upon the conscious awareness of Mark's first-century Christian community, and so should they be thrust upon the conscious awareness of our own worldwide twentieth-century Christian community. The next section of this work will address Perrin's invitation to approach the study of these new aspects of Markan theology and purpose by going into detail about the nature and thrust of the child passages found between 8:22 and 10:52, that carefully composed center section of the Gospel of Mark.35
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER ONE

1 A minority view has developed among some authors, Hans-Herbert Stoldt and others, which would challenge the claim of Markan priority. See Howard Clark Kee's article, "Mark's Gospel in Recent Research," Interpretation, ser. 4, 32 (October 1978), pp. 361-364.


3 "This kind of thinking is characteristic of apocalyptic writers; such writers think naturally of a drama that began in the past, continues in the present they and their readers are experiencing, and will reach a climax in the imminent future with the coming of the End." Perrin, The New Testament, p. 145.

4 "In the gospel Jesus directly addresses Mark's readers, and not only in the apocalyptic discourse; the characters (except for Jesus) are representations of individuals Mark is addressing; the teaching which Jesus gives is directed towards the actual situation and problems of the Markan church." Norman Perrin, Christology and a Modern Pilgrimage, ed. Hans Dieter Betz (Montana: Scholars Press, 1974), p. 36.


6 Ibid.

7 "(Para)didonai developed as a technical term to be used of the passion of Jesus. ...it is clear that it is a terminology appropriate to the fate of any godly man. In Mark 1:14... it is used of John the Baptist. For all that it is an extremely emotive word, and for all that it may carry with it overtones of the fate of prophets and men of God, the verb (para)didonai does not of itself have any particular theological significance." Norman Perrin, A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pp. 98-99.


9 "...there is some agreement that the evangelist is writing for a community or communities of Christians caught
up in a period of apocalyptic fervor occasioned by the
circumstances of the Jewish War; and that he is writing either
shortly before or shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.
70. His purpose is to help his readers prepare themselves for
the coming of Jesus as Son of Man, an event both he and they
regard as imminent." The Interpreter's Dictionary of the
by Norman Perrin.

11 Ibid., p. 145.
12 Ibid., p. 146.

13 "The form is a narrative of the ministry of Jesus, but
the concerns are those of Mark and his church, and the purpose
is directly to exhort, instruct, and inform Mark's readers.
...a major aspect of the Markan purpose is christological:
he is concerned with correcting a false Christology prevalent
in his church and to teach both a true Christology and its
consequences for Christian discipleship," Perrin, A Modern
Pilgrimage, p. 110.

15 Ibid., p. 147.
16 Ibid., pp. 155-158.

17 Kelber writes that of the four gospel stories Mark is
the most "startling" to the reader. "Its most surprising
feature is the elimination of all authority figures who
mediate between Jesus and the reader of the Gospel. There
are altogether three mediating authorities: the relatives
of Jesus, the messianic prophets, and the disciples. Mark
opposes all three of them. Mark's theological enterprise,
is the rejection of tradition and the return to the ori-
gin...." Werner H. Kelber, Mark's Story of Jesus (Philip-
phia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 95. Harrington calls the
Markan gospel, "...uncompromisingly uncomfortable." Further,
"Mark acknowledges that Christian existence is paradoxical."
Wilfred Harrington, Mark (Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc.,
1979), p. xiii. Gros Louis contends that, "...a total change
is about to take place: What Jesus brings is not new ideas for
old structures or new structures for old ideas. Both the
ideas and the structure are to be 'new' and 'fresh.' Jesus'
'new teaching' that amazes and often baffles the people and
his disciples contain many paradoxes." Kenneth R. R. Gros
Louis, "The Gospel of Mark;" Literary Interpretations of
320-321. Donahue challenges us to a, "...parabolic reading
of Mark; for an approach to Mark's Jesus with a sense of
wonder, awe, and holy fear; for an openness to the extra-
ordinary in the midst of the ordinary; for a suspension of belief that true faith may occur. ...Mark communicates vividness and strangeness...by the use of irony and paradox. Response to this parable puts the ordinary askew. It involves a challenge to the total fiber of life." John R. Donahue, "Jesus as the Parable of God in the Gospel of Mark," Interpretation 32 (October 1978): 381 and 386. "The teaching of Jesus was set in the context of ancient Judaism, and in many respects that teaching must have been variations on themes from the religious life of ancient Judaism. But if we are to seek that which is most characteristic of Jesus, it will be found not in the things which he shares with his contemporaries, but in the things wherein he differs from them. Now those circles of early Christians who were most concerned with the Jews...tended to 'tone down' the startlingly new element in the teaching of Jesus...and also to develop new traditions specifically related to emphases in Judaism." Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 39-40.


Perrin, Interpreter's Dictionary Supplementary Volume, p. 572.

Perrin, Christology, pp. 8-9.


Ibid., p. 147.

Ibid., pp. 145-146. Cf. "It is evident that the earliest Christians made most significant use of the Old Testament in their theologizing. They developed major aspects of their belief and expectation from Old Testament texts, interpreting the texts in the light of their experience and their experience in the light of the texts." Perrin, Rediscovering, p. 23.

...the most characteristic feature of the gospel tradition, especially in contrast with Jewish rabbinical tradition, is the remarkable freedom which the transmitters of that tradition exercise in regard to it. The almost cavalier manner in which sayings are modified, interpreted and rewritten in the service of the theology of the particular evangelist or editor is quite without parallel in Judaism, and is only possible in Christianity because of the basic Christian conviction that
the Jesus who speaks is the Jesus who speaks, i.e. because of the absolute identification of earthly Jesus of Nazareth and risen Lord of the evangelist's or editor's Christian experience." Ibid., p. 31.

27 Perrin, Christology, pp. 77-78.
28 Ibid., p. 78.
29 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
30 Ibid., p. 79.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 84. Cf. "One of the evangelist's major purposes is christological: he seeks to combat a false Christology which unduly emphasizes the power and glory of Jesus, and which sees his passion and death only as a prelude to glory; i.e., the passion became an apotheosis. In deliberate contrast to this, Mark develops and emphasizes the theme that a true Christology must see not only the power and glory of the Christ but also the necessity for his suffering."


33 Ibid.
34 Perrin, Pilgrimage, p. 110.
35 ...an approach to the Gospel along the three avenues of redaction criticism, the question of model or purpose, and general literary criticism shows that Mark is using Son of Man to express his own Christology; that he uses Christ and Son of God to establish rapport with his readers, and Son of Man to interpret and give content to those titles. It is not the claim of this paper that these conclusions are new — on the contrary they would generally be accepted by the world of scholarship — but it is the claim of the paper that the fact that they can be reached by the approach suggested validates that approach and suggests a similar approach to other aspects of the Markan theology and purpose." Ibid., p. 121.
CHAPTER TWO - PART I  Overview of Markan Exegesis

The study of the gospel of Mark reminds one of the evolution of our knowledge of planet Earth which began with the voyages of discovery made by the early explorers and continues today with manned space flight. After the initial fear of falling off of the edge of the world was overcome, those brave explorers of old set out to see what lay beyond the known horizon of their world. Their original destinations were often based on fantastic legends and were frequently completely unattainable by the routes chosen. Early maps were naive attempts at picturing the unknown and, beyond a meager coastline approximation, trailed off into an abyss of uncharted terrain. Quickly, as seen now through the myopia of historical time, more and more of the unknown lands came to be explored and charted in increasingly minute detail, until now modern man has mapped, charted, and described much of his accessible universe. The history of this exploration is the history of the evolving needs of mankind and its changing political, social, economic, and religious beliefs and practices. However, the job is far from complete. As mankind's needs and concerns evolve, as knowledge of inner and outer space continues flooding in, and as natural curiosity keeps pushing us ever onward in our quest for more detail about our world and its design and purpose, our exploration and mapping will continue to challenge scholar
and layman alike.

From this global exploration and mapping image of mankind in macrocosm, one may turn easily to the development of the exploration and "mapping" of the gospel of Mark and its design and purpose, and see many of the very same processes at work in microcosm. Just as the voyages of discovery have revealed what was always present geographically and physically, and mankind has slowly discovered the natural resources of the earth, so too have the various attempts at revealing the resources for the Christian community that lay within the Markan gospel message been slowly undertaken. This discovery process has come a long way and the stages detailing this growth which follow demonstrate a dawning awareness of the unique and challenging nature of Mark's purpose in writing his gospel. There is much uncharted terrain left, however, and the exploration of the nature and purpose of the child passages Mark composed is presented in this paper in an attempt to further the exegetical voyage of discovery being currently undertaken by the scholarly explorers through the Markan gospel. Paul Achtemeier, using our geographical image a bit differently, challenges the scholar and student alike by saying that the Markan gospel, "...is a rich lode to be mined by students...and that effort will be rewarded with new knowledge and with new insights in self and with new awareness of the ways of God with his people. Mark has yet more light to shed on the Christian life."¹

Originally, the Markan gospel was widely read within the
early community without need of specific authorship cited to
give it credibility. It was simply accepted and circulated
within the Markan community for whom it was composed.² By
the second century many people assumed that the gospels were
first-hand accounts and the, "...the authors were themselves
present at the events they describe, or at any rate, that they
knew people who were, so that their accounts give us direct
eyewitness testimony..."³

Then, as Christianity began to move into wider areas of
influence, it became necessary to grant the Markan gospel
authoritative status by ascribing its authorship to John Mark
who was depicted as being a companion to Paul in Acts.⁴
Papias, bishop of Hierapolis during the second century, went
so far as to report that John the Presbyter wrote:

Mark being the interpreter of Peter whatsoever
he recorded he wrote with great accuracy; but not
however, in the order in which it was spoken or done
by our Lord, for he neither heard nor followed our
Lord, but as before said, he was in company with
Peter, who gave him such instruction as was necessary,
but not to give a history of our Lord's discourses:
wherefore Mark has not erred in any thing, by
writing some things as he has recorded them; for
he was carefully attentive to one thing, not to
pass by any thing that he heard, or to state any
thing falsely in these accounts.⁵

After this early attempt to give credibility and status
to Mark and his gospel, little more was put forth as it was
simply felt that Mark was, "...merely the lackey and abbre-
viator of Matthew,"⁶ During the middle of the nineteenth
century the exploration into the Markan gospel began in
earliest. By the early years of the twentieth century, based
upon comparisons with the other two synoptics, the priority of the Markan gospel had been suggested. Scholars were beginning to also seriously explore the possibility that the evangelist had been the originator of the gospel genre of literature. Then, with all of the excitement and fervor of the multi-national race to explore and settle the New World, scholars from Europe, Great Britain, and the United States began undertaking the exploration of this unique and paradigmatic work which continues to hold countless theologians and students alike within its paradoxical grasp. The list of these scholars reads like a catalogue of modern biblical criticism and theology. However, as has been previously stated, this study will be confined to the work of Norman Perrin, one of his mentors, Vincent Taylor, and one of Perrin's students, Werner Kelber. Dennis E. Nineham, Wilfrid Harrington, and Theodore J. Weeden will also be cited as secondary sources in this chapter as Perrin's projected detailed exegetical work on Mark was left unfinished at the time of his death.

It is mainly with the scholarship of recent years that an attempt has been made to put aside the questions of authorship and provenance and to begin instead addressing the issue of the motivation and purpose behind the Markan gospel. It has now become clear that Mark's major purpose in composing his gospel was to combat false christology and give his community instead a dose of what has come to be known in modern psychological parlance as reality therapy. Whatever the exact date of the composition of the Markan
gospel, we now know that Mark wrote for a community in the grip of severe crisis at many levels. They were a community suffering from an identity crisis engendered by being seen as Jews by the Roman government, as heretics by the Jewish hierarchy, and as a somewhat upsetting amalgamation of Gentile and Jewish Christians by the Christian community. They were a community caught between the stark reality of the crucifixion and the wonder of the resurrection on one hand and the promised, but as yet unfulfilled glory of the parousia on the other. They were a struggling community whose oral history vaguely recounted stories of the man Jesus and his ministry and teaching but whose daily reality inclined them to begin embracing the emerging concept of Jesus. They were, in short, a community seeking a purpose, an identity, and a future on two levels; their own and that of their leader, this now enigmatic Jesus of Nazareth. Was he only yet another divine man within the long Hellenistic tradition of divine men, or was he truly the Son of God whose life and messiahship demanded something far different from his followers than any divine man before or since? Were his disciples to see themselves as the elect few chosen to accompany their messianic leader on his mission of glory and liberation, or were they the least among men following and emulating one who came to serve and to be given up as ransom for all? Mark obviously saw Jesus as the suffering Son of Man whose disciples could do nothing greater than turn and become as children so to follow their Messiah, with simplicity
and faith, through his ministry, passion, and resurrection into membership in the kingdom of God. Mark wrote these convictions in a way so unique, so startling, and so challenging that Perrin writes that,

...the moment was almost explosively creative, that the form he created, however unconsciously, was such as to meet dramatically the need for which he created it. Had it not been, then it would not have had the impact it did have in the churches, there would have been no gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the history of early Christian literature would have been very different, as would the make-up of the New Testament.¹⁸
CHAPTER TWO - PART II  Exegesis of the Child Passages

The Sitz im Leben of the Markan community was grim and Mark perceived the need for a new thrust of objectivity, commitment, and support. Perhaps a document was needed that would rekindle faith in the face of persecution, simplicity in the face of hero worship, and hope in the face of suffering and death. Mark took it upon himself to take the very bold step of designing such a document in the manner of a narrative about Jesus of Nazareth that would attempt to answer some of the needs of the community for which he wrote. He gathered story cycles, accounts of miracles, and traditional material and constructed a flowing geographical and historical narrative of the ministry, passion, and resurrection of Jesus in such a way as to combat the prevailing false christology and erroneous view of the nature of discipleship.

Past scholarship has demonstrated many of the ways Mark used traditional material and composed his own material to address a variety of issues and problematical situations. Various motifs have been uncovered and studied in depth as to their origin and purpose within the Markan gospel. It is now the intention of this work to present an exegetical study of the child motif used by Mark to further his aim of correcting the prevalent misunderstanding of the true nature of discipleship.

It is obvious that Mark valued children and used them as
examples of discipleship in a creative and loving way. It is also obvious that Mark saw little difficulty in ascribing the same feelings to the Jesus he so realistically portrayed. A case may even be made that, centuries before modern psychology pointed out the same fact, Mark perceived that truly healthy people acknowledge the child within themselves and celebrate that reality. One of the most moving examples of this insight on Mark's part is his portrayal of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Driven to his emotional extremes, deprived of the support of his followers, and faced with his imminent death, Jesus called to God with the plaintive, "Abba, Father." The Aramaic word, abba, of this plea may be rendered in English as Daddy! Who among us does not wish to call out to our own daddy at times of extreme pain or need? Who among us does not react to this heart-rending and child-like plea of Jesus?

We cannot continue to ignore the beautiful images Mark uses of Jesus and his interactions with children and his portrayal of Jesus' obvious feeling for and valuing of children. One must agree with Vincent Taylor when he writes, "Hardly anything is more characteristic of Jesus than his attitude to children." Mark, probably having inherited some of the traditional material which pictures Jesus and children in various situations, saw in these images perfect vehicles for some of his lessons about discipleship. What finer way to combat the arrogance of status seeking than to give priority to a child?
What finer way to counteract the self-proclaimed glory of being chosen to travel with the Messiah than to warn against doing anything to cause spiritual difficulty for a child? What finer method of correcting the false assumption of a guaranteed place within the kingdom because of the nature of one's place within the economic, religious, or political realm than to proclaim that the kingdom belongs to the children and to those who would become as children?

Indeed, the child passages are as enigmatic and paradoxical as much of the rest of the Markan gospel. That they have been largely ignored by biblical scholarship is a function of the same adult social and religious sense of superiority that Mark sought to combat by composing and using the child passages originally. Surely nothing in the society of Jesus' time would have prepared his followers for the image of the importance and immediate acceptability of children within the eyes of Jesus and the kingdom of God. No one would have thought to reach out to the child at hand and use him or her as an example of true greatness or discipleship within a group of men gathered in an elect circle around their new prophet. It would appear that the modern Christian community is little better prepared to perceive and accept such an iconoclastic image.

Mark 9:14–29 When they came back to the disciples they saw a large crowd surrounding them and lawyers arguing with them. As soon as they saw Jesus the whole crowd were overcome with awe, and they ran forward to welcome him. He asked them, "What is this argument about?" A man in the crowd spoke up: "Master, I brought my
son to you. He is possessed by a spirit which makes him speechless. Whenever it attacks him, it dashes him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and goes rigid. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they failed." Jesus answered: "What an unbelieving and perverse generation! How long shall I be with you? How long must I endure you? Bring him to me." So they brought the boy to him; and as soon as the spirit saw him it threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell on the ground and rolled about foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked his father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he replied; "often it has tried to make an end of him by throwing him into the fire or into water. But if it is at all possible for you, take pity upon us and help us." "If it is possible!" said Jesus. "Everything is possible to one who has faith." "I have faith," cried the boy's father; "help me where faith fails short." Jesus saw then than the crowd was closing in upon them, so he rebuked the unclean spirit. "Deaf and dumb spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never go back!" After crying aloud and racking him fiercely, it came out; and the boy looked like a corpse; in fact, many said, "He is dead." But Jesus took his hand and raised him to his feet, and he stood up. Then Jesus went indoors, and his disciples asked him privately, "Why could not we cast it out?" He said, "There is no means of casting out this sort but prayer."

The important image which appears within this text is that of the epileptic boy. It is around him that the action flows and through his healing that Mark discourses on faith and prayer and their ultimate relationship to discipleship. Although we have little actual information about the boy himself, he is used to illustrate the necessity of prayer in difficult situations and the need to rely upon the power of God which alone is adequate to heal. The boy's father is a very humanly drawn character and was Mark's symbol of man's knowledge of his own incomplete faith. The disciples are here represented as being unable to heal the boy because of
their lack of faith, their inability to deal with the realities of the messianic drama, and their overblown image of their own power to perform miraculous healings. The lawyers play no significant role in this account, but it has been suggested that their presence may have been, "...a conventional addition which secures their explicit inclusion in the condemnation for faithlessness."\(^{21}\) The oft-present crowd is here in evidence and is used by Mark to, "...dramatize, by contrast with the religious leaders, the positive response to Jesus. The crowds flock to him with eagerness... listen to his teachings enthusiastically..., and respond to his healing powers with anticipation..."\(^{22}\)

The progress of thought within this text begins actually with the transitional giving-of-sight story (8:22-26), in which Jesus heals the blind man at Bethsaida. This rather ironic introduction sets the stage for the repeated attempts on Jesus' part to lead the disciples to an understanding of themselves and the true nature of Christian discipleship, and the repeated failure of the disciples to comprehend these attempts. Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah is quickly shown to be a mistaken one as he does not understand, nor accept the suffering nature of Jesus' proclaimed messiah-ship.\(^{23}\) Here the reader is faced with the dawning awareness of the magnitude of the difficulty the early church must have experienced with the nature of the Markan understanding of Jesus' messianic identity. As Nineham reminds us, "...there was general agreement that the Messiah would accomplish his
work by the possession and exercise of brute power in one form or another - power is none the less power for being directly supplied from heaven - he would be a glorious and manifestly victorious figure to whom defeat and suffering would be entirely foreign." 24 Mark must now take his readers on to the next step in his attempt to correct the false christology he perceived developing, and have Jesus proclaim unequivocally that, "...his earthly future would be one of ignominy, defeat, and suffering." 25

As the narrative moves through the process of attempted teaching, so does it move geographically up the mountain to the act of transfiguration (9:2-8), which is seen in the Markan gospel as anticipatory of the coming parousia. 26 Coming down the mountain after the transfiguration, a discussion takes place between Jesus and Peter, James, and John about the prophet Elijah and his role in the grand historical plan for the people of Israel (9:9-13). Immediately after this discussion, Jesus cures a young boy, and, indeed, brings him back to life just as Elijah did the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:17-24. 27 Of all of the traditions that could have been drawn upon for this comparison between Elijah and Jesus, Mark chose the mutual healing of children!

Not only did Mark here employ the flow of history from past into present as noted earlier, but the progression from the mountain top experience also placed Jesus right back in the midst of the people and their increasing pleas for his teaching and healing presence. Robert Henry Lightfoot made
an observation about this miracle story (9:14-29 cited above), that points up a very interesting feature for the purpose of this study. "...The cure of the lad with the dumb spirit... is probably placed in its present position as a kind of foil to the story which immediately precedes it. It shows the same Jesus, who has just been glorified upon the mountain, once more at work among men on the plain below." 28

The literary form of this text is that of a narrative account of an exorcism, possibly of a conflated nature. Vincent Taylor maintains, that, "...it is not likely that Mark would have introduced this story at this point without the support of good tradition since its leading ideas, exorcism, faith, and prayer, are not vitally connected with the emphasis on Messiahship and suffering...." 29 Taylor supports a two narrative combination theory, "...in which the main interest is the inability of the disciples to effect a cure by reason of their neglect of prayer...." 30 Nineham also indicates that the present form of this text is probably due to the combination of two independent stories that were put together by Mark into a single story. He supports this supposition by noting the unusual amount of detail and the fact that a number of motifs emerge which may be seen upon first reading as somewhat confusing. 31

The form of this text contributes to an understanding of the content in that a careful reading of it indicates that the most significant concern is that of the necessity of faith. The reader is presented with the image of a boy
writhing in the throes of an epileptic attack at the feet of the ineffectual disciples. The boy's father, willing to admit his lack of faith, has come to ask for a cure. The crowd standing around, the presence of the scribes, and the sudden appearance of Jesus upon the scene, lends an element of heightened drama to this whole segment. Mark portrays Jesus quickly perceiving what has not taken place, and speaking in a strongly condemnatory fashion of the general lack of faith of the entire generation. His words are directed at the entire assembled multitude. The first half of the story has the effect of showing what a paralyzing force the lack of faith may be. The second half of the story, after which the boy's father indicates his desire for faith sufficient to be of help to his son, moves into a demonstration of the healing nature of faith, imperfect though that faith may be. Nineham sums up the form of this text and its function when he says,

...the repeated descriptions of the long duration and extreme seriousness of the complaint (vv.18:21-22,26), the immediate violent reaction of the demon to Jesus' presence (v.20) and its unwilling but complete obedience to a mere word from him after it had withstood the efforts of the disciples (v.26), all serve to emphasize the special status and messianic power of Jesus.32

From the standpoint of textual criticism, the major variant reading to be found in this passage is in 9:29 where the New English Bible reads, "There is no means of casting out this sort but prayer." The variant reading is "There is no means of casting out this sort but prayer and fasting."

If the presence of the words "and fasting" is original,
they would seem to indicate that there were certain types of demons that could only be exorcised by someone who was conspicuously a man or woman of prayer as well as a strict ascetic. However, Wilfrid Harrington feels that this is a post-Markan addition for two reasons. The most important manuscripts leave it out, and also, it does not follow from Markan christology. If we were to ascribe to the addition of the gloss, "and fasting," it would mean that some action undertaken by the individual him or herself would have an effect on the healing, whereas the point being made is that healing comes precisely as a result of reliance upon the Lord. To quote Harrington:

The theme of the powerlessness of the disciples, introduced into the narrative by Mark and stressed in this esoteric teaching, is the pastoral instruction to the church. The evangelist makes clear that, without Jesus, the disciples are helpless. Christians must seek to find union with him in prayer if they are to share in his power and have part in his work. This variant may be explained as a conscious alteration of the text. Not only is "and fasting" more than likely not original, indeed, it seems that the last two words are post-Markan additions put in by the early church in response to problems with certain types of exorcisms. Therefore, the shorter reading, without the addition, would be the more appropriate one demanded by the context, language, and style of this particular passage.

The words referring to children or childhood, both literally as well as symbolically, have been the object of
much research and the parallels offered are the most useful for this work. In the section under consideration, 9:14-29, there are two words which are important. One is paidion, which is usually translated as referring to an infant or a young child up to the age of twelve. The other word is huios, which means "son," and is used by Mark both to indicate the son of one's parents as well as the Son of Man, or the Son of God. The closest parallel to the use of these two words is 1 Kings 17:17-24. (See text in footnote 27). In the New Testament story Jesus heals the epileptic child and brings him back as from death. The youngster is described as both a child (paidion) and as his father's son (huios). In the Old Testament story, Elijah heals a child whom he also brings back from a death-like state. This youngster is also described in both terms in the Greek of the Septuagint: as a child (paidion), and as his mother's son (huios). There is also another Old Testament parallel story in which the follower of the holy man is unable to work a healing miracle on his master's behalf. 36 2 Kings 4:18-37 depicts Elisha bringing back to life the son (huios) of the Shunammite woman after his servant, Gehazi, failed to do so using Elisha's staff. Again in the Septuagint translation this boy is referred to as both a child (paidion), and as his mother's son (huios).

The meaning of the words paidion and huios is, in the context of 9:14-29, that of an actual child and the son of his natural father. The texts which refer to Jesus dealing with actual children, like the one under discussion and
9:36; 10:13-16; and 10:29-30, were certainly intended by Mark to be seen as such. Historically, within the Jewish experience, children periodically held a place of high regard for their own sake. From earlier times, children were included in the worship of YHWH, as seen in Joel 2:16 and Judith 4:10f. The Old Testament also speaks of children to whom YHWH revealed himself and made of them messengers of his salvation. The boy Samuel (1 Sam. 1-3), received the words of YHWH and passed them along. The child David gained favor over his older brothers (1 Sam. 16:1-13), and Daniel demonstrated his superior wisdom over the elders in saving Susannah (Dan. 13:44-50). As Léon-Dufour wrote, "Finally, a high point of messianic prophecy is the birth of Emmanuel, the sign of deliverance (Is. 7:14f); and Isaiah proclaims the royal child will re-establish right and justice together with the kingdom of David."

Against this historical background, it is very easy to see how Mark could portray Jesus dealing with real children and using them, not only as examples of discipleship, but as evidence of his continuation of the love and importance accorded them by his Father. Irenaeus wrote, in effect, that because Jesus himself had been a child and had experienced the conditions of human childhood for the sake of all children, he had, by this experience, sanctified it. "It was only to be expected that Jesus would exhibit an unquestionable love for children; and it is in complete accord with the whole tenor of his teachings that he should specially emphasize the
importance and value of the child."

It has been somewhat difficult to ascertain all of the sources used by Mark, but, it seems proper to assume that the evangelist used many traditions from the Old Testament and felt the Old Testament to be an authoritative source. It is also fairly safe to say that Mark used a Greek version of the Old Testament. However, "...there is little concern for the historical context of the Old Testament passages; the fulfillment of the Old Testament in the person of Jesus is considered far more important." The evangelist was probably using an anthology of biblical quotations applicable to Jesus, such as the anthologies of Old Testament quotations which have been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Perrin supports the view that because of the unique and prototypical nature of the gospel of Mark, it has become increasingly difficult to isolate his various sources with any degree of precision. It is generally agreed that he makes extensive use of traditional material, but it is becoming more and more necessary to view that material in terms of the compositional work of Mark, and, therefore, any in-depth discussion of particular sources has to be largely curtailed within this paper.

In addition to looking at this passage as an exorcism, it may also be seen as a wonder story. This is the conclusion of Howard Clark Kee, who bases his classification system of the material in the synoptic tradition on the work of Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Dibelius, and feels that this section should be placed within such a narrative tradition. He says
these stories were told to,

...demonstrate the extraordinary powers of Jesus. They were often longer and provide more vivid detail than aphorisms or anecdotes, including development of the situation along dramatic lines. On grounds other than form, the wonder stories of the synoptic tradition show the influence of the non-Christian miracle-story tradition. 44

According to Theodore Weeden, Mark used many of these miracle stories to discredit the growing theios-aner movement within the Markan community. Weeden goes on to say that, "Mark saturates the first half of his gospel with theios-aner miracle activity of Jesus. Once the evangelist has set up the theios-aner Christ position to destroy it, he no longer emphasizes the theios-aner traits of Jesus in his narrative." 45

It is incorrect to assume that Mark took out all mention of the theios-aner traits of Jesus from the last half of the gospel. There is still evidence of these traits in the transfiguration (9:2-8), in 9:14-29; 10:46-52, in the Palm Sunday story and in various aspects of the passion narrative. It is certainly acceptable to indicate that these traits have been modified, if not totally neutralized, by the strong emphasis upon the messianic commitment to suffering servanthood attributed to Jesus. 46

Mark's placement of this section would seem to be very purposeful. Although it is now difficult to get at this purpose with any real assurance, there are some general suppositions which may be made. Nineham feels that perhaps the story was placed within this context because the evangelist, "saw a connexion between the disciples' failure to understand
the truth about Jesus, so clearly apparent in the preceding stories, and their inability to cast out an evil spirit in his name (v.18).\textsuperscript{47} It is also possible to agree with Nineham when he further states that, "Jesus speaks here as an incarnate deity whose human form and earthly existence are only temporary and who already has one foot in the next world..."\textsuperscript{48} Mark placed this narrative of the epileptic demonic child immediately after the transfiguration for the same reasons that he placed the temptation story of Jesus directly after his baptism; that is, to emphasize the contrast between the glory of the divine world and the struggle with the powers of evil in this world.\textsuperscript{49}

This story is a very clear example of the Markan use of children and child passages to correct false ideas about the nature of discipleship. It is used by Mark to drive home the point that the disciples did not have an accurate view of either themselves and their mission or of Jesus and his mission. The juxtaposition of a child, possessed by what they saw as a demon, and the disciples, possessed of what they thought to be powers of exorcism, bestowed upon them by their supposed theios-aner messianic leader, but unable to drive out the demon, makes the point even more startling and difficult to accept.

It is also more than coincidental that, after having been acknowledged as the beloved son of his Father, Jesus should so quickly after that transfiguration address himself to the restoration of life of yet another man's son. It must also
be noted here that the children in Mark's church were commonly seen as being included in the faith of their parents, thereby benefiting by that faith which would explain the action of Jesus in dealing with the faith of the father while curing the son in this passage. The message conveyed by this passage is a compelling one, having to do with faith, the importance of a true understanding of discipleship, and the interest Jesus has in all people, as children of his Father. Harrington sums up much of the Markan thrust of this passage when he says:

Even more markedly here we find the technical language of the early church's preaching of the death and resurrection of Christ. This kerygmatic intent, already present in the story of the daughter of Jairus, is more obvious here, coming in the middle of the section dominated by the predictions of the passion and resurrection. The cure, worked by Jesus, is a symbol and presage of resurrection from the dead; the messianic power of Jesus is manifest. The theme comes dramatically here after the disciples' questioning about the meaning of rising from the dead. (9:10).

Mark 9:33-37 So they came to Capernaum; and when he was indoors, he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" They were silent, because on the way they had been discussing who was the greatest. He sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all." Then he took a child, set him in front of them, and put his arm around him. "Whoever receives one of these children in my name," he said, "receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

The important words and symbols that occur within this passage are those having to do with the nature of greatness and the nature of servanthood. It very quickly becomes
obvious that the discussion of greatness that was being held by the disciples had very little relationship to what Jesus defined as true greatness. It is also clear that the element of servanthood is new to the disciples, as is their concept of discipleship to a suffering messianic leader. Again we have the character of Jesus as the central figure around whom the action revolves, and from whom the Markan teaching emanates. Also, we have the disciples, who are used by Mark for the purpose of teaching: We continue to get a very clear understanding that the disciples are having a great deal of difficulty with Jesus' teachings about his mission and purpose, and we see Mark using them as foils for the christological teachings that he wishes to put across. The child in this passage is used to illustrate true greatness and the nature of true servanthood.

We have here a further representation of the progress of thought underlying the center section of the Markan gospel. Not only is there geographical movement, into Galilee and on into Capernaum, but there is further progression into the understanding of the messianic nature of the mission and purpose of Jesus, as well as into the understanding of the nature of discipleship. This movement is interestingly executed by Mark by his use of tense in the three passion predictions. In the first passion prediction, Mark has Jesus use exclusively the present tense. In the second passion prediction, which immediately precedes this second text now under consideration, the prediction begins in the present
tense and ends in the future tense. 52

Vincent Taylor expresses the opinion that the narrative shows signs of having been written by Mark himself with the possibility of Petrine influence in the first few verses. Otherwise the story consists of fragments loosely connected at 35 and 36. The story begins a section...declared to be the most obscure part of Mark. In no small part the obscurity is occasioned by the fact that in 37-50 Mark makes use of an extract from a collection of sayings strung together by catchwords, the first which appears in 37; and it is difficult to decide whether the story has suggested the use of the extract or vice versa. 53

Taylor further proposes that 9:33f, 9:35f, and 9:37, may have been fragments that were of sufficient interest in and of themselves to have lost their original narrative element. "The teaching on true greatness (35), the indispensability of the attitude of childlike trust, and the mind which esteems the lowly as in some sense Jesus himself (37), are some of the most authentic and characteristic elements in his thoughts." 54

Nineham agrees that this compilation seems to be the work of Mark; however, he indicates that the traditional parts of the passage which Mark inherited have been put together with less than the usual Markan literary skill. Perrin views this passage as part of a contextual pattern he sees as constant throughout this section, 8:22-10:52. The pattern that Perrin identifies is that of a prediction, followed by a misunderstanding, and ended with a teaching about discipleship.

The first prediction is followed by the rebuke of Peter, the second by a reference to the disciples' misunderstanding and then by a dispute about greatness, and the third with dramatic irony by the request of
the sons of Zebedee. The three units of teaching on discipleship are to be found in 8:34ff., 9:35ff., and 10:38ff. Each of these sections of teaching makes its own particular point. But together, they represent the basic Markan understanding of the nature of Christian discipleship, and, moreover, they progress to a climax in 10:52. In the first section discipleship is defined in terms of preparedness to take up the cross, in the second as preparedness to be last and servant of all, and in the third servanthood is defined in terms of the Son of Man who 'also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life in ransom for many.' This arrangement of the material is very effective indeed, and it clearly represents a very strong element of redactional and compositional activity on the part of the evangelist.55

The form of this passage, since it is a brief account of an episode that culminates in a pithy saying placed on the lips of Jesus by Mark, makes it very effective for teaching. It is the existence of the child in this passage that makes the greatest contribution to the form and meaning of the content. It is Bultmann's assessment of this passage which most closely agrees with the hypothesis of this paper. "For the paidion or mikros were doubtless originally meant: the reception and refreshment of a little child was reckoned as equivalent to the greatest service that could be rendered."56 The content of the teachings of Jesus was made clearly understandable by the gospel form of sayings and stories about Jesus and his followers. Difficult teachings, such as the one in this passage, were placed into situational settings and explained. The success of this relationship between form and content within the gospel tradition has no more persuasive testimony than its long-lasting impact upon peoples the world over.
It has been pointed out by Bultmann that, based upon a study of the Greek and of Matthew's later revision of this passage, there was a transference in the later history of the church to render the ideas of the paidion or the mikros as meaning unimportant Christians.\textsuperscript{57} There can be little doubt, however, that in this passage Mark employed the image of a real child in the arms of Jesus in order to make his teaching clearly understood to the disciples.

The closest parallel to this passage where we have the word paidion, meaning "young child," is Mt. 18:1–5.\textsuperscript{58} The commentary on both passages presents the idea that the child referred to may be literal, or symbolic of those who would humble themselves and follow Jesus.\textsuperscript{59} According to Weeden, "In Mark's narrative of the scene in 9:33–37, he obviously focuses on the egocentric interests of the disciples in personal greatness,"\textsuperscript{60} which would help to strengthen the argument that a reading of this as an intentional use of real children would be the one demanded. In another passage in Weeden, there is further evidence that the paidion in this section should be translated as referring to real children.

Some of the most striking theios-aner traits of the disciples come into focus when they are seen over against the suffering discipleship which Jesus advocates (8:34ff). Illustrating these conflicting points of view are the passages 9:33–37 and 10:35–44. Like the heretics in 2 Corinthians, the disciples in 9:33–37 are engaged in comparing themselves with each other to determine who is the greatest among them. Jesus intervenes in the discussion and sharply reprimands the disciples for placing such importance upon rank, honor, and self-praise. He proclaims that the real sign of greatness lies in servanthood to all (9:35). Instead of acting like
the leaders of the Gentiles, who enjoy ruling over and lording their authority over their fellow men, his disciples must accept positions of total humility and be servants of all.\textsuperscript{61}

What is clearly evident in this passage is that there must have been some dispute about the relationships among the members of the new Christian community. Viewed in this context 9:37 addresses the qualifications necessary for membership. "Using a child as an example, the Markan Jesus illustrates that the most humble and insignificant person is worthy of acceptance and esteem in the community. To receive such a person is analogous to accepting Christ himself."\textsuperscript{62}

The significance of this passage lay in Jesus' reaction to the disciples' seemingly all-pervading obsession with power and prestige. It is interesting that Mark does not have Jesus sound the well-known reversal of the statement "the first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Instead, Mark has Jesus simply say to the Twelve, that the first must be the last and must serve. It would seem that what Mark is attacking is the concept of authority that the disciples were entertaining. They saw themselves in terms of priority, authority, and power. Their concept of greatness was in terms of a hierarchical arrangement of status. This attitude concerning greatness was exactly what Mark had Jesus challenge. It is very clear to the reader that Mark is indicating that there is no recognition in the kingdom of God of this hierarchically organized structure of leadership functions. Instead, Kelber emphasizes,
Genuine authority is assumed by serving the people, all the people, not by lording over them. Above all, authority means to show concern for the little ones, the children, those who have the least power of all. This concept of power in service must now be understood by the Twelve. As they approach Jerusalem they ought to prepare themselves for the exercise of power in service and stop thinking as if they were to become the leaders of a new establishment.63

There are a few added unique views or unusual emphases placed by Mark within the context of this passage. In the disciples' discussion about who among them is the greatest, Mark portrays Jesus as intervening with a child passage which surely must have been very difficult for them to comprehend for a number of reasons. In the first place, the child was close enough at hand that Jesus simply had to reach out and draw him or her into the circle of disciples. Mark tells us that Jesus put his arm around the child, so obviously Jesus was as comfortable around children as they were with him. Since Jewish fathers or teachers usually had very little to do with their young children, as this one must have been, since again the Greek is paidion, the visual impact alone must have been very great. It must be remembered that until a child was old enough to recite the first verse of the Shema, and to begin to take upon his shoulders the rule of God, he was regarded as having very little importance in the sight of the elders and the rabbis.64 The contemporary Christian reader will probably miss much of the iconoclastic element of this child passage, since the discussion of rank within Jesus' own disciples seems rather ludicrous to us. What would bring
it into focus is the knowledge that both at Qumran and within the Sanhedrin there was a definite hierarchy and each member was apprised of his proper status periodically. Mark presents Jesus as diametrically opposing this practice and, instead, presenting a child to them saying that service to such a child brings one closest to himself and God. What a staggering blow to the egos and expectations of the disciples who were having difficulty understanding Jesus at best!

Mark 9:42. As for the man who is a cause of stumbling to one of these little ones who have faith, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone round his neck.

The overriding image of this passage is that of example. The seriousness of causing sin is expressed in a series of effective hyperboles. The children or little ones presented in this passage are used as an example to encourage right living within the Markan community. The movement of thought is here, evidenced by a further refinement of the Markan teaching on the nature of discipleship. The highly symbolic form employed, with its use of hyperbole, can only be seen as contributing to the nature of the content. Again, we see Mark presenting an iconoclastic idea, that of paying attention to, and aiding children, within a startling context. This child passage follows closely on the heels of the one preceding it and in that way does carry a sense of flow.

This example image has more importance when one reads further in Mark 9:43, and comes to the passage, "If your hand
is your undoing cut it off; it is better for you to enter
into life maimed than to keep both hands and go to hell
and the unquenchable fire." There can be no doubt that the
"little ones" referred to in this section are to be seen as
children, when one begins tracing the word "hell" used in
this verse. During that search, it became obvious that the
reference was to the Valley of Ben-hinnom, which was the site
of child sacrifice and child immolation to the god Moloch. There are several references to this place in the Old Testament
as well as to the acts of child sacrifice and immolation.
Deut.12:31 speaks of the immolation of sons and daughters.
Lev. 18:21 recounts a story of child immolation to the
Ammonite god Moloch. Jer. 32:35, Jer. 7:31, Lev. 20:1-5, and
2 Kings 23:10 all contain references to the Valley of Ben-
hinnom and child sacrifice. Jer. 19:4-5 speaks of the shrines
to Baal whose purpose was for child immolation. 2 Kings 3:27
is an account of child sacrifice during the time of war with
the Moabites. 2 Kings 16:3 is yet another account of child
immolation, and in 2 Kings 21:5-6 we hear of Manasseh prac-
ticing child immolation upon his son.

A further search led to checking other bibles and their
choice of the translation of the word "hell" in this passage.
The New American Bible has Gehenna; the Revised Standard
Version has "hell"; the English version of the Jerusalem Bible
has "hell," but the French version has "géhennée." It is the
belief of this writer that the reading demanded by the context,
language, and style of this particular passage requires a
return to the original use of Gehenna, which, although not the choice of the experts on English who too often have the last word on translations, does give a much clearer meaning to the word "children" or "little ones" in the passage 9:42.

The Greek used in 9:42 is mikros which means "little ones" either literally or figuratively. It is the opinion of this writer that the word mikros lends more credibility to the Markan theological stance if it is read to mean real children.

The passages in which debatable child passages are used, such as 9:37; 9:42, now under discussion, and 10:15, are also to be read historically as real children, as the argument is offered that if those who were like children are to be granted entrance into the kingdom of God and are to be guarded from false teaching, so, even more naturally, are real children, so granted and guarded.

Vincent Taylor presents this passage (9:42) as part of "...the work of a pre-Markan compiler who sought to assist catechumens in committing the sayings to memory."67 As part of an early Roman catechism, the various small parts of this whole passage, 9:42-50, are tied together with linking words and phrases and so, "after the saying on receiving little children (9:37), it is not surprising to find that about offending little ones (9:42)."68 Although there is some feeling within the existing scholarship that this passage reflects an earlier proverb, there has been no evidence forthcoming to date to indicate what that proverb may have
been. Nineham also supports the view that the literary form of this text seems to be that of a catechetical document used to meet the needs of the early church.

The section of this catechetical document, 9:42-50, which is referred to by Nineham as a catena of sayings, is a group of sayings basically on the theme of self-renunciation and service to others. Mark uses this particular section to warn anyone, the disciples in particular, against hurting little ones by shaking their faith in Jesus. "Deliberately to lead others astray, to snatch from them the hope that he has given them, is seen by Jesus as the blackest sin: the very denial of his demand of love. But a man's own enemy, his stumbling block, may lie within himself." This particular section, more than any other in the Markan gospel, gives one a clearer understanding of the concept of oral tradition, as it was clearly designed with verbal mnemonic devices to help in the memorization and retelling of the lessons contained in this section. Mark again indicates his didactic purpose of making the community for whom he wrote more clearly understand the true nature of following the way of the Messiah. It is not enough just to profess belief, one must be ever on guard against even the smallest offense against any other member of the community of the faithful, including the smallest child.

The inclusion of the image of Gehenna leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader that Mark was jogging the memory of his community about the fact that child sacrifice was prohibited within the Hebrew tradition historically. One may also make
a case that Mark was addressing the Gentile members of his
community, when it is remembered that infanticide was practiced
with great abandon during this time within the Roman society. 72

Mark 10:13-16 They brought children for him to touch. The
disciples rebuked them, but when Jesus saw
this he was indignant, and said to them, "Let
the children come to me; do not try to stop
them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such
as these. I tell you, whoever does not accept
the kingdom of God like a child will never
enter it." And he put his arms around them,
laid his hands upon them, and blessed them.

This pericope is not only the central one in the seven
child passages in this section, it is also the central point
around which this presentation is constructed. The major image
to appear in this passage is the relationship of children to
the kingdom of God. "Like a child" indicates, among other
things, simple trust. Again Jesus is the central figure of
the action of this passage, while the disciples, as usual,
embody a resistance to the Markan teaching about Jesus. The
children in this passage are used to illustrate acceptance
into the kingdom of God and they also afford an interesting
insight into the person and convictions of Mark.

In terms of the movement of the gospel, we have gone now
into the region of Judea and the Transjordan (10:1), and
Jesus has discoursed on marriage and divorce (10:2-12). This
passage (10:13-16) is a narrative form of a teaching of Jesus.
The visual construct of this passage lends a great deal to the
expression of the ideas contained in it. Here, as in many
other places, the reader gains an appreciation for the Markan
use of vivid imagery and clear discourse. One can readily see the children running up to Jesus, the self-important disciples pushing them away, and Jesus' indignant rebuke of their interference with the children. The vividness of this imagery cannot escape even the most casual reader of this passage. There are no variant readings of this passage of any importance.

As to the word "indignant," in Greek aganakteo, it is a very emphatic word used nowhere else in the gospels depicted as an emotion of Jesus. Clearly, the attitudes toward the children seen here are very important to Jesus, to Mark, or to both. It is also very clear that the Greek use of paidion literally means children and has been retained throughout the history of this passage.

Taylor and others agree that this story, "...circulated in the earliest Christian community because it showed the attitude of Jesus to children, and by continual repetition it has gained the rounded form of a Pronouncement story." With time, details of time and place have long since been lost except for those few needed to set the stage for Jesus' teaching about conditions of entry into the kingdom of God. It must be emphasized again that "to a degree which leaves an indelible impression in the mind of all readers, the story shows that, 'hardly anything is more characteristic of Jesus than his attitude to children.'" Bultmann felt that this particular passage can be placed within the Palestinian church and is seen as a comment by Mark, placed on the lips of Jesus, called forth by the conduct of the disciples.
Although it is not the intention of this paper to discuss the historicity of any of these passages as to whether they may be ascribed to the historical Jesus, it must be noted at this juncture that Bultmann feels that this is one of the very few cases in which any of the logia can be ascribed to Jesus with any measure of confidence.

Such sayings as arise from the exaltation of an eschatological mood...sayings which are the product of an energetic summons to repentance...and finally we may include sayings which demand a new disposition of mind...like Mark 10:15. All these sayings, which admittedly are in part no longer specific examples of logia, contain something characteristic, new, reaching out beyond popular wisdom and piety and yet are in no sense scribal or rabbinic nor yet Jewish apocalyptic. So here if anywhere we can find what is characteristic of the preaching of Jesus. 76

This pericope has caused a great deal of discussion as to whether Jesus or Mark was talking about real children in any respect or whether the entire passage is to be read and understood metaphorically. The point has previously been made by Rudolf Bultmann that, because of the very nature of this passage, it may be traced back to Jesus himself. We may go back into the tradition yet farther and consider Deut. 1:38-39, where the similarities to be seen are rather startling.

Deut. 1:38-39 You yourself shall never enter it, but Joshua, son of Nun, who is in attendance on you, shall enter it. Encourage him, for he shall put Israel in possession of that land. Your dependents (little ones) who, you thought, would become spoils of war, and your children who do not yet know good and evil, they shall enter; I will give it to them, and they shall occupy it.

Initially, it should be noted that Jesus is Aramaic for Joshua, and that this passage, with its use of the Greekpaidion can
be seen as at least a precursor to 10:13-16 in intention as well as content. A series of parallels may be drawn between these two passages; the Promised Land and the kingdom of God, Joshua and Jesus, leading the way therein respectively, and the children entering before they became of age within the eyes of the Law. Earlier, in Deut. 1:36, God was angry with the rest of the people because they failed to follow him with their whole hearts and so therefore could not enter into the Promised Land, just as those in the Markan passage who did not accept the kingdom of God as wholeheartedly and simply as a child will never enter it.

Isaiah 11:1-9 is an announcement of a new Davidic king, during whose reign justice will prevail and special protection given to the poor and humble people. There are three paidion references in this section, the most important being 11:6, "...and a little child shall lead them," which in the Greek includes a very emphatic and pointed use of "little child." Verses 8b to 9a, "the infant shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the young child dance over the viper's nest," are also very powerful images, and, being eschatological in nature, set the stage for a New Testament statement like Mark 10:13-16, in which Jesus, the new messianic figure, will give protection to the poor and humble people and again tell his followers that the way into the kingdom of God shall be led by a child.

Another possible parallel according to Nineham would be Psalm 8:2 wherein we again have babes and infants and the word "rebuке" with the idea that children may be closer to
the truth than the mighty are." It is interesting to note that, lest anyone feel that this is a simple saying of Jesus used only lightly to placate the families of the children the disciples rebuked, the Greek contains the use of a double negative which in essence translates to "shall not not enter into the kingdom." In Greek the use of a double negative makes the negative more emphatic and leaves no room for any doubt that Mark knew and meant exactly what he had Jesus saying and the import it carried within the tradition. During New Testament times this use of an emphatic negative was employed extensively and therefore less forcefully; however, it is usually within the context of a saying of Jesus and is used to demonstrate the decisive nature of these pronouncements.

In light of Talmudic Law, Mark is again breaking with tradition when he uses this child passage, because he says nothing about the child taking on the yoke of the Law after he has taken on the yoke of the kingdom of heaven.

His hearers could not but agree that when a child should receive the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, but would find it surprising to have it said that one should receive it as a child. In any case a little child did not have to lay Tefillin, and say the Shema twice daily. The important thing in the Pharisees' minds was to keep the Law; but a little child could not fulfill the dicta of the Law, the important religious duties ordained in the Law, Written and Oral, the keeping of the Festivals and matters tithing and cleanness and uncleanness.

With regard to this passage also, it is enlightening that many commentators have suggested that the little children
were brought to Jesus by their older brothers and sisters which is partly why Mark depicts the disciples as being so quick to rebuke them. The metaphorical meaning ascribed to this section has been explained by countless authors and, although such a reading is certainly included, and, in large part intended, one must not discount the importance Mark has Jesus place upon children and the value he saw in the childlike qualities of unselfconsciousness, honesty, and loving trust.

This passage is a continuation of the Markan dialectic against the theios-aner concept of messiahship and discipleship. Mark depicts the disciples as being unable to grasp either Jesus' concept of his messiahship or its corollary, suffering discipleship. This conflict of expectation and interpretation grows until it eventually affects almost every aspect of their relationship with each other. An example of this is the episode in which the disciples refuse to allow the children access to Jesus. In response to this rejection Jesus becomes indignant, rebukes the disciples, and has the children come to him. Further, Weeden indicates

This same attitude of exclusiveness on the part of the disciples is reflected in their response toward the children brought to Jesus (10:13-16). Once again they place themselves in the position of determining who can and cannot have access to Jesus. Symbolically, the children represent the people of humble position who came to the faith, an interpretation suggested already by 9:36, 37. Much the same as rejection of a child in 9:37 is a rejection of Jesus, likewise the denial of the children's access to Jesus in 10:13-16 is a rejection of him. As in the
previous instance, the disciples present themselves as the final seat of authority for judgment on community membership. In the cases of both the frustrated exorcist and the rejected children Jesus sharply inveighs against the disciples' misplaced claim to authority and superiority over others and counters their narrow exclusiveness with his own broad inclusiveness. The evidence points unmistakably to the conclusion that the Markan disciples not only viewed Jesus as a theios-aner Christ but also display all the traits of theios-aner discipleship. 82

Perrin felt that in this passage Mark presented his community with the direct and concrete nature of the challenge to faith in the teachings he ascribed to Jesus, "...we turn now to explore further the response as obedience aspect of that teaching in terms of a group of sayings which exhibit the radical and total character of the challenge of Jesus all together. Mark 10:15 is part of those sayings." 83

On the exegesis of this passage we find the following offered by Perrin.

This is perhaps the most memorable and pregnant of all the sayings of Jesus, and a worthy tribute was paid to it by the Jewish scholar C.G. Montefiore: '...the beauty, the significance, the ethical force, and the originality...of the great saying in 10:15, can also only with injustice be overlooked, cheapened, or denied.' It sums up a whole aspect of the teaching of Jesus in one unforgettable image: a man must bring to his response to the activity of God the ready trust and instinctive obedience of the child. Only in this way is he truly able to enter into the depth of the experience that has now become a real possibility for him. 84

The point of comparison within this passage is not so much the humility and innocence or obedience of children, "...it is rather the fact that children are unselfconscious, receptive, and content to be dependent upon others' care and bounty; it
is in such a spirit that the kingdom must be received - it is a gift of God and not an achievement on the part of man; it must be simply accepted, inasmuch as it can never be deserved."

Harrington introduces this story to us as a pronouncement story showing Jesus' attitude to children. Again we have the lifelike nature of the Markan narrative style with his amazing ability to give it all the vitality and excitement the scene must have generated.

The point of the narrative lies in the sayings: children, better than any other are suited for the kingdom since the kingdom is a gift which must be received with simplicity. Jesus himself, in a true sense, is the kingdom; that is why children have a right of access to him. No one can enter upon the blessings of the kingdom who is not open and willing to receive the kingdom as a gift.

Harrington cautions the reader about this passage when he says, "we, in a culture that is often sentimental in regard to children, can miss the revolutionary aspect of Jesus' conduct here...."

One must receive the kingdom as a child receives it; with trustful simplicity and without laying any claim to it. Here the kingdom is presented both as a gift which men receive and as a sphere into which they enter: one must be willing to receive the kingdom as a gift before one can enter upon the blessings and responsibilities of it. 'He took them in his arms' - proper to Mark (as in 9:36). He does so much more than had been sought (10:13). 'And blessed them' - a strengthened form of the verb; that, with his laying of hands upon them, indicates a fervent blessing. In this sense the church is shown how to treat its children.
Mark 10:19-20. You know the commandments: "Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not give false evidence; do not defraud; honor your father and mother." "But, master," he replied, "I have kept all of these since I was a boy."

The main image here is the idea of possessions and the kingdom, and how difficult it is for one who is possessive of large amounts of material things and social status to enter into the life of discipleship, or into the kingdom of heaven. Again the central character of the story is Jesus and his dealing with the stranger. The conversation with Jesus and the stranger is used to drive home the point that life emanates from God who is good, and from whom the commandments proceed.

The sense of movement within the passage is present as Jesus and the disciples continue upon their journey to Jerusalem (10:17). As they are drawing ever closer Jesus continues defining, with more and more clarity, the true nature of the price of entry into the kingdom and the way of true discipleship. Very clearly here Mark is presenting evidence to his community in an attempt to counter the theois-aner concept of discipleship to a famous and holy man, and this attempt is aided by the Markan ability to tell a vivid and moving story. It is very easy to picture this stranger and his approach to Jesus with his seeking after aid and counsel as to the way into the kingdom. One can almost see the sense of dejection and defeat on the face of the stranger when he is told that, although he has been a good Jew, and has
followed the letter of the Law, it isn’t enough. He must give up those very things that his society regards as the evidence of his obedient life and take upon himself poverty, only in that way to enter into the kingdom of God and win eternal life.

There are no profoundly different ancient readings of this passage, but it is interesting to note that the New American Bible reads, He replied, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my childhood." This reading makes the choice of this text as one of the child passages more clearly evident for the purpose of this study. I would agree with the New American Bible at this point that the word "childhood" is a better rendering than "since I was a boya."

Taylor defines this text as part of a very detailed pronouncement story, but one about which Mark had fuller and more vivid information than usual.89 "The details are too deeply woven into the story to be regarded as amplifications,"90 so the Markan story is to be read as by far the more original within the synoptic tradition. Interestingly enough, M.J. Lagrange has suggested that, "...the man, hearing the kingdom promised to children, asked if he himself possessed the necessary qualifications,"91 and as it does fall within a teaching section, 10:1-31, about attaining the kingdom of God, such an interpretation, in light of its proximity to 10:13-16 is not unwarranted.92

In terms of this study, it is most interesting to note that, although Mark portrays Jesus as quoting a summary of
the "Second Table" of the Commandments to the young man, "Jesus did not suppose that the Law could supply the full answer to the man's question."\textsuperscript{92} That the young man, indicating that he had followed the Law since he was a boy, seemed to still feel the need to ask Jesus the way into the kingdom of God follows well on the heels of that which Jesus had just finished saying about the kingdom being most readily attainable by children before they became able to recite or even understand the Old Covenant Law. Such a radical juxtaposition must be seen as deliberate on Mark's part and as further proof that this is indeed an intentional child passage.

The Markan challenge to his community is seen here very clearly as most Jews would never have asked a question about what they could do, in addition to keeping the Law, to attain the kingdom. It would simply have been taken for granted that keeping the Law was sufficient. That Mark used this passage to further clarify the true nature of discipleship is indicated by the great surprise that this teaching brought as a response from the disciples. They had surely been brought up to believe that worldly wealth, although involving responsibility, was indeed a sign of God's favor and made the good works upon which salvation is dependent much easier. A curious aspect of this passage is that the Markan Jesus offers the disciples no reasons why this is not true in the new kingdom he is describing in which the attainment of the kingdom of God is a gift, and discipleship is based on suffering and sacrifice.
So for all - rich and poor alike - the true relationship with God, the only relationship that can be expected to survive the arrival of the kingdom, involves conditions virtually impossible of fulfillment. At this further teaching the astonishment of the disciples knows no bounds - additional evidence in Mark's eyes, of how completely they still misunderstood the true character and cost of their calling.93

Concerning the attitude taken here by Jesus with regard to riches, Perrin attests that it was indeed a radical stance. Although the Jews recognized the danger of riches becoming a hindrance to the full observance of the Law, and, although they had had some experience of the wealthier among them succumbing to the Hellenistic life style, the rabbis did strive for balance in the matter of riches and piety. Perrin quotes from Midrash Exodus Rabbah 31 on Exodus 22-24:

You will find that there are riches that positively harm their possessors and other riches that stand them in good stead. When Solomon built the Temple, he said in his dedication prayer: "Lord of the Universe! Should a man pray unto thee for money and Thou knowest that it will be harmful to him, then do not grant his request; but shouldest Thou see one that should do well with his riches, then do grant him."94

Jesus, however, seems to see danger in any riches in anyone's hands according to Mark. The reason for this portrayal is probably that Mark is attempting to drive home to his community the fact that riches would be a hindrance to the nature of the absolute self-surrender which is a necessary response to the challenge of discipleship and the cost of entering into the kingdom.95

Weeden used this passage to further strengthen his claim
that Mark was building a case against the theios-aner christology and theios-aner view of discipleship. "Sacrificial discipleship (10:17–27) or discipleship without its tangible rewards (10:28–29, 35–40) is incomprehensible to the disciples."96 Kelber adds an interesting observation to this passage when he says that when Jesus declared that the giving of all earthly possessions to the poor was a precondition for entrance into the kingdom, Peter announced that that was just what he and the rest of the disciples had done. Mark has Jesus quickly reminding him, however, that this selfless giving, rather than being a marvelous act of glory, will only earn them additional persecution.97

This story is seen as moving the reader along to the climactic passion Jesus is hurrying toward during his journey into Jerusalem. He is showing that even though people observe the Law and attempt to live within the guidelines of good Jewish expectations, in fact, he – Jesus – is the way into the kingdom through suffering and sacrifice. As Harrington points out, this is one of the most human stories in the gospel and one of the saddest in that it is the only place where one who has been called to follow Jesus refuses.

In effect, Jesus is saying that, in order to gain eternal life, it is not enough to be guided by prohibitions; we must also positively love our neighbor and share our goods with him. The relinquishing of riches is demanded of all the disciples of Jesus, but this must be understood in light of its guiding principle.98

The love that we show goes beyond simple loving of our neighbor, we must love all of mankind, according to the Markan
christological stance.

The impact of the teaching in 10:13-16 is further heightened in that, had the rich young man accepted the kingdom as a child, or had he been viewed by his parents as being inherently accepted by God simply because of his child status, he would not be in the situation he found himself in, facing the dissatisfaction of a life lived within the confines of the Law, and yet knowing that this Jesus of Nazareth was talking about a kingdom that he very likely could now not attain. Here it is again emphasized that it must be clearly recognized that the Markan use of children and child images was a conscious, deliberate act on his part.

Mark 10:24 "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God."

In this section we have a metaphorical use of the word "child" spoken by Jesus to his disciples. The crowd has now been left behind by the disciples and Jesus and they are proceeding along the way toward Jerusalem in what must seem to be a final effort to have the disciples understand the true nature of entry into the kingdom. Mark has Jesus address the disciples themselves as children. In light of all of the earlier passages in which Mark has Jesus use children as examples, it is most fitting and touching at this point that he should have Jesus attempt to approach the misunderstanding of the disciples by equating them with the children he has been trying so desperately to have them accept and appreciate
up until then.

The verse chosen for use in this work is, "Children how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God." One of the ancient variant readings is, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God." It would appear to have been a conscious alteration of the text to have taken out the modifying phrase, "for those who trust in riches," and made the statement more global in nature. The western text included the modifier, but the Revised Standard Version put this phrase in the margin. The phrase is a perfectly sound comment on the difficulties of the rich and, "if they are genuine, the passage was originally concerned exclusively with riches as a barrier to salvation, but a number of extremely important manuscripts, followed by the majority of commentators, omit them...." I would agree with the New English Bible in omitting them as it makes the qualifications for entry into the kingdom more generally applicable and points to the rest of the passages of teaching about entry into the kingdom which have preceded this passage.

The Greek here for "child" is teknon, meaning "child" or "one born." It is the most commonly used word for children and clearly this is a metaphoric use of the word meant to denote the disciples. This word teknon is seen by all of the commentators this writer has found to mean the disciples. The metaphoric nature of this use of the word "children" attributed by Mark to Jesus' designation of the disciples was clearly to be seen as metaphorical even at the time of
the writing of the Markan gospel. It would be well within keeping for Mark to portray Jesus as referring to his disciples as children to denote, among other things, the sense of family so important in the language and thrust of the gospels written as they were for specific communities within the family of new believers. It is also justifiable for Mark to have Jesus referring to the disciples as children because of his emphasis on their trust in following Jesus, even though they did not fathom his teaching or his destiny.

According to Taylor, this verse is part of the extended tradition following the rich young man story and serves to emphasize how difficult it is for anyone to enter into the kingdom of God. The use here of the word "children" points up the gift of the kingdom as it must be accepted with childlike faith, as Jesus so clearly taught in earlier verses. Taylor would even go so far as to say: "There can be little doubt that the story rests on authentic tradition, ultimately that of an eyewitness, for it is life-like and contains teaching on wealth which transcends that of Judaism."\(^{100}\)

One of the few commentaries that offered any direct interpretation of the use here of the word "children" and its possible message to the disciples was Kenton Smith's *Mark* which stated, "This gentle address suggested to them the kind of trusting dependence upon God that should be in their hearts - as little children."\(^{101}\)
Mark 10:29-31 Jesus said, "I tell you this: there is no one who has given up home, brothers or sisters, mother, father or children, or land, for my sake and for the Gospel, who will not receive in this age a hundred times as much - houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and land - and persecutions besides; and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last and the last first."

The image in this passage is again that of possessions and the kingdom of God. It demonstrates a direct contrast with the rich young man in that the disciples have left everything and are therefore promised eternal life. Here again the characters are Jesus and the disciples and they are drawing ever nearer to Jerusalem. The disciple who has spoken is Peter, one of the first disciples that Jesus called and one of the three given prominence with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, in the Markan gospel. This passage is right before the third passion prediction and, within the flow of the Markan gospel, the final passion prediction is in the future tense as is this passage under discussion. Here we see an instance of the eschatological nature of the understanding of the kingdom within the Markan gospel. This passage would have had a great deal of influence upon the Markan community as it stood between the passion and resurrection and the promised parousia of Jesus as the Son of Man.

The form of this passage leaves the reader with the understanding that the disciples have not even yet grasped the true message that Jesus, as the suffering Son of Man, is trying to convey to them. Even this close to the passion, the disciples are depicted as still misconstruing the Markan
christological stance and the Markan discipleship requirements. Here, as nowhere else in this section, the reader gets the feeling of waiting and of promise with a full sense of the demands placed upon the disciples and upon the Markan community:

There are no major ancient variant readings within this section. The Greek word \textit{teknon} used in this passage, meaning "child" or "one born," is seen in two senses of the word. However, it is the opinion of this writer that the primary reading of "children" in this verse must indicate the real children of the followers of Jesus.

According to Taylor, although Mark has given no grammatical link, this passage is closely connected with 10:17–27, and he further indicates that there is some basis for placing this passage within the Petrine tradition but, that it, 
"...is coloured by later interests," and is in part, 
"...Markan appendage derived from a primitive collection."^{102}

It is felt by others that this passage came from the prophetic sayings, although it has undergone changes at some time. Whether this passage is to be seen as an earth-bound teaching about the price of discipleship in terms of one's own home, possessions, and children which must be given up, or whether it is to be seen as the future of the disciples within the kingdom of God, we can read it as a translation of the meaning of Mark's message to the new community of believers. Nineham feels that the last part of 10:30f. is
An, "...interpretative addition... made by the early Christians and reflecting their experience that the fellowship they found in the Christian community more than compensated for the loss of home ties and possessions, and even for the persecutions their new faith so often entailed."  

According to Norman Perrin, with this particular passage, we have come to the climax of this type of Markan teaching ascribed to Jesus.

The kingdom is God's Kingdom: his activity in the present and the consummation he will establish in the future. The responsibility of man is to respond to that activity in his present - radically, thoroughly, with complete self-surrender - so that he may both deepen his experience of God in his continuing present and move towards the goal of the future.

Lest it should seem that Mark is going back on the importance he has Jesus according children by saying that the disciples must leave everything, including their children behind, it must be remembered that the children, at least of the families that believers have to leave behind, have already been accorded their place within the kingdom of God. Here again we see the disciples being forced to stand aside and allow the children to be taken care of within the purview of their own recognizance granted by the covenantal promise of the Markan Jesus.

This passage is seen by Weeden as part of the concept of the Markan teaching on suffering messiahship as translated through the corollary of suffering discipleship. He goes on to say that there can be no doubt that Mark found himself
and his church in the midst of severe persecution which greatly tested the survival capacity of their faith.\textsuperscript{105} 

In this passage we should see Jesus and the gospel as one and the same. If one were to give up all for the sake of the gospel, that is in turn saying that one would give up all for the sake of Jesus. It is for the gospel, for Jesus, that one is to leave all and follow the way.\textsuperscript{106} However, it must be noted that Mark here balances the need for renunciation with the promise of a reward. The disciples have left all for the sake of the gospel and this is to be seen as the present reality of Mark, "...sacrifice and reward are verified in the evangelist's own time."\textsuperscript{107}

Mark has introduced the concept of the future time juxtaposed upon real time to show that the harsh reality of the current Christian experience of the Markan community will be offset by the reward that is to follow with the coming of the parousia. Harrington postulates that

\begin{quote}
We have no way of knowing, with certainty, the original import of the saying. Mark, seemingly, understands it to mean that while the rich and prosperous are first in this world, those who have left all things (and consequently are the last here below) will be first in the world to come.\textsuperscript{108}
\end{quote}

The whole image of the last being first gives further credibility to the immediate place guaranteed within the kingdom, and the immediate acceptability granted to children, who were seen as the least among people. This final summation, if it does nothing more, gives a great deal of credibility to the
argument that the images of children used by Mark were employed intentionally in a realistic, as well as symbolic attempt, to get the community in which he lived to understand the true nature of discipleship as well as the importance of the children within his community and, indeed, within our own community.

Eventually it became a point of much controversy whether the child passages, in particular the ones like this in which both real and symbolic interpretation is possible, were to be read as meaning real children or as metaphorical images constructed by Mark to illustrate the teachings of Jesus. Much of this questioning has been based upon the vicissitudes caused by the moral and social vagaries inflicted upon children since the first-century Christian community for whom Mark wrote. Much of the time, historically, it was easier to read these child passages as metaphorical than to admit to the place of grace and attitude of love bestowed upon the real children here portrayed. It is the opinion of this writer that it is now time to re-evaluate these child passages and see them in their true perspective within the Markan gospel and its theological teaching.

In this final child passage Mark has tied together many of the elements of the other six passages under discussion. Although there is no doubt that many of the child passages are to be read and understood on one level as meaning real children and their new importance and place in the eyes of Jesus within the new covenantal community and within the
kingdom of God, there is also the metaphoric use of the child passages which reminds all Christians of the child within each of us and of the child-like faith and trust true followers of Jesus must embrace. Mark draws all of this together in his final child passage as he prepares the disciples for the last passion prediction and the final portion of the journey into Jerusalem where their new faith will undergo its most severe test. Mark touches on the first passage, 9:14-27, and its elements of faith and rebirth through Christ into the community of believers, the second, 9:33-37, in reminding the disciples that the first will be last and the least, the greatest, and the third passage, 9:42, by indicating that those who continue striving in faith shall be rewarded, even if they are hindered or persecuted. The central pericope, 10:13-16, is recalled in terms of the simple faith of the children and the simple child-like faith of the true disciples who will leave all to follow Jesus in order to enter the kingdom of God. One's lawful obligation as a child and a parent under the rubrics of the Old Covenant are again superseded by a commitment to leave all and follow Jesus within the community of the New Covenant, as the wealthy young man was charged to do in 10:19-20. Finally, child as person and child as metaphor, 10:24, come together in the eschatological reality of the new community of believers in Christ, who would enter the kingdom of God through the eye of the needle with child-like faith.

If, as Willie Marxsen says, Mark's gospel confronts us
with the reality of Jesus, then that real Jesus saw in children, real children, not just metaphorical shadows, a way to teach his unbelieveing and uncomprehending disciples about the way of true discipleship, the nature of a true christological understanding of the Son of Man, and a way to open their eyes to the powerful truth about God's love and grace.

One of the reasons I would suggest that Mark portrayed Jesus as dovetailing so many of the child passages into his teaching about discipleship, was to counteract some of the prevailing popular opinion of Mark's day which supported a theology of special privilege without any attending responsibility accorded to the disciples and other followers.

The best example of the fact that Mark holds that special relationship to God requires special responsibility and does not entail exercising special privilege lies in his portrayal of the Twelve. As the elect in his drama the disciples lose their spiritual birthright by choosing to flaunt what they believe to be their special privilege (e.g. 9:38f.; 10:13f.; 10:35-37), rather than accepting and fulfilling their special responsibility.

We have seen, by way of the study just concluded, that many of these child passages may be traced back into the traditional material that Mark gathered and organized as well as those which bear traces of Markan composition. We have seen child passages come from the various literary forms of the traditional material Mark used, but they still attest to the prototypical nature of the creative gospel form Mark placed within Christian literature. As an author, Mark is clearly unparalleled in his theological insight and in his
ability to realistically construct situations that one may see as applicable to Mark's first-century community, as well as to the present-day Christian community. I cannot help but feel that the full meaning of the child passages in Mark, unearthed by this journey of exploration, should have the same kind of iconoclastic impact upon our society today as they must have had upon the followers of Jesus and the first century Christian community for whom Mark wrote.

What the nature of the impact may be upon our present-day Christian community, will be discussed in the following chapter. In terms of the Markan promise to all children, that the kingdom truly belongs to them and to those who would turn and become as children, I propose therein to suggest the development of a celebrational theology of childhood.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER TWO


9. Among the more important works on the Markan gospel are those done by the following scholars. R.H. Lightfoot and Vincent Taylor introduced a study of the gospel of Mark from the approach of form criticism. D.E. Nineham wrote a full commentary based largely upon Lightfoot's and Taylor's pioneering work. E. Lohmeyer studied the compositional techniques used in the Markan gospel and his work led W. Marxsen to further study Mark's use of traditional material and editorial techniques, thus giving rise to the school of redaction criticism. E. Best began developing a literary-critical approach to Mark and this work was enlarged upon by the American scholars N. Perrin and T.J. Weeden. On the question of Mark's model, H. Koester and J.M. Robinson postulated, as the basis of their interpretation, a hero cycle of stories or aratology. T.A. Burkill and W. Marxsen approached Mark as a passion narrative which the evangelist inherited and wrote the rest of his work to introduce. H.C. Kee and N. Perrin studied the gospel from the viewpoint of Jewish apocalyptic origins. Studies of the thematic approaches
to the Markan gospel include work on the messianic secret by W. Wrede and others, Markan-christological work by Weeden and Perrin, the discipleship theme-work done by Weeden and Maye, the study done by Lightfoot, Bopbyer, and Evans on the Galilee and Gentile mission theme, and W. Kelber's work on Markan eschatology.

10 The modern scholar has little data available as to the true identity of the author of the Markan gospel and Perrin sums up the prevailing attitude when he states, "his name is irrelevant; we have called him 'Mark' simply for convenience." Perrin, New Testament, p. 163.

11 "The church's tradition claimed that the gospel of Mark was written in Rome, and again we have no way of judging the validity of this claim. All that we learn from the gospel itself is that it has a special concern for the Gentile mission and should be located within that mission. Rome is, therefore, a possibility, but then so is almost any other ecclesiastical center outside of Palestine itself." Ibid.

12 "Although there is no scholarly consensus, there is some agreement that the evangelist is writing for a community or communities of Christians caught up in a period of apocalyptic fervor occasioned by the circumstances of the Jewish War, and that he is writing either shortly before or shortly after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70." The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplementary Volume, 1976 ed., s.v. "Mark, Gospel of," by Norman Perrin.


14 "By claiming that the divine presence, defined both as God's kingly rule and as Father, was accessible to people in his own life and person, Jesus undercut the various systems that had been devised within Judaism to control that presence and people's access to it. Therein lay the source of power within actual Palestinian life for parties like the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the aspirations to power of other groups like the Essenes and Zealots. Insofar as Jesus' claims suggested alternative means of access to God, or better, of God's coming to people, outside and independently of all of the groups and their programmes, and to the extent that this had been found attractive, he was clearly striking at the very reasons for existence of each of the groups and their philosophies. To do so in the name of God's final and irrevocable promises to his people was intolerable." Sean Freyne, The World of the New Testament (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1980), p. 140.

15 "Much has been written about the Hebrews and the Hellenists who suddenly appear in Ac. 6, and this much at least seems certain—insofar as they represent two different
language groups within the earliest body of believers they clearly indicate that two very different currents of ideas are to be found within Christianity from the start." Ibid., p. 145.

16 Markan Sitz im Leben was such that his community, "...finds itself at the beginning of the eighth decade A.D. faced with a crisis of faith. Forty years have passed since Easter morning. The expectations and hopes generated in the Christian community as a result of that event have not been realized. Easter has come and gone the old world order still continues. The eschatological age has dawned, but inexplicably the eschatological day of final consummation and reckoning has not interrupted. Jesus has not returned to his community of believers as the triumphant and glorified Son of man. The joys of the kingdom of God are still only dreamed of. In the course of this interim period the Markan church has been beset by suffering and persecution." Theodore J. Weeden, Mark – Traditions in Conflict (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 159.

17 "On almost every count the theioi-andres present a different understanding of Jesus and Christian existence than what Mark himself has preached. The interlopers talk about Jesus as a great miracle worker, as one who imparted secret teachings about God and himself, as one who can be experienced as the exalted Lord, if the believer cultivates his spiritual life to the high pitch of spiritual ecstasy. They argue that authentic faith is evidenced in a person by a demonstration of great miracle-working ability and by his ability to have pneumatic experiences of the exalted Lord." Ibid., p. 160.


19 "An intensive investigation of the Jewish traditions has shown that to address God as Father is by no means a commonplace of ancient Jewish piety, and that when it does happen the form abba, 'Father' or 'My Father', is never used. The reason for the avoidance of abba in address to God in the ancient Jewish piety is that this is the form of the word used by a child in first learning to speak of his earthly father. Aramaic, unlike English, does not have an onomatopoeic word to be taught to children (Dadda or the like) and then a quite different root for the formal word. In Aramaic, the root ab has to serve for both. Thus, the ancient Jews maintained the dignity of God, in so far as they addressed him as Father at all, by scrupulously avoiding the particular form of the word used by children." Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 41.

21 Nineham, Saint Mark, p. 246.

22 Weeden, Traditions in Conflict, p. 22.


24 Nineham, Saint Mark, pp. 224-225.

25 Ibid., p. 225.


27 1 Kings 17:17-24 Afterwards the son of this woman, the mistress of the house, fell ill and grew worse and worse, until at last his breathing ceased. Then she said to Elijah, "What made you interfere, you man of God? You came here to bring my sins to light and kill my son!" "Give me your son", he said. He took the boy from her arms and carried him up to the roof-chamber where his lodging was, and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, is this thy care for the widow with whom I lodge, that thou hast been so cruel to her son?" Then he breathed deeply upon the child three times and called on the Lord, "O Lord my God, let the breath of life, I pray, return to the body of this child." The Lord listened to Elijah's cry, and the breath of life returned to the child's body, and he revived; Elijah lifted him up and took him down from the roof into the house, gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive." Then she said to Elijah, "Now I know for certain that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord on your lips is truth."


30 Ibid., p. 396.


32 Ibid., p. 245.

33 Ibid.


35 Nineham, Saint Mark, p. 245.
36 2 Kings 4:18-37 When the child was old enough, he went out one day to the reapers where his father was. All of a sudden he cried out to his father, "O my head, my head!" His father told a servant to carry him to his mother. He brought him to his mother; the boy sat on her lap till midday, and then he died. She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door and went out. She called her husband and said, "Send me one of the servants and a she-ass, I must go to the man of God as fast as I can, and come straight back." "Why go to him today?" he asked. "It is neither new moon nor sabbath." "Never mind that", she answered. When the ass was saddled, she said to her servant, "Lead on and do not slacken pace unless I tell you." So she set out and came to the man of God on Mount Carmel. The man of God spied her in the distance and said to Gehazi, his servant, "That is the Shunammite woman coming. Run and meet her, and ask, 'Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the boy?" She answered, "All is well." When she reached the man of God on the hill, she clutched his feet. Gehazi came forward to push her away, but the man of God said, "Let her alone; she is in great distress, and the Lord has concealed it from me and not told me." "My lord," she said, "did I ask for a son? Did I not beg you not to raise my hopes and then dash them?" Then he turned to Gehazi: "Hitch up your cloak; take my staff with you and run. If you meet anyone on the way, do not stop to greet him; if anyone greets you, do not answer him. Lay my staff on the boy's face." But the mother cried, "As the Lord lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you." So he got up and followed her.

Gehazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the boy's face, but there was no sound and no sign of life so he went back to meet Elisha and told him that the boy had no roused. When Elisha entered the house, there was the boy dead, on the bed where he had been laid. He went into the room, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the Lord. Then, getting on the bed, he lay upon the child, put his mouth to the child's mouth, his eyes to his eyes and his hands to his hands; and, as he pressed upon him, the child's body grew warm. Elisha got up and walked once up and down the room; then, getting on to the bed again, he pressed upon him and breathed into him seven times; and the boy opened his eyes. The prophet summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." She answered his call and the prophet said, "Take your child." She came in and fell prostrate before him. Then she took up her son and went out.

37 This section is part of the later additions made to the book of Daniel.

39 Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses 2. 22. 4.


42 Ibid., p. 66.


44 Kee, Jesus in History, p. 273.

45 Weeden, Traditions in Conflict, p. 164.

46 Ibid., pp. 164-165.


48 Ibid., p. 243.

49 W. Harrington, Mark, pp. 139-140.

50 Nineham, Saint Mark, p. 244. Cf. 1 Cor. 7:14, and for the general idea of participation in the faith of others, Mk. 2:5 and 1 Cor. 15:29.

51 W. Harrington, Mark, pp. 142-143.

52 Taken together, the three prediction units are extraordinarily interesting. The first summarizes the divine necessity for the passion and is entirely in the present tense. The second provides a hinge in that the first part anticipates Jesus being delivered into the hands of men, but still uses the present tense...and then puts the second half of the prediction into the future tense, 'they will kill...'. The third puts the whole prediction into the future and introduces specific references to Jerusalem and the details of the passion itself. This care in composition, and Mark has composed the predictions himself very carefully, provides an element of movement to the plot of the gospel. In this central section we look back over what has happened to make the passion necessary - the plots, rejections, misunderstanding, all forseen by God - we pause for these solemn moments of revelatory teaching, and then we move forward to Jerusalem and the passion itself." Perrin, New Testament, pp. 156-157.

53 Taylor; The Gospel According to St. Mark, p. 403. It must be remembered that Taylor takes Papias' tradition with regard to the relation of Peter to Mark more seriously than the later scholars this work is relying upon.
54 Ibid., p. 404.

55 Perrin, Christology and a Modern Pilgrimage, p. 91.


57 Ibid.

58 Matthew 18:1-5. At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?" He called a child, set him in front of them, and said, "I tell you this: unless you turn round and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven. Lest a man humble himself till he is like this child, and he will be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. But if a man is a cause of stumbling to one of these little ones who have faith in me, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung round his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea. Alas for the world that such causes of stumbling arise! Come they must, but woe betide the man through whom they come!"

59 Nineham, Saint Mark, pp. 252-253.

60 Weeden, Traditions in Conflict, p. 35.

61 Ibid., p. 62.

62 Ibid., p. 63.


65 Ibid., p. 205.

66 "Hell: A word with so many irrelevant associations that it is probably better to keep to the original word, Gehenna. This was a valley west of Jerusalem where at one time children were sacrificed to the god Moloch...after being desecrated by Josiah it came to be used as a refuse dump for Jerusalem...." Nineham, Saint Mark, p. 258. Gehenna is actually south of Jerusalem. Cf. "The catechetical interest of these sayings must have been especially relevant to the Christians of Rome during Nero's persecution." Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, gen. eds., The Jerome Biblical Commentary, 2 vols. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), vol. 2: The New Testament, "The Gospel According to Mark," by Edward J. Mally.
68. Ibid., p. 410.
71. W. Harrington, Mark, p. 149.
75. Ibid., p. 41.
76. Ibid., p. 44.
81. Weeden, Traditions in Conflict, pp. 34-35.
82. Ibid., p. 64.
83. Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, p. 142.
84. Ibid., p. 146.
86. W. Harrington, Mark, p. 156.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid., p. 157.
90 Ibid., p. 425.
92 Nineham, Saint Mark, p. 274.
93 Ibid., p. 272.
94 Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, pp. 143-144.
95 Ibid.
96 Weeden, Traditions in Conflict, p. 68.
97 Kelber, Mark's Story of Jesus, p. 53.
98 W. Harrington, Mark, p. 161.
99 Nineham, Saint Mark, p. 275.
103 Nineham, Saint Mark, p. 273.
104 Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, p. 145.
105 Weeden, Traditions in Conflict, p. 82.
106 Ibid.
107 W. Harrington, Mark, p. 164.
108 Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE - INTRODUCTION

In order to understand fully the impact of the child passages upon those for whom Mark composed his gospel during the mid-portion of the first century C.E., it is necessary to delve just a bit into the historical reality into which they were interjected. This was no simple, uncomplicated society, but rather a highly heterogeneous, multiethnic, and politically convoluted group of people drawn together either by the free choice afforded them by virtue of their position within the mercantile, political, or social structure, or by the forced chance endured because of the victimization of religious, nationalistic, or economic persecution.

The Jews, who made up a goodly portion of Mark's community, had undergone centuries of persecution from without and sweeping leadership changes from within. They had been subjected to cultural contamination throughout their history from all manner of invading and host peoples, not the least of which was the Hellenization—which had recently threatened their very identity as nothing hitherto experienced. The Roman rule, under which the Jews lived during this time, was itself influenced at virtually all levels by foreign beliefs and practices. For the most part, however, the Romans adopted the attitude and habit of peaceful co-existence during the period under discussion. The majority of the people were casting about for a firm anchor and began
turning more and more to their religions. Unfortunately, they came away with empty rituals and void promises.

The world cried out, as it does again today, for peace, for sanity and mental health, for confidence, for brotherhood and good will, for understanding, for release from age-old fears and terrors, from private malice and public animosity on earth and from malevolence on high.

This was the culturally egocentric, physically hedonistic, and religiously impotent world Mark depicted Jesus entering; these were the people to whom he spoke and for whom Mark wrote. That Mark chose to write about Jesus interacting with, teaching about, and making examples of children can only be seen as an intentional act, calculated to engender introspection, nurture faith, and ultimately, change the face of society.
CHAPTER THREE - PART I Roman Background

The religion of Rome and her possessions during the first century C.E. was a curious mixture of traditional and exotic practices owing mainly to the cosmopolitan nature of Rome itself and her newly flourishing sister cities which were experiencing an influx of traders, captives, returning soldiers, and merchants, each with their own particular brand of religion and pantheon of gods and goddesses.

The Roman government treated these alien faiths for the most part with toleration; since it would not admit foreigners to its own worship it preferred that they should practice their imported rites rather than have no religion at all. In return it required that each new faith should exercise a similar tolerance toward other creeds, and should include in its ritual some obeisance to the emperor’s ‘genius’ and the goddess Roma, as an expression of loyalty to the state.²

This sense of religious leniency allowed for the growth in Rome of such disparate cults as those of Isis, the Egyptian goddess of motherhood, fertility and trade; Anubis, the Egyptian monkey god; the Great Mother; the Oriental faiths; the southern Italian Pythagorean doctrine with its practice of vegetarianism and belief in reincarnation; the Syrian goddess Atargatis and god Aziz and the Parthian sungod, Mithras. The Judean god YHWH was worshipped by Roman Jews, some of whom, hardly distinguishable from the others, followed his incarnate and resurrected son, Jesus of Nazareth.³

During this time there was still practiced in many homes the traditional family and household rites supervised by the
father or paterfamilias who officiated as priest. These rituals consisted of offerings to the guardian spirits of the home known as Lares and Penates. These household dieties ensured happiness and plenty and were especially a part of the family mealtime ritual which held a great deal of importance in most Roman homes even into the time of the Christian emperor Theodosius. The idea of Roman religion thus begun in the family was to deal with the numen or powers indwelling all of nature and in so doing secure the "peace of the gods" for the family and their many agrarian and social pursuits. The worship of the numen took place in prayer, food offerings, and occasionally animal sacrifice and these rites were passed within the family structure from father to son.

The very nature of the Roman religion was to admit subordination to that which had an external binding-power on one. The result of this, "...subordination or obedience to exterior power, whether a god, or a standard, or an ideal," gave rise to some rather polemic practices with regard to child rearing and religious beliefs about children.

We are told by W.W. Fowler that children had certain religious duties to perform in the family which were inaugurated by the mother who taught the young children the code of family pietas as soon as they were able to learn it. Thus, from a very young age, the children were steeped in the concepts of mutual devotion between parent and child and unerring subordination to the will of the gods. Their
actual religious functions began quite early also, as children were the only ones allowed access to the *penus*, the household storage closet, as they alone were pure and unde-
filed. This closet was believed to be holy as it was the seat of the Penates. It was a young boy who announced, after the libation at each family meal, that the gods were propitious. "These religious duties...were probably the original reason for the dress of children up to the age of puberty, the purple-striped toga (*praetexta*), which was also worn by priests and curule magistrates, i.e. by all who had a right to perform religious acts."¹⁰ Children were thought to be ideal religious intermediaries as they were chaste and therefore innocent, making them especially beloved of the deities. "Thus, a children's procession for special requests to the gods was considered to be particularly efficacious."¹¹ Children were also used as *camilli* and *camillae* (acolytes), in the cultic observances of the state religion as witnessed by several surviving monuments.¹² To protect children from being carried away by death, the cult goddess Juno, the protector of women, was worshipped as the guardian of young lives as well.¹³

In sharp contrast to these ideas and practices was the widely exercised option of casting out unwanted or delicate infants if deemed necessary for cultic, national or personal reasons.¹⁴

The decision to let the baby live or die was made shortly after its birth, usually by the father or paterfamilias. The newborn was laid at the man's
feet and, if he picked the child up, it was allowed to live. If he turned away from it, a slave was dispatched to carry the infant from the house and get rid of it. The methods chosen varied from throwing babies into rivers to flinging them into dung heaps and ‘potting’ them in jars.\textsuperscript{15}

If the child was allowed to live, the family celebrated \textit{Dies Lustricus}, one of the only rituals mentioned with regard to the individual child before puberty. The \textit{Dies Lustricus} was performed on the eighth or ninth day, depending if it was a boy or a girl, after the birth of the child and was to confer upon him or her the individual name, \textit{praenomen}, by which he or she would be known. This was a joyous celebration attended by family and friends who usually brought gifts for the baby or the family. Partly as a means of identification, but largely to confer a magical protection over the child, a string of beads, a \textit{bulla}, was placed around the infant's neck which was worn, usually with a locket, until the end of childhood.\textsuperscript{16}

Aside from the superstitious Roman feeling that children were the embodiment of the supernatural,\textsuperscript{17} they usually regarded them as less than human until fully grown, and used children in religious practices mainly only to further the sanctity of the family. Paradoxically, however, at the end of the last century B.C.E. there arose, from the social, political, and moral chaos that marked the last days of the Republic, a divine child motif in Roman literature. This was partly sparked by the religious significance accorded children, as seen above, and partly by the hope for a better future.
Thus we read the miracle stories about the boyhood of Alexander the Great and Emperor Augustus, the stories about the child Dionysus and the bad boy Eros, all of which were emerging as favorite themes of artists and poets as well. Emperor Augustus was referred to as *divi filius* or son of a god, and in his *Fourth Eclogue*, written around 40 B.C.E., Virgil was seen as having foretold his birth as a divine child who would bring about an utopian age of peace in Rome.

Now comes the final age in the Cumean chant; the great succession of epochs is born anew. Now the Virgin returns, the reign of Saturn returns; now a new race descends from heaven on high. O chaste Lucina smile upon the boy just born, in whose time the race of iron shall first cease, and a race of gold shall arise throughout the world. Thine own Apollo is now king.

It is interesting to note here that Mark, writing possibly in Rome, did not choose to begin his account of the life and mission of Jesus with an infancy narrative and so establish the *theios-anes* concept of his divine child-sonship claim in a positive way, which would have been more readily understood by his audience. In view of the Roman use of children in family and cultic worship and their opinion that children had easier access to the gods than adults, they probably had little difficulty understanding Mark 10:13-16 on some level, but the rest of the child sayings would have indeed sounded iconoclastic, if not even absurd, to their ears.
CHAPTER THREE - PART II  Jewish Background.

One of the groups of peoples populating the assemblage that was the Roman Empire in the first century C.E. were the Jews. It must be noted from the outset, however, that many of the Jewish people with whom Rome dealt did not perceive themselves as part of the Empire the way most of her other immigrant and captive peoples did. Although a widespread attempt at Hellenization was embraced by many Jews, at heart they were still very much a people unto themselves, chosen by YHWH, ruled by their multitudinous laws, and assured of their eventual rightful possession of the Promised Land. They were Israel.

This feeling of the divine destiny of Israel gave rise to many courageous acts of preservation of her ways and ideals. It assured the continuation of a feeling of national identity during the Babylonian exile, brought the people back to a desecrated Palestine after the first destruction of the Temple, caused the priests and Levites to divorce their foreign wives in order to attempt to rebuild the Temple and study the Law, and gave the Maccabees the courage and zeal to fight for Israel in the face of insurmountable odds. As missionaries of the divine revelation entrusted them, the people of Israel proselytized widely, and, during the time of their Roman domination, successfully converted great numbers of people. The converts were required to
embrace all of the laws, confess one God, become circumcised, and renounce their former nationality and become a Jew in religion as well as ethnic identity. This widespread conversion resulted in Israel being less adamant about nationhood and the necessity of living in or near Palestine in order to be a true Jew.

There were problems arising with this growth that eventually led to the decline of Israel and gave rise to Christianity. Among these problems was an attempt to return to the ideals of the religion as practiced in the desert under Moses, the religious nature of the covenant, and the authority residing in the hands of the high priest and his legions of priests and scholars. The code was the Torah and communities became closely associated with a synagogue which governed their daily life. Although all of these factors lent strength and a sense of solidarity to Israel, it also gave rise to a particularism which led inevitably to an ethnic identity. It was this renunciation of the idea that the true religion was universal in scope which rendered further expansion impossible. During much of the first century C.E. then, Israel was occupied with her attempts to repel Hellénization, recover from the devastation of Jerusalem, and condemn any foreign compromises. For these reasons, "separatist decrees [were] strengthened, and ceremonial laws [were] given greater emphasis; there [were] additional Sabbath restrictions, more laws on impurity, and contact with foreigners [was] made more difficult. "The fences around the
Law, to use the rabbis' phrase, became higher and more impenetrable. To appreciate more fully the total immersion of religion into the daily life of an observant Jewish family we have only to turn to George Foot Moore's description.

In Judaism the whole range of religious observances, the morality prescribed or commended by it, and the specific type of its piety, are all integral and inseparable parts of a revealed religion, and correlated to the revelation of God's nature and character and his relation to his people collectively and individually, of the nature of man, his religious and moral obligations under divine law, of the consequences and remedies of default, the means of expiation, and the salutary efficacy of repentance.

Safrai tells us that, "the whole life of the Jewish people, from hour to hour of its working days as well as on the solemn moments of sabbath and feast-day, was dominated by the Law...." The primary source of the Law of Moses was the Torah, which contained commandments about virtually every aspect of life. "Personal and social ethics, family relationships, property, agriculture and even food and dress were catered for, almost as much as strictly religious behaviour, like the observance of sabbaths and feast-days or the offerings to be made to priests and Levites." It must be remembered, however, that individuals placed their own emphasis on the observances and rituals, based on their private tendencies and convictions, and this was entirely within the scope of the Law as long as the person held as foremost the service and worship to God for his own sake and not with a
view toward greater reward.

By way of introducing how the people of Israel perceived prepared for, and ritually celebrated their children, it is interesting to note that although the Greeks managed to learn very little about their Jewish captives, and a legend existed that Alexander never visited Jerusalem during his vast travels over his empire, Hecataeus of Abdera did manage to cull two very salient features of the religion of this mysterious and stubborn people: "the Jew made no images of the gods, and by command of his lawgiver Moses did not practice infanticide." Just as the prohibition against any type of infanticide set the Jewish people apart from their neighboring peoples, so too did many of the other Torah-dictated rituals and beliefs about children. It will become evident that a similarity did exist, however, between the Jewish and Graeco-Roman world of the first century C.E. in general attitude about the individual worth and importance of each child. It cannot be emphasized enough that it is this attitude which was challenged by Mark in his use of the child passages.

By the sheer number of scriptural passages concerning the begetting of children contained in the Old Testament, it is evident how important children were from the earliest times in Jewish history. Large families were very important when Israel was a small and struggling band of nomadic tribes because children represented their only hope of survival. Among the several passages expressing the desire for the blessing of many children upon a marriage are Gen. 24:60:
the blessing of Rebecca; Ruth 4:11-12: the blessing of the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. Abraham, Isaac, and Hagar were promised countless children in Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4, and 16:10. Psalms 127:3-5 and 128:3 indicate that, "among the Hebrews certainly a high value was set upon the possession of children...".

Abortion was forbidden and considered by tradition to be possibly equivalent to murder, and, as seen earlier, no thought was given to casting out any children. As miscarriages were common, several measures were taken to guard against them. A pregnant woman, "...must not take a hot bath... and she was told to avoid green vegetables, salt food and fat, as these might affect the constitution of the child adversely, but she must eat salt fish and mustard." The only public fasts a pregnant woman had to observe were the Ninth of Av and the Day of Atonement and she was allowed to eat any food she smelled and developed a craving for, as it was believed that "a pregnant woman whose appetite is whetted by the smell of food is liable to miscarry if she does not eat it." Prayers were said in the Temple every Thursday, and women often wore a stone amulet called a stone of preservation, to guard against miscarriage. The mortality rate among women at childbirth was very high and it was generally believed that, "death in childbirth resulted from negligence in religious obligations specific to women: the kindling of the sabbath lights, the separation of the dough-offering, and the laws of menstrual purity."
There were many folk remedies and superstitious practices associated with pregnancy and childbirth. One such practice, undertaken to prevent miscarriage, was to tie a dead scorpion up in a crocus-green cloth and fasten it to the woman's skirt. Many herb remedies did prove to have a great deal of practical value, although the practice of giving a woman about to deliver a concoction of powdered ivory and wine seems of dubious medical merit. Some such customs were thought pagan and were outlawed.

Most babies were born with the assistance of a midwife although Jewish women could do without this help and prided themselves on delivering their children quickly and easily. This is not to say that they did not suffer according to the curse against women pronounced in Gen. 3:16. In the very early times a woman delivered seated on two stones but these later were converted into a delivery or travail chair. All sabbath laws concerning the prohibition of any work could be broken by the mother, the midwife, and the doctor. Lamps could be lit, the umbilical cord could be tied and even cut, a fire could be kindled and water boiled. The father was generally not present at the birth according to Jer. 20:15, but was told of the birth usually by the midwife. It is interesting to note that, like many other peoples the world over, the Jews also buried the afterbirth in the belief that this would help to warm the infant. In the Tosefta Shabbath this information is given, "On a sabbath, the rich preserve the afterbirth in oil, and the poor in straw, but on week-days
all bury the afterbirth in the ground in order to give the earth a pledge.\textsuperscript{51} In southern Judaea it was also customary to plant a cedar tree if the baby was a boy and an acacia tree if it was a girl. Branches of these trees were then used to construct the wedding canopy when the child became married.\textsuperscript{52} After the infant had been received by its father, it was washed, rubbed with salt to harden the skin, wrapped in swaddling clothes to insure that the limbs grew straight and strong.\textsuperscript{53}

The birth of either a boy or girl called for a celebration among family and friends, but the joy was much more evident at the birth of a son. Indeed, many times expressions of sympathy were tendered at the birth of a girl. "Daughters were no addition to the family fortunes, since as soon as they were married they belonged to other families. Girls are but an illusory treasure, observes the Talmud; and then adds, besides they have to be watched continually."\textsuperscript{54} However little joy was felt as the birth of a daughter, it must be said to the credit of Israel that, although the exposure of unwanted female infants was a widespread practice in the Graeco-Roman world, all girl children were kept and raised, albeit grudgingly.\textsuperscript{55}

Until New Testament times all children were named at birth usually by the mother. The name was chosen after a great deal of careful consideration, as it was felt that one's name had a mystical sense of essence and destiny which could be used against one or to foretell one's future and char-
acter. During the first century C.E. a boy was not named until his circumcision which took place eight days after his birth. This all-important event in the life of a Jewish male was the cause of much celebration; and the obligation to the Law was so absolute that the operation was even conducted on the sabbath, if that was the eighth day in the infant boy's life. Circumcision was "a sign of incorporation into the life of the group, into the community of Israel (Gen. 34:14-16; Ex. 12:47-48). Hence it is prescribed as an obligation, and as a sign of the covenant which God made with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:9-14)."

If the child was the first-born son, he had to be redeemed according to the commandment in the Torah Law (Num. 18:16). The father had to pay five selas as a redemption fee, usually to the local priest, although during the time of the first and second Temples, this fee was often taken to Jerusalem. "Of the redemption of the first-born son the Torah explicitly states (Ex. 34:20): 'All the first-born of your sons you shall redeem, and none shall appear before me empty.'" According to the gospel of Luke, Jesus was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem for redemption also.

After the birth of a child a Jewish woman was considered to be impure for seven days, if the child she bore was a boy, and fourteen days if a girl. After this period of time she then had to complete her purification by an animal sacrifice within the stipulated thirty-three days for a boy and sixty-six for a girl. The sacrifice was to be either a lamb or
a young dove and was taken to Jerusalem and used as a burnt offering for her purification. In later times a woman was allowed to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem after a few births and take all of the sacrifices together. 60

Between these elaborate rituals at the birth of a child and those conducted to signify their passage into adulthood, children took part in the daily family religious observances discussed earlier as soon as they were able to understand and perform them. 61 There can be no doubt that a great deal of attention was paid to the rituals discussed concerning children within the religious structure of Israel. However, it must be noted that

Outside this context of...the land and the Torah, the children as such had no special importance. Like the literature of other people, so also the Old Testament bears witness to paternal and maternal love. Yet the Israelites did not idealize their children, nor did they pay any special attention to the children's individuality. Nothing is said in the Old Testament about the innocence of children. If anything, children symbolize lack of understanding. 62

Lest this should be thought to be an unfair statement, within the body of Jewish rabbinical literature this statement appears several times:

Girls and boys participated in every religious and social ceremony, in the synagogue and at celebrations at home; in pilgrimages and at every public gathering. As much as possible, if only 'so as to bring a reward to those who brought them.' 63

In light of this section, the true nature of the predicament of the young man in Mark 10:17-22 comes into startling focus. The young man told Jesus that he had observed
the Law since he was a boy and was yet still questing after eternal life. Instead of heaping upon the fellow more laws and rituals, Jesus told the young man simply to give away his riches and follow him. Imagine the impact this straightforward solution must have had upon this young man who had spent his entire life living within the structures of Torah Law, who has amassed a fortune which set him aside in the eyes of his society as one favored by God, and who was now being suddenly faced with the inaccessibility of one thing he most wanted. How very human of him to reject the negation of status, wealth, and the adult nature of life when faced with the child-like trust and simplicity required for the life of true discipleship and the attainment of the kingdom of God. How very human of him, and yet how very sad!

The attitudes expressed, verbally and non-verbally, toward children within the Jewish community of the first century C.E. demonstrated many of the same opposing emotions and opinions as those of the Roman people with regard to their children. Although Jewish children were far more actively sought after and protected than Roman children, their individual being and personality suffered from much the same adult attitude of indifference, except with regard to the continuation of the family lineage and assurance of future religious and social prosperity. The fact that Jesus was himself raised in a manner very similar to that outlined should help one grasp even more fully the true impact of Mark’s portrayal of Jesus’ actions and sayings concerning
children. Mark presented the reader of his gospel a truly paradoxical--and iconoclastic depiction of the man, Jesus of Nazareth. This man, trained in the laws of ritual purity concerning the sick and dying, freely embraced the epileptic boy and raised him as from the dead. This man, who was raised with the knowledge that stature in the eyes of God and the community of the faithful was attained by living a pious and prayerful life of ritually regimented observance, placed a child in front of his disciples and announced that service to such a one was the way to attain stature in the eyes of God. This man, who was raised in a society which freely and severely punished children for any infraction and caused them to become subservient to the will of their parents and teachers, chastised anyone who would cause harm or stumbling to come to a child. This man, who was raised within the very strict confines of the Law, virtually since his birth, preached against the Law as a means of salvation and turned instead to a child as an example of the way into the kingdom of God. This man, who was raised to keep a respectful distance from his male elders and who had probably experienced very little physical affection from them, freely and often held and embraced and blessed even the smallest children who easily came to him. This man, who was raised in a society which demanded absolute filial obedience and valued the acquisition of material goods for the honor of the family, instructed that the way into the kingdom of God is rather by rejecting family and wealth and becoming a disciple.
This man, who was himself redeemed at the Temple by his parents, rejected outward, sacrificial acts and said, rather, that he himself had been sent to redeem mankind from sin and that what was required was a simple child-like faith in God. This man, who had been raised to honor his parents above all—save the Law, justified a doctrine which would cause division within the households of new believers who would then become each other’s mother and father and sons and daughters.

In light of the nature of his message and his methods, in juxtaposition to the society in which he found himself, there can no longer be any difficulty in understanding why Mark was moved to have Jesus say, "A prophet will always be held in honor except in his home town, and among his kinsmen and family." Mark 6:4.
CHAPTER THREE - PART III  A New Synthesis of Mark's Teaching

The brief overview presented in the previous two sections regarding the Jewish and Roman beliefs and practices concerning children and childhood, clearly points to the truly unique and iconoclastic nature of the Markan gospel with its clarion call for a new community of faithful, committed to fully embracing and celebrating its children, and dedicated to becoming child-like disciples of the Son of Man.64 The gospel of Mark, seen as it has been from various perspectives within this study of the child passages, continues to hold out its haunting challenge to attempt to develop a celebrational theology of childhood.

Karl Rahner calls us to this task even more pointedly when he reminds us that, within the historical reality of each person, the flow of his history emanates from the child he was. He urges us to see each stage in the development of a given person as one which has its own inherent importance and dignity. The Markan use of a sense of the flow of history, from past to present and on into the future, which Perrin pointed out, and which has been commented upon several times in the second chapter of this work, may also be applied to the Markan sense of childhood and its importance to the individual and the community at large.

Man emerges out of a past to which he clings, into a future which he has sketched out in advance. A man's free act brings into the present the whole of
his past and his future. Childhood has in all
this as vivid and enduring a part as any other
age. It is no mere scaffolding, but will endure
forever as a part of the building's facade.
Instead of leaving childhood behind as we wander
forward in time, we are heading towards it as the
eternally salvaged content of our free activity
in time. When we gather all our past together
to make up our eternity, only then will we really
become the children that we were.65

We must remember that Christianity holds a concept of
being that is in many ways very different from any other
cultural or religious group. It becomes evident, in the
Markan uses of children, at very young ages, as examples
for discipleship that he espoused the idea that children
are fully human at birth. Unlike many other cultural and
religious groups, who see the child as an empty slate upon
which to write, an empty vessel which must be filled, or
even as an incomplete state of humanness,66 Christianity
sees and acknowledges the humanness within each person at
the very beginning of their existence. Mark further ampli-
fies this attitude by insisting that it is children who are
the most natural inheritors of the kingdom of God.

One of the difficulties within all of the child passages
in the Bible is that nowhere do we get a very clear under-
standing of what it really means to be a child. It is taken
for granted that we remember our own childhood and that we,
as adults, interact with enough children to have an adequate
concept of the state of childhood, with its many facets and
unique ground of being. There is, within that lack of
definition, a great deal of freedom and also a great deal of
responsibility. Historically, the condition of childhood has changed drastically through the years and it has fallen to each generation to spend enough time with its real children, and with the child within each adult, to make the child passages in the scriptures come to life and have meaning. Unfortunately, very often, that time has not been taken and that challenge has not been met with any consistency nor with any abiding sense of commitment to children.

It must be pointed out that in no way is the implication to be drawn from this work that children are without fault or that they are perfect. Rather, the attempt has been made to point up the fact that children know that they are the beloved of God through no real action of their own. They accept his embrace and his promise of a place within the kingdom out of simple faith. The Markan Jesus identified with children, he protected the children around him, and he made sure that their salvation was safeguarded. In so doing he left a lasting impression upon, and a lasting challenge to, the present-day Christian community to go and do likewise.

Rahner reminds us beautifully that "childhood is humanly a trustful adventuresomeness heading under guidance into the unknown." The child passages in Mark stand in celebrational testimony to that fact. Like the family of graduated roly-poly nesting dolls I played with as a youngster, Mark reveals his secrets one at a time to the seeker who is willing to keep trying to take each section apart to see what hidden
treasure will be given up next. Just as I was convinced that, within the tiniest roly-poly, there existed the true heart of all the roly-poly family, so am I now convinced that within the child passages Mark hid the message that the true nature of the child-like faith required in all Christians may most readily be seen in the children at hand.

One has only to look around to see the need for a re-evaluation of the importance and role of children within the Christian community. A few years ago there began to appear several books whose purpose was to attempt to teach people how to live self-directed and self-fulfilling lives. They taught how to pull one's own strings, how to become assertive, meditative, and combative, and how to win friends and influence people. There seemed to be no area of life and living that someone had not written a book about how to deal with, cope through, or change, in an effort to become healthy, actualized adults. Gradually, this avalanche of self-help books began to concern me, and I started to look for a possible explanation of this glut of ego-centered concentration on introspection and renovation. During this same period, it also began to become obvious to me that something was radically wrong with the nature of childhood within our society. Child abuse statistics began soaring, as did those for juvenile crime, drug abuse, child suicide, school drop-out, and child prostitution. While the adults were pursuing health and happiness, the children were being pursued by death and destruction at almost identical rates. Clearly, much of
North American society was failing to keep things in proper perspective and it began to look as though the child was becoming the father of the man.

I began talking more and more to the children with whom I dealt daily and they taught me many unforgettable lessons about the nature of childhood and the needs of children. Their words and actions reminded me that children are eager for knowledge and that, given even a partial chance at life, they look at people and situations with a fresh outlook that is largely unspoiled by prejudice, disillusionment, or sophistication. I also had to deal with the fact that healthy children are usually very quick to discern character and to know instinctively whom to trust, and whom not to trust. 70

Watching the children around me, I was reminded that the "...beautiful thing about children is that they are full of hope and promise. Precisely because a child is not yet what he will be, the possibilities for what he might become are unlimited." 71 Children also have an enormous ability to live in the here and now, while at the same time remaining creatively open to the future. They expect the impossible to become possible, and they challenge the hard facts of the world by the reality of their own joy and trust and the fact of their innate example of the coming kingdom of God.

Again, however, it must be remembered that children are not always humble, or joyful, or trusting, or peaceful, or innocent, but it also must be remembered that they are terribly vulnerable, and often subjected to humiliation, and a
heightened sense of their dependence upon the people around them. Regardless of their condition, there is a very real sense of the presence of Christ within children. This concept has largely been ignored, but can be likened to the concept of Christ within the poor and humble people, an idea which has merited a great deal of study over the years. Mark 9:37 demonstrates this essence of Christ within children when it says, "Whoever receives one of these children in my name", he said, "receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me." When Jesus made the above-mentioned affirmation, however, he certainly referred to actual children. Christ, even God who sent him is thus mysteriously present in ordinary children — playing or crying, tender or cruel, nicely washed or dirty." To learn this gospel of the mysterious love God has for children, we must look anew at the children all around us, and, by so doing, see a new manifestation of Christ's presence among us.

Even after being shown many of the qualities of childhood by the children with whom I dealt, I was still unable to fathom where the root of the difficulty lay with regard to modern Christian society and its children. I turned next to a study of the inherently healthy people I knew who, without the aid of countless books and manuals, were living creative and celebrational lives. While every journey into adulthood was different, some common features began to coalesce from which I could draw certain conclusions. Although certainly not a universal fact, it became clear that one of the ways
to arrive at healthy adulthood was to have a protected childhood which enabled the person to have "... that ultimate trust in reality, that attachment to God as our Father which is the basis of religion." In addition to either a healthy childhood, or the ability to have overcome an unhappy or battered childhood, the people whom I identified as living healthy God-centered lives, also without exception, expressed having within themselves a large degree of child-likeness. Again Rahner speaks most cogently on this point when he says:

Everyone acknowledges how any healthy human existence must include such qualities of childhood as confidence, openness, expectancy, and docility. Biological childhood is a prelude and token of that childliness which in a mature man is both preserved and surpassed. Only from the inner childhood of the mature man do we learn what meaning to attach to the childhood of an infant.

It was to this sense of child-like faith that the Markan Jesus was appealing when he used the children as examples of true discipleship. It was to the child within that Mark appealed when he attempted to reshape the closed and self-centered thinking of the people in his community. It was to the child within that Mark appealed when he portrayed Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane praying his child-like plea of "Abba - Father," alluded to earlier. The challenge of the Markan gospel, directed to the adult believer, is that he turn and learn from the child next to him how to release the child within himself so as to be open and responsive to God, to be dependent upon him, and dependent upon the other believers within the community. "Spiritual childhood, in the New
Testament becomes the ideal for all and incorporates the best of the old covenant blessing of the fruitful family as a gift from God. At the same time, it reminds the first Christians that Jesus reaffirms the Israelite concern for the orphan, the neglected, and the helpless...."76

A word of caution must be sounded at this point as well. The emphasis must be placed upon child-likeness, not childishness. The Markan challenge is not to mediocrity, or to a lack of responsibility, or to a lack of motivation. The Markan challenge is to be open enough and sensitive enough to the people and things around one to experience life as acutely as a child does. To understand that the kingdom is received by grace alone, not by learning, or work, or the keeping of the Law.77 This entry into the kingdom of God is dependent upon the individual's ability to turn away from mature, autonomous, sensible, adult living and embrace instead the unformed potential of childhood. The Markan Jesus offers life to those who would lose their life for his sake, hope for a mankind mired in hopelessness, and membership, as children, in the greater family of God.78

The reality of discipleship is very distinctly pointed out by the use of the child passages, and as we read the words of Mark, we sense ourselves being challenged by this usage. We can respond, as the disciples did, with misunderstanding, we can respond with fear, or we can respond with an affirmative answer to the call of true discipleship.

Our utter helplessness in the face of evil,
our total dependence on a loving Father and our
ability to be reshaped into God's image consti-
tute our greatness in the kingdom of heaven.
As children in God's kingdom, we are free from
the burden of repairing our offenses, free from
the anxiety of shaping our own destiny, free to
grow with Jesus as his disciples, as his Father's
own children. Through spiritual childhood we
experience the fullness of God's power that he
has always made available to the last and least. 79

The child-likeness which the Markan Jesus calls us to
is a guaranteed way of finding God, and of finding the child-
likeness, the beauty, simplicity, trust, and openness which
is at the core of our brothers and sisters. We are reminded
again that, if we become as children, we may enter the king-
dom of heaven.

A child is a man embarking on the wondrous adventure
of staying a child forever, or rather becoming ever
more fully a child. His maturity and his divini-
zation are just ever fuller actuations of this child-
likeness. Thus the smallest child has a function, a
dignity, a claim on all of us who are around to be
of service in that grand enterprise. This is no
mere sentimentalizing. Man's own dignity and
sharing in God's inner nature consists in really
becoming that child which he only starts to become
in his childhood. 80

This sense of the importance of children, and the impor-
tance of the child within every adult, is best celebrated
within the worshipping community. A great deal has been
written over the years concerning various aspects of the
child and his church school experience. This study will not
attempt to address that issue. The sense of worship here
referred to is that which occurs within the family unit, or
within the organized church structure, or within the greater
community, during which a celebrational stance is taken
toward and among all of the worshipping members of the group in question. As Schilling so succinctly puts it, "to be concerned about the Kingdom but to regard the child as trivial and unimportant is to miss the Kingdom, because it is of the essence of a child and must be accepted as a child is taken into loving embrace." 81

A child does not begin his religious training when he learns to talk, but, indeed, at the very moment of his birth. "It is the family, not the church, that lays the child's religious foundations. This is done effectively not by the words spoken, but by the attitudes and conduct of the parents in relation to each other, the child, those outside the home, the natural world and God." 82 When a child does begin to worship publicly, the nature of that worship depends upon the child's parents, and the group with whom the family worships. He very early should learn that the church, and its liturgy, is another way of helping him to develop his inner life. Children readily take to the singing, prayers, contemplation, and the sense of silence, if they are allowed to learn about and participate in these things in a way commensurate with their developmental growth. Children understand about the holy, the essence of things unseen, and the nature of unquestioning faith. They are at home within the worshipping community if they are allowed to be.

Ulrich Becker asks some very unsettling questions about the nature of the Christian belief about childhood, and the significance the Christian faith attaches to children in his
article, "The Child in Theology and Church." He feels that what we have been taught to believe about children, and our practices within the organized church based upon those teachings, are, in many cases, diametrically opposed. We are at a point in time, historically, where we do now take childhood seriously, and it is an accepted developmental stage of human growth, but childhood is not exactly an all-important feature within the worshipping community of Christians. One could even go so far as to suggest that there is an element of denial of the child going on within the field of theology, and within organized religion. Many of the things that are done concerning children, such as infant baptism, the communicating of children, children's catechism, religious instruction, and confirmation classes, along with the Christian outreach and missionary programs directed to children, are not really based upon an understanding of what childhood is or upon any actual regard for the characteristics of the way children and young people believe and perceive their faith. There seems to be a pointed failure, on the part of the church, to act upon any sense of belief that childhood does possess a value and a dignity of its own. The failure to see this dignity and value within the child causes us to neglect to take "...the child's way of living and believing seriously [in] a theology of God's word where the human being has hardly any function at all in his historical and social situation." This denying type of theology takes away a great deal of the dignity and necessity of the child, as
child, and the child within and this theology has worked to
gave disadvantage, not only to the children and their par-
ticular way of living and believing, and their fundamental
needs and interests, but, in fact, it has taken away a great
deal from the worshipping community at large.

The sad, but true, fact that we are not fully addressing
the children within our churches has been supported by a
number of studies, which have been conducted in churches in
Australia, England, and the United States. In spite of
all of the events and situations in which we place our children
it is painfully obvious that

our ideas about what it means to be a Christian
relate mainly to adult models. Adults of almost
every Christian tradition assume that belonging
to the Church is a matter of believing certain
things and doing certain things. But the things
to believe are mostly things only adults can
understand, the things to do are mostly things
only adults can do. So these adult categories
of faith and conduct do not provide a suitable
theological framework for interpreting the place
of the child in the church. Childhood requires
a theology of its own. This does not mean that
there is a different gospel for children, any more
than there is a different gospel for women; it does
mean that just as we seek to include in a predomi-
antly masculine theology the feminine, so we must
include childhood.

As with any other problem, there are always exceptions.
Characteristically, children in the Orthodox churches have
always joined with their parents in taking communion, and
play important parts in many aspects of the worship service. The North-American Anglican and Roman Catholic communities also communicate their youngsters and give them a very large role within the daily worship of the church family.

In September of 1980, a group of one hundred and forty participants met in France, to design a document which would be a message to the children of the world. The title of this document was, "Children as Active Partners in the Christian Community." In part, the message read

We have come together because we want to discover how all people— from the youngest infant to the oldest member of a village or town—can live together and share the love of God.

We want to learn together, to work and play together. We want to learn from you and share with you what we have learned. We want to worship God and serve Him together.

We need your help and prayers as we work together to bring peace and justice to the world. We offer our help and we pray for you. Let us join together in every part of the world in praising God.86

Part of the undertaking of this group was to look into what a church might look like if the children were seen as making a viable contribution to its worshipping experience. They suggested that such a worshipping experience would be far more dramatic and visual; there would be more informal participation with more physical and emotional contact; there would be more obvious affection; and more respect for each other's needs. Such a situation would address the greater issues of life, about which children are so keenly aware and so concerned, like starvation, abuse, nuclear power, justice,
fairness, poverty, unemployment, and so on. To the members of this committee, it seemed only fair to sum up their feelings by saying, "the child's world is often apparently an upside-down world - but Christians are called to turn the world upside down!" 87

There are, undoubtedly, numerous other examples of isolated churches including their youngsters and not preventing them from approaching divine worship with all of their childly attributes and spirituality intact. These obviously are churches where the adults have chosen not to behave as the disciples did in Mark 10:13-16 when they tried to prevent the children from coming to Jesus because they were too small, or too innocent, or too insignificant, for the greater matters of the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this study of the Markan gospel, with its emphasis on the child passages in the center section, helps in some way to answer the questions of what Christianity actually teaches about childhood, and what significance our faith places upon children. Mark offers us no real theology of childhood, but he does offer us examples of behavior and opinion which are as applicable to ourselves and our children today as they were to the church for whom Mark composed them. One of the biblical concepts upon which Mark obviously drew was the idea that any human being stands between his ancestors and his descendents. He is a link in the chain which guarantees the continuity of God's promise. Seen this way, childlessness may be under-
stood as the great disaster it was portrayed as being in the Old Testament. Without children, a given family would lose its future meaning within the narrow confines of the view of children held in the Old Testament. The child also plays a very important part in the all-encompassing view of human life which we find in the scriptures. The child is the bearer of life, of the nation and its traditions, and is usually only seen in that regard by the greater community.

There is a great deal in both the New and Old Testaments about honoring one's father and mother, but it must be here emphasized that the New Testament clearly reminds us that this relationship must be two-sided. It imposes responsibility upon both the child and the parent to uphold the relationship in order to experience the life of the family, and the history of the family within the community of God.

Mark portrays Jesus as experiencing difficulty with the Old Testament tradition of children only being taken seriously with regard to their place within the future of the community. Mark, however, has Jesus make it very clear that the children belong directly and immediately to the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God belongs directly and immediately to them (Mark 9:33-37). This weak and helpless and most insignificant member of the community, this child, is brought within the very center of the group by the Markan Jesus, so the adults must recognize that a new order is being established. "Whoever receives one of these children in my name, receives me," said Jesus. So we come to understand that one
encounters Christ himself by caring for a child.

To receive the kingdom of God as a child (Mark 10:13–16) does not indicate a romantic glorification of the simple faith of the child.

[It] does not mean that the child possesses certain subjective qualities, such as particular feelings or childlike experiences or a pure conscience, and that an adult should now take on these qualities. The child is used as an example for a believing existence, because he is objectively weak and helpless and yet at the same time full of hope and trust; he takes the present time very seriously and yet at the same time awaits the future and is prepared to accept that the improbable can become reality. Not the child's transformation to adulthood but the adult's transformation to childhood determines Jesus' words about the child. 88

There is an urgent need to re-evaluate the place of the child within our worshipping community. This re-evaluation could only give our churches a new thrust of theological possibility with regard to the nature of children and their faith. It would also help to focus the church's ministry to children on the child's view of life and his fundamental needs, and in this way the Christian church would better understand and live out its faith and existence within the world. The church must work in concert with the family to provide an opportunity for each child's relationship with God to emerge and grow. It also places parents and children together under the purview of the same God and in this way advocates a sense of solidarity between the generations. This also can only help to strengthen the Christian worshipping experience. The New Testament lessons about children and childhood, particularly those in Mark, have only begun
a course which has not been carried forward to any great
degree within the worshipping Christian community. This
study of the child passages within the book of Mark should
show the reader that the Markan gospel contains a great deal
which still surprises us, which has the ability to give us
new ideas, and which may help us revise our old opinions and
ways of doing things. We must proceed to the next task to
discuss together these surprising ideas and concepts, to put
into action revised opinions, and to help the Christian
community go to its farthest limits in developing and prac-
ticing a celebrational theology of childhood which would
celebrate not only our children but the child-like disciple
within each one of us. We are all children of God.
FOOTNOTES - CHAPTER THREE


3 Ibid., p. 390.

4 "The Lares were originally the spirits who presided over the land outside the house, and the Penates protected the food in the store cupboards and the grain in the bins." Robert Payne, Ancient Rome (New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1968), p. 65.

5 Ibid., p. 66.

6 "Every minute operation of nature and man – the manifold life of the fields, the daily tasks of the farmer, the daily round of his wife, the growth and care of their children – took place in the presence and by the energy of these vague powers, now becoming formless deities." R.H. Barrow, The Romans (Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1949; reprint ed., Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, Inc., 1965), p. 15.

7 "For a 'religious man' the phrase is usually 'a man of the highest pietas' and pietas is part of that subordination of which we have spoken. You are pius to the gods if you admit their claims: you are pius to your parents and elders, and children and friends, and country and benefactors, and all that excites, or should excite, your regard and perhaps affection, if you admit their claims on you, and discharge your duty accordingly; the claims exist because the relationships are sacred." Ibid., p. 22.

8 Ibid., p. 25.

9 Durant, Caesar and Christ, p. 371.


15. Greenleaf, Children Through the Ages, p. 19.


24. Ibid., p. 4.

25. Ibid., p. 3.


27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 73.

29. Ibid., pp. 73-74.

30. Ibid.

31. "The national character of the religion is evident from the transformation of the Sabbath, circumcision, and the laws of bodily and dietary purity - originally purely religious - into ethnic rites. All these prescriptions had as their primary purpose to keep Israel in careful seclusion, in order to allow it to keep intact the deposit of revelation." Ibid., pp. 74-75.
32 Ibid., p. 75.

33 Ibid., p. 76.


36 Ibid.


38 Greenleaf, Children Through the Ages, p. 7.


44 Mishnah: Shabbath, 2:15, cited by S. Safrai, Ibid.


46 "Practices forbidden at childbirth included blocking the window to prevent the entrance of demons who were supposed to suck children's blood, tying a piece of iron to the mother's bedposts, and setting out a meal on a table - probably for the enjoyment of demons or magical spirits. It was permitted, however, to place a cup of water before a woman in confinement, and to tie a hen to her. Another stratagem was to whisper into the mother's ears." Tosefta: Shabbath, 6:4; Ecclesiastes Rabba, 7, cited by S. Safrai, The Jewish People in the First Century, p. 766.


"The moment the father was told of the birth and took the child upon his knees; this was the official recognition of the baby's legitimacy. If one of the child's ancestors was present, he was sometimes given this privilege, as we see in the case of the patriarch Joseph, whose great-grandchildren he took on his knees,' Gen. 50:23." Daniel-Rops, Daily Life in the Time of Jesus, p. 119.


Babylonian Talmud: Gittin, 57a, cited by S. Safran, Ibid., pp. 766-767.


Ibid., p. 120.

de Vaux, Ancient Israel, p. 43.

Ibid., p. 48.


Ibid.

Ibid.

"A minor who is no longer dependent on his mother is obliged by the commandment to sit in a booth (during Tabernacles); if he can wave it he is obliged to take a palm branch; if he can wrap it around himself he is obliged to wear a prayer shawl; if he can care for them, his father should buy phylacteries for him; if he can talk, his father should teach him the Shema and Torah and the sacred language; ... if he knows how to slaughter animals, his slaughtering is kosher; if he can keep his body clean, he may eat pure foods; if he can keep his hands clean, one may eat pure food from them; if he can eat... a piece of meat the size of an olive, one may slaughter a paschal lamb for him..." Tosefta: Hagigah, 1:2; Sifre Zutta on Num. 16:38, p. 288, cited by S. Safran, Ibid., p. 772.

Weber, Jesus and the Children, pp. 9-10.

The world in which Jesus lived had a highly ambiguous attitude towards children. Among Greeks and Romans children were disposable entities. The widespread practice of child exposure threatened the survival of whole families and cities. Among the Jews, children were received as a great blessing from God and no child exposure was practiced. Yet here again children were in the first place seen as future Israelites. Jesus' way with children was in sharp contrast to what was current in his own world. So astonishing were his words and gestures that even his disciples could not comprehend them." Han-Ruedi Weber, "The Gospel in the Child," The Ecumenical Review, ser. 31, 3 (July 1979): 228.


A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, 1953 ed., s.v. "Children," by Benjamin B. Warfield. Cf. "The fact that the Lord regarded these little children that were brought to him as being already 'in' the kingdom, as being even now members of his church, must not escape our attention. He definitely did not view them as 'little heathen,' who were living outside of the realm of salvation until by an act of their own they would 'join the church,'" New Testament Commentary, 1975 ed., s.v. "Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark," by William Hendriksen.

Mark portrayed Jesus doing many things for children, "He manifested the tenderness of His affection for children by conferring blessings upon them in every stage of their development as He was occasionally brought into contact with them. He asserted for children a recognized place in His kingdom, and dealt faithfully and lovingly with each age as it presented itself to Him in the course of His work. He chose the condition of childhood as a type of the fundamental character of the recipients of the kingdom of God. He adopted the relation of childhood as the most vivid earthly image of the relation of God's people to Him who was not ashamed to be called their Father which is in heaven, and thus reflected back upon this relation a glory by which it has been transfigured ever since." A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, p. 302.


73. Ibid., pp. 232-233.


75. Ibid., p. 22.


84. Ibid., p. 237.


86. "We acknowledge that we have much to learn from children - their spontaneity of expression, their ability to see through the complexities of a situation, to its underlying truth (and) their ability to discern our true motives, all provide valuable insights into Christ's invitation to come to faith as a child." Bruce Best, "Evian: Keeping it Short and Simple, but Just for the Kids," One World, 61 (November 1980): 5-6.

87. Ibid., p. 6.

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